

Sida-supported Projects at the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 1995–2005

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
COICOP	Classification Of Individual Consumption According To Purchase
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy – Vietnam’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
Doi Moi	Renovation – Vietnam’s market oriented reforms initiated in 1986
DSB	District Statistics Bureau
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSO	Vietnam General Statistics Office
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification of all economic activities
IT	Information Technology
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
PPI	Producer Price Index
PSO	Provincial Statistics Office
SCB	Statistics Sweden
SEK	Swedish Krona (1 USD = 7.5 SEK)
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation’s Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nation’s Industrial Development Organisation
USD	US Dollar
VHLSS	Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey

1 Executive Summary

In June 1994 the Government of Sweden agreed to support the Government of Vietnam's ongoing economic reform programme with some projects aimed to improve the effectiveness of the reforms. A project for support to General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO) was finalised in 1995, and later in the year Statistics Sweden (SCB) was contracted as institutional consultant.

Three project phases were implemented in the period 1995 – 2005, where the immediate objective remained *'Timely supply of economic statistical information of appropriate quality and in cost-efficient forms'*. In this period SCB assigned a team leader and additional long-term advisors to GSO and facilitated short-term technical assistance. Study tours and international meetings have been financed and training courses in English and specific subject matters have been provided.

During the first phase GSO and SCB identified a specific need for support to establish an IT infrastructure. Sida responded positively and provided extra funds for an IT module, which became fully integrated with the twinning project between GSO and SCB. Of the SEK 66 million provided to GSO in the period 1995 – 2005 some SEK 30 million has been used for establishing an IT infrastructure. SEK 4 million has been committed for the Vietnam Living Standard Survey (VLSS) conducted by GSO 2003–2005.

GSO established a Project Steering Committee with overall responsibility for the project. The day-to-day management was taken care of by the GSO Project Administrator in close cooperation with the SCB Team Leader and the subject matter departments concerned.

The Sida-supported projects at GSO have been very successful. The Team has reached a positive conclusion in the assessment of project achievements in relation to each of the five standard evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability.

Relevance: Project objectives are in line with the objectives of the Vietnamese Government and society at large, especially the business sector, which demand good economic statistics. It has addressed important problems defined by GSO.

The projects have supported Vietnam's transformation to a market-based economy, which in turn is a major cause of the economic growth that is responsible for most poverty reduction, which is the overall goal for Sida. They contribute to one of Sida's specific goals, promoting openness and democracy, because public statistics are part of the 'infrastructure' of a modern democratic society.

Effectiveness: The immediate objective has been achieved; GSO now provides economic timely statistical information of appropriate quality.

Key economic statistics are rapidly available from GSO. They are available with a one-to two-month delay on the GSO web-page. The quality has been considerably improved. Earlier some users trusted GDP figures calculated by IMF more than the ones published by GSO, but IMF no longer sees a need of calculating alternative GDP statistics. The price indexes have been updated and established with technical assistance from SCB. GSO now uses international classification based on common used UN nomenclature. A Business Register developed with assistance from SCB is a valid frame for the economic surveys that include the multitude of new small enterprises. With assistance from SCB GSO has developed its capacity to conduct sample surveys – the only practical and cost-efficient way to collect data from households as well as from small private enterprises. The project has provided assistance for gender specification of statistics and more gender specific statistics are now produced by GSO.

The IT component has been essential for GSO's development. The technical assistance has contributed to strengthening the capacity of GSO staff and to develop an IT strategy, which has saved GSO from

the mistakes made by other institutions, which is a sound basis for further development of the IT infrastructure with funds from Government as well as from other donors.

In addition to training in statistical subject matters the project has contributed to English language training, which enables GSO to develop from international sources.

All in all GSO is now as a Modern Statistical Institution in line with the UN principles for official statistics in juridical as well as in practical terms.

The Team has concluded that the positive result described cannot be attributed to the Sida-supported projects alone, but that fewer results would have been achieved without the support. Thus, the Sida-supported projects have contributed considerably to the positive results achieved.

Impact: The development objective is implicitly defined as better management of the economy and better economic policy making. The improved statistical information produced by GSO is in other words expected to contribute to decisions based on factual information. Based on interviews with stakeholders the Team has concluded that the improved statistics from GSO reach policy makers and planners, and that they base policies, plans and programmes on these statistics.

The Team has not identified any unexpected negative effects. But an important (partly) unexpected positive effect has been identified. The Team has found that GSO has become a learning organisation in the sense that GSO has developed its ability to analyse its problems and to find solutions. GSO is also quite experienced in learning from technical advisors and from statistical institutions, adapting it to a Vietnamese context, and applying it. The knowledge of English and the IT infrastructure are important preconditions for this enhanced learning ability.

Efficiency: At the overall level, when comparing to similar projects, it is the assessment of the Team that Sida's support to GSO has been efficient. The support to GSO has had much better results than similar projects, and the costs of implementing these projects are not widely different.

The procedure for decision making on the use of short-term consultants has been an important mechanism for improving efficiency: SCB has made plans for short-term consultancies, and the Project Steering Committee has in some cases substituted the SCB-consultants with others, often with consultants based in the region.

Sustainability: The GSO Project Steering Committee has taken great care to ensure that the technical assistance has been used for capacity building. Due to this GSO is now able to continue the use of the methods it has learned. Financial sustainability has been improved through government's increased willingness to provide resources to GSO.

Lessons learned: One lesson to be learned is that the GSO-SCB twinning project seems to have been in line with the general experience that twinning is successful for building up professional skills in a specific field, but cannot demonstrate the same success where, for example, management development is concerned. Only after a long period where mutual trust was created (and other constraints overcome) did the project start providing some assistance to developing the organisational framework and sensitive areas.

Another lesson is that the relatively massive provision of IT equipment gave the project a possibility to establish an overall IT strategy for GSO. The project's comprehensive approach has ensured that GSO's later investments in IT have been rational and it has saved GSO from a piecemeal and unsystematic approach to investment in IT, which has been costly to many organisations.

Remaining problems: Due to GSO's capacity development, above all the development of its learning ability, a different project is called for in the future. Support to GSO's continued learning should be

'lighter' than the previous project. In a new project a resident team of advisors is no longer required. Thus, a new project could be run by GSO without an institutional consultant.

If a twinning arrangement is chosen, it is the Teams' opinion that it would only make sense if the cooperation with SCB is continued. A new institutional consultant would not be able to build up the same level of trust and mutual understanding with GSO as SCB has.

Future support: In the Team's opinion GSO's remaining challenge is first and foremost to address a series of structural problems related to interaction between GSO and other organisations and entities. These problems are: cooperation with users, improving the dissemination strategy, re-design and use administrative registers (managed by other organisations) to make them useful for statistical purposes, and improvement of the reporting system. Therefore the Team's recommendations to GSO refer to creation of groups or commissions tasked with finding solutions to these problems.

The Team is of the opinion that the best way a project can support such commissions is providing funds for *study tours* to allow GSO and other stakeholders to learn from experiences of other countries within these fields. This should be supplemented with technical assistance from short-term technical advisors. Short-term technical assistance would first and foremost support the development of GSO's statistical methodology in specific areas like sample survey design, service, transport and energy statistics etc. It should also be considered to provide assistance for developing statistics showing the connection between economic growth and social development. In this endeavour gender-specific statistics are required.

Based on this the Team recommends:

- A project for support to GSO be designed and implemented. The key component would be funds for study tours for commissions or groups comprised of GSO and other stakeholders. Short-term technical assistance would be another component.

2 Introduction

During ten years Sida has provided support to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO). There are several reasons for Sida choosing to conduct an evaluation of this support:

- The project has not earlier been externally reviewed or evaluated. Sida now needs a careful, independent assessment of the support.
- GSO, other parts of government and donors should learn from the experience so as to make future support and to build capacity more efficiently in the future.
- Sida needs a basis for making a decision on future support to GSO

The Terms of Reference for this evaluation (refer to Annex 1) state that the Team has to assess the project in relation to five standard criteria: relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability. These criteria are considered in turn in the main chapter, *Findings and Conclusions*. After that *Lessons Learned* are considered in a separate chapter and in the last chapter *Recommendations* a future project for support to GSO is proposed.

The Terms of Reference state that the evaluation should focus on the bilateral twinning between GSO and Statistics Sweden (SCB). (The project intervention is described in section 3.2).

The Team Leader met Sida and SCB in Stockholm on the 21st of December, 2005. The whole Team visited Vietnam during the period 9th to 20th January 2006 where it met GSO, Sida and a number of stakeholders. The Team had a series of meetings with the Project Steering Committee and representatives from departments within GSO. On 12th and 18th of January the Team visited statistical offices at province and district levels in Bac Giang and Hanoi provinces. Due to the fact that the two Danish team members, who have deep technical knowledge of statistics, do not speak Vietnamese it was not possible to make informal interviews with GSO staff in various functions to get detailed information and different perspectives on statistical processes. Within Government the Team met representatives for Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Planning and Investment and Ministry of Home Affairs. In addition to this the Team met external stakeholders like the World Bank, the IMF, UNDP and the Vietnam Institute of Economics. Before departing from Vietnam the Team presented and discussed a Debriefing Note with the Project Steering Committee and Sida on 20th of January. (Refer to the full programme in Annex 2: Programme and People Met).

A Draft Report was discussed with Sida and with SCB on a workshop in Stockholm on the 7th of February. On the 17th of February a similar workshop was held in Hanoi with GSO and the Embassy of Sweden. Based on the comments made on these workshops and comments forwarded by mail the Team prepared the Final Report.

The Evaluation Team consisted of:

- Mr. Ole Stage, Copenhagen Development Consulting, Team Leader;
- Mr. Poul Henning Larsen, Expert in Statistics; and
- Ms. Pham Thi Bich Hoa, National Academy of Public Administration.

The Evaluation Team was ably supported by GSO, which generously provided an interpreter as well as local transport. The Team wishes to thank all officials and stakeholders who kindly made their time available. The findings and recommendation of the report have been made by the Team and do not necessarily represent the views of Sida, the government of Vietnam or any other stakeholder.

3 The Evaluated Intervention

3.1 Context

After decades of war Vietnam was reunited in 1975. The national development strategy at that time was based on the implementation of the socialist system in all of the country. All land was collectivized, markets were gradually abolished, and prices were strictly controlled. This led to an economic crisis, low agricultural production and periodic outbreaks of hunger. At the macro level Vietnam suffered from hyperinflation and trade imbalances in the 1980s.

In this critical situation, the Communist Party approved a comprehensive reform agenda under the name of *doi moi* (renovation) in 1986. *Doi moi* recognized the essential role of a multi-ownership structure of the economy; (re-)introduced free market prices for commodities and private property rights on land and enterprises; and supported macroeconomic stabilization and external liberalization. These measures have been successful and Vietnam is now undergoing rapid development. GNP per capita doubled from 1990 to 2000 and the annual growth rate has remained around 7–8%. International trade has increased rapidly and foreign companies have increased investments. American companies joined from 1994, when an American embargo against Vietnam was lifted.

Although the growth has been unevenly distributed and inequality has been increased the poor have benefited: the wide-spread hunger of the 1980's has been left firmly behind. While 58% of the population lived below the poverty line in 1992, this had been reduced to 38% in 1997–98 and further to 20% in 2004. Thus, Vietnam has already fulfilled the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.¹

3.2 GSO

The statistical service in Vietnam is an important institution for planning and economic management. In Hanoi it became part of the State Planning Commission in 1956, but already in 1960 it was separated from the Planning Commission and an independent General Statistics Office (GSO) with overall responsibility for production of statistics was founded. The GSO has always been close to the centre of political power and is currently under the Prime Minister.²

Since 1994 GSO has been a vertically integrated institution represented at central, provincial and district levels. At central level in Hanoi it is organised through seven subject matter departments supported by 17 functional units or departments for administration, information technology, publishing, training etc. Refer to the diagram of GSO's organisational structure in Annex 3.

There is a Provincial Statistics Office (PSO) with an average number of staff around 30 in each of Vietnam's 64 provinces. The PSOs are under the direct authority of GSO, although the PSOs also collect and provide data to local authorities (People's Committees).³ In 1994, before the project intervention, most of these offices had only a few stand alone PCs and a third of them had no computer equipment at all. Telecommunication links (via modem) were only established between a few of the provincial offices and the GSO headquarters.

The District Statistics Bureau (DSB) with 3 to 5 staff in each of the 659 districts is the cornerstone for data collection within the national statistical service. The DSB collects statistical data directly from the communes, enterprises and from the local authorities. Communes and enterprises have staff collecting statistics. Local departments of line ministries keep administrative records that are used for statistical purposes. These statistics are collected by DSB, but they are also passed on and compiled by line ministries at province and central levels. When a census or a survey is made the DSB hires and supervises enumerators.

PSOs and DSBs also have to meet the requirements of local governments for whom they collect and compile specific data and from whom they in return receive support. Local authorities expect and are used to receive frequent and detailed socio-economic data. Small scale surveys are sometimes conducted to collect data for local authorities. This seems partly to be a heritage from the centrally planned system, where local authorities were responsible for monitoring production and could intervene in management decisions of enterprises. PSOs publish various statistical publications including statistical yearbooks. Even DSBs sometimes disseminate data in formal publications.

¹ This refers to Target 1 under MDG 1 as the VHLSS poverty line is approximately one dollar a day. Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people suffering from hunger, seems also to have been fulfilled.

² Physically GSO is placed right at the centre of political power: it shares an imposing building with Ministry for Planning and Investment next to the headquarters of the Communist Party and not far from the President's Palace.

³ This vertical integration is exceptional within Vietnam's decentralised administrative structure, where all other local administrative structures are managed by People's Committees.

All in all the statistical service grew from a little more than 4,000 staff at the beginning of the project period to 5,200 at the end of the project period.⁴ In August 1997 the 4,832 GSO employees of which 39% were women were distributed as follows⁵:

- 576 at headquarters in Hanoi (of which 45% women)
- 1854 in Provincial Statistics Offices (of which 49% women)
- 2402 in District Statistics Bureaus (of which 29% women)

The proportion of women within GSO has grown in 2005 it reached 42%. Very few women (though more than ten years ago) have reached leading positions within GSO.

3.3 The Project

3.3.1 Background and identification

During a Sida commissioned feasibility study conducted in 1993 on support to the Central Bank of Vietnam it was found that there was a need for improving economic statistics, especially statistics for monetary policy management.⁶

At that time much attention was focussed on the inflation rate. Vietnam had experienced three digits inflation rates in the 1980s, but a macroeconomic stabilization package was implemented in 1989. Through price liberalization, devaluation of the exchange rate, reduction of subsidies to state owned enterprises (SOE), and budget constraints the Government succeeded to reduce the inflation rate to only 5% in 1993.

Vietnamese authorities felt a general need for comprehensive and timely economic statistics for managing the economy. There is a considerable state (and party) intervention in the Vietnamese economy and the economic system has consequently been described by the Party as a 'socialist-oriented market economy'.⁷ However, the economic statistics collected by the GSO did not meet the requirements for the management of an open market-based economy. Internationally recognised concepts and classifications were not always applied, and statistics on production provided an incomplete or biased picture of the economy.

Statistics on production were based on the reporting system: Enterprises report (monthly) to a DSB. The DSB compiles the data in a report to the PSO. The PSO aggregates the data in a report to GSO. Finally GSO aggregates the provincial data and arrives at national production statistics. However, a large part of the enterprises were no longer owned by the state, and a significant and growing part of the production was undertaken by a multitude of small (often informal) private enterprises. The reporting system was unable to cover the latter categories, especially the small informal enterprises, and produced incomplete data. It was recognised that the reporting system had to be supplemented by data collected on a sample basis, and that sample surveys would in many cases be the most efficient way of collecting data.

In June 1994 the Government of Sweden agreed to support the Vietnamese Government's ongoing economic reform programme with a number of projects aimed to improve the effectiveness of the reforms. General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO) prepared a project proposal in 1994. Two consultants visited GSO on a project identification mission in January 1995 and prepared the final project document, *Statistical Services in Vietnam* (May 1995),

⁴ According to the project document, *Statistical Services in Vietnam*, GSO had 3,821 staff members in 1995. But this number does not include Computer Centres (the ones in HCMC and Da Nang had 140 staff in 1997 according to Result Analysis Report for Phase 1) and a Publishing House which have later been included. If these units are included it would probably amount to more than 4,000 staff in 1995.

⁵ Result Analysis Report for Phase 1, Annex III.

⁶ *Statistical Services in Vietnam*, page 5.

⁷ Nørlund, Tran Ngoc & Nguyen Dinh: *Dealing with the Donors, The Politics of Vietnam's Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy*. Policy Papers 4/2003 page 36, Institute of Development Studies, University of Helsinki.

3.3.2 Design

In the Project Document the method for channelling technical assistance to GSO is an institutional partnership between GSO and a national statistical agency (twinning). This partnership should last no more than seven years and it is divided into three phases:

1. *Initiation*; with a focus on competence in specific subject matter areas.
2. *Reinforcing capabilities*; spreading techniques and competences within GSO and to users, as well as strengthening the institutional organisation capacity.
3. Phasing out; assist to develop a learning organisation able to assess future needs and specify/carry out upgrading activities.

The intervention logic of the project is described in the Project Document from 1995 as well as in two separate documents for Phase Two and Phase Three. However, the definitions of objectives in the three project documents are not consistent and they are in the Team's opinion not fully in accordance with the logical framework approach. As an evaluation deals specifically with the achievement of specific objectives, it has been necessary to reconstruct the logical matrix for the support to GSO (refer to Annex 4).

Table 1: Reconstructed Logical Matrix for Sida Support for GSO 1995–2005

Intervention Logic	Indicators
<i>Development Objective:</i>	
Better management of the economy and better economic policy making	– Policy makers and planners have access to and are aware of the economic statistics produced by GSO. – Policy makers and planners take account of statistical information from GSO (= informed decisions)
<i>Immediate Objective:</i>	
Timely supply of economic statistical information of appropriate quality and in cost-efficient forms	– Improved timeliness – Satisfied users
<i>Outputs defined for First Phase (October 1995–1997):</i>	
1) Capacity to carry out sample surveys in cost-efficient ways	
2) System to produce regular short-term indicators including CPI and PPI based on internationally recognised methods	
3) Computer-based establishment register prepared for cost efficient sample design for business sector	
4) Capability to carry out statistical analyses by means of modern software	
5) Capacity to prepare user friendly reports combining commentary, statistical analysis, tabulations and graphic presentations	
<i>Outputs defined for Second Phase (1998–October 2001):</i>	
1) Cost effective statistical system	
2) Cost effective organisation and information system	
3) Strengthened legal mandate	
4) Enhanced ability to carry out censuses	
5) IT infrastructure down to the provincial level (a separate component implemented 1997–1999, but integrated in Second Phase of the Project)	

Outputs defined for Third Phase (November 2001–June 2005):

- 1) Adequate statistical methods available
 - 2) Competent staff (sufficient staff)
 - 3) Supportive organisational structure
 - 4) Adequate information Technology
-

The three phases have in fact covered a total of ten years. All the outputs defined for the First Phase refer to methods for producing and disseminating statistics. In the Second and Third Phase organisational matters have been introduced (outputs 2 and 3 in Second, and output 3 in Third Phase), but the budget for these outputs (include establishment of retraining centre, standardised reporting system for economic statistical indicators and English language courses) are only 6% and 11% respectively of the total budget for each of the phases. None of the outputs refer directly to learning abilities of GSO despite the fact that the Third Phase was to focus on this.

3.3.3 Inputs

Sida tendered the contract for the institutional consultant. Statistics Sweden (SCB) won this tender in completion with other national statistical bureaus and signed the first contract for twinning with GSO in October 1995. Contracts for the ensuing phases were signed in February 1998 and October 2001. In accordance with these contracts SCB has provided the following inputs:

- A Team Leader has been assigned to the project in GSO throughout the project period.
- Long-term advisers supplemented the Team Leader. In the 2nd Phase with almost 6 man-years, mainly on IT. In the 3rd Phase with 1.5 man-years for administration of a database on establishments (and 2 man-years for an associate expert).
- Some 50 missions of short-term advisors have provided inputs on specific subject matters. In the 1st Phase 17 missions were undertaken, 21 in the 2nd and 16 in the 3rd Phase.
- Senior staff from GSO has participated in study tours to statistical institutions. There have been a total of 37 study tours with 8 in the 1st Phase, 17 in the 2nd, and 12 in the 3rd.
- The project has financed participation in international meetings or seminars for senior GSO staff.
- Qualified GSO staff members have been on attachment at SCB and a number of other statistical institutions.
- SCB has provided technical back-stopping to GSO (including provision of technical advice and documents) via telephone and e-mail.
- English language courses (of duration at 6 to 13 weeks) have been provided for GSO staff.
- Advisors and others have provided training courses in specific subject matters.

The first project document stipulated that only 3% of the budget would be for IT equipment. However, when GSO and SCB identified a specific need for support for establishing an IT infrastructure, Sida responded positively although it generally avoids equipment-intensive interventions. An extra SEK 7.9 million was provided for IT in June 1997. The IT module was fully integrated with the twinning project in the 2nd Phase.

3.3.4 Management

The Project Steering Committee has had the overall responsibility throughout the project period. This Committee has consisted of five directors or heads of department led by GSO Project Administrator, Dr. Le Manh Hung, who was Vice Director General of GSO until November 2000, when he became Director General. The day-to-day management of the project has been done by the Project Administrator in close cooperation with the SCB Team Leader and the subject matter departments concerned.

In the annual plan of operation for the project the Team Leader has generally suggested short-term advisors from SCB. However, GSO has had the right to, and has on a number of occasions substituted these advisors with other subject matter specialists when deemed appropriate.

3.3.5 Cost of building the IT infrastructure

Approximately SEK 66 million was disbursed by Sida in the ten year project period from 1995 to 2005. The great bulk has been used for the twinning of GSO with SCB, through which various kinds of technical assistance was provided. However, some SEK 30 million, almost half of the support from Sida, has been used for building an IT infrastructure within GSO and its provincial branches. Table 2 shows that more than SEK 23 million has been used for procurement of IT equipment. In addition to this technical assistance costing more than SEK 6 million has been specifically related to establishing the IT infrastructure.⁸

Table 2: Expenditures for Procurement of IT Equipment

Period	1997	1998–2000	2001–2004	2005	Total
SEK million	5.6	11.5	3.6	2.7	23.4

3.3.6 Support for the VLSS and Support from Other Donors

Sida and UNDP co-finance the first Vietnam Living Standard Survey (VLSS) conducted 1992–93. They also co-financed the VLSS conducted by GSO 2003–2005 for which Sida committed SEK 4 million.

GSO has received assistance for specific projects from a number of other donors. These projects have generally been in the social statistics area, only few donors have been willing to deal with economic statistics. In this field UNDP and ADB have provided some assistance to National Accounts, and UNIDO has provided some assistance to industrial statistics. However, Sida is the only donor providing broad-based assistance to GSO.

4 Findings and Conclusions

4.1 Relevance

The Sida-supported projects are in line with the objectives of the Vietnamese Government. The Government has a clearly expressed need for good economical statistics to enable it to improve the management of the new market-based economy. In accordance with this objective the Government of Vietnam has strengthened GSO through a series of measures:

- reorganisation of GSO in 1994, where GSO was strengthened by moving authority of provincial and district statistics offices from local authorities to GSO at central level;

⁸ During the Second Phase technical assistance related to the IT component amounted to SEK 3.5 million, in the Third Phase it amounted to SEK 2.8 million.

- a statistical law passed in June 2003, which gave GSO an important role in coordinating and overseeing the national statistical system;
- a government decree, which in May 2004 gave GSO a more streamlined organisation;
- resources for GSO, where staff has increased despite several reductions in the number of government employees in the project period, and government funding for major surveys like the Vietnam Living Standard Survey (VLSS) that initially were donor funded.

In addition to this there is a growing demand for good statistics from society at large, especially from the business sector, including from foreign investors.

GSO itself has regarded the lack of economic statistics as an important problem. However, donors did not respond to this need as they focussed on social statistics. Thus, Sida's willingness to assist in the area of economic and business statistics was seen by GSO as a relevant contribution towards solving an important problem.

The projects have been relevant to Sida's overall goal of poverty reduction⁹. The projects have supported Vietnam's transformation to a market-based economy, which in turn is a major cause of the economic growth that is responsible for most poverty reduction. Moreover, relevant data on economic growth are important for the attempt to link growth more directly to poverty reduction as expressed in the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) and for other targeted programmes for the poor.

The projects contribute to one of Sida's specific goals: 'promoting openness and a development towards democracy and an increased respect for human rights' because public statistics are part of the 'infrastructure' of a modern democratic society. Statistics on society contribute to a qualified public debate and therefore to a development towards democracy. The projects do not contribute to respect for human rights.

4.2 Effectiveness

The immediate objective of the projects is '*Timely supply of economic statistical information of appropriate quality and in cost efficient forms*'.¹⁰ Despite the fact that a baseline measuring the indicators defined, time lags and user satisfaction, was never made, it is clear from interviews with stakeholders that the objective has been achieved. By achieving this objective GSO to a high degree fulfils the role that Government wants it to play.

It should be emphasised that this section (4.2), which reaches positive conclusions on achievements in relation to objectives, should be seen in relation to Section 6.1, which deals with GSO's remaining problems, to get a balanced view of GSO's capacity.

4.2.1 Timeliness

Stakeholders, including users, informed that *time lags* in the early 1990s were considerable and that GSO is now supplying statistics timely. The Team can confirm that key economic statistics are rapidly available from GSO. By the end of January 2006 key economic indicators for 2005 were already available, though with preliminary data or estimates for December 2005. The following examples can be mentioned: Detailed export and import statistics, foreign direct investment (up to 15/12 2005), foreign visitors, output of main industrial products (definitive statistics). The CPI for December 2005 and a number of other indicators for 2005 compared to 2004 (population growth, cereals production,

⁹ The overall goal is to create the preconditions for improved living conditions for poor people.

¹⁰ The first project document defines the 'project objective' the following way: *To strengthen the timely supply of statistical information of appropriate quality and in cost/efficient forms required for economic development and stabilization policies.*

fishery production, export and import, retail sales of goods and services, investments etc.) was published already 23rd of January 2006.¹¹

The use of IT or ICT is an important factor for timeliness of the statistics. The statistics are published on the GSO web-page, which was established in October 2004 (with assistance from Sida), which make them readily available to users all over the world as soon as they are published. The establishment of an IT infrastructure down to provincial level has enabled GSO to process survey data rapidly.

Where survey questionnaires earlier had to be sent to GSO headquarters for entry, the availability of computers at provincial offices has enabled staff here to enter and clean survey data (and make call backs when needed) soon after it has been collected and forward it electronically to the headquarters.

4.2.2 Quality and improved methodologies

The *quality* of the economic statistics has also been considerably improved. This was the unanimous conclusion of the users met by the Team. Earlier some of the users had used statistics not produced by GSO, notably alternative GDP growth rates calculated by IMF. This situation has changed; now users have much more confidence in the GSO statistics and IMF does no longer calculate an alternative GDP growth rate.¹²

The Team has found that the projects have contributed to improving the quality of statistics in a number of ways. The price indexes have been updated and established with technical assistance from Sida and SCB. The consumer price index (CPI) has been redesigned; earlier weights from retail sales were applied; now weights from proper expenditure surveys are used. In addition to this a producer price index has been established (PPI). Indexes for prices on construction and for services are also being developed.

GSO now uses international classification based on common used UN nomenclature as for example ISIC¹³ and COICOP¹⁴, which make comparison with other countries possible.

A Business Register has been developed, and the register today contains more than 100.000 units/enterprises and 1.500.000 households businesses. However, mechanisms for effective updating procedures have not been established as a link to the register of the tax authorities has not been established.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this is indeed an important achievement and a prerequisite for creating a valid frame for the economic surveys that include the multitude of new small enterprises. This is an important step for monitoring the economic development in Vietnam.

With assistance from SCB GSO has developed its capacity to conduct sample surveys. The Team has found that at headquarter as well as at provincial level GSO is skilled in survey design, sampling techniques, collection of survey data as well as data analysis. The knowledge of sample survey methodology was little known before the projects when total data was collected through the reporting system. Sample methodology is the only practical way to collect data from households and from the new actors in the market economy: the small or medium sized private enterprise. Sample methodology is a cost-efficient way to collect data – because less data has to be collected and processed and because the response burden is much lower than in total censuses. Finally, sample statistics can be produced more rapidly than total censuses. GSO has in some cases applied rather large sample sizes, partly as a result of provinces wanting break-downs to their level. However, technical assistance from SCB has enabled GSO to reduce the sample size of the Vietnam Living Standard Survey (and the cost) considerable without reducing data quality.

¹¹ A comparison between GSO and Statistics Denmark shows the same time lag for publication of definite data for key economic indicators: approximately 1 ½ month.

¹² IMF still questions how far all economic activities like production of services are included in the GDP figures. However, this appeared not to constitute a serious reservation and the representatives met were not able to qualify this reservation any further.

¹³ International Standard Industrial Classification of all economic activities.

¹⁴ Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purchase.

¹⁵ In Section 6.1.3 the Team outlines an approach for solving this and similar problems.

Project documents for the 2nd and the 3rd Phase see gender specification of statistics as aims. The Team regards gender specification of statistics as an important aspect of data quality.¹⁶ The project has provided assistance in this area and the situation has been improved as more gender specific statistics is now produced by GSO. In the 12 tables published from the VLSS 1992–93 gender specific data are not available. However in the VLSS 2002 there are 14 tables with gender specific statistics among a total of 34 tables. Table 3 shows that the Statistical Yearbook has included more statistics broken down by gender in 2004 than in 1994.

Table 3: Gender Specific Statistics in Statistical Yearbooks 1994 and 2004

Subject matter	Tables with gender figures in 1994 Statistical Yearbook	Tables with gender figures in 2004 Statistical Yearbook
Statistics on population and employment	0/6	2/15
Statistics on enterprise labour	0/1	3/6
Statistics on Education	0/12	3/15

Legend: 2/15 indicates that among a total of 15 tables 2 of the tables provide data broken down by gender.

4.2.3 Dissemination

The projects have also contributed to improved dissemination of more user friendly statistical information. The Statistical Yearbook has for example been expanded considerably. In the subject matters selected in Table 3 the number of tables has been doubled. Information on definitions and methodologies used are now presented, where earlier versions of the Yearbook just presented simple aggregated numbers.

In October 2004 the GSO with support from Sida established a website, which mid-January 2006 (after 15 months) had reached a total of 500,000 visitors – 10% of them to the English version. This is a good result compared to the web-page of Statistics Denmark, where it took more than 30 months to reach a total of 500,000 visitors.¹⁷

Table 4: Visitors per Year to the Web-page of Statistics Denmark

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1000 visitors	77	177	310	477	854	1,085	1,135	1,281	1,759

A new way of disseminating statistics is to make raw data from various surveys available to advanced users like researchers. Presentation of a table with aggregated numbers was earlier seen as the end result. Now it has been realised that raw data are much more useful to professional users. However, GSO still needs to formulate a systematic policy for providing access to raw data.

4.2.4 IT infrastructure

GSO has like many other Central Bureaus of Statistics been through the development from punch card – mainframe – to a network of PC's connected with servers. With the start of the Sida project the GSO had a few computers (with a 386 processor) at headquarter level, and was ready to upgrade the technology.

During the 1st Phase of the support the need for upgrading the infrastructure was identified and Sida agreed to include this. The IT equipment part (hardware and software) has constituted a large part of the assistance (refer to Table 2), but the technical assistance included in this component has been essential and has made a big difference to GSO. The technical assistance (supplemented with standard

¹⁶ None of the users met mentioned the need for gender specification of statistics.

¹⁷ The figures for GSO and Statistics Denmark are admittedly not directly comparable: The increased use of the Internet accounts for some of the faster increase of visits to the GSO web-page, on the other hand Denmark was much wealthier and had more computers eight years ago than Vietnam has today.

IT courses procured locally) has contributed to strengthen the capacity of GSO staff – which the Team has found to be good and up to date. But the technical assistance has above all contributed to develop an IT strategy, which has saved GSO from the mistakes made by other institutions (incompatible subsystems etc.). This IT strategy has been a sound basis for further development of the IT infrastructure with funds from Government as well as from other donors.

Today the GSO is well equipped with IT hard-and software and a staff that is fully prepared for the challenges that the future will bring.

4.2.5 English language training and international contacts

In addition to training in statistical subject matters the project has contributed to English language training. The Team has found that many staff members have acquired a good command of English. This is a precondition for following what happens in the professional field through international meetings and through study tours to statistical institutions. Especially the study tours seem to have been a useful tool for GSO.

4.2.6 GSO as a modern statistical institution

Statistical Services in Vietnam (1994) states that the legal framework at the time had not attributed the responsibility for

- overseeing (acceptance of data collection authority);
- respondents' responsibility and limitations; and
- confidentiality of responses and keeping of basic data files.

With the new Statistical Law these problems have been solved and GSO can be described as a 'modern statistical institution' in line with the UN Statistical Commission's *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*¹⁸:

1. serving the Government, the economy and the public
2. decide according to strictly professional considerations
3. scientific standards
4. comments on misuse of statistics
5. data from surveys and administrative records
6. individual data to be strictly confidential
7. statistics law are to be made public
8. coordination among statistical agencies
9. international concepts, classification and methods
10. bilateral and multilateral cooperation

It is the Teams opinion that GSO in juridical¹⁹ as well as in practical terms is in line with these principles.

¹⁸ Refer to Annex 7.

¹⁹ Statistics Law, 2003.

According to the Statistics Law article 11 and article 18 it is the Prime Minister who decides *on long-term and annual national statistical survey schemes*²⁰ and *issues regulations on basic statistical reports*²¹. In many countries there is no such close relation between Government and the Central Bureau of Statistics. The Central Bureau of Statistics is a (semi)autonomous body led by an independent Board appointed by a responsible minister. Typically the Board will have members from important stakeholders – producers as well as users of statistics. It is the Government or Parliament that makes the appropriation, but it is up to the Board alone to adopt a work plan for activities/surveys. If for example a Ministry wants the Central Bureau of Statistics to carry out other activities it must provide the necessary funds.

A construction with a Board for the Central Bureau of Statistics has the advantages that the resources might be used more effectively. This construction might be considered when a new statistical law is to be made sometime in the future.

4.2.7 The attribution problem

It not easy to determine how far the positive results described above can be attributed to the Sida-supported projects. The analysis above is focussed on economic statistics where Sida has been the only donor providing broad support. GSO has emphasised that even without donor support it would have developed its economic statistics, though at a slower pace. However, it is the Team's assessment that fewer results would have been achieved without Sida's support. The Sida-supported projects have in other words contributed considerably to the positive results.

4.3 Impact²²

The development objective is implicitly defined as better management of the economy and better economic policy making. The improved statistical information produced by GSO is in other words expected to contribute to more informed (or better) decisions from policy makers (as well as from other stakeholders).

In order to establish whether the project has contributed towards more informed decisions from policy makers (=impact) two related questions shall be considered:

- Firstly, how far policy makers and planners have access to and are aware of the economic statistics produced by GSO;
- Secondly, how far policy makers and planners take account of or use the statistical information from GSO (= informed decisions).

All stakeholders met by the Team stated that Government makes much more use GSO's statistical data than it did earlier. Office of the Government (Prime Minister's Office) informed that earlier on statistics were hardly presented at all but two years ago a monthly statistical report from GSO now is an official document provided for Cabinet meetings. The Cabinet now makes use of various kinds of statistics from GSO: statistical time series as well as fast reports on price changes, or statistics which can shed lights on a serious event like the outbreak of bird flue. The Ministry for Planning and Investment (MPI) stated it is the major user of statistical data from GSO and that its plans are based on these data. All other informants confirmed this general picture. Based on this the Team has concluded that the statistics of GSO are being widely used by policy makers and planners.

²⁰ Article 11.

²¹ Article 18.

²² There are different ways to conceptualise impact. The Team has chosen to view impact from the point of view of society and in relation to the development objective. In addition to this the Team has looked for unintended effects, positive as well as negative.

The second question is more difficult to answer. The relationship between information and political decisions is not simple. Political decisions are made on the basis of basic values, ideologies and balances of power. Therefore better statistics may not change policies-even statistical information indicating that a policy has failed may not lead to a change. However, there are many strong indications of more informed decisions based on statistical data by policy makers and planners.

The Team was told by the government sources that the economic management decisions are based on a close monitoring of key economic indicators produced by GSO like the rate of inflation, growth of GDP, and the trade balance etc. Adjustments are continuously made (by changing the national banks interest rate, by adjusting government spending etc.).

MPI also stated that plans are monitored through monthly data from GSO and that corrective action is taken on this basis.

The VLSS has according to UNDP been used to design a huge programme aimed at reducing poverty levels. The VLSS has shown clearly that poverty is severe among ethnic minorities, and the Government has therefore prepared a targeted programme for ethnic minorities of USD 3.7 billion over the next five years. Based on the poverty profiles a number of provinces have also made programmes aimed at reducing poverty.

There are in other words strong indications that improved statistics reach policy makers and planners, and that they base policies, plans and programmes on these statistics.

The Team has not identified any unexpected negative effects. But an important (partly) unexpected positive effect has been identified.

According to the original project document GSO was to become a learning organisation in the last phase of the project period. The concept of a learning organisation is not precise, basically the organizational learning theory is inspired how individual persons via a feed-back from results of their activities. However, the Team has found that GSO has become a learning organisation in the sense that GSO has developed its ability to analyse its problems and to find solutions.²³ Some of these solutions require inputs from professional subject matter experts, but GSO is now able to enter into a dialogue with such experts to draw up Terms of Reference and get the assistance needed. GSO is also quite experienced in learning from other statistical institutions, adapting what it has learned to a Vietnamese context, and then to apply it. GSO has realised the importance of learning from other statistical institutions and has acquired a budget from Government for study tours and participation in international meetings.

The English language capability of key staff, which the Sida-supported projects have contributed to, is an important precondition for GSO's improved learning ability. The IT infrastructure established through the project is another important factor, as the Internet provides easy access to valuable information from other statistical institutions etc. for GSO staff.

4.4 Efficiency

At the overall level, when comparing to similar projects, it is the assessment of the Team that Sida's support to GSO has been efficient. The support to GSO has had much better results than similar projects, and the costs of implementing these projects are not widely different.

Based on a detailed analysis of costs it is more difficult to establish how far the same results could have been achieved at a lower cost. Some of the inputs, especially long-term and short-term advisors, are quite costly. At the same time the consultant (SCB) has not had strong incentives to reduce the use of its inputs in order to lower costs; the consultant has had an incentive to use the available budget fully.

²³ It has been suggested that this could simply be described as "an organisation that can steer its own development."

However, there is little doubt that at least one resident long-term advisor is necessary during a long period in order to establish and maintain trust and common understanding between partners from societies with widely different culture and socio-political systems. The procedure for decision making on the use of short-term consultants has also been an important mechanism for improving efficiency: SCB has made plans for short-term consultancies and has often suggested its own staff, but the Project Steering Committee has in some cases substituted the SCB-consultants with others, often with consultants based in the region.

It seems that especially the budget for study tours has been used efficiently because the Project Steering Committee has been aware of the importance of learning from the experience of others. The Result analysis Report for the 3rd Phase in many cases mentions study tours as contributing to project objectives.

4.5 Sustainability

GSO has been able to handle the Sida-supported projects differently from other projects. Over a long time period it has been able to use the resources in a broad area where it has identified problems. This has enabled GSO to take a much stronger ownership of the Sida-supported projects than other more limited projects that finish within a much shorter time.

The GSO Project Steering Committee has taken great care to ensure that the technical assistance has been used for capacity building (as opposed to gap-filling). Due to this the project has achieved sustainable results within the field of capacity building. GSO has in other words learned methodologies for improved production of statistics and GSO is now able to use these methods for producing better statistics. GSO has, furthermore, in the Team's opinion been enabled to run a future project by itself without support from an institutional consultant (refer to section 6.2).

The Sida-supported projects have also contributed to increasing GSO's financial sustainability. GSO now fulfils the role that the Government wants it to play to a larger degree than ten years ago; and this has increased government's willingness to provide resources (personnel and budgets for equipment) to GSO. This is crucial as funds from government are the basis for financing a national statistical institution.

The IT infrastructure might appear less sustainable as the equipment and the systems will quickly be outdated. However, the head of the Informatics Department summed up what the essential result within this field is when he stated: *'The useful life of a computer is only 5–6 years, but the most important point is that even when the computer that was given to us does not function any more, we are left with knowledge'*. The Team also took note of the fact that GSO made no requests for more IT hardware (which is otherwise common in similar situations in developing countries) – a sign that GSO has learned that professional knowledge and skills are the important factors for developing the institution. It should, however, be mentioned that the World Bank is preparing a USD 10 million project for upgrading GSO's IT system.

4.6 Cross-cutting Issues

The project document for the First Phase did not mention gender. But the documents for the ensuing phases defined gender specification of statistics and an increased percentage of female staff as an objectives. The project has contributed to gender specification of statistics, though much remains to be done in this field. The share of women has increased within GSO, and a policy of preferring a woman if two candidates for a job are equally qualified has possibly contributed to this. However, the project seems not to have contributed to this.

There have been no requirements that the project should work with environmental issues, HIV/AIDS, human rights or specific perspectives of the poor; and the project has not dealt directly with these issues. However, the project has contributed indirectly to some of these issues (refer to Section 4.1).

5 Lessons Learned

5.1 Twinning

The technical assistance from SCB/Sida has been focussed on professional statistical skills and establishment of an IT infrastructure, while issues related to the organisational framework and overall management have received less attention. The First Phase dealt only with statistical subject matters, while relatively small amounts were allocated for organisational and management related issues in the Second and Third phase. Table 5 shows that 6% was allocated for these issues (A cost efficient organisation and information system²⁴ and legal mandate). During the Third Phase 11% of the budget was allocated for an output related to these issues (Supportive organisational structure).²⁵

Table 5: Budget for the Second and Third Phases by Output

Output	Million SEK
<i>Second Phase</i>	
IT infrastructure	15.1
A cost-efficient system for statistics	8.6
Enhanced ability to carry out censuses	3.8
A cost-efficient organisation and information system	1.3
Strengthening the legal mandate of GSO	0.5
Total for Second Phase	29.3
<i>Third Phase</i>	
Adequate statistical methods available	6.0
Competent staff	2.5
Supportive organisational structure	1.9
Adequate information technology	6.6
Total for Third Phase	17.0

The Results Analysis for the 2nd Phase states that an initial design decision on not to intervene in areas where GSO is supported by other donors. This has meant that the project has been limited to one of three departments and that the statistical system has not been sufficiently viewed as a whole.

Furthermore by ‘only supporting one department [...] the so called “twinning method” can’t be applied in full, leaving out spin off effects on areas like administration, management, human resource development.’²⁶

The project document for the Third Phase (2001 – 5) states that in a twinning relationship it takes time to establish confidence and before this has been accomplished it will not be possible to transfer knowledge in areas dominated by cultural behaviour, areas such as management, human development, organization, financial matters etc. According to the project document (prepared 2000–2001) the co-operation had at that stage reached a level, where it was possible to deal with the more sensitive areas. The Team agrees with the approach taken by SCB; it would not have made much sense to deal with organisational matters before establishing mutual confidence.

The project provided technical assistance to development of the organisational framework for: preparing a strategic plan for the period 2000 – 2010; making a first draft for a new Statistical Law; setting up a documentation centre, general management training courses.

²⁴ This includes items like retraining centre, standardised reporting system for economic statistical indicators and English language courses.

²⁵ Although interventions in organisational matters normally do not include equipment they can easily be time consuming and therefore quite costly.

²⁶ Page 14.

The project has contributed decisively to the GSO management's decision making process achievements through study tours for GSO senior staff to statistical institutions in other countries.

This should be seen in connection with the general experiences from twinning projects, where it has been found that twinning has proved successful for building up professional skills in a specific field. *'On the other hand twinning cannot demonstrate the same documented success where, for example, management development is concerned.'* And *'if the problems to be solved are the result of shortcomings in the institutional framework in the legislation, or in personnel, salaries and financial systems which are common to the entire government administration, other forms of cooperation are often preferable.'*²⁷

The GSO-SCB twinning project seems to have been in line with the general experience from twinning projects in the sense that only after a long period where mutual trust was created (and after overcoming other constraints) did the project start providing some assistance to developing the organisational framework and other potentially more sensitive areas.

5.2 IT Infrastructure

A major part of the support to GSO has been for establishment of an IT infrastructure. Procurement of IT equipment has taken a large part of the budget, although Sida, along with like-minded donors, normally keeps away from equipment intensive interventions. The Team has, however, found that the support for establishment of an IT infrastructure has been well warranted.

IT is an important tool for a modern statistical institution, and procurement of some equipment would have been necessary in any case. By providing forthright support to the establishment of an IT infrastructure Sida and SCB have contributed to the development of an IT system for GSO based on a sound overall strategy. All aspects have been taken care of in a professional way like training of staff, making an agreement with Microsoft's Vietnam office on software prices and support mechanism, defining network standards etc.

If Sida had opted for a less comprehensive approach it is likely that GSO and various donors would have introduced IT equipment and (not fully compatible) IT subsystems in a piecemeal way. A piecemeal and unsystematic approach to introduction of IT has been costly to many organisations. Sida's comprehensive approach has ensured that GSO's investments in IT have been rational.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Future Challenges for GSO

GSO has experienced an impressively positive development during the past decade. However, problems or challenges remain, and the Team recommends that GSO pays special attention to some of them. These remaining challenges/problems are first and foremost to address a series of structural problems related to interaction between GSO and other organisations and entities. In the ensuing sections these challenges/problems are described further.

6.1.1 Cooperation with users

One cluster of challenges relate to the interaction with the various users. GSO has expressed its intentions of meeting user needs more fully, but staff members conceptualise this as simply more effective

²⁷ 'Twinning-Cooperation between organisations in the public sector', Subject Facts, Sida, September 2000, page 2.

dissemination not as a continuous dialogue and *mutual learning* on all aspects of productions and use of data. GSO has not yet instituted systematic interaction with users. One way to do this would be to organise user groups within specific areas. A user group consists of representatives of major user groups, for industrial statistics it could consist of Ministry of Industry, representatives from the business community/industries, a representative for research institutions, a donor providing assistance to the industrial sector, a representative for industrial workers. The user group would comment on and specify its needs for data before a new survey is designed; and the group would be invited to discuss and provide feed-back on the analysis and the final report when the survey has been made. Annex 6 on data needs assessment provides more reflections on the interactions with users.

Research institutions constitute a specific group of users. The function of a statistical institution is first and foremost to make general statistical information available. However, the usefulness of the data can be considerably enhanced if researchers get access to the raw data sets as soon as they have been cleaned. It is the job of research institutions to provide specialised and new kinds of (possibly controversial) analyses of the data in order to get a deeper understanding of society's development. GSO could not and should not try to match research institutions, but should only publish general analytical information. But GSO statistical data will enhance the public good²⁸ created by the statistical data if they are provided to research institutions that later publish the results. Sale of raw data or in-transparent mechanisms for dissemination of raw data might constitute a barrier for research institutions and might earn some money for GSO, but might reduce the public good from the data considerably.

The Team recommends the following:

- Carry out a data-needs assessment for various subject areas
- Establish permanent user groups in different subject areas.

6.1.2 Dissemination

It is generally a challenge to Central Bureaus of Statistics to improve dissemination of data. For GSO it might be time to develop a proper dissemination policy.

The Team suggest that GSO improves dissemination to the general public by forming a group with participation of user representatives. The following areas should be considered: Improving publications with overview introduction for each subject matter; providing more user friendly data (as GDP per capita and not just a total for the whole country); more gender-specific statistics; improving the homepage further; provide documentation of the methodologies used.

The Team recommends that:

- GSO forms an ad hoc group with representatives from users aimed at improving dissemination of statistics to the general public.

6.1.3 Methodological and structural challenges

GSO normally sees two main methods for collecting statistics: 1) reporting, and 2) sample surveys. The Team would like to call the attention to a third method: use of administrative registers for statistical purposes. This is in fact the main method for collecting statistics in Scandinavia. Most statistics are collected from administrative registers of various public entities and very few sample surveys are made.

The Team is of the opinion that establishment of administrative registers that also serve statistical purposes now is a major challenge to GSO. The main problem is structural: namely to institute cooperation between line ministries and GSO. In the field of business statistics the challenge is to establish a

²⁸ A public good, like statistics, possesses two properties: It can be available to all once it has been produced and everyone can benefit from it without diminishing other's use.

well functioning single business register that serves the tax authorities as well as GSO. In the field of trade statistics the challenge is to establish a register that serves the customs authorities as well as GSO.

The Team recommends that:

- GSO and the tax authorities form a commission with the purpose of making a proposal for how a single business register could be designed and managed to serve the tax authorities as well as the need for national statistics.
- GSO and the customs authorities form a commission with the purpose of making a proposal for how a single business register could be designed and managed to serve the customs authorities as well as the need for national statistics.

The development of the Vietnamese society makes it necessary to develop statistics on new subject matter areas like services, energy and environment. Sample survey methodology is a relatively new to GSO and skills in this area could still be improved.

6.1.4 Improving data quality from the reporting system

For many years Vietnam has developed a reporting system. The quality of the data has been questioned – among other things because the statistics have been influenced by what should have been achieved and does not reflect what really was achieved. However, the reporting system is extremely useful because it (unlike sample surveys) provides detailed information on local areas.

The main cost of the reporting system is the *response burden* to communes and the enterprises. This response burden could be reduced considerably by less frequent reporting. Monthly reporting made sense in a centrally planned economy, when authorities could intervene in enterprises. In a market economy, frequent reporting makes less sense. In many cases biannual or annual reporting would be sufficient. In addition to diminishing the response burden less frequent reporting would also allow DSB, PSO and GSO to improve the data quality.

The Team recommends that:

- GSO, relevant line ministries and local authorities form a commission with the purpose of improving the reporting system.

6.1.5 Management

GSO faces the challenge of a more general reform of the organisation as part of the Public Administrative Reform process driven by the Ministry of Home Affairs. As an outcome of this process GSO could become a service organisation more detached from government. This might be combined with introduction of newer management tools within the organisation.

Within the past decade new management tools have been developed to make organizations focus on their core functions. The key areas would be improved management skills (strategy management, change management, human resources management, quality management, modernization management process, motivation).

The Team suggests that GSO considers how far these tools could be used.

6.2 Outline for Future Support to GSO

The ten years cooperation between GSO and SCB funded by Sida has, as mentioned, been successful. GSO has undergone a very positive capacity development, which has enabled it to produce better and timelier economic statistics. Above all, GSO has developed its learning ability.

Due to these positive results a different project is called for in the future. Support to GSO's continued learning should be 'lighter' than the previous project. In a new project a resident team of advisors is no longer required, because GSO is able to analyse its remaining problems and to specify the technical assistance it needs. Thus, a new project could be run by GSO without an institutional consultant.²⁹ GSO has stated that it would need a local consultant to assist the Steering Committee with practical matters.

If a twinning arrangement is chosen, it is the Team's opinion that it would only make sense if the cooperation with SCB is continued. The institutions would only meet a couple of times a year and therefore a new institutional consultant would not be able to build up the same level of trust and mutual understanding with GSO as SCB has. Due to this only SCB would be able to provide back-up through telephone and mail.³⁰

Section 6.1 attempts to determine GSO's remaining challenges. It is concluded that these problems first and foremost are based on structural problems – problems related to interaction between GSO and other organisations and entities. Organisations or stakeholders have to engage in a joint problem solving process to address these problems. Therefore all the Team's recommendations to GSO refer to creation of groups or commissions tasked with finding and elaborating solutions.

The Team is of the opinion that the best way a project can support such commissions is providing funds for *study tours* to allow GSO and other stakeholders to learn from experiences of other countries within the following fields: cooperation with users, improving the dissemination strategy, re-design and management of administrative registers to make them useful for statistical purposes, and improvement of the reporting system.

The Team emphasises the use of study tours for the following reasons:

- It is a finding that study tours have contributed considerably to the results achieved, and key staff members often referred to what they had learned on study tours to statistical institutions.
- GSO has to a considerable degree acquired the methodological skills it needs. To develop GSO further it is important to get continuous inspiration from practical experience of organising statistical processes in other countries.
- Study tours and participation in international conferences also enables GSO to build up a professional net-work, which is essential for developing a modern organisation.
- Finally a study tour can be a useful vehicle for bringing key people from different Vietnamese organisations together and establishing relations between them, and for engaging them in common problem solving.

GSO, SCB and the statistical bureaus of Cambodia and Laos have established a useful exchange of experiences at regional meetings. The Team agrees with SCB and GSO that this is useful and recommends that funds for this regional collaboration be included in a future project.

Short-term technical advisors might provide a limited input in relation to some of the issues mentioned above. Short-term technical assistance would first and foremost support the development of GSO's statistical methodology in specific areas like sample survey design, and specific subject matter areas, where GSO has identified a need: service, transport and energy statistics.

²⁹ At the workshop in Hanoi on 17th of February the representative from MPI, who has followed the Sida-supported projects at GSO since the start shared this opinion.

³⁰ At the workshop in Stockholm on 7th of February SCB expressed the opinion that a permanent advisor is needed. It emphasised the need for a method-oriented statistician assigned to GSO who would also be a link between the institutions.

The Team suggests that provision of one or more Masters' training courses in sampling techniques is considered. It should also be considered to provide assistance within another area that is high on the agenda in discussions about the CPRGS: develop statistics showing the connection between economic growth and social development. In this gender-specific statistics is one of the requirements.

Based on these considerations the Team finally recommends:

- A project for support to GSO be designed and implemented. The key component would be funds for study tours for commissions or groups comprised of GSO and other stakeholders. Short-term technical assistance would be another component.

Appendix 1. Terms of Reference

1 Background

The General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO) is Vietnam's state statistical bureau reporting directly to the Office of the Prime Minister. Vietnam passed a new Statistics Law in May 2003 and GSO was given a new mandate in Government Decree 101/2003/ND-CP of September 3, 2003, according to which

The General Statistics Office is an agency under direct authority of the Government to implement state management responsibilities and powers in statistics field; to perform statistical activities and provide socio-economic information to agencies, organizations and individuals as regulated by the law; to operate state management in public services and implement some concrete responsibilities and rights regarding state-ownership representatives in state-owned enterprises which are under management of the General Statistics Office as regulated by the law.

Sida has supported projects at GSO since 1995, disbursing SEK 66 million of an expected SEK 67 million to date. The great bulk of this support – and the subject of this evaluation – is the support channeled in the form of a bilateral project twinning GSO with Statistics Sweden (SCB).

Sida supported 1995–1998 (contribution 46004281) at the General Statistics Office with SEK 15 million.³¹ The purpose of the support was to increase GSO's capacity to produce statistics that are in demand and to improve the quality and reliability of the statistics.

Sida gave SEK 30 million in support to the *Economic Reform Program 1998–2001* (contribution 46000004) at GSO.³²

Sida gave SEK 34 million in support for *Strengthening Capacity in Economic Statistics 2001–2005* (contribution 46000065).³³ According to the specific agreement between the Governments of Sweden and Vietnam,³⁴ “The main objective of the support is to enable Vietnam to formulate effective policies and to establish priority areas for development through access to improved and reliable economic statistics. The specific objective is to strengthen the timely supply of statistical information of appropriate quality and in cost-efficient terms.” The major elements included:

- an enterprise register and a land use register,
- an IT component and
- the development of a “new and modern-thinking” organization

Additionally, Sida has co-financed with UNDP the *General Household Survey conducted by GSO 2003–2005* (contribution 46000138). To date Sida has disbursed SEK 3.5 million of SEK 4 million committed.

³¹ Decision FÖRV 22/94; decision VIE 151/95 dated 1995-10-19, file no. 1.62.15.

³² Dnr DESO-1998-1056. Agreement signed 1998-02-12 and amended in an exchange of letters 2000-10-09 and 2000-10-17.

³³ Decision VNM 148/01 2001-06-20.

³⁴ Specific Agreement signed 2001-10-17 and extended until 2005-06-30 in an exchange of letters 2004-11-09 and 2004-11-22.

contribution	46004281	46000004	46000065	46000138	Total
before 1998	14 844 765				14 844 765
1998	215 413	5 542 093			5 757 506
1999		11 036 935			11 036 935
2000		8 642 369			8 642 369
2001		4 313 666	1 137 299		5 450 965
2002		746 192	3 104 599		3 850 791
2003			2 545 224	1 910 250	4 455 474
2004			6 696 628	0	6 696 628
planned 2005			3 251 087	2 089 750	5 340 837
disbursed 2005			3 251 087	1 573 933	4 825 020
total (plus planned 2005)	15 060 178	30 281 255	16 734 837	4 000 000	66 076 270
total (plus disbursed 2005)	15 060 178	30 281 255	16 734 837	3 484 183	65 560 453

2 Reasons for conducting the Evaluation

There are several reasons for conducting an evaluation at this time:

- Sida is considering additional support to GSO starting during 2005 and would like to sum up and assess the experience thus far before making a decision about new support.
- GSO has an important role to play in Vietnam and that role has been strengthened in the new Statistical Law. At the same time, GSO will need to strengthen itself and the public sector's capacity to commission statistical work and use statistics, if statistics is to be an important tool for public decision-making. GSO and other parts of government responsible for or dependent on GSO's performance need to learn about its capacity-building in the past in order to build capacity more efficiently in the future.
- Sida has supported GSO for ten years. While the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi's general impression is that the support has gone well, Sida would like a more careful, independent review to assess the support.
- Regardless of Sida's decision, other donors are providing support to GSO, or planning to provide support, or can be expected to provide support for many years to come. It is therefore reasonable that GSO and the donors learn from experience so as to make future support more effective.

Scope and Focus

The evaluation will focus on the Swedish supported bilateral project twinning GSO and SCB. The evaluation shall focus on the entire period 1995–2005, but for practical reasons will probably need to focus primarily on the most recent bilateral project Strengthening Capacity in Economic Statistics 2001–2005 (contribution 46000065).

3 The Assignment (issues to be covered in the evaluation)

Achievement of Objectives

What has been the effect of the Sida-supported projects? What have been the major accomplishments of the projects? Could the projects have been significantly more effective, and if so how?

Review the goals of the Sida-supported bilateral projects. Have these goals been attained?

During the period of Swedish support, has GSO taken important steps towards playing the role that the Government of Vietnam wants it to play – keeping in mind that this role has changed with the new Statistical Law?

What qualities would characterize a modern and internationally recognized statistical institution, at least for a country with Vietnam's income, institutional strength and level of development? During the period of Swedish support, has GSO taken important steps towards becoming a modern and internationally recognized statistical institution?

Relevance

Have the Sida-supported projects played an important role in solving important problems for Vietnam?

Have the Sida-supported projects played an important role in achieving Sweden's goals for development cooperation with Vietnam?

Have the Sida-supported projects played an important role in solving important problems for GSO?

Efficiency

Have the resources devoted to the project been used reasonably efficiently? Are there alternative ways that better results could have been achieved at a significantly lower cost?

Impact

What evidence is there that the statistics provided by GSO are more useful – used more and for more important purposes – than they were before the period of Swedish support?

Sustainability

Are the improvements that have taken place at GSO during the period of Swedish support sustainable? Can GSO be said to have “owned” the project?

Is GSO sustainable? Can GSO develop on its own sustainably towards playing the role the Government of Vietnam has assigned to it and towards becoming a modern, internationally recognized statistical institution? If not, what are GSO's major remaining weaknesses? Is GSO capable, with the support of donors and expert consultants, of diagnosing its remaining weaknesses and designing and implementing measures to remedy them?

Cross-Cutting Issues

Was there a requirement that the project work with gender issues? Has the project worked with such issues effectively, both in terms of the statistics produced and GSO's personnel policy?

Was there a requirement that the project work with HIV/AIDS? Has the project worked with such issues effectively, both in terms of the statistics produced and protecting GSO's employees?

Was there a requirement that the project work with environmental issues? Has the project worked with such issues effectively, both in terms of the statistics produced and GSO's management?

Was there a requirement that the project consider with the perspective of the poor or the human rights perspective of the Swedish Policy for Global Development? Has the project worked with such issues effectively, in terms of statistics produced?

Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

In addition to reporting evaluation findings, the evaluators must draw conclusions about the Sida-supported bilateral project twinning GSO and SCB, make recommendations for future support, and finally identify lessons learned of a more general nature that may be important for other organizations in Vietnam or statistical projects.

4 Methodology, Evaluation Team and Time Schedule

Evaluation team

The evaluation team shall consist of at least three people with the following qualifications:

- Expert knowledge of capacity-building and institution building in developing countries, preferably with some experience from Vietnam;

- Expert knowledge of statistics in developing countries, preferably with some experience from Vietnam;
- Expert knowledge of public administration in Vietnam and elsewhere;
- Expert knowledge of evaluating development cooperation projects.

All team members should speak and write English well. At least one person should be Vietnamese and speak Vietnamese³⁵.

Work program

The evaluators shall spend approximately a week collecting and studying written documents from GSO, the Embassy, Sida and SCB regarding the Sida-supported projects.

The evaluators shall spend approximately ten days to two weeks in Hanoi visiting and interviewing people at GSO, the Embassy, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Home Affairs and other government agencies, research institutions, and other donors including the World Bank, the IMF, UNDP and DFID – that the evaluators consider appropriate to meet. Thereafter the evaluators shall write and submit a draft evaluation report.

The evaluators shall conduct seminars in Stockholm and Hanoi on the draft report, presenting and discussing the findings and collecting comments on the draft report. On the basis of oral and written received comments, the evaluators shall revise the report and submit a final version.

5 Reporting

The evaluation report shall be written in English and should not exceed 40 pages, excluding annexes. Format and outline of the report shall follow the guidelines in *Sida Evaluation Report-a Standardized Format* (see Annex 1).³⁶ The draft report shall be submitted to Sida electronically and in paper no later than February 28, 2005.³⁷

The draft report should be presented at a seminar at Sida in Stockholm, and at a seminar organized by GSO and the Embassy in Hanoi with representatives from GSO, SCB, other Government agencies and donors. GSO, the Embassy and Sida will submit written comments to the evaluators within one month of these seminars.

Within one month after receiving GSO's, the Embassy's and Sida's comments on the draft report, a final version shall be submitted to Sida, again electronically and in paper. Sida will have the copyright to the final version of the evaluation report. The evaluation report must be presented in a way that enables publication without further editing. Subject to decision by Sida, the report will be published in the series *Sida Evaluations*.

The evaluation assignment includes the completion of *Sida Evaluations Data Work Sheet* (Annex 2), including an *Evaluation Abstract* (final section, G) as defined and required by DAC. The completed Data Worksheet shall be submitted to Sida along with the final version of the report. Failing a completed Data Worksheet, the report cannot be processed.

³⁵ Should the tenders not be able to identify or provide an appropriate Vietnamese consultant for the assignment, the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi will suggest a suitable consultant.

³⁶ Note that the report by prior agreement with the Embassy of Sweden may be written in standard, widely used word-processing software other than Word. Moreover, the file containing the report can be e-mailed to the Embassy rather than be submitted on a diskette.

³⁷ Note that Tết, the most important holiday in Vietnam, is January 28, 2006, so the evaluators cannot count on getting any work done one week before or two weeks after Tết.

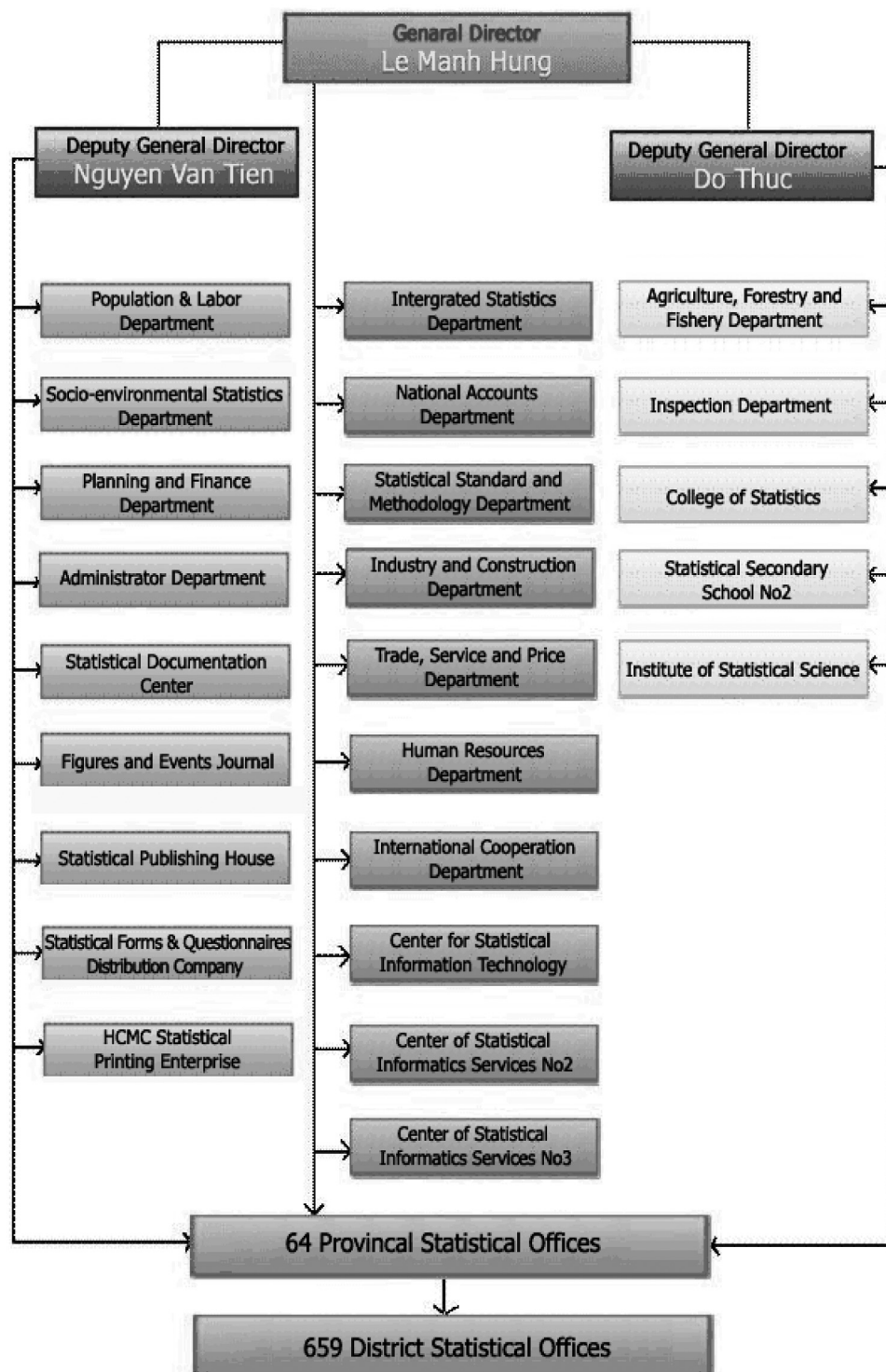
Appendix 2. Programme and Persons Met

January 9th	Arrival in Hanoi
January 10th	<i>Director of GSO, Le Manh Hung, Ph.D.</i> <i>Project Steering Committee of GSO</i> • Director of GSO Le Manh Hung, <i>Ph.D.</i> • Mr. Pham Huy Tu • Mr. Nguyen Anh Tuan, Head of International Co-Operation Department, • Mr. Duong Danh Ton, Head of Planning and Finance, • Ms. Nguyen Thi Lien, head of Trade, Service and Price Department, • Mr. Nguyen Van Lieu, Deputy Director of GSO's Office • Mr. Phan Huy Tu, Head of Statistical Informatics Centre <i>Trade, Service and Price Statistics Department</i>
January 11th	<i>Embassy of Sweden</i> • Mr. James Donovan, First Secretary • Ms. Le Ngoc Lien, Programme Officer <i>Integrated Statistics Department</i> <i>Ms. Nguyen Thi Chien, Deputy Director</i>
January 12th	<i>Bac Giang Provincial Statistics Office</i> • Mr. Duong Van Chien, Director • Ms. Nguyen Bich Hang, Deputy Director • Ms. Nguyen Thi Xuan Nghia, Head of Organizational and Administrative Division • Mr. Ha Van Luong, Deputy head of Population and Social culture Division • Ms. Le Thi Bich Hanh, officer Population and Social culture Division • Ms. Hoang Thi Hanh, Deputy Head of Integrated Division • Mr. Tran Van Chuong, Officer Integrated Division <i>District Lang Giang Statistics Office</i> • Mr. Nguyen Xuan Quynh, Head of DSO • Mr. Le Manh Hao, Deputy Head of DSO

January 13th	<i>Statistical Informatics Centre</i> • Mr. Pham Huy Tu, Director • Ms. Nguyen Huyen Thanh, Deputy Head Database Division <i>Personal and Organization Department</i> • Mr. Than Van Nien, Director Personnel and Training Department, General Statistical Office • Mr. Tran Dang Long, Deputy Director Personnel and Training Department, General Statistical Office • Ms. Pham Y Tu, Senior officer of Training.
January 14th	Report writing
January 15th	Report writing
January 16th	<i>World Bank</i> • Mr. Rob Swinkels, Senior Poverty Economist <i>IMF</i> • Mr. Il Hounq lee, Senior Resident Representative • Mr. Nguyen Danh Hao, Senior Operations Officer <i>UNDP</i> • Mr. Nguyen Tien Phong, Assistant Resident Representative/head Poverty and Social Development Cluster - Junichi Imai, Programme Officer Poverty and Social Development Cluster
January 17th	<i>Office of the Government (Prime-Ministers' Office)</i> • Mr. Dam Quang Oanh, Vice Director of the general Department • Mr. Vu Duc Khanh, Senior Department of Synthesis <i>Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)</i> • Mr. Bui Ha, Director Department of National Economic Issues <i>Vietnam Institute of Economics</i> • Mr. Vu Tuan Anh, Editor in Chief, Vietnam's Socio-Economic Development Review • Mr. Nguyen Van Pham, Deputy Director GSO's Department of International Cooperation
January 18th	<i>Hanoi Province Statistical Office</i> • Mr. Cong Xuan Mui, Director • Ms. Vu Lan Huong, Deputy Head Organizational and Personnel Division <i>Tay Ho District Statistical Office</i> • Ms. Le Tuyet Son, Head of Tay Ho DSO • Ms. Chi, Officer • Ms. Nguyen Kim Chi <i>Ministry of Home Affairs</i> • Dr. Hoang Dung, Deputy Director General, International Cooperation Department • Mr. Nguyen Hoa Binh, Deputy Director, Department of Administrative Reform

January 19th	<i>Project Steering Committee</i>
January 20th	Summing Up Meeting with GSO and Sida <i>Mekong Economics</i> • Mr. Adam MacCarthy, Chief Economist Departure from Hanoi Airport
February 7th	<i>Workshop in Stockholm</i> • Mr. Thomas Kjellson, Programme Coordinator, Sida • Mr. Ronnie Andersson, Director, International Consulting Office of SCB • Mr. Sten Bäcklund, Area Manager, International Consulting Office of SCB • Ms. Christina von Bahr, Administrator, International Consulting Office of SCB
February 17th	<i>Workshop in Hanoi</i> • Dr. Le Manh Hung, Director-General of GSO • Mr. Nguyen Anh Tuan, Director, Dept. of International Cooperation • Mrs. Nguyen Thi Lien, Director, Dept. of Trade, Service and Price Statistics • Mr. Tran Kim Dong, Director, Department of Integrated Statistics • Mr. Duong Danh Ton, Director, Department of Financial Planning • Mr. Vu Van Tuan, Director, Department of Industry and Construction Statistics • Mr. Tran Dang Long, Deputy Director, Department of Organization and Personnel • Mr. Thieu Van Tien, Deputy Director, Statistical Informatics Center • Mr. Duong Van Chien, Director Bac Giang PSO • Mr. Do Ngoc Khai, Deputy Director, Hanoi City Statistics Office • Ms. Le Thi Lan Phuong, Official, Department of International Cooperation (Interpreter) • Ms. Hoang Thi Kim Chi, Official, Dept. of International Cooperation • Mr. Do Xuan Thong, Head, EU Division, MPI • Mr. James Donovan, First Secretary, Embassy of Sweden • Ms. Le Ngoc Lien, Programme Officer, Embassy of Sweden

Appendix 3. Organisational Structure of GSO



Appendix 4. Reconstruction of the Logical Matrix

The project objectives and thus the intervention logic of the project are described in separate documents – one for each of the three phases. However, the definitions of objectives in the three project documents are not consistent and they are in the Team's opinion not in accordance with the logical framework approach.

Immediate Objective

The highest level objective in all the documents (designated 'Project Objective' in the Phase One document and 'Overall Development Objective' in the documents for Phase Two and Three) is with minor variations: 'Timely supply of statistical information of appropriate quality and in cost-efficient forms (required for economic development and stabilisation policies)'. The Team sees this as an immediate objective because it is an objective that the project (and the primary beneficiary, GSO) is able to achieve. It is necessary to define a development objective at a higher level, which the project can only contribute to but which it cannot achieve. It is against this development objective that impact has to be measured.

Development Objective

The first project document implicitly defines the development objective of the project as better economic management and better policy making—more specifically as efforts at stabilising the economy and to implement an economic reform programme (p. 6). The Result Analysis Report of the 3rd Phase describes the development objective as 'to enable the government of Vietnam to formulate effective policies and to establish priority areas for development'. Thus the following development objective has been deducted: 'Better management of the economy and better economic policy making'. As the Team is not in a position to pass judgments on what is to be considered 'good' policies we have decided to operationalise this as *informed* policy making and planning. The indicators chosen for this are: 1) the Policy makers and planners are aware of and refer the economic statistics produced by GSO; 2) Statistical information from GSO affects policy decisions and plans.

Outputs

Each of the documents for the three phases define 4–5 specific outputs (for Phase Two and Three the construction is more complicated they are objectives that summarise objectives at a lower level below which a number of outputs are defined). Outputs for each of the phases are summarised in the reconstructed logical framework.

Appendix 5. Selected References

Documents on the 1st Phase:

- Statistical Services in Vietnam, Project Document; by Jan A. Ekelöf and Merrick L. Jones, May 1995
- Contract between General Statistical Office of Vietnam and Statistics Sweden, International Consulting Office, 1995-10-26.
- Stöd till Statistikområdet i Vietnam; Sida, 1995-06-20
- Annual Progress Report and Annual Plans of Operation, 1996
- Amendment to contract, 15 July 1997
- Assist GSO in the whole process of procurement of the IT project, Embassy of Sweden, 19 August, 1997
- Result Analysis Report, Project Steering Committee, 1997.

Documents on the 2nd Phase:

- Project Document for the 2nd Phase, Project Steering Committee.
- Contract between General Statistical Office of Vietnam and Statistics Sweden, International Consulting Office, 1998-02-13.
- Beslut om avtal för stöd till Vietnams ekonomiska reformprocess 1998–2000; Sida, 1997-11-14
- Progress Report for 1998 and planned activities for 1999, Project Steering Committee.
- Annual Progress Report for 1999, Project Steering Committee.
- Twinning GSO-SCB, Vietnam, Sida Promemoria, 1999-02-08
- Result Analysis Report, Project Steering Committee, 2001.

Documents on the 3rd Phase:

- Project Document for the 3rd Phase, Project Steering Committee.
- Contract between General Statistical Office of Vietnam and Statistics Sweden, International Consulting Office, 2001-10-17 – 2004-12-31.
- Annual Progress Report for 2002, Project Steering Committee.
- Support to national statistics development in Vietnam 2001-2004, Embassy of Sweden, 2001-06-20
- Result Analysis Report, Project Steering Committee, May 2005.

Other Documents:

- GSO: Introduction of Main Statistics Products, Hanoi, 2005.
- GSO: Main Statistics of the year 2005.
- GSO: Statistical Yearbook, various years.
- GTZ: National Monitoring of Sustainable Poverty Reduction Strategies /PRSPs, Volume 2: Country Study Vietnam.
- Joint Donor Report to the Vietnam Consultative Group Meeting: Poverty, Vietnam Development Report 2004, Hanoi, December 2003.
- McCarty, Adam: The Policy Making Process in Vietnam, Mekong Economics 2002.
- Nørlund, Tran Ngoc & Nguyen Dienh: Dealing with the Donors, The Politics of Vietnam's Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy. Policy Papers 4/2003, Institute of Development Studies, University of Helsinki.
- Sida: Looking Back, Moving Forward, Sida Evaluation Manual, 2004.
- Vietnam Institute of Economics: Vietnam's Socio-Economic Development.

Issues number 41 to 44.

- Sida: Twinning-Cooperation between organisations in the public sector', Subject Facts, Sida, September 2000

Appendix 6. Data Needs Assessment

For a Central Bureau of Statistics and for other producers of statistics it is not always easy to identify the user's need for statistical information.

Some stakeholders for example by tradition will continue to require the same information as they have received over long period without asking if this information really is necessary or if other information will be more relevant. Other stakeholders might require specific information collected without knowing that nearly the same information can be obtained from a combination of administrative and already published surveys.

For stakeholders that do not have a thorough knowledge of scopes of surveys and/or administrative records, how data are collected and reliability and validity of the data it is difficult for the users of statistics to specify what kind of data they really need.

The Central Bureau of Statistics can approach to user's need using various methodologies:

User surveys.

The Central Bureau of Statistics can conduct systematic user surveys for relevant groups of users by

- structured questionnaires or
- more open ended questionnaire

This approach can be recommended for user with a broad knowledge in statistical matter, but if this is not the case it will not be possible to solve the problems describes above.

Comprehensive data needs assessment.

A more complete approach could be that the Central Bureau of Statistics forms user groups within a specific subject areas and in these forums the users can articulate their needs for statistical information. The statisticians from the Central Bureau of Statistics must thought questions to the user try to clarify more specific what the user's need as for example:

- The level of geographical breakdown
- Survey or total count
- Precision of data
- Detail of data
- Precise definition of concepts
- How often

This clarification can help to specify the outcome and as the budget in most cases is limited the statisticians should try to come up with proposal that minimizes the scope of the project and in that way minimize the expenses and maybe at the same time reduce the response burden. This is of course not always possible but should always be tried and the result will in any case be a further specification of user needs resulting in a clearer picture of what is needed to know and what is nice to know.

What is important here is the dialog process between user and producer. Sometimes it can be a very long process, but in most cases the results will give a profound understanding between each of the two parties.

In many cases it will be possible for the statisticians to come up with proposals in the end of the first meeting, but in some cases it will be necessary for the statisticians to make further investigations for example analysis of quality of data in specific surveys that perhaps can be used to satisfy users need or if it is possible to produce relevant information by combining administrative records and already collected survey data. The outcome of such an investigation can very well be that the statisticians come up with more than one solution to be discussed with the users.

To summarize: The above described process will give a deep mutual understanding between user and producer of statistics and will furnish the way forward for producing relevant statistics for the users by statisticians using all there professional skills.

Middle of the road

Structured user surveys and comprehensive data needs assessments have the same focus: to satisfy users. It is the Team's opinion that although the latter can be very time consuming it can produce much more relevant statistics.

Appendix 7. Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Adopted by UN Statistical Commission,

Principle 1. Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the Government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honor citizens' entitlement to public information.

Principle 2. To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.

Principle 3. To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.

Principle 4. The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.

Principle 5. Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.

Principle 6. Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.

Principle 7. The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

Principle 8. Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.

Principle 9. The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.

Principle 10. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.

Recent Sida Evaluations

- 06/35 Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), 2002–2004**
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- 06/36 Health through Sanitation and Water Programme (HESAWA), Tanzania Ex-post (Retrospective) Evaluation Study**
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Department for Natural Resources and Environment
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Holger Jonasson, Agnes Mwaiselage
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- 06/38 Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) Bus Project in Dhaka**
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Department for Infrastructure and Economic Cooperation
- 06/39 Journalism as a Tool for the Formation of a Free, Informed and Participatory Development Swedish Support to a Palestinian Journalist Training Project on the West Bank and Gaza for the Period 1996–2004**
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