2010:03 Sida Review

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COOPERATION PROGRAMME BETWEEN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF VIETNAM AND THE SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY – MSCP 2005–2009

Sida

Cooperation Programme between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency – MSCP 2005–2009

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The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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1. Executive Summary

Programme start	July 2005	Programme completion	December 2009
Programme final Sida budget	SEK 42.5 million	Programme Sida budget approx US$	US$ 5 million

The MARD-Sida Cooperation Programme (MSCP) was intended to facilitate the implementation of the 2000–2010 Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) in line with the national socio-economic development plan 2006–2010. The Programme was specifically tasked with enhancing the capacity of MARD: for policy dialogue with donors; improved coordination of donor support by strengthening the partnerships under MARD's auspices: International Support Group (ISG), the Forestry Sector Support Programme (FSSP) and the Trust Fund for Forests (TFF) and the National Disaster Management Programme (NDMP); and developing the application of Sector-wide Programmes (SWAps) for agriculture and rural development. The emphasis on SWAps and resources for the TFF proved not to provide a viable route forward and the Programme was gradually reoriented towards technical assistance to MARD in the transformation of its functions to support decentralised and delegated service delivery and a socialist market economy committed to poverty alleviation. The Programme remained a loose collection of components with the resources devoted to developing partnerships never acquiring a real sense of direction and decreasing substantive involvement by Sida in the partnerships (at the same time Sida interest in the development of the technical assistance work remained strong throughout the life of the MSCP).

The MSCP has made a unique contribution in facilitating a process in MARD to develop a "vision" for the ministry. A process was undertaken, which for the first time in Vietnam, initiated a dialogue among senior managers on the future orientation of the ministry. In starting to develop a road map there was also a unique interchange amongst middle-level management representatives from other ministries concerned with the rural sector. This process will have continuing impact in the thinking and attitudes of the current and future management of MARD. The importance and difficulty of this contribution for a country at Vietnam's stage of development and transition to a socialist market economy cannot be overstated.

There has also been a contribution to the sustainability of an independent source of policy thinking to the senior management of MARD through the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD). IPSARD itself has built a sustainable relationship with senior international policy thinkers and is developing a "think tank" role for MARD.

The contribution of the MSCP to the partnerships was largely financial and was desirable but not essential to them. The partnerships are for the time being sustainable with continuing donor contributions, with the exception of that for natural disasters (NDMP). The experience of the partnerships has led to some valuable insights for the future which are included in the final section of the report providing recommendations.

It is suggested that:
Facilitated support for visioning processes is a viable approach that could usefully be extended to other ministries, in view of its proven results in MARD.

Support should be mobilised for continued external facilitation of the Vision and road mapping processes in MARD. This now has an ongoing momentum which it would be a pity to loose, but which may without further assistance be seriously slowed. MARD and Sida should take early action to identify the limited financing and technical inputs required.

Similarly support should be mobilised for the continued flexible availability of limited resources to the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD), specifically to enable it to bring in external expertise and organise policy inputs for the MARD minister and management.

Integrating the planning and management of resources in MARD: It may be more difficult for MARD to implement its vision and plan and manage the coherence of resources for the agricultural sector without improving the level of internal integration of the International Cooperation Department (international resources), resource planning and finance (the national budget). How to achieve this and more integrated overall resource management may be important for the further development of the Road-map for MARD.

The sustainability of donor funding for partnerships is linked to their extent of activity in the partnership. In deciding whether to enter partnerships as passive contributors or active substantive members, donors may consider concentrating their resources on those partnerships where they have a strong and ongoing interest. Closer involvement would probably deliver greater value for money from the donor perspective and the active participation of the donor is more likely to contribute to genuine exchange and substantive results from the partnership.

MARD partnerships in Vietnam have not achieved their original aspiration of strengthening the Vietnam government's capacity to manage donor resources and conventional donor resources are becoming increasingly less important for Vietnamese development. Partnerships have gradually emerged as fora for consultation and information exchange between a wide range of actors at national level and an important issue is how the partnerships could build on this strength and mature as fora for policy and technical exchange by the national actors in the agricultural and rural development sector. It would be useful to review the role and functions of partnerships as to how they might make this transition and remain sustainable. Among the issues as the importance of donor support decreases are:

- whether sustainability and operational flexibility for the medium-term of the MARD partnerships could be better achieved if the partnerships were to be loosely federated in the International Support Group (ISG) as a separate legal entity. This could make it easier to open-up new partnerships and wind-up those which had served their purposes, while maintaining important continuing functions such as websites;

- ways of buttressing the interest of MARD in strengthening the transition of the partnerships to broadly based national consultative mechanisms in-line with the role of MARD in a socialist market economy with a high level of decentralization in government services in line with the "MARD Vision" developed with MSCP support.

These developments and furtherance of the "Vision" could be further facilitated if donors were to provide resources for a small fund operated by the ISG to support specific time-bound activities of the partnerships such as ad-hoc policy inputs for Government, small consultancies and the participation of academics in workshops.

Donor and Vietnam Government policies for national Trust Funds: In establishing national trust funds, national ownership is important but so is donor confidence and the avoidance of conflict of interest. Normally funds, whether making loans or grants are established autonomously from the primary institutions which they are designed to serve (such as ministries undertaking projects), although there usually will be participation from the clients and the funders in their boards. The Board should be the ultimate authority and the Chief Executive responsible to the Board. Staffing, lines of decision making and procedures should be independent of clients and funders and in this context it may also be noted that civil service procedures are seldom well suited to the operation of Funds.

National Disaster Management: In its present form the NDMP partnership is non-sustainable and largely non-functional but the coordination function it was serving for emergencies, particularly through access to information, including during an emergency, is essential and needs to be strengthened. The incidence of emergences due to natural disasters is increasing in the region.

There is a question as to whether MARD should provide the institutional home for national disaster management. This responsibility was apparently assigned to MARD because most people live in the rural areas and most land is rural and the responsibility for flood control structures is in MARD. In many other developed and developing countries the responsibility for disaster management lies with a cross-ministerial secretariat in the office of the President or Prime Minister or sometimes in the Ministry of the Interior.

2. Introduction

2.1 Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

The SAT evaluation was required by its terms of reference (see Annex 2 for full text) to evaluate the performance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development – Sida Cooperation Programme (MSCP) from 2005–2009, making use of the standard OECD criteria as set out in the Sida Evaluation Manual:[1]

Effectiveness: The extent to which a development intervention has achieved its objectives, taking their relative importance into account.

Impact: The totality of the effects of a development intervention, positive and negative, intended and unintended.

Relevance: The extent to which a development intervention conforms to the needs and priorities of target groups and the policies of recipient countries and donors.

Sustainability: The continuation or longevity of benefits from a development intervention after the cessation of development assistance.

Efficiency: The extent to which the costs of a development intervention can be justified by its results, taking alternatives into account.

Key questions for the evaluation identified in the terms of reference were:

To what extent has the MSCP had an impact on the *institutional reform process* that MARD has embarked upon?

To what extent has MSCP managed to act as a lever for MARD to act as a *model for Public Administration Reform?*

Does this model have the potential for being replicated elsewhere in the Government system?

How has the Policy Assistance Group influenced policy development in MARD?

[1] Looking Back, Moving Forward: Sida Evaluation Manual, Sida, Stockholm, Sweden, 2004, page 25.

2.2 Evaluation Methods and Data Sources

The mission had a ten day duration and there was limited availability of both Government and MSCP Programme staff (the Programme was closing and this also coincided with end of year closures in Vietnam). The mission therefore decided to:

Make a detailed review of programme documentation;

Conduct a round of interviews with the representatives of all the Programme Components, including each of the partnerships;

Interview three MARD Directors-General with regard to the effectiveness of the Technical Assistance and Programme Advisory components;

Conduct informal soundings throughout MARD on the extent of knowledge, ownership and satisfaction with the Vision and Road Map (see below);

Conduct two workshop sessions to gain preliminary and then final reactions to findings (unfortunately these were not well attended due to the limitations referred to above);

Review recent evaluations by independent teams of the partnerships (which covered all but the International Support Group for which an evaluation was ongoing concurrently with this evaluation – discussions were held with the team). These and other independent documents are footnoted in the text;

Apply bench-marking and comparative criteria drawn largely from the previous experience of the evaluation team;

Undertake means-ends analysis to gauge the results which had benefitted from a significant contribution by the Programme.

The report of the evaluation follows the outline provided in the Sida evaluation guidelines.

3. The Evaluated Intervention

3.1 Background and Context

3.1.1 Overall Developments in the Sector and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) – see a more extensive treatment in Annex 1

Already in 1986[2] significant changes were made in policies on agriculture and rural areas which reduced the role of the state: (i) Land was allocated to farm households for to 20–50 years; (ii) the State no longer had longer monopoly in input delivery and the trade in agricultural products; (iii) Farm households were recognized as the primary units of production instead of cooperatives and farmers could decide whether to farm individually or in groups or cooperatives. Since that time the emphasis of government policy has steadily shifted towards promotion of a socialism oriented market economy, emphasizing poverty alleviation and a decreasing role for the state and promoting multiple actors in the rural sector.

[2] Policy Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam Resolution No 10/BTC April 5th. 1988 on renovation in agricultural management

In 2008 the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) was drastically streamlined[3] to comprise 22 state management units and five public services with more focus on macro-management and policy formulation and a clearer division between the state management and public services, although duplications and lack of clarity did remain in some areas. Decentralization to the provinces and state managed units was accelerated from 2005. MARD is no longer responsible for the financial or administrative management of many state corporations, the extension services, research centres, etc. The decentralisation to the provinces was particularly important as the Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARDs) became responsible to the provincial administration, rather than MARD.

3.1.2 Sida Cooperation

Sida has a strong and continuing relationship with the then Ministry of Forestry which now forms part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). This cooperation dates back to the early 1970s when Sida began its support of the forestry sector. This support gradually developed an emphasis in community forestry beginning in the mid 1980s and continuing in the 1990s with the Sweden Forestry Cooperation Programme. A natural progression from this was the Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme (MRDP) started in 1996 and was completed in 2001 The MRDP supported rural development in the five northern mountainous provinces. Three of the components of the MRDP were directly relevant for MSCP: a policy support function in the ministry; support for an International Support Group (ISG) dating back to 1997 and a partnership between MARD and originally 19[4] international donors established in 2001 to support the implementation of the Forest Sector Development Strategy up to 2010. The partnership also supported the implementation of the national forest sector programmes, including the 5 Million Hectare Reforestation Programme (5MHRP).

The Swedish – Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Cooperation Programme (MSCP) was designed to support a transition in donor relations with Vietnam, specifically in the Ministry of Agriculture. The Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness agree by the Government and donors in 2005 was intended to operationalise the Paris Declaration in Vietnam, delivering increased government ownership of programmes, alignment of donor programmes with government priorities and simplification of processes through conformity to national procedures, etc. At that time and continuing today There were several groups working on harmonisation of procedures which continue to this day, both on the bilateral donor side and the development banks. These groups coordinated their activities through the co-chaired Consultative Group, the Like-Minded Donors Group, the EU harmonization pilot (twelve EU and the European Commission).

3.2 Objectives and Modalities of the Sida Support

In synthesis, as originally designed, the Programme was intended to facilitate the implementation of the 2000–2010 Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) in line with the national socio-economic development plan 2006–2010 by developing capacity within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and its development partners. The main thrust within the overall objective was contained in the stated indicator "institutional frameworks and mechanisms are in place for effective donor coordination and use of foreign funding, and a system established for feed-back of information from development programmes/projects from provinces to MARD leadership". The Programme was specifically tasked with enhancing the capacity of MARD:

- for policy dialogue with donors;
- coordination of donor support (strengthening the institutional frameworks for existing partnerships under MARD's auspices: International Support Group (ISG), the Forestry Sector Support Pro-

[3] Decree No 01/2008/ND-CP of January 1st 2008 of the GoV
[4] There are currently 22 signatory donors and International NGO's to the partnership MoU.

gramme (FSSP) and the Trust Fund for Forests (TFF) and the National Disaster Management Programme (NDMP));
- developing the application of Sector-wide Programmes (SWAps) for agriculture and rural development.

To contribute to progress on these broad objectives, the programme was to provide:

- Technical assistance particularly to facilitate and support institutional capacity development for the:
  - development and management of Sector Wide Approaches (SWAps),
  - harmonisation and strengthening the institutional frameworks, modalities and coordination of the different partnerships and donor support in general (including strengthening Results Based Monitoring),
  - synthesis of experience and engagement in policy dialogue with donors.
    Included in this framework was listed substantive technical assistance support to the partnership secretariats especially the International Support Group (ISG).
- Support to facilitate the agreed work of multi-donor partnerships: It was stated that "The technical assistance team will take part in the work of the different partnerships in order to learn from their experience, and to assist in the development of partnership institutional arrangements," and for the International Support Group (ISG) to strengthen coordination and dialogue on all aspects of agriculture and rural development (this partnership was particularly singled out for technical support as it covers the sector as a whole.
- The Forest Sector Support Programme (FSSP) and Contribution to the Trust Fund for Forests (TFF) was seen at the time of project design as a stepping stone to a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) for the forest sector. The multi donor trust fund which was the largest single component of the MSCP (see Table 1 below – initially 65%) was designed to provide financial support for technical assistance to major grant and/or loan projects as well as small grants for project preparation, community-based forest management initiatives workshops and studies, and to generally support the work of the Forest Sector Support Programme (FSSP); and
- A small contribution to the costs of the International Cooperation Department of MARD in administering the programme and to strengthen its capacity.

4. Findings and Evaluative Conclusions

4.1 Relevance of MSCP Objectives and Design to the Needs of MARD and Agriculture and Rural Development in Vietnam

4.1.1 The Programme Document (2005)

Some 70 percent of the Vietnamese population is rural and those remaining in absolute poverty in the country are almost entirely rural. Forestry, agricultural land use and poor communities and land degradation are highly correlated, so the general areas with which the programme was concerned were of evident importance.

Any judgement on the project relevance as originally designed to contribute to these ultimate needs is inevitably influenced by the continued economic growth in Vietnam and its rapid progress towards middle-income status. This is leading those of the donors which focus their ODA in the Least Developed Countries to scale back or cease their assistance to Vietnam. It has become evident that the future major donors to Vietnam will be the International Financing Institutions and a markedly reduced number of bilateral funds.

As designed, the project was responsive to the Paris Declaration and Hanoi Core Statement on aid effectiveness. It could be argued however, that the emphasis on assisting donors in improving their coordination and the government's capacity to respond to this and to channel donor resources through SWAps was excessive. In this regard it differed from the thrust of the declarations, which were in essence concerned with donors bringing their processes in-line with those of government and addressing government priorities, not pushing any particular formula. The emphasis of the Hanoi Core Statement is on donors aligning their assistance with the national Economic and Social Development Plan. Programme approaches and sector approaches are mentioned but not emphasised and there is no reference to the SWAp modality. It does have to be recognised however, that at the time the Programme was designed this was very much in vogue in donor statements in Vietnam.

Overall the Programme's original intentions were clear but the design was loose and there were not the resources available to do everything mentioned. The role of the technical assistance in strengthening the various coordination mechanisms was explicit in the Programme document but there was no modality defined for this and in practice the technical assistance did not play that role.

Resource allocation did not align with the stated objectives. For a relatively small amount of money the Programme lacked focus and the legacy of previous Sida priority to the forestry sector led to an allocation of some 65 percent of the resources to the forestry coordination mechanisms. This was quite excessive in terms of the Programme's stated objectives and there was under investment in the apex mechanism for interaction between MARD and international actors, the International Support Group, which was budgeted and received only 2.5 percent of the total budget. In the event the share to forestry was cut, first at Programme start in 2005 to fund work on Avian Influenza and later to fund expansion of the technical assistance.

With the benefit of hindsight it may be argued that two basic programme components could have been designed: one for technical support to the Ministry in policy and institutional change; and one for coordination mechanisms with less firm initial programming of the distribution of funds within the two components, particularly between the coordination mechanisms (partnerships and the Trust Fund for Forests).

Table 1 Budget and Expenditures by Main Areas of Work

	Original Budget (2005)	Expenditures (to 1 December 2009) (Budget to 31 December 2009 – SEK 43.6 million)						
SEK All Programme Components (000s)	39,600	42,535						
Percentages	Percentage of Total		Percentage of Expenditure in each Year					
			2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2005–09
All Programme Components	**100.0**	**100.0**	**23.4**	**14.0**	**36.8**	**21.0**	**4.8**	**100.0**
Technical Support	21.7	33.3	0.0	16.2	28.2	41.2	14.4	100.0
Technical Assistance Group	n.a.	27.4	0.0	18.3	27.8	36.3	17.5	100.0
Policy Advisory Group (PAG)	n.a.	5.9	0.0	6.2	29.8	64.0	0.0	100.0
Partnerships	71.9	58.3	39.7	13.1	42.6	4.6	0.0	100.0
International Support Group (ISG)	2.5	2.4	34.5	30.6	34.9	0.0	0.0	100.0
Forest partnerships total	64.6	42.1	30.7	14.0	52.5	2.8	0.0	100.0
Forest Sector Support Programme	3.8	4.7	24.7	25.1	25.1	25.1	0.0	100.0

Table 1 Budget and Expenditures by Main Areas of Work								
Trust Fund for Forests	63.1	37.4	31.4	12.6	56.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
National Disaster Management Programme	2.5	1.6	0.0	42.9	57.1	0.0	0.0	100.0
Rural Water Partnership	0	2.8	0.0	12.1	33.6	54.2	0.0	100.0
Avian Influenza Campaign	0	9.4	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Support to the International Cooperation Dept	1.3	7.2	0.0	9.4	34.8	55.8	0.0	100.0
Sida management and supervision	5.1	1.3	21.9	22.1	13.4	42.5	0.0	100.0

4.1.2 Adjustments and Management During Implementation

4.1.2.1 The Inception Report and Early Adjustments

An inception report was foreseen *for the technical assistance (TA)* component but not for the Programme as a whole. This was a mistake although the inception report for the TA did not immediately bring about a major improvement in the programme relevance or design. What the inception report did do was to provide an assessment of constraints, particularly for the development of SWAps. Difficulties identified, included the:

- Relative weakness of MARD in contributing to sector wide approaches, in particular compared with the Ministry for Planning and Investment;
- Strong project culture in MARD and the vested interests in that;
- Lack of coherence between MARD plans and strategies, such as that for Forestry with the national five year socio-economic development plan; and
- Blurred and overlapping lines of responsibility in MARD and between MARD and other government departments.

The inception report also looked at modalities and did point towards somewhat more focus in the Technical Assistance than was evident from the original Programme document. The inception report identified that the point of entry for the technical assistance needed to be at upper-middle and higher levels, not primarily the middle levels and needed to relate strongly to the ministry as a whole, not just the Department for International Cooperation. There was a shift in emphasis from a donor-centric approach to becoming MARD centric and an emphasis on achieving change through the national planning system. No emphasis was given to working with the partnerships, such as the International Support Group. The inception report did not develop the work of the Policy Assistance Group (PAG) but it was at this time that the Technical Assistance team suggested the PAG through a separate working paper.

4.1.2.2 Adjustments in the MSCP budget

The expenditure pattern of the project compared with the original budget is summarised in Table 1. Over the life of the project the Sida budget has increased slightly to SEK 43.6 million and expenditure currently stands at SEK 42.5 million compared with an original budget of SEK 39.6 million. However, if the contribution to the Avian Influenza Campaign in 2005 is excluded (9.4 percent of expenditures to date) the overall budget decreased. Sida has also spent very considerably less than the original 5.1 percent of the budget indicated to cover Sida management and supervision. The pattern of expenditure over the life of the Programme showed major contributions to partnerships in the first year (2005), with a downturn in 2006 and building to maximum total expenditure for the Programme as a whole in 2007. The technical support was at its height in 2008, when significant expenditure on partnerships had ceased. The programme was originally scheduled for completion in 2008. The decision was first taken to extend the whole programme to the end of 2008 with a small budget increase and then later during

2008 to extend the technical assistance group to the end of 2009 utilising funds from programme adjustments but with no overall budget increase. During 2009 the only expenditure has been on technical assistance and this at a much reduced level compared with previous years.

Funding for partnerships was seen as mainly financial contributions to ongoing efforts. An adjustment was made to add the Rural Water and Sanitation Partnership to the original three partnerships being supported but this only accounts for a very small share of the total budget. The contribution to the Trust Fund for Forests was deliberately cut and reallocated. This major change came in came in 2007 when largely in order to cover an expansion and extension of the technical support component (in particular the technical assistance team) the support to the Trust Fund for Forests was reduced by the Sida contribution for 2008. The technical support in the MSCP now stands at 33 percent of total expenditures, as compared with the originally budgeted 22 percent and forest partnerships fell from 65 percent to 45 percent. This realignment brought expenditure closer to the Programme objectives.

The orientation of the Technical Assistance was formally adjusted in 2008, away from supporting capacity development for international funding in MARD to a facilitation role in policy and envisioning the Ministry of Agriculture's future role in response to decentralization of service provision to the Provinces and the transition from a command economy to a socialist market economy with a strong emphasis on poverty reduction.

The cut in the budget of the Trust Fund for Forests(TFF) was contentious with MARD and other partners to the TFF because this was in some ways a legally binding pledge, in that the TFF was itself entering into binding commitments by the signature of project documents based on its pledged income. This flexible move was justified for Sida and requested by the MARD minister because the Sida contribution to the TFF was relatively small compared with other donors, other donors were prepared to make up the difference and the Technical Assistance component was accorded high priority by the Minister. Sida was also not convinced of the major co-funding being undertaken through the TFF (see below). However, the cut does raise procedural issues with respect to commitments to national funds (see recommendations at the end of the report).

4.1.2.3 Role of the MSCP and role of the Sida Advisory Team (SAT)

Management of the MSCP: The MSCP has not been managed as a single entity. MARD senior management and Sida were supportive of the adjustments in planned outcomes and resource shifts but these were not formally reflected in a document which would have allowed for a results-based assessment and further reinforced focus. There was no transparent presentation of proposed adjustments to the programme annual review meeting. The MSCP does not seem to have been in anybodies' minds a Programme (e.g. when Sida and the Vietnam government needed to fund the programme on Avian Influenza, funds were taken from MSCP right at the start of the Programme in 2005). Due partly to capacity constraints, the International Cooperation Department of MARD did not take on a leading or main management role.

The technical assistance component did not as originally stated in the Programme Document actively support the partnerships. It is argued that this was because it would have just inserted another layer and each of the partnerships had its own board, but this is a question of whether the role could have been one of support, not supervision. The TA component did originally try to work with the Forest partnerships, as the largest recipients of funds and as the sub-sector identified for a potential SWAp. However, these two partnerships had their own technical assistance and there was apparently little interest in collaboration. There was inter-action between the components for direct support to the International Cooperation Department (ICD) in MARD the technical assistance team and the Policy Assistance Group (PAG) but there was not a fully integrated approach. The Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSAD), which managed the PAG component did organize joint activities with the International Support Group, some of which used PAG resources.

An audit management letter[5] drew attention to the inconsistency of financial reporting between the components and that in the case of the support to the Policy Advisory Group and the International Cooperation Department there were some issues in accounting for the MSCP funds separately from funds received from other sources.[6]

Sida advisory team for follow-up on the development cooperation programmes in the field of rural development in Vietnam (SAT): The technical support to Sida in monitoring and managerial decision making on the Programme was provided under the contract with a consultancy firm[7]. Sida requested three inputs from SAT for MSCP, an initial review mission, a mid-term review and this terminal evaluation. The SAT was thus not involved in the MSCP in any way other than review and evaluation. In each case in order to aid objectivity the SAT brought in independent international and national consultants who had not been previously involved in SAT's other work on the programmes of Sida for ChiaSe. The possible disadvantage of using a consultancy firm, rather than individual consultants contracted by Sida or using a separate contract for each action was thus offset by the SATs use of different independent consultants and the modality provided continuity and reduced costs in transaction handling.

The reviews were thorough and objective. It could be argued that as with the other actors involved, the first review could have identified earlier some of the issues discussed above. The reviews also tended to concentrate their critical attention on the technical assistance component which may have reinforced the attention to this component and the tendency to address the MSCP component by component rather than holistically. This having been said, the mid-term review did discuss the difficulties of monitoring the partnerships and find that the Technical Assistance component could have "provided the glue" for the programme as a whole but had failed to do so. It did not address a specific recommendation to change this but by that time (October 2007) the Programme was only envisaged to run for just over another year. The mid-term review did strongly endorse the change of direction for the technical assistance component and recommended that there should be a new logical framework formalised for that component.

In summary the MSCP gradually became more relevant and resources were to some extent adjusted to better address the underlying objectives. This enabled it to achieve the substantial results discussed below. This flexible adjustment is to be commended but it could have been reflected in formal changes in a revised programme document or an agreed statement. More transparent financial and overall integrated MSCP total programme information could have been developed and provided to the International Cooperation Department and to the programme annual review meeting to better enable them to perform their respective decision making and advisory functions. The overall effectiveness and value for money in use of resources may have been enhanced if the MSCP had been managed in a more integrated manner which could have contributed to the components becoming more mutually re-enforcing but there is no certainty that this would have been the case.

4.2 Programme Outputs and the Sustainability of Outcomes – Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

4.2.1 Technical Assistance Group

4.2.1.1 Activities and Outputs

The technical assistance group began their work in March 2006 and an inception report was completed in July 2006 and approved in November of the same year. Work will terminate with a workshop in December 2009.

[5] KPMG Management Letter for the period 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2007 (PAG, ICD & TA components)

[6] They also noted that interest was not recorded and this would appear to be also the case for the Partnerships, where it does not appear in their income statements.

[7] ITAD

Although the technical assistance group was only originally programmed to receive less than 20 percent of the budget, this rose to over 27 percent and it is the component of the programme which has received by far and away the greatest managerial attention and the component which is likely to have the most unique sustainable impact from the Sida support.

As discussed above the emphasis on improving donor coordination and strengthening the MARD's capacity vis-á-vis donors was not a strongly felt need and the rapid progress towards medium income status was reducing the relevance of such an agenda for the future. However, as detailed in the medium-term review of the MSCP, the programme initially tried to pursue its original objectives. The first product was a report "SWAp Capacity Assessment" in August 2006 and this was followed by an "Organizational and Functional Review of the International Cooperation Department completed in March 2007, which in particular identified training needs. The Technical Assistance Group also worked in 2006 and early 2007 on:

- Development and introduction of a sector-wide approach;
- Understanding of the programme concept; and
- Approach to Monitoring and Evaluation and Results Based Management.

None of this work had much direct impact: -partly because, although ICD is the focal point for donors, a lot of power rests with the substantive departments which make direct contacts and enjoy long-standing relations with certain donors (undermining any move towards SWAps); -partly because there were no resources to follow-through on recommendations; -partly because of the declining relevance of the Programme's emphasis on coordination and efficiency of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA); -partly because the work could have been technically stronger; and -partly because advantage was not taken of the framework provided by the International Support Group (ISG). In this context it may be noted that the subsequent development of a results-based Monitoring and Evaluation system for MARD made no use of the MSCP work (information provided by MARD Planning Department).

What was happening during the first two years of the Programme was however important for the future. The technical team was gradually attracting interest in MARD for dialogue on change across the ministry for the MARD's evolving role with decentralization to the Provinces and transformation to a socialist market economy with a strong emphasis on the elimination of poverty.

The MARD Vision: The first phase of the project technical assistance (2005–2006/7) resulted in a process to develop a vision and roadmap for the MARD in 2020:

The development of a vision statement was undertaken through five workshops which were actively participated in by managerial staff across the Ministry and given strong encouragement by the Minister. Two vice-ministers (of which there are now eight) were actively involved[8]. The level of participation of Directors-General who head Departments, including the key Departments responsible for planning and for human resources, was strong in several cases and there was good participation from their subordinates from about half the Departments and all Departments were represented.[9] There was consultation with some provincial Departments of Agriculture (DARDs) but there was not participation from outside of MARD, for example from other Ministries. This undoubtedly allowed the free discussion of ideas in a way which would not have been possible if outsiders were present, and those interviewed by the mission were unanimous in their view that the exchange of ideas was relatively free. The technical assistance role was one of facilitation but the basis for discussion could possibly have been strengthened in envisioning future functional requirements if there had been a detailed analysis of the government

8 Four ministers attended some sessions

9 In so far as the mission could determine, there was good participation from Crops, Planning and Veterinary, reasonable from International Cooperation, Human Reources, and Livestock Production, and relatively weak from the remaining Departments.

functions and services presently carried out by MARD, other Ministries and the decentralised government offices and agencies to provide scenarios on how these might need to evolve.

The *draft Vision for MARD 2020 was completed in November 2008* and demonstrated a major shift in thinking away from the direct undertaking of development activities and the issuing of instructions to be followed in the sector. The functions emphasised, policy setting for the sector, regulatory responsibilities (with a drive to reduce to the extent of regulation), standard setting and monitoring and evaluation. The statement could have been written in a punchier style (the role of Government in the future is stated more clearly and succinctly in the Socio-economic Development Strategy 2001–2010 Document of the Party Congress IX) but it was a product of the senior staff of the ministry and reflects their aspirations. In the view of this mission (which is not shared by the technical assistance team). The vision statement would have benefitted from addressing the transition to be undertaken in service provision (e.g. support to extension, animal health) and examining how central government functions in investment will continue but change. Some have argued that these are not at all functions of central government but the mission does not take this view, given the experience of other countries, including developed countries that the functions are gradually much reduced and change in nature to one of support to decentralised agencies, private sector, etc. but do not generally entirely disappear.

- Some work began in individual Departments, especially Crop Production and Planning in a similar process to develop Departmental visions and roadmaps:
  - in 2008 the Department of Crop Production produced a draft vision and road map for the Department. This drew on a functional and organizational analysis of the Crop Production Department completed by the technical assistance component in June 2008. The vision and roadmap are intended to be reviewed annually (although this may not happen so frequently).
    A pragmatic and useful approach was adopted of trying to state what the Department would do more of and what it would do less of without setting targets and accepting that ultimately decisions were made at a higher level. Certain actions were marked as continuing and others were time-lined from 2008 to 2011. Resource implications were not discussed but this was a solid effort, and
  - in February 2009, a group of national consultants (researchers) produced a paper on the functions and structure of the planning department which contains useful basic analysis;
- As work on the production of a draft vision was being completed, work was initiated on producing a draft roadmap for fulfilment of the vision. This followed a different process. There were five cross-cutting working groups on themes covering the: functions and organization of MARD; division of responsibilities with other ministries; decentralization; deregulation; and the management culture of MARD. There was participation from other ministries and some from the provinces, especially in working groups dealing with these subjects. Participation was at the working level and the consultant technical input was somewhat greater. At the end of this process in November 2009 a a draft road-map was completed.
- The roadmap itself was formally presented at the closing workshop of the MSCP in December 2009. The document's emphasis on the steps which need to be taken for deregulation and decentralization and its discussion of the overlaps and gaps in the distribution of responsibilities between the various Ministries, etc. was particularly important and had never occurred at the working level before. On the other hand, it could have better carried forward the identification of functions as discussed above for the Vision and the emphasis given to reorganization of MARD, could in the view of this mission become divisive and detract attention from the other important elements of the road-map.

4.3.1.2 Outcomes and their sustainability in capacity building

All those spoken to considered that the above processes were more important than their actual outputs. It was considered that the technical assistance had contributed considerably to changes in attitudes and thinking at middle-management and senior levels and that these would be the managers of MARD over the next ten to twenty years. No other ministry in Vietnam had worked on such a visioning exercise and no other ministry had a vision statement. Managers in MARD noted that they had never before sat down together to discuss the future of MARD and that this was always previously considered something which would be decided without their input.

The SAT evaluation team had considerable experience of evaluating policy assistance[10] and can confirm that in the context in which it was working the Technical Assistance team succeeded in facilitating an almost unique process.

The *vision statement*[11] has been agreed by the Minister as providing the basis for development of the road map.

The *road map* for MARD is an initial step. It is less deeply owned than the vision and will require a major commitment on the part of the Ministry to further develop the functions, especially those in support of service delivery and to develop an immediate action plan, including resource requirements.

Sustainability of the process: There has been change in attitudes and thinking to which the Programme has made a significant contribution. Assuming that Vietnam continues on its present development path, this will be reflected in the evolution of the MARD. The actual change process initiated by the MSCP requires further external facilitation to sustain it and this is the subject of a recommendation. Progress in actual implementation may also be limited by the lack of integration between planning – and the management of international resources (including foreign direct investment) on the one hand and the national budget and expenditure on the other which fall in separate departments of MARD and are also separate at the level of the non-sector ministries.

4.2.2 The Policy Advisory Group (PAG)

4.2.2.1 Activities and Outputs

Work under this component is managed by the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD) which is a semi-autonomous research institute under MARD. Activities got fully underway only in 2007 with the appointment of a secretary and the three international academic experts who are considered as being part of the PAG (one from China, one from USA and one from Sweden, which is an appropriate mix of experience). The Policy Advisory Group was initially envisaged as having a strong international component of experts who could be drawn on by the Minister of MARD and the vice-ministers for policy advice. An equivalent component was for national expertise, workshops, etc. and there was the concept of a "Group". It is not clear that this really functioned as a Group but this was probably not important as the issue was interaction with the Vietnamese authorities, not between members of the group.

Table 2 Breakdown of 2008 Expenditures – Policy Assistance Group	
Work of international experts	17.5%
Policy studies and workshops	25.2%
Developing IPSARD management and vision	44.5%
Journals, data base development, etc.	12.8%
	100.0%

[10] e.g. Comprehensive evaluation of FAO's Policy Assistance

[11] The mission was informed that the Vision could not be approved as such as this did not lie within the authority of the Minister of MARD but with the Prime Minister.

In the two years 2007–08 one of the international advisers visited the country five times (Sweden) and two of the advisers twice (China and USA). They discussed with the minister and had discussions with other officials and held workshops/seminars. Some written contact was also maintained and discussions held with the Director-General of IPSARD.

At the direct request of the minister several papers and studies were prepared by national consultants and experts and a number of other papers were prepared at the initiative of IPSARD. Resources were utilised from the Programme to support workshops by the PAG experts and others and for publications. In 2007 a biotechnology group was organised at the Minister's request to advise on biotechnology development in agriculture. An initial proposal was completed but the group does not appear to have been active in 2008.

PAG resources were also used to contribute flexibly to policy publications, other seminars and workshops including a visit by the Director-General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

A further objective was added to the PAG's purposes: Facilitating the development of the Institute for Policy and Strategy in Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD) in advancing its vision to become the "think tank of MARD". Emphasis on this can be see from Table 2 on the breakdown of expenditures by purpose in 2008. This emphasis, although not fully in-line with the original objectives, may provide more of a basis for sustainable policy inputs to the management of the Ministry. This is particularly important as other work under the technical assistance component of the MSCP has shown that the Planning Department of MARD currently has little capacity to fulfil this function as it is concentrated on ad-hoc requests in a secretariat function to the Minister, planning for the MARD and planning for the sector in the context of the five year Economic and Social Development Plan. In line with the "Vision" it should gradually gain a more policy oriented role but this will never exclude the need for more independent policy perspectives from IPSARD and others.

4.2.2.2 Outcomes and sustainability of the policy assistance

The results of the PAG work need to be examined in the context of the resources deployed which was only some six percent of total or SEK 850,000 (about US$ 120,000) per year for the three years of expenditure 2006–08. It is very difficult to assess the contribution of policy dialogue. The external experts and in particular, the Director-General of IPSARD, had access to the Minister. The international experts were said to have made important intervention on rice trade immediate policy and a contribution's to MARD's thinking on:

- Negative elements of the China experience to avoid in Vietnam's development path;
- Pensions for rural households; and
- Restructuring of the rural budget.

Such free flow of ideas can only assist decision making. However, a concept such as PAG relies heavily on personal empathy. Another source of funds and another set of experts could well have no entry point. Policy makers in middle income and developed countries seek independent thinking on policy to inform their own decision making and this is regarded as part of good governance practice. The contribution is valuable but non-quantifiable and only sustainable in so far as it contributes to decision-making for the future.

The building up of IPSARD as a policy think tank is essential as no such think tank exists in Vietnam at present. The use made of IPSARD by many international projects, suggests that it is well thought of. In the medium-term, it is not desirable for a country the size of Vietnam to have only one main source of policy thinking for the rural sector and it should be noted that as long as most funding for policy work flows through IPSARD that will tend to be the case.

The main thrust of IPSARD's work will continue to be possible in opening up ideas and sharing experiences because of the considerable use being made of that Institute by other projects. However, the lack of more flexible funds for immediate short-term inputs and the loss of the Policy Advisory Group as an entity will have some negative implications.

4.2.3 Capacity of the International Cooperation Department (ICD)

The International Cooperation Department (ICD) was provided a small amount of assistance to strengthen its capacity for the planning and management of international resources for agriculture and rural development. This included language training and equipment.

4.3 Programme Outputs and the Sustainability of Outcomes – Partnerships

4.3.1 Common features of partnerships

The MSCP was a contributor of funding for the partnerships and its contribution was generally comparable with that of other donors. The Sida-MSCP financial input was demonstrative of commitment but never critical to the financing of the partnership (as there were always a number of donors).
The proportion of MSCP funding going for partnerships other than those on Forestry was only 16 percent. Over the life of Programme Sida was a decreasingly active participant at the substantive level in the partnerships and the MSCP-Technical Assistance group was not involved, as originally envisaged in the MSCP Programme document, the results of the partnerships as discussed below should be viewed from this perspective.

The over-arching goals for the partnerships are for their sub-sectors the same as for that for the International Support Group, which is "to strengthen MARD ownership, capacity and building of partnerships for effective and efficient utilisation of ODA … and to strengthen MARD's ability to attract and coordinate Foreign Direct Investment in a manner complementary to Vietnam's development goals and principles".[12]

With the exception of Forestry all the partnerships function very similarly. Their principal activities are the maintenance of websites, exchange of information and the holding of formal meetings and workshops on current topics, attended by a wide variety of stakeholders from the donor community, International NGOs, academia, etc. and from the Provinces. The partnerships also play a useful role in making English versions of Vietnamese legal texts available to the international community[13]. All partners appreciate these elements of their functions. In addition to information exchange the most productive areas of cooperation seems to seems to have been in developing technical standards, especially for monitoring and evaluation and providing a sounding board and venue for feedback on the development of sub-sector strategies (sub-sector strategy development has usually been assisted by technical assistance from one or two donors but the strategies are not always well integrated with the national socio-economic development plan).

One potential strength of the partnerships which is not touched on by any of the evaluations of them, is the extent to which the participation of MARD staff in their secretariats increases their eventual capacity to undertake higher responsibilities in MARD. If it does, it is helping to provide for a generation of staff which have been exposed to a wide range of ideas and approaches.

There has been no evidence of the partnerships assisting Foreign Direct Investment and it is unclear how they could do so, given their current membership (or that major private sector investors would have any interest in participating).

[12] ISG Donor Framework Agreement 2007–10
[13] They also provide a framework for consultation on the draft texts but if distributed for comment at all, this is very usually late in the day.

The partnerships have secretariats housed in MARD. They are not fully integrated into MARD and may follow donor business procedures but their secretaries report to line-management in MARD. The importance of this relationship is evident from the records of meetings which seldom reflect any controversial points. The procurement procedures while possibly helping to protect against nepotism or corruption have also meant that the partnerships tend to have difficulty in spending their resources. Another difficulty for transparent and effective management is that expenditures are reported against budget but not income (budgets tend to be much higher than actual income).

As found by several of the evaluations discussed below, the heterogeneity of the partnerships and different expectations from them does result in limitations. The major donors have other lines of communication with Government and are not interested in the partnerships for dialogue on major policy issues. They also discuss directly with each other on major projects, etc. so partnerships are not a modality to mobilise funds or secure major cooperation between funding sources. The International NGOs are interested in the partnerships to make a policy input but may also have their own fora to talk between themselves, e.g. on water and sanitation (WATSAN Group). The MARD International Cooperation Department may find that the partnerships impinge on its responsibilities and functions as well as facilitating them. Participation by Government officials has tended to be in a formal capacity and it is indicative that where working groups list members, those from outside government are named but if there is any participation listed from inside government, it is institutional, i.e. Departments. The international partners all tend to be dissatisfied with the high level of formality in exchanges.

Sustainability: There is no doubt of the value of the partnerships. They may not deliver on all the expectations but they are performing an important role (see below). All the partnerships begun and supported by MSCP have continued to date with continued donor support except that for Natural Disaster Mitigation (see below).

Avian Influenza Campaign: The Sida contribution in 2005 to the major Vietnam joint initiative for an Avian Influenza Campaign was important but that Campaign is not discussed further here as to its results because this was a one-off contribution to an ongoing campaign with major contributions from many donors and a very significant input from the Government of Vietnam.

4.3.2 International Support Group (ISG)

Sida was a founder of the International Support Group (ISG) for agriculture and rural development but its level of funding for the present phase was small. The ISG has received some recent technical assistance from donors other than Sida and at the moment that is concentrated on logistics and communications.

With its comprehensive membership and sector-wide mandate the ISG could provide an umbrella for other partnerships. It has been a seat for new initiatives such as that in 2008 on food safety and provided the first work on rural water which later became a separate partnership. It has been less successful in providing an apex for existing partnerships. As with other partnerships the ISG has had difficulty in spending its income (e.g. 27% under-spent in 2007). The ISG organised 20 meetings of various kinds and two training courses[14] in 2008:

- Is an important means of information exchange with newsletters, etc. and maintenance of a website which has recently apparently had some problems in keeping updated;
- Provides a venue for the discussion of important policy themes but the input is reported to be logistic rather than substantive in ensuring the quality of meetings and workshops. Most of the workshops are not pushing forward the edges of the policy debate but rather are looking at existing policies. An important venue is provided for feedback on upcoming legislation and Party Resolutions;

[14] International commitments under WTO, AFTA and UPOV

- Organises some training workshops for Provincial and INGO staff;
- Assists the International Cooperation Department of MARD especially in:
  - Updating its website on new projects,
  - Sponsoring staff for training and study tours,
  - Forum to provide inputs for IPSARD;
- Is trying to organize provincial networks.

The ISG is currently under evaluation by an independent mission. This evaluation should provide greater information on its effectiveness and any definitive judgements should await that evaluation's findings.

4.3.3 Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership (NDMP)

Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership (NDMP) functioned with donor support from 2002 to until June 2009. It was evaluated at the termination of the international support by a consultant team[15]. The evaluation found that the NDMP had been restricted to water related emergencies (generally typhoons). It had been successful in involving a large number of actors including participation from seven Ministries. The partnership functioned outside the line government structure and had international technical assistance. This enabled it to undertake a wide range of activities. In particular it established using a website which allowed for prompt information exchange during an emergency. It also provided a forum for discussion of the National Strategy on National Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 and facilitated donors in coordinating their emergency responses and to some extent their disaster preparedness projects, but the World Bank project remained largely outside the frame.

Sustainability: The encouraging results were however not sustainable:

- The NDMP had taken a lead in developing a national disaster management strategy. There were still hopes that this might receive the Prime Minister's approval but it had not been possible to develop implementation arrangements during the period of donor support and the evaluation team was cautious in its judgement as to whether the strategy would be implemented;
- It had not been possible to make institutional arrangements for continuation of the partnership services prior to the termination of the donor input. When this ceased the secretariat function was transferred to the Department of Dyke Management in MARD. Some donors are providing personnel inputs to maintain the information function but by the time of the evaluation in October 2009, it was already said to have deteriorated quite seriously and the national staffing was officers from Dyke Management who had been assigned this as an additional duty.

The evaluation team was of the view that the partnership had suffered because it was run as a donor project and not mainstreamed into the Government structure much earlier and because of its low level institutional location in MARD. Participation by ministries other than MARD was weak and the commitment of Departments in MARD low.

As donors and international NGOs continue to be important actors in major emergencies, the case is not so clear cut for how firmly a partnership should be linked to the government structure as is the case for the development oriented partnerships. During an emergency coordination of donors is a real-time activity and may require a flexible mechanism. This is not the case however, for developing the overall institutional arrangements, strategy and work on disaster preparedness and prevention.

[15] Final Evaluation Report: Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership, Hanoi, October, 2009, PeaPROs Consulting JSC

In its present form the NDMP partnership is non-sustainable and largely non-functional but the coordination function it was serving for emergencies, particularly through access to information is essential and needs to be strengthened, as the incidence of emergences due to natural disaster's is increasing.

4.3.4 Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Partnership

This partnership has had a relatively short life (having started in mid 2006). In its short life it has facilitated the development and dissemination of a number of products for the sub-sector, including monitoring and evaluation indicators and legal guidelines. The inception phase was evaluated by an independent team of national and international experts in November 2008[16]. This evaluation found that the partnership had:

- Contributed to development of a monitoring and evaluation indicator set;
- Contributed to development of a standard latrine design for schools;
- Provided coordination for review and update of the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy for 2020;
- Acted as co-organizer for the activities for the international year of Sanitation
- Contributed to discussion of research priorities; and
- Developed a websight and news letter which were well appreciated for exchange of information (although this evaluation noted that several of the pages in English were not populated).

  The evaluation also noted that as most of these activities were directly supported by one or more major donors it was difficult to assess the extent of the Partnership's contribution but it undoubtedly increased the range of input.

International partners shared most of the concerns identified for other evaluations which are common to all the partnerships. They found that the secretariat was technically inadequate and lacked the capacity to make good use of international consultants. The available funds for 2009 are US$ 162,500 of which US$ 58,000 is for the coordination unit and the remainder for activities. It appears highly unlikely to be fully utilised.

4.4 Forestry Sector Partnerships

The MSCP supported the Forest Sector Support Partnership and the Trust Fund for Forests with funding which eventually accounted for 5 and 37 percent of the budget respectively.

4.4.1 Forest Sector Support Partnership (FSSP)

The Forest Sector Support Partnership dates back to 2001. It functions in a similar manner to those discussed above and has a wide membership drawn from international agencies, international NGOs and the government. It shares a secretariat with the Trust Fund for Forests (TFF). There has been substantial technical assistance in all aspects of forestry and the Partnership has served as a consultative forum for much of this work. It also provided a forum for consultation on the Viet Nam Forestry Development Strategy 2006–2020. The Trust Fund for Forests (see below) funded the development of a monitoring information system for the Forestry sector maintained by MARD but with the issue of some products through the FSSP in particular the Sector indicators and baseline report data (2005) issued in 2008.

[16] Vietnam Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Partnership, Evaluation of the Inception Phase 2006–2008 by Lutz R. Meyer and Dr. Nguyen Tung Phong. Final Report Hanoi 15 November 2008

A report by the departing Chief Technical Adviser to the FSSP in 2008, reflected upon its achievements and future[17]. It noted that the Technical/Executive Committee had been active as long as it had a role in deciding on the Trust Fund for Forest Grants but interest declined when it no longer had this responsibility. Activities which went much beyond information sharing and discussion had not been successful including those for donor coordination and for national capacity building. Vietnamese Government Representatives level of interest and attendance seemed to be declining as the allowance for attendance in meetings was discontinued. The evaluation of the Trust Fund for Forests completed in June 2009[18] found that the FSSP activities had suffered because the coordination unit did not have sufficient capacity to adequately handle the Trust Fund for Forests (TFF) and the FSSP. It also noted that given the smaller size of the group and the higher level participation from MARD, donors were trying to use the TFF Board for policy discussion on the Forestry Sector which was not the function of the Board.

4.4.2 Trust Fund for Forests (TFF)

The funding for the Trust Fund for Forests (TFF) is currently Euros 32.6 million of which Sida-MSCP contributed some five percent and Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland, the remainder (nevertheless this is 35 percent of expenditure under the MSCP to date). Finland has also provided one technical adviser and GTZ two. Sida is no longer a donor and the remaining three donors are committed to continue their support to the end of 2012. When the TFF was established in June 2004 the objectives were:

- Aligning ODA support more closely with the agreed priorities identified in the Forestry Sector Support Programme (FSSP);
- Improving the poverty targeting of ODA support to the forestry sector, consistent with the government priorities in he National Forestry Development Strategy;
- Harmonizing aid to the forest sector and reducing the transaction costs of the government of Vietnam;
- Supporting transition toward a sector wide approach to ODA support in the forestry sector (this last was found to be unrealistic and dropped following the first evaluation in 2006).

The current MoU with the remaining three donors introduces a new objective of serving as a pilot to develop experience and lessons beneficial to the establishment of a fully Government of Vietnam owned Forestry Protection and Development Fund. In 2008 Vietnam established such a fund as a legal entity but it has no funds, staff or regulations.

A report by GTZ in November 2005, found that the trust fund is a legal entity but its ownership is unclear. It also found there was a conflict of interest which could make it difficult to fund MARD projects and projects initiated by the Forest Sector Support Programme (FSSP) as it shared a secretariat with the FSSP and that secretariat was within a line government department (Forestry). These are genuine concerns but were not addressed and not given attention by evaluation missions (see below). It also appears that the Trust Fund for Forests (TFF) does not have legal clarity on what constitutes a donor commitment and what constitutes a grant commitment. This is important because no Fund should commit more resources than it has but it should also avoid processes which lead it to under commit.

The TFF was evaluated in June 2009 and that evaluation found that good progress had been made. Euros 30.8 million had been committed to projects to date. It was envisaged in the original memorandum of understanding that the TFF would co-finance projects with specific mention of the Global

[17] Forestry Parnerhsip in Viet Nam: Reflections on Experiences and Future Challenges – Final Report by Dr. Paula Williams, Chief Technical Advisor, Forest Sector Support Partnership Coordination Office (2003–2008), Helsinki 2008

[18] Trust Fund for Forests (TFF) – Second Major Evaluation Final Report Indufor forest intelligence, in association with VICA, Hanoi and Helsinki June 30, 2009

Environment Facility (GEF) and would fund small grants of up to Euros 50,000 each up to a maximum of Euros 200,000 per year.

During its first years approval rates were low. This contributed to the decision to undertake co-funding of the World Bank Forest Sector Development Project and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Project Forests for Livelihood Improvements in the Central Highlands. These account for 66 percent of total commitments. The decision to finance these was controversial and was pushed through by the donors, it is understood with the disagreement of Sida. The 2009 evaluation also considered that this was an inappropriate use of the TFF.

That evaluation was very concerned about rate of disbursement to the large projects and suggested money not disbursed should be cut but as the co-financing has to move in conjunction with that from the World Bank and ADB, this just does not seem realistic. A bigger issue would have been (if there were now remaining funds) how to increase the number of viable proposals from governmental agencies and non-governmental and this could have partly lain in increasing the small grants component. Contrary to the current thinking if the TFF were institutionally independent of MARD and the FSSP, applications for funding could be more easily encouraged from these sources.

The evaluation found that results from the projects funded by the TFF were poorly documented and disseminated but results identified by the evaluation mission included:

- National level policy instruments developed and issued including eight decrees;
- Information materials, training curricula, etc. developed;
- Piloting through projects of community forestry, collaborative forest management, production and marketing of non-timber forest products, conservation financing and payments for environmental services; and
- The up-scaling through the large investment projects.

Specific weaknesses included:

- The lack of interest by other donors in joining the TFF;
- Monitoring and evaluation of ongoing and completed projects; and
- Insufficient information exchange on the results of projects.

The evaluation was rather critical of donor behaviour in that they were in membership of the TFF board but very passive for the most part, not supporting decision making but sometimes interventionist.

The evaluation recommended that the TFF should work alongside the new Vietnam Fund for Forests and be housed in the same offices, but maintain its separate identity in order to retain the separate donor, rather than governmental procedures, the voice of donors in its governance and the quality of its staff. This mission includes some general observations on Funds in its Recommendations while not having the information to provide any additional advice on the particular case of the TFF.

4.5 Overall Sustainability and Value for Money

The MSCP has made a unique contribution in facilitating a process in MARD to develop a Vision for the ministry. A process was undertaken which, for the first time, initiated a dialogue among senior managers on the future orientation of the ministry. In starting to develop a road map there was also a unique interchange amongst middle-level management representatives from other ministries concerned with the rural sector. This process will have continuing impact in the thinking and attitudes of the current and future management of MARD. The importance and difficulty of this contribution for a country at Vietnam's stage of development and transition to a socialist market economy cannot be understated.

There has also been a contribution to the sustainability of an independent source of policy thinking to the senior management of MARD through the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD). IPSARD itself has built a sustainable relationship with senior international policy thinkers and is developing a "think tank" role for MARD.

The contribution of the MSCP to the partnerships was largely financial and was desirable but not essential to them. The partnerships are for the time being sustainable with continuing donor contributions, with the exception of that for natural disasters (NDMP).

The MSCP delivered *"value for money"* in its latter half when the achievements from the Technical Assistance component in contributing to the transformation process in MARD took place. The MARD and Sida support for a shift in concentration of resources towards the technical assistance component and away from the Trust Fund for Forests, as well as the extension of that component in time and the support for that component concentrating on the MARD change process was thus well justified. Overall however the Programme has not been efficient, as in the first half of its life it was searching for relevance to MARD's needs and the major expenditure on the Trust Fund for Forests was neither in line with the MSCP's stated objectives or essential to that Trust Fund. It is probable that an earlier shift in direction would have been justified especially as the early concentration on donor coordination soon showed it was not achieving the planned results. However, it is also evident that, as previously noted, the first two years of the MSCP were a period of confidence building and an early move to the facilitation of change in MARD might not have been successful.

5. Recommendations & Lessons of More General Application

As Sida assistance for MARD in the current modality is drawing to a close, the number of recommendations for MSCP follow-up are limited. It is also difficult to draw wider recommendations from a single case and the limited mandate of the MSCP. In doing so the knowledge the evaluators have of experience elsewhere has been helpful.

Extension of the MARD experience to other Ministries: The Vision and road mapping processes in MARD have been unique and there are already lasting benefits. In view of the impacts achieved by the visioning process employed in MARD it is recommended that the approach be extended to further Ministries in Vietnam, especially those undergoing a rapid change in their functions with decentralization, delegation and transition to a market economy. This should include the facilitated internal dialogue at managerial level.

The Vision and road mapping processes in MARD now has an ongoing momentum which it would be a pity to loose, but which may without further assistance be seriously slowed. Similarly the flexible availability of limited resources to the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD) to bring in external expertise and organise policy inputs for the MARD minister and management is valuable.

It is recommended that in order to not loose the valuable momentum established, MARD and Sida quickly explore the possibilities for identifying sources of future support for:

- Further facilitation in MARD of the Strategy development, Vision and Road Map processes at the level of the Ministry as a whole and in individual departments;

- Access for Vietnamese policy makers at senior managerial/political level to demand driven independent policy thinking on agriculture and rural development, through IPSARD[19].

  This may best be sustainably and neutrally provided through the International Support Group (see below) or alternatively by the United Nations System (FAO) or possibly a bilateral donor but these latter would almost inevitably be time-bound inputs. It is also possible that a lasting relationship could be built with a Swedish partner, in line with the new modalities. In this context the Swedish priority to the environment and climate change is important in view of the agricultural sector's importance for environmental management and climate change mitigation.

As discussed above it may be more difficult for MARD to implement its vision and plan and manage the coherence of resources for the agricultural sector without improving the level of internal integration of the International Cooperation Department (international resources), resource planning and finance (the national budget). How to achieve this and more integrated overall resource management may be important for the further development of the Road-map and MARD senior management may wish to consider these institutional issues.

Approach to partnerships by donors: Although the funding of partnerships can best be achieved by inputs from many sources, it is noticeable that the sustainability of donor funding is linked to their extent of activity in the partnership. In deciding whether to enter partnerships as passive contributors or active substantive members, donors may consider concentrating their resources on those partnerships where they have a strong and ongoing interest. This is more probable to deliver value for money from the donor perspective and the active participation of the donor is more likely to contribute to genuine exchange and substantive results from the partnership.

MARD partnerships in Vietnam: Partnerships have not achieved their original aspiration of strengthening the Vietnam government's capacity to manage donor resources and conventional donor resources are becoming an increasingly less important for Vietnamese development. An important issue is how could partnerships build on their strengths and mature as fora for technical exchange as distinct from donor-recipient groups. It seems unlikely that they could go down that route for international interchange, as that is more likely to develop in regional associations such as that for forest policy and research and the ASEAN technical groups. They could however, fulfil a growing valuable role as fora for exchange at national level. Despite their limitations the partnership already facilitate a wide range of national actors in participating in sub-sectoral policy and technical exchange.

It would be useful to review the role and functions of partnerships as to how they might make the transition to primarily national fora and remain sustainable. Among the issues as the importance of donor support decreases are thus:

- Whether sustainability and operational flexibility for the medium-term of the MARD partnerships could better achieved if the partnerships if the partnerships have some form of umbrella organizational structure with a degree of autonomy as discussed above. It is noticeable that there are a growing number of sub-sectoral partnerships being established in Vietnam. Only one of these (NDMP) appears to be becoming defunct and new ones are under discussion. The international partners emphasise that the capacity and authority of the coordination unit is critical for the strength of the partnership and it is sometimes suggested that the partnerships should be separate legal entities. This might reduce MARD commitment to them but would increase their ability to carry out joint activities and include a high level of national expertise in their secretariats/coordination units. It has also been suggested that they be federated in the International Support Group (ISG) as a separate legal entity. In the view of this mission, this latter would be more likely to be a sustainable

[19] IPSARD has been successful in obtaining quite a number of small contracts and projects from donors but not for this purpose

alternative for the medium-term. It would make it easier to open-up new partnerships and wind-up those which had served their purposes, while maintaining important continuing functions such as websites. It could also encourage immediate non-continuing issues to be tackled by sub-sectoral task forces (Also important in this regard are the findings of the study of the Contribution of the Partnerships to Sector Coordination and Aid Effectiveness[20] but this study was focused on donor partnership and aid effectiveness); and

- Ways of buttressing the interest of MARD in strengthening the transition of the partnerships to broadly based national consultative mechanisms in-line with the role of MARD in a socialist market economy with a high level of decentralization in government services in line with "MARD Vision" developed with MSCP support.

It is further suggested that these developments would be reinforced, as would delivery on the "MARD Vision" if donors may wish to provide resources for a small fund operated by the ISG to support specific time-bound activities of the partnerships such as ad-hoc policy inputs for Government, small consultancies and the participation of academics in workshops.

Donor and Vietnam Government policies for national Trust Funds: In establishing national trust funds, national ownership is important but so is donor confidence and the avoidance of conflict of interest. Normally funds, whether making loans or grants are established autonomously from the primary institutions which they are designed to serve (are their clients such as ministries undertaking projects), although there usually will be participation from the clients and the funders in their boards. The Board should be the ultimate authority and the Chief Executive responsible to the Board. Staffing, lines of decision making and procedures should be independent of clients and funders and in this context it may also be noted that civil service procedures are seldom well suited to the operation of Funds. It is also important to have legal clarity on what constitutes an obligation for funding to the Fund and what constitutes a commitment to provide funds for a project. Clearly Funds can only commit resources of which they are assured and they should not commit more resources than they can rely on receiving.

National Disaster Management: In its present form the NDMP partnership is non-sustainable and largely non-functional but the coordination function it was serving for emergencies, particularly through access to information, including during an emergency, is essential and needs to be strengthened. The incidence of emergences due to natural disaster's is increasing in the region. Both MARD and donors need to accord this a priority.

The evaluation of the NDMP did not address the question of whether MARD should provide the institutional home for national disaster management. This responsibility was apparently assigned to MARD because most people and most land is rural and the responsibility for flood control structures is in MARD. In many other developed and developing countries this responsibility lies with a cross-ministerial secretariat in the office of the President or Prime Minister or sometimes in the Ministry of the Interior. It seems self-evident to this mission that a sector line ministry will face difficulties in commanding the authority to fill such a coordination and policy function, cutting across much of government but this is naturally a decision for the Government of Vietnam.

Future partnership in Agriculture and Rural Development in the new framework between Sweden and Vietnam: The mission was asked to examine this issue. It was noted with appreciation that the MACP Technical Assistance Component and the Policy Assistance Component had both committed resources to help identify opportunities. However, the mission did not find that it had evidence to draw any further conclusions of assistance to Sweden and Vietnam in this important step forward.

[20] Contribution of the Partnerships to Sector Coordination and Aid Effectiveness – The case of Agriculture and Rural Development in Vietnam: Jens Rydder, Dao Thanh Huyen, Lotta H gland Global Donor Platform, Hanoi, January 2008

Annex 1 Background

1 The Changing macro-context for agricultural and rural development

Vietnam is still agriculture-based country where 70% of population is living in rural areas and more than 57% of them make their livelihood on agriculture in earlier years of the 21st. century. By the year 2007, the share of agriculture to Vietnam's GDP has still occupied up to 20%.

Agriculture and rural development in Vietnam is still facing with significant obstacles such as:

– The policy mechanism is not yet strong enough to deal with new urgent issues. The progress of formulation and institutionalization of the Resolution (the National Assembly, the Government) enforced by ministries and local sectors remains slow. Many policies have been promulgated, however, the enforcement meet many difficulties. And some policies remain unpractical, overlapped and less feasible.

– The modernization and urbanization has promptly occurred. However, agricultural land area contraction and ecological environment recession are caused by the lack of the sound planning or broken land use planning; the long-term maintenance of domestic-directed policy (the Policy on incentive foreign investment and heavy industry development with the high intensity of investment capital and low intensity of labor force) both creates few job opportunities and causes obstacles for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, failing to deal with labor redundancy in rural areas.

– The labor redundancy, underemployment and low living standard among a part of population (especially in mountainous, isolated and remote areas), big gap between the rich and the poor and ecological environmental recession become burning issues, causing inequality and un sustainability and instability of present agriculture and rural areas.

– Over recent years, the mechanism of policy promulgation has encouraged localities and local people participating in rural infrastructure construction (transport roads, canal consolidation etc…). However, it has not yet encouraged organizations and individuals from economic sectors to involved in investment and trade of agricultural and rural infrastructure.

– Some policies are evaluated to have positive impact on the agricultural and rural development. However, they are still slow to be studied and considered for modification, for instance, capital contribution by using agricultural land use right, centralization of agricultural land areas in favor of industrialization and modernization of agricultural production. The tenure of agricultural land use (20 years for short-term crops) is not reasonable to encourage farmers to make investment in long-term agricultural development etc.

Main challenges can be summarised:

(i) Stagnant agricultural productivity;

(ii) Rigidities in promoting further agricultural and rural livelihood diversification;

(iii) Problems insufficient productivity growth, diversification and competitiveness are compounded by under-developed marking channels, institutions and infrastructure.resulting high post-harvest losses and transaction costs;

(iv) Widening poverty gap between urban and rural areas and between lagging regions and population groups;

(v) Unsustainable and inequitable patterns of natural resources use, access and control; and

(vi) Limited capacity of public institutions and public expenditure serving rural sector interests.

- With admission to AFTA/CEPT, WTO and other involvements, Vietnam's agriculture is more and more involved in the process of economic globalization and facing more serious competitiveness.
- Importance of efforts to develop and implement market regulations is increased.
- Influence of different stakeholders and sectors (private sector, business sector, international joint venture, urbanization process, etc) has been imposing stronger press requiring an urgent renovation of agriculture and rural policies.

2 Evolution of national government policy in agriculture and rural development

The agriculture and rural development have undergone a considerable evolution since the national reunification (1975) so far. Before the Renovation ("Doi Moi", 1986), the national economy including agriculture was governed by centrally planning approach. The harsh methods imposed in the peaceful time by the collectivized agriculture showed counter-productive as farmers were not happy with the system in which they had to contribute entirely their resources in exchange for income.

A big leap forward was undertaken in 1986 with the CPV's Resolution No 10/BTC of April 5th 1988 on renovation in agricultural management with significant changes in the policies on agriculture and rural areas through (i) Land is allocated to farmer households up to 20–50 years; (ii) State is no longer monopole in input delivery and output circulation control; (iii) Farmer households are recognized as the primary units of production instead of sole cooperatives; and (iv) New Law of Agricultural Cooperatives is issued in which farmers can freely choose their production modalities (private farm, mutual group, company or voluntary cooperative).

The rural development strategy is presently rested on three pillars, notably (i) creating opportunity via accelerating market-oriented reforms; (ii) Sustaining and managing natural resources for livelihood security; and (iii) mainstreaming poverty reduction via inclusion and empowerment.

The policies in A&RD are being renovated and characterized by following reflections:

- From monopole "state-ownership" to "multi-actor ownership" in A&RD: This is a significant change in mode of thinking among the leaders (State should not and can not cover everything);
- From the centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one;
- Restructuring agricultural production to achieve an appropriate balance between sub-sectors: crop, livestock and service;
- Promoting processing, storage and standardization of agro-products to increase added values;
- Beside food security, food quality and safety is more focused;
- More attention is paid on the sustainability of A&RD: promoting investment in the rural infrastructure, rural human resources, farmer livelihoods (electricity, road, health care service, schools, water supply, etc);
- Streamlining the global issues (conservation of natural resources, biodiversity, global climate change, greenhouse effect, disaster mitigation, etc) into A&RD programs;
- On August 5, 2008, the Communist Party of Vietnam adopted Resolution 26-NQ/TW on agriculture, farmers and rural areas with the aim of developing a comprehensive, modern and sustainable

agriculture. This document stated that "the issues related to agriculture, farmers and rural areas shall play a particularly strategic and important role at present and in the coming time. It is advised to put premium to promoting rural and agricultural industrialization and modernization in an attempt to develop a large-scale diversified agricultural sector with fast and sustainable growth and high productivity, quality and competitiveness. This facilitates to gradually establish a clean development mechanism (CDM) based agriculture, increase the added value of agroforestry and aquaculture by 3–3.2%/year, and develop the rural industry and services at the speed not lower than the national average percentage etc…".

– The Government is determined to make a shift from the strategies and policies for agriculture from production of specific goods to more strategic objectives focusing on economic development of the sector, food security, food safety and farmers' income and well being, while significantly reducing the importance of production planning and production direction.

3 Change in the role of MARD:

Today's MARD has been developed as a result of combining Ministry of State Farms, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Food, Ministry of Food Industry to become Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAFI) in 1987; and subsequently adding Ministry of Forestry (MF), Ministry of Irrigation (MI) in 1995 and lastly Ministry of Fisheries in 2007.

– The Ministry's tasks include not only those of the initial ministries but also the higher requirements of developing agriculture and rural areas sustainably, protecting associated natural resources and further gluing the agriculture, forestry and irrigation development with rural development with more than 60 million rural residents accounting for about 78% of national population.

– In period before 1987, the MAFI had 46 departments, 26 institutes, 13 schools, 53 producing and trading units (state farms, corporations, companies, enterprises, factories, etc). The MI had 3 research institutes, 1 university and 1 school and conducted implementing huge irrigation constructions. The MF had 2 research institutes, 8 training centers and a number of national parks. By the Decree No 01/2008/ND-CP of January 1st 2008 of the GoV, the MARD would comprise 22 state management units and 05 public services. As such, the MARD's structure has been more streamlined with more focus on implementation of macro-management and policy formulation; making clearer cut between the state management and public services.

The decree No. 01/2008/NĐ-CP on MARDs task: "Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is a state's agency, carrying out tasks of state management on such fields as agriculture, forestry, salt industry, aqualculture, water resource and rural development in the country; of state management on public services and fields under the management of the Ministry".

The following changes can be observed in the role of MARD:

– From managing an agriculture with narrow sense (crop & livestock production) to an agriculture with larger sense (crop production & livestock husbandry, forestry, irrigation, fishery). From single-sectors managing ministry to multi-sector ones to reduce the overlap and separation among them.

– Parts of the duties in land and water resources management were transferred to the MONRE. MARD undertakes the duties of water uses and clean water supplies for rural areas.

– Food supplies and circulation are no more monopole by the state-owned units. Private companies are allowed to do business, including exportation of agro-products. In collaboration with other ministries, MARD is assigned to monitor food security, paddy land uses and sufficient input supply for agricultural production at national level.

- Food processing is under management of Ministry of Industry and Commerce whereas MARD is responsible for primary processing in farm level.
- MARD undertakes state management of food safety in the production chain (for example, the case of controlling H5N1 in poultry production); while hygiene issues of food are under Ministry of Health and monitoring food standards in food circulation are under Ministry of Industry and Commerce.
- State farms previously managed by MARD have been re-arranged. Most of them have been transferred to the provincial level and/or transformed into joint stock companies. Protective forests (> 5000 ha) are managed by Protective Forest Management Boards under MARD. Production forests are managed by the Foretry General Company of Vietnam (MARD) or Paper General Company of Vietnam (Ministry of Commerce and Industry).
- Large scale production of commercial crops (rubber, tea, coffee, sugarcane, etc) is no longer under direct management of MARD and became state-owned or joint stock corporations.

a) Change in the role of the central ministry (MARD)

- MARD has larger mandates of a "macro-ministry" covering trans-sectoral development at macro-level.
- MARD focuses more on preparation of national strategy and policy for A&RD than direct involvement into control of production inputs and production processes as well as circulation of agricultural outputs.
- Large parts of state funds for agriculture and rural development previously invested through MARD now are transferred directly to provinces (for instance, funds for extension activities, disaster mitigation, forest protection and development, etc).
- MARD's functions of public service delivery are gradually detached from the functions of state management.
- The delegation and decentralization between MARD's functional units, between state management units and those at provincial level has been accelerated.
- The burden of MARD in financial management has been much reduced thanks to decentralization in this field (since 2005, three decrees on financial autonomy and self-responsiveness have been issued by the GoV).
- With accelerated decentralization and widened scope of its mandates, the central ministry will be able and should concentrate its efforts to the functions of policy making, inspection of regulation performance, monitoring quality standards and ensuring A&R sustainability.

b) Change in the role of the Provincial DARD

- In the past, DARDs were strongly dependent on MARD direction. A number of physical indicators were delivered to each province despite the local conditions and therefore in many case the provincial plans were often unfeasible. Certain DARDs has not enough leaders to attend regular and ad hoc meetings. In some cases, operational fund of DARDs was not enough to cover the fees for travelling and communication.
- DARDs are now empowered to decide, direct, monitor agricultural production in their localities (technical guidance; traning local extension and farmers; public services, etc).

– DARDs are more and more relaxed from the rigid and direct governance from the line ministries, including MARD.

– DARDs receive the state budgets allocated in the provincial budget but no longer through MARD budgeting system (for instance, budget for extension work, reserve fund disaster prevention and control and forest protection, etc);

– With the on-going delegation and decentralization, DARDs have to be re-structured and their personnel capacity is also strengthened to cope with new tasks assigned.

c) Change in the institutional relationships between MARD and the Provinces, research institutions, etc:

– In reality, DARDs are closely subordinate to the PPCs who decide their personnel, plan and budget. By the laws on local authorities, DARD is a part of the PPC administrative apparatus and its leadership is also nominated by the PPC.

– DARDs are subjected to MARD's professional direction, inspection and guidance. There is no more plan and performance indicators coming from MARD as previously done (for example, acreage, yields and production of each crop, varieties used, pesticides and chemical fertilizer delivery, etc). Presently DARD's activities are planned, approved and reviewed by the PPCs. DARDs are only to consult the MARD in technical issues and provide information for MARD to consolidate progress reports on the sector development.

– With the GoV Decision No 115, the research institutions have become autonomous in financing.

– As previously, MARD administers 39 schools. As they directly provide human resources for the A&RD sectors, so they will not be transferred to the other ministries.

– In according to Decision No 43 of the GoV, MARD is intensively realizing decentralization to the research & education centers in terms of personnel management, facility procurement, staff recruitment, financial management, etc.

– Re-arrangement of state-owned enterprises and economic units on one hand offer them to run their business in accordance with market laws and facilitate MARD to lessen its burden of administration. MARD's staff can avoid from handling many detail work in an ad hoc manner. Fees for travelling, transport and communication are considerably reduced.

December 5, 2009

Annex 2 Terms of Reference

1. Evaluation Purpose

The MARD Sida Cooperation Programme (MSCP) will be evaluated as an end-of-phase evaluation. The Swedish Government decided in 2007 to phase out the bilateral cooperation with Vietnam due to the fact that the country has reached the level of middle-income country.

The MSCP was planned to run from 2005 to mid-2008. It was extended in-time with an additional allocation of 4 MSEK initially from mid-2008 to end 2008 in order to consolidate and draw lessons from the support and pursue other avenues like actors for future cooperation between Sweden and Vietnam in the field of agriculture, forestry, food-safety, etc. A no-cost extension for 2009 was made with a reallocation of remaining funds to cover TA costs and facilitate the visioning process and Road Map for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) which was not finished by the end of 2008.

Thus, the aim of this evaluation is to evaluate the performance of the MSCP from 2005–2009 given the change in orientation that has taken place over the time of the project, and the independent external evaluation will be carried out by the Sida Advisory Team (SAT).

2. Background

The MSCP was designed as a logical evolution of several strands of support for MARD. The major precursor to the programme was the Mountain Rural Development Project (MRDP). Two of the components of the MRDP were directly relevant for MSCP: a policy support function in the ministry; and support for an *International Support Group (ISG)* dating back to 1997. The purpose of ISG was to support MARD generally and the International Cooperation Department (ICD) in particular by: coordinating with international donors, including NGOs on up-coming projects and programmes; building partnerships; fostering Vietnamese ownership of foreign supported projects; and acting as a facilitating mechanism in policy dialogue and coordination at vertical and horizontal levels (donors, ministries and provinces).

The MSCP programme aimed initially at supporting new forms of development cooperation in Vietnam, such as the various partnerships and trust funds established during the years preceding the MSCP, and was planned to run for the period 2005–2008. The programme also aimed at promoting a sector-wide approach, within the Agricultural and Rural Development Sector (ARD) in Vietnam and supporting the harmonisation process within the same, following the Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness.

The main objective of the programme was to support the integration and implementation of the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) into the ARD sector through institutional capacity building within MARD and its various partnerships. The objective has been gained through the introduction of Programme Based Approaches (PBA), Results Based Management (RBM), strategic policy dialogues, including the development of the new Rural Development Strategy and the National Forest Strategy to MARD and ARD leadership and staff.

During the early years of the programme it provided core support to the International Support Group (ISG), the Forestry Sector Support partnership (FSSP), Trust Fund for Forest (TFF), the Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership (NDM-P), the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Partnership (RWSSP), and the Avian Influenza Partnership (AIP) Support was also given to the Policy Advisory Group (PAG).

In 2007 a mid-term review was undertaken by the SAT-team.

During the implementation of MSCP the programme has to an increasing extent been engaged in sensitive policy and strategic issues including the MARD visioning process for a renewed, modern, more efficient ministry to meet the challenges of Vietnam in a market economy, and closely related to the modernisation of MARD. The change process, included stimulus for a change of mind-set and perspectives of MARD's leadership and staff by exposing them to new ideas and responsibilities of a public administration. Experience has been shared in the areas of management tools, structures, roles and responsibilities of a public administration, the cooperatives and the private sector.

As the core support to the partnerships were ending in 2008 the remaining components were focussing on the visioning process and policy capacity building (PAG, ICD, Technical Assistance (TA)). As from January 2009 the main focus of the TA component has been to focus on the development of MARD's institutional visioning process which provides a foundation for the whole reform process of MARD. The TA have also investigated possibilities for Partner Driven Cooperation in line with the new Swedish Country Strategy 2009–2013.

The visioning process has generated spin-off internal visioning work in departments within MARD, and the most progress has been achieved in the Department of Crop Production.

As the MSCP moves towards the end of its term, it is timely to undertake an external evaluation, to inform future interventions and learn lessons. This is particularly important as Swedish – Vietnam cooperation enters a new phase: The Government of Sweden has decided to phase out traditional development assistance to Vietnam over the next four to six years, and gradually replace it with Partner Driven Cooperation. Vietnam is one of seven countries to be phased out in which Sweden will shift to selective cooperation between Vietnamese and Swedish actors, and in prioritised areas such as the environment and climate change, and democracy/human rights.

This Terms of Reference (TOR) is for the external evaluation of the MSCP that is due to take place during November–December 2009. The SAT-RD will undertake this evaluation, drawing extensively on existing monitoring data and studies already commissioned by the programme.

The provisional title of the evaluation is: *"Study to assess the contribution of the MSCP to the institutional Reform Process within MARD"*.

3. Objectives

The objective of this assignment is to evaluate the performance of the MSCP from 2005–2009, making use of the standard OECD criteria as set out in the Sida Evaluation Manual:[21]

Effectiveness: The extent to which a development intervention has achieved its objectives, taking their relative importance into account.

Impact: The totality of the effects of a development intervention, positive and negative, intended and unintended.

Relevance: The extent to which a development intervention conforms to the needs and priorities of target groups and the policies of recipient countries and donors.

Sustainability: The continuation or longevity of benefits from a development intervention after the cessation of development assistance.

Efficiency: The extent to which the costs of a development intervention can be justified by its results, taking alternatives into account.

[21] *Looking Back, Moving Forward: Sida Evaluation Manual, Si*da, Stockholm, Sweden, 2004, page 25.

3.1 Programme objectives

The specific programme objectives have remained unchanged throughout the process although they are now somewhat obsolete:

Enhance the capacity of MARD for policy dialogue and coordination of donor support in order to further strengthen the integration and implementation of poverty related aspects during the new 5-year Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2006–2010 (SEDP) of the sector of agriculture and rural development,

Strengthen the institutional frameworks for partnerships under MARD's auspices and contribute to implementation of agreed partnership activities;

Assist MARD in its finalisation and application of SWAPs in the agricultural and rural development sector or, if this is not regarded feasible, for different sub-sectors.

The programme has evolved over time as the diverse influences on the approach to MSCP led to an organisational design with complicated lines of management, and components which mix the means of delivery (direct financial support and a TA component) with the objectives of the support (enhancing ICD capacity; strengthening MARD partnerships; and preparation for sector wide approaches). The design left the components largely independent and probably missed an opportunity early on in the programme for the TA component to be the 'glue' that holds the whole programme together. This has had a significant effect on the subsequent fragmented nature of much of the work that has been done. The programme has towards the end, however, on the request of MARD, supported the reform processes within MARD to enable MARD to adapt for a changing role in a changing society.

This has created problems for the follow-up as it is difficult to assess the programme from beginning to end through a logical framework process.

4. Scope of work

In order to narrow the focus of the evaluation, and make the best use of resources, this assignment will focus on a number of key questions and themes. The themes have partly been taken from the recent SAT Annual Review report 2008.

The main aim of this evaluation is to assess impact (to the extent practicable) and clarify results as regards the latter part of the programme which concerns the Institutional Visioning Process and the Road Map Process. However, the change in mandate over the length of the programme shall be assessed in the light of finding out how optimal the change process has been.

The evaluation shall look at the processes in the light of a changing world where Vietnam is moving towards full market economy, the necessary changes that need to take place on the Government side, i.e. PAR process, and how the MSCP has facilitated this shift.

a) Completion of the MARD Vision:

- To what extent has the MSCP managed to ensure that a process approach for the Visioning and Road map process at the policy and strategic level has moved forward and advanced to a stage where a completion of the process is visible as well as being able to continue unassisted once the MSCP is completed?
- Have clear benefits of the approach and ownership of the concept emerged, given the short time available for the advisory support?

b) Completion of Functional and Organisational (F&O) Analysis of MARD Departments and Linkages with the MARD Vision and LFA and Results Based Management

- How has the work with the Crop Production Department's own Road Map been turned into practice?
- Where is ICD as regards the functional and organisational analysis?
- How far has the process with the Department of Planning come as this is a key department in MARD in terms of the future orientation of the state management function. Planning is a key department in terms of implementing the vision enshrined in the GoV policy of centralised ministries focussing on policy and regulatory functions? The focus at the higher levels of MARD on the envisioning and achieving a shared common understanding and consensus is necessary for a change management process in the functional and technical departments of MARD
- Has a plan been produced for the extension of this activity with agreed milestones, and a Logical Framework?

c) Continuation of PAG/IPSARD Support

- What results and gains has the PAG achieved?
- Is there a mechanism for a continued influencing at the policy level internally?
- Has the IPSARD secretariat the capacity to maintain support on policy and strategic planning after the end of MSCP?
- Is there a mechanism in place for the PAG to continue within MARD?

d) Detailed Financial Management Report required by the Annual Review Meetings

- Has MARD managed to take a broad view of the overall progress under the programme and reallocate the remaining funds in line with priorities of MARD as a whole?

e) Partner Driven Cooperation (PDC) and Selective Cooperation

- How has the efforts/initiatives provided by MSCP facilitated the process of promoting PDC and Selective Cooperation?

f) Completion of Partnership Funding Commitments

- How have the partnerships that initially were funded among other by Sweden under the MSCP faired?
- Has MARD managed to secure sustainability for the partnerships?
- What progress has there been towards a programmatic approach within the various partnerships?

The key questions for the evaluation are therefore:

- To what extent has MSCP had an impact on *the institutional reform process* that MARD has embarked upon?
- To what extent has MSCP managed to act as a lever for MARD to act as a *model for PAR?*
- Does this model have the potential for *being replicated* elsewhere in the Government system?
- How has PAG influenced policy development in MARD?

5. The approach

The evaluation will mainly be reviewing documents and 'validating' the process of change through interviews. The evaluation will draw on existing data, studies and interviews with staff. These include among other:

- Annual reports
- Mid-term review
- The MARD Vision and Road Map

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COOPERATION PROGRAMME BETWEEN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF VIETNAM AND THE SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY – MSCP 2005–2009

The MARD-Sida Cooperation Programme (MSCP) was intended to facilitate the implementation of the 2000-2010 Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) in line with the national socio-economic development plan 2006-2010. The Programme was specifically tasked with enhancing the capacity of MARD: for policy dialogue with donors; improved coordination of donor support by strengthening the partnerships under MARD's auspices. The MSCP has made a unique contribution in facilitating a process in MARD to develop a "vision" for the ministry. A process was undertaken, which for the first time in Vietnam, initiated a dialogue among senior managers on the future orientation of the ministry. There has also been a contribution to the sustainability of an independent source of policy thinking to the senior management of MARD through the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD).

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