

The Strengthening Environmental Management and Land Administration Programme in Vietnam

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Acronyms

APO	Annual Plan of Operation
CIREN	Centre for Natural Resources and Environment
CPLAR	Vietnam-Sweden Cooperation Programme for Land Administration Reform
CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DoNRE	Department of Natural Resources and Environment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ELIS	Environment and Land Information System
GoS	Government of Sweden
GoV	Government of Vietnam
HRD	Human Resource Development
ISGE	International Support Group on Environment
Keml	Swedish Chemicals Inspectorate
LA	Land Administration
LEP	Law on Environmental Protection
LFA	Logical-Framework Analysis
LURC	Land Use Rights Certificate
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
MoIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade
MoNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoV	Means of Verification
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MPR	Management and Policy Review
MRDP	Mountain Rural Development Programme
MTDP	Management Training and Development Programme
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
MTR	Mid-term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	National Programme Office
NRE	Natural Resources and Environment
NREM	Natural Resources and Environmental Management
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OSS	One-Stop-Shop
PAR	Public Administrative Reform
PCM	Provincial Coastal Management
PDP	Policy Dialogue Platforms
PGAE	Partnership Group for Aid Effectiveness
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
PSB	Programme Steering Board
QA	Quality Assurance

RBM	Results-based Management
SAT/ESD	Sida Advisory Team on Environmentally Sustainable Development
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan
SEMA	Strengthening the Environmental Management
SEMLA	Strengthening Environmental Management and land Administration (Programme)
SEPA	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SPO	Strategic Plan of Operation
TA	Technical Assistance
TAG	Thematic Advisory Group
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VEPA	Vietnam Environmental Protection Agency
VLAP	Vietnam Land Administration Programme
WB	The World Bank

Executive Summary

The SEMLA objective is to establish: *“A Natural resource and Environmental Management that contributes to economic growth and poverty alleviation, sustainable development and environmental protection, strengthening local governance and participation of the population in decision-making processes and the management of resources, in order to meet the demands and needs in an efficient and equitable way”*.¹ Five basic principles are laid down: poverty alleviation, participation, cooperation, decentralisation, and integration.

The Programme was agreed upon by the two Governments of Vietnam and Sweden by mid 2004 and is coordinated through a Steering Board led by a Vice-minister of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE). It includes a National component and six Provincial components. The National component includes sub-components at the Ministry of Industry (MoIT) and the Vietnam Environmental Protection Agency (VEPA). The Programme also includes an Expansion Fund for replication of tested and agreed models and for support to emerging natural resources and environment (NRE) challenges.

The Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the Programme is to focus on overall performance of SEMLA and to highlight structural problems experienced during its implementation.

Relevance

The SEMLA objective and its basic principles remain relevant from the perspective of the overall policies of both Governments. The Programme has responded to changing requirements arising from the expansion of MoNRE's mandate in NRE management. There is now a strategic choice to be made whether to continuously broadening into additional subject areas or whether to focus more on consolidating on-going work to put methodology firmer in place.

SEMLA holds the potential for an approach involving both the civil servants and the communities, which would be in line with a rights-based approach to improving efficiency in public administration: i) strengthening capacity of authorities to deliver essential services, and simultaneously ii) assisting communities and individuals to empower themselves to be able to demand greater accountability from the administrative system. Some specific activities at local level include participatory processes, informing and consulting with communities and public awareness activities focus on community access to information. Most focus has, however, been on the civil servants and less attention has been given to empowering the communities to demand greater accountability from its civil servants.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

SEMLA has contributed to the successful strengthening of the legal and regulatory capacity in the fields of environmental management and protection and land administration. Its contributions include a Law on Environmental Protection and assisting in preparing Vietnam's first Chemical Law. The support for the development of an integrated information system for environment and land management (ELIS) is another major contribution. The Programme has developed a model which directly integrates environmental issues into the land use planning process and secures public participation. The Programme has, however, not progressed successfully in capturing opportunities to mainstream poverty reduction considerations into the process. A roadmap for strengthening pro-poor analytical approaches is needed.

Work within management and policy review has contributed to clarifying mandates and responsibilities within MoNRE and between involved Ministries. In Vietnam natural resources and environmental

¹ See Programme Document or Preface of the SEMLA Mid-Term Report, September 2007

management (NREM) is spread over more Ministries than in many other countries. Efforts should now focus more on how to integrate changes into practical daily management or behaviour of the decision makers at all levels and across all involved Ministries at the same time as the legal development continues. A road-map for how the integrated NREM administration should work in the future should be developed.

SEMLA has undertaken a number of pilot demonstration projects intended for experimentation of different themes and learning purposes, while also directly benefiting the communities involved. Pilot models with new approaches to integrated environment and land use planning are implemented in all SEMLA provinces. Cleaner production models are also working well with high expected potential for replication. In practise, many of these pilots have been seen primarily as a means to get a particular issue solved rather than as projects for learning and replication. The focus of SEMLA, including progress reporting system, is too exclusively on the activity level and on a target-driven approach. The latter is not appropriate for what is mainly a “learning” programme aimed at producing models for replication. Given that the pilot projects are identified as learning processes, the outcome should be a proven model with guidelines, staff skills etc for replication.

SEMLA has taken a very incremental approach to the reform of the land registration system proposing a gradual introduction of a more coherent and efficient land registration system. If SEMLA had put more attention to analyse and describe the problems for economic and environmental development and for poverty alleviation with the current system, it might have been possible to raise the necessary political support for a more comprehensive reform, which would be well in line with the PAR policy. Land valuation is one of the expected outputs of SEMLA, but is not included in any activity. The reason seems to be that MoNRE has no responsibility in relation to land valuation.

The Programme has increased the capacity of many civil servants, especially those directly involved at the national and provincial levels. The Programme should now try to make an effort to go beyond those directly involved in the Programme, and in particular make an extra effort to involve staff at district and commune levels. Useful direct results of SEMLA include the introduction of skilled-based training and new way of management through the management training development programme. However, capacity building is largely viewed as a separate training component rather than an integrated cross-cutting tool to build the capacity at various levels. Capacity building planned and implemented at provincial level has in particular taken a rather traditional approach, focusing on providing information by lecturing or disseminating documentation. The involvement of MoNRE in capacity building at provincial level is weak which implies that MoNRE is also not in a good position to replicate emerging good results from training at national level.

The Programme has used various means to introduce the rights and obligations of users when it comes to land and environment. In some provinces attempts have also been made to apply communication methods for behaviour change in grassroots projects. Such attempts should be strongly encouraged. Through the public awareness and communication component the communities should be empowered to articulate their rights and put pressure on local government to fulfil their services delivery duties.

The Expansion Fund is a very useful tool since it allows the Programme to directly respond to unforeseen demands for prioritised NRE investigations. It can also be used for replication of successful pilots to the provinces. It can, however, be criticised from the point of view that the urgent issues are issues which not always contribute to the learning and capacity building aspects of the Programme.

There is scope for strengthening the coordination across components. For capacity building a stronger link should be made between training, study tours, demonstration projects, and public awareness raising activities. Public awareness raising activities should place much emphasis on the initiated efforts to make more pro-active use of lessons learned from for instance pilot demonstration projects. Public

awareness and communication activities could be coordinated with pilots to test new methodologies, including a rights-based approach to PAR. The national component should ensure that lessons learned from all components are documented and assessed in a systematic way. The Programme should be stronger on mainstreaming gender into its activities, just as it should be stronger on mainstreaming pro-poor perspectives in general.

Planning, MIS and M&E Systems

SEMLA has developed effective planning and MIS systems, based on the Log-Frame Analysis (LFA) structure of the programme objectives. Operational plans, and both physical and financial progress/status reports, conform to the Programme LFA structure. This ensures compliance at the inputs and outputs levels. The situation is less satisfactory in evaluation at the outcomes and goal levels. The SEMLA Log-Frame itself contains no indicators, means of verification or risks/assumptions, and the vertical logic does not clearly link activities to outcomes, or outcomes to purpose and goal. This should be urgently addressed in order to improve the M&E system.

Indicators and means of verification at outcome level have been developed by SEMLA M&E group during the inception and implementation periods. The indicator structure and coding adopted do, however, not match the Log-Frame structure and the indicators used are (deliberately) selective rather than comprehensive. Consequently there is loss of transparency in assessing the results of the Programme activities, a violation of results-based management principles. The outcome indicators currently used focus almost entirely on capacity development in MoNRE/DoNRE. Attention should also be given to outcomes at grassroots level in line with the SEMLA guiding principle of participation. The M&E system does not cover the goal level. A fresh review should be carried out of the risks and assumptions affecting SEMLA.

Technical and Institutional Feasibility

There is strong ownership of SEMLA in MoNRE and also at provincial level. There are, however, signs that activities at provincial level do not always pay attention to Programme quality requirements. Clear benchmarks need to be included to ensure that the SEMLA activities have added value and will be replicable in the future without SEMLA. At the national level, the special thematic advisory groups (TAG) are innovative and have contributed to improved integration across departments in MoNRE. Efforts should be made to encourage participation also from other Ministries given the cross-cutting nature of NRE and land. The sustainability of the TAGs is, however, worrying given that the members are currently paid an additional incentive by SEMLA for the extra work involved.

MoNRE has not been able to provide the required human resources. Instead, external staff has been contracted and paid from the donor funds. The problem with externally recruited staff is also an issue in VEPA. It is envisioned that the use of contracted staff shall decrease as capacity in MoNRE and VEPA staff increases. There should be a clear road map for how to successively build the capacity in regular staff and a clear time table for when regular staff will replace externally contracted staff.

Overall the technical assistance (TA) has been useful at both national level and provincial level. There is high appreciation of new knowledge and methods brought by international consultants and the application experience in the context of Vietnam provided by national consultants. The impact of TA has been stronger at the national level than at provincial level while it seems that the needs for TA are stronger at the provincial level. There is also a need for clearer agreement on how to divide responsibilities in order to maximise synergies and exploit the comparative advantage of each involved TA stakeholder. More support is needed (at both national and provincial levels) to ensure that activities are not reduced to “business as usual” but show added value. Not all TA inputs have resulted in the expected

quality of output. Two examples of outputs which need to be further revisited are the M&E system and the mainstreaming of social/socio-economic aspects, including gender equity.

Sustainability

The degree of sustainability will crucially depend on which steps are taken during the remaining Programme time. There are a number of substantial threatening factors which point to weak sustainability. All positions but one in the National Programme Office are manned by externally contracted individuals who will most likely not remain in MoNRE when the Programme ends. The combination of frequent outsourcing of implementation of activities, TA being located separate from their main counterpart, and few MoNRE staff accompanying TA when travelling to the Provinces, implies strongly decreased capacity building effects of the Programme. It does also seem that TA continues to be used as gap filler to certain extent.

The methodology will not be finalised and firmly in place when the Programme ends. SEMLA resources facilitate implementation of pilots and extensive training. There are comparatively high costs associated with these activities and it is thus not likely that pilots will be replicated and training continued.

Recommendations

Detailed recommendations are included at the end of each sub-section. Some of these recommendations could be undertaken without delay while others may require longer time but should still be initiated with a longer-term institutional MoNRE perspective. The detailed recommendations are summarised in five main recommendations, which include to i) review and consolidate the Log-Frame and outcome indicators; ii) pay immediate attention to mainstreaming social and socio-economic perspectives into activities applying a rights-based approach; iii) consolidate and deepen work within current areas of coverage rather than add new thematic areas; iv) consider continuation and/or addition of a few selected TA positions; and v) consider a shorter extension of the Programme.

1 The SEMLA Programme

1.1 Background

Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) has been involved in the field of land administration (LA) reform and management of natural resources and the environment (NREM) in Vietnam for the last 15 years. The previous cooperation was organised through separate programmes within specific technical fields. Programmes supported included Strengthening the Environmental Management (SEMA), Provincial Coastal Management (PCM) and the Mountain Rural Development Programme (MRDP). Reform of the land administration system in Vietnam was supported by the Vietnam – Sweden Cooperation Programme for Land Administration Reform (CPLAR) during 1997 – 2002. The cooperation was mainly focused on policy and institutional development, capacity building and technical assistance in specific subject areas.

The dynamic development context in Vietnam has brought about many changes for NREM. From an institutional perspective, the process started with the establishment of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) in 2002. The new Ministry took over the responsibility of six institutions with different NRE responsibilities (land, environment, water, geology, mineralogy and hydro-meteorology). A year later, the process continued with the establishment of integrated provincial Departments of Natural Resources and Environment (DoNRE).

The legislation with regard to the management of land, natural resources, forests and the environment has been revised during recent years, increasingly reflecting the changes in the policy framework and in state management. Support for these changes, in particular for further public administrative reform, decentralisation of the implementation responsibilities, increased local participation in decision-making and, improved coordination between government institutions, the private sector and donor agencies is becoming widespread throughout the Vietnamese society. The underlying principle is to encourage management approaches that stress human and institutional facilitation capacity over centralised technical development.

Following the approval in 2005 of the Hanoi Core Statement a joint Government and donor process for improving the effectiveness of development assistance was initiated. The process is coordinated by Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) under the Partnership Group for Aid Effectiveness (PGAE).² MoNRE is in the beginning of building partnerships with the donor community for different subject areas. One formal partnership is in operation at MoNRE, namely the International Support Group on Environment (ISGE) for policy dialogue and donor coordination. The cooperation modality of the ISGE has recently been reviewed. The report is expected to result in various modifications of the present working and funding arrangements for support to donor coordination of the NRE-sector.

1.2 The SEMLA Programme and its Components

The SEMLA Programme (Strengthening Environmental Management and Land Administration) was agreed upon by the two Governments of Vietnam and Sweden by mid 2004. The overall Specific agreement for the cooperation was signed by representatives of MPI and Sida. The SEMLA Programme is coordinated through a Steering Board led by a Vice-minister of MoNRE. The SEMLA National Programme Office (NPO) is located at MoNRE. It is implemented over a 5-year period and is currently in its third year of operation.

² Information about the achievements of the PGAE can be found under the web-site of MPI.

SEMLA includes various components, a National component and Provincial components (Ha Giang, Nghe An, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Dong Nai and the Ba Ria-Vung Tau provinces). The National component also includes sub-components at the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) and the Vietnam Environmental Protection Agency (VEPA). A Memorandum of Understanding is signed between the Embassy and the Provincial People's Committee (PPC) of each province, including MoIT and VEPA.

SEMLA aims at the development of new policies and methods for environmental management and land administration. The cooperation is focused on the promotion of integrated approaches for state management of NRE, the building of increased capacity of technical staff at DoNREs as regards environment and the piloting of new methods in selected technical subject areas in the selected six provinces. The Programme also includes an Expansion fund for replication of tested and agreed models in other provinces and for support to new NRE-projects prioritised by MoNRE.

Technical assistance to the Programme is provided by a Consortium led by Ramboll, Natura AB, Sweden. Advisory services are provided to the national and provincial components by both international and national expertise. The technical assistance team is led by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) based at the National Programme Office at MoNRE.

The total Programme budget amounts to 250 MSEK. Out of this amount Sweden shall provide 200 MSEK. The average budget for the provincial components is 10 MSEK. Technical assistance to the SEMLA Programme amounts to 60 MSEK.

Additional technical assistance to the SEMLA programme is provided by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Swedish Chemicals Agency (KemI). The agreed budget for institutional cooperation between SEPA/KemI and VEPA/MoIT respectively amounts to totally 8 MSEK.

For further information about the SEMLA Programme reference is made to the open homepage of the programme (www.semla.org.vn).

2 The Evaluation Assignment

2.1 Purpose and Scope

An external Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) of the SEMLA Programme as a whole has been planned for 2007 to serve as an input to the Programme Mid-term Review (MTR) between the Government of Vietnam (GoV) (represented by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), other relevant Ministries and Agencies, as well as the six provinces participating in the cooperation) and Sida (represented by the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi).

The MTE shall focus on the overall performance of the SEMLA Programme and highlight structural problems experienced during the implementation of the different components of the Programme. Further, the MTE needs to take into account how the Programme has adjusted to new policy initiatives of the GoV, such as the inclusion of the environmental sustainable development as an integral part of the Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP), the adoption of a new and comprehensive legal framework for NREM, institutional changes of environmental responsibilities within the GoV, etc. Finally, the MTE needs to look into how the Hanoi Core Statement on harmonisation and aid effectiveness has been addressed by the Programme.

A number of in-depth studies as an input to the MTR of the SEMLA Programme shall be undertaken. The studies shall focus on the overall performance of the Programme in relation to its steering documents, the main objectives of the cooperation, the updated LFA, etc. In this respect relevant GoV and Sida policies as regards environmental sustainable development and the reduction of poverty shall also be compared with. Based on these in-depth studies, a performance and results assessment, as well as a risk assessment of the SEMLA Programme, by its third year of implementation shall be undertaken and presented in a Synthesis report. The review shall include a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the main achievements from past years of implementation of the Programme.

The MTE shall further provide advice to the parties on the future scope and direction of the individual components of the SEMLA Programme. The Synthesis report shall thus include a chapter with recommendations on measures to overcome possible obstacles, and if needed, suggestions on how to improve the performance of the Programme, as well as the various components and individual projects.

The full Terms of Reference for the evaluation of SEMLA by its mid-term is attached in Appendix II.1.

2.2 Approach and Methodology

The Sida Advisory Team for Environmentally Sustainable Development (SAT/ESD)³ has been requested by Sida, through the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi, to undertake a performance evaluation of the SEMLA Programme by its mid-term. The specific Terms of Reference (ToR) requires the SAT/ESD to look at the Programme in relation to its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, feasibility, cost-effectiveness and sustainability. The requirements specified in the ToR are in turn in line with Swedish/Sida requirements for any performance evaluation.⁴

In order to fulfil its task the SAT/ESD has undertaken:

- Document review and assessment
- Meetings at national level with relevant Programme stakeholders (Steering Board, all TAG Groups at MoNRE, VEPA, MoIT, CIREN)
- Participation in quarterly management meeting in Hanoi
- Meetings in Hanoi with representatives from province components (Phu Yen, Binh Dinh, Dong Nai)
- Visits to Nghe An, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, Ha Giang with meetings at provincial level with relevant Programme stakeholders and visits to Programme sites
- Meetings with other donor-supported projects (Poverty and Environment (UNDP/Dfid) and DCE/Danida)
- Meeting with Embassy of Denmark/Danida

Meeting schedule and field visit programme is attached in Appendix II.2.

³ The SAT/ESD core team includes: Henny Andersen (Team Leader), Bach Tan Sinh, Dao Ngoc Nga, Mike Daplyn, Paul Schuttenbelt and Tommy Österberg. (For further details, please contact Team Leader by e-mail: henny.andersen@spmconsult.se).

⁴ For detailed discussion on what is required from a performance evaluation, see e.g. Sida (2007): *Looking Back, Moving Forward. Sida Evaluation Manual*. (2nd revised edition), Stockholm.

2.3 A Note on Delimitations of a Performance Evaluation

An evaluation will by definition be foremost backward looking. It is an assessment of on-going or completed activities, not activities that are still at the planning stage. The SAT/ESD thus has to base its assessment on what it learned through reading, meetings and field visits during its Mission about what has been achieved to date. Future plans are of course valuable, but from an evaluation point of view they can only be seen as an indication of intentions ahead and not be regarded as a vital part of an evaluation.

It should further be noted that a performance evaluation is rather different from monitoring, or progress reporting, on activities. Whereas monitoring may be nothing more than a simple recording of activities and results against plans and budgets, evaluation probes deeper. The Programme produces its own monitoring and progress reporting which details activities undertaken. The MTE in turn assesses whether the combined efforts of these activities are likely to produce the end results as laid out in the Programme Document and the subsequent SPO. Therefore, the MTE report does not detail all activities undertaken.

The SAT/ESD has made an effort to provide recommendations which are seen by the SAT/ESD as logic consequences of the findings. However, given the role of an evaluation, recommendations cannot be made at activity level (i.e. not detailing a specific activity to undertake). Instead, the SAT/ESD aims at pointing to aspects which need more attention during implementation ahead in order to better contribute to achieving the set goal and objectives. The Programme itself will then have to review how to best design its activities in order to achieve this.

2.4 Acknowledgement

As members of the Sida Advisory Team on Environmentally Sustainable Development (SAT/ESD) we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all who helped us put this report together. The SEMLA Programme is complex and the Mission has been intense. We therefore highly appreciate the efforts made in updating reports, providing information, supporting in the arrangement of numerous meetings, and answering our endless questions. We recognise missions of this kind require much preparation by many people, and take up a lot of valuable time, which might be better spent getting on with the real work of helping the beneficiaries of the Programme. We were impressed with the high level of commitment, enthusiasm and courtesy shown to us by all concerned.

We would particularly like to thank MoNRE and the Programme staff at all levels. Apart from organising many parts of the mission, they gave us a thorough briefing at the outset, and contributed many productive ideas that we found most helpful in carrying out this Mission.

All of us on the SAT/ESD learned a lot from our Mission. We sincerely hope we have accurately interpreted current issues relating to the SEMLA Programme, and that all concerned will find our ideas and recommendations useful in thinking about how to proceed during the second half of the SEMLA Programme.

2.5 The Report

In chapter 3 we present our findings structured around the required evaluation aspects/features. The first section (section 3.1) thus discusses the Programme relevance and justification. In section 3.2 we assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation to date. We thereafter elaborate on planning, MIS and M&E systems in section 3.3. Technical and institutional feasibility is discussed in section 3.4 followed by a discussion on sustainability (section 3.5). We present our specific recommendations in each section, i.e. in direct relation to the analysis. Summary conclusions and recommendations are included in a final chapter 4.

Findings from in-depth studies are attached: *Assessment of the Achievements, Progress and Outcomes of SEMLA* (Appendix I.1) and: *Assessment of SEMLA Planning, M&E and MIS Systems* (Appendix I.2).

3 Findings and Assessment

3.1 Relevance and Justification

3.1.1 From the Perspective of Overall Policies

The two Governments of Vietnam and Sweden (GoV and GoS respectively) share a common vision and goal of development for poverty reduction. The SEMLA objective is to establish: *“A Natural resource and Environmental Management that contributes to economic growth and poverty alleviation, sustainable development and environmental protection, strengthening local governance and participation of the population in decision-making processes and the management of resources, in order to meet the demands and needs in an efficient and equitable way”*.⁵ Five basic principles are laid down: poverty alleviation, participation, cooperation, decentralisation, and integration.

The Programme Document states that the direct beneficiaries – the rural and urban poor households – are expected to benefit by: i) strengthening of land use rights; ii) provision of land related services; and iii) mitigating the hazards from pollution and natural resources degradation. The staff at all levels of the MoNRE/DoNRE environmental and land administrative system is expected to be indirect beneficiaries.

The SEMLA objective and its basic principles are thus highly relevant from the perspective of the overall policies of both GoV and GoS. However, the extent to which any programme or project is truly relevant will ultimately depend on how it is operationalised, i.e. how intentions are translated into practise. Team findings on implementation are discussed further in various sections below.

3.1.2 From the Perspective of Policy and Contextual Changes

Vietnam is developing fast and need to develop its administrative structures to meet new challenges and demands. The Programme contributes to strengthening the foundations of MoNRE/DoNRE, VEPA and MoIT and to facilitating the process of change in the field of land and environment management.

The Programme has responded to changing requirements at national level. Changing demands have arisen from the fact that MoNRE's mandate in management of natural resources and environment has expanded. Examples of areas of expansion include Coastal Zone Management, River Basin Management, and most recently Climate Change.

One reflection when it comes to continuously broadening the scope of SEMLA in response to expanded MoNRE mandate is that there is a risk to spread the comparatively limited resources too thinly. While the formulation of policies and subsequent legal documents is without doubt a necessary first step in all policy areas, it is not a sufficient step in any policy area. Experience shows that the formulation of policies, laws etc is indeed the easiest step – while translating policies into practise and enforcing laws has proven to be considerably more difficult. There may thus be a case for a strategic choice between continuously broadening to new areas versus deepening and consolidating work within areas where work is already being undertaken (also discussed under PAR below). This is particularly so given that other donors are in the process of preparing support to MoNRE and in light of the Hanoi Core Statement. Attention should be to maximize synergies and acknowledging that SEMLA does not have to do it all.

⁵ See Programme Document or Preface of the SEMLA Mid-Term Report, September 2007

3.1.3 Harmonisation and Aid Effectiveness

The Hanoi Core Statement has been put in place since the inception of SEMLA. The Programme NPO, and in particular the technical advisors in the NPO, seem to have made several efforts to improve coordination between SEMLA and other donor-funded programmes within MoNRE. To date this coordination has generally been in the form of sharing information and experience of SEMLA, which has also at times contributed to avoiding overlapping activities in provinces. An example of an area within which SEMLA is directly supporting improved aid effectiveness is in supporting MoNRE to reach the benchmark required for the planned loan-financed Vietnam Land Administration Programme (VLAP).

Improved harmonisation and aid effectiveness involves “division of labour” between donors, ideally based on comparative advantages. Not all donors should work on the same subject areas but rather seek complementarities and synergies. The framework of harmonisation and alignment thus further underlines the point raised above of a strategic choice to be made about how to make best use of SEMLA resources during its remaining years. There is a choice to be made whether to focus more on consolidating on-going work to put methodology firmer in place or whether to continuously broadening the area of work to include all new sector responsibilities assigned to MoNRE. Consolidating would imply putting more focus on enforcement of laws and regulations in practical work.

One immediate example for making a choice is climate change, an area within which Danida is in the process of planning major support to MoNRE, while it is also being discussed to expand SEMLA activities to cover also this area.

Recommendation:

- Assess the pros and cons for broadening into additional subject areas vs. consolidating within areas of on-going work.

3.1.4 From a Public Administrative Reform (PAR) Perspective

The core guidelines and contents of the Government of Vietnam’s PAR are indicated in its Master Programme 2001–2010 and include⁶: “institutional reform, enforcement of legislation at all levels; reform of administrative procedures; reform of administration apparatuses; improving the working style of civil servants; capacity building for civil servants; decentralisation.”

At the national level, SEMLA has contributed to the PAR within MoNRE/DoNRE through supporting the development of a MoNRE PAR strategy, training staff, organisational review, reviewing job descriptions, etc.⁷ These are all necessary steps towards a more efficient public administration. It seems, however, that less attention has to date been given to enforcement of legislation and reformed administrative procedures, which is equally necessary steps. Experience clearly shows that the most difficult steps are to be taken when translating new policies and organisational structures into practise.

It is therefore recommended to pay more attention to enforcement during the remaining time of the Programme, in line with the contents of the GoV PAR programme. Based on the achievements to date there is good scope for moving ahead towards addressing also next and possibly more complicated dimensions of PAR. There are many difficult things to be done in order to make sure that good policies and good legislation are well translated into efficiently functioning public administration with good services delivery. More attention needs to be on to how to improve transparency and accountability of

⁶ Government Resolution 83.

⁷ SEMLA contributions are described in detail in: MoNRE (August 2007): *Status Report for SEMLA Contribution to the MoNRE 2007 Public Administrative Reform Plan*, Hanoi.

civil servants at all levels in *practical work*. This will inevitably involve supporting attitudinal changes and will require measures beyond formulating policies and strategies of various kinds and beyond providing training courses. Changing practical way of work will inevitably touch upon both formal and informal power structures.

At the provincial level, it seems that only capacity building activities relate to PAR. The SAT/ESD did not find efforts to contribute to other core guidelines and contents of GoV Master Plan (described above). MoNRE decisions on decentralisation imply that new tasks are given to the local level within its administrative system. The new responsibilities and tasks have, however, not yet been accompanied by added resources to any larger extent. Capacity building activities within SEMLA have also not yet benefited the lower levels of the administration to any larger extent. Most capacity building efforts have been directed to the provincial level, less to the district level and even less to the commune level (see further in section on capacity building below). More emphasis needs to be on district and commune levels to more proactively involve them in Programme activities.

Recommendation:

- Deepen contribution to PAR and introduce measurements to follow up on improved transparency and accountability of civil servants at various levels.

3.1.5 PAR and a Rights Perspective

Core Features of a Rights Perspective and its Policy Support

The core features of a rights perspective are accountability, participation and empowerment, and non-discrimination (including gender), and attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The two Governments of Vietnam and Sweden share a common view that attention must be placed on these features.

Vietnam adopted a Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) in 2003, which has later been incorporated in the draft Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) for 2006–2010. The CPRGS emphasises transparency in governance, equity in services delivery, participation of stakeholders and building capacity to increase the influence of poor people over their own lives. The GoV Grassroots Democracy Decree stipulates that people have a right to “know, discuss, do, and supervise” and thus provides a framework within which to improve local level authority accountability. The Grassroots Democracy Decree is in the process of being upgraded to an Ordinance (level below Law), which is expected to provide a stronger basis for decentralisation.

Sweden adopted a new Policy for Global Development in 2003, which lays down one goal for Swedish development cooperation: to contribute to an environment supportive of poor people’s own efforts to improve their quality of life. A rights perspective and the perspective of the poor are to form the basis. Introduction of a rights perspective in the implementation of the Program for Administrative Reform (PAR) is also an important objective of the country strategy for Swedish development cooperation with Vietnam during 2004–2008 and includes:

- promotion of a professional, transparent, accountable, service-oriented and non-discriminatory public administration;
- encouragement of grass roots democracy as tool for participation and democratization; and
- emphasis on gender equality.

A Rights-based Approach to PAR

The core features of a rights-based approach thus puts emphasis on how interventions are undertaken (i.e. the process) *in addition to what* the intervention does. Further, with a rights perspective to access to services, people become “rights-holders” and those who hold the duty to provide services become “duty-bearers”.⁸ A rights-based approach is thus highly relevant in order to improve efficiency within public administration.

With a rights perspective, efforts to improve efficiency in public administration should be twofold: i) strengthening the capacity of authorities (the “duty bearers”) to deliver essential services, and simultaneously ii) assisting communities and individuals (the “rights holders”) to empower themselves to be able to demand greater accountability from the administrative system. In essence, strengthening capacity for improving efficiency from above and below (as opposed to focusing more on strengthening the capacities of duty bearers alone or only assisting right holders to demand what they are entitled to).

The SEMLA Programme does hold the potential for an approach which involves both the civil servants and the communities. Some specific activities at local level do also include participatory processes, informing and consulting with communities. Public awareness activities focus on access to information. To date, most focus has, however, been on the civil servants (duty bearers), whereas less attention has been given to empowering the communities (rights holders) to demand greater accountability from its civil servants.

There is scope for more innovative processes through making use of the pilot mechanism (see further below). There is also legal support for stronger efforts to empower communities. Within the GoV PAR Master Programme 2001–2010 a number of legal documents of importance to successful decentralisation have been adopted. Examples include laws on the exercising of the Grassroots Democracy and on Complaints and Denunciations. A law on the issuance of normative legal documents (adopted by the National Assembly in 2004) will contribute to overcoming previous arbitrariness in issuing normative legal documents at local levels.⁹

Recommendation:

- More emphasis on attitudinal change, transparency, participation – “responsibilities of civil servants” – “legitimate rights of communities to access services”
- Identify activities aiming at empowering the communities to demand greater accountability from the environment and land administrative system and to demand the services they are entitled to.

3.1.6 Improved Services Delivery and Intended Direct Beneficiaries

Activities in the SPO/APOs are mainly focusing on civil servants, and not the intended direct beneficiaries (the urban and rural poor). Most people involved in the Programme seem to believe that improved capacity and understanding of environmental and land issues of the local government officers (especially at commune and district level) will ultimately benefit the urban and rural poor.

It should, however, be clearly recognised by MoNRE/DoNRE and the Programme that there is no automatic linkage between improved capacity in civil servants and improved services delivery. It is true that improved capacity in civil servants provide an *opportunity* to improve services delivery. However, capacity building *per se* does not guarantee improved services delivery. In reality, improved capacity

⁸ However, right holders and duty bearers are roles and functions and nothing fixed. One individual may be both a duty bearer and a right holder. A teacher, for instance, has the duty to provide good quality teaching (duty bearer) but s/he also has a right to receive agreed salary (right holder).

⁹ PAR Master Programme Mid-Term Review (2006).

within an inefficient and not transparent system may equally well result in increased elite capture of benefits.

Improved services delivery within an inefficient public administration will require attitudinal changes and change of mind set of civil servants, which in turn requires more than establishing policies, organisational reviews, guidelines and providing training. It does in particular require that new policies and guidelines are accompanied by new clear and enforceable mechanisms for monitoring performance. Such aspects have not been addressed within the Programme to date.

The establishment of one-stop-stops (OSS) at district level provides an excellent opportunity to improve services delivery. However, as discussed above, the mere establishment of an OSS does not per se guarantee that ways of working change radically. Previous experience has shown that an OSS may function well while supported by a programme but may cease to do so when no additional programme support is available because no enforceable mechanism was ever established during the programme life-time.¹⁰ Pilots at grassroots level provide another opportunity to improve services delivery but for piloted methods to be sustainable an institutional mechanism which remains when the pilot ends is required (see below on purpose and use of pilots).

SEMLA should thus during its remaining time be very clear about what is a “means” and what is the intended outcome/result. Although within SEMLA there is a separate component on capacity building this component should not be an end in itself but a means to make public administration within MoNRE/DoNRE more efficient in order to benefit the general public. It is an indispensable requirement that due attention is paid to following up to what extent activities to strengthen capacity do in fact translate into improved efficiency and better services to the communities. A rights based view further implies that attention must be paid also to social inclusion. It matters which groups in society will be negatively or positively affected. This is not yet covered in the SEMLA M&E system (see also below on M&E system).

Recommendations:

- Clearly explain link between proposed capacity building activities for MoNRE/DoNRE staff and how this will contribute to improved services delivery to the benefit of the intended direct beneficiaries.
- Ensure monitoring of results in terms of improved services delivery and the distribution of these services to ensure inclusion of vulnerable groups.

3.2 Effectiveness and Efficiency

SEMLA has been operationalised through a Strategic Plan of Operation (SPO) and a series of 18 months' Annual Plan of Operations (APO), one for each provincial component and one for the national component, supplemented by detailed 6 months' plans. A second set of 18 months' APO will be formulated following the mid-term review of the Programme. See also Appendix I.1 for more details. Below the SAT/ESD raises issues relating to the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation.

3.2.1 Achievements in General

In general, SEMLA is making good progress in implementing its activities. Through the different systems for management and follow-up, the Programme has good control of the progress in implement-

¹⁰ See for instance experience from previous Swedish PAR support to DoNRE Quang Tri.

ing its activities.¹¹ In particular, the good progress has been achieved in a short time – during only one year of implementation following a prolonged inception phase with strong focus on systems and structures rather than on the direction of the Programme.

SEMLA tries to build on existing initiatives of MoNRE and DoNRE as much as possible and the APOs are formulated in what is referred to as a participatory and bottom-up process. This contributes to a strong ownership of the Programme. It does, however, also mean that there is a risk that added value will not be a radical change from the usual way of affairs, but rather an improved and accelerated mode for regular MoNRE activities. In addition, as discussed above, it further entails the risk of never reaching beyond the initial and easiest reform steps. The proposed need for ownership should be balanced with the need for ensuring that proposed activities are in line with the overall objectives of SEMLA. The proposed APOs should be assessed from the perspective of SEMLA overall objectives before approval.

A weakness to date has been that little attention has been paid to ensuring that activities directed to civil servants do in fact translate into increased efficiency and improved services to the intended direct beneficiaries (the urban and rural poor). Therefore, the Programme should pay more attention to identify *clear and enforceable* institutional mechanisms through which proposed activities directed to the civil servants will in fact benefit the communities. This should also be monitored (see further below on M&E system).

Recommendation:

- Assess proposed APOs from the perspective of SEMLA overall objectives before approval.
- Clearly identify the *mechanisms* through which proposed activities directed to civil servants will in fact translate into benefits to the community.
- Identify additional activities that more directly target the intended direct beneficiaries.

3.2.2 Management and Policy Review

During its first year of implementation, SEMLA has contributed substantially to the successful strengthening of the legal and regulatory capacity of MoNRE in the fields of environmental management and protection and land administration. The programme has provided considerable expertise in these fields and has ensured that the process of developing and adopting new legislation and procedures in key environmental areas has been accelerated.

Management and policy review (MPR) may be seen as the key area from which other reforms take place. One example is the formulation of the PAR plan for MoNRE. Another example is the establishment of a national level one-stop-shop (OSS) mechanism in order to simplify the administrative procedures and to handle requests in a fast, convenient and timely manner. The national-level OSS is to be followed by district-level OSS.

In Vietnam natural resources and environmental management is spread over more Ministries than in many other countries. Work within the MPR has contributed to clarifying mandates and responsibilities both between Ministries and within MoNRE, and thus contributed to providing a basis for an organisational restructuring. A new decree is being drafted including the proposal to establish a General Department of land and environment to integrate the present “sectoral policy departments” (Department of Environment, Department of EIA&A, VEPA, Department of Land, Department of Land Registration and Statistics, and COLIP respectively).

¹¹ See for instance the SEMLA progress reports and the SEMLA Mid-Term Report covering the period from 1st of July 2006 to the 30th of June 2007.

Efforts should now focus more on how to integrate changes into practical daily management or behaviour of the decision makers at all levels at the same time as the legal development continues, among others including experiences from the provincial pilot projects. A more pro-active approach should be taken to the development/creation of a roadmap for how the integrated NREM administration should work in the future. There is limited knowledge and experiences available on integrated NREM in Vietnam – not only between land and environment within MoNRE, but also for aspects of other sectors. Natural resources and the environment is a cross-cutting issue and will continue to involve a number of other Ministries in addition to MoNRE also following the on-going organisational restructuring. There is a need for studies and debates on how to establish working mechanisms for a well-organised and well-coordinated integrated administration at all levels and across all involved Ministries.

Recommendation:

- Build on the achievements made in the legal and regulatory field to develop a roadmap for practical steps to be taken to strengthen the integrated NREM administration in daily implementation.

3.2.3 Integrated Environmental Management

The Programme has worked at both policy level and grassroots activity level to contribute to strengthening environmental protection and management.

Programme contributions at the policy level include a Law on Environmental Protection (LEP) formulated by MoNRE, Department of Environment, with advisory support from SEPA. VEPA and SEPA have cooperated on hot spots, environmental technology and hazardous waste. KemI has assisted the MoIT to prepare Vietnam's first Chemical Law, which was recently approved by the National Assembly. The Programme has also supported the formulation the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which is a cross-cutting tool introducing environmental aspects into all sectors. To date, the SEA has been used mostly in land use planning activities. Activities within integrated land use planning and its contribution to the formulation of the SEA is an example of vertical learning (see further below).

The 5-year plan for Natural Resource and Environmental Sector 2006–2010 (NRE 5-year plan) was formulated with support from SEMLA. Programme activities have now been put under relevant goals and objectives of NRE 5-year plan to be able to tracking progress in relation to the NRE 5-year plan.¹²

Integrated environment management requires not only well developed legislation but also the organisational and institutional capacity of implementing agencies. At the grassroots level, SEMLA has undertaken a number of pilots and demonstration projects for learning purposes, while also directly benefiting the communities involved. Projects have included pollution prevention, control, and rehabilitation, and cleaner production and chemical safety. Other projects have introduced village environmental regulations.¹³ It does seem that many of these pilot projects have in practise been seen primarily as a means to get a particular issue solved rather than as projects for learning for replication. Documentation of the pilots has thus not always been comprehensive and is at times lagging behind (see further discussion below on purpose and use of pilots).

Effective pollution prevention and control for instance requires not only legislation and its enforcement but also application of economic instruments and market-based management tools. SEMLA could be stronger on involving enterprises and industries in piloting hot spots management models in order to

¹² Details on contributions are summarised in: MoNRE (August 2007): *Status Report for SEMLA contribution to the Implementation of 5-Year Plan for Natural Resource and Environmental Sector 2006–2010*, Hanoi.

¹³ For a full list of pilot projects, see: SEMLA (September 2007): *Pilot Projects and Strategic Expansion Fund Projects Status up to the End of August 2007*, Hanoi.

better pilot models to address the underlying mechanisms that need to be in place in order to change enterprise behaviour when it comes to pollution. Management tools in pollution prevention are identified as one of the urgent needs for Vietnam in pollution prevention.

Recommendation:

- Shift focus from refining legislation and policies review to improvement of enforcement and implementation of revised legal documents or piloted models
- Work on initiatives to develop and pilot economic instruments and market-based tools for pollution prevention and hot spots management.

3.2.4 Integrated Approach to NRE and Land Administration

The Programme is supporting the integration of environment and land management. SEMLA has conducted a number of pilot projects with integration of environmental issues in land use planning which have contributed to the development of tools like Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and subsequently to the SEA (see above). These pilot projects have contributed to an improved understanding of these instruments and how they relate to each other. Based on this, SEMLA has developed a model which directly integrates environmental issues into the land use planning process. The model secures also public participation in the planning process. This model seems ready for replication and also for inclusion in the forthcoming revision of Circular 30 about land use planning.

However, the land use plan as a strategic land use plan involving all sectors of society in regards to land use needs to be further developed. SEMLA should concentrate on continued development of the land use concept in order to build an understanding of the role land use planning should play in a market economy, which supports a sustainable and equitable economic and social development in a healthy environment.

The Programme has not progressed successfully in capturing opportunities to mainstream poverty reduction considerations into its various processes. There are well-known and critical issues in relation to the interface between land – environment – poverty, such as ill-being and vulnerability in particular for the poor. Analysis of social and socio-economic implications of land-use planning alternatives should urgently be integrated into manuals and guidelines as well as into any activity. The participatory approaches which have been introduced in some land use planning pilots provide a good basis for taking further steps towards strengthening the pro-poor analytical approach during the remaining time of the Programme. The forthcoming APO should include a roadmap for this.

The support for the development of an integrated information system for environment and land management (ELIS) is one of the major contributions from SEMLA to the integration of environmental and land management. SEMLA has developed a strategic document to guide the principles for the development of ELIS. ELIS is intended to support the whole NRE Sector with information policy and strategy, tools for creation, storage, and maintenance of data bases, tools for dissemination of information to users outside the sector and to the general public. There are, however, problems associated with the access to the data since there are different local standards and formats as well as business procedures in different areas. It is important to continue to develop ELIS as fast as possible before too many different solutions are established in society. In order to keep a strong leadership and coordination of this development it should be considered to give the full responsibility for the implementation of the reform to CIREN, including funds for testing in different provinces.

Recommendation:

- Urgently mainstream social and socio-economic analysis, with a pro-poor perspective, into all manuals, guidelines and activities. Develop a roadmap for achieving this in the forthcoming APO.
- Consider to give full responsibility for the implementation of ELIS to CIREN.

3.2.5 Land Administration

For land administration, the work with development of a Land Code has been postponed and the interest is now focused on a revised Land Law. A number of decrees in order to facilitate land registration have been issued. The Programme's assistance in this is considered very useful.

SEMLA has taken a very incremental approach to the reform of the land registration system. The strategy document describes an approach divided into three phases, short-term 1–2 years, which will cover the SEMLA scheduled project period, a mid-term development of 3–5 years and a long-term perspective of 5–7 years. In the short-term period the strategy proposes a number of improvements to the land registration process including the introduction of a copy of the LURC (white LURC), introduction of a unique transaction number in the process through a bare code and improved records management through scanning of documents for registration and storage in a document data base. The longer perspective proposes the gradual introduction of a more coherent and efficient land registration system in a number of steps.

The approach with incremental small steps taken by SEMLA can be well understood given the difficulties to raise political support for a more comprehensive reform. On the other hand, if SEMLA had put more attention to analyse and describe the current problems with the existing situation, for economic and environmental development and for poverty alleviation and to exemplify benefits of a more efficient system, it might have been possible to raise the necessary political support for the reform. After all, there are not any real political issues involved but only a question of efficient administration, well in line with the PAR policy.

SEMLA is by the expansion fund supporting the establishment of Real Estate Trading Centres in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi and also a similar centre that has existed since long in Dong Nai. Studies have also been undertaken of the real property markets in Hanoi, HCMC and Dong Nai. However, these studies are lacking a social dimension on the situation for poor people on the real property market. It should be an advantage to continue studies of the real property markets also including issues of land speculation and access to property for residents and non-residents in urban areas.

Although land valuation is one of the expected outputs of SEMLA, it is not included in any activity. The reason is that MoNRE has no responsibility related to land valuation. However, this might change in the future. Land disputes are common and are handled in various forms. The extent of these conflicts is one major argument for both improving the quality of the existing land registration system, expanding the system to include the informal market and to develop methodology for market valuations. Another issue is to look on alternative dispute resolution methods in order to speed up the dispute resolution process. SEMLA is therefore recommended to look more closely on land disputes, both to receive inputs for the reform work and to investigate possibilities for alternative dispute resolution methods that will strengthen the rights of the poor people on the formal and informal land markets.

Recommendation:

- Revisit the strategy for land registration reform in order to concentrate on awareness-raising to gain political support for a comprehensive modern reform of the land registration system in Vietnam.
- Pay more attention to informal real property market and poor people.
- Investigate reasons for land disputes and possibilities for alternative land dispute resolution methods.

3.2.6 Capacity Building

There is no doubt that the Programme has increased the capacity of many civil servants, especially those directly involved at the national and provincial levels. The Programme should now try to make an effort to go beyond those directly involved in the Programme, and in particular make an extra effort to involve staff at district and commune levels. The Programme has prepared a draft strategy and action plan that outlines a possible way forward in strengthening the environmental management capacity of districts and communes, which is commendable. Efforts should be made to have this plan endorsed by several donors to ensure sufficient resources for its implementation.

Issues like competence-based human resource development (HRD), introducing skilled-based training and new way of management through the management training development programme (MTDP) are useful direct results of the Programme. The MTDP is expected to result in behavioural change of the course participants in order for them to have a real impact on the land and environment sector in Vietnam. It is, however, not clear how this will be monitored.

The assistance of SEMLA to support MoNRE/DoNRE to develop a human resource development (HRD) strategy is commended and should be the basis for further capacity building and public administration reform activities. The HRD Strategy at national level needs further support. Not all provinces have developed (or are developing) such a strategy. Immediate attention is therefore required to ensure that all provinces develop (and use/implement) a HRD strategy. Further support from SEMLA should be linked to the development and implementation of such a strategy.

Capacity building is a backbone of the Programme and should be seen as a cross-cutting component. However, to date, capacity building is largely viewed as a separate training component rather than an integrated cross-cutting tool to build the capacity at national and provincial levels. The Programme has made several attempts to break through this traditional way and direct SEMLA capacity building efforts towards a more comprehensive and integrated mode of capacity building with interactive skilled based training sessions directly linked to on-the-job assistance, and also linked to pilot project, study tours and other capacity building effort. The Programme has however only partially managed to change away from the traditional approach.

Capacity building planned and implemented at provincial level has in particular taken a rather traditional approach, focusing on providing information by lecturing or disseminating documentation. This training is largely driven by a huge demand resulting in a thrive for numbers rather than quality. Integration of the different components is often lacking. Although training courses differ from province to province, they are generally introductory training courses for district and commune staff (environment) and information sessions on laws and legislation for provincial, district and commune staff (big groups of over 50 people). Most courses are relatively ad hoc and not all of the courses are very effective. The Programme has developed guidelines and procedures for training activities containing important quality control measures. However, these are often ignored.

The involvement of MoNRE in capacity building at provincial level is weak which implies that MoNRE is also not in a good position to replicate emerging good results from training at national level.

TA for the capacity building component is provided by two long term advisors (one national and one international). One (the international) is leaving the project soon and is not going to be replaced. Only one person on capacity building seems not enough considering the fact that, with the finalisation of the HRD strategies, capacity building will need even more support at provincial level for implementation of a strategic approach to HRD paying attention to quality control.

Recommendation:

- Efforts should be made to go beyond those directly involved in the Programme with qualitative capacity building.
- Particular emphasis needs to be placed on quality of commune and district levels capacity building initiatives.
- A more integrated approach to capacity building should be applied at provincial level.

3.2.7 Public Awareness and Communication

The project has made good achievements and progress when it comes to communication and awareness. Strategies have been developed and training course have been organised. SEMLA has taken several initiatives to strengthen the capacity of staff to improve their skills in communication and public awareness activities. Lessons learned from the different pilot projects are currently being reviewed in order to improve the capacity building for public awareness and communication.

Efforts have been made to compile and publish communication material for training, and some of these documents contain all legal documents on land and environment management (legislation, training material for reporters). Legal documents could be presented into even more simple and understandable material in order to be user-friendly and easily understandable. In some cases, the national TAG has coordinated with SEMLA provinces to carry out training courses for commune staff (leaders of commune and mass organisations) on legislation. There have, however, been no attempts to follow up on how the new knowledge and awareness are transferred to the community. This should be an integrated part of the Programme.

In its efforts to raise public awareness, the Programme has used various means to introduce the rights and obligations of users when it comes to land and environment. These efforts have no doubt been useful but it must be recognised that the provision of information and increased awareness does not necessarily lead to changed behaviour. Focus should be on changing behaviour and attitudes of both MoNRE/DoNRE staff and communities. In some provinces attempts have also been made to apply communication methods for behaviour change in grassroots projects. Such attempts should be strongly encouraged and more should be made when it comes to developing new and more effective approaches.

The public awareness and communication component provides an opportunity to contribute to improving efficiency in the public administrative system. As discussed above, a rights-based approach requires efforts to strengthen the administrative system from below in addition to from above. Through the public awareness and communication component the communities can be empowered to articulate their rights and put pressure on the local government to fulfil their services delivery duties. It is strongly recommended to pilot a rights-based approach to improving efficiency in the administrative system.

In addition to making information more easily accessible, the contents of the information made available could be broadened. Information could for instance be provided on what a citizen is entitled to expect from an efficiently functioning public administrative system, such as maximum number of days within which a given service is to be delivered or information on complaint procedures when a service has not been provided adequately.¹⁴ This seems to be well in line with the recent discussion in the

¹⁴ A complaint is about services not provided (as opposed to a dispute which is about something not having been solved).

National Assembly on a Law on Information acknowledging its potential for contributing to decreasing corruption.¹⁵

Recommendations:

- Follow up on how new knowledge and awareness are transferred from local level staff to the communities.
- Focus on empowering communities through a more integrative approach than rather providing information on laws and regulations.
- Provide information – to both staff and communities – on what should be expected from an efficient public administrative system.
- Pilot a rights-based approach in public awareness activities in order to contribute to improving efficiency in public administration.

3.2.8 Purpose and Use of Pilots

The pilot demonstration projects in provinces are to be used for experimentation of different themes. Pilot models with new approaches to integrated environment and land use planning are implemented in all provinces, and highly appreciated by involved stakeholders. Cleaner production models are also working well in the SEMLA provinces with high expected potential for replication.

Pilot projects can easily become implementation of ordinary activities. The piloting process seems to have been seen in some provinces as a source of resources for solving outstanding problems, sometimes together with resources from other donor-supported programmes. This is, however, not universal in the Programme and some staff seem to have a clear idea of the objectives of the pilots and how to maximise their learning value.

The focus of SEMLA, including progress reporting system, is too exclusively on the activity level and on a target-driven approach. The latter is not appropriate for what is mainly a “learning” programme aimed at producing models for replication. A pilot which is conducted at a moderate pace with careful attention to recording process and outcomes is more likely to produce a useful model than one signed off as “100% completed” after 6 months.

Given that the pilot projects are identified as learning processes, the *outcome* should be a *proven model* with guidelines, staff skills etc. for replication. This should be explicit in the Log-Frame, in the progress reporting etc. Implementation processes for piloting should be tailored to facilitate achievement of this outcome (process documentation, evaluation at provincial level, possibly more probing process evaluation by M&E group evaluators – but this may be excessive in resource requirements). The Evaluation report of the pilots should explicitly include the desired model/replication outcome. Some of the evaluations in the Pilots Evaluation report do so but do not make an explicit evaluation of the strength of the model and its fitness for replication.

The national level should strengthen its mechanism to systematically learn from the pilots in order to influence policy making and to make pilot models replicable. There have been some initiatives among the provinces to share experiences and lessons learned from pilot demonstration projects. However, this seems rather ad hoc activities rather than a systematic approach to learning from pilots.

The Programme could have been more active to support the development of pilot projects with wider scopes than at present. For instance, the Programme is lacking activities to develop the services awareness among civil servants in the sector. This is not only a question of informing the general public on the system, but also to change attitudes among the staff in offices at various levels, which in turn also

¹⁵ Discussed in for instance Vietnam News, November 17, 2007 (p6).

requires more than providing information on laws and regulations. The support for a more efficient land administration system, including both land registration and land use planning could have been much more pro-active.

One of the Programme basic principles is participation. The Grassroots Democracy in turn provides the legal basis for strong community participation. The degree of genuine community influence, and social inclusion, in design and monitoring of pilots should therefore be closely followed. It should for instance be assessed whether different processes of participation result in different outcomes with different distributional effects. There is as of yet no mechanism or effort to follow and document the piloting process and no discussion of how to ensure social inclusion.

Recommendation:

- Reformulate expected outcome from a pilot, given that it is identified as a learning process.
- Ensure a *functional mechanism* to systematically learn from pilots in order to influence policy making.
- Broaden the scope of pilots to include for instance service awareness among the community.
- Ensure a mechanism to follow and record the process of implementing pilots to document community involvement in order to learn more about which approaches work and not.

3.2.9 Purpose and Use of Expansion Fund

The Expansion Fund can be used to support urgent unforeseen demands for special investigations within MoNRE or by relevant agency (such as VEPA or MoIT). It can also be used for replication of successful pilots to other provinces. This is a very useful tool for the Programme since the Programme directly can respond to urgent demands from the Ministry. This is certainly strengthening the usefulness of the Programme seen from the point of view of the Ministry and contributing to a strong ownership of the Programme. It can, however, be criticised from the point of view that the urgent issues are issues which not always contribute to the learning and capacity building aspects of the Programme.

A related issue is funding of consultancy support from the Expansion Fund. In view of the learning and capacity building aspects of the Programme it seems unrealistic to believe that activities could be undertaken without use of international and/or externally recruited national expertise. The TA resources within SEMLA are not large enough to support additional initiatives within the Expansion Fund, particularly when these are within thematic areas which lay outside the core SEMLA areas or when these are implemented in non-SEMLA provinces. Therefore, resources should be allocated from the Expansion Fund to cover needed TA.

To the extent that implementing agency internal human resources are relied upon without external support, it should be carefully assessed whether the particular intervention is indeed for learning and capacity building purposes or whether the Expansion Fund is proposed for speeding up a regular MoNRE/DoNRE or other authority/agency regular activity. The use of the Expansion Fund should be more strategically used for capturing emerging learning and capacity building interventions.

Recommendation:

- The use of the Expansion Fund should be strategic aiming at capturing emerging learning and capacity building initiatives.
- Funds should be set aside for recruiting required external expertise.

3.2.10 Cross-cutting Issues

Coordination and Synergies across Components

As follows from the assessment above, there is scope for strengthening the coordination across components. For capacity building a stronger link should be made between training, study tours, demonstration projects, and public awareness raising activities. Public awareness raising activities should place much emphasis on the initiated efforts to make more pro-active use of lessons learned from for instance demonstration and pilot projects. The national component should ensure that lessons learned from all components are documented and assessed in a systematic way in order to achieve the goal of SEMLA contributing to promoting policies and approaches for environmental sustainable development. Public awareness and communication activities could be coordinated with pilots to test new methodologies, including a rights-based approach to PAR.

Gender

The Programme is not strong on mainstreaming gender into its activities. To some extent gender has been taken into account in some work such as involving women in community activities or training activities. Gender disaggregated statistics is very good and should be maintained. However, gender mainstreaming also requires more than having presence of women in a training courses and activities.

SEMLA should carry out a study to identify gender gaps and to formulate a strategy for gender mainstreaming within the Programme. It would, for instance, seem highly relevant to have a training module within the MTDP to increase the understanding of gender mainstreaming of those who are trained with a view of becoming the future leaders of MoNRE.

HIV/AIDS

The Programme has produced a brochure on HIV/AIDS. That is about what may be done on a general level when it comes to HIV/AIDS. At local level there may however be more to be done depending on the specific local circumstances. Efforts should for instance be stronger in areas where large amounts of young people migrate for work, in industries or on construction sites.

3.3 Planning, MIS and M&E Systems¹⁶

3.3.1 Internal Logic of the Programme

Each intervention (programme and/or project) follows certain logic. The intervention logic can be described as a *results chain* – a chain of events which is relatively uncomplicated and which can be applied to all forms of development co-operation. The chain comprises: a) supplied resources, b) implemented activities, c) immediate results of the activities (outputs), d) consequences of the results for the target group (outcomes) and e) long term development effects that can be derived from these results and other influencing factors.

The *results chain* is described by DAC in the terminology input-(activities)-output-outcome-impact.

Results Chain



The chain stems from a results oriented approach to development co-operation, meaning that *outcome results* rather than activities and outputs are *in focus*.

¹⁶ For a more detailed discussion, see Appendix I.2.

Log-Frame Analysis (LFA) is an example of a method which helps understand the causal relationships and helps identify inputs-outputs-outcomes-impact. A well-constructed Log-Frame is the most effective tool for achieving the aims of results-based management. At present the SEMLA Log-Frame does not fulfil this requirement. The Log-Frame itself contains no indicators, Means of Verification or Risks/Assumptions, and the vertical logic (the results chain) does not clearly link activities to outcomes or outcomes to purpose and goal. This should be urgently addressed in order to improve the M&E system (see below).

Recommendation:

- A review and reconciliation of the Log-Frame and outcome indicators should have top priority for improvement of the M&E system.

3.3.2 MIS and M&E

SEMLA has developed effective planning and MIS systems, based on the Log-Frame Analysis (LFA) structure of programme objectives. Operational plans, and both physical and financial progress/status reports, conform to the Programme LFA structure. This ensures compliance at the inputs and outputs levels. Timely periodic reports are prepared, with the main presentations again based on the LFA structure. The extensive use of MS Project as a progress monitoring tool has both strengths and weaknesses. The clear graphic output and ability to conform to Log-frame structure is a plus, but it seems that it encourages a simplistic measurement of “progress” in terms of completed task-days. This is not a very useful indicator in itself, and it reinforces the excessively target-driven approach noted above.

The situation is less satisfactory in evaluation at the Outcomes and Goal levels. This is largely (but not entirely) due to shortcomings in the LFA. The original SEMLA Log-Frame established a satisfactory hierarchy of project interventions and results, which has been successfully used to structure plans and MIS reports, but it lacked most of the other normal elements of an LFA. Specifically, it did not include Indicators of achievement of the results, Means of Verification (MoV) for measuring the indicators, or the Risks/Assumptions governing the translation of outputs into the desired outcomes.

Indicators and MoV at Outcomes level have been developed by the SEMLA M&E group during the inception and implementation periods, and a first evaluation report using these has been produced. However, the indicator structures and coding adopted do not match the Log-Frame structure, and the indicators used are (deliberately) selective rather than comprehensive. Consequently there is loss of transparency in assessing the results of the project activities, a violation of results-based management (RBM) principles.

At a minimum SEMLA should be evaluated in terms of the conformity of its interventions to the Guiding Principles laid down in the Programme Document. The outcome indicators currently used focus almost entirely on capacity development in MoNRE/DoNRE. While this is an extremely important aspect of SEMLA outcomes, attention should also be given to outcomes at grassroots level (communes and individuals participating in SEMLA programmes), in line with the SEMLA guiding principle of Participation.

The measurement approaches for the current indicators rely heavily on self-assessment by the implementation teams, which is potentially a source of bias (even if unintentional). If possible an element of independent assessment should be introduced. The outcome indicators themselves, as actually reported, are in many cases diffuse and difficult to interpret. The indicators used for analysis and reporting should be streamlined by extracting specific unambiguous measurements. Supplementary details, where necessary, should be reported in a separate section.

The M&E system at present does not cover the Goal level of SEMLA. The ultimate Goal as defined by the Programme Document is poverty alleviation, with the land-using poor as the main beneficiaries. Direct measurement of SEMLA's contribution to poverty alleviation is probably not possible during SEMLA's implementation period, if at all, due to the slow maturation of impacts at this level and the many confounding influences caused by Vietnam's rapid economic growth. However, at a minimum SEMLA should be evaluated in terms of the conformity of its interventions to the Guiding Principles laid down in the Programme Document.

Sida's aspiration for SEMLA's Planning/MIS/M&E systems is that they should not only serve the programme's immediate needs, but they should also be suitable for MoNRE to use as models throughout its operations. The Planning and MIS systems are close to meeting the standard required for replication in other MoNRE operations, subject to completion of successful operations (and de-bugging where required) over the next Fiscal Year. The M&E system at Outcomes level and above is currently not suitable for replication, due to the weaknesses noted above. A short extension to SEMLA is recommended. It would be beneficial for disseminating the Planning and MIS systems to MoNRE. It would be essential for disseminating the M&E system, in view of the amount of work required before it is fully fit for replication.

Recommendation:

- Attention should be given to outcomes at grassroots level (communes and individuals participating in SEMLA programmes).
- A road map for reviewing the M&E system should be included in the forthcoming 18 months' APO.
- Further international TA support should be provided both for revision of the M&E system, and for dissemination of the systems to other MoNRE departments and projects/programmes.
- A short extension to SEMLA is recommended.

3.3.3 Risks and Risk Management

The treatment of risks and assumptions is critical in a learning and piloting programme. An intervention (e.g. capacity building or a pilot project) that is successful in itself may not be sustainable or suitable for replication if that depends on non-valid assumptions (e.g. about post-SEMLA levels of skills and resources, or socio-economic environment outside the pilot area).

A proper treatment of risks and assumptions require that they are monitored in parallel with the programme results. The absence of risks and assumptions in the present Log-frame is therefore a serious weakness. RBM principles require continuous monitoring of the extent to which governing assumptions for programme success are fulfilled. A fresh review should be carried out of the Risks and Assumptions affecting SEMLA, especially the sustainability and replication of its interventions. Indicators for measuring the Risks and Assumptions should be developed and monitored.

Recommendation:

- Carry out a fresh review of the risks and assumptions affecting SEMLA.
- Develop indicators for measuring and monitoring risks and assumptions. A roadmap for this should be included in the APO 2008–2009.

3.4 Technical and Institutional Feasibility

3.4.1 Ownership

There is strong ownership of SEMLA in MoNRE. The comparatively high degree of independence of the provincial components has contributed to a high sense of ownership also at provincial level. The commendable strive for ownership should, however, not imply that Programme principles and overarching goal and objectives are not adhered to. There are signs that activities at provincial level do not always pay attention to Programme quality requirements. The forthcoming APOs should be assessed closely to ensure that it is clearly identified how proposed activities are expected to contribute to the overall goal and objectives of SEMLA.

3.4.2 Implementation Management Arrangements

The organisation of the programme support at the national level through special thematic advisory groups (TAG) is an interesting and innovative solution. These groups focus on a specific area, opens for cooperation between the responsible civil servants and the international and national consultants and for cross-references between the different departments within MoNRE and DoNRE. The critical factor is that the members can and are willing to set aside enough time to participate in the meetings and in the work. Although some difficulties in this respect have been identified, the over-all impression is that the work in the TAG groups is functioning well and that the TAGs have contributed to improved integration across departments. Efforts should be made to encourage participation also from other Ministries given the cross-cutting nature of NRE and land.

Presently TAG members are paid an additional incentive for the extra work involved. Although this seems to be an unavoidable measure, it is of course not sustainable (unless the government continues when SEMLA ends) and it is therefore possible that the TAGs will stop functioning when the Programme is over. MoNRE's proposal to establish Policy Dialogue Platforms (PDPs) under the International Support Group for Environment (ISGE), however, builds on the concept of the TAGs. PDPs shall be established based on identified NRE priorities and proposals from MoNRE and other Ministries. Their functioning is to promote policy dialogue on relevant issues and to promote the effectiveness and mobilisation of relevant ODA as well as to exchange information experiences and outputs on relevant issues.¹⁷ These PDPs are to be financed through the ISGE Trust Fund during 2007–2010.¹⁸ This provides an additional opportunity to work to firmly root the concept of the TAGs.

The provincial level has strong authority, which should be further encouraged. As mentioned above, it should however not be the case that the provinces can “do their business as usual”. Clear benchmarks need to be included to ensure that the SEMLA activities have added value and will be replicable in the future without SEMLA support. In this respect, the 18 months' APO should be better scrutinised.

Recommendation:

- Make efforts to include staff from other Ministries in the TAGs.
- Ensure that SEMLA activities are not reduced to “business as usual”.

3.4.3 Provision of Human Resources

The issue of compensation for work by civil servants in the programme has implications for provision of MoNRE human resources. In this respect SEMLA is no different from other donor-funded pro-

¹⁷ Further details are found in: Annex 1 (not indicated to which document): *Organization and Function of ISGE and Policy Dialogue Platform 2007–2010*.

¹⁸ Main funders of the ISGE are Canada, Denmark, Holland, Sweden and Switzerland.

grammes or projects. According to the established donor policy (See Hanoi Core Statement), civil servants will not be compensated from donor funds for extra work in programmes or projects. GoV has introduced a policy of double salary for civil servants, which can be a compensation for the extra work. However, this does as of yet not seem to be applied in MoNRE. Therefore MoNRE staff is reluctant to undertake the extra work. Instead external staff has been contracted, which is paid from the donor funds. The problem with externally recruited staff is also an issue in VEPA.

It is envisioned that the use of contracted staff shall decrease as capacity in MoNRE and VEPA staff increases. Currently, however, the important capacity building aspects in working close to international advisers benefits consultants and not regular MoNRE and VEPA staff. To the extent that externally contracted staff replaces regular MoNRE (or VEPA) staff due to lack of capacity in MoNRE (or VEPA), there should be a clear road map for how to successively build the capacity in regular staff and a clear time table for when regular staff will replace externally contracted staff.

It is of particular concern that the National Programme Director is not regular MoNRE staff. He will return to his regular place of work when the Programme ends. Although MoNRE has a strong influence on the project through the PSB it is not involved in the day-to-day decision-making process. Discussions have been ongoing on this subject but without reaching a solution. All efforts should be made to introduce a MoNRE staff member, or somebody who at the end of the project will work in the MoNRE, in the NPO at highest decision-making level.

At the provincial level, implementation of most activities is outsourced, i.e. staff is recruited from outside DoNRE to implement the activities. Pilot activities at district and commune levels are undertaken by either externally contracted staff or staff from higher levels within the administration. The on-the-job learning effect for district and commune level staff seems minimal. The knowledge and experience disappears without leaving behind improved capacity when the specific pilot is finalised.

Recommendation:

- Continue efforts to involve MoNRE staff in the NPO. In particular prepare a road map and time table for when regular staff will replace contracted staff.
- More pro-actively involve district and commune level staff in pilots.

3.4.4 Technical Assistance Delivery

The major share of technical assistance (TA) is provided to MoNRE through Ramboll. The two separate components with VEPA and MoIT have TA arrangements with SEPA and KemI respectively, which are their corresponding Swedish institutions/agencies. The technical cooperation between VEPA/SEPA and MoIT/KemI is thus in the form of institutional cooperation (or “twinning”). There has been no continuous presence of a representative from the Swedish institution/agency in Vietnam. Ramboll on the other hand has financial resources for a team of long-term advisors based in MoNRE and VEPA, which is further enhanced with short-term consultants as deemed required.

Overall, the TA has been useful at both national level and provincial level. There is high appreciation of new knowledge and methods brought by international consultants and the application experience in the context of Vietnam provided by national consultants. This is equally valid for TA provided through Ramboll, KemI and SEPA.

Ramboll has set-out the structures and systems in which the project can or should operate and report. This is done very capable (although maybe too many reports with similar contents) with a clear structure and reporting lines. Implementation of activities has been initiated with support from Ramboll as well as SEPA and KemI. At the national level the influence of the Programme is well established.

However, it seems that more support is needed (at both national and provincial levels) to ensure that activities are implemented differently and are not reduced to “business as usual”.

After the inception phase it was decided that the short term expertise delivered through Ramboll was not always effective and therefore changed to more long-term TA, which is good especially for the international TA. Not all TA inputs have resulted in the expected quality of output. Two examples of outputs which need to be further revisited are the M&E system and the mainstreaming of social and socio-economic aspects.

TA through SEPA and KemI continues to be on a visiting basis to cooperate on an institutional basis. In the case of KemI the same persons have come on a regular basis to support on a clearly defined task. There has been no overlapping in delivery of TA between KemI and Ramboll. When it comes to TA through SEPA it seems that there has been less regularity in the provision of TA. There were also initial weaknesses in the cooperation between SEPA and VEPA including a lack of proper LFA process to clarify on what to cooperate. There has further not been an obvious and unambiguous division of responsibilities between SEPA and Ramboll. It seems that at times the coordination has also not always been entirely smooth, so for instance was the SPO formulated without consulting with SEPA. It seems to the SAT/ESD that there has in reality at times been certain degree of competition.

For the remaining part of the Programme all involved sources of TA should ensure that a clearer agreement is reached on how to divide responsibilities in order to maximise synergies and exploit the comparative advantage of each involved TA stakeholder. This becomes all the more important in light of the ongoing organisational change, merging a number of present departments (see above). SEPA has now signed a MoU with VEPA which provides a good starting point for clarifying and stabilising the cooperation. In addition, a LFA exercise should further clarify. The NPO must ensure that the forthcoming APO 2008–2009 is formulated in consultation with all involved stakeholders, including SEPA and KemI. The APO should also include a road map for how to phase in Actor’s Cooperation in line with the decision of the GoS for future cooperation with Vietnam.

The long-term international technical advisers are all located at the national level (one in VEPA and the others in MoNRE). They travel regularly to the provinces on demand. It is, however, rather obvious that the impact of TA has been stronger at the national level than at provincial level while it seems to the SAT/ESD that the needs for TA are stronger at the provincial level. It is therefore recommended to review whether some international TA should be deployed from national to provincial level (provided the positions will still be in place). Having TA at provincial level may contribute to enhance the understanding at provincial level of the value of TA which may in turn translate into increased provincial demand for TA services.

There is also a need for strengthening the role of TA in capacity building in terms of on-the-job training for MoNRE and DoNRE staff. One disadvantage is that most of the long-term technical advisors are located in the NPO rather than being integrated in the MoNRE structure.

Support through TA for provincial level pilot projects should contribute to capacity development through (a) ‘learning in’, promoting awareness of relevant international experience and practice, (b) ‘learning out’, ensuring that the experience of these pilots feeds into policies and planning, and (c) ‘learning across’ through exchange of experience between pilots, between MoNRE and other line ministries at different level, and especially with NGOs engaged in similar activities.

Recommendation:

- Review whether some international TA should be deployed to provincial level.
- Ensure appropriate involvement of all TA stakeholders when preparing APO 2008–2009.
- Prepare for a phasing in of Actor's Cooperation to replace the current institutional cooperation when SEMLA ends.

3.5 Sustainability

3.5.1 Prospects for Sustainability

There are prospects for certain degree of sustainability in relation to specific aspects of the Programme. The degree of sustainability will, however, crucially depend on which steps are taken during the remaining Programme time.

It is possible that the TAGs will not continue to exist when the Programme ends. To certain extent, knowledge may remain and coordination might improve through the experiences and networks established during the life-time of the TAGs. Hopefully barriers have been lowered. Further, the establishment of PDPs provide an additional opportunity to more firmly root this innovative way of working.

SEMLA contributed to the 5-Year NRE plan and is expected to contribute also to the coming plan. This does provide an opportunity to mainstream some aspects. There is, however, no certainty that this will happen, as the final decisions on the 5-Year NRE plan do not rest with SEMLA.

The SAT/ESD has proposed a review of the M&E system. If such revisions take place, and if the M&E system reaches a level of quality that will be accepted more broadly within MoNRE and its cooperation partners, the prospects for the M&E system to survive post-SEMLA should be strengthened.

SEMLA has provided support to MoNRE to prepare and achieve some required initial benchmark for the forthcoming Loan supported Vietnam Land Administration Programme (VLAP). Given that the preparation proceeds successfully and that both sides (the GoV and the WB) approve the programme and conclude successful negotiations, this will mean that SEMLA has contributed to a potentially more institutionalised process in MoNRE. However, the land administration system still needs considerable changes in order to reach a sustainable level, which requires that it can be maintained and updated with transactions and that land users find it worthwhile to pay for the services.

3.5.2 Threatening Factors

There are a number of substantial threatening factors which points to weak sustainability.

Only one staff member in the National Programme Office is regular MoNRE staff. Other positions are manned by externally contracted individuals who will most likely not remain in MoNRE when the Programme ends.

For understandable reasons, the Programme has so far mostly dealt with the first step of policy and organisational change – formulation and revisions of regulatory framework. Implementation and enforcement of revised and new laws and regulations is of course crucial in order to achieve sustainable results. To increase the prospects for achieving such sustainable results the Programme needs to place more emphasis on enforcement and implementation.

The frequent outsourcing of implementation of activities, at national level and at provincial level, works against sustainability. Many activities which would provide opportunities for on-the-job learning are thereby foregone by MoNRE/DoNRE and VEPA. Instead, capacity is primarily built in persons external to MoNRE/DoNRE and VEPA.

The TA is located separate from their main counterpart in MoNRE. Thereby opportunities for daily on-the-job training are missed. MoNRE staff does also not frequently accompany TA when travelling to the Provinces. The combination of frequent outsourcing of implementation of activities and that few MoNRE staff accompanies TA when travelling to the Provinces implies strongly decreased capacity building effects of the Programme. It does also seem that TA continues to be used as gap filler to certain extent, which then again implies that no learning process takes place.

The methodology will not be finalised and firmly in place when the Programme ends. SEMLA resources facilitate implementation of pilots and extensive training. There are comparatively high costs associated with these activities. It is therefore not likely that pilots will be replicated and intensity of training be maintained when the Programme ends. Donor coordination will be important for linking the different initiatives. Only if donors clearly link their activities, does it seem likely that the results and lessons learned from SEMLA will go beyond the piloting phase.

SEA is not a cost-effective way of integrating environmental management in land use planning. SEMLA has also proposed and tested a more direct involvement of environmental management in the land use planning process, which has a potential to be more cost-effective and thus more sustainable.

Staff is trained when the Programme ends but there adequate equipment is not available.

Some activities are currently more or less directly financed through adding payment to civil servants – one example is training provided at the provincial level by DoNRE management staff being financially compensated as per SEMLA financial guidelines – which in practise implies added salary.

On balance, the assessment of the SAT/ESD is that the chances for sustainability are rather weak unless the ways of working change during the remaining Programme implementation period.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the SAT/ESD finds that the SEMLA Programme is making good progress in implementing its activities. The Programme remains relevant and well justified from the perspective of applicable Vietnamese and Swedish policies and strategies. As follows from the discussion above, there are, however, also a number of issues which in the view of the SAT/ESD should be given more attention in implementation during the remaining Programme period to enhance the Programme's relevance in practise. The SAT/ESD's view on which steps should be taken within the Programme is expressed in the detailed recommendations included at the end of each sub-section above. Some of these recommendations could be undertaken without delay while other may require longer time but should still be initiated with a longer-term institutional MoNRE perspective.

The detailed recommendations in the text may be summarised in five main recommendations, which in the view of the SAT/ESD are crucial.

Review and consolidate the Log-Frame and outcome indicators.

A thorough review and consolidation of the Log-Frame and the outcome indicators in the M&E system will clarify the results chain and require that clear lines of association are established between the various levels in the results chain. This will in turn provide the basis for identifying activities which are more in line with the SEMLA basic principles and development objective. A roadmap for this should be included in the forthcoming APO.

Pay immediate attention to mainstreaming social and socio-economic perspectives into activities applying a rights-based approach.

A number of the recommendations above relate to a lack of pro-poor analysis and pro-active focus on socio-economic aspects of activities. A roadmap for this should be included in the forthcoming APO.

Consolidate and deepen work within current areas of coverage rather than add new thematic areas

New areas of responsibilities relating to natural resources and the environment have been, or are in the process of being, assigned to MoNRE. It has been discussed whether to expand SEMLA activities to cover also these new areas of responsibilities. It is recommended to rather focus on deepening and consolidating the work within the current areas. Particularly as there is a need to refine some work methods and activities to ensure that the Programme does benefit the intended end beneficiaries. Consolidation would also contribute to increased prospects for sustainability.

Consider continuation and/or addition of a few selected TA positions

- a) It will be essential to have a highly qualified M&E TA in order to ensure that the review and consolidation of the Log-Frame and outcome indicators leaves behind an M&E system of high quality.
- b) The international TA for capacity building should be extended. It should also be reviewed whether this position should be deployed to provincial level.
- c) Add an international TA to support efforts to strengthen community empowerment perspectives within the Programme (in line with GoV policies).

Consider a shorter extension of the Programme

Provided that actions are taken on the above recommendations, a shorter extension of the Programme will be of importance for in particular two reasons:

- a) It will allow consolidation and dissemination of the revised M&E system to provide a model for MoNRE.
- b) It will allow a transition period during which future actor-based cooperation can be looked into. This in turn will prepare for a smooth phasing out of current mode of cooperation and phasing in of potential actor-based cooperation in line with the GoS recent decision for future cooperation between Sweden and Vietnam.

It must be clearly noted, however, that the SAT/ESD-proposed shorter extension is entirely conditioned on actions being taken on the recommendations above. If sufficient actions are not taken, which needs to be closely followed, no extension is recommended as it would be in the view of the SAT/ESD not add value when it comes to achieving the Programme and objectives.

Appendix I.1 Assessment of the achievements and the outcome of SEMLA

1 Introduction

Vietnam is developing fast and need to develop its administrative structure to meet new challenges and demands. The SEMLA Programme is assisting Vietnam to further build and strengthen the foundations of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) including the Vietnam Environmental Protection Authority (VEPA) the provincial Departments of Natural Resources and Environment (DoNRE) and facilitating the process of change in the field of land and environment management. In addition the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) is participating in the Programme in questions related to Chemical Safety.

Technical assistance is provided by Ramböhl. In addition, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) is engaged in an institutional cooperation between SEPA and VEPA and the Swedish Chemicals Agency (KemI) in a similar cooperation with MoIT.

The Programme is divided into one national component, mainly including support to institutional development at MoNRE, and provincial components involving six provinces.¹⁹ The provincial components are separated from the national component in terms of operational planning and implementation. The whole programme is held together by the Programme Steering Board (PSB) and the programme implementation unit under a National Director. This means for instance that each province is responsible for the development and implementation of its Annual Plans of Operation (APO) under the main objectives stated in the Programme Document and other established policies and under the supervision of the PSB. This independence is reflected in activities carried out on the ground but on the planning level, the provincial components are the same in each province.

The programme started in December 2004 with an original inception period of 15 months. This period was prolonged for another three months until the end of June 2006. The actual implementation to date is based on APOs covering July 2006 to the end of 2007, an 18 months planning period, within which complementary 6 months' detailed operation plans have been elaborated. The Programme is thus coming to the end of its first 18 months' planning period. This will be followed by another 18 months' planning period until the end of June 2009.

The reporting of the achievements is comprehensive and includes analyses of achievements and the underlying problems (see for instance various SEMLA progress reports and the SEMLA Mid-Term Report covering the period from 1st of July 2006 to the 30th of June 2007, dated September 2007). The SAT/ESD has in this assessment not found it necessary to repeat all valuable activities of SEMLA. For a full picture of SEMLA activity achievements, we recommend in particular the SEMLA Mid-Term Report.

The SAT/ESD will instead focus on an assessment of how all these activities contribute to the development objective of SEMLA, namely to establish *"A Natural Resource and Environmental Management that contributes to economic growth and poverty alleviation, sustainable development and environmental protection, strengthening local governance and participation of the population in decision-making processes and the management of resources, in order to meet the demands and needs in an efficient and equitable way"*²⁰.

¹⁹ The six provinces are: Ha Giang, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, Nghe An from start and later joined by Binh Dinh, Dong Ngai, and Phu Yen.

²⁰ From Preface of the SEMLA Mid-Term Report, September 2007

Our assessment is based on the information we have collected from members of SEMLA Thematic Advisory Groups (TAGs) at MoNRE and from all provinces involved in the Programme and from visits to three provinces (Nghe An, Ba Ria-Vung Tau and Ha Giang) and districts and communes in these provinces. Discussions were also held with representatives from the other three Programme provinces (Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and Dong Nai) in Hanoi during the 3rd Quarterly Meeting of the Programme. Discussions have also been held with technical assistant representatives.

2 General Remarks

In general, SEMLA is making good progress in implementing its activities. Through the different systems for management and follow-up, the Programme has good control of the progress in implementing activities.

The SAT/ESD has tried to assess how the very relevant progress of SEMLA in undertaking its activities also can be traced in results and outcomes among land users and others. One difficulty of tracing such outcomes is of course that SEMLA only has been implementing activities for 15 months and has not yet really reached the stage when the experiences gained will be transferred into policy, methodology and activities that have had an impact on the situation for the general public. The Programme monitoring and evaluation system and its potential for eventually tracing effects and outcomes are assessed in further detail in Appendix I.2.

Considering the proposed Programme and time frame for SEMLA, one observation is that far too much time was spent on planning of the Programme with an exceptionally long inception period, compared to the time available for the implementation of the Programme.

As much as possible, SEMLA tries to build on existing initiatives of MoNRE and DoNRE. This contributes to the *strong ownership* of the programme. However it also means the added value is not a radical change from the usual way of affairs but rather an improved and accelerated mode for MoNRE and DoNRE activities, showing the possibility of alternative approaches, and by that preparing the basis for change. The decentralised approach with provincial independence is also contributing to the strong ownership of the Programme with high commitment from provincial authorities.

Both national and provincial components are supported by technical assistance and that is appreciated. However, the overall outcome of the programme should benefit from also including MoNRE experts much more than is the case in the technical assistance to the provinces. In this way the capacity building impact and sustainability of the Programme could be improved. SEMLA is therefore recommended to try to find ways of involving more expertise from MoNRE in the technical assistance to the provincial development components.

One approach of SEMLA is to review and analyse the current situation, develop methodology and test this methodology in pilot studies, evaluate the results and then transfer the methodology into legislation, guidelines and manuals and train government staff for a nationwide implementation. There are also possibilities for SEMLA to support replication of models and methods developed through the Expansion Fund to other provinces than those directly involved in the SEMLA development activities.

The Programme is mainly focusing on civil servants involved in administration of environment and land from a governmental perspective. The programme is expected to reach the *ultimate target group* (the urban and rural poor), as stated in the Programme Document, through a more efficient, transparent and accessible administration from central level down to each commune and even hamlets within the communes. Most people involved in the Programme, at both national and provincial levels, also believe that improved capacity and understanding of environmental and land issues of the local government officers (especially at commune and district level) will ultimately benefit the urban and rural poor. It is

believed that it will contribute to a sustainable economic development, which also will contribute to better living conditions for the rural and urban poor. The question for the SAT/ESD will then be, whether the impact is the right impact considering the development objective and whether this impact is achieved in an efficient manner.

The Programme thus builds on an implicit assumption that there is a direct link between improved capacity in civil servants and a more efficient public administrative system to the benefit of the communities. In this respect, the SAT/ESD makes the observation that such an automatic linkage is not supported by empirical evidence. In practice there is no automatic linkage between improved capacity in civil servants and improved services delivery from the public administrative system.

When it comes to improving public administrative efficiency, there are different levels on which to focus interventions. So far, SEMLA efforts have been concentrated at macro level (national level with work mainly on legislation and policy) and micro level (pilot activities). The gap for SEMLA is the meso level where the services delivery system operates. There are many difficult things to be done in order to make sure that good policies and good legislation, as well as pilot experiences, are well translated into efficient work practices with good services delivery. SEMLA needs to focus more on the interface between services suppliers and their clients (the individual citizens and the identified end beneficiaries of the Programme as per the Programme Document).

The SAT/ESD also notes that dimensions such as democracy, human rights, transparency and accountability are part of the Programme Document but are not included in the vocabulary used at the implementation level of the Programme.

3 Integrated Environmental Management

3.1 National component

The national component aims at strengthening the capacity for policy making and providing legal framework for land administration and environmental management.

SEMLA has made overall good contributions to the refining and completion of policies and legal framework on environmental management, on integrating environmental issues into land administration, as well as on integrating natural resources and the environment. Efforts have also been made to strengthening the capacity for environmental management.

3.1.1 Legal and regulatory framework

SEMLA has contributed to a stronger and more comprehensive legal framework for natural resource and environmental management (NREM) in Vietnam. With legal technical and financial support from SEMLA, more and higher quality inputs have been delivered to legislation formulation processes. Thereby, the legislative capacity of national bodies has also improved. This is an important contribution of SEMLA.

The Programme has provided technical support to the revision and implementation of the Law on Environmental Protection (LEP), passed by the National Assembly in November 2005 and implemented since July 2006. SEMLA has further contributed to a Decree detailing and guiding the implementation of a number of LEP articles. Currently, a Decree on Environmental Damage and Compensation is in the process of being drafted and is planned to be presented to the Government by the end of 2007.

SEMLA contributed particularly to developing articles in the LEP on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), including subjects on which to prepare SEA reports, SEA procedures, contents of SEA reports, and appraisal of SEA reports. The technical assistance to the development of SEA has contributed to build the capacity on SEA at the Department of EIA&Appraisal (DoEIA&A) and

DoNRE in the involved provinces. The DoEIA&A completed SEA General Technical Guidelines, and with the issuance of a circular guiding a uniform framework for SEA implementation in the whole country, SEA became the first institutionalised legal framework/tool to ensure mainstreaming of environmental considerations.²¹

SEMLA has contributed to drafting the Law on Biodiversity submitted for review to MoNRE, and to the Prime Minister as well as to the National Assembly, at the end of 2007. Vietnam's first Chemical Law was recently approved by the National Assembly. The law had been prepared by the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) with support from SEMLA. The Programme has contributed to preparing the Decision on a hazardous waste list and a Circular guiding the classification of hotspots with a list of establishments which cause serious environmental pollution.

Integrated environment management, however, requires not only well developed legislation but also the organisational and institutional capacity of implementing agencies. One thing the Programme so far has left out is the development/creation of new and feasible concepts and options/roadmaps of how integrated NREM should be translated into practice in the near future. In the context of limited knowledge and experiences available on integrated NREM, not only between land and environment, but also other aspects of other sectors, there should be more attention on the importance of studies, debates and mechanism for how to achieve a well-organised and well-coordinated integrated public administration.

Pollution control is for instance put as one of key objectives of the programme. Effective pollution control requires the application of economic instruments and market-based management tools in addition to legislation and its enforcement. Management tools in pollution prevention are also identified as one of the urgent needs for Vietnam in prevention control. This is an area which could be strengthened during the remaining life-time of SEMLA.

Integration between land and environmental management are not yet present in many activities where they could (and should) be, such as in the public awareness component of both national and provincial levels.

At the national level (MoNRE), there has been some interaction among concerned departments within Environment Profile (VEPA, DoEIA&A and DoE) across the components (pollution prevention, control and rehabilitation, cleaner production and chemical safety). But the coordination and synergies between environmental and land Management on SEA is less clear.

3.1.2 Policy and implementation framework

The MoNRE 5-year plan for Natural Resource and Environmental Sector 2006–2010 (NRE 5-year plan) was formulated with strong support from SEMLA. All SEMLA activities have been integrated into the NRE 5-year plan, each activity listed under the relevant goals and objectives. It is thereby assured that SEMLA activities are aligned with the 5-year NRE plan and it will subsequently be easier to track progress and implementation of the plan.²²

SEMLA has further assisted in formulating a National Strategy on Marine Resource and Environment until 2020. SEMLA has also provided input to the development and implementation of other major strategies, policies and programmes on environmental protection. It organised a review of three years

²¹ Circular 08/2006/TT-BTNMT dated September 08, 2006. Similar efforts have been tried earlier, for instance to institutionalise the integration of environmental considerations into socio-economic development planning between the former Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MoSTE) and Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) in the framework of the UNDP supported Project "Vietnam Capacity 21" during 1995–1998, through the Inter-ministerial Circular between MoSTE and MPI. But these efforts never materialised.

²² Details on contributions are summarised in: MoNRE (August 2007): *Status Report for SEMLA contribution to the Implementation of 5-Year Plan for National Resource and Environmental Sector 2006–2010*, Hanoi.

implementation of the National Environmental Protection Strategy to 2010 and Vision to 2020 and a workshop to review the implementation of the Joint Resolution between MONRE and mass organisations.

3.1.3 National piloting

With financial support from the Expansion Fund, VEPA and MoNRE (DoEIA&A and Department of Land Registration), have jointly undertaken a pilot on integrated land use planning (ILUP) in Phu Quoc Island.

The TA team together with staff of MoNRE and VEPA shared knowledge and experience gained from the implementation of the Phu Quoc Project with Nghe An DoNRE as they implemented an ILUP in one district.

The accumulated experiences gained have also fed into the development of the SEA/EIA tool of the LEP (see above).

3.2 Provincial components

The provincial components aim at strengthening local capacity in implementing policies, regulations, plans and programs for land administration and environmental management.

SEMLA has achieved good progress in carrying out individual activities that have contributed to strengthened capacity of environmental management (e.g. village environment protection regulations, cleaner production, pollution prevention and hotspots rehabilitation).

The technical assistance provided by SEMLA has proved very useful at both national level (very much appreciated by the DoEIA&A and DoE) and local level (particularly for the development of EIA/SEA and of the land use planning components). The new knowledge and methods as well as the application of experiences in the context of Vietnam brought by the international consultants have been highly appreciated by not only MoNRE but also DoNRE in selected provinces.

The technical assistance, however, needs to link more to the capacity building in terms of on-the-job training for civil servants of DoNRE in addition to of MoNRE. MoNRE should together with SEMLA strengthen its support for provincial level pilot projects to contribute to capacity development at provincial level.

Integrated environmental management in practice must be considered as a cross-cutting that requires a multi-sectorial approach within the public administrative system. If SEMLA at provincial level continues to keep the Programme within DoNRE alone, such as at the moment, this will reduce the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme.

The absence of participation of enterprises and industries in piloting models and policies also works against sustainable and feasible models.

3.2.1 Provincial pilot projects

Pilot models with new approaches and new methods are well promoted and are being implemented in all components of SEMLA. Pilot projects initiated at provincial level have led to a better understanding of the needs for effective management of natural resources, especially land and environment. Technical guidelines for integrated land use planning and environmental impact assessment have been developed and used in several pilots (see further below under NRE and land use planning).

Environmental management guidelines and regulations for villages have been elaborated and implemented with good results. Technical guidelines and procedures for environmental pollution prevention, hotspots management, and cleaner production have been tested and used in various provincial pilot programmes and also created experiences useful for the continued development.

In this way SEMLA has contributed to the objectives to build local capacity and strengthening the implementation capacity for planning and managing natural resources and environment in the involved provinces.

However, no mechanism has yet been put in place to translate the lessons learnt from pilot to policy making. Although there are some examples in which the experiences at provincial level have been used in other provinces, the experience has not yet been institutionalised at national level and has also not yet been replicated through use of the Expansion Fund in non-SEMLA provinces. There is therefore a risk that this experience will remain an isolated event. It is important that SEMLA pay considerable attention to this risk in the remaining period and concentrate efforts on the institutionalisation and replication of the achievements.

Further, it seems that most importance is attached to getting the activities done rather than to developing the process and way of undertaking the pilots. The piloting process thus seems to have been seen in some provinces as a source of resources for solving outstanding problems rather than an opportunity to learn and build capacity in local government. To maximise the learning value it would for instance seem to be more valuable to have a slow process with genuine involvement, and thus on-the-job learning, of local government staff rather than a quick implementation process through outsourcing. To date the latter seems to be the most frequent method.

3.2.2 Integrated NRE and land use planning

Integrated NRE and land use planning pilots (ILUPs) have been undertaken by DoNRE in all SEMLA provinces. There is increasing awareness among officials at DoNRE of the need to integrate NRE and LUP. They know in principle *what* they are expected to do to ensure this integration, but most admit that they remain uncertain about *how* to do it.

It is not certain whether integrated land use planning exercises conducted with the support of SEMLA can be replicated in other places within the province due to the cost and timing involved in this planning process. The extent of replicating these pilots varies among the provinces visited. In one case officials involved admitted that although the planning process was long and costly involving a number of meetings and discussions among concerned stakeholders, the implementation is more effective later on thanks to the consensus and trust have been established in the early planning phase.

The integrated LUP exercise not only contributes to capacity building in forms of on-the-job training but also provides relevant inputs into the policy and decision-making process at provincial level. DoNRE of Nghe An and Ba Ria Vung Tau have used this pilot programme to prepare provincial guidelines for incorporating environmental concerns into LUP.

To ensure the replication of this ILUP it is recommended that the steps involved in the planning are institutionalised through passing under-law regulations for the following reasons: (i) the procedures becomes mandatory; (ii) expenses for conducting these planning steps are officially recognized and can be budgeted in the financial system.

3.2.3 Hotspots management

The task of seriously polluted industries and hotspots control was identified as one of the priorities for environmental management with the provision of strong guideline from the Government (Prime Minister Decision 64 on removal or definite treatment of hotspots).

All SEMLA provinces have pilot models on dealing with hotspots. Some provinces select a spot that has been identified in the list of Decision 64. It is very good that the provinces pilot hotspots treatment models. However, to be valuable a model it requires more than to clean up a hotspot as an ad-hoc activity (such as when selecting a 40 years-old chemical store which has not been used for more than 20

years). A model on hotspots treatment should be built as a pro-active initiative on how to set up a mechanism in relation to the underlying causes of the problems of the hotspots as well as mechanisms relating to how to solve the existing problems of the hotspots. The latter would require cross-cutting models including how to deal with issues such as land allocation for removal of facilities, labour involved, appropriate technology, etc. The piloting would thereby most likely provide more lessons which can result in proposals for changing the regulations. Enterprises and industries should also be more involved in piloting models and policies in order to guarantee sustainable and feasible models.

3.3 Ability to bring back lessons learned from provincial projects to central level for policy development

The integration of environmental concerns into land use planning is an area within which the national component clearly brought back lessons learned from the provincial components to be included in policy formulation and development of regulations. While VEPA was involved in assisting Nghe An DoNRE in mainstreaming environmental considerations into district land use planning, VEPA collected lessons learned from this site to feed back to the Department of Land Registration at MoNRE in order to revise the legal framework for land registration. VEPA also gathered experience from its own Expansion Fund pilot land use planning programme in Phu Quoc to MoNRE.

An area within which there is potential to bring back lessons is related to the cleaner production which has been used by SEMLA as a special tool in integrated pollution prevention and control. The successful Chemical Protection pilot in Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province for sea food processing in one factory and later replicated in other two factories contribute relevant inputs into the revision of the National Cleaner Production Strategy conducted by VEPA. The next step of SEMLA should be to ensure that these experiences are taken care of at the national level and also disseminated to other provinces. The province representatives expressed a fear that this will not happen and SEMLA is recommended to secure that these doubts will not materialise.

3.4 Conclusions and recommendations

The national component has contributed significantly to the capacity of MoNRE in integrated management of environment and land resource. The Programme has furthermore contributed to increased awareness and institutional capacity at all administrative levels of MoNRE on in particular SEA. Given the limited capacity of MoNRE's technical departments, there have been delays in the institutionalisation of the feed-back from pilot projects.

SEMLA should focus on assisting MoNRE to develop its capacity through (a) 'learning in', relevant international experience and practice, (b) 'learning out', ensuring that the experience of these pilots feeds into policies and planning, and (c) 'learning across' through exchange of experience between pilots, between MoNRE and other line ministries at different level, especially NGOs engaged in similar activities.

SEMLA should give further priority to capacity building to the lowest administrative level (commune) since the staff at this level lack capacity while they are increasingly being assigned to deal with problems at the commune level.

SEMLA is also recommended to for the remaining period shift focus from policy and legislation development to more of enforcement and implementation of regulations and replication of models. This includes for instance support to ensure the application of SEA, as it is required in the LEP and its provisions on SEA. This should be done by involving stakeholders also outside DoNRE and including economic instruments and market based tools for pollution prevention and hot spots management.

4 Land administration

Land administration in SEMLA is organised under the national component and contributes to the development of the Land Code (N12) and Arrangements and guidelines for improving policy and legislation on land use planning, land registration, land valuation, and real estate market development (N16). In the provinces the land administration includes components on land use planning (P6) and land registration and the real estate market development (P7).

The provincial activities have a two-dimensional approach. One is to provide opportunities to test different methods on initiatives from national or provincial level. A number of activities have more a character of supporting the implementation of the land reform through direct support to daily activities like cadastral mapping, issuance of land use rights certificates (LURC), improvement of land records etc. In this sense the APOs reflect an interest to satisfy the demands for pilot activities to support development as well as urgent demands connected with the implementation of the land administration reform in Vietnam

4.1 Comments on the national component

4.1.1 Land registration

The previous Swedish support to the land administration branch, CPLAR 1997–2001, had a similar approach for development of methodology and testing in pilot projects as SEMLA. SEMLA has therefore to a large extent had the possibility to build on previous experiences of CPLAR. In regards to land registration, experiences of CPLAR went into the revision of the Land Law 2003 and the subsequent technical guidelines. However, the legislative body, the National Assembly, was not ready to accept all changes proposed to make the land administration system in Vietnam more efficient and transparent.

The concept of establishment of a Land Registration Office (LRO), to be responsible for registration of land use rights was in principle accepted and such offices have been established at district level in Vietnam. This is also in line with the PAR for decentralisation and for establishment of one-stop-shops (OSS). However, a second LRO was maintained at province level for certain land users (organisations etc). The responsibility for updating of changes of land use rights or land use purposes was still kept at different levels from commune to the province.

The registration of buildings and land was kept under two different organisations, MoNRE for land use rights and Ministry of Construction (MoC) for buildings. The competition between spatial planning for urban development (MoC) and land use planning (MoNRE) continued.

The confusion with land registration books at each level of administration also continued.

These deficiencies are still hampering the development of an efficient land registration system for Vietnam and will continue to be an obstacle. In the report “*SEMLA Strategy and guidelines for improving land registration*”, February 2007, which is based on a comprehensive problem analysis of the land administration sector, the current situation is summarised as follows:

These factors contribute to:

Inadequate registration and poor records management and maintenance at Provincial and District level and lower than expected service delivery to the stakeholders (Industry, local people etc

which leads to:

Legal uncertainty, informal transactions, distorted markets, loss of rights and increased opportunities for corruption.

SEMLA has taken a very incremental approach to the reform of the land registration system. The strategy document describes an approach divided into three phases, short-term 1–2 years, which will cover the SEMLA scheduled programme period, a mid-term development of 3–5 years and a long-term perspective of 5–7 years. In the short-term period the strategy proposes a number of improvements to the land registration process including the introduction of a copy of the LURC (white LURC), introduction of a unique transaction number in the process through a bare code and improved records management through scanning of documents for registration and storage in a document data base. The longer perspective proposes the gradual introduction of a more coherent and efficient land registration system in a number of steps.

Since the strategy was adopted, a number of important events that will influence the situation for the land administration have occurred. Vietnam has joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and thus will be required to develop an efficient system for among others the real property market. The Government has decided to postpone the development of the Land Code and instead prepare a new revised Land Law 2008. The National Assembly has decided to speed up the issuance of the LURC to be finished by 2010.

The situation is not ideal. Since 2001 a number of years have passed without significant progress to get an understanding in Vietnam for the importance of an efficient land registration system. The situation has immediate consequences for sustainable economic development. For poor people, the lack of an efficient land registration system will make their rights to land and property less secure. The cost of registration as such and the combined cost effect of registration and taxation make it very difficult for poor people to enjoy the benefits of secure land rights. The informal market in urban areas is estimated to about 40% of the total market and it is mainly this market that is accessible for poor people. The informal market is not providing secure tenure. People are often cheated on this market. Uncontrolled land speculations are going on and are contributing to extremely high land prices in growing urban areas which also make it more difficult for not least poor people to access land with secure rights.

The situation makes also replication of the current methods supported by SEMLA less attractive. Representatives from the provinces have complained about the many small and incremental changes of instructions that are implemented from national level. They only create more administrative work without making any real improvements. Another aspect is the upcoming Vietnam Land Administration Programme (VLAP), which will support land registration throughout Vietnam. It would have been an advantage if a more efficient land registration system could have been developed and been approved before the start of this programme.

The approach with incremental small steps taken by SEMLA can be well understood given the difficulties to raise political support for a more comprehensive reform. On the other hand, if SEMLA had put more attention to analyse and describe the current problems with the existing situation, for economic and environmental development and for poverty alleviation and to exemplify benefits of a more efficient system, it might have been possible to raise the necessary political support for the reform. After all, there are not any real political issues involved but only a question of efficient administration, well in line with the PAR policy.

In view of the importance of the land registration reform and the recent policy changes, we recommend that SEMLA revisit the strategy for land registration reform in order to concentrate on awareness-raising to gain political support for a comprehensive modern reform of the land registration system in Vietnam. The main components and benefits of such a reform are well known since long. In the meantime, the development of ViLIS (especially development of standardised business process for land registration) and its connections to the ELIS (discussed further below) should continue as well as support to improve the quality of the land registration records through modern cadastral mapping and updating of obsolete records. These activities will always be necessary provided that the continued updating of the information from transactions and change of land use can be secured.

4.1.2 *Land Code*

SEMLA is supporting studies of the social and economic situation in Vietnam and of the land codes in other countries in order to prepare for the introduction of a comprehensive Land Code in Vietnam. However, the timing has changed since the Government has decided to make another revision of the Land Law before introducing a land code. It seems obvious that SEMLA should now concentrate on support to the revision of the Land Law and in a direction that supports a comprehensive reform of the land registration system and of the land use planning system. The on-going pilot projects will have a potential for contributing with useful experiences for this revision.

4.1.3 *Land use planning*

SEMLA has contributed to an agreement between Ministry of Construction (MoC) and MoNRE to avoid over-lapping between urban development plans and land use plans. This is one step in the right direction, but there is a need for a more comprehensive review of the spatial planning system in Vietnam, between different sector interests, different level of administration and the role planning should play in relation to the land user's responsibility to develop his/her property in accordance with market demands.

However, the concept of land use planning need more attention in order for land use planning to be a useful instrument for development of land policy and land use and environment control in a market economy. The distinction between land use planning as a tool for production planning and a strategic tool for market development is not well understood. The relation between land use plans, spatial (construction) plans and social economic development plans at different administrative levels is confusing and overlapping. The land use plan as a strategic land use plan involving all sectors of society in regards to land use needs to be further developed. SEMLA should concentrate on continued development of the land use concept in order to build an understanding of the role land use planning should play in a market economy, which supports a sustainable and equitable economic and social development in a healthy environment.

4.1.4 *Land valuation and land disputes*

Official land valuation is in Vietnam based on cost norms, which are elaborated at provincial level under the supervision of Ministry of Finance. The concept of market valuation is not really introduced in these norms. Market land valuation is an important tool to support the development of the land market, for valuation in connection with expropriations, for taxation of real property, for credits etc. Although land valuation is one of the expected outputs of SEMLA, it is not included in any activity. The reason is that MoNRE has no responsibilities related to land valuation. However, this might change in future.

Land disputes are common in Vietnam. They are handled in various forms, in administrative order and in judicial order. They are so common that they are threatening to block the whole judicial system. Most conflicts are connected to compensation for expropriation of real property and to disputes, about administrative boundaries between districts and communes, about parcel boundaries between different land users and about land use rights. The extent of these conflicts is one major argument for both improving the quality of the exiting land registration system, expanding the system to include the informal market and to develop methodology for market valuations.

Poor people usually have fewer possibilities to claim there rights in land disputes. One way for SEMLA to come more close to the ultimate target group, poor people, could be to pay attention to dispute resolution, for instance to study the problems and develop and test alternative methods for dispute resolution that will improve the situation for poor people.

4.1.5 *Integrated information system for environment and land management (ELIS)*

The support for the development of ELIS is one of the major contributions from SEMLA to the integration of environmental and land management. SEMLA has developed a strategic document to guide the principles for the development of ELIS. ELIS is intended to support the whole NRE sector with information policy and strategy, tools for creation, storage, and maintenance of data bases, tools for dissemination of information to users outside the sector and to the general public.

The strategic document “*Environment and Land Information Strategy*”, July 2007 is intended to guide the development of ELIS. This document proposes the development of ELIS as an internet portal for a number of data bases created and maintained by different organisations within MoNRE, provinces and districts. The data accessible through the portal will form a number of important layers within the concept of a Vietnam National Spatial Data Infrastructure. The creation and maintenance of the data for ELIS will depend on each involved organisation and the business processes involved in the different responsibilities. The strategy document also elaborates a strategy for the implementation of ELIS. This strategy is asking for considerable inputs in developing policies and standards for data communication, data bases, quality requirements etc. A pilot project is planned to start in Dong Nai. There are however problems with access to the data since there are different local standards and formats as well as business procedures in different areas. Business processes even within a sector are different in different provinces and also changing often with new regulations for e.g. land registration.

The work to establish necessary standards and to develop the common approach needs to continue. One part of ELIS is of course to agree on the internet portal. However, more important is to agree on and develop the different layers of information to be part of the ELIS. Especially the layers that will form the core data sets, topographic and cadastral mapping, land user information, land use planning and environmental information are important to develop as well as the business processes for maintenance of these data layers. It is important to keep the responsibility for the development of the different business processes within the responsible agency and avoid that the IT developers take over the process development. The pilot project planned for Dong Nai will give input for this. Other activities should include study visits to countries with functional integration of land and environmental information system like Sweden, workshops and seminars in order to develop an understanding for the need for standardisation and agree on such standardisation, both of data models and business processes. A close cooperation is needed with departments within MoNRE responsible for the different business processes. ELIS will in this way provide a number of core data sets in the national spatial infrastructure, e.g. the geographic framework, information on land users and land use purposes, environmental information and land use planning regulations.

It is important to continue to develop ELIS as fast as possible before too many different solutions are established in society. In order to keep a strong leadership and coordination of this development it should be considered to give the full responsibility for the implementation of the reform to CIREN, or its subsequent agency in the new organisation, including funds for testing in different provinces. This is however not a proposal that CIREN should take over the responsibility for the development of the different business processes from the relevant agencies but to have a more coordinated development processes for a national standard for the whole country and for the IT strategy.

4.2 **Provincial components**

4.2.1 *Land registration*

SEMLA has started piloting methods for improved land registration for the short-term perspectives in Dong Nai (unique transaction number), which is aiming at piloting of more efficient record-keeping, originally proposed by the SEMLA technical assistance. Other pilot projects have mainly focused on issuance of LURC due to changes of land parcels (land consolidation in e.g. Nghe An) and to improve the quality of cadastral maps and land records (e.g. Ha Giang), which mainly is supporting the imple-

mentation of the land administration reform in the province. The introduction of computer-based system to support land registration (ViLIS) has been supported by training and installation of the system in some districts in the six provinces. However, the provinces are to some extent lacking funding for equipment for ViLIS. ViLIS is, according to the provinces, not yet developed to the extent that it is meaningful to replicate in large scale. Before ViLIS development can be finalised, it is highly desirable to agree on a national standard for the land registration business processes. The ViLIS activities combine the interest from national level to develop efficient tools for land registration with a similar demand from the provinces.

4.2.2 Land use planning

One of the main principles in SEMLA is the integration of environmental and land management issues into one organisation (MoNRE/DoNRE) and into specific activities like land use planning and development of an information system for land and environmental management. SEMLA has conducted a number of pilot projects aimed at testing methodology for this integration and also for the introduction of public participation in the planning process. These pilot projects have contributed to an improved understanding of these instruments and how they relate to each other. Based on this, SEMLA has developed a model which directly integrates environmental issues into the land use planning process. The model secures also public participation in the planning process. This model seems ready for replication and also for inclusion in the forthcoming revision of Circular 30 about land use planning.

4.2.3 Real Estate Market

Through the expansion fund SEMLA is supporting the establishment of Real Estate Trading Centres in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi and also a similar centre that has existed since long in Dong Nai. These activities are results of provincial initiatives. Studies have also been undertaken of the real property markets in Hanoi, HCMC and Dong Nai. However, these studies are lacking a social dimension on the situation for poor people on the real property market. It should be an advantage to continue studies of the real property markets also including issues of land speculation and access to property for residents and non-residents in urban areas. Such studies should be more valuable for the development of policies in order to secure access to property with secure tenure for all segments of the population. Especially important is of course what role official real estate trading centres can play in this regard compared to commercial brokers. Such studies will also be an important part of awareness-raising and gaining political support for more radical changes, among others for the revision of the land law.

4.3 Ability to bring back lessons learned from provincial projects to central level for policy development

The development of methodology for land administration is done in close cooperation between the provincial components and the development work at central level. For instance, ViLIS is developed and tested in practice and the experiences are used for continued improvement and development of the system. The methodology for land use planning has been a continuous learning by doing exercise between the central and provincial levels. However, it is too early to see any real influence on the policy level based on experiences gained from provincial programmes. One opportunity for this will come with the revision of the Land Law and another with the revision of the regulations for land use planning.

4.4 Recommendations

The strategy for improvements of the land registration system should be revisited by the programme in order to speed up the reform of the system to be more efficient, accessible and up-to date.

The conceptual development for land use planning as a strategic tool for planning of long term land use in a market economy should be given high priority in the next APO. The methodology for participatory integrated land use planning should be transferred into guidelines and be replicated.

More emphasis should be given to studies of the formal and informal land markets, including the credit markets, especially focusing on poor people's access to land and housing.

SEMLA is also recommended to pay attention to the question of land disputes and make studies on alternative dispute resolution methods, which can free the ordinary juridical system from the burden of many land disputes.

The development of ELIS needs to be intensified in order to establish ELIS as the core information system in the National Spatial Data Infrastructure in Vietnam. In order to reach to a national standard for the information system, CIREN or its subsequent department is recommended to be given a stronger leading role in the development. A study visit to the Swedish Land Information System and its integration with the Environmental Protection Information System is recommended.

5 Capacity Building

The capacity building efforts of the Programme are generally much appreciated at provincial as well and national levels. It is very clear that there is a huge demand for training at both levels and that the SEMLA Programme can only partly fill that need. It is therefore important to prioritise and ensure that the capacity building is sustainable and integrated with the other components of the Programme.

The impact of the TA team seems bigger at the national level. The understanding of capacity building issues at provincial level is in most cases limited and driven by a huge demand resulting in a thrive for numbers rather than quality. Integration of the different components at provincial level is often lacking, and the involvement of MoNRE in capacity building at provincial level is weak (and therefore using MoNRE for replication nation wide is weak).

It is not really clear how much of the capacity building resources have been used at national level and how much at provincial level. Estimated is that 70% of the overall capacity building resources goes to the provincial component.

In general capacity building in Vietnam is rather traditional, focusing on providing information by lecturing or disseminating documentation, not on interactive on-the-job training. Although the Programme has made several attempts to break through this traditional way and direct MoNRE and DoNRE towards a more comprehensive and integrated mode of capacity building through interactive skilled based training sessions that are directly linked to on-the-job assistance and linked to pilot projects, study tours and other capacity building effort, they have only partially managed to change this. Capacity building is the backbone of the Programme and should be THE cross cutting component. However until now, it seems that capacity building is too much of a separate (training) component rather than an integrated cross cutting tool to build the capacity at national and provincial levels

Most of the activities expected in the APO and SPO have been implemented or are under implementation. However this says little whether the affect of the impact of the activity is of a certain quality, is sustainable, and makes a real impact resulting in the required change. The chapters below will address the most important capacity building activities as listed in the APO/SPO.

5.1 Capacity building at national level

5.1.1 HRD strategy

The HRD Strategy is a very useful entry point for capacity building at Ministerial level. Although (the English) document leaves room for improvement it provides a useful framework for capacity building indicating several measures and activities that will certainly improve the HRD and capacity building at MoNRE. It is not clear whether the document is actually actively used by MoNRE as well. A major break through is that the document introduces Competence Based Performance Management and skilled based training in MoNRE.

SEMLA also has developed guidelines and procedures for training activities. However these are often ignored. The guidelines contain important quality control measures to ensure modern, skilled based and effective training and should therefore be enforced during all training activities supported by SEMLA.

5.1.2 Management training of future managers

Over 80% of the present managers in MoNRE will retire soon. SEMLA is therefore providing management training for (potential) new leaders and managers. This Management Training Development Programme (MTDP) is provided for the following subjects:

- Strategic leadership and change management
- Organisational development
- Leadership skills
- HRD and management
- Performance management

This MTDP training is for MoNRE as well as DoNRE staff (at the moment). The course has been successively implemented. Resource people came from reputable training institutes such as APPOLLO, AITVN etc. The course is a good example of a modern skilled based practical and interactive course. Sometimes the mix of participants (MoNRE and DoNRE) is causing problems due to a different level of understanding but also attitude of the participants. The MTDP training is a good initiative to prepare future managers of MoNRE to become modern managers and should be further supported. The course should however ensure that it goes beyond general management training and should be relevant to the existing working environment (including the changes introduced by the Programme). It should result in a behavioural change of the course participants in order for them have a real impact on the land and environment sector in Vietnam. We recommend:

- MTDP training should be repeated for MoNRE staff and a separate MTDP training should be developed for DoNRE staff.
- MTDP training should integrate changes, focus on behavioural change and directly target the working environment of the participants
- Pool of external trainers or training providers should be extended and briefing of trainers should take place on a regular base to ensure quality and relevance of the courses provided.

5.1.3 Training of Trainers and manual development.

SEMLA has supported MoNRE with the development of 6 training manuals. These manuals are supposed to be distributed country wide and two sets of trainers have been trained to use the manuals. The manuals are in the following fields

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- State administration over national resources and environment and district staff
- Land Registration and statistics for district staff
- Land use planning
- Environment protection
- Manual on environment for communal land administration officer.

Two Trainings of Trainers (ToT's) for 25 people have been organised. This is considered not enough to create a critical mass of trainers. There is also no comprehensive strategy on how to disseminate and use all the manuals at provincial, district and commune levels. However plans are being developed for training on environmental management at district and commune level (see for further details below).

5.1.4 Supporting institutional reform.

During its first year of implementation, SEMLA has contributed substantially to the successful strengthening of the legal and regulatory capacity of MoNRE in the fields of environmental management and protection. The Programme has provided considerable expertise in these fields and has ensured that the process of adopting new legislation and procedures in key environmental areas has been accelerated.

Some main achievements include the drafting of Decree 80/2006/ ND-CP, providing detailed guidelines for implementing articles of the Law on Environmental Protection (LEP), Circular 08/2006/ TT-BTNMT providing guidelines on SEA, EIA and environmental protection commitments, and the Decision on compulsory application of environmental standards TCVN 2005. These and other policy and legal documents have been developed and issued as guiding tools for the implementation of the LEP, which came into effect the 1st of July 2006. Other legal documents are furthermore in the process of being developed with SEMLA support.

The Programme's assistance in this is considered very useful. All efforts should be made to integrate these changes into the daily management or behaviour of the decision makers. The MTDP programme is of course an excellent vehicle to introduce new laws and management styles to the new generation of managers and the latest developments introduced by the programme should therefore be integrated into this course. The (external) trainers of the courses should therefore be fully aware of the latest developments in this field.

5.2 Capacity building at provincial level

Several training courses have been organised at provincial level. Although these courses differ from province to province they generally cover the following subjects/issues.

- General Environment
- Legislation
- Issues related to the different components

The courses were mainly introductory training courses for district and commune staff (environment) and information sessions on laws and legislation for provincial, district and commune staff (big groups of over 50 people). Most courses are relatively ad hoc and not all of the courses are very effective.

Training courses for adult learners are only effective if the content of the training is based on practical experience on the ground and implemented in an interactive manner in which participants are encouraged to exchange experience and learn from national and international examples. Interactive training is only possible for groups of max 20 participants where these participants are actively involved in working sessions rather than listening to (academic) lecturers and presentations.

The resource people used during the training courses should as much as possible have a practical (rather than only academic) background in the subject. However they should also be able to transfer knowledge in an effective manner and therefore be a mix of practitioners and more academic staff.

It was however noticed that training at provincial level was often conducted by DoNRE staff, organised for big groups over 50 people and not very interactive. Many courses had no or little relation with the pilot projects and were often more of briefing sessions on new legislation or procedures rather than modern capacity building efforts.

The target group was staff of DoNRE and staff of the various districts and communes. No official training was organised for the ultimate target group the urban and rural poor although they did attend public awareness sessions organised by the programme. Mainstreaming of gender did not really go beyond the point of counting the number of female participants. In summary it is noted that:

- Groups are too big
- Lecturers are recruited from the province (DoNRE) and are often not professional trainers
- No relation with pilot programmes
- No strategic approach
- Little relation/interaction between components
- Too much training oriented not capacity building, no follow up
- Target group is mainly civil servants only and not beyond that (civil society, private sector)

5.2.1 Development of HRD strategies

The development of HRD strategies differs from province to province. Some provinces have developed one and others not. The quality of the different HRD strategies also differs from province to province. Development and implementation of HRD strategies should become a priority of each participating province, combined with a capacity building roadmap indicating the training and capacity building efforts of each province and integrating the different components and capacity building activities (such as study tours, on-the-job training, class room training etc).

5.2.2 Provincial exchange.

Although the programme organises workshops every three months to exchange experience between provinces there is a general feeling that this is not sufficient. Internships, exchange of staff and documenting case studies (the process not only the product) would therefore be useful tools to ensure that the experience of the provinces does not get lost. MoNRE should play a much more active role in the exchange of experience and to ensure that the experience at provincial level will be institutionalized nation wide. It could be a task of the TA team to stimulate and ensure that this will actually happen in which TA members would work directly with MoNRE staff to capture, disseminate and institutionalise and replicate the provincial experience.

5.2.3 Future plans

The recent government Decree 81/2007/ND-CP on the state organisation of environmental protection is furthermore expected to result in a significant strengthening of environmental management, particularly at the decentralised level. The Decree thus increases the number of environmental officers to be employed by districts with population above 35,000, as well as certain other districts, such as delta or island districts, to 2–3 officers. Districts with populations of less than 35,000 shall have 1–2 environmental officers. The Decree furthermore spells out environmental protection responsibilities of cadastral and construction officers of communes, who signifies a strengthening of environmental management functions of commune staff.

The Programme has therefore prepared a draft strategy and action plan that outlines a possible way forward in strengthening the environmental management capacity of districts and communes by means of a national capacity building programme. This draft plan should become a multi-donor effort in which several donors, in cooperation with the GoV will pilot and replicate a nation wide training effort.

The present draft plan need further development and should be discussed with MoNRE and other donors.

5.3 Conclusions and recommendations

The assistance of the programme to support MoNRE and the different DoNREs to develop a human resource development strategy is commended and should be the basis for further capacity building and public administration reform activities. Issues like competence based HRD, introducing skilled based training and new way of management through MTDP are very useful direct results of the SEMLA Programme and should be further supported. Other PAR initiatives like the One-Stop-Shop, ISO 9000 are other initiatives in which SEMLA supported MoNRE.

The HRD Strategies at national level needs further support (in development or refining and implementation) and at provincial level should be a priority. Not all provinces have developed (or are developing) such a strategy. Immediate attention is therefore required to ensure that all provinces have developed (and are using/implementing) a HRD strategy. Further support from SEMLA should be linked to the development of such a strategy.

TA for the capacity building component is done by two long term advisors (one national and one international). One (the international) is leaving the Programme soon and is not going to be replaced. Only one person on capacity building seems not enough considering the fact that, with the finalisation of the HRD strategies, capacity building will need much more support at provincial level.

The programme has made a substantial contribution to the increased capacity of MoNRE and DoNRE staff. Many people involved in the Programme expressed their appreciation about the programme and mentioned their improved capacity to manage environmental and land issues as one of the main contributions of the Programme. There is no doubt that the Programme has indeed increased the capacity of many civil servants (especially those directly involved). The capacity of the main target group (the urban and rural poor) has however hardly been increased yet.

Although there is a general feeling that the capacity of many has been increased, the Programme should now try to make an extra effort to go beyond those directly involved and also ensure that the experience gained will be more widely disseminated and institutionalised nation wide. A more integrated approach should be applied at provincial level combining the different components with training, demonstration projects, on the job training and study tours etc.

As part of the provincial HRD strategies the programme should roll-out a provincial capacity building plan integrating the issues mentioned above.

Main observation from the visits to the provinces is that the lessons learned at provincial level are not institutionalised nation wide. Knowledge often remains among Programme and DoNRE staff within the 6 provinces (and sometimes it is not even shared among provinces) but is not *systematically* shared with other provinces in Vietnam. This is mainly due to the lack of involvement of MoNRE staff in provincial SEMLA activities. It is therefore recommended that MoNRE staff and SEMLA staff will more closely be involved in provincial capacity building activities to ensure that the lessons learned will be used throughout Vietnam.

In addition to training courses for government staff the programme should pay more attention to the ultimate target group and try to organise courses for people and train them on issues like rights, identification of environmental problems and explain ways of getting involved in environmental management activities.

Gender should be mainstreamed and be included as a separate module in most training courses, including in the MTDP.

6 Communication and public awareness

SEMLA objectives for Communication and public awareness are covered by National component N 24 with three sub-objectives: i) Public awareness raising programs, including a public awareness and communication strategy on environmental management and land administration (N24.1); ii) Support public access to environmental and land policies, legislation (N24.2), and iii) Support public participation in decision making and monitoring process of environmental and land administration (N24.3).

At provincial level, the objectives of public awareness will be achieved by provincial project (P8). The expected SEMLA contributions include: (i) public awareness raising projects, public awareness and communication strategy on environmental management and land administration is developed and implemented; (ii) support to public access to environmental and land management policies and legislation and (iii) support to public participation in decision-making and monitoring processes for environmental and land management.

Communication and awareness is undertaken by the TAG on public awareness and communication, which is based in MoNRE, Department of Legislation, with members from various departments. The SPO for the public awareness TAG is supporting the objectives of MoNRE's NRE 5-year plan, particularly in regard to the identified major measurements for implementation: enhancing the participation of community by extending public participation in planning and implementation of NREM and environmental protection, and training and improving public awareness on NRE.

The Programme has made good achievements and progress when it comes to communication and awareness. Strategies have been developed, training course have been organised in legislation and communication skills. Pilot projects have been organised in order to disseminate information to concerned stakeholders and the general public.

The national component has successfully developed a strategy on public awareness and communication approved by the Programme Steering Committee. The strategy is well designed and comprehensive, covering all critical objectives, measures and the activities to achieve the expected objectives. With one year of implementation of the strategy, the Programme has gained some achievements.

6.1 Improving public awareness and communication capacity

In accordance with the strategy, SEMLA has taken several initiatives to strengthen the capacity of staff to improve their skills in communication and public awareness activities. These activities have been successfully implemented and lessons learned from the different pilot projects are currently being reviewed in order to improve the capacity building for public awareness and communication. The SAT/ESD has made the following observations.

The TAG for public awareness and communication has made efforts to compile and publish communication material for training, and some of these documents contain all legal documents on land and environment management (legislation, training material for reporters). In order to make the training material more understandable and accessible to the communities, SEMLA should try to process legal documents into even more simple and understandable format.

In some cases, the national TAG has coordinated with SEMLA provinces to carry out training course for commune staff (leaders of communes, mass organisations) on legislation, but there have been no activities to follow up on how the knowledge and awareness is being transferred to the communities. This aspect should be assessed by the Programme.

The Programme has set up a system of reporters and collaborators (70 reporters of land and environmental policy, of which 29 reporters are the staff at national level and the rest are staff of DoNRE at provincial level). These people are civil servants of MoNRE and DoNRE, and they get allowances from

SEMLA for working as reporters. There is no mechanism to ensure that they are willing and available to work as reporters when SEMLA finishes. In order to safeguard the sustainability of these investments MoNRE/DoNRE should consider strengthening its system of staff responsible for dissemination of information and even further concentrate the capacity building activities to the local officers and reporters, who have direct contact with communities, who lack communication skills and knowledge about legislation on land and environment.

The Log-Frame mentions to “ensure experiences and learning is captured and shared” as one of the expected outcome of capacity building and awareness raising (N 22/ N23) and is expected to be implemented by the TAG for capacity building. But so far, the TAG for capacity building has not clearly stated their outputs in this regard. In the SEMLA strategy of public awareness raising and communication, one target of the strategy mentions the importance to “ensuring that the knowledge, experiences and lessons learnt from SEMLA Programme are documented, shared and disseminated as widely as possible”. This is expected to be implemented by the TAG for public awareness. The achievements are, however, modest and limited to contributions to the SEMLA website.

6.2 Participation and pilot projects

One of the important objectives set in the strategy on public awareness, and also in the SPO, is enhancing the participation of communities in decision making and monitoring process of environmental management and land administration. A number of pilot projects have contributed to this objective through information points at local level in several provinces, through workshops on public awareness and communication strategy, etc. Overall, however, activities and achievements related to this objective are quite modest at both national and provincial levels.

It is a good idea to have pilots with information points aspiring at increasing awareness and knowledge of local people on environmental and land management. However, improved knowledge does not automatically lead to participation in decision making and monitoring processes. More efforts should be required from SEMLA as “pioneers” in promoting participation. Genuine participation of local people will hardly be achieved without initiatives to create an enabling environment for participation via setting up an institutional mechanism at lower level (village, communes), via regulations and practical guidance on how to participate, on how to involve local people in the monitoring process, in streamlining procedures, etc.

The objective of supporting public participation in decision making and monitoring processes of environment management and land administration should be viewed from a wider perspective, and not only in pilot activities of the public awareness component. For instance, the public participation approach developed by SEMLA for the integrated land use planning is an example of such application of public participation in real decision making. These approaches are recommended to be applied more systematically in all activities where possible and it requires more contributions from the public awareness TAG, who should take the lead in communication work.

6.3 Public awareness raising

So far SEMLA, at both national level and provincial level, has worked with public awareness raising through mass media and leaflets introducing SEMLA and introducing the rights and obligations of users on land and environment. Competitions at community level have also been arranged. This has been useful but there is room for continued development of new and more effective approaches for public awareness and communication in order to achieve changes in behaviour. The conventional methods are not sufficient to promote behavioural changes and changes of attitudes among the staff. The SAT/ESD therefore recommends SEMLA to introduce more innovative approaches to promote a real change of the service delivery capacity within natural resources and environment through the pilot projects. Among others, the following should be considered:

SEMLA should, based on the strategy, further clarify which are the prioritised target groups for public awareness raising – is it NRE staff or the communities or both. The balance between mass communication and inter-personal communication can be improved. More priority should be given to direct communication, i.e. consultation and meetings in villages and hamlets, door-to-door information, which is a more effective way to reach target groups in communities

Accurate information about the rights of local people in accessing services from the local government in relation to land and environment management should also be incorporated into the efforts. In this way, pressure for better local governance and improved transparency and accountability in the services delivery system can increase. Introducing the rights of citizens to information about services they are entitled to, i.e. “a rights-based approach” to PAR, is strongly recommended to be introduced and mainstreamed in operations of public awareness in the coming years of implementation.

So far, SEMLA has been working with a number of activities to promote the rights to information by increased capacity at national and provincial level to address the need for information. However, the approach should be enlarged to cover interventions to promote the practice of the rights of the public and ordinary people. This is very important work, especially in the current context where complaints on land issues get more and more serious. The rights of land users on their own land are well described in many SEMLA documents. But in the many messages delivered from the public awareness and communication component of SEMLA, the SAT/ESD finds no message, or activity, that encourages or guides how the ordinary people or the community can claim their rights to information and their rights to better and good services.

Public awareness raising with focus on activities such as strengthening the existing information systems and channels, training and information, and practical tools require a strong linkage with other components and activities of SEMLA. It is important to link public awareness and communication efforts and combine them with other SEMLA activities, whenever possible. In this way public awareness raising will become more efficient since they are based on other important issues. For instance, land use planning can integrate information activities regarding land and environmental management issues.

6.4 Cross-cutting aspects

6.4.1 Gender aspects

Gender aspects are taken into consideration in the implementation of a number of activities but are not specifically mainstreamed in the operational plan. There is room for more direct gender activities of different kinds, both in regards to women’s right to land and property, for environmental improvements and for strengthening career opportunities of women in the MONRE organization.

6.4.2 HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS issues have been attended to through the publication of a leaflet.

Appendix I.2 SEMLA Planning, M&E and MIS Systems

1 Summary

Both Sida and the Government of Vietnam have committed themselves to the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach to project and programme management. This approach makes specific demands on Planning, Management Information Systems (MIS) and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems in all Sida-supported programmes in Vietnam, including SEMLA. For this reason repeated reference is made to RBM principles in the following discussion.

SEMLA has developed effective planning and MIS systems, based on the Log-Frame Analysis (LFA) structure of programme objectives. Operational plans, and both physical and financial progress/status reports, conform to the LFA structure. This ensures compliance (at the inputs and outputs levels) with the requirement of RBM that the chain of causation between programme interventions and programme results should be clear and verifiable. Timely periodic reports are prepared, with the main presentations again based on the LFA structure. A few cases were found where some text sections of the reports did not conform to this structure, which on enquiry was found to be because the relevant implementing groups did not feel sufficiently confident about LFA concepts. *Familiarisation/ refresher training in use of the LFA approach would help in this case.*

The situation is less satisfactory in evaluation at the Outcomes and Goal levels. This is largely (but not entirely) due to shortcomings in the LFA. The original SEMLA Log-Frame established a satisfactory hierarchy of project interventions and results, which has been successfully used to structure plans and MIS reports, but it lacked most of the other normal elements of an LFA. Specifically, it did not include Indicators of achievement of the results, Means of Verification (MoV) for measuring the indicators, or the Risks/Assumptions governing the translation of outputs into the desired outcomes. Indicators and MoV at Outcomes level have been developed by the SEMLA M&E group during the inception and implementation periods, and a first evaluation report using these has been produced. However, the indicator structures and coding adopted do not match the Log-Frame structure, and the indicators used are (deliberately) selective rather than comprehensive. Consequently there is loss of transparency in assessing the results of the project activities, a violation of RBM principles. *A review and reconciliation of the Log-Frame and outcome indicators should have top priority for improvement of the M&E system.*

The outcome indicators currently used focus almost entirely on capacity development in MoNRE/ DoNRE. While this is an extremely important aspect of SEMLA outcomes, *attention should also be given to outcomes at grassroots level* (communes and individuals participating in SEMLA programmes), in line with the SEMLA guiding principle of Participation. The measurement approaches for the current indicators rely heavily on self-assessment by the implementation teams, which is potentially a source of bias (even if unintentional). *If possible an element of independent assessment should be introduced.* The outcome indicators themselves, as actually reported, are in many cases diffuse and difficult to interpret. *The indicators used for analysis and reporting should be streamlined by extracting specific unambiguous measurements;* supplementary detail, where necessary, should be reported in a separate section.

The M&E system at present does not cover the Goal level of SEMLA. The ultimate Goal as defined by the Programme Document is poverty alleviation, with the land-losing poor as the main beneficiaries. Direct measurement of SEMLA's contribution to poverty alleviation is probably not possible during SEMLA's implementation period, if at all, due to the slow maturation of impacts at this level and the many confounding influences caused by Vietnam's rapid economic growth. However, at a minimum *SEMLA should be evaluated in terms of the conformity of its interventions to the Guiding Principles laid down in the Programme Document.*

Treatment of Risks and Assumptions is currently weak in SEMLA planning and M&E. RBM principles require continuous monitoring of the extent to which governing assumptions for programme success are fulfilled. *A fresh review should be carried out of the Risks and Assumptions affecting SEMLA, especially the sustainability and replication of its interventions, and indicators for measuring the Risks and Assumptions should be developed and monitored.*

Sida's aspiration for SEMLA's Planning/MIS/M&E systems is that they should not only serve the programme's immediate needs, but they should also be suitable for MoNRE to use as models throughout its operations. *The Planning and MIS systems are close to meeting the standard required for replication in other MoNRE operations, subject to completion of successful operations (and de-bugging where required) over the next Fiscal Year. The M&E system at Outcomes level and above is currently not suitable for replication, due to the weaknesses noted above.*

A short extension to SEMLA would be beneficial for disseminating the Planning and MIS systems to MoNRE. An extension would be essential for disseminating the M&E system, in view of the amount of work required before it is fully fit for replication. Further international TA support should be provided both for revision of the M&E system, and for dissemination of the systems to other MoNRE departments and projects/programmes.

2 The M&E Requirement

SEMLA's objectives for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation are covered by National Component N3, with the following subsidiary objectives:

- N31 Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Management Information System
- N311 Successful programme planning
- N312 Effective monitoring and evaluation system established and running
- N313 Management information system established and running

These requirements are to be fulfilled within the framework provided by the SEMLA Programme Document and the policy guidelines of Sida and the Government of Vietnam, including specifically the Hanoi Declaration of 2005.

Results-Based Management and the Log-Frame

Sida is committed to the use of the 'Results Based Management' (RBM) approach for its projects and programmes, including SEMLA, and the Government of Vietnam has fully subscribed to this approach in approving the Hanoi Core Statement of 2005. The SEMLA M&E system must therefore support RBM, and for this reason much of the following discussion follows the Log-Frame levels from Inputs and Outputs up to the programme Goal.

Like any effective management system, RBM requires:

- a coherent and transparent *results chain*, where the effect of success or failure at one level can be clearly seen at the next higher level; and
- a clear relationship between desired results and their associated indicators.

RBM as practiced by Sida also emphasises the higher levels of results – outcomes and impacts – rather than outputs²³. A well-constructed Log-Frame is the most effective tool for achieving these aims. At present the SEMLA Log-Frame does not fulfil this requirement. The Log-Frame itself contains no Indicators, Means of Verification or Risks/Assumptions, and the vertical logic (the results chain in RBM terminology) does not clearly link activities to outcomes or outcomes to purpose and goal.

²³ Ref. "Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management", Sida 2007.

The Log-Frame deficiencies have been remedied, in part, by incorporating indicators in the Annual Planning and Impact Monitoring systems, but this has been done piecemeal and has not been reflected in an overhaul of the Log-Frame itself. The latter is now urgently needed. In particular, the indicators do not directly reflect the intervention structure; they should correspond, one-for-one, with the interventions specified in the Log-Frame, which they do not at present. From the SEMLA M&E Strategy it appears that this was at least partly a conscious decision, based on the principle of focusing attention on a subset of indicators which could show general trends. That, however, does not meet the requirements of RBM. In particular, there is a need to re-examine the rationale for the division of evaluation indicators between Institutional and Organisational Capacity Building, which does not conform to the Log-Frame structure. Either the Log-Frame structure, or the indicator set, or both, should be revised until they match each other and reflect the actual structure of SEMLA implementation.

Treatment of Risks and Assumptions

The treatment of Risks and Assumptions is critical in a learning and piloting programme, and their absence in the present Log-Frame is a serious weakness. An intervention (e.g. capacity building or a pilot project) that is successful in itself may not be sustainable or suitable for replication if that depends on non-valid assumptions (e.g. about post-SEMLA levels of skills and resources, or the socio-economic environment outside the pilot area). A proper treatment of risks/assumptions requires that they are monitored in parallel with the project results. To quote one source on RBM, this involves "... a regular scanning of the environment in which the program/project is operating to determine whether the necessary conditions for success remain present"²⁴. The first step should be a careful appraisal of Risks/Assumptions for all Log-Frame activities and outcomes, and specification of Indicators and Means of Verification for whether the assumptions are met. This should be done as part of a general review of the Log-Frame (see above).

Log-Frame Review Process

A Log-Frame should not be regarded as a rigid framework incapable of amendment. The present SEMLA Log-Frame was approved by the PSB as long ago as October 2005, after an extensive consultative process²⁵. That was well before the start of implementation, and it would be normally be expected that operational experience during implementation would reveal needs for modification, at least on points of detail. Possibly the difficulty of repeating the consultation and approval process has deterred project management and the M&E group from making revisions, including the incorporation of the missing Log-Frame components. Nevertheless, the Log-Frame should be subject to regular review, preferably integrated with the annual planning cycle. Consultation on revisions could be incorporated in SEMLA's annual planning workshops.

3 Levels of Monitoring and Evaluation

3.1 Monitoring at Inputs and Outputs Levels – The MIS

An MIS is the bottom tier of a project/programme information system and should be seen as integral with M&E at the higher levels. In particular, under the RBM approach the MIS should conform with the log-frame structure so that the chain of causation can be established right down to inputs level (e.g. identifying whether slow implementation was due to lack of funds or staff). The SEMLA Programme document specifies that:

"The MIS must provide the type of information that is useful for learning and management. For this reason, the MIS has to mirror the LFA (logframe) of the programme as a whole, and for each of the projects included in the programme." SEMLA Programme Document, p.82

²⁴ "Results-Based Management in CIDA", <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicida.nsf/En/EMA-218132656-PPK#1>, section 4.3

²⁵ Project Management and Implementation Manual, Chapter 10 p.4

The MIS as implemented conforms to the requirement for log-frame conformity for both inputs (financial) and outputs monitoring.

The MIS is functioning well, in terms of producing periodic reports and progress updates. Most TAGs and Provincial teams seem to find the Log-Frame structure for activity reporting reasonably friendly, but there are exceptions (notably the EM TAG); familiarisation/ refresher workshops on log-frame concepts might help.

The MIS relies on two main software packages, MS Project for physical progress monitoring and Bravo for financial monitoring. Bravo appears well suited for its purpose. The use of MS Project as has both strengths and weaknesses. The clear graphic output and ability to conform to LF structure is a plus, but it seems that it encourages a simplistic measurement of “progress” in terms of completed task-days. This is not a very useful indicator in itself, and it reinforces the tendency in SEMLA towards an excessively target-driven approach.

3.2 Evaluation at Outcomes Level

Although there is a clear requirement to conduct evaluation at Purpose and Goal level (see below) the need for effective and coherent evaluation systems is most pressing at Outcomes levels, where measurable results are hoped for within the life of SEMLA, with potential for informing programme redirection if necessary. This is also where problems with the present log-frame are concentrated.

Without pre-judging the issues around programme targeting and evaluation focus at Goal level (see below), the lower levels (in log-frame terms) of M&E must focus on process and results in capacity-building of MoNRE/DoNRE and their partners. The latter will nevertheless include local people at commune and village level provided the SEMLA Guiding Principle of Participation (see below) is observed. The present focus of evaluation systems and indicators is indeed on MoNRE/DoNRE processes, but does not cover grassroots partners. This is in part because outcomes at grassroots level occur mainly within the Provincial pilot projects, where evaluation has tended to concentrate on physical achievement (basically, the Outputs level) rather than on outcomes. Specific issues relating to evaluation of pilot projects are considered in section *** below.

SEMLA has developed and operationalised an M&E system which has succeeded in delivering an initial impact evaluation report at the end of the first year of implementation. That demonstrates a creditable level of aspiration in M&E, even though report itself was probably produced too early in the implementation period to for most of the desired impacts to be measurable. The collection, analysis and reporting exercise for the first cycle is probably best regarded as a large-scale and real-time system test.

However, M&E operations can be made more effective. A number of problems stem from the weakness of the original Log-Frame, which should be the foundation-stone of the M&E system, especially under an RBM management system with its emphasis on tracing the chain of causality. Problems in retrospectively setting indicators appropriate to the different Log-Frame levels have been noted above. This is particularly apparent at the impacts (outcomes) level. The impact indicators used in the first evaluation report adopt a division between Institutional Capacity Building and Organisational Capacity Building, but this is not a good match to the Log-Frame structure and so far only tentative attempts have been made to rectify the situation (Annex 3 of the first cycle evaluation report attempts to match the impact indicators against LFA objectives, but this if anything emphasises the extent of the mis-match). The result is a lack of the transparent chain of causation required for and RBM approach.

A further problem is that the impact indicator set was consciously restricted to a subset of objectives; to quote the M&E Strategy:

“Measuring the Performance Indicators will provide “indications” of change and trends in impacts of the programme, not an all-encompassing picture of all results of the SEMLA programme.” (PMIM Chapter 10, Appendix 4)

This clearly has advantages in minimising the amount of data to be collected and reported, but runs counter to RBM requirements for verification of causation. For genuinely results-based management, the M&E system must answer the question “If not, why not?” which implies comprehensive coverage. A systematic review of the Log-Frame and indicators aimed at structural alignment and fuller coverage would be a major step in improving the M&E system.

There is also room for improvement in the specific impact indicators used and the way they are measured. The M&E Strategy indicates that the indicator set was developed participatorily with the implementing groups in SEMLA. This has major advantages in terms of ownership of results and, hopefully, willingness to accept and act on negative findings. However, it has led to an almost exclusive focus on capacity-building in DoNRE/MoNRE. Bearing in mind the guiding principle that a participatory approach should be followed in SEMLA

implementation, capacity building at grassroots level should also be measured, even at outcomes (initial impacts) level. The participatory approach appears also, in some cases, to have led to adoption of so-called impact indicators that reflect only low-level processes. An example is objective N12 “Development, revision and finalization of an Environmental Protection Law”. The stated indicator for this is “Staff capacity in legal drafting ...”.

The measurement of indicators and the analysis of findings needs to be strengthened. The existing measurement approach relies almost entirely on self-assessment by staff in the implementing groups/organisations; for evaluation (e.g. in the first cycle Evaluation Report) these assessments are compared to baseline data compiled by the groups during the Inception Period. While self-assessment will strengthen ownership of the findings, it is risky to rely on it exclusively when there are many forces that might induce respondents to consciously or unconsciously bias the results. An element of independent assessment would greatly strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Regarding analysis of findings, the present level is excessively verbal and diffuse, to the point that it is sometimes difficult to determine whether an impact is claimed and if so, what it is. This stems in part from the original baseline information which is often vague and wordy. As an example, indicator NIC1 for the Land Administration TAG requires a measurement to determine the question “Have environmental aspects been incorporated into: detailed strategies for Land Use Planning; Land Registration; Land Valuation; Real Estate Market Development.” The resulting “measurement” consists of three paragraphs totalling 120 words, which still fail to answer the question. The 2007 evaluation measurement intended to answer the same question is even longer. The excessive verbosity in part results from heavy reliance on tabular presentation; greater clarity would be achieved if much of the explanatory detail (which accounts for the length of the quoted examples) were confined to footnotes or a text commentary. However, quite apart from this, attention should be given to extracting from the baseline data clear and concise measurements that match the indicator, and to ensuring that subsequent evaluation data meet the same standard.

3.3 Evaluation at Goal Level

The PMIM makes the following definition of SEMLA’s M&E activities:

“Evaluation is the internal periodic assessment of programme impacts in terms of the achievement of the programme Goals and Component Objectives.” (PMIM Ch. 10, p.8)

Notwithstanding the position this statement grants to Goal-level evaluation, in practice this level has been largely ignored in the M&E system so far developed.

Focus of Goal Level Evaluation

Project/programme evaluation at Goal level depends critically on definition of the ultimate group which is the target of the interventions. For SEMLA the clearest statements on this are in the original Programme Document of 2004, which states:

“The main beneficiaries of the programme are *rural and urban poor households*, which are land users, including women and ethnic minorities, especially by strengthening the land use rights, the provision of land related services to these households, as well as mitigating the hazards from pollution natural resources degradation. Indirect beneficiaries are the staff at all levels of the MoNRE/DoNRE land and environmental administrative system in selected provinces.” SEMLA Programme Document 2004, p.vii [Reviewer’s emphasis]

From examination of later documents from the M&E system, the Mission has concluded that the definition of poor households as primary beneficiaries has been lost sight of in the M&E system, possibly reflecting the situation in the SEMLA programme as a whole.

The causal logic of SEMLA dictates that benefits (in terms of higher capacity and developed approaches) have to be delivered to Land Administration and Environment staff before the population at large can benefit. The current focus on MoNRE/DoNRE staff is therefore understandable, even though they are only indirect beneficiaries in the longer perspective. However, it is essential, during the remainder of the programme, to restore a focus on the direct beneficiaries.

Criteria for Evaluation at Goal Level – the SEMLA Guiding Principles

The Programme Document also states a set of Guiding Principles for conduct of SEMLA, as shown in Table 1, and sets out the linkage between the principles and the programme implementation, through the Development Objective. The Development Objective is stated as:

“A Natural Resource and Environmental Management (NREM) that contributes to economic growth and poverty alleviation, sustainable development and environmental protection, strengthening local governance and participation of the population in decision making processes and the management of resources, in order to meet the demands and needs in an efficient and equitable way.

The development objective links the programme to the basic principles. It will be monitored in its achievement to contribute to these principles.”SEMLA Programme Document 2004, p.xi

The phrasing of the Development Objective was changed slightly in the final version included in the PMIM Log-Frame, but all the key points are the same. The important issue for M&E is the requirement to monitor the degree to which the programme contributes to/complies with these principles. Notwithstanding the implication that several different indicators will be required (at least one per Guiding Principle), this represents the Goal level of evaluation for SEMLA.

Table 1 also tentatively specifies some impact indicators for this level. As is typical in evaluation at the Goal level, some of the indicators will be long-maturing and difficult to measure with confidence during the lifetime of the programme. However, the proposed indicators are broadly suitable for evaluation at this level and most of the measurement problems can be overcome or circumvented. SEMLA should therefore prepare to undertake the necessary data collection and analysis towards the end of the second half of the programme. This could be done either by the M&E group, or by a suitable external contractor if the group is too heavily committed to M&E at lower levels of the Log-Frame.

The following notes attempt to offer some guidance on the relative importance of the proposed Goal-level indicators and some solutions to their associated measurement problems:

Poverty Alleviation is the core Goal-level indicator, demonstrating SEMLA’s contribution to National strategy objectives. The indicators suggested in the Programme Document do not directly address poverty alleviation as such, but focus on SEMLA impacts that are likely to contribute to poverty alleviation. This is wise; Vietnam’s highly dynamic economy currently contains so many influences for growth that it will be impossible to measure directly SEMLA’s contribution to poverty alleviation, especially given the short time-frame of the programme. Even for the proposed indicators, the direct impact of

SEMLA will be small within the programme life, due to the small number of Provinces in which SEMLA operates at local level and the long lead-time for measurable benefits from National-level interventions. However, provided that impacts can be shown to have occurred in the Provinces where SEMLA has sponsored interventions, then it will be legitimate to predict similar benefits in other Provinces in due course (provided that the assumption of sustained support and resources from GoV remains valid). To produce the necessary evidence of impact will require:

- Targeted data collection from people who have potentially been in a position to benefit from SEMLA's interventions (e.g. people in Districts where SEMLA has supported Land Administration improvements, people in Districts where integrated Land Use and Environmental Planning has been carried out); and
- Estimates of the total population which can benefit from replication of SEMLA's interventions. Such estimates should be conservatively based (e.g. limited at least initially to the SEMLA Provinces) and should take due note of the vital assumptions regarding continued support and resources.

Table 1. Programme Principles

Tentative Impact Indicators	
Poverty Alleviation	
The new programme will contribute to alleviating poverty in Vietnam, as defined in the GoV Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy.	* Improved land security for ordinary people, small holders, poor people in the selected programme areas * Improved living and working conditions, and reduced exposure to pollution and harmful chemicals for workers, farmers, poor people
Participation	
The programme will promote active participation of the population in decisionmaking processes and in the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of activities and the results of the programme. The programme will, where necessary and relevant pay specific attention to gender and equity issues and factors disabling specific groups to participate or benefit (including attention to the impact of HIV/AIDS)	* Ordinary people in the selected programme areas have increasingly been, and will continue to be, involved in environmental, land, and landuse related programme and development activities. * Specific efforts have been, and will continue to be, made to ensure equal opportunities to participate
Cooperation	
The programme will address programme issues across the mandates of individual institutions, fostering and supporting cooperation and coordination between immediate stakeholders and other relevant institutions	* Stakeholders inside and beyond the MoNRE/DoNRE institutions, will have been, and will continue to be involved in programme supported activities and areas
Decentralisation	
Through its implementation strategies, the programme will support effective decentralisation and devolution of decision making and implementation responsibility to provinces and lower level authorities, as well as to the private sector	* Lower local government levels in selected programme areas will have increased opportunity and capacity to manage natural resources, and to take a leading role in landuse planning in their specific areas
Integration	
In order to promote sustainable livelihoods and the quality of living conditions, the programme will support an integrative approach to the use of natural resources, using comprehensive, interrelating analysis in the planning and implementation of development activities	* MoNRE/DoNRE, and People's Committees (PCs) in the selected provinces, districts, communes and wards are able to, and effectively do, plan and implement development activities in an integrative manner: a. address, among others, environmental, land, and land use issues; b. aim at achieving sustainable livelihoods and improved quality of living conditions

Source: SEMLA Programme Document 2004, p.vi

The remaining Guiding Principles govern the manner in which the poverty alleviation goal is to be achieved. They should nevertheless be given full weight since they represent the fulfilment, so far as SEMLA is concerned, of Government of Vietnam's commitment to the principles of the Hanoi Declaration. The indicators associated with these Principles are largely qualitative and can be handled descriptively, but this should not be allowed to reduce the rigour with which impacts are verified. The biggest problems will be in those indicators where increase or improvement over time is specified (Participation and Decentralisation). In principle this requires baseline data for the levels of participation and decentralisation in all SEMLA's main areas of intervention, which may not be available. However, for qualitative data (presence/absence of a condition, direction of change) a virtual or reconstructed baseline using informant recall is an adequate substitute.

4 Piloting – a Special M&E Focus

The following comments are based on observation of a selection of pilot projects and discussions with the concerned staff in the Provinces visited by the Mission, on reading of SEMLA's September 2007 report on pilot project status²⁶, and on discussion with the SEMLA M&E Group in Hanoi. It is probable that in the remaining portion of the programme piloting will have a lower emphasis, so that the comments are to some extent too late to have an influence on M&E practice. However, it is arguable that most if not all SEMLA activities have a pilot aspect, and

In piloting a new procedure or technique, it is important that the pilot achieves a satisfactory result (otherwise it cannot be judged fit for replication) but the physical output of an individual project is much less important than the development of a proven model which can be replicated. It appears that in many cases the thinking of staff implementing pilots has been dominated by achieving the physical output, in accordance with a specified implementation schedule. The latter is particularly inappropriate; in piloting, the depth of learning, not the speed of implementation, should be the criterion of success.

Pilot projects should be clearly identified as learning process, with an Output of a proven model with guidelines, staff skills etc. for replication. This should be explicit in the Log-Frame and progress reporting, and plans for pilot implementation should explicitly include continuous process documentation throughout the pilot and a formal evaluation and production (or updating) of a model for replication with appropriate guideline. Implementation processes for piloting should be tailored to facilitate achievement of this outcome (process documentation, and detailed evaluation of pilots on completion).

A series of evaluations of the first twenty pilots has been completed and is documented in the status report, but these evaluations focus largely on completion of the implementation process, not on the learning function. Evaluation of the pilots should explicitly include the desired model/replication outcome; some of the evaluations in the Pilots Evaluation report do so, but by no means all. Even the ones that do so, do not make an explicit evaluation of the strength of the model and its fitness for replication.

The effectiveness of piloting would be greatly increased by cross-project comparisons and exchanges of experiences where possible, e.g. an evaluation workshop for all pilots on integration of LUP and Environment. Currently this is partly addressed by technical sessions convened by the concerned TAGs during the Quarterly Progress workshops. Consideration should be given to giving the M&E group a formal role in these sessions, and to formalising the output in terms of a code of 'best practice' for each type of intervention piloted.

²⁶ "Pilot Projects and Strategic Expansion Fund Projects, Status Up To The End Of August 2007", SEMLA September 2007

Appendix II.1 Terms of Reference

1 Background

A Mid-term Review (MTR) of the SEMLA Programme will be held by November 2007 between the Government of Vietnam (represented by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, other relevant ministries and agencies, as well as the six provinces participating in the cooperation) and Sida (represented by the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi).

Following the overall Specific Agreement for the cooperation, the focus of the meeting is to review the general performance of the SEMLA programme and to analyse if there are any structural problems hampering its implementation. The MTR may recommend changes in relation to the organisational set-up, operational procedures and the overall budget of the programme (Article 12, para 8.).

At the MTR the parties also need to discuss and agree upon guidelines for the planning and budgeting for coming years and the possible revision of the steering documents for the cooperation. The utilisation of the Expansion fund of the programme shall also be discussed. Further, the parties shall discuss the experiences and learning from the programme in relation to the development of the NRE-sector during the present five year planning period (2006 – 2010). Finally, the parties shall discuss the possibility of entering into the initial planning of a continued Swedish financial support to the NRE-sector as from mid 2009.

A draft Terms of Reference for the MTR of the SEMLA programme has been discussed between the parties, but will be decided upon later in this autumn.

2 Mid-term Evaluation

According to the Specific agreement of the SEMLA programme, an external Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) of the programme as a whole shall be undertaken during 2007. The MTE shall serve as an input to MTR and thus have to be undertaken well in advance of the meeting. The MTE is scheduled to be undertaken during October 2007.

The MTE shall focus on the overall performance of the SEMLA programme. Structural problems experienced during the implementation of the different components of the programme shall also be highlighted. Further, the MTE needs to take into account how the programme has adjusted to new policy initiatives of the GoV, such as the inclusion of the environmental sustainable development as an integral part of the SEDP, the adoption of a new and comprehensive legal framework for the NRE-sector, institutional changes of environmental responsibilities within the GoV, etc. Finally, the MTE needs to look into how the Hanoi Core Statement on harmonisation and aid effectiveness has been addressed by the programme.

The MTE is meant to be an external and independent assessment of the SEMLA programme. The MTE is thus proposed to be undertaken as a first assignment of the Sida Advisory Team for follow-up of the Swedish financed programmes for environmental sustainable development. The SAT/ESD will be procured by Sida and the Embassy through competitive bidding during July–August 2007.

The SAT/ESD shall visit Vietnam during 4 weeks in October in order to assist the parties in assessment of the SEMLA programme by its mid-term. The SAT will carry out its assignment during the first mission to Vietnam according to this specific Terms of Reference. Applicable parts of the general Terms of Reference for the SAT dated 29 June 2007 are also referred to and will apply.

3 General Guidelines, Scope of the Assignment and Duties of the SAT/ESD

Section 2 “Country Background” of the general ToR for the SAT/ESD will apply. The general ToR provides basic background information about the NRE-sector and the SEMLA programme and its different components, partners, budgets etc.

Information about environmental sustainable development in Vietnam and the NRE-sector in particular can be found on the home-pages of MPI (www.mpi.gov.vn) and MoNRE (www.monre.gov.vn).

As for detailed information about the SEMLA cooperation such as Strategic Plans of Operation and annual and quarterly progress report of the SEMLA programme during its implementation phase, reference is made to the home-page of the programme (www.semla.org.vn)

Section 3.1 “Purpose and objectives” of the overall assignment of the general ToR for the SAT/ESD shall apply.

Section 3.2 “Scope of work” of the overall assignment of the general ToR for the SAT/ESD will apply.

The SAT/ESD shall work as an independent team, but receive guide-lines from MoNRE and the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi for the assignment. The views expressed and the recommendations made by the SAT shall however be those of the team and shall not be regarded as emanating from or binding upon the parties.

Section 3.3 “Duties” especially sub-sections 3.3.1 - 2 of the general ToR for the SAT/ESD will apply.

4 In-depth Studies

The SAT/ESD shall during its first mission undertake a number of in-depth studies as an input to the MTR of the SEMLA programme. The studies shall focus on the overall performance of the programme in relation to its steering documents, the main objectives of the cooperation, the updated LFA, etc. In this respect relevant GoV and Sida policies as regards environmental sustainable development and the reduction of poverty shall also be compared with.

The MTR studies shall especially focus on the following five aspects of the cooperation:

- Assessment of the achievements and progress of the National and Provincial components of the programme in relation to its stated objectives, strategic plans and outcomes. The review shall in this respect look into how the different components have strengthened an integrated NRE-administration and built capacity as regards environment sustainable development.
- Assessment of the achievements and progress of the National component, including its function to bring back lessons learned from the provincial components to the central level in order to influence the formulation of new policies, approaches and methods for environmental sustainable development in Vietnam.
- Assessment of the appropriateness, functioning and understanding (by different stakeholders) of the purpose of the Expansion fund. The review shall in this respect also generally comment on the relevance of the projects selected for funding and the achievements made as regards the projects so far.
- Assessment of the effectiveness of the systems for M&E and MIS, as well as the functioning of the manual for programme implementation, management and planning.
- Assessment of the relevance and quality of various main reports and plans prepared by the programme for the MTR, such as the Annual Report for 2006, the draft Mid-term report, draft Strategic Plan of Operations of various components for remaining years (2008 – 2009) of the cooperation.

5 Synthesis Report

The SAT/ESD shall, based on the above mentioned in-depth studies and other reviews proposed as part of the offer be the selected company, undertake a performance and results assessment, as well as a risk assessment of the SEMLA programme by its third year of implementation. The review shall include a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the main achievements from past years of implementation of the programme. In this assessment the following aspects shall be addressed and be included in the main report synthesising the findings of the evaluation of the SEMLA programme by its mid-term.

- The relevance of the SEMLA programme taking into account national development policies, strategies and priorities of the two governments. As for Sweden, the Swedish goals for development cooperation in general (as reflected in the various Sida policy documents), and specific goals for Swedish development cooperation with Vietnam, as outlined in the present Cooperation strategy shall be taken into account.
- The effectiveness of the SEMLA programme and its components in achieving its overall goals and immediate objectives of the cooperation by its mid-term. The review shall in this respect also take into account the quality and timing of the financial and personnel resources made available by both Sida and the GoV to the cooperation.
- The effectiveness of the SEMLA programme in promoting new policies and approaches for environmental sustainable development in Vietnam, both in relation to the overall SEDP and NRE sector-plan, as well as new donor financed environmental development projects. In this respect the promotion of relevant parts of the Hanoi Core Statement for harmonised development and improved aid effectiveness shall also be taken into account.
- The over-all cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the programme.
- The building of institutional capacity in GoV institutions and partner organisations that enables a continued national ownership of the strategic vision, monitoring and reporting of the results in relation to the objectives of the programme and its components.
- The ownership and national execution of the cooperation, including the general performance of the management and implementation functions of the programme at large and within its components.
- The management of internal and external risks by the Steering Board of the SEMLA programme and it's National Office at MoNRE. The assessment of the financial management shall be based on the external annual and special (internal) audits undertaken by KPMG, Vietnam and MoNRE respectively.
- The effectiveness of the delivery of the Consultancy services to the SEMLA programme by Ramboll, Natura during the first years of the implementation phase of the programme. The assessment shall also include recommendations on how to best organise the continued delivery of technical assistance to the programme during remaining years of the cooperation.
- The feasibility and effectiveness of the institutional cooperation between SEPA/KemI and VEPA and MoI respectively.

6 Recommendations for Discussion at the MTR

The SAT/ESD shall advice the parties on the future scope and direction of the individual components of the SEMLA programme. The Synthesis report shall thus include a chapter with recommendations on measures to overcome possible obstacles, and if needed, suggestions on how to improve the performance of the programme, as well as the various components and individual projects.

Issues for discussions at the MTR are for example:

- The focus and direction of the SEMLA cooperation during its final years of implementation
- The need for revision of the steering documents for the cooperation
- The need for adjustments of the objectives, organisation etc. of the programme at large and as regards its different components
- The need for re-allocation of budget resources within the programme, taking into account for example present imbalances between the various components of the programme, new policies and initiatives by the GoV, new needs for technical assistance, etc.
- The need for and possibility of a short-term extension of the programme in order to consolidate and terminate the present cooperation
- Priorities for the continued use of the Expansion fund of the programme
- The focus and organisation of continued technical assistance to the programme and its different components, including the need for additional funding of TA by the Consultant during remaining years.
- The focus and funding of continued institutional cooperation, as well as the preparation for a possible new form of cooperation between the involved institutions
- Arrangements for improved coordination between the SEMLA programme and other donor funded programmes in years to come.
- Planning for a possible continuation of Swedish assistance to the NRE-sector focusing on environmental sustainable development.

7 Additional Tasks

Section 3.3.4 “Miscellaneous tasks” will apply. The team-leader and selected members of the SAT/ESD may be asked to participate in the MTR for presentation of the findings of the evaluation team.

8 Composition of the Team

Relevant parts of Section 6 “Profile of the Consultant and Staffing requirements” will apply.

9 Reporting

The SAT/ESD shall before ending its mission in Vietnam present its main findings, conclusions and recommendations in a draft Summary Report (e.g. as a Power point presentation). The report shall be presented to the Embassy of Sweden and MoNRE in Hanoi during a de-briefing meeting to which representatives of the SEMLA programme also will be invited.

A written report, preferably presented as the draft Executive Summary of the main report, shall be prepared and presented to the Embassy within one week after the mission has left Vietnam. The report will be shared with MoNRE and representatives of the programme for information and comments.

A draft main report of the SAT shall be presented in English and Vietnamese to the parties before the MTR (as hard copy and in electronic form). The report may be presented at the MTR by the team-leader of the SAT/ESD. The draft main report shall be finalised within two weeks after receiving comments from the parties.

Appendix II.2 Meeting Schedule Mid-Term Review Mission

Hanoi, Nghe An, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, and Ha Giang, 1–25 October 2007

Date/Time	Meeting	Team Members
	Team Leader	Henny Andersen = HA
	Environmental Management	Bach Tan Sinh = BTS
	Socio-economics	Dao Ngoc Nga = DNN
	M&E	Mike Daplyn = MD
	Capacity Building	Paul Schuttenbelt = PS
	Land Administration (Deputy Team Leader)	Tommy Österberg =TÖ
Monday 1 Oct		
9.00	Embassy of Sweden: Mr Rolf Samuelsson	HA
10.30	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency: Ms Karin Dunér (venue: Embassy of Sweden)	HA
13.30	National Programme Office (NPO): Mr Hoc and Mr Huan	HA
Tuesday 2 Oct		
10.00	Team internal meeting	
14.00	SEMLA Programme NPO: Mr Per Bertilsson and Mr Hoc	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
Wednesday 3 Oct		
8.30	a) SEMLA Programme NPO: M&E/MIS staff	HA/DNN/MD
	b) ELIS TAG	BTS/PS/TÖ
13.30	Programme Steering Board, standing members and key members	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
Thursday 4 Oct		
8.30	a) LA TAG	MD/TÖ
	b) PA TAG	HA/DNN/PS
13.30	a) MPR TAG	MD/PS/TÖ
	b) International Cooperation Department	HA/DNN
Friday 5 Oct		
9.00	MoIT Special Component	HA/BTS/DNN
10.20	Chief Accountant and NPO	HA/TÖ
13.30	a) CB TAG	DNN/MD/PS
	b) EM TAG	HA/BTS/TÖ
Saturday 6 Oct		
11.00	Embassy of Sweden: Mr Rolf Samuelsson	HA
Sunday 7 Oct		
13.00	Travel from Hanoi to Vinh	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
Monday 8 Oct		
8.00	SEMLA Nghe An Programme Management Board	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
13.30	Nghe An DoNRE and SEMLA Programme Management Board	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
Tuesday 9 Oct		
7:30	Field visit to pilot district/commune	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
Wednesday 10 Oct		
07.30	Travel Vinh-Hanoi	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
16.30	Team internal meeting	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ

Date/Time	Meeting	Team Members
Thursday 11 Oct		
8.00	a) VEPA	HA/BTS/TÖ
	b) NPO – M&E/MIS	MD
	c) NPO – CB	DNN/PS
13.30	EIA&A	BTS/DNN/TÖ
15.00	Chief Technical Adviser: Mr Per Bertilsson	HA/DNN/MD/TÖ
Friday 12 Oct		
08.00–17.00	Mid-Term Review Meeting	HA/TÖ
14.30–15.30	MARD	HA
Saturday 13 Oct		
09.00	Discussions with representatives from provinces	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
14.30	Team internal meeting	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
Sunday 14 Oct		
13.00	a) Travel from Hanoi to Ha Giang	DNN/MD/TÖ
	b) Travel from Hanoi to Ba Ria-Vung Tau	BTS/PS
Monday 15 Oct		
	a) Ha Giang SEMLA Province Management Board	DNN/MD/TÖ
	b) Ba Ria-Vung Tau SEMLA Province Management Board	BTS/PS
Tuesday 16 Oct		
	a) Field visit to pilot district/commune in Ha Giang	DNN/MD/TÖ
	b) Field visit to pilot district/commune in Ba Ria-Vung Tau	BTS/PS
Wednesday 17 Oct		
08.00	Travel to Hanoi from Ha Giang and BRVT respectively	BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
Thursday 18 Oct		
10.00	Team internal meeting	BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
Friday 19 Oct		
	Report writing	
Monday 22 Oct		
14.00	Team meeting to prepare debriefing	HA/BTS/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ
Tuesday 23 Oct		
10.00	Debriefing at Swedish Embassy	HA/DNN/MD/PS/TÖ

Appendix II.3 List of Key Documents Consulted

- Annex 1 (not indicated to which document): *Organization and Function of ISGE and Policy Dialogue Platform 2007–2010*.
- CIDA: *Results-Based Management in CIDA*, <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicida.nsf/En/EMA-218132656-PPK#1>, section 4.3.
- KPMG Vietnam (November 2005): *Sida. Strengthening Environmental Management and Land Administration Programme (“SEMLA”). Report on assessment of the Financial Management Guidelines of SEMLA*.
- KPMG Bohlins AB (June 2006): *The SEMLA Program. KPMG In-Depth Review 2*, Final Draft, Sweden.
- KPMG Bohlins AB (November 2006): *The SEMLA program*, Final Report, Sweden.
- MoNRE (August 2007): *Status Report for SEMLA Contribution to the MoNRE 2007 Public Administrative Reform Plan*, Hanoi.
- MoNRE (August 2007): *Status Report for SEMLA contribution to the Implementation of 5-Year Plan for National Resource and Environmental Sector 2006–2010*, Hanoi.
- Ramboll (September 2007): *Consultants Service Report. SEMLA Implementation Phase 1 July 2006 – 30 June 2007*, Final Draft.
- Regeringskansliet, UD: *Country Strategy for Development Cooperation. Vietnam. 1 January 2004 – 31 December 2008*, Stockholm.
- SEMLA (2004): *SEMLA Programme Document*.
- SEMLA: *Guidelines. Evaluation of pilot projects*, SEMLA Pilot Projects 2006–2007.
- SEMLA (March–April 2006): *Quality Assurance Mission 2*, Final Report for mission conducted from 27th March to 7th April, 2006.
- SEMLA (April 2006): *Programme Management and Implementation Manual*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (June 2006): *Strategic Plan of Operation and Organization of SEMLA Programme 2006–2009*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (July 2006): *Logical Framework & Strategic Plan of Operation 2006–2009*, SEMLA Programme documents – 2006/1, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (July 2006): *Final Completion Report*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (2006): *Strategy on Public Awareness Raising and Communication*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (January 2007): *Human Resource Development Strategy for the Natural Resources and Environment Sector from 2007–2010*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (February 2007): *SEMLA Strategy and Guidelines for Improving Land Registration*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (March 2007): *Overall Report on Integration of Land and Environment*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (March 2007): *Quality Assurance Mission 4*. Final Draft Report for Misison conducted from 5–16 March 2007. By Dr. Lill Lundgren and Dr. Marnie Laybourne.
- SEMLA (April 2007): *Progress and Financial Report. First Quarter 2007. Implementation Phase*, Ha giang.

- SEMLA (May 2007): *SIA Analysis of Land and Environment Management. Implications for a Participatory SIA approach in SEMLA*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (May 2007): *SEMLA quality Assurance Report. First Quarter 2007*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (June 2007): *Revision of Decree 91/2002/ND-CP of the Government regarding Functions, duties, Authority and Organisation of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment*, Thematic report by: Msc. Dang Xuan Phuong. In collaboration with experts from Department of Organisation and Personnel, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (July 2007): *Baseline report Organisational Capacity*, Draft.
- SEMLA (July 2007): *Plan of Operations 1.7.2006–31.12.2007*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (July 2007): *SEMLA Evaluation Report. For the first cycle of evaluation data collection. From 01/07/2006 up to 31/06/2007*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (August 2007): *Regulations on Information collection, Processing, and Dissemination*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (September 2007): *ILUP Pilots – Status and Current Lessons learned*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (September 2007): *Mid-Term Report. Covering period from 1st July 2006 to 30th June 2007*, Draft submitted to Sida, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (September 2007): *Pilot Projects and Strategic Expansion Fund Projects Status the End of August 2007*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (September 2007): *Progress and financial Report. Covering period from 1st January 2007 to 30th June 2007*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (October 2007): *Progress and Financial Report, Third Quarter 2007*, Hanoi.
- SEMLA (October 2007): *Summary Mid-Term Report. Covering period from 1st July 2006 to 30th June 2007*, Hanoi.
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