

Vietnam

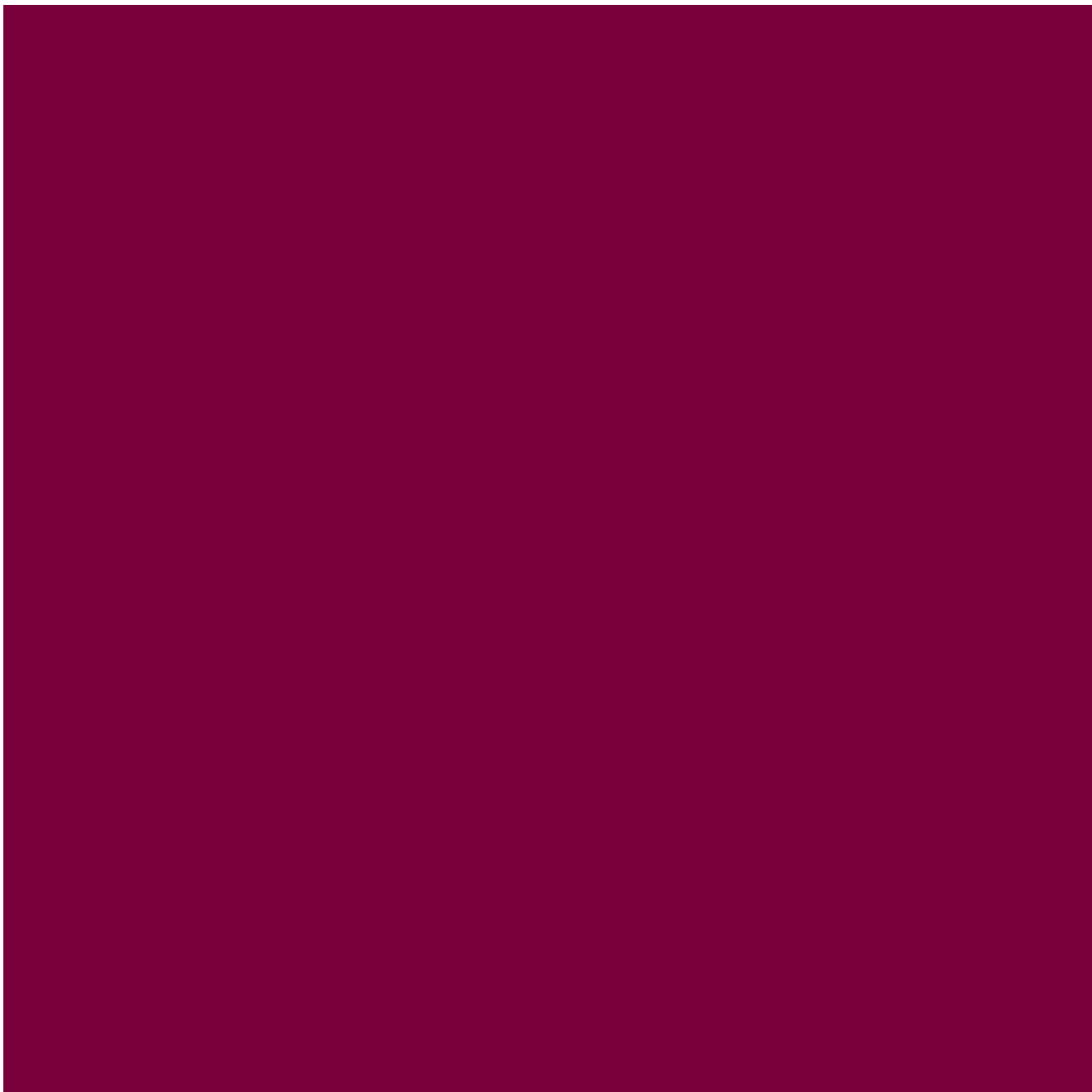


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1. General Analysis

1. 1 General

The 1999-2003 country strategy for Vietnam implied some important changes in emphases in comparison with the previous strategy.

The economic reform, growth and environment oriented approaches, based on the importance of Vietnams reform efforts started in 1986 now gave way to a poverty reduction and governance approach. Two specific objectives were formulated:

- to promote Vietnam’s capacity on a long-term and environmentally sustainable basis, to increase its prosperity and reduce poverty
- to promote openness and development towards democracy and increased respect for human rights,

General guidelines were: “Focus on institution and capacity building with a view to democratisation and the reform process in the fields of economic policy, government administration, industry, health, environment and other sectors of central importance to sustainable development and poverty reduction”, and “projects aimed specifically at the local level should be tried to an increasing extent”.

The current strategy pointed out that the space for new initiatives were small since the “under-planning” during previous periods had turned into a well-filled portfolio. It was thus emphasised that the redirection of the content of the portfolio would take time. It was also pointed out that a major concentration effort was made 1995–96, making room for a concentrated effort for the future (i.e. the 1999–2003 strategy period)

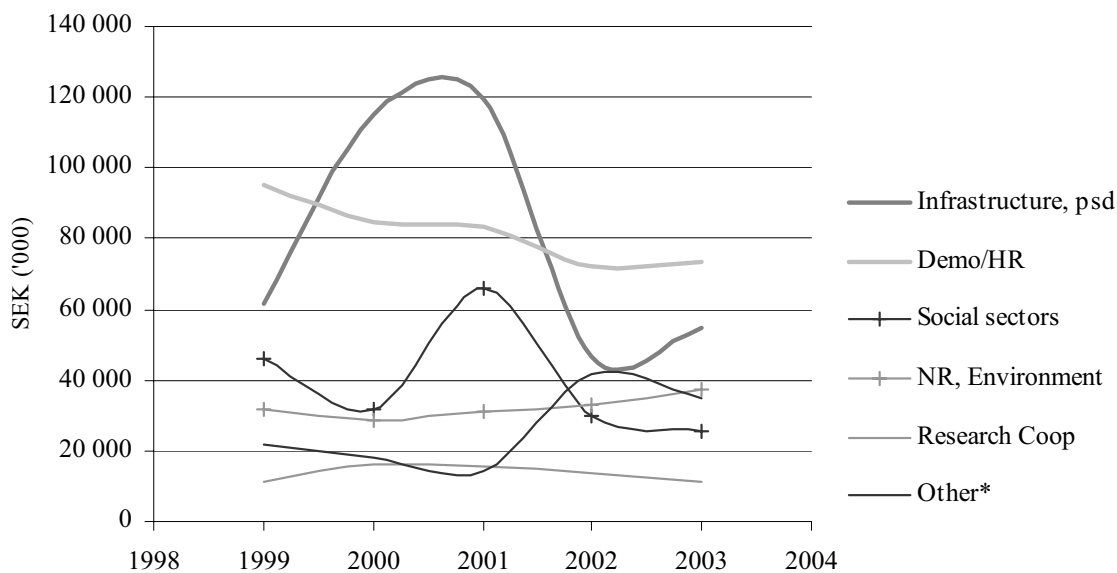
The sector priorities suggested in the Country Strategy were:

- Strategic measures for economic, administrative and social reforms
- Measures targeted at disadvantaged areas and groups
- Efforts for sustainable development
- Promotion of democracy and human rights through pursuing issues of openness, participation and gender equality
- Energy project in disadvantages areas

Gradual shifts have taken place during the past 4-year period in order to reach the specific areas referred to. The total disbursement during the strategy period is shown in the graph below and reflects the changes in

the composition of the programme over time. It should be noted that the decrease in total disbursements during 2002, which will also spill over into 2003, is due to the fact that a number of new project and programme preparations were initiated in order to sharpen the focus of the country strategy objectives and guidelines and these preparations take time. Tables 3 and 4 at the end of chapter 1 provide a more precise account over disbursements 1999-2003.

Graph 1: Total disbursements 1999–2003



During the country strategy period a number of external factors have influenced its implementation. Examples of those are the very rapid economic growth of the country, the slow speed of political reforms and the increased number of other donors on the arena. The net effect has probably been that Vietnam has become more aid dependent, since it has more donors to handle and an increased resource inflow but limited administrative capacities in spite of harmonisation efforts. The economic growth has been uneven creating higher relative income inequalities on one hand but also reducing poverty on the other. Higher demands have been put on the dialogue issues particularly in areas of priority for Sweden. The increased number of donors has also made it possible to synergise efforts but also put higher demand on capacity to co-ordinate both for donors and GoV.

The external evaluation of the implementation of the Sweden-Vietnam country strategy 1999–2003 undertaken in spring/summer 2002 points out a number of issues particularly regarding the need of adjustment of the priorities of the strategy in a changing environment. The evaluation points out that the strategic guidelines may have been too vague to give clear managing directions from Sida to the Embassy in Hanoi, who is responsible for the implementation of the strategy. In the nature of the process of strategy implementation unforeseen changes will certainly require a need to readjust priorities, still in line with the overall objectives of the strategy. This has been done through the annual country plans. But the benchmarks remain the same i.e. the overall objectives

and guidelines of the Country Strategy approved by the government. This is also the main thrust of this performance analysis.

The projects and programs implemented during the strategy period have been in line with the overall objectives of the country strategy. The way the objectives are formulated makes it difficult to assess levels of achievements. However viewed from the sector-perspectives given above, the implementation of the strategy has clearly followed the intentions. Looking at specific areas (sectors) it is worth noting that the specific poverty directed approach in case of rural development and health has been implemented and in the later part of the strategy period given an even higher emphasis on the “targeting at disadvantages areas and groups” than the strategy actually foresaw. Projects and programmes in the main reform areas have been planned and implemented as intended. There have been certain stumbling blocks in achieving the emphasis on human rights issues as envisaged in the country strategy.

It is also worth noting that the “roll-over” of projects, a point raised by the CS evaluation has been limited in numbers and only applied when a long term perspective to development is feasible. The changed approaches in e.g. rural development, environment, energy and legal reform are good examples of this.

The detailed analysis below (chapter 2) gives the picture for the main cooperation areas: within democratic governance, decentralised poverty reduction, social sectors, infrastructure and private sector development and research cooperation. Most major cooperation areas have been evaluated during the strategy period. Thus there is firm basis for assessing the results of the cooperation.

Generally, the level of achievements of intended objectives is high. It differs between sectors and the preconditions for reaching the objectives are different. Looking at the three reform areas (economic, public administration and legal), common or similar conclusions on the results in these areas are the building of structures and foundation for the future, recognising professionalism and result orientation, awareness of problems and how to tackle continued reforms. It should be emphasised that results are often of an intangible nature and therefore difficult to put a value to. However the detailed sector chapters also point at specific results achieved in various areas. A common conclusion is that most projects and programmes have contributed in a positive way to institutions – competence and capacity building, be it public administration reform or energy, health or land administration. Other general effects are establishment of systems and contributing to systems change in specific areas as well as introducing new techniques and methods of work.

The level of ambition of the objectives of the programme has been high, which is natural when working with institutional development. One clear conclusion from this work is that in order to create change, dialogue capacity is needed. This capacity comes basically from staff at the embassy, supporting consultancies and to some extent Sida-HQ staff. The resources given for this purpose has been unrealistically low in relation to the ambitions set. A clear conclusion for the future is thus that the new strategy needs to reformulate the level of ambition for the development co-operation with Vietnam. The strategy must also examine ways and means of retaining the specific comparative advantages of

Sweden in Vietnam and still find possibilities of working with others to reach the intention with the Swedish support. It may also lead to the conclusion to decrease the level of ambition by either rationalising some of the difficult reform areas and move more into traditional implementation programmes, still with the aim of sustainable poverty alleviation with a rights perspective. Although it should be noted that broad based sector support should remain a preferred path of development for Swedish development cooperation with Vietnam.

It should also be noted that the Country Strategy evaluation makes a strong point on the need of dialogue capacity, which translates to additional personnel resources, in a dialogue intensive program setting. This is certainly very relevant in the case of Vietnam.

As regards the efficiency of implementation a few reflections could be made. Implementation has with some few exceptions been done bilaterally. In most cases Swedish resources in terms of “implementation consultants” or direct institutional cooperation in various degrees have been used. Examples of the former are the Health program, MRDP and land administration of the latter e.g. tax administration and statistics. These arrangements have been useful both as capacity building measures and for the overall efficiency and effectiveness of projects.

In trying to assess under what conditions implementation has been successful it can be noted that a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for success is a clear ownership by Vietnam. To get ownership requires long, often cumbersome planning processes. In areas considered sensitive, typically in reforms, areas of governance, human rights, corruption etc this has required long and patient planning processes. In other areas on the other hand, e.g. within the energy sector this have been easier. It is also obvious that in matters where the prevalence of donors is high it is much easier to achieve good results. Sometimes the argument of Sweden as a long-term reliable partner is put forward by Vietnam. This may be relevant but does not necessarily mean that implementation of project supported by Sweden work better than those supported by other donors. From the Vietnamese perspective the flexibility, openness and willingness to adjust after joint discussion are mentioned as important factors for effectiveness in the cooperation.

Obstacles for efficient project implementation are many and universal. It is often pointed out that the unutilised amount of international development cooperation resources, is a proof of lack of capacity to absorb foreign resources. This may also be used as an argument that the inflow of concessional resources is too high. The Vietnam administration shows a lot of weaknesses well known in any developing economy. Some are more important than others. The GoV is trying to rationalise and streamline its procedures through a specific ODA decree (No 17). Through this the partners know what is expected from them and what could be expected from the GoV. Still approval procedures are very time-consuming. There is a need for long lead-times of project planning. Common problems on project level are lack of management capabilities, many controls on the one hand and risk for corruption on the other lack of understanding between political tiers and government bureaucrats, lack of transparency. An active use of audits in many steps of implementation, in particular in procurements is a counterbalance to some of these

issues. The language barrier should not be underestimated. Working with interpreter leads to inefficiency and misunderstandings.

The country strategy gave priority to bilateral implementation. The argument was that with Sweden's special role this should be the rule. Co-financing was suggested for energy cooperation. The CS suggests that co-financing should be the rule where comparative advantage is not there. In reality co-financing is not a readily available option. It presupposes joint points of departure by donors and Vietnam alike. This has happened in a few cases. Sector-wide approaches have however still not been fully developed in Vietnam. In the later years due to a strained resource situation, not least related to requirements of dialogue capacity and the increasing number of donors a discussion has been started and action initiated on a number of co-financing arrangements, with World Bank and UNDP. Discussions have also been initiated with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), so far with no tangible results. These arrangements are often in cooperation with several donors. It is too early to draw any conclusion on the efficiency of these arrangements. They tend however to be small in size and the cooperation modalities between donors are still to be worked out. The resources saving expectations has yet to be fulfilled. Arrangements with only bilateral participants in co-financing are still unusual.

1.2 Portfolio analysis

The purpose of this analysis is to form a basis for conclusions in the Country Strategy on the composition of the project portfolio in terms of quantity, size, time-horizon including phasing out options, dialogue ambition, administrative capacity put into implementation and concentration/focus. However the guiding principle for the portfolio composition shall be the main findings of the country strategy in terms of its objectives, direction, sector focus etc. The conceptual problem with this approach is that it presupposes that administrative resources be taken as given in the medium term. That is however not necessarily the case in view of the emerging Sida field vision. The conclusions shall also be the result of the strategic choice of the Country Strategy rather than guiding these choices. That being said there is an attempt below to undertake the required portfolio analysis.

By 2002 the number of agreements and contributions were 48 and 100. By the end of 2003 the situation is planned to be 41 and 76. The assumption has been that there is a clear relationship between capacity requirements and number of agreements/contributions. This is may be true in a simplistic way but the reality is more complex than that.

The first part of the portfolio analysis is made by assessing the present situation in the programs according to seven dimensions.

The dimensions are:

1. *Volume* in financial terms. Small, medium or large (or no involvement)
2. Degree of *concentration* of the Swedish program (low, medium, high)
3. Number of other *donors* (low, medium, high)
4. The extent of donor *coordination* and program support (weak, medium, strong)

5. The *sensitivity* of issues and the “special Swedish role” (low, medium, high)
6. The existence of *Swedish resources* and experiences (low, medium, high)
7. The *risks* of not achieving the objectives of the program (low, medium, high)

The assessment of the present situation is made in table 1.

There are at present (or in the near future) seven large programs (incl. budget support). Five of these have high or medium concentration and the two remaining (legal and environment) are expected to become more concentrated. All large programs, except land administration, are in areas with many donors and potential for aid co-ordination and program support. On the other hand the small and medium programs are in areas with few donors. Of the 17 programs, 7 are assessed as having high risks, including 3 large programs.

Table 1: Portfolio Assessment

Area	Volume	Concentration	Nr of donors	Coordination	Sensitivity	Swedish resource	Risks
Public Finance Management	Medium	High	High	High	Medium	High	Low
Economic Policy Research	Small	High	Medium	Low	Medium	High	Low
PAR	Large	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	High
Legal sector	Large	Low	High	Medium	High	High	High
Demo/HR	Small	Medium	Small	Low	High	High	High
Anti-Corruption	Small	High	Small	-	High	Medium	High
Media	Medium	Medium	Small	Low	High	Medium	High
Culture	Medium	Medium	Small	Low	High	Medium	High
Health	Large	Medium	High	High	Low	Medium	Low
PA/Chia Se	Large	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
PA/RIDP	Medium	High	High	High	Low	Medium	Medium
Environment	Large	Low	High	High	Low	High	Medium
Land Admin.	Large	High	Low	Low	High	High	Low
Rural energy	Medium	High	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low
PSD	Small	Low	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Research	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Budget support	Large	High	Medium	High	Low	Low	Medium

The next step is to analyse the demands on the capacity at the Embassy and Sida. These demands are influenced by the number and complexity of programs but also of the ambitions regarding policy dialogue. Today Sweden is involved in policy dialogue in many areas and at different levels within the development cooperation programme. This has often been an efficient part of the cooperation and led to important results. The level of ambition is high, but this dialogue is very capacity demanding and it will be impossible to continue and increase ambitions in all

areas with a reduced number of Swedish staff at the Embassy. It is therefore necessary to make priorities, to specify dialogue issues and clarify how and who best addresses them.

Table 2 summarises three factors influencing capacity demands: the complexity of the program, the dialogue ambitions, and the extent of donor coordination and potential for cofinancing. The assessment is that there are at present eight programs with high capacity demands, five with medium and four with low demands.

In a scenario with unchanged capacity at the Embassy and the HQ, this is not a realistic situation.

Table 2: Factors affecting capacity demands in the portfolio

Area	Complexity	Dialogue Ambition	Coordination/ Cofinancing	Total capacity demands
Public Finance Management	Medium	Medium	High	Low
Economic Policy Research	Low	Low	Low	Low
PAR	High	High	High	High
Legal sector	High	High	High	High
Demo/HR	Low	High	Low	High
Anti-Corruption	Low	High	Low	High
Media	Low	High	Low	High
Culture	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Health	High	Medium	High	Medium
PA, Chia Se	High	High	Medium	High
PA, RIDP	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Environment	Medium	High	High	High
Land Admin.	Medium	High	Low	High
Rural energy	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
PSD	Medium	Low	High	Low
Research	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Budget Support	Low	High	High	Medium

Some comments on individual programs:

Public Finance Management is as such a new area but should rather be seen as a continuation of Swedish support to tax administration, as a part of support to PAR and as a complement to budget support. Since mechanisms for program-oriented support (Multi Donor Trust Funds) have been established, future Swedish support should be channelled through these and it will therefore demand relatively limited capacity.

Economic Policy Research is an area where it has been possible to establish a unique cooperation between Vietnamese institutions. It is mainly a core support with little or no Swedish intervention. If successful, it should be continued.

Public Administration Reform is a sensitive and difficult area. A potential exists for moving into co-ordinated/co-financed support. The rationale

for Swedish support has however been our competence, special role and high profile in dialogue. This should be assessed further in view of that Sweden does not any longer have a very broad resource base. Capacity demands will remain high the coming years, but the support could be considered for phase out at the end of the period. The motive for this would mainly be the existence of many other donors.

The *Legal Sector* shares the same characteristics as the PAR. Sweden cannot remain with high profile in both these areas. It should be further assessed where we have comparative advantages. One factor to take into consideration is that in the legal sector, Sweden has a special emphasis on human rights issues which is different from that of most other donors. It may also be possible to focus more on certain areas within the legal sector.

Democracy/Human Rights will remain sensitive, difficult and capacity demanding. However it must remain in the program if there is any chance of results (if not, probably all development cooperation should be reconsidered). Sweden has also a very good resource base and still a position which gives more opportunities than other donors.

Sweden has been given a very special role in *Anti-corruption*. It is important to take the responsibility for this and devote necessary resources for it. But the special role is not based on any specific competence or resources and support should not be continued in the same form after the present agreement has expired.

Media is a very difficult area, with little progress so far as regards press freedom etc. The support should be continued with lower ambitions on dialogue or be phased out completely.

Within *Culture* a distinction must be made between the different components of the program. The support to cultural policy which has had limited results and been capacity demanding, will be phased out. The cultural exchange and the cultural fund on the other hand should receive support in the same and possibly widened forms during the strategy period.

Health is a key area for poverty reduction and Sweden has a long history and a special role. After the end of the present agreement, various possibilities for further support should be considered, with preference for cofinancing and program-oriented support.

The *Chia Se* program will be the largest Swedish program during the strategy period. It will demand substantial capacity and all other programs have to relate to the Chia Se. The program relies to a large extent on capacity and political will at local level and is therefore a risky undertaking. The challenge is to change decision-making processes and to integrate rights aspects in this program. At the end of the period it will be evaluated and decisions on future developments will be taken. The clear connection between Chia Se and CPRGS objectives gives the program a specific role in the GoV poverty approach. Experiences of the *Rural Income Diversification Program (RIDP)*, co-financed with IFAD in Tuyen Quang Province should be analysed and used in future planning of the poverty alleviation programs.

The programs on *Environment and Land Administration* address some of the key issues and Sweden has had a special role and a good resource base in these areas. The integration of these two areas under one Minis-

try creates possibilities for a more co-ordinated support. In the future Sweden should be open to coordination/cofinancing with other donors. It should be further assessed if this is an area where Sweden could play an active role in dialogue.

Sweden has decided to move out of the **E**nergy sector, but to keep a program on rural energy. Capacity is still needed, since some of the credits will probably be channelled to the energy sector also in the future.

Sweden will continue during the next strategy period to support some small programs for *Private Sector Development (incl Trade)*. This will demand some capacity for cooperation with other donors and for support to mutual cooperation with Swedish companies.

The *Research* program will be more focused and linked to other programs.

Budget support will probably play an increasing role and capacity will be needed for monitoring and dialogue.

1.3 Donor co-ordination

Donor coordination, partnerships and harmonisation efforts are described in the Country Analysis.

From the performance analysis point of view it is worth noting that the high ambitions of cooperation, the big number of partnerships and the four harmonisation initiatives, the fact that the MDGs and CPRGS are embraced by all certainly makes a good starting point for donor coordination. Sweden has played a role in several of these initiatives. There are some very important assumptions for co-ordination to lead to concrete actions and results and that is willingness to co-ordinate over the boundaries set by UN, the Banks, EU and the likeminded group. Extended co-ordination is still lacking on an overall level even if many partnerships also go beyond these boundaries. In too many cases the ownership of the coordination processes are on the donor side and not on the government. There is also a limited interest from the government side to encourage practical operational donor coordination even if there are important exemptions to this.

1.4 Disbursements 1999–2003

Table 3: Disbursements during 1999 – 2003, in SEK thousands

Sector	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Infrastructure, private sector dev't	61 365	115 414	119 406	46 750	54 451
Democratic Governance, Human Rights	95 195	84 455	83 279	71 934	73 350
Social sectors	46 299	31 664	66 034	30 047	25 573
Natural Resources, Environment	31 497	28 892	31 007	32 820	37 064
Research Cupertino	11 044	16 240	15 467	13 405	11 110
Concessional credits		48 000	31 000		5 000
Other*	21 816	17874	14 618	41 736	34 568
Total	267 215	342 539	360 811	236 692	241 116

NT: 1999–2002 actual disbursements. Data for 2003 are planned disbursement figures

* 'Other' is composed of humanitarian assistance, NGOs, economic reforms and other.

Table 4 below accounts for the relative high disbursement levels seen in table 1 for 2000 and 2001 in the sectors of Natural Resources and Infrastructure.

Table 4: Large grants and soft credits disbursed 1999–2002, in SEK thousands

Sector	Contribution	1999	2000	2001	2002
Infrastructure	Thai Nguyen Distribution	25300			
	Distribution Grant		55000		
	Distribution Central VNM			55000	
Natural Resources	Highland Program	28000	26000	22000	
Social	Health Financing			24000	
Other					
(Economic Reform)	VNM 2001 PRSC				20000
	Total	53300	81000	101000	20000

2. Analysis of major areas of co-operation

This section gives an account of results and lessons-learned in the main sectors and areas of Swedish development cooperation with Vietnam during the latest country strategy period 1999–2003. The first two sections are an attempt to group the areas of cooperation relevant to the two main goals for development cooperation with Vietnam as identified in the hypothesis for the country strategy, i.e. Democratic Governance and Decentralised Poverty Reduction. This division aims at facilitating comparability and continuity in the analysis between the past and the future cooperation with Vietnam.

2.1 Democratic Governance

2.1.1 Economic Reforms

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Support to economics education at the National Economics University	1997–2002	35.000.000	33.933.397
Support to Economic Reform	1998–2002	62.000.000	57.718.332
Support to Economics Statistics	2001–2005	17.500.000	4.241.898
Support to Economic Policy Research Development	2002–2005	17.000.000	1.166.775

Background

Sweden has supported economic reforms in Vietnam since early the 1990's. During the last strategy period, 1999–2003, support to two projects on higher education within the field of economics has been completed. The bilateral project on development of economics statistics have entered into its third and final phase and the project on support to tax reform have also been completed. The support to economic policy research has been redesigned into a joint co-operation between several Vietnamese organisations.

Many, if not all, of the organisations involved in the Swedish funded projects have developed considerably in terms of policy, systems and human resources. However, they are all part of the public administration system and therefore suffer from the same institutional weaknesses as the public administration in general.

Relevance

Setting up good public finance management system in Vietnam is essential to achieve a lasting reduction in poverty. The Swedish support has responded to the need of building government institutions capable of mobilising, handling, tracking and applying funds efficiently. During the strategy period Swedish support has stressed the importance of good governance and transparency to effective financial management, emphasising the need to nurture and enhancing the skills of public officials working in this area.

Strong financial management systems are essential for the smooth working of Vietnam's internal fiscal, budget and welfare policies. But it is equally important for the effective use of funds provided by donors with the intention of alleviating poverty. It is indeed a condition for donors to support Vietnam policies and strategies through program support.

Results and effects

The common result of the Swedish support to economic reforms is that it has brought important public finance management systems more in line with international standards and practices. Focus has been put on taxation, statistics and education of economists.

Sweden has supported the tax reform since its start. According to Vietnam a majority of basic and major structures of the reform until now, emanate from the co-operation with Sweden.

Although many weaknesses remain in the Vietnamese official statistics, a sound foundation for the national statistical system has been established. The Swedish support, which has been the only long-term institutional development assistance, has played a significant role in this development. With support of the Swedish supported projects at the National Economics University (NEU), 84 people received MBA degrees and 56 received MSc in financial economics. Among these graduates, 72 people were from the NEU. In organisational terms the support resulted in the establishment of the Business School at NEU. More importantly, the two projects benchmarked the significant transition of the higher education in economics in Vietnam. For the first time, Western academic programs, in economics and business, were taught fully in Vietnam by Western faculties.

Other donors supporting economic reforms

Bilateral and multilateral donors have been showing an increasing interest in public finance management. Donors, particularly the World Bank, are actively supporting the Government to develop and enhance financial management systems.

Since economic reform is not an easily defined sector, there is no formal Government-led partnership encompassing the entire area. Instead, the World Bank is co-ordinating the dialogue between donors

and the Government in the public expenditure area, while the IMF is doing the same in the area of public revenue. As a consequence, the multilateral donors are dominating the partnerships. The group of likeminded donors has in recent years tried to establish themselves as an alternative to the dominance of the multilateral donors.

Conclusions for future co-operation

As Vietnam has moved forward with its economic reforms and transition into a market based economy, important steps towards being able to raise, allocate and account for resources better have been taken. Swedish support has been significant in the reforms, both in terms of creation of basic institutional capacity and public finance systems. Vietnam has moved into a new stage of economic reforms and therefore Swedish support needs to be adjusted.

Future support should have less to do with the creation of new public finance systems. Instead, efforts should be made to adopt the existing ones to international standards of transparency, and to make sure that they are implemented effectively at all levels of Government.

There are a number of prerequisites for such an implementation. Firstly, the owners as well as the users of the public finance systems need to have clear roles and mandates. Secondly, there is a need for a proper organisational structure, as well as a good management of human resources. These being the objectives of the public administration reform, it would be preferable that Sweden combines its support to the systems development with the reformation of the public administration.

Most of the “first generation” Swedish bilateral support to economic reforms has already or will soon be phased out. With the larger number of involved donors it is possible to co-finance Government owned initiatives and together with likeminded bilateral donors ensure that blueprint solutions are avoided. The support to economic policy research development however represents a unique cooperation between Vietnamese institutions with direct influence on policy-making and should be given continued bilateral support.

2.1.2 Public Administration Reform

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Support to the Public Administration Support	1999–2003	35.023.000	26.610.001
PAR strategy development (Consultancy Services Fund)	2000–2001	535.000	531.758
Quang Tri pilot PAR project	1999–2003	20.000.000	18.988.861
Support to the Prime Ministers Research Commission	1997–1999	3.673.647	3.673.647
The Prime Ministers Research Commission – additional costs (Consultancy Services Fund)	1994–2000	327.683	327.683

Background

Sweden has, since 1997, provided direct PAR support to the Personnel Management project at the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). Sweden has also supported the pilot PAR project in Quang Tri province since 1999, focusing mainly on improved land administration procedures. Sweden has been an active dialogue partner, and has also provided financial support, mainly through the UNDP, for the preparations of the PAR master program.

Relevance

As one of the keys to the implementation of the CPRGS, PAR is considered as a starting point for most of the Swedish development co-operation with Vietnam. It has the potential to improve service delivery to people, including the poor. By enhancing overall efficiency and reducing transaction costs it may also contribute to a more favourable investment climate. PAR is therefore not only relevant for Sida's Democratic Governance program, but equally so for the Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development program (incl. support to rural development and health) and for the Private Sector Development program.

Results and effects

The government and the Party have given strong signals in recent years to reform the public administration system. The Public Administration Reform Master Program, approved in September 2001, envisages the reform of the entire public administration system by 2010. The agenda for reform and renovation is far-reaching. It includes replacing cumbersome administrative procedures with more simplified and transparent ones; reducing red tape and corruption; streamlining and better defining the mandates and functions of institutions; reforming provincial and other sub-national administrations and redefining their relations with the centre. But also rationalising the organisational structure of ministries; raising the quality of public officials; undertaking salary reform for public employees; reforming public financial management; and modernising the public administration system through computerisation and e-government initiatives.

Concerning the results of the Swedish supported personnel management intervention, it could be noted that there is now a recognition that professionalism should be guiding principle for civil servant recruitment, promotion and appraisal. There is also a general acceptance of modern output- and result-oriented methods in staffing, based on function, post and workload analysis. The salary reform proposal includes a significant rationalisation of the grade and scale system that will make it easier to modulate salaries according to sectors and expertise, a factor to attract and reward needed staff. The Swedish support has further shown that it is possible with active support from leadership to increase the proportion of women in higher positions. However, translating increased awareness and potential into concrete actions still largely remains to be done. A foundation for a national unified database and personnel administration system now exists, that will make possible more advanced human resource development analysis. A new training management system, as basis for a move to more skills-oriented training has been accepted and is

being implemented. Furthermore, a wide acceptance of the need and usefulness of modern interactive methods in civil servant training has been established.

Some of the results from the support to PAR implementation in Quang Tri province are very concrete. Prior to the project a person applying for a Land Tenure Certificate (LTC) had to process his/her application by visiting 6 different government agencies or “doors” 12 times. The result of the one-door-model is a faster, more cost-efficient and effective delivery of public service. The time for issuing LTC has been reduced by 75–85%, from 91 to 23 days for urban land and from 90 to 13 days for rural land. Names of both husband and wife appear on all LTC’s, providing more equal access to credit for women. From the perspective of the public administration, the Quang Tri one-door-model has reformed the local government organisation and decentralised the LTC granting for households and individuals to district level. The pilot has subsequently led to amendment of the land law (2001). Further the project has contributed to changes in central ministerial (GDT and GDLA) regulations on land allocation procedure.

Other donors

Vietnam has received extensive support for the implementation of the PAR from a large number of other donors. However, due to the lack of a coherent policy framework, much of this support has suffered from scattered implementation and has operated at the margin of reform. Hence, impact has been limited despite the number of projects undertaken. With the approval of the PAR master program there is now an opportunity to strategically attach donor support to a coherent framework.

Vietnam has chosen not to apply a sector wide approach to the PAR master program. Instead it is envisaged that bilateral supported projects, with adjustments if necessary, will operate within the framework of the PAR master program and its seven national programs. The ADB program loan and grant financed technical assistance (TA) linked directly to this program loan, as well as the recently approved multi-donor UNDP PAR project represent a new modality to deliver support through trust fund arrangements.

The partnership between the Government and the donors has been unstable, mainly due to weak capacity within MoHA, difficulties in interministerial co-ordination and the fact that PAR is so closely associated with political reform and thus extremely sensitive. Also on the donor side there has been conflict of interest and uncoordinated attempts to support the PAR process. There are, however, recent signs of a (re)establishment of a Government led PAR partnership. Sweden should, together with other active bilateral donors, support the UNDP to take the lead in co-ordinating the donors’ participation in this partnership.

Conclusions for future co-operation

The implementation period for both the Swedish financed interventions providing direct support to the implementation of the PAR master program will expire in 2003. Sweden has already committed itself to further support of the PAR, and also indicated an interest to increase

and expand the support. The Vietnamese Government has in turn requested Sweden to continue to bilaterally support personnel management development.

A number of alternatives for future Swedish support have been contemplated. Considering the prevailing principles and approaches for the Swedish development co-operation with Vietnam, including an alignment with the CPRGS, the expanded use of new delivery instruments (trust fund arrangements), the requested concentration and focus, as well as the Embassy's reduced capacity to manage the Governance program, only a few of these alternatives can be pursued. The desire to maintain the possibility for Sweden to participate in a high-level policy dialogue should influence the future support. It is likely that this policy dialogue will take place in partnerships centred on the multilateral interventions.

The conclusion is that Sweden should use the available opportunities to support the implementation of the PAR master program through and together with other donors. Co-financing of the UNDP's PAR project should therefore be aimed at. Where co-financing is not an option and Sweden has been requested to provide bilateral support, such support shall be closely co-ordinated with other PAR stakeholders.

Subsequent to the positive results in the Quang Tri PAR project, Sweden should be prepared to continue the support to the PAR project in Quang Tri during its second phase. This also includes co-ordination with proposed local governance initiatives from other donors. Replication of the Quang Tri PAR project results in other provinces and continued bilateral support to the Ministry of Home Affairs should also be considered.

In addition to the direct support to the implementation of the PAR master program, attempts should be made to treat the PAR agenda as a mainstreaming and/or focus area/issue in other Swedish supported programs. This is especially relevant for the new health support, the new poverty alleviation program and other components of the democratic governance program.

A PAR support portfolio with the above indicated design would mean maintained strong involvement in the PAR implementation at strategic, central and local level. Such support should be possible to manage even with reduced staffing capacity at the Embassy.

2.1.3 Legal Reform

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Legal Sector	1997–2001	46.000.000	22.671.00
Legal Education	2001–2005	24.000.000	7.817.271
Law Making and Implementation	2001–2004	15.000.000	2.360.919
Legal Aid	2001–2004	11.500.000	2.360.919
Legal Information	2001–2004	11.500.000	1.788.114

Background

The legal sector reform is closely linked to and a part of the public administration reform. Sweden has provided support to the legal reform since 1992. The judiciary was considered important in order to support the economic reform. At that time the Ministry of Justice was relatively newly re-established and their competence and capacity was rather low. The agreement starting 1997 and extended to 2001 focused on three areas; Law Making, Legal Education and Legal Information. However only half of the agreement budget was utilised. One reason being that the capacity to carry out planned activities was lower than anticipated but also that the project proposals were not developed or agreed by the parties when the specific agreement was signed. In the later part of the agreement period implementation improved and also considerable efforts was devoted to prepare the new agreements starting later in 2001 and support to Legal Aid was added to the three initial areas.

Relevance

The legal sector in Vietnam is still characterised by inconsistencies in laws, unpredictable implementation, and trial procedures not living up to human rights standards and limited access to justice in particular for poor people. Public officers working in the sector does not have the education or skills demanded to uphold the rule of law. Swedish support to the Legal reform in Vietnam has as its overall goal to improve democratic governance from a rule of law perspective. During 1999–2002 the focus of the Swedish support moved from legal reform in order to enable economic reforms, towards a holistic approach advocating the individual's human rights. This reorientation was a direct effect of the objectives of the country strategy. Even though MoJ is the agreement partner, most activities are open to different target groups in public sector and associations. Also some support is provided directly to provincial and local level in particular for legal aid.

The development in the legal sector in Vietnam and related Swedish support is assessed by an independent contracted monitoring team, called Policy Development Forum (PDF). According to this team, the Swedish support is well in line with the overall reform process¹. The chosen areas are also very relevant in relation to the country strategy's chief objective of democracy, respect for human rights and the alleviation of poverty.

Results and effects in relation to project and sector objectives

A major effect of support provided to the legal reform has been an increased competence and capacity among the Vietnamese agencies². The capability to revise and draft new law has increased considerably. According to an assessment made by Vietnam, the international assistance has contributed to transition into market mechanisms, harmonisation of domestic laws with common legal principles in the region and in

¹ Legal Policy Development Forum for the Legal Reform Process in Vietnam, First Mission Report, October 02, Rolf Larsson et alias.

² Reforming the Legal Sector in Vietnam, An Assessment of Sida's support to the Ministry of Justice, July 1999, J Carlsson, T Cars, E Häggqvist

the world creating a premise for Vietnam to integrate in the world³. The same assessment however brings up that lack of a comprehensive strategy and effective co-ordinating mechanism together with, what the report label “spontaneity and localism” in foreign assistance, make it less efficient.

Legal Education is the financially largest Sida financed cooperation and geared towards improvement of the basic legal education provided at the major law universities in Vietnam. A competent force of well-trained lawyers is a core factor towards improvements in the sector in future. The law faculty of Lund University is contracted as Swedish partner and a close academic cooperation has developed. The law making, enforcement and administrative program has the Law faculty of University of Umeå as Swedish partner and through the program a broad spectrum of comparative legislation and procedures has been provided to Vietnam. The Legal Aid cooperation has a very clear rights and pro-poor focus and is mainly provided in the form of actual provision of legal aid⁴ and include direct support in 15 provinces. The provision of free legal aid has made a great difference in poor peoples access to justice. Legal Information is developing as a support function of great importance to the legal reform.

In addition to these bilateral co-operations, Sweden has been one of the core donors and party to the comprehensive sector analyse undertaken 2000–02, named Legal Needs Assessment in Vietnam. The direct outcome of this joint Vietnamese donor assessment is a draft strategy for legal reform in Vietnam until year 2010 with supporting action plan. But as important, through this legal assessment, there is now a high degree of awareness around the problems that Vietnam has to tackle to continue the reforms. It has become easier, compared to some years back, to have a dialogue on different aspects of human rights including protection against abuse, right to fair trial and access to justice especially for the poor. This dialogue also opens for possible safeguarding of the poor and rights based approaches in the legal reform.

Other donors in the legal sector

There are around 15–20 donors supporting different activities promoting the legal reform. The core group consists of UNDP, WB, ADB, Sweden, Denmark, France, Japan, Canada and Australia. A relative newcomer, USA, supports the implementation of their bilateral trade agreement. Through the legal needs assessment main steps towards effective donor coordination and possible co-financing have been taken. The partnership group in the legal sector has been considered to be one of the more active networks. The strategy for Legal sector development is under approval and the action plan for implementation will be subject to both joint funding and bilateral support.

Conclusions for future support

The importance for rights protection justifies that the legal sector shall remain a priority area for Swedish support. However, based on a com-

³ General Assessment on International and Judicial Cooperation and the Efficiency of Using International Assistance Since 1986, Ministry of Justice, November 2002.

⁴ Assessment of possible Swedish support to the Legal Aid System in Vietnam, October 2000, S Gärde, E Häggqvist

parative advantage, the support can be more focused on areas where other donors are not so active as Sweden, such as advocating rights perspectives of rule of law and in particular the rights of poor and groups with special needs. Additionally more of the support to legal reform shall possibly be geared towards the grassroots level and integration into PAR and poverty programs.

Bilateral co-operations shall be maintained in areas where Sweden has an advantage in an already developed Swedish recourse base. Legal education is one such area but there may also be such advantages in the areas of law implementation and administrative reform of the judiciary.

A joint funding initiative to implement the legal sector reform and its action plan is being developed under the umbrella of the UNDP. This initiative shall be assessed for Swedish co-funding and possibly a major part of the Swedish support could be channelled through such an arrangement in future. Bilateral support to legal information could possibly in such case be terminated. Additionally a dialogue is established with Switzerland for possible co-funding to legal aid in future.

Bilateral co-operations shall be maintained in areas where Sweden has an advantage in a Swedish recourse base. Legal education is one such area but there may also be such advantages in the areas of legal implementation and administrative reform of the judiciary.

2.1.4 Democracy and Human rights

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Strengthening the Office of the National Assembly (phase I)	1998–2002	15.000.000	14.158.371
Human Rights Cupertino VRCHR/RWI (phase II)	1999–2002	3.650.000	3.639.388
Grassroots Democracy	2002–2004	3.400.000	1.523.720
Vietnam Women's Union	1998–2001	4.500.000	4.467.962
Swedish/Danish/Vietnam Fund for Promotion of Gender Equality	1999–2001	4.000.000	3.907.890

Background

Swedish co-operation with the direct aim of promoting democracy, human rights and civil society participation was initiated around 1997. This being an area considered as sensitive by the Vietnamese government, it is difficult to identify partners that are able to take on co-operation. Swedish support has been provided to target groups, such as the National Assembly, with a particular role in the development of public participation in decision-making, and to the increased participation at the grassroots level. Furthermore, awareness on international human rights standards have been another area of focus, in particular for law enforcers involved in the protection of human rights for persons in conflict with the justice.

In addition to the rather limited direct support, efforts have been made to mainstream democracy and human rights into all sectors. Particularly by changing objectives and methods during the implementation to better ensure participatory and pro-poor rights perspectives.

Relevance

In Vietnam's policies and strategies for poverty alleviation the social and economic rights and rights of special groups such as children, women, disabled and minorities are well accepted. As a consequence many actions are taken to improve these rights even though in reality many rights abuses prevail. The official policies give some room for increased public information and participation, also gender balanced, in public decisions. Most criticism for violations Vietnam receives relate to freedom of opinion, assembly and association, rights which are not granted in reality. The interest of maintaining national unity and security supersedes the individual's civil and political rights as stipulated in the conventions that Vietnam has ratified. The unquestioned monopoly of the communist party hampers the democratisation process.

The Country Strategy 1999–2002 was the first one to highlight promotion of openness and development towards democracy and increased respect for human rights as one of its two chief objectives. The Swedish direct support to democracy and human rights has been geared towards building a foundation for the development of a more democratic system and by increasing the awareness about international standards on human rights. By increasing the awareness, it is assumed that new approaches to people's participation and protection of rights that are more in consistence with Swedish policies will emerge in Vietnam.

Results and effects

In general this is an area where the effects are hard to assess due to the limited information about human rights violations in Vietnam. However, during the strategy period the GoV has increasingly recognised the problems with the different rights perspectives and openly discussed them. These include access to justice, rights of poor people and disadvantaged groups, protection against abuse, right to fair trial, right to information and to complain and to take part in public decision-making. The protection of "people's legitimate rights", is a new term frequently used in public statements. But the increased openness is limited by that one can not question the one party system or do anything that might be interpreted as a threat to national security.

A major co-operation in the area has been the co-operation between the Vietnam Office of National Assembly (ONA) and the Swedish Riksdag Administration (SRA). The co-operation had the overall objective of enhancing democratic processes and the principle of rule of law including the constitutional role and function of the National Assembly. The evaluation in 2001/02⁵ concluded that professional skills related to supervision over law implementation had been improved and the public had access to more information about the National Assembly, its activities and debates. The National Assembly has by independent observers been recognised as the political institution that has improved the most

⁵ Strengthening the Capacity of the Office of the National Assembly, Sida Evaluation 02/12

during the period. Another new initiative by the Vietnam Journalist Association, is a study on the implementation of a grassroots democracy decree to promote local participation. This decree, launched in 1998, has opened a door for new opportunities of increased participation in public decision-making, but in reality it is very unevenly implemented. The research started recently and aims at disseminating good practices and improvements of the legislation.

Vietnam Research Centre on Human Rights (VRCHR) at Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy, and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Lund Sweden, implemented a human rights training program between 1997 and June 2002. An independent evaluation conducted in June 2001⁶, showed that the project had resulted in a raised awareness of about 200 senior professionals, within the police force, among prosecutors, members of parliament etc, regarding the understanding of international instruments and the national laws for protection of human rights regulating their authority. Furthermore, the capacity of the VRCHR to carry out its own human rights training had improved. Apart from contributing to improved understanding of human rights in Vietnam, the activities opened the door for extensive discussions on international HR conventions and their application. A continuation with focus on prosecutors and action orientation was recommended by the evaluation. However, Vietnam and Sweden have not been able to reach consensus on a continued human rights co-operation along these lines.

Women's rights and more gender equal participation in public decisions are areas where it has been possible to identify and work with quite pro-active partners. In the evaluation of Sida's support to Vietnam Women's Union in June 2000⁷, it was concluded that VWU have developed into a more democratic and grassroots level oriented organisation. A Gender Fund managed by a Vietnamese advisory board has so far supported more than 200 small-scale grassroots projects managed by groups of different religion and ethnic minorities with various cultures. The Gender Fund channels support to women and men at the grassroots levels where most of the people are poor. Denmark joined the fund in 2000 and in June 2001 it was evaluated⁸. Results of each small project may differ but there are many reports on more equal opportunities for women and men and girls and boys in many localities.

Preparations have been made to support the Rights of the Disabled and their access to IT during the period but the proposal has not yet been finalised.

Other donors

Due to the sensitivity of everything labelled human rights, the number of donors providing direct support in Vietnam are very few. The Danish Human Rights Center supported some parallel activities related to human rights with VRCHR. Switzerland supported translation of literature on Human rights and Australia some research projects. A number of international NGOs supported studies on grassroots

⁶ Human Rights Training in Vietnam, Sida Evaluation 01/16

⁷ Vietnam women's Union, Promoting Gender Equality, Sida Evaluation 00/16

⁸ Swedish-Danish Fund for the promotion of Gender Equality in Vietnam, Sida Evaluation 01/17

democracy implementation. Even though the National Assembly receives considerable support, it is usually geared to the lawmaking, budget and social work. The Swedish cooperation complement with its unique strong bearing on the strengthened political role of the National Assembly.

The rights of children, women, disabled and minorities on the contrary are supported by a number of agencies and international NGOs. As an example Rätts Barnen have an extensive program promoting children's rights and in particular improvement of the treatment of juveniles in conflict with justice. Also VWU has received considerable but usually small-scale support at different levels. Sweden has maintained a close consultation with other donors and when possible streamlined recourses and utilised joint competencies in implementation.

Conclusions for future support

It is not possible to get any commitments from Vietnam towards improvement of the fundamental freedoms of expression, opinion and association. Furthermore, it is difficult to give support to any (from the government) independent organisation. Project proposals with a direct objective at improving human rights situation in a broader term are subject to careful screening by Vietnamese authorities before approval. As a consequence, the direct support will be rather limited but the few opportunities available to maintain a dialogue shall be used. A major such opportunity is the new phase of co-operation between the ONA and SRA. It will provide a platform for further strengthening of the NA and the role of the parliamentarians.

Democracy at grassroots level shall be promoted and used as a tool for participation and democratisation in several Swedish co-operation areas. However, civil society organisations may continue to be difficult to support through country agreement budgets and in that light, the already accepted Gender Fund shall remain a main entry point. The VWU project is proposed to be finalised after this agreement period mainly due to the policy of concentration. Mainstreaming of democracy and human rights perspectives into all sectors is and will remain the most important approach.

As democratisation and increased respect for human rights remains a core objective in the country strategy for the Swedish co-operation with Vietnam, it is important to have different forums for dialogue between the countries. Sweden has an advantage in being looked upon as a neutral country with long relations in Vietnam to raise and discuss more sensitive aspects of human rights. Improvement of the adherence to the international human rights conventions shall continue to be the entry point here and development Cupertino shall, in spite of the sensitivity, try to establish forums for such dialogue. As a consequence of difficulties in the past, new ways of Cupertino and parallel partners has to be identified and Sweden shall initiate discussion on these lines with Vietnam. We believe that Sweden is still one of the few countries with who Vietnam is prepared to have such dialogue discussions. At the same time such discussion will demand quite some HR-qualified personnel capacity from UD, Sida, the embassy and the regional advisor for Demo/HR.

2.1.5 Media

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Support to Culture and Media (2 media projects only)	2000–2003	26.000.000	19.696.725

Background

Sweden has supported media development in Vietnam since 1992. Since then a three-phase project with the purpose of introducing live broadcasting at local radio stations has been implemented. This project will be phased out during the present strategy period. In 1998 a journalist-training project was launched. The project has provided Vietnamese journalists and editorial management at newspapers and TV stations with further training. The aim has been to establish high quality Vietnamese journalism characterised by professionalism, integrity and interaction with the audiences. The project has also created a basis for an active exchange of views on the role of media in a society under democratisation.

Relevance

Vietnam has 11,000 journalists, very few of whom have received any professional training. The further training of journalists in Vietnam is of low quality and the resources are scattered. It therefore makes sense to give support to improved professional skills of journalists and to enhance the understanding of what role journalism can play in the society.

At the same time it remains a fact that media in Vietnam is not free. The Communist Party and the Government insist on retaining ownership and thereby control. Even if the freedom of the media is guaranteed in the constitution and the Press law, self-censorship is widely practised by domestic journalists. Laws declaring freedom of expression require support and enforcement from the courts, and since the Vietnamese judiciary system is not independent from political influence real freedom of media is not possible.

However, the role of the media is changing and expanding, reinforcing the relevance of Swedish support to media development. Conditions have improved for audiences to engage in a two-way communication with the media. Furthermore, media has been permitted to take on a business approach and as a consequence competition and diversity have increased. The transition to a market economy has made it difficult for the government to uphold the subsidy system and has forced subsidised papers to change in order to get revenues. Anti-corruption campaigns by the government have contributed to the acceptance of “negative news”. Competition from Internet and international news channels has put pressure on domestic media for more modern news broadcasting and investigative journalism. All these changes in the Vietnamese society have expanded the room to manoeuvre for domestic media.

Results and effects

The Swedish support has had an impact on various levels. A policy dialogue on the role of the media in a democratic society, the Press Ombudsman and the ethic codes etc, has been initiated with policy makers. Editorial management courses have reinforced this policy dialogue, with an added discussion on practical management leading to several organisational changes within media.

The two media development projects have during the strategy period provided training to more than 2.500 journalists and media managers. Those participating in the training have an increased awareness of what the journalistic role could or should include. This has led to higher self-esteem on how they can contribute to overall news evaluation and production, and how they can expand their limits for self-censoring. In terms of journalistic production for both TV and newspapers the project has contributed to improved layout, with a positive effect on the content, less protocol news, more ordinary people featured, both in texts and photos and broadcasting, more facts and angles and less opinions, increased focus on local journalism and more readers columns. For VTV the project in general has been the trigger for professional live broadcasting and the focus is now on pre-production rather than post-production, including a lot of information gathering and research.

Half of the 61 provincial radio stations have been provided with the ability to broadcast live. Most of the stations are broadcasting live programs daily. The local radio development project has been based on Swedish Radio's experience of public service and its ideals of free speech and serving democracy. It has certainly contributed to a more interactive radio with the audience in focus, and has introduced the concept of public service radio.

Co-ordination between the two projects as well as with other relevant Swedish supported democratic governance projects has been weak.

Other donors

Foreign support to long-term media development projects focusing on journalist training has been very limited. Short training courses have been organised in collaboration with lecturers from Australia, Germany and France. The Vietnam Journalist Association has initiated a French-financed, three-year training project for journalists in Hanoi together with Lille University in France. This training is part-time, one week per month, in basic skills. Apart from this, some UN agencies and international NGO's, e.g. Save the Children Sweden, are supporting small scale and subject focused short-term training for journalists and journalist trainers. Japan (and Denmark to a lesser extent) has been supporting broadcasting media infrastructure development.

The political dimension of the media can probably explain the reason why so few foreign partners are involved in the systematic media development. The Vietnamese Government has repeated many times that Sweden is one of the few countries it wishes to co-operate with in such a politically sensitive area. The total openness regarding the Swedish objectives for the co-operation, i.e. to promote democratic governance, is a main factor for the Vietnamese decision.

Conclusions for future co-operation

Even if the development is not clear-cut, there certainly is a general positive movement towards an expanded role of the media in Vietnam. The trends differ between the media and vary considerably between different newspapers. The development is achieved despite, rather than because of the legal and regulatory framework and official statements by the Government and the Communist Party about the role of the media.

There is, however, another more negative perspective of the media situation in Vietnam. This is based on the fact that the media is not free and the notion that the self-censorship imposed on Vietnamese journalists circumscribes media's ability to play an effective public watchdog function.

Both these descriptions are probably true. However, the experience from the Swedish support is that journalists and media managers are pushing the limits of the existing framework, and thereby expanding the role of media. Professional skills, good journalistic values in combination with proper understanding of audience demand as well as the advertisement market are necessary for such expansion. The most effective system for guaranteeing freedom of the media is one where the media itself is empowered to make careful judgements on its own. With an appropriate focus on media as a counterbalance to corruption and misuse of power, foreign support can stimulate a positive development towards an expanded role of the media. Sweden is as one of very few countries invited to provide such support. Any future Swedish support should, however, be concentrated on one intervention only, and combine policy dialogue on the freedom of the media and journalist training. Also, any future support must be closely co-ordinated with other relevant Swedish projects associated with the media, for instance the National Assembly-Riksdag co-operation and the corruption study project.

References:

A Performance Analysis of the Swedish Support to Media Development in Vietnam, Elmqvist and Fredriksson, March 2003 Vietnam Media Needs Assessment, Hodson, July 2001.

2.2 Decentralised Poverty Reduction

2.2.1 Land Administration

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
CPLAR	1997–2002	67.2 MSEK	47.6
CPLAR Bridging	2002–2003	14.2 MSEK	8.5

Background

The first phase of the Swedish – Vietnam Cooperation Programme on Land Administration Reform (CPLAR) was implemented from April 1997 to December 2001. The General Department of Land Administration (GDLA) was responsible for the cooperation on CPLAR-1, which also included 9 provinces. The programme received technical support

from Swedesurvey, the international consultancy company of the Land Survey Department of Sweden (Lantmäteriverket).

Main areas of the programme were: methodologies for studying land legislation and policies, land valuation, procedures for land use planning, solutions for cadastral surveying and mapping, land registration and information system. The Programme also focused on human resources development by providing training for land administration officers at central and local administrative levels. Studies on socio-economic and environmental issues of the land allocation have also been carried out.

In order to bridge over to a long-term cooperation on land administration reform, the parties have agreed to extend the present cooperation through a special project. The main activities of the “bridging” project are finalisation of a feasibility study on the socio-economic benefits of investments in the sector of land administration, TA support to the revision of the land law, assessments of various trials during CPLAR-1 and support to the planning of a possible second phase of the cooperation.

Re-organisation of the sector of natural resources, land and environment

The Government of Vietnam (GoV) decided in July 2002 to re-organise the sector of natural resources, land and environment by the establishment of a new Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MoNRE). The new Ministry encompasses former NRE institutions such as GDLA, the National Environment Agency (NEA) and the General Department of Hydrometeorology (GDOH). Other NRE areas such as, watershed management and geology have also been included in the mandate of MoNRE. The GoV has also recently decided to integrate the NRE administration at local administrative levels.

The re-organisation of the environmental sector at the central level was undertaken during the autumn of 2002. MoNRE became formally functional in December 2002, but is still in formation. Thus for example, various water-related departments and projects of MARD are still to come under the responsibility of the new Ministry. The merging of various NRE departments at the provincial level will be gradually implemented, starting from mid 2003.

Following the integration of the NRE-sector, Sida decided in September 2002 to re-think its initially planned continued support to land administration reform and environmental management. The programme proposals prepared within GDLA and NEA had to be revised in view of the integration of the NRE-sector and the establishment of a new NRE ministry. Sida expressed its views on the opportunities created by this public administrative reform in two Position papers. The in-depth planning of two new programmes was also merged under the leadership of a Joint Reference Group consisting of representatives of MoNRE, MPI and Sida. In order to integrate and facilitate the preparation of these programmes, Sida has engaged a Swedish consultancy company for TA support during the in-depth planning.

Relevance

While all of Vietnam’s land belongs to the state, the rights to its use have been assigned to individuals and firms through land-use right certificates.

The land certification process started in 1993 and by today most agricultural land has been registered. The registration of urban and forestry land is however lagging much behind, with only x % of urban land registered and y % of forestry land registered.

The land-use right certificates provide the owners' legal rights to the long-term use of the allocated land. Land-use right holders also have the right to transfer, exchange, lease, inherit and mortgage their land. The land reform was arguably the single most important step in Vietnam's path to rapid growth and poverty reduction in the 1990s. In order to support economic and social change and development, the land administration sector has to meet the following requirements: land administration must create tenure security for the land users; land allocation must satisfy equity needs, and land administration must secure that land can be used efficiently in terms of what is demanded by the market. Further, land must be used in a sustainable way and land valuation and taxation has to become relevant and reliable in order to guarantee both incomes to the state from land and protect the rights of people.

Starting in 1986, land administration reform has been an integral part of Vietnam's economic development, as well as its public administration reform. While 76% of the total population lives in the rural areas, agriculture only represents 25% of the GDP (2001). One of the important factors thus enabling Vietnam to shift from chronic food shortages during the 1980's and to become the 2nd biggest rice exporting country in the world, was both to reform the state control over land through the introduction of land-use certificates and to let farmers more freely plan their the use of their land.

The CPLAR has contributed to these socio-economic processes as it has assisted GDLA in improving the legislation and regulations for secure rights to land use. The programme has also been assisting the government with regularly revising and amending the land law. Land allocation and registration in general, as well as granting rights to land for poor groups in the society, has much supported the government policy on poverty alleviation. The programme has also partly addressed human rights issues, as it has tried to include the new mechanisms for provision of land-use rights for ethnic minorities, i.e. communal land use rights.

Results and effects

Reviews and various assessments undertaken during the CPLAR-1 have all concluded that the programme has been generally successful. Apart from capacity, competence and technological development of the land administration sector, the programme has contributed to improved land legislation, valuation, training and information. Socio-economic issues related to land, such as gender, rights of ethnic minorities and environmental aspects to land have also been highlighted during the cooperation. These aspects are now receiving much more attention within the land administration system. Land legislative documents for transparency, openness have been developed to ensure stable long-term land use for the Vietnamese people.

Methodologies for development of the cadastral mapping with digital technology and aerial photos have been tested in order to speed up the process for issuance of land use certificates. Methodologies of land use

planning and land use mapping have been field-tested, giving MoNRE and its provincial departments a strategic role in land use planning and management. New methodology for land valuation based on market prices has been tested confirming its suitability in the Vietnamese context.

Further development of the land administration sector is however urgently needed in order to catch up with the fast economic development of the country. Thus, there is a need for strengthening the coordination between MoNRE and other key central authorities, especially the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Construction and the Government Pricing Committee. The CPLAR has proposed solutions to speed up the issuance of LUCs and to improve the land registration procedure. A land information system has been established and will be useful for environmental management and to support equality in land registration. Through various studies, pilot activities and training, the CPLAR has also contributed to capacity building and improved competence of the staff in the LA sector.

During the bridging phase, a feasibility study has been conducted by GDLA to assess the economic benefits of further investments for increased implementation of the land reform in the whole country. The study concludes that a fully implemented LAS reform, would have significant effects for the economic development of Vietnam and be much beneficial for the government policy on poverty alleviation.

Other donors

Beside Sweden, there are presently no other major donors assisting Vietnam with land administration reform. However, there have been and still are interests from some other donors to join the sector. Especially the World Bank have expressed an interest to support the sector, but has so far its proposals to provide loan assistance to the sector has been rejected by the GoV. Some other donors, such as NORAD, ADB and IFAD are indirectly supporting land allocation and the provision of land use rights and land registration through PAR and poverty oriented projects.

Conclusions for future support

Land administration reform (LAR) has been of great importance for economic and social development of Vietnam during the 90-ties. Its positive effects on the alleviation of poverty are also well recognised. Continued support to LAR is thus deemed both strategic and rational, not the least from the point of view that Sweden plays such an important role in the sector. Following the integration of GDLA into and integrated ministry for natural resources, land and environment, opportunities also exists for a comprehensive cooperation with better focus and integration with other aspects for sustainable development than land.

The in-depth preparation of a new LAR programme will take such aspects into consideration. Though the planning is at an early stage, the tentative main and long-term objective of the co-operation is expected to be the focus of the development of the land administration systems to promote economic growth, sustainable development and improved livelihoods in various rural and urban areas of Vietnam.

The immediate objective of the co-operation is to strengthen institutional capacity and competence for land management and reforming of the land administration at both central and provincial levels, in order to improve GoV's ability to address complex land and socio-economic issues in Vietnam. The LAR programme is planned to be integrated with the environmental management programme and focused on 5–6 common provinces. In these provinces a model for an integrated NRE administration will be built.

The main focus of the new co-operation programme shall be on institutional development, methods development and learning on LAR. The co-operation shall however combine such interventions with relevant small-scale investments for improving the field operations of the land administration system in Vietnam. Sida has also expressed an interest to provide a soft-loan for larger investments for improvement of the LAR administration, provided that such investments are found economically feasible.

2.2.2 Rural Development

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
MRDP agreement 27800023	1996–2001	SEK 158 M	SEK 75,4 M

Background

Since the early 1990's Sweden has provided support to the socio-economic development of the rural areas in northern Vietnam. The support has focused on improved management of natural resources and the environment through two main rural development cooperation programmes: the Forestry Co-operation Programme – FCP (1991–1996) and the Mountain Rural Development Programme – MRDP (1996–2001). This analysis will focus mainly on the MRDP.

MRDP was established under the new Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), which was formed in 1995. As during FCP the cooperation focused on five provinces in the northern upland and mountain areas of Vietnam, most of which are among the poorest areas in the country. During its operation MRDP supported various types of rural development interventions in over 200 villages and 64 communes of the provinces of Ha Giang, Yen Bai, Lao Cai, Tuyen Quang and Phu Tho. The total budget of the programme was 158 million SEK.

During MRDP a Ministerial project was also set-up under the Policy and Planning Departments of MARD. The purpose of this project was to provide policy advice to MARD and its local RD departments on poverty alleviation and rural development issues in general, as well as to provide technical support to the RD administration on various aspects of RD, such as agricultural extension, rural finance and land-use planning.

The programme aimed at creating an environment in which poor households in mountainous communities were able to benefit from sustainable and diversified economic activities, e.g. primary production, processing, trade, and employment in the context of the emerging market economy in mountain rural areas. Common provincial activities

included (1) land use planning and land allocation focused on district and commune planning, (2) agriculture extension and applied research, (3) rural finance, (4) human resources development, (5) organisational development, (6) gender awareness and (7) business and market development. MRDPs immediate objectives were institutional development at all administrative levels, method development in natural resources development and policy development focusing on RD and improved livelihoods.

Following the recommendations by the Mid-term review of MRDP in 1999, the programme planning methods and field operations were altered. Thus, during the years 2000–2001 a mechanism for decentralised local planning and funding was piloted by the programme. Commune and village development funds were established in the remote rural areas (Zone 3 communes) in order for the programme to better address poverty alleviation.

An overall evaluation of Swedish support to rural development in northern Vietnam during the 90-ties was undertaken during 2000 (Of Trees and People, Sida Evaluation Series No 01/34, 2001). The conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation, as further commented below, have served as a major input to the planning of a new type of RD programme focused on decentralised poverty alleviation in Vietnam.

Relevance

The programme approach of MRDP was well in line with GoV's policy on economic development of the rural areas. Further, the programme has much assisted MARD in its concentration of administrative resources, and institutional and capacity development following the merging of three former ministries (Forestry, Irrigation and Agriculture) by the mid-90-ties. The people-oriented rural development approach piloted under FCP was formalised during MRDP. Both programmes were thus considered of high relevance to the GoV's broader-based rural development strategy.

The launching of MRDP was made at a time when poverty alleviation became a major theme for Swedish development co-operation in general. Even though this issue was not an overall objective for the GoV at the time, concerted efforts were made by the programme to take into account and include such dimensions in the co-operation. Thus, though MRDP did not directly have poverty as its main goal, the programme has both promoted the poverty discussion in Vietnam during the late 90-ties and assisted in the development of relevant methods for reduction of poverty.

In line with the current Country Strategy to counterbalance the emphasis on infrastructure programmes in growth triangles and large cities, MRDP has also contributed to improved livelihoods in the remote and poor areas of the five provinces. Furthermore, its geographical focus reflects the GoV's wish to allocate more assistance to the local administrative level and particularly to the disadvantaged areas of the remote northern mountains. The programme thus had a strong emphasis on several important elements in the CS that were priorities of both governments, for instance, institutional and capacity development, promotion of gender awareness, business and market development.

Results and effects

Swedish support to RD through FCP and MRDP is highly appreciated by MARD and the concerned provinces, not the least because these programmes were the first major foreign supported RD initiatives in the northern mountains of Vietnam. Both programmes have pioneered and mainstreamed new RD concepts such as public consultations (PRA), gender awareness, and the allocation of land for economic development. Both FCP and MRDP have also had significant effects on the building of capacity and competence in technical subject matters of relevance for RD. In many northern provinces, the PRA method introduced by FCP and MRDP, has become a regular tool for local planning. It is today commonly used in donor-supported projects and in the formal planning system. Local people in the rural areas are familiar with and appreciate these new planning methods. The support to gender development through the Swedish cooperation on RD has also improved the awareness of the socio-economic situation of women in the five provinces, including women among ethnic minorities.

At the final annual consultations meeting between Vietnam and Sweden in May 2002, it was concluded that MARD and its provincial departments had gained valuable experiences and lessons for RD through the MRDP. It was also noted that the development and testing of a concept of commune/village-based development budget and fund (CVDB/F) had been successfully implemented. This type of decentralised planning and funding is much in line with the government's policy on grassroots democracy. MRDP has thus positively contributed to the empowerment of vulnerable groups by introducing a mechanism for improved local planning and management of local development. Several other donors, e.g. the WB, DFID and EU have recently taken up this idea developed by MRDP, and local development funds are now often introduced in RD programmes.

MRDP has also provided inputs to the national programmes targeting the poor, e.g. the 5 million-hectare reforestation programme, the WB-funded Participatory Poverty Assessment, Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction as well as the development of the network on Community Forestry. The main reasons behind MRDP's claimed success are first of all a strong Vietnamese ownership of the programme. MRDP's process-orientation and commitment to change to new ideas and concepts have also contributed to its appreciation by the GoV.

The external evaluation of FCP and MRDP in 2001 confirmed that these programmes have had significant effects on institutional and capacity development for RD within MARD and the local RD administration. The evaluation, however, made a number critical remarks about the cooperation. MRDP was criticised for not properly addressing poverty, in particular not reaching the poorest segments of the society. It had rather focused on policy development and the scaling up and institutionalising of RD concepts introduced during FCP. FCP's role of being a change agent for RD was also diminished during MRDP.

The pioneering role of Swedish development assistance to RD during the early 90-ties was also gradually marginalized due to the inflow of many new donors to Vietnam by the mid-90-ties. As a conclusion, the evaluation stated that the results of the cooperation under MRDP had

diminished in terms of returns on its investments. The evaluation also rightly claimed that it was difficult to assess the Swedish contribution to the development of the RD sector in Vietnam, in particular within the local project areas, as the monitoring and reporting system was not functioning well.

Following the conclusions of the evaluation, Sida has advised against the interest and request by MARDs to launch a second phase of the programme. Instead of once again adjusting the cooperation to new realities and policies, Sida decided to plan for a new cooperation clearly focused on poverty alleviation. Thus the evaluation came to play an important role for Sida's internal decision not to "role over" the past area and sector based RD type of development cooperation.

Other donors

A number of new rural development projects focusing on poverty alleviation of the upland and mountain areas of northern and central Vietnam were planned in the late 90s and have recently been started. The main projects are supported by multilateral donors such as the WB, ADB, IFAD and the EU. Beside Sweden, other main bilateral donors supporting RD and poverty alleviation in the remote mountain areas are DFID, Finland, Norway, Germany and Switzerland.

Following the establishment of the CPRGS in 2001, poverty issues are getting more and more attention and priority in donor-funded RD projects. Beside the national programmes on poverty reduction, two main regional poverty oriented RD programmes have recently been approved by the GoV. ADB will support twelve provinces in the central region of Vietnam, while the WB is providing support to the six provinces in the northern mountains. DFID will provide TA to these regional programmes. Sida, on the other hand, is continuing to provide TA to projects by IFAD. While the earlier cooperation with IFAD in Ha Giang has come to an end, Sida agreed in 2002 to co-finance the IFAD project in the Tuyen Quang province. The total Swedish financial contribution to this project is 10 USD over five years.

Following the influx of new donors focusing its support on poverty alleviation, donor coordination and harmonisation processes have become increasingly important. Over the last years a number of partnerships and trust-fund arrangements have been agreed upon in the sector of RD. Several of the bilateral donors are today also providing TA to loan projects. While DFID as a principle works through co-financing of other planned projects, bilateral donors such as Sweden, Denmark and Holland have taken the position to both co-finance other projects and to work through bilateral arrangements.

Within MARD, Sida has supported the establishment of an International Support Group (ISG) for improved coordination of donor-supported projects. ISG is at present an active forum for policy dialogue between MARD and the international donor community. ISG-activities are financed through a trust fund set up by the main bilateral donors within MARD. At MARD, a partnership for forestry cooperation has also been established during recent years. The Forestry Sector Support Programme (FSSP) was formally agreed upon in November 2001. Sweden is one of the 19 signatories of the FSSP. The FSSP presents a

first opportunity to promote a sector wide approach to development in Vietnam. A discussion of establishing a multi-donor trust fund for TA support to forestry programmes is in progress. Main bilateral donors interested in the FSSP are Holland, Finland, Switzerland, Germany and Sweden. MARD also holds the responsibility for a third important partnership, namely the inter-ministerial cooperation on Natural Disaster Management and Mitigation.

Conclusion for future co-operation

Following the influx of many new donors to the agricultural sector and RD, as well as the concentration of development assistance to poverty alleviation of the northern mountains, Sida has come to the conclusion to not automatically continue and “role over” previous types of RD programme, such as the MRDP. The intention has rather been to look into the opportunities for other types of RD interventions, including co-financing with other main donors. In the planning, experiences from MRDP and other Sida supported programmes in the region should be built upon. Consequently, Sida started in 2002 to plan for such new types of cooperation. The in-depth planning process is basically finished and two options for RD cooperation focusing on poverty alleviation have been found relevant:

- Co-financing of the IFAD Rural Income Diversification Project (RIDP) in the Tuyen Quang Province. The Swedish support is estimated to 45 MSEK and would mainly cover costs for technical assistance and training and be channelled through UNOPS. Agreements will be signed with the Tuyen Quang province and UNOPS. Opportunities for co-financing of other new IFAD projects in Vietnam should be explored in due course.
- Support to a bilateral poverty alleviation programme (Chia Se) focusing on multi-sectorial investments through a decentralised planning and funding mechanism. The Swedish support to the Chia Se poverty alleviation programme is estimated to 300 MSEK and would mainly cover costs for local investments, mainly through commune and village development funds, capacity development for decentralised planning, technical assistance and Sida follow-up. The Chia Se programme will cover three provinces and include a component for support to CPRGS. A Specific Agreement on the overall cooperation will be signed with MPI. Provincial agreements will be signed with the three provinces.

A third option of relevance for RD and poverty alleviation is to provide financial support to the partnership on the 5 million-hectare programme and the attached sector support programme on forestry (FSSP).

This option is of further interest as a multi-donor trust fund for support to the forestry sector (MDTFF) is in progress. FSSP and the MDTFF represent one of the few possibilities for establishing a sector-wide cooperation with a poverty angle in Vietnam. Swedish support to the forestry sector however ought to be looked further into in the view of the new Country Strategy for Swedish development cooperation with Vietnam.

2.2.3 Environment

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
SEMA	1997–2001	33,0 MSEK	20,3 MSEK
SEMA, Bridging	2001–2002	1,7 MSEK	1,1 MSEK
PCM	1995–1998	7,0 MSEK	7,0 MSEK
	1999–2000	2,0 MSEK	2,0 MSEK
SEF	1997–2002	4,0 MSEK	4,0 MSEK
	2002–2005	6,9 MSEK	1,3 MSEK
Mining Environment	1999–2003	8,4 MSEK	7,9 MSEK
Cleaner Production	2001–2004	4,5 MSEK	2,5 MSEK
(UNIDO)			
Environmental Report	2002–2004	2,0 MSEK	0,5 MSEK

Background

Sida was the first main donor supporting the environmental sector in Vietnam. The cooperation started in 1984 and has expanded during the 90-ties supporting the establishment of both new national environmental institutions and policies. Initially the cooperation focused on assisting the new Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MoSTE) in their work to establish new strategies, policies and regulations for the environmental sector. Since 1995, when the National Environmental Agency (NEA) was established, the Swedish cooperation has been focused on institution building and capacity development of NEA.

A regular programme for support to NEA was established in 1997. The programme named “Strengthening of the Environmental Management Authorities in Vietnam” (SEMA) received technical assistance from the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and two Swedish Environmental agencies, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Inspectorate for Chemical Safety (KEMI). Being the first nationally executed programme within the NEA, it received strong support from senior staff of NEA and the leadership of MoSTE. SEMA formally lasted up to mid – 2001, but the cooperation was continued by a bridging phase during 2001–2002. The programme aimed at improving the capacity of NEA as an institution and the technical competence of environmental staff. The SEMA programme also included support to the Provincial Departments of Science, Technology and Environment in six provinces. The objectives of the programme were to enhance the capacity in environmental management, particularly in relation to policy development, environmental planning and monitoring. SEMA also focused on improving the national environmental inspection services and improving Vietnam’s international collaboration on the environment.

In order to respond to local initiatives in the field of nature conservation and sustainable development, the Embassy decided in 1997 to set up an independent fund – the Sida Environmental Fund (SEF) for promotion of local initiatives in environmental protection and natural resources

conservation. SEF is managed by a Vietnamese Advisory Group (AG), in close co-operation with the Embassy. Following the recommendations of an evaluation in 2002, SEF is continued into a second phase.

Over the last years, Sida has also provides minor support to the environmental sector in the fields of integrated coastal zone management and promotion of the industrial environment. The Provincial Coastal Management project (PCM) aimed to strengthen the capacity for integrated coastal zone management in two provinces. The Swedish support to brown environmental issues included a project with the Ministry of Industry on improving the mining environment in Vietnam. Further, Sida has also co-financed a project on Cleaner Production with UNIDO and provided support to the Vietnam Association of Conservation of Nature and Environment in environmental reporting.

Relevance

The SEMA programme is relevant both in relation to the Swedish strategy for development co-operation with Vietnam, as well as to Vietnamese policies on sustainable development and the building of a public administration for improved environmental management. The programme has focused on institutional development with a view to assist NEA and the provincial environmental departments on sustainable development, environmental protection and monitoring. Through the programme, Sida has also supported the formulation of new environmental policies and strategies, improved donor co-ordination, as well as the disclosure of environmental information. Support to the strengthening of the environmental management is well in line with Sida's action programme on sustainable development.

SEF is probably one of the few projects in Vietnam providing direct support to local environmental initiatives and promotion of public local awareness on sustainable development. SEF is also unique, since it is run independently from the state and supports projects fully managed by local communities, mass-organisations, schools, etc. The purpose of SEF, namely to promote the capacity of the civil society in environmental protection and natural resources conservation, is also well in line with the Sida action programme for sustainable development. By promoting awareness on the role of the civil society in sustainable development, environmental protection and poverty alleviation, SEF has, at least indirectly, contributed to both Vietnam's policy on local democracy and the action programme of Sida on democracy and human rights.

Swedish support to other environmental projects such as the Provincial Coastal-zone Management, Cleaner Production and the Environmental Report has also promoted capacity building on environmental management in other relevant ministries, provincial departments and the private sector.

Results and effects

The In-depth Review and the programme Result Analysis Report shows that the SEMA programme has achieved its overall goals, contributing to the building of a competent and effective environmental administration. The programme has also promoted international cooperation, i.e. by assisting in the establishment of the International Support Group on the

Environment (ISGE). Further SEMA, has contributed to the finalisation of various national policy documents, such as the 10-year National Strategy and 5-year Action Plan for Environmental Protection and the national report on sustainable development presented at the Summit in Johannesburg in 2002. SEMA also provided inputs to the discussion on how to integrate the sustainable development concept in the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS).

The evaluation of SEF (Sida Evaluation report, xx/02) concluded that the project had been successful in involving local people in environmental protection and sustainable development. It had reached groups of people, which are normally not in focus for and reached by foreign assistance.

The Mining Environment project has strengthened the capacity for environmental monitoring and management at the MoI and contributed to improved cooperation between environmental authorities. The Cleaner Production project co-financed with UNIDO has improved the cooperation between the different environmental agencies, universities and various state and private enterprises.

Other donors

While Sida was one of the few donors in the environmental sector up to the mid-90-ties, this is not any longer the case. A number of new donors have entered the sector during the last 5–10 years. Main bilateral donors are today Denmark, Sweden, Canada, Japan, Switzerland and Holland. The multilateral donors play a less important role in the sector, with the World Bank and UNDP as exceptions. The environmental sector is dominated by a project approach to development. Only a few examples of co-financing arrangements exists, with Denmark as a main partner in projects with UNDP and the WB. With the recent reduction of Danish support to the environmental sector, these few co-financing examples might seize during the coming years.

An International Support Group for the Environment (ISGE) was established under MoSTE in 2002 with the purpose of allowing for policy dialogue and better co-ordination of programmes in the sector of environment. With the re-organisation of environmental sector, the responsibility for ISGE has been transferred to MoNRE. With donor support, MoNRE is presently making an attempt to widening the scope of the ISGE and establish a sustainable funding mechanism.

Conclusions for future support

The establishment of an integrated ministry for natural resources, land and environment, has created new opportunities for focusing, harmonisation and integration of the initially planned future Swedish support to environmental management under NEA. As earlier mentioned under the chapter Land administration, Sida has seized this opportunity and is presently planning for an environmental management programme that should be integrated and harmonised with other departments of MoNRE than VEPA (former NEA) and other planned Swedish interventions, i.e. land administration reform.

Following GoVs policies on PAR and promotion of local democracy, the responsibility for implementation of certain parts of the new coop-

eration programme should be decentralised to local administrative levels. Concept-wise, it has been principally agreed that the new environmental programme should be concentrated on pollution control and prevention. Present unsustainable use of land and the environment, particularly by the state-owned industries is an urgent socio-economic problem. Beside support from Canada, there are presently no other donors addressing these critical environmental issues. Modalities for cooperation with other donors on sustainable development will also be looked into during the planning. In this respect a cooperation with UNDP and Denmark on the promotion of Agenda 21 at local levels has emerged as an opportunity.

Swedish support to SEF should be continued, but financially integrated within the country allocation. SEF is considered an innovative and catalytic project both for the raising of environmental awareness among local people and for support to the formation of local organisations in Vietnam. The project has proven to be a promising example of how local initiatives can be supported, and in the mid-term opening for the establishment of non-governmental organisations.

The earlier cooperation with Swedish environmental agencies such as SEPA and KEMI, as well as international environmental organisations, in particular IUCN, is planned to be continued. The cooperation could be undertaken either through institutional cooperation or through providing these organisations responsibility for special projects within the overall cooperation programme on environmental management.

2.3 Social sectors

2.3.1 Health Sector

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Vietnam Sweden Health Co-operation, VSHC II	1999–2002	90.000.000	85.000.000
Trust Fund WB/National Health Support Project	1996–2003	34.500.000	34.500.000

Background

The first Swedish supported health projects started in 1974 with the construction of two hospitals. During the last 30 years, Swedish co-operation has changed considerably, from hospital infrastructure to systemic changes aimed at poverty alleviation. The aim is equity and efficiency in the health service provision. Support goes to health policy and systems development, capacity building and management and human resources development and public administration reform. Health care financing for the poor plays a crucial role. Support is further extended to drug management and rational and safe use of drugs and to the national public health programmes on tobacco control and accident and injury prevention, which cater for emerging public health problems. These national programs have both come into being with Swedish support to the development of their respective policies during the strategy period. Programme management and donor co-ordination is another difficult and crucial area where Sweden is active as an only donor.

Support is given to community based health development in disadvantaged areas which is where theory and policies come into practice. This flexible character of support has developed over time.

A trust-fund support is given via the World Bank for a National Health Support Project from 1996–2003 to an amount of 34.5 MSEK, including a National Health Survey and Health Economics Masters training. The Health Survey has already provided results that will provide invaluable data for future policy and programme making.

Relevance

The overall objective of Swedish support to the health sector is to help obtain the goal of Vietnam's strategy 2001–2010: "to make all possible efforts to enable Vietnamese people to access and utilise quality health care services". The combination of Swedish health support is by many deemed highly relevant to fulfil this goal including by the Sida Health evaluation carried out in 2000 by A. Jerve et al on the Vietnam-Sweden health co-operation 1994 to 2000⁹. The evaluation concluded that the co-operation has been efficient and achieved most of the results expected. It recommended a continued support along the same lines for the next period. Furthermore, informal statements of late by ADB Principal Economist suggest that Swedish support is crucial and outstanding for achieving the aims of a poverty alleviation strategy within the health sector¹⁰ in Vietnam.

All or most results of the period have been linked to the overall objective of equity and efficiency for poverty alleviation. This is in line with both Vietnam's and Sweden's development policies. It is also in line with the proposed objectives of the CPRGS, and with the Swedish Poverty Strategy, the present Country Strategy for Vietnam and the follow-up of the Swedish Asia Strategy. Although Swedish support is no longer among the largest, the Ministry of Health is constantly repeating that Sweden's support is trusted and highly relevant and of high quality and supporting sensitive areas such as policy and system change and donor co-ordination.

Results and effects

The Vietnamese government is starting to see the negative effects of high user fee policies and want to introduce changes to the benefit of the poor. The Swedish support has contributed to these positive changes via dialogue and constant advocacy for equity and efficiency based on the Swedish health model. Particularly one study carried out in collaboration with the Central Committee has visibly influenced the 9th Party Congress Resolution. It states that comprehensive health insurance shall now be successively introduced in Vietnam. This implies the introduction of a community based health insurance system. This is a long-term effort and not an easy task. To start this process the Ministry of Health has set up the HCFP, with surprising support of Ministry of Finance, and Prime Minister approval. The fact that this Fund has developed in a very short time can be attributed to the improved capacity that Sweden has contributed to. Capacity has been built also via PhD training under the Sida/SAREC support.

⁹ Source: Alf Morten Jerve et al. 2001. Tackling Turmoil of Transition

¹⁰ Source: ADB Principal Economist, Indu Bhushan and Erik Bloom. 2003. ADB's comments regarding Sida Country Strategy re Health

Many other key health policies developed with Swedish support have been approved during the period; the important Health Strategy 2001–2010 introducing the concepts of equity and efficiency, Strategy for health care for people in the remote and mountainous areas, the already mentioned Accident and Injury prevention policy, the Tobacco Control policy, the National Drug Policy among many more.

The indiscriminate opening up of private pharmacies, which have led to non-prescribed irrational and unsafe use of drugs and highly inconsistent drug pricing, Swedish support is aiming to regulate these negative effects via drug policy and drug law development as well as self-financing of drug quality control, improved drug inspection, and increased regional co-operation to exchange experience and to counteract smuggling and counterfeiting. The majority of the poorest out of pocket medical expenses are for drugs. Since a high proportion is irrationally used it can only be remedied with increased consumer and health staff awareness and enforced inspections, drug pricing and prescription regulations. A high quality Vietnamese National Drug Formulary (FASS) has successfully been developed with Swedish support. This book will help improve the situation. Sweden along with WHO is the only major donor in this difficult and sensitive area. The consistent long term Swedish support is starting to yield results, but not easily. The drug sector is full of vested interests and corruption possibilities that many donors shy away from.

All these policy and law-making efforts must, however, be applied in practice. This is one of the weaknesses in the health sector. Swedish support has been extended to piloting of a model of applied Support to Disadvantaged Areas in three provinces during the period. The main problem has been to raise the interest for this community based bottom up model at the higher levels including central ministries and provinces. High turn over of local staff in this particular case has not helped. Furthermore, the highly qualified but self-contained Swedish expertise during the period did not facilitate the needed information flow. Nor has the unconventional bottom up approach been easily understood by the hierarchical Vietnamese health structure until recently. Many of the donors have, however, overtime shown great interest in the pilot results, including EC. Many of its results are already being used in various locations in Vietnam. This pilot can become successful as a national model since the MoH for application in two provinces in the new period with an aim of full national coverage has approved it in the future.

Programme management and donor co-ordination is a sensitive area where Sweden as a trusted and long-term partner has been chosen as the only donors. This area, however, although having achieved many tangible results such as a data base of donor projects and project manuals and training modules, has not visibly come much closer to the overall aim of efficient co-ordination of donor support nor a sector program support. This is not easy and is also connected to other factors such as public administration reform and macro economic issues not easily influenced by MoH. The recent change of Health Minister has also not yet contributed to clarify the future visions in these respects.

The Swedish support has not and will not by itself create successful reform, but it increases the probability that investment in capacity building leads to institutional development, and that investment in policy

formulation leads to effective implementation of relevant policies. The Health Evaluation 2000 states that investment in policy development and system reform is much riskier than more straightforward support to infrastructure and equipment. When reform is needed, ideas work better than money, the evaluators concluded. It is difficult to assess effectiveness of support to capacity building since behaviour change takes time. There is a need to further evaluate also the follow up efforts taken by the recipient to ensure sustainability.

Other donors

At the end of 2002 there were 231 projects and 17 main donors including the ADB and the WB. The total donor budgets of these were about 800 million US\$*. About half is loans. Priority for loan money is given to infrastructure and equipment for maternal and child healthcare, primary healthcare and prevention of communicable diseases. The Banks often need a grant part to their loan for technical assistance and software. Sweden was once the largest donor in health. In financial terms Sweden is now number 13 out of the 17 biggest donors in health sector.

Many donors are providing scattered assistance, which is not well co-ordinated by the authorities or at central or at provincial level. Only a few donors are providing support to Health Systems Development; ADB, Sweden and WHO. The European Community has stepped back, realising that this is a sensitive area where you have to be a trusted and long-term partner. The government has designated Sweden as the only donor to give support in program management and donor co-ordination. This area is highly relevant to obtain efficient use of scarce resources. Donor support should be co-ordinated with relevant government programmes.

The Swedish supported initiation in 1998 of ministerial International Support Group (ISG) quarterly meetings should ideally serve as a forum of information exchange and active sub working groups in order to avoid overlapping of donor support. However, during year 2002 only one ISG meeting was held. Sweden was earlier leading the health donor group. This role was handed over to WHO in 2001. The recent change of the Health Minister might influence the donor co-ordination and SWAP situation in any way. At the present, the prospects for any kind of health sector program support are considered small. Many donors, some say too many, are presently giving all kinds of support to the HIV/AIDS area. HIV/AIDS seems to be the latest donor favourite even though the total fund per capita is small if compared with other countries e.g. Thailand. The Ministry of Health has suggested Sweden to assist in HIV/AIDS co-ordination.

Conclusions for future support

Poor health and high medical expenditures constitute major causes of poverty. Vice versa, improved health and access to essential health services prove a major route out of poverty. Investment in health will therefore make an important contribution to poverty reduction. Swedish support has played a major role in promoting this understanding among government officials and other donors and has given the Ministry of

* Source: UNDP. 2003. Development Co-operation Report.

Health confidence to focus on health financing for the poor. As visible first steps it has resulted in the 9th Party Congress Resolution on Comprehensive Health Insurance and in the recent establishment of the HCFP which both need long term support.

MoH and many donors attribute Sweden with having a significant role to play in key health sector areas. The Swedish health model is the way Vietnam seems to want to follow. The present Vietnam-Sweden Health Co-operation on Health Policy and Systems Development (VSHC/HPSD) will end by 31 October 2006. There are two main alternatives for the future:

1. A phasing out of the health sector, preferably in a phased manner e.g. with some continued support on a lower level to health policy and programme management for a shorter period e.g. November 2006–October 2008. This will deprive Vietnam of a trusted and known partner at a very critical point in Vietnam's health system development. Considering all historical hardship Vietnam has had to face, the Government will surely try to cope as best as they can on their own or search for another trusted donor for the sensitive key areas where Sweden has traditionally been the main donor.
2. A continued deliberate support to the equity and efficiency in health sector aiming at poverty reduction. The level of support could be the same as present or at increased levels, all or some of the following fewer and more focussed areas, over a longer period and with less administrative inputs.
 - a. Continued bilateral support to the key area of health policy development for equity and efficiency in the health care system including a Master Plan of Health Care Financing for the Poor, contributing to implementation of the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS); also possibly direct support to the HCFP. This could entail support to the development of policies and strategies for dealing with new emerging health problems, e.g. non-communicable diseases, health care for the elderly people, alcohol misuse, mental health, environmental problems possibly in co-financing with WHO. The MoH's view is that support to the politically sensitive area of health policy is suitable for a small, neutral and trusted long-term donor such as Sweden.
 - b. Co-financing with ADB for supporting the Health Care Fund for the Poor and HIV/AIDS Capacity Building. ADB is preparing two projects: Health Care for the Poor in the Central Highlands, and Strengthening of Preventive Health Services.
 - (i) The Health Care of the Poor in the Central Highlands seeks to provide a comprehensive health system support to the poorest region in the country. ADB is seeking grant co-financing to support the Health Care Fund for the Poor. This grant support is required for both supplementing the government financing of the fund and developing monitoring and targeting systems for this new government initiative.
 - (ii) Strengthening of Preventive Health Services will have a national coverage and will aim to strengthen the capacity of the

Ministry to prevent and control communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS. SIDA co-financing can cover the institutional development and co-ordination aspects related to HIV/AIDS. Providing co-financing to these projects will directly build on work done by SIDA in last decade, could help increase the impact and poverty reduction effects of the projects and at the same time reduce the administrative work on the part of SIDA.

- c. Support on a larger scale to the implementation of the National Public Health Programmes of Accident and Injury Prevention and Tobacco Control, preferably with other donors or as co-financing.
- d. An interesting new option for consideration is support to Public Administration Reform (PAR) in the health sector. Sweden has supported Vietnam in development of the National Master Programme for PAR and a pilot PAR in Quang Tri Province. Sweden could be the first to provide support to a pilot PAR in one central ministry e.g. Ministry of Health.

As regards HIV/AIDS, it is not advisable that Sweden should support HIV/AIDS with direct bilateral support since there are presently and in the foreseeable future too many donors involved already. In order to assume a co-ordinating role as suggested by MoH, a major bilateral contribution of some kind is necessary which is not advisable at present. However, through co-financing, Sweden could support much needed institutional development, capacity building and co-ordination aspects in the field of HIV/AIDS without major bilateral undertaking. The other donors are spreading out their support in an ad hoc manner in the provinces without due consideration to the need for support to the mentioned key areas at a national level.

2.3.2 Culture

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Support to Culture and Media (2 culture projects only)	2000–2003	9.000.000	4.156.959
Swedish-Vietnamese Fund for the Promotion of Culture	1997–2001	4.000.000	4.000.000
Swedish-Vietnamese Fund for the Promotion of Culture	2001–2004	4.500.000	2.663.161

Background

Sweden has supported culture development in Vietnam since 1992. The support has been closely linked to the support to media development. It has during the recent country strategy period engaged in both a continuation of previous support, through the financing of the Swedish-Vietnamese Fund for the Promotion of Culture, and at the same time it has shifted its focus. As a consequence of the new, more multifaceted and

pluralistic cultural climate, Sweden has supported a self-critical review of the national culture policy, with a view to develop for the first time a comprehensive national culture policy. Inspired by the Swedish experience, Vietnam has as the first non-European country adopted the European model for culture policy review. Furthermore, support has been provided to a broadened cultural exchange, involving an increased number of cultural organisations and individuals both in Sweden and Vietnam.

During the strategy period the overall objective of the support has been reformulated (creation of conditions for openness and development towards democracy), and thus emphasised the connection between Swedish support to cultural development and democratisation.

Relevance

The implementation of the free-market reform under the label of Doi Moi has had far-reaching consequences for the Vietnamese cultural sector, calling into question the whole issue of government subsidy for the sector. But also through opening its doors to the rest of the world, resulting in a vast number of new international arts exchange initiatives. State financing for arts organisations have been drastically reduced and in some cases abolished altogether in favour of self-financing. As a consequence many arts organisations have been obliged to reduce their personnel and overheads in order to cut costs. Others have opted for commercialisation of their activities in order to attract greater box office support, whilst yet more have been obliged to cease operations.

Even though the Communist party and the state have so far shown little intention of letting go of the control over culture, the new financial reality has led to a pressure to find alternative sources of income. Subsequently, a number of cultural agencies have been permitted to enter into joint ventures with private (also foreign) investors. The new financial situation, in combination with ambitions of global integration has weakened state monopoly on culture and opened up for more private initiatives and thus contributed to a more diverse and dynamic culture life.

In this changing environment it is not only necessary to develop a culture policy that fits the new situation, but also for support to important domestic culture development and cultural heritage protection efforts throughout the country, as well as international contacts through cultural exchange.

Results and effects in relation to project and sector development objectives

The fact that Vietnam has decided to review its culture policy by using the European model, suggests that Vietnam has opened up for international scrutiny and advice in an area closely associated to political ideology. This could be seen as an important leap towards increased openness. At the same time it is worth to note that the capacity within the culture administration is weak at the same time as it has limited experience working in an international context. This leads to slow and cumbersome working relationship, which very well can jeopardise the effectiveness of the co-operation.

Inspired by the Swedish Asia Strategy the cultural exchange with Vietnam has been broadened and expanded to the areas of fine arts,

film, literature, museums and music. In each area a link between Swedish and Vietnamese organisations have been established. Although still small in scale, this exchange has made impact both in Sweden and Vietnam. The level of mutual benefit is very high, probably higher than in any other area of the development co-operation. However, it is difficult for the culture exchange partners in both countries to find alternative sources of funding that would guarantee sustainable links.

Over the past 10 years the Swedish Vietnamese Fund for Promotion of Culture has given more than 1,250 grants within the cultural sphere. The Fund restricts itself to small scale and short-term projects and has a special focus on mountainous and remote areas. This does, however, not mean that the results are limited, since the grants often have a catalytic effect. By functioning as a non-governmental organisation, mainly responding to requests coming from the grass-roots level and helping individuals and private organisations to develop creative cultural activities of their own, it represents an important alternative to state financed culture development. One of the more extraordinary results of the Fund is the rescuing of the traditional water puppet trade in the Red River delta.

Other donors

Although Vietnam has culture exchange with a large number of countries, it has very few culture development co-operation partners. Sweden is one of the very few donors with a long-term culture development program for Vietnam. Most other countries focus their support on providing Vietnamese audiences with their own countries' domestic culture. When co-operation involves mutual exchange, it is usually short-term and focused on one single area. Certain areas, for example protection of tangible cultural heritage, do attract foreign support, but others are more or less neglected. The Ford Foundation is providing support to the development of teaching curricula in arts and heritage management at three key training institutions.

Vietnam has in recent years increased its active participation in ASEAN's committee for culture and information. This committee is providing funding to culture exchange projects involving all ASEAN member states. Vietnam and Sweden have jointly attracted the committee's interest in national culture policy reviews, and the Vietnamese review process will be shared with the other ASEAN member states.

Conclusions for future co-operation

As one of the few donors involved in a programmed and long-term development co-operation in the area of culture, Sweden is in a position to make an impact on the future culture policy in Vietnam. However, the Vietnamese culture administration is weak and inexperienced in implementing development projects. Considerable difficulties have been encountered in the national culture policy review. It is likely that later stages of the culture policy development will not be any easier or require fewer resources.

With clear guidelines and division of responsibilities between the financing and implementing agencies involved in culture exchange, it has proved to be an effective form of co-operation with exceptional high degree of mutual benefit. The project implementation capacity and

communication skills of the Swedish and Vietnamese exchange partners are keys to success, and must be the basis for selection. In areas where a regional co-operation is financed by Sweden, for instance museums and libraries, bilateral co-operation should be avoided.

The Swedish Vietnamese Fund for Promotion of Culture is a well-established institution in Vietnamese culture development. It remains a cost-effective way of stimulating cultural diversity, by supporting new ideas as well as protecting cultural heritage.

During the preparation of the new country strategy and in particular in connection to a discussion about concentration of the country program, the possible phasing out of the culture program has been mentioned. The conclusion from the performance analysis is, however, that the main part of the culture program is working well without requiring considerable administrative resources from Sida or the Embassy. Due to the complexity of the subject as well as to weaknesses in the project owner's administrative capacity, the culture policy intervention has, however, so far (with the present project design) required relatively large resources. By phasing out this component of the program, Swedish administrative resources would be saved, but a possibility to have impact on Vietnam's future culture policy would be lost.

2.4 Infrastructure and Private Sector Development

2.4.1 Energy

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Energy co-operation	1994–2003	259	85.790.000
Distribution Projects Central	1998–2005	67.000.000	62.750.000
Demand Side Management	1999–2004	30.000.000	29.000.000
National Hydropower Plan Study	1998–2002	19.000.000	19.000.000
Song Hinh Multipurpose Project	1999–2004	38.000.000	24.970.000
Capacity Building in Mgmt & Tun	1997–2000	27.000.000	21.580.000
Women in Energy Efficiency (I)	1999–2000	370.000	370.000
Women in Energy Efficiency (II)	2000–2002	3.800.000	3.800.000
Song Hinh Resettlement follow-up	1999–2003	160.000	100.000

Credits	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Credit Line Substations, I	1998–2009	60.000.000	3.120.000
Credit Line Substations, II	2002–2014	80.000.000	28.673.548
Ha Tinh Transformer Station 1999–2011		60.000.000	26.000.000
Total disbursement of the grant fund only. The credits have been disbursed to the Swedish Bank after the agreement has been signed.			

Background

Sweden and Vietnam have been co-operating in the energy sector since the early 1980's. The first projects resulted in improved urban electricity supply in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Gradually the programme has shifted its focus towards the less developed central part of Vietnam. In recent years, the main activities aim at improving the efficiency in the electricity system, mainly through an upgrading of distribution networks and an emphasis on capacity building. Strategic studies like Demand Side Management, Master Plan for Hydropower and Environmental Management of Hydropower are also a significant parts of the co-operation. Moreover, concessionaire credits for investments in hydropower and transmission have been provided. The total project portfolio since 1996 amounts to around 900 million SEK, of which 55% is grants and 45% credits.

Relevance

The demand for electricity in Vietnam increases by a steady 10–15% yearly. EVN and the authorities face a huge challenge to meet this increase and supply enough electricity to support the development of the country. New power generation capacity of 800–1000 MW has to be added each year, of which a considerable part will be hydropower, which if not managed properly, will put considerable strain on the environment.

A major development challenge, and priority, in the Vietnamese energy sector today is electrification of rural areas, where access to electricity is still low and a large part of the customers are poor. The government of Vietnam carries out an ambitious rural electrification program, which aims at extending the national grid to 95% of the rural households by 2005 (81% in 2002). However, the capacity to carry out these policies and programmes is to a large extent lacking. The Vietnamese priorities for support from Sweden are on capacity building, strategic studies, to develop electricity supply to rural areas and investments in power supply, transmission and distribution to rural areas.

Sida's country strategy for Vietnam for the period 1999–2003, directs a shift in focus for the energy co-operation towards rural areas and disadvantaged groups, paired with strategic studies, capacity building, structural reforms and investments. The strategy also anticipates that investment projects, which in earlier agreements in many cases have been grant financed, to a large extent will be financed through concessionary credits or soft loans.

It should be noted that the energy co-operation is specifically mentioned in the strategy as an area where Vietnam holds Sweden as a

partner with a comparative advantage. The rationale behind this is that similar power systems in Sweden and Vietnam are similar with a combination of hydro- and thermal power and transmission over long distances. The Swedish power industry, authorities and organisations have a renowned high level of competence in all fields (technical, management, market and institutions). Sweden has recent experience from reform, deregulation and opening and running a market place for electricity.

Results and effects

The Energy co-operation has complied with the strategy. The shift towards rural areas and disadvantaged groups has been implemented during the strategy period, and a new agreement on Rural Energy (2003–2008) was signed in March 2003. Capacity building (Distribution training, Customer service and management, Environmental management in hydropower) and strategic studies (Demand side management, National hydropower plan) have been supported either as integrated parts of investment projects or as separate activities. Environment and gender has been mainstreamed through the programme, but also addressed in separate projects like EVN gender equality action plan, Women & Energy project and Environmental management in hydropower. Credits have been extended for transformer stations in poor rural areas.

Results and effects of the energy projects during the period have been verified mainly in Project reports, during reviews and an evaluation¹¹. The findings, summarised below, are still relevant especially in the area of distribution upgrading projects which has continued to be the focus of the co-operation.

Sida has been instrumental in the capacity development of distribution utilities in central Vietnam and their on-going transformation to service companies. Strategic activities within deregulation and sector reform, Demand side management, Hydropower planning and Gender equality within EVN have definitely been catalytic for the process of change in the power sector. Moreover, the Sida supported project Environmental management in hydropower has raised the level of competence within EVN and also triggered other positive developments like a “environmental network” between the staff at hydropower plants.

The Song Hinh hydropower project and the Ha Tinh 500 kV substation have contributed to improve and stabilise the power supply to the poor provinces in Central Vietnam. Increased reliability and reduction of energy losses have met the targets set out for the distribution projects supported by Sida. Various consumer surveys¹² have confirmed that the distribution projects have had positive effects on living conditions, industry, small enterprise and job creation.

However, even if the end results are mainly positive some problems have been encountered along the way. There have been delays of up to two years in some of the distribution projects due to reorganisations and capacity constraints within the implementing agencies, which has been outside Sida’s control. Such long delays are for obvious reasons not

¹¹ Sida Evaluation 98/10, “Swedish Support to the Power Sector in Vietnam; Bo Sedin et.al.”

¹² Consumer Study Qui Nhon – Thai Nguyen, Interforest, 1997 and “Worries and Hopes among Electricity Consumers in Da Nang”, SEI, 2000).

acceptable for Sida nor for EVN and as a result improved reporting and follow up routines have been agreed upon.

For the Song Hinh Multipurpose Hydropower project Vietnam has so far failed to provide funds for the irrigation component of the project, due to limitations in available funds and higher priorities for other needs in the region related to remedy of damages caused by natural calamities. The implication is reduced economic viability for the project. However, efforts are made by MPI to increase the priority of Song Hinh for appropriation of government funds. MPI has drawn some lessons and all new Multi Purpose projects have funds secured for all components and the roles for all concerned actors are clarified from the start.

Other donors

The number of international donors to the energy sector in Vietnam has increased during the period. The main donors are the World Bank, Japan (JICA), France, the Asian Development Bank and the EU. All parts of the power sector receive substantial support from the donor community. The WB and AdB are leading in sector reforms and policy dialogue but also in investments. During the period, the WB has become very active also in rural electrification, and has plans to expand in that area. Japan mainly finances investments in the national grid, but becomes more and more active in rural electrification as well. Sweden, at present is a “small to medium size” donor in the energy sector in Vietnam. The Ministry of Industry has however expressed their appreciation of the Swedish support to strategic projects of a developing nature of interest for Vietnam, but not included in the programs of the World Bank or other major financing institutions.

Conclusions for future support

The electricity sector on the national level has today, although still largely a state monopoly, reached a level of development and momentum which form a foundation for further development by its own force. The main area in need of further support is the reform and institutional development. Here Sweden has played a catalytic role, through small but well-timed and effective activities. As presented above, the main actor from the donor side in the electricity sector is the World Bank, joined by ADB and possibly Japan. These actors, especially the WB and ADB, will be able to provide the further support needed on the national system level.

Sweden has long experience, a good reputation in the energy sector and a highly competent resource base with a comparative advantage as described earlier. Sweden has however in line with overall objectives of the current country strategy, in consultation with GoV decided to focus in the coming 5-year period on rural energy support. This gives an opportunity for synergies with the poverty alleviation programmes that will start implementation soon. It also gives an opportunity for dialogue with the MoI, Electricity of Vietnam and other relevant actors in the field of rural energy supply.

Candidate projects for concessionary credits, soft loans as well as guarantees can be found in the power sector. The increasing level of development in the electricity sector indicates that investments in the national power system to be funded by Sida should be financed through

credits and that such projects should be situated in rural areas.

2.4.2 Private Sector Development

Agreement	Disbursement 1999–2002
Start and improve your business	19.481.900
Industry/mines – environment	8.292.700
Other ¹⁾	13.346.637
¹⁾ Other consists of 23 projects. Most of them are of a smaller volume. They cover a broad spectra of areas within PSD.	

Background

Sida's ongoing support to Private Sector Development (PSD) in Vietnam was initiated in 1995–96. It has been limited in volume terms, with a total allocation of SEK 55 million during 1999–2003. It has been concentrated to training/capacity building and institutional support directly or indirectly targeted towards private small and medium enterprises and implemented mainly in cooperation with other donors. The two main programs have been the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) and the Mekong Project Development Facility (MPDF). Sweden has also provided a loan to the Eastern Asia Commercial Bank for onlending to SME:s.

The SIYB includes training of private entrepreneurs and the dissemination of training materials. The project is implemented by ILO and, increasingly, by the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) and a number of local implementing organisations. The MPDF is a multi-donor facility, managed by the IFC, where Sweden is a rather small partner. It covers activities in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The main components of the program are advisory assistance to companies, support to local providers of Business Development Services, training of bank staff and SME managers and support of business enabling environment.

Relevance

The private sector plays a key role in Vietnam's economic reforms and in its poverty alleviation efforts. It is also given high priority in the CPRGS. The conditions for the sector have improved significantly during the period and the private domestic sector is now the fastest growing part of the economy. The role of the private sector, and the microenterprises in particular, are very important for employment creation both in urban and rural areas.

Although the conditions have improved, the private sector still faces many problems. Private companies have difficulties in accessing credit, since the banks prefer to lend to SOE:s. They face a lot of bureaucratic procedures and abuse of power at the local level. They lack information and infrastructure and have limited possibilities to form own, independent, associations.

Results and effects

The SYIB is generally considered as a very successful program. It is the only program of its kind, targeted towards micro-/household enterprises and to potential entrepreneurs. The first phase of the program brought training to 20 provinces. The training is highly demanded and all participants pay fees for the courses. The program has made substantive achievements in terms of preparation of training material for Vietnam, in strengthening the VCCI to manage and implement the program and in establishing cooperation with numerous local training providers to conduct SIYB training. A separate component, "IYB on air" (distance learning via radio) has also attracted much interest.

The first phase of the MPDF (1996–2002) was evaluated in 2002.¹³ The conclusion was that MPDF had been successful in achieving the intended outcomes. It had helped 96 companies arrange financing of USD 58 million. The training components had been highly demanded and the studies had contributed to the policy debate. It was recommended that MPDF pay more attention to cost recovery, clarify its target population and improve its handling of environmental and social issues. The evaluation also recommended improvements of the financial and information systems. All these recommendations have been taken into account in the Strategic Plan for the second phase that will be started in 2003.

Other donors

The interest among donors to support PSD in Vietnam is large and increasing. But so far suitable channels for this have been lacking. Up to very recently, there has been no governmental structure for SME development. The Business Associations have been weak and had limited roles. MPDF has been the major channel for donor support (financed by IFC, ADB, and nine bilaterals). Outside this, some donors have implemented bilateral programs, the most important being Germany (GTZ) and Denmark. A partnership group for SME development has been established but it has so far not been very active. The situation is changing however, with the establishment of a SME agency within the MPI and establishment and strengthening of a number of Business Associations.

Conclusions for future co-operation

The needs for PSD support are substantial and the conditions for providing such a support have improved. Sweden has been a small donor in this area but has played a key role (the SIYB is based on a Swedish concept). The present support with one programme for microentrepreneurs (SIYB) and one for small/medium-sized companies (MPDF) is a good combination. There is no overlapping but still experiences could be exchanged. Participation in these programs has demanded limited capacity from Sida and the Embassy. When the present SIYB program ends (in 2004) it should be replaced by a similar program which could be more directed towards the overall business climate and employment creation in selected provinces.

¹³ Evaluation of the Mekong Project Development Facility, Nexus Associates, Inc., June 4 2002

Sida should not enter into a new large program but rather integrate PSD-aspects into all its programs in Vietnam. The links are very obvious in e.g. programs for legal reform, land administration and poverty alleviation. Efforts should also be made to use knowledge and experiences from Swedish companies in the cooperation programs. Trade development should be one element in PSD support, with emphasis on support in WTO-accession and export to the European market. Sweden will start two special programs in this area during 2003.

2.5 Research Co-operation

Agreement	Period	Budget	Disbursement 1999–2002
Research Co-operation	1997–1999	42.200.000	33.666.793
Research Co-operation	2000–2002	54.000.000	43.190.027

Background

The bilateral programme of research co-operation between Vietnam and Sweden started in 1979. Since its beginning approximately SEK 200 million have been used to finance co-operation between universities and research institutes. During the first decade international exchange was considered very important. Vietnamese researchers had, at the time limited exposure to scientific progress in other countries than those of the “Soviet block” and China. During the 1990s, the Swedish Vietnamese programme of co-operation changed towards capacity building in specific sector programmes, primarily in health research, agriculture, and forestry.

The research programme has so far been planned in 3-year agreement periods between Sida/SAREC and the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) in Vietnam. The funds have been used for research infrastructure (laboratories, libraries, information technology), human resource development and technology transfer. The agreement from 2000–2002 has emphasised research in the medical and agricultural sector with a focus on training components at MSc and PhD levels.

Relevance

The research co-operation programme has to be seen within the context of Vietnam’s policies on research and development. The past decade has seen important policy changes. The strong element of detailed central planning has been abandoned. Scientific institutes have experienced increasing autonomy and are allowed to engage in more commercial and contract-based relationships. The Vietnamese government gave MOST the task of formulating a strategy for national Science and Technology Development. A general framework for the strategy was completed in 1998, consisting of 25 different sector strategies for S&T development. There are several issues relating to the co-operation between universities and research institutes and to the control of research priorities and cross-sectoral co-ordination of priorities that are still under discussion. It is of importance that Sweden participates in this dialogue. The policies of Sida/SAREC states that the main objectives for research co-operation is

to assist developing countries to strengthen research capacity in the form of creating conducive research environments, providing research education and to assist with methods to plan, set priorities and allocate funds for research and to assist developing countries by providing financial and scientific resources to produce new knowledge on topics that are of importance to the developing countries and to transfer such research results to be used in the development process.

Results and effects

The research co-operation was evaluated in 2001/02¹⁴ and the evaluation report points out that several programmes have had a significant impact on the Vietnamese society. For example, the results from Health Systems Research have had an impact on policies in health, primarily in respect of administrative processes involved in managing pharmaceutical supplies. Research on gender and tuberculosis has also affected policy. The knowledge generated through the epidemiological field laboratory has led to new information on the prevalence of disease, patterns of usage of health services and related issues. The programme in Forestry Research has developed hybrid clones of acacia and eucalyptus, as well as pine species. These are used in the government reforestation programme and as they are two to three times as effective (grow faster and produce better timber) they bring significant advantages to the forestry sector. Farming Systems Research has developed new knowledge of animal feed and husbandry practices as well as new types of biogas converters. These are applied widely, 20.000 households are estimated to use the biogas systems today.

By the end of 2001, a total of 31 PhD students had successfully defended their dissertations and 28 Masters students had completed their programmes. Several shorter training courses had been conducted at most of the Vietnamese institutions. The programmes have together published around 540 contributions to national and international scientific journals, conferences and workshops.

Other donors

There is no co-ordinated donor support to research and research capacity building in Vietnam.

Canadian CIDA supports regional programmes and scholarships through ASEAN and a joint research project funded by IDRC and CIDA in the areas of economic policy, natural resource management, science technology policy and legal reform. IDRC also supports around 12 other research projects related to farming systems, upland resources management, coastal resource management, shelter for the urban poor, building capacity for social/gender analysis, private sector/industrial development and population policy.

The World Bank is in the process of initiating an ICT project, which aims at giving a large number of universities in Vietnam computers and access to Internet and possibilities to download scientific journals.

Franco-Vietnamese co-operation has developed considerably since the beginning of the 1990s. France supports further education and scientific research through programmes such as: teaching of economics and

¹⁴ Research Cooperation between Vietnam and Sweden, Kim Forss. Sida Evaluation 02/06

financial control (CFVG), engineer training (PFIEV), the development of scientific schools ("Espoir" project), scholarships, training for managers and inspectors of the Ministry of Education and Training and a support project for the development of social science co-operation.

Conclusions for future support

Since Sweden today is a comparatively small donor, there is a need for an increased focus in the research co-operation portfolio. Still, Sweden maintains a strong position in research collaboration partly due to the fact that research collaboration dates back to 1979 when almost no other donor supported research. Sida/SAREC can play a strategic and catalytic role.

In order to focus, it is suggested that the research collaboration during the next agreement period be considered as one programme which consists of 3 to 4 sub-programmes (health, bio-technology, rural development and environment) rather than consisting of many small separate projects. Support to research capacity building within the above areas is still needed, especially at universities. The focus should be on PhD and post-Doc training rather than training at Masters level.

Furthermore, it is proposed that there should be a close linkage between research and development. This means that the research co-operation programme should be closely linked to the development programme and in line with the priorities of the i) strategy for science and technology 2001–2010; ii) Vietnam comprehensive poverty reduction and growth strategy (CPRGS) and iii) Swedish country strategy for development co-operation with Vietnam, and other relevant strategies and policies.

3. Sida's support to Swedish NGOs' development cooperation programmes in Vietnam

Background

The aim of Sida's support for the development cooperation programmes of NGOs is to further the development of a sustainable and democratic civil society and to strengthen the capacity of the local partner organisations. Sida's guidelines for support to NGOs stress both the importance of developing the knowledge and skills of local partner organisations and the importance of effective organisations. Sida finances up to 80% of the programmes while the Swedish organisations raise a minimum of 20% of the requested funds.

Seven of 13 Swedish NGOs with frame agreements with Sida have received funding from Sida for development programmes in Vietnam during the period in question (see below).

The total amount utilised for the three years 1999–2001 was SEK 41.3 million. The estimated amount for 2002 is SEK 13.5 million. The utilised amount is broken down as follows: (the amount utilised for 2002 will be reported to Sida on January 15th, 2003)

Table 5: Disbursements to NGOs 1999–2001, in SEK thousands

Organisation	1999	2000	2001	Total
Rädda Barnen	3 400	4 530	4 230	12 160
Diakonia	3 826	1 400	1 794	7 020
OPIC	1 870	1 917	2 014	5 801
LO/TCO	2 082	1 846	1 819	5 747
IOGT/NTO*	0,920	0,943	2 366	4 229
Kooperation Utan Gränser	0,880	1 450	1 098	3 428
Sv Röda Korset	—	1 400	—	1 400
SHIA	0,230	0,297	0,330	0,857
SMR	0,709	—	—	0,709
Total	13 917	13 783	13 651	41 351

*under the umbrella organisation Forum Syd

Support for Human Rights Promotion and Democracy Development is by far the most predominant sector of NGO cooperation. Other sectors

receiving support are the social and education sectors, and a small amount of support is provided for trade and health projects. The projects have mainly been implemented by local partners and not by the Swedish organisations themselves.

Six of the seven organisations mentioned above have submitted reports (Diakonia is missing). The following analysis is a summary of the information given by the six Swedish organisations. It reflects their own assessments of the programmes of cooperation and the results and effects.

The partners in cooperation during the four-year period include governmental partners on different levels, mass organisations such as the Women's Union and the Association of Theatrical Artists; national trade unions, for example the medical, building, bank, education, industrial, and labour unions; co-operative organisations such as Saigon Coop and the Vietnam Co-operative Association; as well as a number of associations, e.g. Vietnam Blind Association, IOGT Vietnam.

Results and effects

It has been reported that the planned outputs have been achieved in all projects, although some difficulties have been encountered in the form of slow decision-making processes and administrative performance.

Several projects focus on raising awareness and promoting rights: equal rights for people with disabilities; children's rights; information and work against drug abuse. Other areas of cooperation are support for the development of independent trade union organisations and the co-operative sector, in this respect the consumer co-operative market. Training and capacity building have been instrumental in achieving the reported outputs.

Teacher training and the introduction of child rights and special education methods in schools are reported to have had an effect that a more child-friendly learning environment for a great number of children have been achieved. The training of journalists has resulted in greater visibility of children in the media. Training in children's needs and rights in the legal system is reported to have been included in the curriculum of a number of training schools for officers in the police force and the courts system. The low impact achieved in general of increasing the visibility and rights of children is considered to be due to the following: the difficulties the government sometimes has in acknowledging internal social problems, the incoherence of relevant laws, corruption, inadequate law enforcement, and the need for capacity building of practitioners working with distressed and abused children. These difficulties also hamper Vietnamese NGOs that want to take action.

Economic development through small-scale business for women is considered to give the target group an instrument for improving their living conditions in a long-term perspective.

Raising awareness in respect of drug abuse is reported to have contributed to limiting the consumption of alcohol and smoking at public meetings, and in offices. Another result is that young people have been mobilised to support a healthier life style and, by refraining from using drugs, have also improved their economy.

In the co-operative sector, the results achieved have been in the form of more competitive organisations, with improved business and personnel management, capable of adjusting to the competition that exists today on the retail market. It is also considered that the modernisation of the co-operatives is on the way to reach international standards.

However, many of the NGOs emphasise the long-term perspective of the projects and of cooperation, and therefore the immediate results are limited at this point.

Relevance

Some of the reports touch upon Vietnam's rapid development towards a free and globalised market economy. What consequences this will have for example for the unions are still uncertain: how far the unions will go, or can go, to adopt the concept of free trade unionism, will be discussed in the next Congress in 2003. In this process, cooperation for democratic development in the unions and in civil society is important. In the process of transition of the co-operatives from state-governed to member-based organisations, the promotion of democratic and transparent procedures and values is reported as instrumental for development.

One general experience reflected in the reports is the slow decision-making process, due to the existing hierarchy, which slows down the work. Furthermore, the experience gained by some organisations is that it is possible to work through the existing structures of mass organisations and government authorities, as well as with supporting groups or individuals that are on the verge of acceptance. However, the high-risk support has, in many cases, led to the acceptance of a group that is now able to work officially in the NGO framework. Social actors, individuals and groups are tolerated as long as they keep their activities within accepted social, cultural and political norms. The recognition given by the government is often based on who their leaders are and their efficiency as project implementers at local levels.

The Swedish partnership with the Vietnam Blind Association is considered to have been facilitated due to the fact that the VBA was developed from and is closely connected to the Communist Party. As a result, project implementation has enjoyed the assistance of People's Committees and political leaders at different levels. This connection is reported as having had a positive effect on the commitment and understanding of the needs of people with disabilities in the ministry in question and the government.

Efforts made by another NGO to form a national non-governmental organisation as a fruit of a programme of cooperation did not succeed, due to the fact that national organisations cannot have individual members. However, the organisation was established, but under the Ministry of Education and Training. Yet another experience reported was that reluctance shown towards co-operative development on the part of the People's Committee led to a slow decision-making process. However, once the decision was made the reluctance was transformed into positive interest in the project.

Conclusions for future support

It can be seen from the reports that the question of the take-over of activities by local partners is considered an integral part of their cooperation. However, the need for development cooperation still remains and once the capacity within the present area of support is developed, cooperation extends into a complementary field to further capacity.

One general concern expressed is sustainability without external funding, although some partners are expected to be self-sufficient in a few years. With various strategies and time periods, it is foreseen that the present relations will develop into a partnership based on the exchange of ideas and information.

The Swedish organisations were asked to give their opinion on what they considered relevant for future development cooperation in relation to the needs in Vietnam. These organisations have years of experience of working in the country and the following identified areas are based on a deep understanding and broad knowledge of some crucial needs.

Legislation issues and the economic reform process are stressed. The adjustment process is having severe effect on families, with serious social consequences. Reform of the education system in order to improve the quality and the availability of basic education for all is of high priority and would limit drop-outs and prevent children from ending up on the streets and the risks that follow from this. Another area of priority expressed is the mainstreaming of the disability dimension in the overall context, especially in the sectors of education, human rights support and in legislation emphasising women and children.

The need to include environment and infrastructure in the next strategy period for development cooperation is also stressed. The situation in a city such as Ho Chi Minh with rapidly increasing pollution and a diminishing supply of fresh water is one example given, where the effects of the expanding economy on the infrastructure will lead to a breakdown if nothing is done. At the moment the housing situation is inadequate with the effect that young newly married couples are forced to live with their parents. Several measures need to be taken, but one suggestion is to allow alternative forms of ownership and financing, thereby permitting individuals to take care of their housing needs.

In the support for democratisation, the need for the government to develop reliable and transparent institutions should be emphasised.

In respect of future support for strengthening civil society some of the organisations expressed the following. In the support to the democratisation process, the government's recognition of the value of a free and vibrant civil society based on democratic values and popular participation should be part of the support. There are many ways of strengthening civil society, co-operatives and Cupertino in other democratic forms is one tool in this endeavour. New forms of Cupertino in agriculture, housing sector, financial services and the consumer sector will lead to the emergence of new organisations which will also lead to greater demands being made on leaders and leadership. The politically sensitive structure is, however, and obstacle to Vietnamese NGOs to play the role of formal agents for democratisation. One role for international NGOs in strengthening the development of civil society is to promote their NGO-partners as knowledgeable potential partners to the authorities in order to create a

better understanding of the existence of NGOs. Strengthening the trade unions to enable them to develop into democratic and independent organisations is also a road to strengthening an emerging civil society in the country. Empowering mass organisations on local and district level with leadership training and youth exchange programmes is seen as a possible way of strengthening civil society.

The following reflection is given by one of the organisations: “maybe it should be reconsidered that the western/liberal ideas about what a civil society consists of do not fit the Vietnamese context. Maybe we should try to find other definitions of a civil society to describe the process in this country’s society”.

Regarding the question of how Swedish NGOs and Sida can contribute to creating an enabling environment for civil society, the following reflections were made. One opinion is that it may be more fruitful to build on and advocate the competence of existing NGOs and to support and work for a change in attitudes towards NGOs in the Party and State sector, rather than trying to influence the legal context at present. Furthermore, the importance of continuing the projects and the NGO cooperation in Vietnam is expressed. For example, in the case of the unions, to support the development of democratic and independent unions, can have an effect on labour and other legislation in the country.

Sida, on the other hand, should use the opportunity offered by the official development cooperation to advocate liberalisation of the legislation.

4. Summary and conclusions

During the current country strategy period a number of external factors have influenced its implementation. Examples of those are the very rapid economic growth of the country, the slow speed of political reforms and the increased number of other donors on the arena. The effect has been that Vietnam has more donors to handle and an increased resource inflow but limited administrative capacities in spite of harmonisation efforts. Higher demands have been put on the dialogue issues particularly in areas of priority for Sweden. The increased number of donors has made it possible to realise synergies but it has also put higher demand on capacity to co-ordinate both for donors and GoV.

Generally, the level of achievements of the objectives of the programs funded by Sweden has been high. It differs between sectors and the pre-conditions for reaching the objectives are different. Looking at the three reform areas (economic, public administration and legal), common or similar conclusions on the results in these areas are the building of structures and foundation for the future, recognising professionalism and result orientation, awareness of problems and how to tackle continued reforms. Most projects and programmes have contributed in a positive way to institutions – competence and capacity building, be it public administration reform or energy, health or land administration. Other general effects are establishment of systems and contributing to systems change in specific areas as well as introducing new techniques and methods of work.

The level of ambition of the objectives of the programme has been high. To be successful it needs a continuous policy-dialogue in a number of areas, some of them considered as very sensitive. This will however demand more capacity than is now available at the Embassy and at Sida. There is therefore a need to reformulate the level of ambition for the development co-operation with Vietnam as well as finding ways and means of retaining the specific comparative advantages of Sweden in Vietnam and still find possibilities of working with others to achieve the objectives of Swedish support.

The present program is dominated by a number of rather complex bilateral programs in sensitive areas with high dialogue ambitions. This form of co-operation has often been based on the assumption of a “special relation” between Sweden and Vietnam. If capacity is not increased it must however lead to the conclusion to decrease the level of ambition in some of the difficult reform areas.

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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