

Strengthening the Capacity of the Office of the Vietnam National Assembly

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**Department for Democracy
and Social Development**

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Sida Evaluation 02/12

**Department for Democracy
and Social Development**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report evaluates the three-year co-operation between the Swedish Riksdag Administration and the Office of the National Assembly (ONA) in Vietnam. Since 1998, Sida has financed a project between the two parliamentary administrations in order to strengthen the capacity of the ONA to provide efficient support to the National Assembly in the area of supervision and public information.

The ambition of the report is to assess the results and relevance of the project to date by a review of the project activities. The report also places the co-operation in a broader development context by analysing current reform processes in Vietnam in a number of key areas. The last ambition is to provide a set of recommendations and guidelines for the future Swedish-Vietnamese co-operation in support to the National Assembly and also comment upon some of the lessons learned from the co-operation.

Development Context

Since the reform process (called the Doi Moi) in Vietnam commenced in 1986, reform initiatives have been introduced in all areas of social life. During the 1990s, Vietnam has experienced a high economic growth rate. At the same time, the incidence of poverty has been reduced substantially. Over the last few years the Party and the Government have formulated more comprehensive reform plans, to which the international donor community have been invited to contribute.

The reform processes in the economic, legal and administrative areas are particularly linked to the development context of the project. The report argues that the comprehensive approach to reform planning chosen in these areas represent a new mode of operation. The reform strategy is characterised as a step-by-step tactic where the initiatives are cautiously tested before implemented on a national scale.

Discussing the political development in Vietnam, the report notes that some significant changes have occurred since the initiation of the Doi Moi process. The political system has continued to open up both internally and in terms of foreign relations. In this respect, the establishment of the 1992 Constitution represented a milestone by giving the National Assembly formal powers in governing the country. However, the Vietnamese system is still very far from being parliamentary, the leading role of the Party is enshrined also in the Constitution, with no prospect for change.

The project

The project is a co-operation with technical and political dimensions between the ONA and the Riksdag Administration. The technical aspect is the transfer of know-how for the improvement of the National Assembly supervisory and public information functions. The political dimension is the long-term objective to contribute to a democratic development in Vietnam.

During the project period a number of activities have been carried out. The project input has to a large extent comprised of providing expertise in the main subject areas through seminars and study visits. Funding has also been allocated for IT and English training and procurement of equipment and literature.

Findings and overall assessment

The findings presented in the report have mainly been obtained through review of documents and interviews with staff of the Riksdag Administration and the ONA, Members of the National Assembly, mass media representatives and staff of Sida Stockholm and the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi.

The report observes that the National Assembly have strengthened its capacity to perform its duties in recent years. The Assembly activities have become more open to the public through its information channels. The focus on the importance of parliamentary supervision has increased and the law making process is guided by more intensive debates. Regarding different aspects of democratisation, the report establishes that the selected areas for the co-operation – parliamentary supervision and public information – are key elements in strengthening the role of the National Assembly.

Each of the project activities is assessed in terms of compliance with the immediate objectives. The general findings from the project activities fall into three categories:

- Contribution to improved professional skills of the staff of ONA and some National Assembly deputies in supervision over law implementation.
- Contribution to improved public access to information about the National Assembly and its activities.
- Contribution to improved research/library services.

In general, the immediate objectives set for the project are ambitious and some of the outputs are not clearly defined in the project document. The reason for this might be explained by the lack of baseline data and comprehensive studies in the initial stage of the co-operation. The analyses show, however, that there have been developments in all areas of co-operation and that the project has contributed to this development.

In the area of supervision the project has most likely contributed to raise the awareness of the importance of parliamentary supervision by presenting and explaining the practice of the Swedish system. However, the project has not been able to pass the stage of transfer of know-how into a more profound stage of problem solving. The most visible results from the co-operation can be found in the area of public information, with the development of a web page and the establishment of a public information house. Activities involving problem solving, such as, the creation of a new information policy has also in this area been difficult to implement.

A key aspect of the project is the mode of co-operation. The report provides a discussion on the role and responsibilities of the project parties. Even if the project has worked fairly well between all parties, there is an impression that different expectations prevailed in terms of the role each party should play in the co-operation. The unique character of the project and the previous experience of the ONA and the Riksdag Administration in development programmes might explain some of the shortages in the implementation and development of the project.

Recommendations

The report presents two possible strategies for a second phase of the project. Each strategy represents a different degree of co-operation in terms of commitment and development process.

1. An exchange programme, which provide parliamentarians and staff member from the two parliaments with the opportunities to meet now and then for exchange of experiences and joint workshops. Study visits to institutions of interest can be included in this programme. Themes can be determined in regard to needs of the reform process of the Vietnamese Parliament. Intensity will depend on the time and resources the two parliaments are prepared to put into the exchange. Depending on the level of ambition, a special project administration may not be needed.
2. A development programme based on what has been achieved in the current co-operation. In order to be meaningful such a programme must represent an elevation into something more targeted, focussed and thorough than what has been possible in the first phase. This implies a stronger involvement in problem solving activities where technical experts from the parties work together. The consultancy role of the Riksdag Administration will become more pronounced.
3. A third alternative could be a combination of 1 and 2. In such a format an exchange programme run by the two parliaments should be combined with a capacity building programme for the NA with a separate project administration. Co-ordination between the programmes should, on the Swedish side, be secured through a special coordinating committee with participation from the Riksdag, Sida and the project management of the capacity building programme. This programme could be managed and executed on a consultative basis, requiring competence in parliamentary procedures, management, organisational development and capacity building. It would also be of importance that the capacity building programme could benefit, based on case by case agreements, from the know-how in the Riksdag, both among members and staff.

A new phase of the project need to be preceded by a thorough project preparation exercise where alternative strategies are assessed and the level of ambition is determined. In the view of several on-going and planned projects and the growing interest in support to the National Assembly from different donors, the report argues it is necessary to design projects that are complementary to each other and that take into account the capacity of the National Assembly to manage several projects. To facilitate co-ordination and creation of synergy between the different projects, the possibilities of establishing a partnership arrangement between the National Assembly and the various donor agencies should be explored.

The project preparation mission should represent competence in parliamentary affairs, capacity building and project design and include expertise from the ONA and the Riksdag Administration. A first step in preparing for the future co-operation would be to make a deeper analysis of needs and assess the strategic options available. Based on decisions concerning strategy by the parties, detailed project design should commence. As to the timing of the mission, the first step should preferably be taken after the general elections in Vietnam and before the AIPO meeting in September 2002.

Acronyms

1. AIPO ASEAN inter-parliamentary organisation
2. CFTA Contract Financed Technical Co-operation
3. CIDA Canadian International Development Agency
4. CIRLS Centre for Information, Research and Library Services
5. Danida Danish Development Agency
6. GDP Gross Domestic Product
7. IPU Inter Parliamentary Union
8. IT Information Technology
9. IULA International Union of Local Authorities
10. MP Member of Parliament
11. NA National Assembly
12. ONA Office of the National Assembly
13. PMU Project Management Unit
14. SEK Swedish Crowns
15. Sida Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
16. SOE State Owned Enterprise
17. TA Technical Assistance
18. USD US dollar
19. WTO World Trade Organisation

1 Introduction

1.1 Project brief

The Administration of the Swedish Riksdag (the Riksdag Administration) and the Office of the National Assembly of Vietnam (ONA) agreed in 1998 to undertake a three-year programme of co-operation. The project constitutes the first direct co-operation between the National Assembly in Vietnam and a Parliament of another country. The project is also the first long term co-operation with another parliament for the Swedish Riksdag, and is therefore unique in terms of parliamentary exchange.

The overall objective of the co-operation is to enhance the democratic processes and the principle of rule of law in Vietnam, with a specific long-term objective to strengthen the constitutional role and functions of the National Assembly.

The immediate objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of the ONA to provide efficient support to the National Assembly in the area of supervision and public information. In order to reach these objectives a number of activities have taken place in Vietnam and Sweden during the project period.

There are two expected results of the project. First, the project shall strengthen the skills and capacity of the professional staff and members of the National Assembly in supervision over law implementation. Second, the public and media shall gain increased access to information about the National Assembly role and responsibilities, and in so doing increase public knowledge, interest, and insight into the decision making process.

1.2 Structure of the report

The first ambition of this report is to assess the results of the co-operation, in terms of impact on the overall and immediate objectives. The report also aims to place the co-operation in a broader context, analysing the current reform development in Vietnam in a number of key areas. The second ambition is to provide recommendations and guidelines for the future and comment upon some of the lessons learned from the co-operation.

This report is structured in the following manner. Chapter 2 examines the development context in Vietnam, with focus on the current reform initiatives and the political development. Chapter 3 present the methodology and approach used in this evaluation, as well as the scope and purpose of the study. In chapter 4, the project is presented in more detail, elaborating on the project activities and the model of organisation. Chapter 5 examines the findings of the project activities in terms of compliance with the overall and immediate objectives and provides specific assessments under each output. Based on the project findings chapter 6 turn to an overall assessment of project relevance, efficiency and cost effectiveness, mode of co-operation, sustainability and gender. Chapter 7 attempts to provide some recommendations and guidelines for the future. And last in Chapter 8 we offer some remarks on the lessons learned from the co-operation.

2 Development Context

2.1 The reform process – Doi Moi

The reform process in Vietnam (in Vietnamese called Doi Moi) started in 1986 as a consequence of the failure of the centrally planned system to deliver welfare to people. The reforms aimed at introducing a market-oriented economy and opening up of the country for broader international co-operation. The events in Soviet Union and its eventual collapse, triggered off fast changes in the economic system at the end of the 1980s. The settlement of the conflicts with China and the withdrawal from Cambodia facilitated a reorientation of Vietnam's international relations.

During the 1990s, Vietnam has achieved a high economic growth rate and the incidence of poverty has been substantially reduced. Reforms have been introduced in all areas of social life. Normal diplomatic and trade relations have been established or re-established with most countries, including China in 1991 and the USA in 1995. Vietnam has also become member of several international organisations.

The reform process is based on a step-by-step strategy where reforms are cautiously tested before implemented on a national scale. This approach to reforms, which stems from a deliberate choice to avoid risks of severe setbacks and social instability, has sometimes created an uncertainty among foreign observers as to the decisiveness of the political leadership to pursue reforms and a criticism of the pace in which reforms are implemented. However, over the last few years the Party and the Government have formulated more comprehensive reform plans where the international donor community has been invited to contribute.

2.2 Current reforms

2.2.1 Economic reform

In April 2001, the Communist Party of Vietnam adopted a socio-economic strategy for the coming 10 years. The ambitions are very high. The GDP should double over the next 10 years, implying an annual average growth rate of 7%. The continued reform and development of the economic system, to facilitate achievement of the ambitious socio-economic goals, is the primary driving force in the overall development process. Reforms of legal institutions, judiciary, public administration and political system are all related to the drive for economic growth and development.

There has been an intense debate over the last years on the implications of a transition from a centrally planned economy to a market oriented economy. Although the Party and the Government have confirmed the direction of reforms ever since the reform agenda was set, the practical implications have not been clearly identified, conceptualised and widely understood or accepted. In April 2001, the Party Congress once again confirmed the determination to reform the economic system to a market based system where the state will play the role of regulator and facilitator of economic activities performed by different actors: state, private, foreign and domestic. Integration into the world economy will continue and an immediate goal is now to become member of the WTO. In December 2001, the National Assembly ratified a bilateral trade agreement with the USA. This latter development is widely seen as a decisive move towards full integration into the world economy, which also will pave the way for membership of WTO.

It now seems safe to say that the systemic change of the economy will be pursued at a higher pace than before. The trade agreements will speed up reforms of legal institutions to create a level playing field for all economic actors. The state will, according to adopted policies, retain a strong position in industrial production but the monopolistic role the state has played will be reduced.

2.2.2 Administrative reform

The public administration system is commonly regarded as inefficient and as constituting a bottleneck for development of the market economy as well as for efficient service delivery to the citizens and the rule of law. Roles and functions are not clearly defined, administrative procedures cumbersome and decision making overly centralised. The management systems are still largely based on the central planning model, which also remains influential on managerial behaviour. Professional competence, in particular of administrative civil servants, is low and contributes to low quality and efficiency in service delivery. The bureaucratic practices in combination with low competence and very low salaries are also considered to be major factors behind the widespread corruption.

Already in 1993–1994 the foundation of a new civil service system was laid in terms of new organisational structures, post structures and introduction of salaries in monetary terms. From 1995 the Government embarked on reforming administrative procedures in matters of direct importance for citizens e.g. business licensing, land use certificates and similar. However, no real break through has been achieved and the administrative reform efforts have been widely criticised for not being pursued strong enough by the Government.

Recently the Government endorsed a plan for comprehensive reform of the administrative system. The formulation of the plan was preceded by an evaluation of administrative reforms during the 1990s where a number of fundamental weaknesses were identified. The donor community has also supported this work. The reform plan addresses issues related to the legal institutional framework of the administration, the organisational structures of central and local government, the development of civil servants and reform of the public finance management system. Decentralisation of decision making from central to local levels of government is a key objective. The time perspective of reforms varies depending on their nature. Re-organisation of central government is on the agenda for 2002 and will be implemented in a first step when the new cabinet is formed after the election of a new National Assembly in April 2002. A salary reform is envisaged from 2003.

2.2.3 Legal Reform

There is a wide consensus in the political discussion and policies adopted that the principle of rule of law has to be established and practised in order for economic development to take place in the desired direction and for international integration to succeed. However, the implications of this principle is far from widely understood and accepted in the Vietnamese society. There has been a development since Doi Moi was declared where the traditional exercise of public power through decrees and decisions by Party and Government gradually has given way for exercise of public power based on laws enacted by the National Assembly.

However, the legal system suffers from a range of severe weaknesses. There is a long way to go before a state of rule of law has been achieved. Also in this field the Vietnamese step-by-step model for change has been applied. A number of reforms have been adopted over the last 10 years that has contributed to an emerging legal system that eventually may lead to a state of rule of law. A milestone in the development was the new constitution of 1992 where the National Assembly was

established as the highest organ of the state with exclusive powers to enact laws, approve the state budget and exercise control of the executive and judiciary system.

Currently a comprehensive analysis is being done of the reform needs in the legal sector. In a draft report, recently published by a high level Government committee, a number of fundamental principles for the development of the legal system were identified. These principles – if adopted by the Government – will have profound consequences for the future development of the legal system and eventually take Vietnam to a state of rule of law.

The draft report also outlines a comprehensive and concrete reform agenda including measures to improve the legal framework regarding substantive and procedural rules, measures to clarify the roles and functions of legislative agencies, administrative agencies, judicial and law enforcement agencies and measures to improve legal education, dissemination of legal information and legal aid for the poor. The work of the Committee is the first of its kind where the whole legal system has been reviewed. The donor community has supported the work.

The comprehensive approach to reform planning chosen in the economic, legal and public administration areas represents a new mode of operation. The reform strategy used during the 1990ies could not only be characterised as a step-by-step approach but also as a piecemeal approach. No observer or stakeholder outside the political leadership could form an opinion about the reform agenda and its priorities.

The current development context is thus characterised by the existence of comprehensive reform plans in economic, legal and administrative fields. It is not lack of good intentions or ideas that will pose obstacles to achieve the targets of socio-economic development, but the reality itself. An important part of the reality consists of the people who are to bring about change and those who will be affected by change. In the plan for administrative reform the following statement is made:

“The lingering existence of inertia and habits from the centralised, subsidised bureaucratic system which have taken deep roots in the thinking, working styles and practices of a section of cadres and civil servants, in particular those who have vested interests in this old system, will create obstacles to public administration reform and make it very difficult for public administration reform to get over the influences and constraints of the old mechanism and adapt itself to the market-based mechanism.”

The statement identifies lack of willingness and ability (knowledge) to change as key parameters. Although the statement refers to administrative reform it is equally valid for reforms in the economic and legal sectors. The experience of the past years verifies the significance of these factors as obstacles to reform e.g. in the attempts to reform administrative procedures and in reforming SOEs. People tend to prioritise security and stability before change. Only if change promises attractive alternative options to status quo are people prepared to change. Any strategy where people are expected to change behaviour therefore has to seek to reduce the threats of change or the perception of threats.

2.2.4 Political developments

When Doi Moi was proclaimed in 1986, Vietnam, first North Vietnam and later the united Vietnam, had for 40 years been developing according to the classical model of a Peoples Republic. The political power was vested with the Communist Party, decision-making was centralised, and the “Parliament” only met some days a year to formally endorse decisions that were made

elsewhere. The economic life was based on socialist central planning and public ownership of the means of production

As Doi Moi is leading away from the centrally planned economy towards a situation where the economy should be mainly demand-driven, also the political environment is bound to change. A demand-driven economy means that the consumer should be in command. Such a highly decentralised decision-making process requires transparency and a free flow of information. Competition comes instead of control. But competition only works if the individuals have a free choice of alternatives and access to complete accurate information.

There is a realisation in Vietnam that the political system of the country must move in a similar direction as the economic system. But there is a concern that change should not be too radical or rapid. The experience of Russia and some other Central and Eastern European countries, that let the political changes precede the economic ones, frightens. The wounds of the war between the North and the South are also being referred to. There is also a strong sense of the importance that Vietnam is in command of its own political process and a resentment of any attempt to impose anything from abroad. Developments should be made step by step and be based on the Vietnamese reality.

The government of Vietnam is based on collective leadership and a balance of power between different interests within and outside the party. The interests can be ideological (reformers vs. conservatives), regional, or structural such as army, public service, rural interests, different industries, intellectuals, women, youth etc

The leading role of the Party is enshrined also in the post Doi Moi Constitution of 1992 and will certainly not be changed in the constitutional changes envisaged for the present National Assembly to ratify. There is still no intention to let the balance of power between different interests in the society, or different political ideas, be determined through popular vote. That is instead being done in closed negotiation between stakeholders in the central committee of the party, and elsewhere.

This corporativism is clearly reflected in the electoral system. The Fatherland Front, which is an umbrella organisation of the communist party and several "mass organisations", determines who will be the candidates, based on nominations from the member-organisations, but sometimes also independent nominations. (In the last election there were six such nominations accepted, out of which three were elected.) The nomination process is elaborate, with negotiations between interest groups to determine the division between e.g. direct party representatives, women, trade unionists, farmers (currently only 6% although 70% of the population) intellectuals etc. A screening is done which includes enquiring the views of the prospective candidates' neighbours and collaborators. Then the approved candidates are being distributed to constituencies in a slightly higher number than available seats.

Typically there might be eight candidates for a constituency with five seats. This means that most important for anyone wanting to become, or remain, an MP is to have support in the leadership of the party, of nominating mass organisations and the Fatherland Front. But if one disregards the wishes of one's constituency one might not be elected/re-elected. The voters are however left with a very limited choice. And no one representing a real alternative to the official policy would supposedly have a chance to run. That is irrespectively of whether the deviation is to the "left" (i.e. demanding return to planned economy) or to the "right" (i.e. demanding multiparty system.)

Still there is also a drive to open up the political debate. The new National Assembly inaugurated by the 1992 Constitution has a real role in the governing of the country. Budget and legislation has

to be adopted by the National Assembly, there is a real process including committee work and plenary debates and the cabinet sometimes have to see its proposals altered and even rejected. Certainly the Vietnamese system is still far from being parliamentary, but compared to the situation prior to 1992 the difference is considerable. One can also see that the parliament gradually has strengthened its position both in scrutinising and debating government proposals, and in supervising the public organs. The work of the parliament is also gradually being given more publicity, including live televising of parliamentary debates, especially the questioning of ministers.

All media are state owned, but the number of newspapers has increased considerably in recent years with all what is being published less easy to control. Foreign observers find a tendency that media experience more freedom than before. However there is still a long way to go before one can talk about a free public debate in Vietnam. Indeed, recent legislation has codified the responsibility of individual journalist, for what they publish.

In 1998 Professor Ove Bring, leading Swedish expert on International Law, Professor Christer Gunnarsson, economic historian, specialised in developing countries and Anders Mellbourn, Director of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs on behalf of Sida, made a study of Democracy and Human Rights in Vietnam. They analysed the status of the Vietnamese democracy making use of criteria developed by Axel Hadenius (Democracy and Development; Cambridge University Press 1998) with some completions.

In summary they found that *general and equal suffrage* in principle does exist while *open, free and fair elections with competing alternatives* certainly do not exist. *Effective elections* do not exist in the sense that they should be possible means to change government or fundamentally change policy. Concerning *freedom of association* they noted a positive development, with an increasingly vivid civic society, but still too many restrictions while the *freedom of opinion* has obvious limitations. *Absence of political violence* was not completely achieved as the researchers had noted reports of police violence meant to curb political opposition. About *rule of law*, the researchers noted that there still exist a gap between civic rights enshrined in the constitution and in legislation and the actual implementation, and that political considerations sometime take precedence to legislation. The researchers found that the *decision making power* was hampered by the lack of a clear public mandate to the government and the need to accommodate different parts of the political elite, which too often meant that internal conflicts were avoided by postponing decisions, sometime infinitely. Also the *implementation capacity* was seen to be effected by the same weaknesses. Another problem was unclear division of responsibility between Party and Government. This uncertainty and the weaknesses in the decision-making power create uncertainty among officials that foster formalism and bureaucracy.

The 1998 report was written at the same time as the co-operation between the Riksdag Administration and ONA was initiated. Chapter 4 and 5 of this evaluation touches upon developments that have occurred in some of these areas during the project period.

2.3 Organisation of the National Assembly

2.3.1 The National Assembly

According to the Constitution of 1992, the National Assembly is the highest organ of state powers. The 450 elected members are seated for a term of five years and assembles twice a year in ordinary sessions of 30–40 days. In the intermediate periods, a Standing Committee of 14 members serve as a legislature and may issue ordinances and resolutions as assigned by the National Assembly. One member of the Standing Committee has a special function to handle complaints and petitions from

citizens. Currently 35 MPs, including members of the Standing Committee, work full time. The members elected in each province form a Members Delegation, and in between the session the MPs work part time within the framework of the members delegations.

The National Assembly is the only institution with the authority to enact the Constitution, codes and laws. In addition to the legislative mandate, the National Assembly approves the state budget proposed by the Government in its autumn session. It also has the power to exercise control over all state activities and to supervise all activities of the State agencies and official, including the President, the Government the Courts and the Prosecutors service.

The National Assembly is organised into permanent committees and one Council for Ethnic Affairs. At present there are seven committees:

- Law Committee
- Committee for economy and budget
- Committee for national defence and security
- Committee for culture, education, youth and children
- Committee for social affairs
- Committee for science, technology and environment
- Committee for foreign affairs

The main tasks of the committees are to examine bills and policy proposals, supervise implementation of policies and laws and to consider motions and recommendations. The Organisation structure of the National Assembly is shown in annex 1.

During the autumn session in 2001 changes was approved in the law on organisation of the National Assembly, which will increase the number of full time serving MPs to 125 in the next assembly to be elected in April 2002. The number of permanent committees will increase by dividing the Law committee into a Law committee, responsible for law making, and a Judiciary committee, responsible for supervision of the judiciary (courts, procuracy and police). Changes in the Law on election will increase the number of MPs from 450 to 500.

2.3.2 The Office of the National Assembly

An administrative body, the Office of the National Assembly (ONA), supports the National Assembly. The main function of ONA is to provide technical, administrative and advisory services to the National Assembly, the Standing Committee, the Ethnic Council, the Committees and the Deputies. Today the ONA employs more that 400 full time professional staff divided into 19 different departments. One department serves a parallel committee and the remaining departments have general service functions. The department structure is shown in annex 1.

The staff is responsible for research and provision of legislative and policy information. One department assist the Standing Committee member responsible for handling complaints and petitions. Between the sessions the ONA is responsible for providing the deputies and member delegations with information concerning the activities of the Standing Committee and the National Assembly committees, and prepare the agenda and material for the upcoming sessions. The ONA also work closely with the Office of the Government and other State authorities.

Centre for Information, Library and Research Services (CIRLS) is a major beneficiary of the Riksdag Administration-ONA project. The Centre is divided into 7 units:

- Information division

- Legislative research division
- Publication and press service division
- Library division
- Computer division
- Science management division
- Museum and Information house

The project management of the Riksdag Administration-ONA project is based within CIRLS. The Centre is also the main co-ordinator for other international co-operation and exchange programmes and houses a Project Management Unit (PMU).

2.3.3 The National Assembly in the project context

The focal aspect, in a development perspective, of the co-operation between the ONA and the Riksdag Administration concerns the overall objective to support democratic processes in Vietnam. This goal is in conformity with one of the six objectives of Swedish development co-operation. In most of the Sida's partner countries this objective has meant to promote transition from authoritarian to democratic rule (Utrikesdepartementet, SKR 1997/98:76). In the case of Vietnam the emphasis has been to support a process towards development of a more democratic society.

The largest financial support to Vietnam in the area of democratic governance is allocated to the parliamentary co-operation, and the rationale from Sida is that state institutions are at the core in development of democracy and protection of human rights. This implies support for reforming the role, structure and organisation of these institutions, and to increase transparency, accountability and efficiency in serving the citizens. In all democracies the legislature is the primary arena for citizens to express and pursue their needs and interests, and therefore a key institution in enhancing democratic processes.

Since the 1992 constitution the National Assembly has gained substantial formal powers. The National Assembly is the only political body with some democratic legitimacy through the election process. However, the Communist Party of Vietnam has a constitutional right to be "the leading force in the state and society". The division of functions between the party and the state organs is therefore still unclear, and this has important implications for determining the independence of National Assembly in relation to other state organs. The National Assembly is also a relatively weak organisation, in terms of capacity and ability to carry out its functions, and the fact that the Assembly is only gathered twice a year in short sessions add to this situation. The recent decision to increase the number of full time serving MPs and the strengthening of the committee organisation is likely to increase the capacity of the National Assembly to fulfil its constitutional role.

3 Methodology and Approach

3.1 The scope and purpose of the study

The Swedish Agency for International Development Co-operation (Sida) has initiated an evaluation of the co-operation between the Riksdag Administration and ONA in Vietnam. The purpose is to assess the results and relevance of the project up to date and to provide recommendations regarding future Swedish-Vietnamese co-operation in support of the National Assembly of Vietnam. In the light of the project context and the rationale for the support from Sida, special emphasis is given to discussions of the impact of the overall objective to *enhance democratic principles and the principle of rule of law and to strengthen the constitutional role of the National Assembly*.

The scope of the evaluation covers the entire project period from October 1998 onward to October 2001. The focus of this report is to assess the learning aspects of the project and evaluate the project activities in the light of the set objectives and the expected results. The terms of reference for the evaluation are appended as annex 3.

3.2 Target groups

The Terms of Reference identify a primary target group consisting of ONA staff and members of the National Assembly. A representative number of members of the target group have been selected for interviews and the survey questionnaire. The criterion for specifying the primary target group has been participation in project activities either as staff directly involved in project management, or as participants in seminars and study tours.

The secondary target group for the evaluation is defined as the media that conveys information about the National Assembly.

The study will to a large extent focus on the primary target group for the assessment analysis, but also attempt to gain the opinions from representatives of the mass media and other beneficiaries such as schools.

3.3 Description of approach and methodology

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation provide the background to the project and identify the main issues that should be reviewed and evaluated. By combining the different methods listed below, comprehensive and in-depth analyses have been facilitated for. The methodology employed in the evaluation consists of the following components:

3.3.1 Document and literature review

In the document and literature review, we have attempted to include all available and relevant Sida and Riksdag documents such as project document, formal agreements, annual reports, subject matter reports and samples of documentation from seminars and study visits. In addition a review has been made of documentation of other projects at ONA and related fields. A list of documents is appended as annex 4.

3.3.2 Interviews

Interviews with key actors constitute the most significant methodological component in the study. The design of the interviews has been semi-structured and open-ended, and where appropriate followed the evaluation criteria established for the study. The interviews have focused on four categories of key actors.

Open-ended interviews with Sida officials were used to gain an understanding of the Sida policy toward supporting the project in its early stage. These interviews also aimed to map the mode and perceptions of the co-operation during the project implementation and how the programme fit into the overall Sida development strategy. The second focus group has been the project administration and key actors at the Swedish Riksdag, in terms of mapping the background, expectations, implementations of project activities and results. An important issue for the discussions have also been the scope and design of the project itself, in the light of the role and responsibilities held by the Swedish Riksdag.

A third focus has been open-ended interviews with the project management unit and key actors at the ONA. A substantial part of the interviews has been conducted with the beneficiaries and participants in the activities comprising of ONA staff and members of the National Assembly.

An emphasis has also been placed on gaining viewpoints from other beneficiaries such as mass media to get information on their perception of changes in frequency, regularity and quality of information about the National Assembly. A randomly selected group of this category has been interviewed, but cannot be considered as fully representative. However this gives an additional source of information, even if it is difficult to detach the opinions back to the performance of the project itself. A list of people met is appended as annex 5.

3.3.3 Field visit

The field visit to Vietnam constitutes the second main component of the study and includes a combination of interviews, document review and observations. The schedule of the visit was developed in collaboration with the project management unit at the ONA and the local consultant. The National Assembly was assembled in its autumn session at the time of the field visit, and ensured access to a large number of MPs.

3.3.4 Questionnaire

Part of the information is collected by a survey designed in the form of a structured questionnaire directed to a broader collective of the primary target group. (Annex 2) The entire population for the data collection are all ONA staff and Members of Parliament whom have participated in activities restricted to study visits and general seminars during 1999–2001. The total number of participants amount to 318 (total population). The source of information is the list of participants in all project activities provided by the ONA project management unit.

The participants who only have taken part in activities with specific content were excluded from the selection list. These areas will however be covered with individual interviews during the field study. The reason is that we want to capture the views of the participants whom have been directly involved in the major activities. We make the presumption that they are more familiar with activities linked to the main objectives of the project. Excluded are thus the participants whom have only participated in English training and general computer knowledge.

3.3.5 Evaluation Criteria

In accordance with the Terms of Reference and the methodological note, the evaluation has been guided by a set of evaluation criteria:

Relevance of the project in relation to needs and of activities and implementation pace in relation to objectives, relevance and coherence of objectives of different levels; relevance of selected target groups in relation to the objectives.

Results of the project are assessed in terms of attainment of the immediate objectives and its contribution to the overall objective as well as efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Realism in the assessment of risks for poor performance on the part of the project parties and Sida

Mode of Co-operation in terms of appropriateness and ability to carry out respective responsibilities by the parties, and further the capacity of the parties to manage the project.

Possible alternative forms of co-operation, in particular Contract Financed Technical Co-operation.

External Factors influencing the project implementation such as other development assistance projects, political and legal factors and incentives of target groups to pursue the project objectives.

Sustainable impact of results is assessed in relation to the project objectives.

Gender sensitivity in the project formulation and execution.

3.3.6 Participatory Approach

In the process of conducting the interviews and analysis for the evaluation, there has been an emphasis on ensuring the participation of all relevant stakeholders in the project. In practice this has meant close consultations with Sida's representatives in Stockholm and Hanoi in the planning stage of the evaluation. The field visit has been designed in close relationship with the project management unit at ONA – ensuring the logistic of interviews and distribution of the evaluation questionnaire in Vietnam. During the field visit the team was invited to the annual review meeting for the project in Hanoi to discuss and brief the project on preliminary findings.

4 The Project

4.1 Project History

A great number of contacts between the Swedish and the Vietnamese side preceded the actual project formulation. The Swedish Foreign Affairs Committee visited Vietnam in 1993 and the Speaker of the Riksdag visited Vietnam in 1995 and addressed the National Assembly. Vietnamese representatives also paid visits to the Swedish Riksdag. The dialogue continued between the Swedish Embassy and the National Assembly and the idea of a co-operation was promoted in the Riksdag when the former ambassador to Vietnam was appointed head of the international department of the Riksdag.

Already in 1995 Sida decided to finance a project through IPU on creating a database of legal normative documents. This project, which utilised IT expertise from the Riksdag, resulted in the establishment of the first legal database in Vietnam and an Intranet serving the ONA. The project was completed in 1998.

A formal proposal was submitted by ONA to the Swedish Embassy in early 1997, in which the ONA suggested co-operation with the Riksdag in the areas of parliamentary supervision and public information and education. The proposal was forwarded to the Riksdag. An agreement was reached between the Riksdag Administration and Sida to field a fact finding and project-planning mission to Vietnam in October 1997. The mission reviewed the proposal by ONA and recommended co-operation mainly in the areas proposed by ONA and elaborated on activities to be undertaken.

The Riksdag Administration got the approval by the Speakers Conference (now Riksdag Board) to enter into a co-operation with the ONA. The head of the Riksdag Administration and a vice-chairman of ONA signed a Mutual Statement of Intent on Co-operation in March 1998.

Following upon the agreement between the two institutions, Sida decided formally to finance the project and allocated SEK 15 million for the period 1998–2000 and authorised the Swedish Embassy to conclude a Specific Agreement with the Vietnamese Government on the project. The Specific Agreement entered into force on October 1, 1998. A project document was appended to the Specific Agreement outlining the project objectives and activities in more detail. The technical assistance and related support to be provided by Riksdag Administration was separately agreed upon in a contract between Sida and the Riksdag Administration.

4.2 Project Activities

The project is a co-operation with technical and political dimensions between the ONA and the Riksdag Administration. The technical aspect of the project is the transfer of know-how for the improvement of the National Assembly supervisory function and public information functions. The political dimension is the long-term objective to contribute to a democratic development in Vietnam. The project is rooted at the administrative level of the two parliaments, but with frequent participation of Members of Parliament from the National Assembly in project activities. There has also been rather frequent participation of Swedish MPs in connection to study visits by Vietnamese delegations.

The activities have involved a large number of resource persons both from the Swedish and Vietnamese side. Since the start of the project more than 90 members of parliament and more than 200 of the ONA staff have participated in one or more activities. The project inputs have to a large extent comprised provision of expertise in the main subject areas through seminars and study tours. Funding has been provided for English training, training in IT and provision of equipment and literature

According to the Specific Agreement between the two countries the overall objective of the co-operation is “the enhancement of democratic processes and the principle of rule of law in Vietnam”. The long-term specific objective is to “strengthen the constitutional role and functions of the National Assembly.”

The project document identifies three immediate or project objectives focusing each on one specific area of National Assembly activities. These are supervision of law implementation, public information and library and research services.

In the following a more detailed description will be provided of implemented activities in relation to the immediate objectives stated in the project document.

4.2.1 Immediate objective 1

“Improved professional skills of the staff of the Office of the National Assembly and some National Assembly deputies in supervision over law implementation”.

Three main outputs were expected to result from the planned activities: a programme for skills training relating to supervision over law implementation, facilitation of the production of a law on supervision and a new software application to support the supervision and scrutinising of the issuance of legal documents by other agencies.

Project activities carried out:

1. Organisation and effective functioning of a programme for skill training relating to supervision over law implementation.	
Hanoi, 3-21 May 1999	Assessment mission on the Parliamentary Supervision over law implementation
Hanoi, 26-28 April 1999	Seminar on Parliamentary Supervision
Hanoi, 30 August – 1 September 1999	Seminar on the Supervision over the implementation of economic policies, state budget and important projects
Sweden/Denmark, 18 Sept.- 2 Oct 1999	Study tour on implementation of economic policy, state budget and important projects
Sweden/Germany, 23 Oct – 6 Nov 1999	Study tour on supervision in the field of education
Hanoi, 28 Feb – 01 Mars 2000	Seminar on Parliamentary Supervision over Judicial Matters
Sweden/Poland 18 Mars – 2 April 2000	Study tour on Parliamentary Supervision over judicial institutions
Hanoi, 21-23 August 2000	Seminar on Supervision over the implementation of legal documents on the Environment
Sweden/Holland/Norway 5-26 October 2000	Study tour on Parliamentary supervision of the Environment
HCMC, 10-12 January 2001	Seminar on Supervision on the implementation of labour law and social affairs
Sweden, 24 Mars – 1 April 2001	Study tour on supervision on labour and employment

2. Facilitation on production of the law on Supervision	
Hanoi, 5 January	Provision of books and literature for drafting of the law on Supervision

4.2.2 Immediate objective 2

“Improved public access to the information about the National Assembly and its activities.”

The expected results were to develop services to and relationship with press and news agencies, develop a public information policy and to provide education and exchange of experiences in the area of public information.

Project activities carried out:

1. Press service: develop service to and relationship with press and news agencies	
Australia, 5-24 January 2001	Scholarship to study the relationship between the Parliament and Media
Hanoi, 30 Mars 2001	Supply of equipment to facilitate for the relationship between the National Assembly and the mass media

2. Policy work: development of public information policies	
Sweden 11-25 September 1999	Study tour on experiences in the information services
Hanoi, 22-24 February 1999	Seminar on Parliamentary Public Information

3. A developed connection between the Internal and External Information system and accessibility of Parliamentary Information	
Hanoi, 31 August 2000	Equipment supply
Hanoi, 3-9 June 2000	Development of a Homepage for the National Assembly
Hanoi/HCMC, 2000	Set-up of Information House for the National Assembly
Hanoi, 26-30 March 2001	Training on computer, database, homepage use

4. Educational program for school	
Hanoi, 4-5 Oct 2000	Seminar on education activities on the Parliament in the school system
Sweden, Sept 2001	Study tour on education activities of the Parliament in the School system

5. Education and practical exchange of experience	
Sweden, 13-15 Oct 1999	Attending seminar on “Towards an Integrated Information Handling”
Australia, 2 Jan – 9 Feb 2000	Scholarships for training in Information technology
Brazil, 3-6 May 2001	Participation in the 35 th International Union of Local Authorities and 16 th World Federation of United Cities

4.2.3 Immediate objective 3

“Improved research and library services”

The main expectation of the component was to strengthen the research capabilities and support the development of library functions to improve the service to the MPs.

Project activities carried out:

Sweden/Norway 13-30 June 2000	Study tour on research and library services
Sweden, 14-18 May 2001	Scholarships to study support activities for MPs services
Australia, 29 Mar – 2 Sep 2000	Training course in General English
Hanoi, November 2000	Local training in General English
Hanoi 28 November 2000	Supply of equipment and literature

4.2.4 Other activities

A number of activities have been added to the original plans drawn up in the project document. These activities can be seen as a response to needs emerging during the course of co-operation.

Hanoi, 3-4 April 2000	Roundtable conference on National Parliaments and Inter-parliamentary work
Hanoi, 18-19 Dec 2000	Seminar on Organisation and Management of Parliamentary affairs
Sweden, 31 Mar – 8 April 2001	Study tour on supervision in the field of education
England, 19 Mar 3 August 2001	Scholarship to study legal English

4.3 Project organisation and mode of co-operation

Regarding the Swedish Riksdag’s international activities, the collaboration with the National Assembly in Vietnam is a unique feature. It is the first time the Riksdag has entered into a long-term co-operation with another parliament of such substantive character. The National Assembly on the other hand has experience from similar development programs, but yet not directly in the form of a twinning program with another parliament.

The planning and execution of the co-operation concerns the two parliamentary administrations. In Vietnam the chairman and vice-chairmen of the ONA are MPs, having a direct involvement in the planning and execution of the project. In the Riksdag, MPs inclusion in the organisation was limited to occasional reports to the Riksdag Board.

4.3.1 The agreements

The direct guiding agreements for the co-operation comprise of the following documents:

- Mutual Statement of Intent on Co-operation between the Administration of the Swedish Riksdag and the Office of the National Assembly, signed Mars 6 1998

- Project Document approved by the Standing Committee, the Vietnam National Assembly, signed September 1, 1998
- Specific Agreement between the Government of Sweden and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on strengthening the Capacity of the Office of the National Assembly to serve the National Assembly, signed 1 October 1998
- Agreement between Sida and the Riksdag Administration concerning Parliamentary Co-operation with Vietnam National Assembly, signed 9 November 1998.

4.3.2 ONA

A project management unit (PMU) within the ONA was established to manage the project on behalf of the Vietnamese side. The PMU is responsible for the project administration and the execution of activities; in addition it shall keep a close co-ordination with Sida, Hanoi and the Riksdag Administration. Apart from the organisation of seminars and study tours and other project activities, the PMU is also responsible for the procurement of equipment and other services apart from what is supplied by the Swedish Riksdag.

The PMU is located within the Centre for Information, Research and Library Services (CIRLS). The Director of CIRLS is the head of the project and acts as National Project Director. A project manager carries out the day-to-day management, and two staff members are appointed to assist in the implementation of the Swedish project. The overall reporting on the activities and outcomes of the program is the responsibility of the PMU.

4.3.3 Riksdag Administration

At the Riksdag Administration, a project administration was set up to manage the project. The project is lead by a project manager, who is assisted by a project secretary. The main tasks and responsibilities is to plan and carry out the activities in Sweden, co-ordinate and engage the Swedish resources and where relevant provide advisory service to the PMU in Vietnam. Throughout the project the project administration shall keep permanent contact with the PMU and ensure that the activities are planned and carried out by mutual consensus. The project administration supports the PMU in Vietnam in submitting annual plans of operation, annual progress and results analysis reports to Sida.

Through the contract with Sida, the Riksdag Administration is allocated a budget for its expenditures for study tours and scholarships to Sweden. The Riksdag Administration is responsible for providing an annual budget report, including a statement of expenses and an estimated budget for the next financial year.

4.3.4 Sida

Sida provides the financial resources for the project. The Swedish Embassy disburses funds to the PMU based on requests and sub-mission of accounts. The Swedish Embassy also assists the PMU through direct payments in foreign exchange of goods and services.

Representatives from the Swedish Embassy and Sida Stockholm participate in the annual review meeting with the project parties. In these meetings the progress of the project is discussed as well as the plan for the coming year. Swedish Embassy and Sida Stockholm act as speaking partners to the project parties in between these formal meetings.

4.3.5 Planning and follow up

The project is guided by a joint project document. For each year an annual plan of operation and a budget have been made and agreed upon in the annual planning and review meeting. In between the annual meetings contacts between the project managers are held through e-mail and in connection to project activities such as seminars and study visits. Sida and the Riksdag Administration have quarterly meetings in Stockholm to follow up on the development of the project.

The ONA is responsible for providing Sida with an annual report, describing the project activities and the achievements and results of the past year. The report is prepared in consultation with the Swedish project manager. In addition, the Riksdag Administration is responsible for submitting to Sida a short project analysis focusing on own activities and the project development.

4.3.6 Project Budget

The specific agreement stipulates a funding to support the implementation and monitoring of the program within a total amount of 15 mill Swedish Kronor. Of this amount 1MSEK has been set aside for project evaluation. The contract between Sida and the Riksdag Administration includes a tentative budget frame of 11MSEK of which 6MSEK for personnel and 5MSEK for reimbursable expenditures. The remaining amount of 3 MSEK was allocated to meet local costs of the ONA and costs of direct procurement of goods and services.

No overall budget showing estimated expenditure for the main project components was made at the start of the project for the whole project period. Instead annual budgets have been made.

5 Findings

5.1 Introduction

The findings reported below have been obtained through review of documents and interviews with staff of the Riksdag Administration and ONA, Members of National Assembly, Members of the Riksdag Board, mass media representatives and staff of Sida Stockholm and the Embassy in Hanoi. In a separate section, the result of a questionnaire answered by a sample of ONA staff and members of National Assembly is provided. Consultations were also held with other actors such as Danida, CIDA and IPU.

5.2 Project formulation

The first activity under the Project, a seminar on parliamentary public information, was conducted in Hanoi February 1999. Preceding the activities the preparatory period amounted to almost two years, starting with the formal proposal submitted by ONA to the Swedish Embassy in early 1997. The reasoning behind the long preparations might be explained by the very nature of the project. The project is unique in the sense that it features a long-term co-operative arrangement between the two Parliaments, and neither of them having been involved in similar projects before. A large amount of time was spent building a project organisation and determining the interest and working relations between the two parties. The first joint plan of operation was submitted as late as June 1999.

Sida played a key role in the initial phases of the project formulation. The idea of a twinning co-operation between the two parliaments was welcomed as an important strategy to support the democratisation process in Vietnam. It therefore seems as if Sida was very keen on getting the project to take off. Funds were e.g. set aside, not on the basis of detailed cost estimates but rather as a financial frame within which the project was to be executed. The fact that Sida took the role as a promoting agent in the project formulation and allocated 15 MSEK to the project without a developed project plan placed a high pressure on the project parties in terms of administrating activities and creating a well functioning organisation.

5.2.1 The project document

The project document follows a standard format. However, it appears rather brief and superficial in analysing the problems the project was intended to address. Neither of the documents prepared during this period (planning mission report by Riksdag Administration delegation, project document) are describing the current state of affairs in the area of supervision and public information in sufficient detail to provide a solid understanding of the baseline from which the project took off.

This may be attributed to the relative inexperience of the parties to prepare project documents of a long-term character. It may also be attributed to the experience of Sida and other aid agencies in starting up projects in the field of governance in Vietnam. A process-oriented approach has often been chosen implying that the understanding and knowledge of the environment and conditions under which the project will be conducted improve when the project parties learn to know each

other. Gradually the specificity's will emerge and enable the parties to conduct the co-operation in a rational way leading to attainment of the objectives.

In the area of governance, Sida has often chosen to fund the co-operation between "sister" organisations, assuming a fruitful collaboration will develop. Moreover, mutual benefits are here expected to accrue to the co-operating parties and enhance the likelihood of attaining the set objectives.

5.2 2 Needs assessment and baseline data

In May 1999, a needs assessment was carried out with the intent to map the parliamentary supervision over law implementation in Vietnam and provide recommendation for the project activities in the area. No similar assessments were made in the area of public information. Although, at an early stage of the formulation process a more in-depth project preparation mission including external experts was discussed, the idea was never realised.

The seemingly superficial needs assessment and baseline data on which the project objectives and activities were based may have influenced the actual implementation as the interpretation of the content of some activities may have differed between the two parties.

By the influence of strong personal relations and a growing interest from the Swedish Riksdag in the parliamentary development in Vietnam, the project created a new area of international exchange. Based on these circumstances, the decision of the Riksdag does not seem to have been preceded by any thorough analysis whether this was an appropriate model of co-operation for the Riksdag. Neither if the Vietnamese National Assembly would be the best partner in such a project, and the administration-to-administration approach the best level of co-operation.

It is worth noting that on the Swedish side the involvement of the MPs in the formulation process, as well as later in the guidance and monitoring of the project, has been very limited. The project idea was driven by the administration, although the overall objectives were highly political, and Vietnamese MPs formed an important part of the target group.

5.3 Overall objective

The overall objective of the project is formulated in the Specific Agreement as to promote the enhancement of democratic processes and the principle of rule of law in Vietnam. The long-term specific objective is to strengthen the constitutional role and functions of the National Assembly.

In terms of the overall objective the question is whether the project activities can contribute to a democratic process in Vietnam, and strengthen the role of the National Assembly in the overall government structure. (The question of relevance will be further addressed in Chapter 6.)

The last few years represent a continuous opening up of the political system in Vietnam. Not least has the parliament continued to strengthen its role and is today the only national body with some democratic legitimacy. Our impression is that, improvements especially have happened in some areas, such as the *rule of law*, where a reform process is in place also with foreign (incl. Swedish) assistance, including both the legal and administrative reform.

Especially looking at the National Assembly in the overall democracy process we note that *transparency* in the National Assembly activities has increased to some extent. The parliament is going more public, by improving work conditions for media, receiving school classes and other

study groups and providing information material, including an exhibition on the site of the Parliament, and a web-site. However, the debates are still not open to the general public, which is explained by logistic difficulties in the present Parliament building – a new one is being planned. The televising of some debates, including questioning of ministers, and inviting comments from citizens is presumably the single most important achievement in this regard.

The National Assembly has since the 1990s gradually gained more power and influence over the legislation, and has become an important institution to enhance the principle of *rule of law*. The elected representatives can to a larger extent interpret Party policy, which has resulted in a larger degree of public scrutiny. In the law process, new law proposals are now subject to more intense debates before accepted by the National Assembly. Moreover the strengthening of the supervisory role over law implementation, through the development of a law on supervision is also promoting the rule of law. The opening up of the National Assembly to the public also promotes public knowledge of the law and law process. However, the executive powers are not truly separate from the legislative body. The supervisory system and role of the National Assembly is still too unclear and complex in order to safeguard an objective and transparent supervision.

The development and reform initiatives of the parliament are also promoting *accountability*, as ministers increasingly have to answer to the parliament. The autumn session 2001 of the National Assembly approved a law amendment allowing for a vote of non-confidence of ministers, if 20% of MPs forward a proposal to this effect. Although it is too early to determine the effect, the government ministers can in the future be held accountable to the National Assembly. Another element of strengthened accountability is the increased attention by the parliament to its supervisory role. However, this area seems still to be underdeveloped and complex with many actors involved.

When it comes to *representation* and *participation* a lot remains to be done. As described earlier the electoral process makes the members represent rather the Party elite and certain acknowledged interest groups than the general public. In this sense the government does not represent any evident political will manifested in the elections. Consequently the participation of the public in the political decision making process is limited. However it is to be expected that a greater openness and a freer political debate will promote more of a general interest and involvement in public affairs. This could in turn necessitate a development towards a more representative and participatory system, “step by step”.

To support the overall objective two areas have been prioritised in the co-operation – parliamentary supervision and public information. Now, looking at the different aspects of democracy, we can establish that the selected areas are key elements in strengthening the role of the National Assembly. The component of public information is directly supporting increased transparency and public openness in the National Assembly. The other component of Parliamentary supervision is promoting a more accountable system by aiming to improve the role of the National Assembly in supervising the law implementation; it is also strongly connected to strengthening the rule of law by improving the National Assembly capacity as a guardian of the law implementation. None of the activities has however been targeted to improve representation and participation.

We have seen the project activities as providing stimuli and a great deal of know-how to this process. The following discussions will reveal the accomplishment of the project activities in more detail.

5.4 Immediate objective 1: Improved professional skills of staff of ONA and some National Assembly deputies in supervision over law implementation.

5.4.1 Developments in the area of supervision

The parliamentary supervisory function is carried out by individual members of National Assembly and by the National Assembly committees. The Supreme Peoples Procuracy, a body under the National Assembly, supervises law implementation by government agencies. The 7 permanent Assembly committees carry out supervision in their respective area of responsibility. This implies that supervision of judicial institutions is the responsibility of the Law Committee of the National Assembly. Supervision is carried out through receiving reports from Government, interpellations and questions to ministers and through inspections.

The Mission was informed that the Department for Peoples Wills and Petitions within the ONA receives about 20 000 complaints annually. The complaints are first screened by the department and then forwarded to the relevant committees. Of those 20 000, about 40% concern land and housing issues and about 25% court cases. The various committees handle about 45% of all complaints. A member of the Standing Committee of National Assembly who has the specific task to deal with complaints and petitions manage the rest. Those complaints are forwarded to relevant government agency for action. Of the about 4000 cases that are forwarded to the Law Committee, only around 200 are individually handled. This is an indicator of the weakness of the current system.

A delegation from the Riksdag administration studied the system of parliamentary supervision in May 1999. The report provides an overview of the current situation of parliamentary supervision. It also identified a number of issues that should be addressed in the work to draft a new law on parliamentary supervision and recommended further studies of the Swedish institutions on parliamentary supervision namely the Ombudsman, the Constitutional Committee and the Parliamentary Auditors. The report stressed the importance of transparency to facilitate effective supervision by people, mass media and members of National Assembly.

The institutions and organisation of supervisory activities have remained almost unchanged during the project period. However, a draft has been prepared on a law on supervision but is still under consideration. The Mission was informed that a lively debate is going on about the supervisory role of National Assembly; many members of Parliament and staff of ONA have had the opportunity to observe different systems of supervision abroad through international exchange. Different opinions have emerged where some have stressed the role of National Assembly to supervise all aspects of society and the exercise of public power. Others have pointed at the need to focus on certain basic issues such as supervision of the government and the judiciary.

During the 10th session of National Assembly (autumn 2001) a number of changes have been made through amendments to the Law on Organisation of National Assembly. These changes are presumed to strengthen the capacity of National Assembly to exercise its supervisory function. A new committee will be established by dividing the current Law Committee into a Judiciary Committee with responsibility for supervision of the judiciary system and a Law Committee responsible for law making. A proposal to split the current Budget and Economy Committee into one Finance and Budget Committee and one Committee on Economy was turned down by the Assembly. The most significant changes resulting from the law amendment, is that the number of full time MPs will increase substantially from 35 to 125 in the next Assembly, to be elected in April

2002. The Mission has, however, not been in a position to evaluate the likely impact these suggested changes would have on the supervisory function.

5.4.2 Project results

The immediate objective to improve professional skills of staff of ONA and some MPs was planned to be achieved through a number of outputs: development of a skills training program, facilitation of production of a law on supervision, development of a computer application to facilitate supervision of issuance of legal documents by other agencies than the National Assembly. In the following an account and an assessment will be made of what has been accomplished so far by the project.

Output 1.1 Organising and effective functioning of a program for skills training relating to supervision over law implementation.

The activities agreed upon in the project document to produce this output, comprised of studies on the current situation of law implementation, conducting a series of seminars, study tours to Sweden and other countries and scholarships for Vietnamese officials to learn about supervisory activities in Sweden and other countries.

Of the planned activities most of the seminars have been implemented as well as a number of study tours. A few delays in the activities have occurred.

The two main target groups of the project, members of parliament and staff of ONA have participated in these activities. Each seminar has commonly had about 60 participants and each study tour about 10.

In the seminars Swedish experts have participated and provided knowledge primarily on the Swedish system and experiences. Vietnamese experts have similarly provided knowledge on the Vietnamese system. The speeches by the different experts have been collected in seminar proceedings, and summary report has been submitted to Sida. The delegations of each study tour have prepared reports on their experiences.

Assessment

Presuming that a training program includes a continuous process of skill learning targeted to meet identified needs, no training program on supervisory skills has yet been organised by the ONA. The formulation in the project document may, however, not have reflected what the parties actually intended to achieve. It rather seems as if the series of seminars conducted have been perceived as constituting the training program. Of the planned activities, the activity focusing on studies of the current situation of law implementation has not been implemented to the extent the project document envisages. The study by Swedish experts, referred to above, is the only action that may be referred to this activity. Neither have any scholarships to Sweden and other countries focusing specifically on supervision been implemented. However, an additional study tour for MPs was organised to replace the planned scholarships.

An explanation the Mission would suggest for the shortage of an established training program is that the seminar and study tour program has absorbed the capacity of the project parties. The need to conceptualise and enhance knowledge and understanding of supervision and the role of National Assembly has dominated the perception of what the situation demanded. The more in-depth investigations and analyses required to actually design a skills training program have therefore not received the attention the project document envisaged.

However, the study tours and seminars are widely perceived as having been very useful for the development of the supervisory function by providing new ideas and useful knowledge in the area. Presentations and discussions on the Swedish model of parliamentary supervision, serve as a tool in the internal reform initiatives and changes taking place without external participation. The debate referred to above has been facilitated by the project activities and the steps to be taken shortly to strengthen the capacity of National Assembly through establishing new committees and increasing the number of fulltime MPs will definitely impact positively on the supervision of law implementation as well as the protection of citizens rights.

Output 1.2 Facilitation of the law on supervision

To produce this output three activities were planned according to the project document. First, local and foreign experts would be fielded to give advice on drafting the bill, secondly, reference books were to be procured and thirdly, special seminars were to be held on the draft bill.

As to date, no local and foreign experts have been engaged through the project to assist in the drafting and no seminars have been reported as carried out. There was a readiness on the part of the Riksdag Administration to supply an expert to assist in the drafting. This opportunity was, however, not utilised by the ONA. However, a book on the Ombudsman has been translated as well as a book on the Russian legal system, and a number of reference books have been purchased.

Assessment

The Mission was informed that the Swedish institutions of Constitutional Committee, Ombudsman and Parliamentary Auditors have been much debated and that a development in this direction may emerge. However, the capacity in terms of qualified staff and funding poses obstacles to actually take more decisive steps in this direction. Strengthening of the supervisory function has to be done in a long-term perspective where institutional and organisational reforms have to go hand in hand.

As mentioned above, a law on parliamentary supervision has actually been drafted without international assistance. The draft is still under consideration, but expected to be discussed in the next session of the National Assembly. The draft was not available for review by the Mission. Its likely impact on parliamentary supervision, if enacted, can therefore not be assessed.

The more focused studies of parliamentary supervision that were envisaged never took off as planned. At hindsight it seems plausible that the project parties underestimated the time required to create the prerequisites for development and enactment of a law on supervision. The capacity of the ONA and the PMU to actually organise these types of activities may also explain why these activities were cancelled. Another or additional explanation may be found in the way the project parties perceive their roles in a project of this nature. The dominating activities of the project – seminars and study tours – are means to provide new knowledge and experiences on principles and solutions. The development of concrete solutions for the National Assembly may have been seen as a task of ONA, and not as a joint task of the project parties.

Output 1.3 Development of a new computer application of the legal database to support supervision and scrutiny of legal documents issued by other agencies.

To achieve this output it was envisaged to contract a programmer to develop the application and to train staff in its use. Procurement of software is now in its final stage.

Assessment

During the project period the development of IT support for the operations of ONA and member delegations of provinces has continued. An Intranet has been established providing access to the

Legal database and facilities for internal communication within ONA and between ONA and member delegations. Although, initially supported by Sweden through the IPU, the continuous development of the Legal database and the IT systems has not been part of the project except for computer support for public information. A related project funded by Danida and executed by UNDP have supported IT development. Danida now runs this project on a bilateral basis and IT development constitutes an important component of this project. The development of IT support in the legal sector has been very dynamic during the project period with different actors involved such as the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Government. Development of an appropriate solution for the ONA therefore had to be co-ordinated with other development activities. Expertise from the Riksdag Administration has been involved in the process. This explains the delay in the implementation of this activity.

5.5 Immediate objective 2: Improved public access to information about the National Assembly and its activities

5.5.1 Developments in the area of public information

The tenure of the current National Assembly started in 1997. Since then the provision of information about the National Assembly and the access of the public to information has improved in many areas. Previously the ONA only had a mandate to provide information services directly to the MPs during and between the parliamentary sessions. The significant changes that the Mission has identified are the following.

The most appreciated change is the live broadcasting of National Assembly sessions through TV and radio that were introduced in 1998. In particular the live broadcasting of sessions where ministers answer questions from MPs is held as a major achievement. These features are considered to have improved the quality of information provided by Government to the National Assembly and to the public considerably. The Mission was informed that this assessment is supported by viewer surveys showing a great interest in these programs. Live interviews with MPs during the ongoing sessions are now a regular feature in news programs and programs on socio-economic issues.

According to Press Service division, its activities have increased substantially during the last few years. The division now issues press statements continuously during the National Assembly sessions and between sessions the Standing Committee and other committees issue press releases. A press centre has been set up where journalists can follow the proceedings of National Assembly through TV. Journalists get access to documents and minutes of the discussions and can access the Intranet system through facilities at the press centre. The Press Service now also organises meetings between journalists and MPs and facilitates TV and radio broadcasted programs on special issues where MPs participate.

The National Assembly, previously a closed institution, is now more accessible to the public. The concept of public information has also been widely accepted by the National Assembly, including the development of a new attitude towards more openness in informing about the tasks and responsibilities of the National Assembly. As a result of the new approach, schools and students from Universities have been invited to attend the National Assembly and the general public can follow the sessions on TV at the Information House/Museum established close to the Ba Dinh Palace where the Assembly sessions take place. During the parliamentary sessions the Press Service organise a hot line through which people can ask questions to MPs. The plan to set up an information house in Ho Chi Minh City materialised in the end of 2001.

The establishment of a website is regarded as a major achievement by the ONA. The website provide basic information about the role and organisation of the National Assembly. It contains linkages to a database with information of each member as well as a link to the Legal database. Through the website it is possible to get information on the agenda of the National Assembly and its Standing Committee. The Vietnamese website is updated daily with news and press statements. However, the English website is static. Lack of capacity for timely translation is said to be the bottleneck.

The importance of reaching out with information on the National Assembly to the young generation through the school system has been recognised. However, no changes have yet occurred in the school curricula and there is no information material yet that is tailor made for schools to use in the civic education.

5.5.2 Project results

The immediate objective was planned to be achieved through improved press service, development of an information policy, improved accessibility to parliamentary information, and the establishment of educational programs for the schools and training and exchange of experience.

Output 2.1 Developed service to and relationship with press and news agencies

The output was planned to be achieved through visits to other countries in order to study the relationship between parliaments and media and by designing a model of effective press service and provision of required equipment.

The project funded a study tour by four staff members of ONA to Australia in January 2001 and provided some IT equipment to be used in the press centre to facilitate communication with mass media.

Assessment

The improvements of the press service as noted above is a result of several activities conducted to improve public information, this project being one. However, the specific contribution of the activities under this output cannot be verified. It is unclear what a model of effective press service would include and how such a model would distinguish itself from a written information policy.

Output 2.2 Developed public information policy

By a study tour to Sweden a seminar on public information and the production of information material in form of books, video films, leaflets etc this output would be produced according to the project document.

Both the seminar and the study tour have been conducted. A history book on the National Assembly from 1946–1960 has been published as well as a CD Rom on the National Assembly history. However, no written and approved information policy is yet available.

Assessment

It is unclear whether the output should be interpreted to be a written information policy. However this would have been a natural outcome of the activities. Regardless of this observation it is obvious that the activities conducted have had a profound effect on the development of public information and the attitudes towards public information both among MPs and ONA staff. It is likely that the changes reported above are a result, not only of these activities, but also of the aggregated impact the study tours and seminars have had. It is, of course, impossible to distinguish the impact this

project has had from other influences but it is obvious that the study tours to the Riksdag have been of great importance.

Output 2.3 A developed connection between internal and external information system and the accessibility of parliamentary information

This output was planned to be achieved by provision of books and PCs to some fulltime MPs and ONA staff, development of the website, training to use the Intranet and the setting up of two information rooms, one in Hanoi and one in HCMC.

The provision of equipment has been limited to printers for the Intranet and to IT equipment for the information house in Hanoi. The main achievement is the establishment of the website. The project has contributed to this by assisting with two Swedish experts in June 2000 to develop the website and through the support to training in Australia of 3 ONA staff in January 2000. Local training of 16 ONA staff on the use of the Intranet was carried out early in 2001. The information house has been set up in Hanoi.

Assessment

The establishment of the website is definitely a major contribution by the project. It is dynamic as regards the Vietnamese version but further developments have to take place before it reaches its full potential as an information channel. The English version is not regularly updated and therefore static. ONA is well aware of the situation but lacks capacity to address the problem.

The Swedish experts, in their report, pointed out the need to review the organisation of website management. The link between units responsible for information and the unit responsible for the technical aspects would need to be reviewed. The further development and management of the website is only one part of the continued application of IT at the ONA. The comprehensive needs assessment of IT development carried out by the Danida/UNDP project in late 2000 could serve as a basis for establishing a detailed development plan for IT where priorities are made regarding technical improvements as well as development of management capacity.

The information house in Hanoi should rather be called Museum, which actually is the Vietnamese name. It is mainly presenting the history of the National Assembly and gives little information about the present work and functions. The development of the Museum into an information house that can supply up to date information and operate as an active informer to the public has yet to take place. The concept of an information house in the sense of an easy accessible and active provider of information to the public is appreciated by ONA. The Mission was informed that this is the ultimate objective. The explanation provided for the priority given to the build up of a museum was that the capacity to develop an information house is limited due to shortage of funds and staff with required capability.

Output 2.4 Educational program for schools

The activities planned to achieve this output comprised seminars, study tours, production of training materials and equipment for pilot schools and a follow up activity to evaluate educational programs.

Implementation started with a seminar in Hanoi in the autumn of 2000. In September/October 2001, two study tours to Sweden were carried out by delegations of teachers, MPs and ONA staff. Two brochures about the National Assembly, one targeting the adults and the other school children are now available in drafts. The strategy to introduce educational programs for schools is still under consideration.

Assessment

The idea to introduce educational programs for schools is new and emanates from the co-operation with the Riksdag administration. School curricula do not include topics on National Assembly. However, within civic education there is possibility to include such a topic.

The project has pioneered the idea and a foundation has been laid for further development in the field. The time it takes to conceptualise and outline a strategy for development and implementation of educational programs seems to have been underestimated in the original plan. The late start of activities has also contributed to the fact that production of information material not yet has commenced. The lack of suitable information material is, naturally, a bottleneck for wider dissemination of knowledge on National Assembly.

Output 2.5 Education and practical exchange of experience

This output is supposed to be produced through a collection of unrelated activities, some of which actually supports the achievement of output 2.1–2.4. A group of 3 staff have been sent to Australia to study information activities and another group have been trained on designing websites.

The project has also funded the participation of three officials to attend an IULA conference in 2001.

Assessment

The planned activities have been implemented and have most likely had a positive impact as capacity building measures. However, from a project design point of view the activities should rather have been placed under other outputs.

5.6 Immediate objective 3: Improved research/library service

5.6.1 Developments in the area of research and library services

The research and library services have developed substantially during the last few years. The introduction of IT and the establishment of Intranet are the most significant developments that have enhanced the capacity to provide services. The unit responsible now has access to internet through which it can access information from other parliaments and international sources of information. It is linked to all major libraries in Hanoi. The library has acquired a substantial number of international publications.

Service to MPs and committees is provided through out the year. Currently about 100 research cases are processed every month in between National Assembly sessions. During sessions, pooling staff with the information division extends the research service. About 1000 questions are handled by this entity during the National Assembly sessions. The Unit now makes regular summaries of press coverage of National Assembly activities in Vietnam. Plans are underway to extend this service to cover ASEAN countries.

5.6.2 Project results

No specific outputs were formulated to achieve the objective. A number of activities were planned including study visits to the Riksdag, funding of scholarships for 4 MPs and 2 ONA to England and Australia for intense English training, funding of local training in English for 19 ONA staff and procurement of books and equipment for the library. All planned activities have been implemented although the time spent on visits and scholarships have been shorter than originally envisaged.

Assessment

The project inputs have undoubtedly contributed to a positive development of the capacity to provide research and library services. In particular, the visits to Sweden have provided a model for the development of these types of services as witnessed by staff interviewed by the Mission. The keys to future development are gradual improvement of the competence of staff to undertake research and produce high quality answers to MPs and ONA staff and continuous development of IT infrastructure and tools and competence to utilise those tools. The demand of services is likely to expand substantially when the new Assembly has been elected in April 2002. The Mission has not been informed of any in-depth studies made of the likely implications of this expansion for the research and library services.

5.7 Mode of co-operation and project management

The formal arrangements for managing the project were described in chapter 3. The project organisation on the Vietnamese side follows a standard model adopted in Vietnam. For the Riksdag Administration, the project represents a new undertaking. The regular inter-parliamentary co-operation of the Riksdag Administration is normally not conducted on a long-term contractual basis but rather as an exchange between parliaments where joint activities are determined case by case. The setting up of a project management unit for this project was the first arrangement of this kind.

The co-operation is more of a co-operation between three parties, ONA, Riksdag Administration and Sida rather than a co-operation between the ONA and Riksdag Administration with Sida playing the role of financier only. This may be explained by the fact that the project is the first and still the only long-term project the Riksdag Administration has entered into. The Riksdag Administration does not look upon itself as a consulting organisation operating on commercial terms. To enter into a contractual relationship with ONA was therefore not a viable option when the co-operation started. Sida therefore had to establish working relationships with both parties. The role of Sida Stockholm is limited to payment of invoices from the Riksdag Administration and of being a speaking partner to the project manager of Riksdag Administration. In Vietnam the Swedish Embassy/Sida has taken upon itself to assist in disbursing funds to the PMU for goods and services procured by the unit. The volume of this service has exceeded what was anticipated during the project planning stage. The constraints regarding administrative arrangements the two institutions are subject to seem to exclude other models of co-operation than the model chosen.

On the whole the co-operation between the parties seem to have run quite smoothly as regards planning and implementation of most agreed activities. A problem mentioned by the Swedish side has been the rather frequent changes in timing of agreed activities.

Until June 2001, the project had spent almost 70% of the funds allocated which also indicate reasonable efficiency in implementation. The expenditure accounts provided the Mission are shown in the table below.

Purpose of spending	Total	Riksdag Administration	Sida/Swedish Embassy	ONA
Supervision	313 042	192 481	76 620	43 940
Public information	169 282	46 053	113 251	9 978
Library and research	64 831	6 813	57 917	100
Others	388 046	289 492	82 270	16 285
Total	935 201	534 840	330 058	70 303

Table 5.7.1 Project expenditure as per 2001-06-30 in USD

The table indicates that the Riksdag Administration has spent less than envisaged in the contract with Sida. This is due to the fact that certain activities requiring Swedish experts have not been carried out and also by the fact that the Riksdag Administration has abstained from invoicing personnel costs for its own staff. The personnel costs of the project can therefore mainly be referred to project management and the technical assistance in terms of provision of expertise has therefore been very cost effective.

The “hesitation” on the part of the Riksdag Administration to compensate personnel costs from the project budget can probably be explained by the perception of the co-operation as a mutual exchange of experiences rather than as a consultancy relationship.

5.8 Results of questionnaire survey

A survey (annex 2) was carried out to provide information from a large number of the project target group. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on whether the project have a) provided new ideas and knowledge to the staff of ONA and Members of Parliament, and, b) been useful/applicable to the current activities within the ONA and National Assembly. The questionnaire was distributed by random selection to 50 percent of the staff of ONA and Members of Parliament whom have participated in one or more activities. The response rate of MPs was 71 percent and 60 percent for ONA staff providing an overall response rate of 64 percent. Although the number of responses is at the low side, the spread in the opinions are in general low. We therefore presume the results are reliable and present the general perception of the target group.

	Distribution	Response
Members of NA	49	35
Staff of ONA	112	68
Total	161	103

Table 5.8.1: Frequencies of distribution and response to the Questionnaire

Result

The first part of the survey address whether the activities have provided new ideas and new knowledge in the field of supervision and public information. The majority of the participants have indicated that the activities to some extent have contributed to new ideas and knowledge in the areas. The distribution is similar for both the staff of ONA and the MPs, although slightly more positive from the member of staff. The same pattern occurs when compared to fulfilment of expectations. The overall impression of the project activities is positive and complies with the observations made by the mission.

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
Get new ideas	Very large extent		1,5%	1,0%
	Large extent	24,2%	31,3%	29,0%
	Some extent	75,8%	67,2%	70,0%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 5.8.2 Project contributions to new ideas and new knowledge

The analysis shows a more diverse picture in the perceptions on whether the activities have been useful/applicable to the current activities within the ONA and National Assembly. The majority from both groups reply the activities have been useful to some extent. As could be expected with regard to the objectives of the project, more staff of the ONA than MPs has to a large extent been able to use the new ideas and information in their work. A small group have had limited use of the information. There is a tendency towards setting more positive value in this category when the respondents have participated in more than two activities.

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
Use ideas	Very large extent		1,5%	1,0%
	Large extent	9,4%	24,2%	19,4%
	Some extent	81,3%	66,7%	71,4%
	Limited extent	9,4%	7,6%	8,2%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 5.3 Usefulness of project activities

Turning to the specific project areas, the majority of the participants have the impression the activities have contributed to clarify the supervisory role of the National Assembly, but are more restrictive to assert the project have changed the supervisory role of the Assembly. The result can possibly be confirmed also by the character of the project activities, mainly providing know-how in the area of supervision as compared to problem solving activities.

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
Clarified supervisory role	Very large extent		1,7%	1,1%
	Large extent	31,3%	25,4%	27,5%
	Some extent	65,6%	66,1%	65,9%
	Limited extent	3,1%	6,8%	5,5%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 5.8.4 Project contributions to clarify the supervisory role of the NA

In the assessment of the present capacity of ONA to give the public access to information about the role of the National Assembly, the majority consider the capacity as high or very high, while around 30 percent regard it as low or have not answered the question. More staff of ONA assessed the present capacity as very high in the survey. Regarding the outcome of the project activities in this area, the majority of the participants believe the project activities to a large extent or some extent have contributed to giving the public more knowledge about the National Assembly. The majority also believe the capacity of ONA to provide this service has improved significantly in the current tenure of the National Assembly. The mission has observed the most visible results in this area, such as, televised National Assembly session, establishment of a web site and an information house.

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
More public knowledge	Very large extent	3,4%		1,1%
	Large extent	37,9%	28,3%	31,5%
	Some extent	55,2%	65,0%	61,8%
	Limited extent	3,4%	6,7%	5,6%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 5.8.5 Project contributions to give the public more knowledge of the NA

Related to the capacity of ONA to provide information services to the MPs in and outside session, all the MPs assess the capacity to have improved substantially during current tenure of the National Assembly. On the whole, most of the MPs also consider the support provided by ONA to have met their expectations.

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
ONA MP info capacity changed	No change		1,6%	1,0%
	Slightly improved	6,3%	20,3%	15,6%
	Substantially improved	93,8%	78,1%	83,3%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 5.8.6 Change of the capacity of ONA to provide services to the MPs

General Assessment

The result of the questionnaire survey supports the findings based on interviews and document review in the report, and confirms the assessments made under each immediate objective. There is in general a low discrepancy in the values of the answers. Majority of the responses are placed within the mid-value, resulting in a relatively unanimous picture. However participants whom have taken part in more than two activities tend to be more positive to the contribution of the project activities. There is also a slightly more positive response from participants whom have taken part in study tours. This can be explained by the fact that for many participants the activities have just been a one-time acquaintance with the project, which make it difficult to assess the value of the project as a whole.

5.9 Other on-going projects

Parallel to the Riksdag Administration – ONA project, three other projects are on going. Canadian CIDA is funding a Policy Implementation Assistance Project, PIAP, Danida is funding a project intended to “strengthen the National Assembly as the policy – and law – making entity in the political system” and UNDP, funded by Danish trust fund, is assisting ONA in “strengthening representative bodies with focus on Provincial People’s Committees”.

5.9.1 PIAP

This project was initiated already in 1996 and ended a first phase in July 2001. The second phase will last until 2005. The purpose of the project is to assist in policy formulation and implementation.

Two National Assembly Committees, the Law Committee and the Social Affairs Committee, are the direct beneficiaries. Support is channelled direct to these committees and is based on annual work programs agreed between the chairmen of the two committees and the project operator of CIDA. The project management unit of ONA is not managing the project. A total of MUSD 1,4 is allocated for the second phase

The project is funding study tours, domestic workshops and visiting Canadian experts who may conduct seminars and participate in workshops. Study tours have been done to several countries in the region including China and to Canada. The project has e.g. assisted the Social Affairs Committee during the last three years in studying social security and social insurance issues. The Law Committee has been supported in studies on law supervision and inspection.

5.9.2 Danida

From mid 2001, Danida is funding a bilateral project in support of ONA, Supreme People's Court (SPC) and Supreme People's Procuracy (SPP). A Joint Project Support Office with a Chief legal advisor is managing the project on behalf of Danida. Within ONA a Project Management Unit manages the project.

The project is a continuation of a project supporting the same institutions through UNDP (VIE 95/016-017-018) with Danida funding. The UNDP project, which started in 1997, focused on English and IT training, development of information technology and training in various fields through workshops and study tours to several countries in Asia and Europe.

The recently started bilateral project covers four main areas: parliamentary procedures, legal capacity building, communication and information technology and English language training. A total amount of about 1,8 MUSD is allocated for a three-year period. A detailed work plan has not yet been agreed upon and therefore the emphasis on the different components is yet to be clarified.

Two studies were made as preparatory activities for the project. One study outlines an IT strategy for the three institutions and the other study investigated training needs.

5.9.3 UNDP/Danish Trust Fund

The project commenced in early 2000 with the purpose to strengthen representative bodies with focus on Provincial People's Councils. The project will be completed by mid 2002 and has a budget of about 1,3 MUSD. The project is managed by the Project Management Unit of ONA and is assisted by an international Chief technical advisor.

The project is the first ever in Vietnam focusing on People's Councils. Three pilot provincial councils have been selected towards which activities have been directed. The main components of the project are to a conduct opinion surveys in the pilot provinces, improve the flow of information between National Assembly and the Provincial Councils, train councillors and conduct seminars on certain topics such as budget scrutinising and supervision. The project has provided IT equipment and data- links between the pilot councils and ONA and trained staff and council members. Study tours have been conducted i.a. to Australia and New Zealand. Contacts have been established with IULA and Vietnam is currently considering membership in IULA.

The need to train council members have been recognised and a feasibility study is currently being conducted on how to meet the training needs of councillors at the various local levels in the future. The option of setting up a training resource centre within ONA is being considered. Such a centre would be responsible for training of National Assembly deputies as well as People's Council members.

Assessment

The on-going projects have many similarities. Capacity building is a common denominator and the target groups are largely the same. Whereas the Canadian project only supports two National Assembly committees with the MPs as target group, Sida and Danida supported projects focus on both MPs and ONA staff. The primary target group of the UNDP project is councillors of three provincial councils but also ONA staff.

All projects have mainly provided opportunities for the target group to acquire new knowledge, in particular about the role and operations of parliaments in the region and in the industrialised western countries. The National Assembly and the ONA through these projects gathered a considerable amount of knowledge on comparative parliamentary systems. A question for the future is whether a continued focus on gathering comparative knowledge will bring value added to the capacity of National Assembly and ONA?

The projects have also contributed to the development of IT and financed English training for a substantial number of ONA staff and MPs. This has obviously had a great impact on capacity development. The ability to communicate in English has become a crucial skill, necessary for the co-operation within AIPO and IPU and for access to information through Internet.

The overlap between the activities of the projects seems to have been modest so far. However the competition of access to the primary target groups cannot be ruled out. The frequent changes in time schedules, mentioned above, indicate that there is a limit to which MPs and ONA staff can make themselves available for project activities.

The knowledge of the foreign partners about each other's activities does not seem to have been promoted systematically. The PMU has co-ordinated the different projects without providing the parties with overviews of the on-going activities and project plans.

The interest in supporting the National Assembly is growing in the donor community. Recently an agreement was reached with the German Bundestag on exchange of experience between the two parliaments. Through contact with IPU (Mr Anders Johnsson, Secretary General) in Geneva, the Mission learnt that discussions are under way between IPU and the National Assembly about renewed support directed towards the area of supervision. ONA and UNDP are also planning to field a mission to look into the possibilities of future continued co-operation and ONA is actively seeking funding to continue the work to strengthen the representative bodies of local governments.

It seems, to the Mission, that the time has come to develop a new approach to co-ordination of the various projects. A partnership model, of similar type that has been applied in the legal reform work and that is planned for the support to administrative reform, could, for example, be developed for support to National Assembly.

6 Overall assessment

6.1 Overall project relevance

To determine the project relevance in terms of the overall objective, the outcome rely on whether there is any democratic process to support, in the meaning of a development towards a more democratic society.

We have noted in chapter 4 that there are a number of ways in which the present system of government in Vietnam falls short of what, in Sweden and broadly by the international community, is seen to be fundamental to a functioning democracy as no real alternatives to the ruling party can be presented to the electorate. The voters are not free to elect their representatives of their own choice and no real alternatives to the ruling party policies can be presented to the electorate. There are also restrictions to the freedoms of opinion and expression and independent media do not exist. There is furthermore, as mentioned, no expressed intention of the leadership to change that situation. Therefore there is reason to question whether there is any “democratic process” in Vietnam to enhance.

In spite of these shortcomings we find there are reasons to conclude that there are possibilities to promote a democratic development in Vietnam. Even if there is no declared intention to systemic change, changes occur through the many reform processes currently taking place in Vietnam. And although relatively on a small scale, more transparency and publicity, a more open public debate, more focus on parliamentary supervision of the executive create a dynamism that obviously is seen as necessary and welcomed by many, if not necessarily by all. The liberalisation of the economy is an important driving factor

These visible changes and ongoing reforms can be interpreted as a transition process, in the sense that we can observe changes also in the political procedures that determine the distribution of powers. The parliament has gained more formal powers through the Constitutional changes, and also through the new organisational structure that will increase the number of full time parliamentarians. This will certainly create a more efficient parliament with improved capacity in key areas such as law making and supervision. A coming new law on supervision would add to this development situation. There is no doubt the parliament plays a very active and important role in a democratisation process. Indeed, although division of power as conceptualised by Montesquieu is not part of the official ideology of Vietnam, the Parliament is increasingly assuming the role of a “peoples tribune” in the government structure, and a platform for political debate.

6.2 Results Analysis

6.2.1 Overall objectives

Establishing that there is a democratic process to support, the analysis turn to the specific long-term objective. Is the support and selected areas of co-operation contributing to strengthening the constitutional role and functions of the National Assembly?

Supervision and public information are key areas of the parliamentary functions in a democratic system. The National Assembly holds the constitutional power to supervise the law implementation

of the government bodies. However, the capacity of the committees to perform their supervisory functions have been characterised as low. The project has contributed to raise awareness of the importance of parliamentary supervision by presenting and explaining the practice of the Swedish system. This has presumably generated new ideas and expertise for the National Assembly and its internal development. In this respect, the Mission was informed that the Swedish system have been frequently debated in the committees. Since the implemented activities mainly have focused on the transfer of know-how, it is difficult to measure the impact of the project. However, the current development of a draft law on supervision and a new organisation is strengthening the supervisory role of the National Assembly, and the project activities have most likely contributed to this.

Looking at other on-going projects within the National Assembly confirms the importance given to, and priority of, strengthening the supervisory role and information capacity within the National Assembly. Many ongoing and proposed projects have similar objectives.

Public information was a newly established function of the ONA at the time the project was initiated and is today a vital tool for dissemination of knowledge about the role and work of the National Assembly. Improving public access to information and proceedings of the National Assembly has a major influence on transparency and accountability, and also for the general understanding of the political system. The impact of the project can be most clearly recognised in the development of a website and the establishment of a public information house.

The conclusion is that the selected areas of co-operation are highly relevant in order to strengthen the role of the National Assembly. There are, however, vital areas still to be focused upon in order to improve the constitutional functions of the National Assembly. These areas will be further discussed in chapter 6 under “recommendations”.

6.2.2 Immediate objectives

The immediate objectives set for the project are ambitious and some outputs not clearly defined in the project document. The reason for this might be explained by the lack of baseline data and comprehensive studies at the initial stage of the co-operation. The lack of indicators of achievement of the immediate objectives indicates that the project parties did not pay enough attention to the formulation of objectives. However, the immediate objectives are relevant in connection with the overall objectives. The analysis provided in chapter 4 shows that there has been a development in all areas of co-operation and that the project has contributed to this development. The extent of contribution of the project cannot be measured. In the view of the Mission, the evidence provided indicates that the project has been reasonably efficient in achieving its objectives.

6.3 Efficiency and cost effectiveness

On the whole, project activities have been implemented efficiently. However there have been delays and certain activities have not been implemented as intended at the start of the project.

The review made of project expenditure indicates that the costs incurred have been rather modest especially as regards technical assistance. This is explained by the fact the expert inputs have been limited in terms of time and by the fact the Riksdag Administration has refrained from charging fees for its own experts. The reported costs of Riksdag Administration project management, which amount to about 25% of total project expenditure, seem to be reasonable given the fact that the Riksdag Administration does not cover its overhead expenditure by charging fees.

The nature of the project, where the primary aim has been to provide opportunities for exchange and sharing of experiences, have not made it possible to choose alternative ways of providing the same services. Given these circumstances the cost effectiveness is high compared to typical technical assistance projects. The unused funds allocated to the project have been caused by some activities not being implemented. The expenditures incurred for the final half year of the project for which accounts not yet are available will most likely result in a reasonable utilisation of the total budget. It should be born in mind that the original allocation was agreed upon without detailed cost estimates having been done.

6.4 Mode of co-operation

The Mission has the impression that the project parties may have had different expectations on the role each party was supposed to play in the co-operation. From the side of Sida the project was perceived as an institutional co-operation of sister institutions where the two co-operating institutions would gradually develop the project content and deepen the co-operation from the level of exchange of experience to joint problem solving. The Riksdag Administration would develop a consulting role.

From the side of the Riksdag Administration, the role of facilitator of exchange between parliaments is familiar, whereas the role of acting as a consultant in joint problem solving is unfamiliar and even questionable. Also from the side of ONA it seems as the expectations have been that the project should provide knowledge inputs to facilitate conceptualisation of development options in the agreed subject areas. A deeper involvement in long-term development activities by the Riksdag Administration does not seem to have been expected during this phase.

However, in a project of this nature the Mission would have expected the parties to review the project document thoroughly after the first year to analyse the achievements in relation to the objectives and to review the coherence and realism of planned outputs and activities. This has not been done as far as the Mission has observed. The absence of this kind of follow up indicates that the parties have regarded the project document as unchangeable. In a development project of this kind the experiences gained and the new circumstances that arise should be reflected in critical review of objectives outputs and activities and affect the plans made. The absence of this type of critical review may explain why certain outputs have remained whereas activities to achieve the output have been cancelled.

Another explanation why more long term development oriented activities – such as envisaged studies – not have been implemented may be found in a lack of readiness on the part of both parties to involve in such activities or that the more hands on activities, seminars and study tours, have fully absorbed the capacity of ONA and Riksdag Administration. If the latter explanation were valid it would indicate that there is a limit for the involvement of ONA staff and expertise from the Riksdag Administration in activities requiring active participation in several consecutive activities over a longer period of time.

The Mission has been explicitly asked to assess whether the co-operation model called “Contract Financed Technical Co-operation” (CFTC) would be applicable in a possible continued co-operation between Riksdag Administration and ONA. Contract Financed Technical Co-operation is based on the assumption that two parties, one in Sweden and one in a developing country, agree in a contract to jointly carry out a co-operation programme aiming at institutional, systems and human resource development. Sida is not a party to either side in the co-operation but accepts,

through exchange of letters, with the aid co-ordinating agency in the recipient country to fund the Swedish technical input. The party of the recipient country is supposed to finance all local costs in execution of the project. Equipment is normally not funded. There is no disbursement of funds from Sida to the recipient party. Sida's role in project implementation is limited to pay invoices from the Swedish partner. Sida, of course, also have the role of controller of results and cost effectiveness.

Any future co-operation between Riksdag Administration and ONA is likely to include components of study tours and scholarships abroad, not only to Sweden, as well as local costs for seminars, local field activities and equipment. Therefore, to apply the model, ONA would have to mobilise local funding of activities that until now have been financed by Sida or Riksdag Administration would have to shoulder the responsibility of administering all activities of a project and be reimbursed by Sida according to Sida's funding commitment. The latter solution is being applied in some cases of CFTC, where the recipient party lack financial capacity. In such cases the Swedish party makes arrangement to pay local costs, pay for air tickets and similar, that otherwise would have been done by the recipient party.

The arrangements in the current project limit the administrative responsibility of Riksdag Administration to administer its own inputs into the co-operation. A CFTC arrangement of the normal type would hardly satisfy the needs of ONA. A CFTC arrangement with additional administrative responsibilities of Riksdag Administration would imply that Riksdag Administration has to build up its administrative capacity for this purpose. This would turn Riksdag Administration into an "exporter of consultancy services" similar to Swedish Government agencies involved in such business.

The Missions conclusion is that CFTC model hardly can be applied without modifications. In a continued co-operation between Riksdag Administration and ONA, a tailor made solution to the administrative issues should be worked out which satisfies the specific requirements of Riksdag Administration as well as the needs of ONA.

6.5 External factors

The project has operated in a political, legal environment that has been increasingly conducive to pursuing the project objectives. No real constraints have been encountered of a political or legal nature to implement the planned activities. The constraints have rather been of the nature discussed above. However, at the level of the overall project objective – to enhance democratic processes – it is clear that the project parties do not have fully congruent views on what constitute democratic processes. This obviously makes it difficult to formulate a clear overall and long-term objective for the project.

The Mission has not been able to get a clear view on the extent to which other on-going projects have posed constraints on the implementation of this project. On the whole the on-going projects seem to complement each other. However, the Danida funded project to "strengthen the National Assembly as the policy and law making entity in the political system" includes planned activities in the field of parliamentary procedures, legal training, communication and information, including IT development and English training. The project has recently started and when and if a continued Swedish support is considered it is necessary to take into account the development of the Danida funded project to avoid unnecessary duplication and competition over ONA capacity and to explore possible synergetic effects of the projects.

6.6 Sustainability

A strength of the project is the close relation to the operative work of especially CIRLS. The ideas and solutions provided through the project have, when found suitable, been integrated into the regular operations. In the field of public information several changes of this kind have taken place as noted above. Sustainability is secured in these cases.

It is more difficult to assess sustainability in other areas where the development is at a conceptual level. Increased awareness and knowledge is a prerequisite for development and change. It is impossible at this stage of the co-operation to foresee what kind of future developments that may be attributed to this project. The likelihood of sustained impact will naturally increase if the project continues by maintaining activities of information and orientation through exchange of experiences and at the same time develop interventions that are more focussed and development oriented.

6.7 Gender

The project has not had a specific gender focus. The project documents and analysis have not included gender awareness. However, it can be noted that there has been a high representation of women in the seminar activities. The women representation in leadership positions in committees and departments is low, and will in itself pose an obstacle to a more balanced gender representation. In chapter 7, we attempt to give some recommendations as how to promote gender awareness in the future.

7 Recommendations

7.1 General considerations

The first phase of the co-operation has focussed on information and supervision. It has mainly contained seminars, workshops and exposure visits with various themes, related to the two main headings, and with various participants. Some concrete results can be noted, but to a large degree the project activities have served as means of general information and orientation for the participating MP:s and staff members.

If the project shall continue with a second phase, three possible strategies can be considered.

1. An exchange programme, which provides parliamentarians and staff members from the two parliaments with opportunities to meet now and then for exchange of experience and joint workshops. Study visits to institutions of interest can be included in this programme. Themes can be determined in regard to the needs of the reform process of the Vietnamese Parliament. Intensity will depend on the time and recourses the two parliaments are prepared to put into the exchange. Depending on the level of ambition a special project organisation may not be needed.
2. A development programme based on what has been achieved in the current co-operation. In order to be meaningful such a programme must represent an elevation into something more targeted, focussed and thorough than what has been possible in the first phase. This implies a stronger involvement in problem solving activities where technical expertise from the parties work together. The consultancy role of Riksdag Administration will become more pronounced.
3. A third alternative could be a combination of 1 and 2. In such a format an exchange programme run by the two parliaments should be combined with a capacity building programme for the NA with a separate project administration. Co-ordination between the programmes should, on the Swedish side, be secured through a special co-ordinating committee with participation from the Riksdag, Sida and the project management of the capacity building programme. This programme could be managed and executed on a consultative basis, requiring competence in parliamentary procedures, management, organisational development and capacity building. It would also be of importance that the capacity building programme could benefit, based on case by case agreements, from the know-how in the Riksdag, both among members and staff.

The parliament is in a very interesting and important development. Under the previous speaker, (now Secretary General of the Communist Party) the Parliament took important steps to become more relevant to the general public and more important as a branch of Government. Some of these steps were closely linked to the ONA-Riksdag Administration project. There are all reasons to believe that the new speaker will follow up on the work to promote the popular relations and importance of the parliament.

A very important step to strengthen the role and capacity of the National Assembly is now taken by the current legislature by increasing the number of full time MP:s from 35 to 125 (out of 500) in the next legislature. The lack of time for MPs has been a serious problem in the strife to make parliamentary processes less summary and more penetrating and concrete. After the election on

May 19, 2002, the National Assembly will have a number of full time MPs equalling many highly “professional” parliaments in Europe and elsewhere.

To get maximum impact of this reform, however, form an enormous challenge. Parliamentary procedures must be revised. The support organisation needs to be assessed and strengthened. The new parliamentarians need training and so need the members of staff. In meeting those challenges, the National Assembly cannot only rely on experience of its own or on that of neighbouring countries. A continued and possibly deepened co-operation with the Riksdag Administration would have a potential to be of great importance.

There is therefore a case for selecting the second strategy - a development programme based on the experiences of the first phase. However, the implications for the Riksdag Administration of this strategy may be considered too demanding and not in line with the policy for international co-operation adopted by the Swedish Riksdag. It may therefore be necessary to find modalities for the co-operation that satisfy the needs of the National Assembly and at the same time are in line with the policy on international co-operation of the Riksdag, as presented in the third strategy. The project has contributed to building up capacity of the Riksdag Administration to manage long term co-operation. The capacity is apparent both in the international department of the Riksdag Administration and other departments, such as the department of information. This capacity represents a valuable base for the second phase.

In the following an inventory of possible themes of future co-operation will be presented. The inventory is based on proposals forwarded to the Mission and its own consideration of the development needs of the National Assembly and its office.

7.2 Possible themes for future co-operation – process oriented.

7.2.1 Organisation and management of National Assembly

There is an expressed need to continue to review the organisation and management of the National Assembly. In particular the increase of full time members will necessitate a review of organisation and working modalities of the parliament. The project has already addressed these issues in one seminar. The challenges ahead would make a continuation of this initial activity a natural theme of future co-operation.

7.2.2 The budgetary process

The budgetary process in the Parliament is now very summary. About a week is available, and only one of the committees is involved. In the new dispensation with much less time constraints a more normal budgetary process could be developed. This has however far-reaching consequences for the whole work of the Parliament, not least the committee structure, and also for the executive branch. One way to tackle this could be to set up a commission with MPs, representatives from the Executive side, normally Ministry for Finance and some experts including ONA. Sweden could assist with study visits, seminars and workshops about Swedish and other international models. If there is an interest, Sweden could possibly also provide expertise on a longer-term basis to assist the commission.

7.2.3 The law-making process and supervision

Supervision has been a major theme in the first phase. A law on supervision is in the making. However, there is a view expressed by many in the Parliament that even if a new legislation is

adopted within a near future, it will not necessarily provide a long-term solution. There would therefore be a case for continued work on the issue. One way to address these issues could be to set up a review committee, with the task to evaluate the present situation, looking deeper into foreign models including the Swedish Ombudsman, Riksdag Auditors and Constitutional Committee, and come forward with proposal. This would also provide an opportunity to address another need that has been pointed out to us – to develop a more systematic and thorough law-making process. Thus, the activities within this theme could be seen as a practical exercise in a “Swedish model” (common also elsewhere) with a review committee with parliamentarians and different stakeholder represented, a remittance of the report to all relevant stakeholders and expertise for comments, policy decision in cabinet, drafting, new cabinet decision and proposal to parliament, parliamentary process in portfolio committee and House. A possible Swedish contribution could be of the same kind as under 7.2.2.

7.2.4 Public and internal information

Further developing the information capacity is a priority area. Considerable progress can be noted during the period of the project with the Riksdag, but the capacity is still limited. The parliament is planning for new premises in a few years time and it would be of importance to develop a strategic plan to meet information needs, internal as well as external, in time to have an impact on the planning. In the short term there is also room for improvements in facilities to accommodate and inform representatives of media and public on the present premises, as well as further developing IT-media.

7.3 Possible themes for future co-operation – training.

7.3.1 Training for new parliamentarians

Training for new parliamentarians is a must in the new situation, and Swedish support for that would obviously be welcome. Examples of useful areas are: rights and responsibilities of an MP (based on the Constitution and Vietnamese and international experience), The structure of the Government of Vietnam, Parliamentary processes, Constituency relations, Supervision, International Co-operation, Economic and Social challenges for the Government of Vietnam, time management, basic computer skills, languages.

7.3.2 Management skills

There is an expressed wish to upgrade the skills of the ONA staff, especially to meet the new challenges posed by the rapid development of the parliamentary work. Indeed staff training must be seen as a necessary element so make any activities under 1–4 effective. Such training could include general management, parliamentary processes including budget and legislation processes, constitutional matters, and languages. We assume that special, subject oriented competence will be made available on an ad hoc basis by relevant Government organs, research institutions etc. However there is a need for a good general in-house know how in public affairs within the ONA.

7.4 Gender aspects

Gender considerations need to be accommodated. For instance the promotion of the underrepresented sex should be an element in all training programmes. The number of women in the National Assembly is high compared to many other parliaments. That can, to a large degree, be attributed to a strictly monitored nomination and electoral process. However women are still vastly

under-represented compared their share in the population. Experience from other countries also show that freer election often tend to lead to a decrease in female representation. There is also a tendency that female representation tends to decrease the higher you go in the political hierarchy. That is e.g. reflected in National Assembly in the composition of the Standing committee. Any training programme for parliamentarians should therefore look at the need to empower women in the political structure as well as vis à vis the electorate. In the same way management development within the ONA should have as an objective to promote the position of women within that office. Likewise gender concerns should be an important part of the Parliament supervision efforts.

7.5 Mode of co-operation

If the parties i.e. the National Assembly and the Riksdag would consider evolving the character of the co-operation along the line sketched out here, the administrative and partnership arrangements also need to be reviewed.

The first issue that the parties need to consider is the future involvement of active parliamentarians. Till now the project had been based on a co-operation between the administrative organs of the two parliaments. If in the future the exchange of experience between parliamentarians will play a more important role, the guidance of the project by parliamentarians (which at least on the Swedish side has been quite limited) should perhaps be strengthened.

The second issue that needs to be addressed is the choice of strategy. The first strategy would keep the future co-operation at the level of exchange of experience and with a level of involvement of the project parties similar to the current project. The second strategy outlined above implies a more targeted and “vertical” character, which would demand more of professional project management and specialised skills than would be seen as a natural part of the responsibilities of the International Department of the Riksdag. A choice of the second strategy could include activities of exchange of experience whereas a choice of the first strategy would exclude deeper interventions of a consultancy nature. Especially the areas under 7.3 are such that an operator with expert competence in training, public relations, communication and management could be considered. In view of the experience gained by the International department of the Riksdag through the current project, capacity to manage the second strategy could be created by the department. Should the Riksdag Administration find a choice of the second strategy incompatible with its policy on international co-operation the third alternative outlined under 7.1 could be considered.

The fact that the current project is a co-operation between two parliaments constitutes a considerable comparative advantage. Particular in areas under 7.2 the hands on knowledge and experiences that can be utilised make a partnership between the two Parliaments a superior arrangement. As concluded in the previous chapter, the Mission believes that tailor made administrative arrangements for the co-operation should be developed. This arrangement will depend on the choice or strategy that is made, essentially by the Swedish Riksdag.

7.6 Next step

A new phase of the project need to be preceded by a thorough project preparation exercise where alternative strategies are assessed and the level of ambition is determined. In view of the several on-going and planned projects and the growing interest in support to the National Assembly from different donors, it is necessary to design projects that are complementary to each other and that take into account the capacity of National Assembly to manage several projects. It is therefore

necessary also for the National Assembly and the engaged donor community to establish new forms for co-ordination and co-operation. A project preparation mission for a second phase should explore the possibilities of establishing a partnership between donors and the National Assembly for exchange of information and co-ordination of their respective projects. The possibilities of donors to pool their resources in certain areas should also be explored.

The project preparation mission should represent competence in parliamentary affairs, capacity building and project design and include expertise from the ONA and the Riksdag Administration. A first step in preparing for the future co-operation would be to make a deeper analysis of needs and assess the strategic options available. Based on decisions concerning strategy by the parties, detailed project design should commence. As to the timing of the mission, the first step should preferably be taken after the general elections in Vietnam and before the AIPO meeting in September 2002.

8 Lessons learned

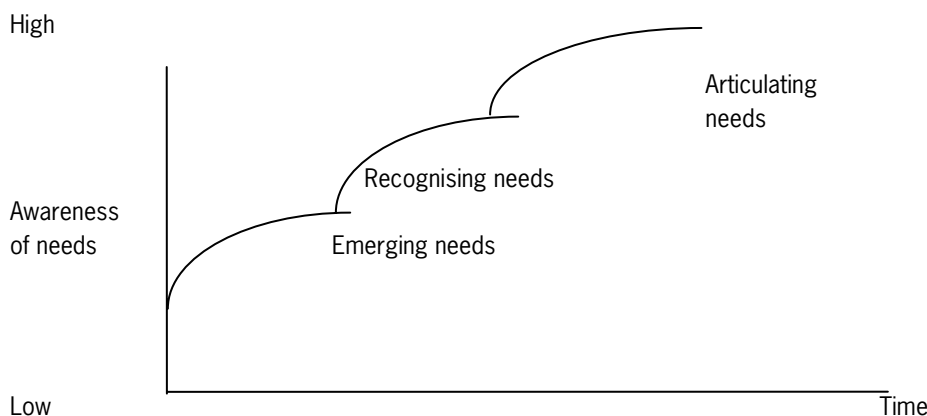
There are two aspects of this project that may be of interest for the parties: ONA, Riksdag Administration and Sida to reflect on for the future. First there is the question of development needs. How do needs become recognised? Under what circumstances are recognised needs addressed through concrete development actions? The second aspect concerns the roles the parties assume and the extent to which these roles are consciously chosen and mutually agreed upon. In the following we will provide some food for thought on those questions.

8.1 Awareness of development needs

Planned change always require people to be aware of the problems the organisation is facing or, in other words, people who are aware of the needs for change. This is a fundamental condition that has to be met.

Different levels of awareness can be described as shown in the figure below:

Awareness of needs



What this figure tells us is that the raising of awareness is a learning process, which takes the individual through different stages. At the first stage needs are *emerging* and the individual is getting aware of this fact. But at this stage the need is unclear. There may be many people in the surroundings that do not yet share the perception of the need. When the learning process continues, new information about the need is received and this may lead to a clear *recognition* that there is a need for change. However, at this stage the individual is still not fully aware of the problem/need and further learning is necessary. Not until the individual is capable of *articulating* the need can we expect the individual to start to act in order to solve the problem or to start a process of development.

In this project, the project document articulated development needs. As we have seen in the analysis above some needs were specific and clearly defined, others a bit vague opening for different interpretations. Even in some cases where rather specific needs were identified e.g. a law on supervision, a skills training programme, an information policy, these products remain to be produced. In applying this model to explain this finding we can conclude that the learning process is still going on. Even if there are individuals in the organisation that could articulate the needs, this

ability may not yet be a shared ability of all important stakeholders. Therefore they may not have been ready to move to the problem-solving phase that follows upon a shared and articulated problem identification. The awareness raising process in an organisation is naturally not homogenous. Some people become aware earlier than others do. The problem the project managers have to deal with is how to organise the learning process in order to facilitate for the stakeholders to raise their awareness, ability to articulate the needs and readiness to identify solutions. A possible conclusion, given the level of activity planned for in the project, is that the managers underestimated the time required for awareness raising and learning to realise these outputs.

However, the project format, dictated by the logical framework approach (LFA) assumes that the project owners are clear about the objectives. The awareness raising is supposed to be part of the project preparation phase not a result of project implementation. This is a dilemma for which no clear cut solution exist, but something that the project parties, including Sida as a financier requiring the LFA approach, need to be aware of and manage in the best possible way.

8.2 Roles of the co-operating partners

It is difficult to find evidence that the project parties consciously chose and mutually agreed upon the roles to be played in the project. The matrix below summarises a range of roles that can be played in a co-operative venture.

We can ask ourselves who is and who should be responsible for the growth of capacity? What responsibility has the provider of technical assistance and what responsibility has the receiver? Another question we can ask is; who is and who should be responsible for carrying out the project work and thus take responsibility for the results of the project in terms of new solutions or improved performance?

A TA provider can assume different roles or be given different roles by the recipient and thus shoulder different responsibility for capacity growth and project results. At one extreme the TA provider is carrying out all project work, as for instance is the case when a computer expert is developing specific software. The expert is fully responsible for producing the result, the software, but has no responsibility to enable the client to become a programmer.

At another extreme we have the situation where the TA provider is more of a reflective observer of what is done by the recipient. This is, for example, the case when comments are made on documents produced. In this case the TA provider has not been given responsibility to write, so the responsibility for the result is very little. The TA's responsibility for growth of the capacity of the recipient is also very limited as the intervention is very limited. It is altogether up to the recipient to utilise the comments at his/her own discretion.

CAPACITY
GROWTH

Counsellor "You do it, I will be your sounding board"	Coach "You did well; You can add this next time"	Partner "We will do it together and learn from each other"
Facilitator "You will do it, I will attend to the process"	Teacher "Here are some principles you use to solve problems of this type"	Modeller "I will do it; You watch so you learn from me"
Reflective observer " You will do it; I will watch and tell you what I see"	Technical advisor "I will answer your questions as you go along"	Hands on expert "I will do it for you; I will tell you what to do"

RESULTS

If we look at this model we can see that there are a number of possible roles the parties in a co-operation project could assign to each other. We can see that the degree of direct involvement by the TA provider is least in the lower left corner. The partner role is the most involving, requiring extensive information sharing and interaction by the partners.

We should observe that these role descriptions only try to catch the main characteristic of how the TA provider acts. The TA provider often plays different roles at the same time or different roles are assumed during the course of an assignment.

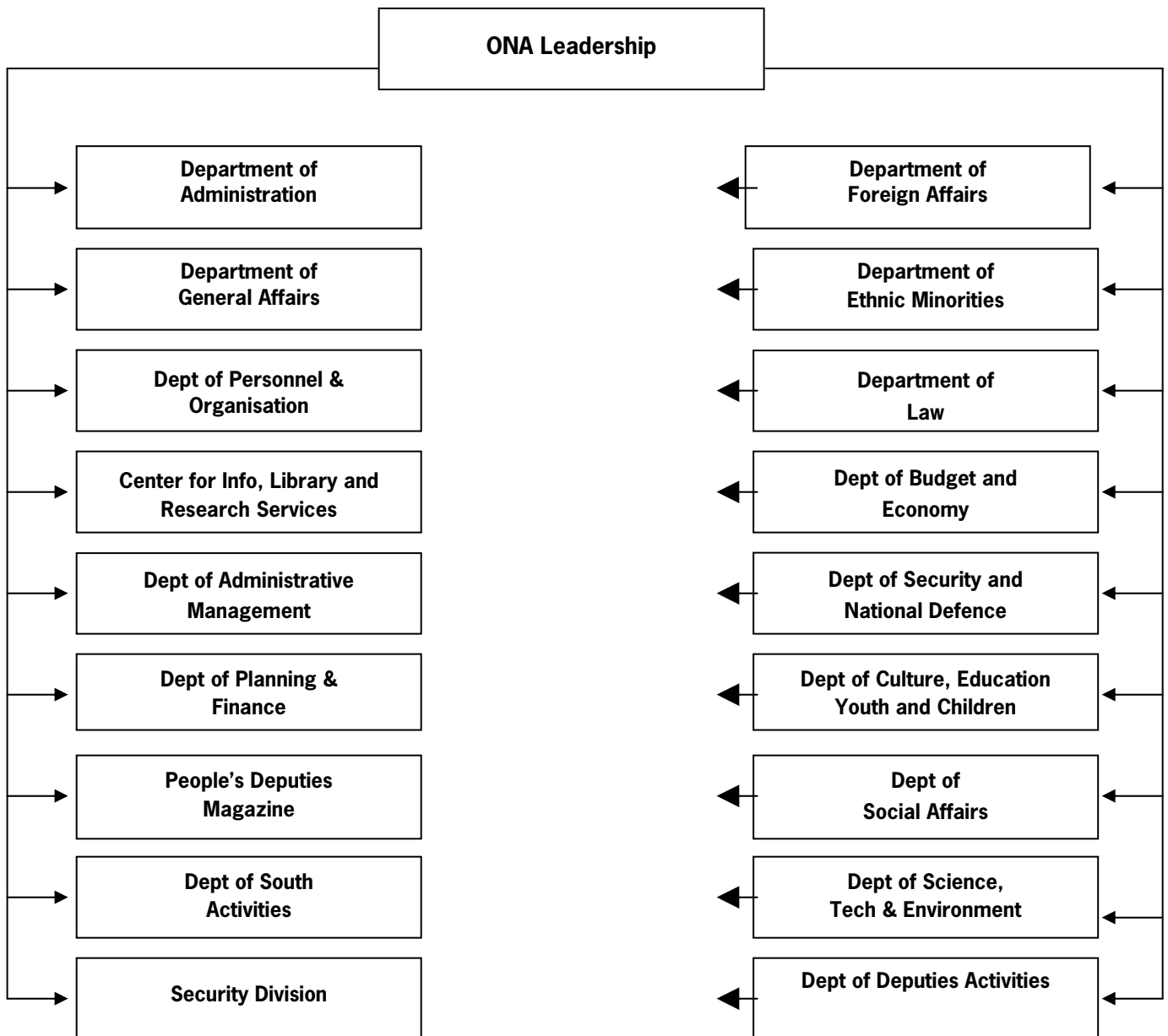
If we look at the role distribution in this project we can see that the Riksdag Administration mainly has played the role of teacher, by participation in seminars and being a venue for study visits. To some extent the counsellor and technical advisor roles have also been exercised

What is interesting to discuss is what roles should be played in a continuation of the project? A more "vertical approach" will require roles that are more involving than the ones practised by Riksdag Administration so far. The partner role requires a lot from both parties and is difficult to establish. It is, however, the most effective way to facilitate growth and at the same time produce results. It is a demanding role not only for the TA provider, but also for the partner who has to be motivated and set-aside time for interaction, information sharing and joint problem solving.

Annex 1

Organisational Structure of The National Assembly and ONA

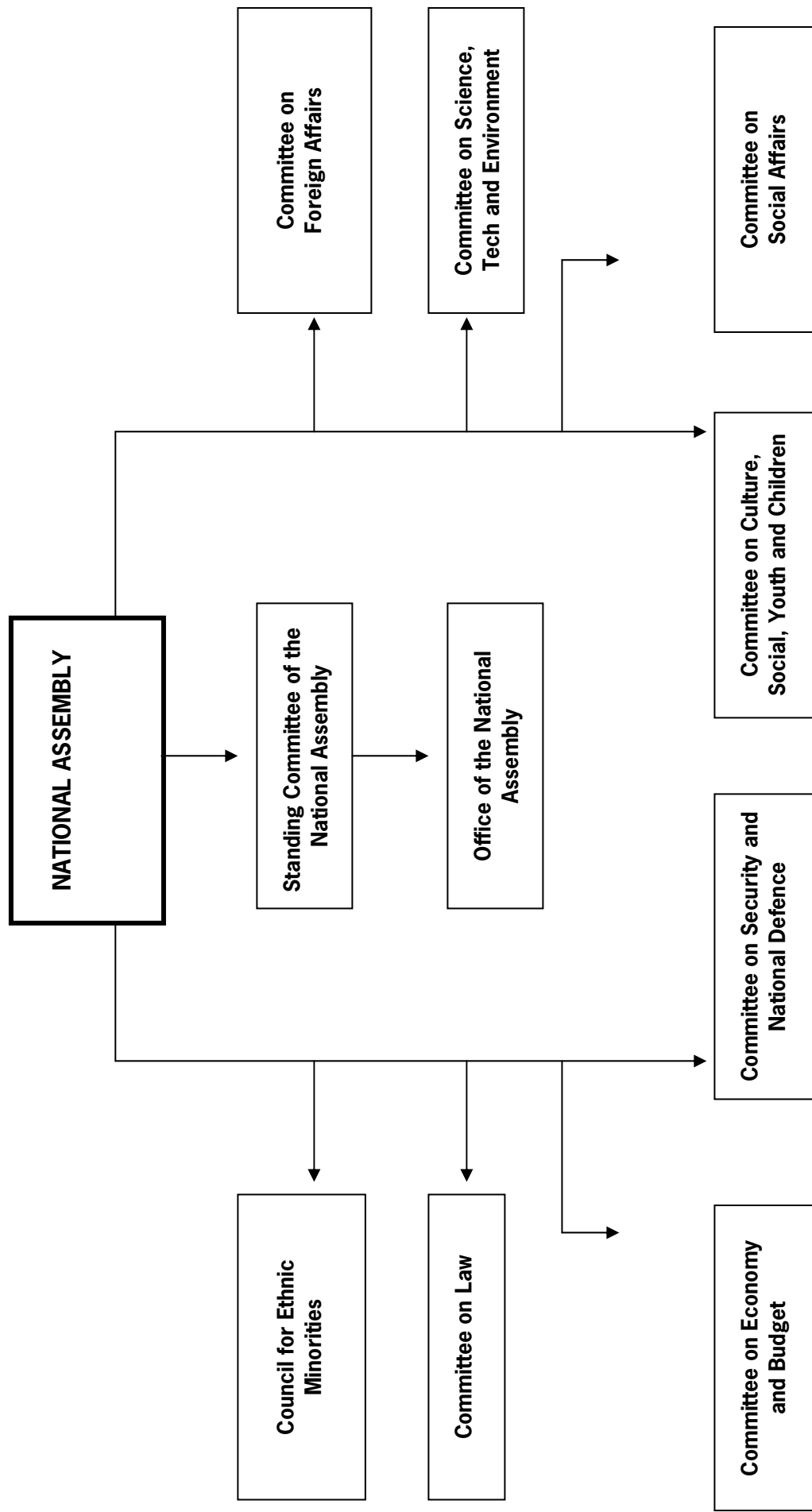
Organisation The Vietnam National Assembly Office



→ Leading of the Leadership of ONA to Dept. and Agencies

← Relationship to Council and Committees of NA

**Organisation
The Vietnam National Assembly**



Annex 2

Questionnaire and Result

**Questionnaire
For the Evaluation of the project
Strengthening the Capacity of the Office
of the National Assembly**

Background

1. Name:

3. Sex

2. Position:

Member of Staff	
MP	

Female	
Male	

4. Age:

25-40	
41-55	
55-	

5. I have participated in the following general seminars and study visits:

Seminars Topic, place, date	Mark X	Study tours Topic, place, date	Mark X
1. Seminar on Parliamentary public Information, Hanoi 22/2 – 24/2, 1999		1. Study tour on implementation of economic policy, state budget and important projects. Sweden. 18/9-2/10, 1999	
2. Seminar on Parliamentary supervision, Hanoi, 26/4-28/4, 1999		2. Study tour on supervision in the field of culture, education, youth and children. Sweden and Germany. 23/10-6/11, 1999	
3. Seminar on Supervision, economic policy and state budget, Hanoi, 30/8-1/9, 1999		3. Study tour on supervision of judicial matters. Sweden and Poland. 18/3-1/4, 2000	
4. Seminar on Supervision, judicial institutions, Hanoi, 28/2-1/3, 2000		4. Study tour on supervision of the environment. Sweden, Holland, Norway. 6/10-24/10, 2000	
5. Seminar on Supervision, environmental law, Hanoi, 21/8-23/8, 2000		5. Study tour on supervision of labour law and employment. Sweden. 24/3-1/4, 2001	

6. Roundtable on national parliaments and inter-parliamentary co-operation, Hanoi, 3/4-4/4, 2000		6. Study tour on ethnic issues. Canada, Mexico. 2/7-24/7, 2001	
7. Seminar on Education activities on Parliament in schools, Hanoi 4/10-5/10, 2000		7. Study tour on Parliamentary Education activities in schools, 1/9 2001	
8. Seminars on Organization of parliamentary affairs, Hanoi, 18/12-19/12, 2000			

General

6. Did the activity/activities you participated in contribute to giving you new ideas and new knowledge in the field?

Very large extent	
Large extent	
Some extent	
Limited extent	
Very limited extent	
No opinion	

7. Did the activity/activities you participated in meet your expectations?

Very large extent	
Large extent	
Some extent	
Limited extent	
Very limited extent	
No opinion	

8. As a result of the activities you have participated in, have you been able to use the ideas and knowledge gained in your work?

Very large extent	
Large extent	
Some extent	
Limited extent	
Very limited extent	
No opinion	

Supervision

The project aim to contribute to improved professional skills of the staff of ONA and some MPs of NA in supervision over the law implementation.

9. In your view, have the project contributed to further clarify the supervisory role of NA?

Very large extent	
Large extent	
Some extent	
Limited extent	
Very limited extent	
No opinion	

10. In your view, have the project activities contributed to any changes in the supervisory role of the NA?

Very large extent	
Large extent	
Some extent	
Limited extent	
Very limited extent	
No opinion	

11. If you have observed any changes, please describe:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Information

The project aim to improve the public access to the information about the NA and its activities

Public access to ONA information

12. How would you assess the capacity of ONA to give the public access to information about the role of NA and its activities?

Very low	
Low	
High	
Very high	
No opinion	

13. In your view, to what extent have the project activities contributed to giving the public more knowledge about the NA and its activities?

Very large extent	
Large extent	
Some extent	
Limited extent	
Very limited extent	
No opinion	

14. In your view, to what extent has the project activities contributed to changes in ONAs capacity to give the public access to information about the NA?

Very large extent	
Large extent	
Some extent	
Limited extent	
Very limited extent	
No opinion	

One important task of ONA is to provide information, research and library services to the MPs of NA

ONA services to MPs of NA

15. In your view, have the capacity of ONA to provide the MPs with necessary information changed during the current tenure of the NA?

Deteriorated	
No change	
Slightly improved	
Substantially improved	
No opinion	

Only for MPs:

16. What are the main information services from ONA used by you as an MP

.....

17. Have you noticed any change in the quality of services provided by ONA to NA deputies during the current tenure of NA?

Deteriorated	
No change	
Slightly improved	
Substantially improved	
No opinion	

18. Do you receive the support from ONA you expect in your work to inform and meet the citizens of your constituency?

Not at all	
To a limited extent	
To some extent	
To a large extent	
No opinion	

Result from the Questionnaire

The following present the statistical result from the survey questionnaire. The response rate of MPs was 71 percent and 60 percent for the ONA staff, providing an overall response rate of 64 percent.

Background Variables

Position

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Member of NA	35	34,0
	Member of staff	68	66,0
	Total	103	100,0

Sex

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Female	33	32,0
	Male	70	68,0
	Total	103	100,0

Age

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	25-40	24	23,3
	41-55	56	54,4
	>55	23	22,3
	Total	103	100,0

Frequency - Seminars and Study tours

Seminars	MP	ONA	Total
Parliamentary public Information, Feb 99	6	25	31
Parliamentary supervision, March 99	13	16	29
Supervision, economic policy and state budget, Sep 99	2	12	14
Supervision, judicial institutions, Feb-March 00	4	9	13
Supervision environmental law, Aug 2000	7	5	12
Roundtable inter-parliamentary co-operation, March 2000	3	9	12
Education activities on Parliament in schools, Oct 2000	4	14	18
Organization of parliamentary affairs, Dec 2000	4	20	24

Study Tours	MP	ONA	Total
Economic policy, state budget, Oct 99	3	3	6
Supervision in the field of education Nov 99	2	3	5
Study tour on supervision of judicial matters, March 2000	4	3	7
Supervision of the environment, Oct 2000	4	2	6
Supervision of labor law and employment. March-April 2001	4	4	8
Ethnic issues. Canada, Mexico, July 2001	4	3	7
Parliamentary Education activities in schools, Sept 2001		1	1

General

Did the activity/activities you participated in contribute to giving you new ideas and new knowledge in the field?

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
Get new ideas	Very large extent		1,5%	1,0%
	Large extent	24,2%	31,3%	29,0%
	Some extent	75,8%	67,2%	70,0%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Did the activity/activities you participated in meet your expectations?

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
Meet expectations	Very large extent	3,1%		1,0%
	Large extent	25,0%	22,4%	23,2%
	Some extent	71,9%	77,6%	75,8%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

As a result of the activities you have participated in, have you been able to use the ideas and knowledge gained in your work?

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
Use ideas	Very large extent		1,5%	1,0%
	Large extent	9,4%	24,2%	19,4%
	Some extent	81,3%	66,7%	71,4%
	Limited extent	9,4%	7,6%	8,2%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Supervision

In your view, have the project contributed to further clarify the supervisory role of NA?

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
Clarified supervisory role	Very large extent		1,7%	1,1%
	Large extent	31,3%	25,4%	27,5%
	Some extent	65,6%	66,1%	65,9%
	Limited extent	3,1%	6,8%	5,5%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

In your view, have the project activities contributed to any changes in the supervisory role of the NA?

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
Changed supervisory role	Large extent	15,6%	22,8%	20,2%
	Some extent	68,8%	59,6%	62,9%
	Limited extent	15,6%	14,0%	14,6%
	Very limited extent		3,5%	2,2%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Information

How would you assess the capacity of ONA to give the public access to information about the role of NA and its activities?

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
ONA capacity public info	Low	20,7%	22,8%	22,1%
	High	75,9%	64,9%	68,6%
	Very high	3,4%	12,3%	9,3%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

In your view, to what extent have the project activities contributed to giving the public more knowledge about the NA and its activities?

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
More public knowledge	Very large extent	3,4%		1,1%
	Large extent	37,9%	28,3%	31,5%
	Some extent	55,2%	65,0%	61,8%
	Limited extent	3,4%	6,7%	5,6%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

In your view, to what extent has the project activities contributed to changes in ONAs capacity to give the public access to information about the NA?

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
More public access	Very large extent	3,4%	1,6%	2,2%
	Large extent	41,4%	26,2%	31,1%
	Some extent	55,2%	70,5%	65,6%
	Limited extent		1,6%	1,1%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Library and Research

In your view, have the capacity of ONA to provide the MPs with necessary information changed during the current tenure of the NA?

% within Position

		Position		Total
		Member of NA	Member of staff	
ONA MP info capacity changed	No change		1,6%	1,0%
	Slightly improved	6,3%	20,3%	15,6%
	Substantially improved	93,8%	78,1%	83,3%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

For MPs only

Have you noticed any change in the quality of services provided by ONA to NA deputies during the current tenure of NA?

ONA MP service quality changed

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Slightly improved	1	2,9
	Substantially improved	33	97.1
Total MP		34	100,0

Do you receive the support from ONA you expect in your work to inform and meet the citizens of your constituency?

Expected ONA support received

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	To a limited extent	1	3,3
	To some extent	14	46,7
	To a large extent	15	50.0
Total MP		30	100,0

Annex 3

Terms of Reference

011002

Final version

Terms of Reference for an Evaluation of the Project Strengthening the Capacity of the Office of the Vietnam National Assembly (ONA).

1 Background

Sweden has provided support to Office of the National Assembly (ONA) since 1995, first channelled through the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) for the purpose of computerisation of the legislative process. In 1997 a proposal from Vietnam regarding co-operation between the National Assembly and its Swedish counterpart was submitted to Sida. A delegation from the Swedish Riksdag was sent to Hanoi in October 1997 and a “Mutual Statement of Intent on Cooperation”¹ was signed that adjusted and expanded on the Vietnamese proposal. In April 1998 a Project Document² was drawn up that was considered by Sida as a satisfactory basis for supporting a project.

In October 1998 co-operation between the Administration of the Swedish Riksdag (ASR) and the ONA of Vietnam commenced. The project period runs from October 1998 through September 2001, with an extension to March 2002. Sida has allocated SEK 15 million for the co-operation and to date, SEK 8,7 million has been disbursed. In addition, both parties have contributed substantial amounts for project activities in kind.

In Swedish development co-operation terminology, the co-operation falls under what is called a twinning of two equivalent institutions. Under such arrangements, there are no commercial interests, and both parties’ give input to and stand to gain from the co-operation.

The project seeks to enhance the capacity of ONA in providing efficient support to the National Assembly in *supervisory functions* and *public information services*. The overall objective of the co-operation is to strengthen the Assembly towards increased openness, adherence to democratic principles, and to provide effective support to the economic and legislative reform processes of Vietnam.

The expected results of the project are two-fold; first, the project shall strengthen the skills and capacity of the professional staff and members of the National Assembly in law implementation supervision, and secondly the general public shall gain increased access to information about the National Assembly and individual MP’s, and in so doing increase public knowledge, interest, and insight into the decision making process. Immediate objectives and activity planning are to be found in project documentation to which the evaluation team is referred.

2 Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is *to assess the results and relevance of the project to date, and to provide recommendations regarding future Swedish-Vietnamese co-operation* in support of the National Assembly of Vietnam.

The scope of the evaluation is the entire project period – October 1998 onwards to date – providing assessments on the relevance of its mode of co-operation, formulation and priority setting processes, activity approach, results achievement, and impact. Based on the findings from the co-operation to date, recommendations shall be formulated providing Sida with a comprehensive basis for its assessment on *how* and *if* support should be continued.

In carrying out the assignment, the consultant will be asked to take into consideration a number of external factors (confer below, section 3 iv). In consequence, the evaluation will not be limited to the co-operation as such, but also to the environment in which it is being implemented. The project has, as mentioned, objectives covering both constitutional and cultural values. The full complexity of the pre-requisites for successful implementation shall be reflected in the evaluation.

3 The assignment

The evaluation shall cover five basic areas of review, including the cross-cutting issue of external factors. Based on the findings of an assessment of past performance, the evaluation shall result in recommendations for future support.

3.1 Evaluation of past performance and project environment

i. Relevance

The evaluation shall review the relevance of;

- the *formulation process*, i.e. was project focus relevant in relation to the need assessment;
- the *implementation approach*, i.e. activity relevance and implementation pace in relation to stated objectives;
- *stated immediate objectives* and their relevance to the overall objectives, i.e. the coherence of the anticipated logical chain of events leading up to the achievement of the overall objectives;
- the *selection of target groups and primary recipients*.

ii. Results

The evaluation shall assess;

- the *level of attainment* of immediate objectives, including an analysis of recipient absorption capacity;
- the extent to which *immediate results* may be said to *have contributed to the overall objectives*
- the *efficiency* and *cost-effectiveness* with which objectives have been achieved;
- the *risk analysis* of the project parties, and Sida, and to what extent it has been realistic and comprehensively considered in project implementation and monitoring.

¹ Mutual Statement of Intent on Cooperation between the Administration of the Swedish Riksdag and the Office of the National Assembly of Vietnam, March 6, 1998.

² Project Document: Strengthening the Capacity of the Office of the National Assembly, April 24, 1998.

iii. Mode of co-operation

A specific point shall be made of an assessment of the *mode of co-operation*.

- First, the evaluation should assess the appropriateness of the co-operative arrangements between ASR and ONA, and the ability of the partners to carry out their respective responsibilities in the partnership.
- Secondly, the evaluation shall assess the management capacity and performance of the project parties (ASR, ONA, and Sida). This includes division of responsibilities and monitoring, follow-up and reporting functions.
- Thirdly, the evaluation shall discuss alternatives to the present form of co-operation, and whether or not other forms could prove more efficient and achieve better results in the short and longer term.

The consultant is specifically requested to comment on *Contract Financed Technical Co-operation* (KTS in Sida terminology) as a mode of co-operation suitable for the project.

iv. External factors

The evaluation shall deal extensively with assessing *the environment in which the project operates* and the *external factors* that could influence its course. The evaluation shall limit itself to three areas of analysis;

- *Other development assistance* in support of the National Assembly. It shall be determined what other support of the NA is ongoing and how the ASR and ONA co-operation fits in this context. It shall also be determined if other support was under consideration when formulating the project, and how that information has been used. All efforts made by ASR, ONA and Sida to coordinate project activities with other support shall be reviewed.
- Questions that should be posed are; are there instances of duplicating or contradictory activities, could there be an increased element of co-operation with other activities/projects in favour of NA, and is there competition for scarce management resources?
- *Institutional constraints*. The consultant shall consider to what extent the success of the project is dependent on external (beyond the control of the co-operating parties) *political* and *legal* factors. It shall be determined whether, and to what extent, such factors have proved or are likely to prove disadvantageous to project implementation and the achievement of its overall objectives.
- *Incentives* to pursue project objectives, immediate as well as long term. The consultant shall analyse the existence of and possible consequences of a non-conductive incentive structure with primary as well as secondary stakeholders.

v. Impact

The evaluation shall;

- analyse what possible impact the project has had in relation to its stated overall objectives, i.e. have changes in attitudes and competence occurred;
- analyse to what extent achieved impact is *sustainable* in light of the analysis of past performance, external factors, and the general capability of ONA to carry the work forward on its own accord;
- analyse to what extent the project has produced negative impacts.

Lastly, the evaluation shall make a separate point of commenting the issue of *gender sensitivity* in project formulation and activities. Questions to be addressed are i) could the extent of gender sensitivity be enhanced, and ii) how could the project deal with the issue in the future?

3.2 Recommendations for future support

Based on an assessment of the aforementioned aspects of the project, the consultant is asked to provide recommendations with regard to *how* or *if* support should continue. In short, the consequences of the findings from the analysis of past performance shall feed into a discussion on what Sweden can do to support NA in the future, and if and how project modalities can be re-formulated. This involves a discussion with ONA and ASR on any proposal they have for future support. The evaluators should be aware that a draft proposal for a second phase has recently been prepared by ONA.

Each finding (of past performance) shall be turned into a discussion on how the matter could be dealt with henceforth. The basic starting point being *what conditions need to be present in order to effectively contribute to the overall objectives in the future.*

4 Reporting

First, the consultants shall submit an inception report formulated as a *methodological note*. The note shall specify methods and approach to be used in the evaluation (confer section 5).

The main report that will be the result of the evaluation shall follow a basic format. When presented, the report shall begin with i) an introduction or background which is *descriptive* in character, ii) a section where the main findings from the evaluation of past performance is presented, iii) recommendations for future support, and iv) conclusions. From this format the consultant may deviate, but only insofar as the basic structure is retained.

A draft report shall be submitted to Sida DESO/DESA no later than December 31, 2001. Sida, ASR and ONA shall comment on the draft report within three weeks of reception. A final report shall be presented to Sida no later than two weeks after receiving comments from all project parties.

The report shall be written in English, and it shall not exceed 40 pages excluding annexes. It shall include an executive summary and be delivered in 5 hard copies accompanied by a diskette in Word (6.0 or later) format to facilitate printing.

5 Method

A basic outline of the methods to be used in the evaluation will be provided in this section. However, its details shall be elaborated in an inception report (*methodological note*).

In order to obtain information regarding the results and impact of the co-operation, the consultant shall conduct surveys and interviews. This includes a field visit to Vietnam.

Surveys shall be designed in the form of questionnaires directed to the *primary* target groups. The questionnaires shall explore to what extent the group perceive changes with regard to stated immediate and long-term objectives. Regarding the secondary target group, i.e. the public, such as the media, members of local government, school teachers etc., the consultant shall *suggest an appropriate and efficient way* to attain a reasonable view of their perception of changes; the availability of written information (NA, other donors) or other surveys conducted (other NA co-operation partners or local initiatives) should be explored. The methodological note shall specify in detail how

the evaluation team interprets the primary and secondary target groups and how they intend to arrive on an appropriate selection.

Interviews shall be conducted with all personnel having managerial functions in the project, including Sida staff. Interviews should also be conducted with selected key individuals in the primary target group. The methodological note shall determine the general direction of the interviews and how the consultant proposes to go about in practice.

Finally, the note should outline how the evaluation team intends to conduct its field visit (locations, personnel, time-allocation). Sida envisage the extent of the field visit by Swedish consultants to no more than two and half (2,5) weeks per person.

6 Time-plan

The assignment shall commence on October 8, 2001. The evaluation group then have three weeks to produce its inception report, which should be submitted by October 29, 2001 (this time-frame presume that the team includes one local consultant stationed in Hanoi that can contribute to the inception report, confer section 7 below).

Field trips should be conducted during November and a draft report shall be submitted by December 31, 2001.

Sida estimates a total of maximum sixteen (16) man weeks are needed to conclude the evaluation.

7 Qualifications

It is suggested that the evaluation team comprise four individuals; a team leader, a subject matter specialist, a local expert, and an interpreter.

The first two should preferably be Swedish nationals and they should combine the following competences.

- Extensive evaluation experience of development assistance in the field of good governance and political and economic transition,
- Experience from developing evaluation methodology,
- Familiarity with Sida, its methods and policies,
- Experience from evaluations of cost-effectiveness and gender sensitivity,
- Extensive subject matter expertise, i.e. expertise in parliament functionality, and particularly parliaments in countries experiencing political transition from more closed to more liberalised traits.

The third member of the team should be a Vietnamese national. He or she should hold the following competences.

- Thorough insight into Vietnamese political life, and particularly that of the National Assembly,
- Familiarity with development assistance, strategy and policies.

The fourth member shall be a skilled interpreter who can assist the team in collecting data if required.

Annex 4

Documentation

Project related documents

1. Letter to Swedish Embassy, Hanoi, requesting Swedish support dated Feb 12, 1997. Office of the National Assembly.
2. Terms of Reference. Planeringsmission avseende samarbete mellan Sveriges riksdagskontor och Vietnams nationalförsamlingskontor. Sida decision dated October 1997
3. Report on the Expert Mission to the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (24-31 October 1997) by: Bengt Thufvesson, Karin Isacson, Marianne Carlbom and Lars Starell.
4. Mutual Statement of Intent on Co-operation between the Administration of the Swedish Riksdag and the Office of the National Assembly of Vietnam(ONA), Stockholm, March 6, 1998
5. Specific Agreement between the Government of Sweden and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on Strengthening the Capacity of the Office of the National Assembly to Serve the National Assembly. September 10, 1998
6. Project document: Strengthening the Capacity of the Office of the National Assembly.
7. Annual plan of operation for 1999
8. Annual report on project performance for the year ending 31.12 1999
9. Agreed minutes between the Embassy of Sweden, Sida, and the Office of the National Assembly from the Annual Review of the project, 8 December, 1999
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19. Minnesanteckningar från besök i Vietnam, februari 1999. Linda Linder, Bengt Eriksson, Eva Rosengren, Marianne Carlbom
20. Minnesanteckningar från besök i Vietnam, oktober 2000. Informationsenheten, Sveriges Riksdag
21. Rapport från besök i Vietnams parlament 2000-06-05-09. Lars Hermansson, Magnus Korkala. Informationsenheten. Sveriges Riksdag

Documentation of related projects

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23. Needs assessment mission: Legal Information and Information Technology in the Republic of Vietnam. Final report August 13, 2001. UNDP/Danida, VIE 95/016/017/018
24. Legal Needs Assessment Mission. Draft report November 2000. UNDP/Danida, VIE 95/016/017/018
25. Support to Office of the national Assembly, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuracy, Vietnam. Project Document. Danida, April, 2001
26. Strengthening Representative Bodies with focus on Provincial People's Councils. Project Document, December 1999. UNDP/Danish Trust Fund
27. Strengthening Representative Bodies with focus on Provincial People's Councils. Project Document, December 1999. UNDP/Danish Trust Fund. Annual Report 2000.
28. Danish Trust Fund on Capacity Development. Mid-term evaluation, August 2001. Report prepared for Evaluation Office, UNDP, New York by Paul Collins and Basem Khader.

Other

29. Landstrategi Vietnam, 1999–2003, Utrikesdepartementet,
30. Vietnam – Democracy and Human Rights. A report commissioned by Sida by Ove Bring, Christer Gunnarsson, Anders Mellbourn. The Swedish Institute of International Affairs. 1998
31. Legislative Studies Magazine. The National Assembly Into the 3rd Millenium. August 2001
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34. Evaluation of Public Administration Reform. Government Steering Committee for Public Administration Reform, The Secretariat. Hanoi, July 2000.
35. Master Programme on Public Administration Reform for the period 2001-2010. Government of Vietnam, September 2001.
36. Comprehensive Needs Assessment For Development of Vietnam's Legal System for the period 2001–2010. Draft report by inter-agency team chaired by Ministry of Justice, November 2001.
37. Strategy for Socio-Economic Development 2001–2010. Communist Party of Vietnam

Annex 5

People met

Stockholm

Riksdag Administration

Mr Anders Forsberg, Secretary General
Mr Mats Åberg, Head of International Department
Mr Lars Starell, Head of Division, International Department
Mr Lars Hultstrand, Project director
Ms Mari Rydingstam, Project assistant
Ms Linda Linder, Head of Information Department
Ms Margareta Brundin, Head of Library Services

Parliamentary Ombudsman

Mr Kjell Swanström, Head of Staff
Ms Marianne von der Esch, International Co-ordinating Director

Sida

Karin Norberg, Assistant Director General
Anette Dahlström, Programme Officer

Hanoi

Members of National Assembly

Mr Vu Mao, chairman of ONA
Mr Pham Thanh Son, vice chairman, ONA
Mr Kim, Vice chairman, Committee for Culture, Education and Youth
Ms Bui Thi Thu, member, Committee for Culture, Education and Youth
Mr Le Quang Vu, member, Committee for Social Affairs
Ms Dang Hai Thu, member, Committee for Social Affairs
Mr Tran The Vuong, vice chairman, Committee on Law
Mr Ly Tai Luan, Chairman, Committee on Economy and Budget
Mr Nguyen Huu Khanh, member, Committee on Economy and Budget

Office of National Assembly

Mr Tran Duoc Thuan, Vice chairman

Centre for Information, Research and Library Services (CILRS)

Mr Nguyen Si Dung, Director, National Project Director
Mr Phung Van Hung, Head of Project Management Division
Mr Nguyen Phoung Tuan, project staff
Mr Nguyen Duc Thuan, project staff
Mr Vu Dau Hung, Dep director, Head of Science management division
Mr Do Van Tri, Dep director, Head of Publication and press service division

Mr Dao Van Thach, Dep director, Head of Library division
Mr Nguyen Tri Nguyen, Dep director, Head of Museum
Mr Do Khac Tai, Dep director, Head of Information division
Mr Ngo Minh Chau, Dep director, Head of Computer division
Mr Ngo Duc Manh, Dep director, Head of Law research division

Law Department

Mr Nguyen Van Thuan, Director
Mr Le Duy Quan, Dep Director

Deputies Activities Department

Mr Tran Van Tam, Dep director
Mr Nguyen Van Nhan, Dep director

Department for Culture, Education, Youth and Children

Mr Nguyen Viet Lenh, Director

General Affairs Department

Mr Nguyen Duc Hien, Director
Mr Dang Van Chien, Dep director
Mr Le Nhu Tien, Dep director

Department for People's Wills and Petitions

Mr Nguyen Dang Dai, Director

Department for Social Affairs

Mr Luong Phan Cu, Director
Mr Thai Minh Phoung, specialist
Ms Nguyen Thuy Anh, specialist
Ms Nguyen Thanh Tra, specialist

Media

Mr Anh Hung, Panorama Magazine
Mr Trang Song Thao, Vietnam Radio

Hai Ba Trung Secondary School

Ms Do Thi Kim Ngan, Principal

Policy Implementation Assistance Project, Canada

Mr Andre Saumier, Resident Director

Strengthen the National Assembly as the policy and law making entity in the political system, Danida

Mr Thorkild Hoyer, Senior Legal Advisor

Strengthening representative bodies with focus on Provincial People's Councils, UNDP

Mr Lenni Montiel, Senior Technical Advisor

Swedish Embassy Hanoi

Ms Mari Sjölander, Ambassador

Mr Per Lundell, Counsellor

Christine Johansson, First secretary

Vu Tuan Minh, National programme officer

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