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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

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The Evaluation of VAHU Foundation on core support for the period 2011-05-30 – 2015-03-31

Final Report

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the period
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July 2015

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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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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BLCE	Buddhist Leadership in Civic Empowerment
CDCE	Community Development and Civic Empowerment Program
CDEC	Comprehensive Development Education Centre
CESD	Centre for Economic and Social Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EU	European Union
FESR	Framework for Economic and Social Reforms
LGED	Local Governance for Economic Development
MDRI	Myanmar Development Research Institute
MPC	Myanmar Peace Centre
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDI	VAHU Development Institute
YSF	Young Scholars' Network

Preface

The Embassy of Sweden in Myanmar commissioned the “Evaluation of VAHU Foundation on core support for the period 2011-05-30 – 2015-03-31” through Sida’s Framework Agreement for Reviews and Evaluations with Indevelop. The evaluation was undertaken between March and June 2015 by Jups Kluyskens and Matt Desmond. Quality Assurance was conducted by Niels Dabelstein. The project manager at Indevelop, Sarah Gharbi, was responsible for ensuring compliance with Indevelop’s QA system throughout the process, as well as providing backstopping and coordination.

The team would like to thank all those who made time available for this evaluation, in particular the Director and Deputy Director of VAHU and the Programme Manager of the Embassy of Sweden in Yangon.

Executive Summary

Sida's support to VAHU goes back a long way and its most recent support covers the period 2011 – 2015.

The key objectives of this evaluation are to generate information on how effective the support project has been in achieving results, identifying how much the move to Yangon influenced positive results and the original program outline. An important aspect for assessment and analysis is the partial move from the VAHU office in Chiang Mai to Myanmar with some of the activities now falling under Community Development and Civic Empowerment Program (CDEC) and Myanmar Development Research Institute (MDRI), and how this has affected the results.

VAHU was first registered in the USA in 2006 as a Foundation, VAHU Development Institute (VDI) and describes itself as a think tank dedicated to policy research, advocacy and citizen diplomacy in promoting broad-based social transformation and sustained economic development in least-developed countries of South East Asia. It promotes educational development and exchanges, people-to-people networks and partnerships, resource sharing and knowledge transfer essential to comprehensive and sustainable development.

In 2009 VAHU was created with a legal basis and office in Chiang Mai and after the move to Yangon VAHU created a local office in Myanmar and is legally registered as an NGO since early 2015. It has several in country programmes, including a local governance building programme, the CESD programme which conducts research and the CDCE local programme.

This evaluation started with an Inception Report, outlining how the work would be undertaken and identifying some serious setbacks, including a lack of available documents from Sida, including classified documents. In addition, Sida had only one contact point in VAHU who was not easy to access. This affected the preparation of the work and contributed to the fact that the team had a limited understanding of the VAHU Institute and also of Sida's support. The team managed, before and during the field work, to use and create different entry points and networks. In addition, the team split up in order to maximise data collection. Visits were organised in Yangon, in Mon State, in Naypyidaw and in Chiang Mai (Thailand).

The classified documents were received at a later stage and after agreement of confi-

dentiality. The team received the VAHU proposal 2010 submitted to Sida, including a results framework, the day after the mission came to an end.

The support to VAHU is a continuation of support to Myanmar since the early 2000s. Swedish aid is focused on democracy and human rights and on meeting urgent humanitarian needs. Since 2013, Sweden has emphasised support for: Increased respect for human rights, freedom of expression and accountability, broad popular participation in peace processes, and improved health for women and children, focusing particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Civil society organisations are important for supporting Myanmar's people and communities in the pursuit of their rights and the conduct of policy dialogue.

Building on previous rounds of support the unconditional, core grant that Sida provided was highly relevant to CSOs in Myanmar and enabled VAHU to continue its work in Chiang Mai and later in Yangon. The core support also attracted other donors who provided programme support. Sida did not carry out its intended lead-role in coordinating international support to VAHU due to human resource constraints. Sida's contribution as an unconditional grant was used for both core support and programme activities

The core training programmes were relevant to Myanmar NGO representatives as well as to government officials and others. The CDCE flagship programme is VAHU's three months training programme helping CSOs in applying development oriented theories and practices to their own practice, organisations and localities in Myanmar. The VAHU alumni from this training are now an important source to strengthen CSO's capacity, to build a local governance network and strengthen grassroots in development related activities.

Research that was undertaken was also relevant since very little research was being done from a development perspective inside the country and scholars and academics could come together, debate and exchange so that they could develop strategies, provoke change, create platforms for discussion and take part in international conferences. Without exception the teachers, VAHU staff, alumni and current students report that the programme is very effective and empowering at the individual level. There is anecdotal evidence that training has mobilised smaller CSOs in advocacy work and engaging with authorities on various development issues, including basic services. Creating and building capacity based on needs, included targeting ethnic states and religions has helped to establish action-oriented CSOs with a development orientation towards social transformation and democracy.

Other training courses were developed, including Promoting Governance for Local Government Program (PGLG) and the Local Governance for Economic Development (LGED) course. Different groups were targeted, including local government, political parties, MPs and a few civil society people.

The move to Yangon enabled VAHU to work more closely with government, CSO, politicians, and create networks for advocacy and change. VAHU's research programme moved to Yangon and housed itself within the Centre for Economic and Social Development (CESD) which is part of MDRI. This has proved a highly effective decision and CESD is now widely seen as the premiere policy institute in the country.

Engagement in policy discussions has been effective, such as the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) which is a tripartite agreement between government, the private sector and civil society. CSOs, however, have been critical of this engagement claiming that MDRI has monopolised the discussion and excluded groups. This has resulted in alienating parts of civil society with the risk that trust may not be easily restored.

The Sida grant has provided VAHU with flexibility allowing VAHU to operate in a challenging situation, responding to different needs and grasping opportunities when they arose. Both Yangon and Chiang Mai offices have finance and administration support and the operations between both is now running smoothly after some start-up challenges. During some years of the Sida support, grant-management capacity on VAHU's side was insufficient for an increasingly complex and multi-sited programme.

The evaluation finds that a lack of capacity also constrained the Sida contribution to the programme, and that the gaps on both sides of the partnership became self-reinforcing over time. A lack of programme-management resources on one side did not spur increased response or support from the other, because they also were inadequately resourced. The Sida programme-officer was initially managing 20 grants – an impossible task.

For VAHU, this gap was mainly manifested in late reporting and other communications with Sida. For Sida, it was manifested in their inability to take an active donor co-ordination role and to build on their VAHU partnership for stronger engagement with the reform process. The dual program-presence (Thailand and Myanmar) and the

shift to Yangon¹ during the grant period were other potentially constraining factors for both partners during the grant-period. For Sida, this disruption was not counter-balanced by increased opportunities such as VAHU was able to find.

The highest direct return on investment is by far the VAHU alumni network which has created a VAHU identity. VAHU has the potential for reach and influence across Myanmar civil society and this model has visible impact. The engagement with government and reform minded individuals is emerging but many have pointed out that the election results could have unexpected impact on VAHU should less reformist blocs dominate the parliament or the office of President.

This evaluation finds that VAHU has positioned and navigated itself very successfully in this complex context to meet the overall objectives of the programme – or project that Sida has supported.

To date, it is largely the lack of resources which has constrained this growth. This is an excellent opportunity for a donor seeking to support impact through an existing resource.

¹ Please note: some activities have still not moved, to Yangon

1 Introduction

Sida's cooperation with VAHU (VAHU Development Institute/VAHU Foundation) has a long history. The founders were in the 1990s associated with the Burma Fund, a think-tank of the US-based government in exile, and established the independent Young Scholars' Network (YSF) in 2001. YSF received a small, two-year support from Sida in 2003-04, and based on these experiences the, then recently Thailand-based, VAHU Development Institute received a three-year, 8 MSEK support for 2006-08.

During this period VAHU established itself in Chiang Mai and started its two major training programmes for civil society activists from inside Burma/Myanmar; the Community Development and Civic Empowerment Program (CDCE) which had reached almost 260 participants (50% women) by the end of 2010, as well as a similar, but shorter Buddhist Leadership in Civic Empowerment (BLCE) programme for monks and nuns. Former students of the CDCE programme now form an important alumni network in Myanmar and some were deeply involved in the monitoring of social impact after Nargis during 2008-2010.

Sida's support to VAHU for the period 2011-2013 was a three year grant which had two no-costs extensions running until June 2015. The final report on the activities is expected shortly and all the resources provided have been exhausted.

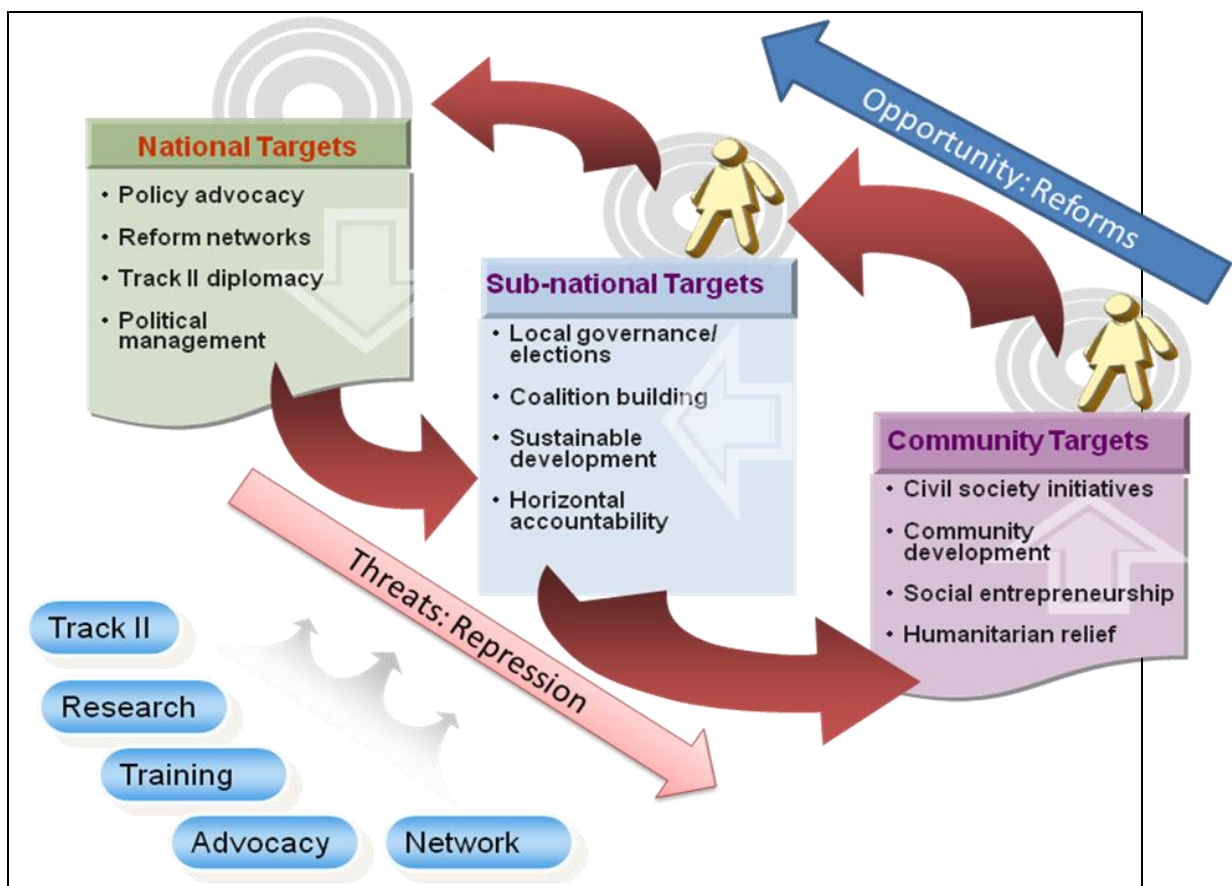
With a new government in Myanmar came new opportunities and after the first year VAHU had the chance to move staff and parts of its activities into Myanmar. This unexpected opportunity has provided VAHU with the chance to capitalise on the work that was undertaken from its Chiang Mai base.

Since 2012, VAHU has worked from both Chiang Mai and Yangon. Sida's funding has provided core support in both countries. The CDCE programme continues at Chiang Mai University and selection interviews for the 16th group were ongoing during this evaluation. Much of the programme's preparation, teaching resources, follow-up and alumni services are now managed by the Comprehensive Development Education Centre (CDEC), a VAHU-initiated organisation in Yangon. Also in 2012 the Myanmar Development Research Institute (MDRI) was established in Yangon and the VAHU leadership and alumni play a key role in the research activities conducted by MDRI's Centre for Economic and Social Development (CESD).

1.1 WHAT IS VAHU?

VAHU was first registered in the USA in 2006 as a Foundation, VAHU Development Institute (VDI), and describes itself as a think tank dedicated to policy research, advocacy and citizen diplomacy in promoting broad-based social transformation and sustained economic development in least-developed countries of South East Asia. VAHU also contributes to capacity building initiatives undertaken by Community Development and Civic Empowerment Program at the Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

It promotes educational development and exchanges, people-to-people networks and partnerships, resource sharing and knowledge transfer essential to comprehensive and sustainable development. It had 3 level basic strategies: (1) civil society development at grassroots levels (2) community coalition building at the subnational level (3) reform advocacy at the national level. Its strategy diagram below was developed for the period 2011 onwards and thus covers the period of this evaluation.



Box 1: VAHU strategy diagram (with permission from the VAH management)

The Community Development and Civic Empowerment (CDCE) Program was founded in 2006 by the VAHU Foundation. It is a three-month certificate training

program at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Chiang Mai University for community leaders, NGO workers, and other civil society actors from Myanmar. CDCE's key strategy is the capacity building of young leaders and engaged citizens who are in a position to positively influence the development process in the country. To this end, the CDCE program provides active learning experiences that develop participants' practical skills in development programming as well as their understanding of participation, empowerment, transparency, accountability, and sustainability of civil society activities and the greater development process. Since its start it has trained 15 batches of approximately 30 students coming from Myanmar. The shorter Buddhist Leadership in Civic Empowerment (BLCE) programme for monks and nuns is based on the CDCE programme. It has trained 10 batches but had to stop since it was too difficult to get participants out of Myanmar.

In 2009 VAHU was created with a legal basis and office in Chiang Mai and started working closely with Chiang Mai University's Faculty of Social Sciences. Later the cooperation was expanded with the Faculty of Political Sciences in order to set up new training programmes.

After the move to Yangon, VAHU created a local office in Myanmar and is legally registered as an NGO since early 2015. It has several in-country programmes, including a local governance building programme, the CESD programme which conducts research and the CDCE local programme.

2 Methodology and Approach to the Evaluation

The evaluation started with an inception phase to scope the evaluation and understand the background of VAHU, Sweden's engagement with Myanmar from Stockholm and then Bangkok from 2008, the changes in Myanmar starting in 2011 and the partial move of VAHU activities to Myanmar shortly after.

A lack of available documents had a somewhat negative impact on the evaluation work during the inception phase, most of the Embassy documents are classified or were otherwise unavailable at the start of the evaluation. A teleconference with the Embassy provided the consultants with some background information, including information about the Embassy's lack of human resources for programme management. Unfortunately, the Embassy was unable to provide the evaluation team with names of key informants within the government or in civil society. This is partly due to the fact that Sweden's previous country strategies for Myanmar have been confidential - contacts with the government have therefore been limited. The current strategy is public.

In addition, Sida's only contact point had been one of the VAHU leaders who now serves as Presidential Advisor and who is a very busy person and not easy to access.

This affected the preparation of the work and contributed to the fact that the team had a limited understanding of the VAHU Institute and also of Sida's support.

The required meetings for the field work could therefore not be organised before arriving in Yangon. The team managed to interview former Sida staff and other persons who had been exposed to VAHU or Sida at the time and slowly started to get a better picture of who to approach and how to maximise data collection.

The team managed before and during the field work to use and create different entry points and networks. In addition, the team split up in order to maximise data collection. Visits were organised in Yangon, in Mon State, in Naypyidaw and in Chiang Mai (Thailand).

The classified documents were received at a later stage and after agreement of confidentiality. The team received the VAHU proposal 2010 submitted to Sida, including a results framework, the day after the mission came to an end, so no data was collected in order to assess the different proposal objectives. This is unfortunate since the VA-

HU proposal included results areas that were also used for the annual reports. If the team had been aware of this, the evaluation methodology would have assessed progress against these result areas. In the absence of having the document, the evaluation matrix has been the framework against which this report is written and served as the basic evaluation methodology.

An additional challenge was that VAHU reports are written against the proposal objectives, but progress towards the objectives includes support from other donors.

As “core support” Sida resources are not tagged to specific activities but to areas of the strategy (see efficiency below, including diagram). Since other donors earmarked their support, Sida’s grant was used for both core support and programming.

The move to Yangon complicated matters and the team spent considerable time trying to disentangle the Sida grant from other donors’ support to VAHU. Moreover, other donors had different timelines in their support.

During the field visit, the evaluation matrix was used as a guidance to collect data and the team managed to interview of total of 67 persons:

- 25 alumni from the CDCE programme
- The Director of VAHU
- The Sida Programme Manager
- 6 CSO leaders in Myanmar, Yangon
- Various other key VAHU stakeholders, including Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC)
- CESD research team-members
- 6 Local officials who have attended the PGLG programme
- 2 Parliamentarians who have attended LGDE programme
- CEDC team , alumni, trainers and trainer managers/organisers
- Financial and admin persons in both Yangon and Chiang Mai
- 5 Donors/collaborators with VAHU
- The Chiang Mai based Deputy Director and her staff and the VAHU Board president and former Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The evaluation was highly dependent on interviews and the evaluation matrix was created to meet the quality standards of Indevalop which includes developing questions in response to the ToR for all the five OECD DAC criteria - relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.

The draft report was submitted to the Sida’s Programme Manager (Myanmar) and the Director of VAHU for comment, reflecting the participatory approach that was envisaged in the ToR. The interviews were conducted applying Chatham House rules and

it was agreed with all interviewees that no quotes would be included in the report and also not their names.

3 Sweden's Country Strategy

Sweden has provided support to the Burmese refugees in Thailand and to the media in exile during the last two decades². Since the early 2000s, Sweden also financed activities inside the country.

The EU Council Decision concerning restrictive measures against Myanmar/Burma, together with the Swedish Government Communication "Freedom from Oppression", (2009) sets the framework and the goal for Sida's operations globally.³

Swedish aid is clearly focused on democracy and human rights and on meeting urgent humanitarian needs. The Swedish Government Communication "Freedom from Oppression" emphasises support for democratisation and respect for human rights and is a guiding star for Sida's work globally.

Sida's country strategy for Myanmar applies to the period 2013-2017 and a maximum sum of SEK 750 million is available for programming. Target groups are mainly women and ethnic minorities. The purpose of activities within the framework of the strategy⁴ contribute to:

1.1 Increased respect for human rights, freedom of expression and accountability

- Increased capacity of civil society and strengthened democracy actors.

² Sweden also hosted the two Bommersvik Conventions of the government-in-exile in 1995 and 2002.

³ Council conclusions on Burma/Myanmar 3082nd FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting Luxembourg, 12 April 2011: Under current circumstances, the EU deems it necessary to renew the restrictive measures for a period of twelve months. In doing so, however, the EU reiterates its willingness to encourage and respond to improvements in governance and progress, in the hope that a greater civilian character of the Government will help in developing much needed new policies. The application of the visa ban and asset freeze will be suspended for certain civilian members of the Government, including the Foreign Minister as an essential interlocutor, for a period of one year, subject to continued review. The ban on high level visits to the country will also be lifted, anticipating access to senior levels of the Government, and to key opposition figures. The EU will assess the new Government by its deeds, and will review the set of restrictive measures accordingly.

⁴ Results strategy for Sweden's international development cooperation in Myanmar, 2013 – 2017. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Government Offices of Sweden.

- Increased political influence of women and ethnic minorities.
- More independent media and higher journalistic quality.

1.2 Broad popular participation in peace processes

- Strengthened capacity of national and regional institutions to manage and resolve conflicts in a peaceful way.
- Increased participation of women in the peace processes.
- Increased participation of ethnic minorities in the peace processes.

1.3 Improved health for women and children, focusing particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

- Increased access to basic health services for women and children, especially in those parts of the country where access is poorest.
- Increased number of births taking place in the presence of trained staff, with the ambition that Sweden's contribution leads to at least an additional 2 800 births taking place in the presence of trained staff⁵

Since 2009, Sweden has emphasised support for democratic development and human rights, especially civil and political rights. Civil society organisations are important for supporting Myanmar's people and communities in the pursuit of their rights and the conduct of policy dialogue. Through its support to civil society, Sweden also aims to actively contribute to ensuring that legislation and other instruments include a gender equality perspective and strengthen women's and ethnic groups' political influence in order for their rights to be respected.

In its strategy it's asserted that 'possible support in the area may include initiatives that strengthen or build trust between the government and ethnic groups, and between different ethnic groups'.⁶

⁵ Results strategy for Sweden's international development cooperation in Myanmar, 2013 – 2017. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Government Offices of Sweden, pages 2 and 3

⁶ Results strategy for Sweden's international development cooperation in Myanmar, 2013 – 2017. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Government Offices of Sweden, page 5.

4 Changes in Myanmar: the context⁷

A process of political and economic reform began in 2011. Most political prisoners have been released and relatively free and fair by-elections have been held. Censorship of the media has been softened and formerly exile media are gradually establishing in the country. Negotiations have begun with the armed ethnic resistance groups and fourteen bilateral truce agreements have been entered. Myanmar's political transition from military authoritarianism to an evolving parliamentary system has gained worldwide attention. Local and international scepticism regarding the flawed national elections of November 2010 gave way to a period of cautious optimism after the by-elections of April 2012 brought representatives from the National League for Democracy into the parliaments.

In particular, Nobel Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's metamorphosis from long-term political prisoner into national parliamentarian was seen as key evidence of the government's sincerity in its reform agenda. Since then, the country has embarked on a journey towards fundamental change, encountering severe challenges, setbacks, and renewed criticism but also encouraging developments.

During the previous period, however, there were a high number of diaspora outside Myanmar, of which four million in Thailand and smaller communities around the world. Many different social movement organisations were created, including VAHU in the US and Chiang Mai. Many of these movements linked up with other international movements such as regional and international parliamentarian and women's networks. Once the authorities removed many exiled from the immigration blacklist a few prominent exiles visited Yangon in 2011, amongst whom were the co-directors of VAHU.

Myanmar still faces major democratic challenges. The constitution lacks popular support and guarantees the military a quarter of the seats in parliament, which gives them a veto on constitutional amendments. The capacity to implement and institutionalise

⁷ This section relies heavily on documents collected from the web by the team, including work by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Asia Foundation, International Crisis Group, and a Master thesis by Yee Yee Htun.

reform is low. There are still political prisoners, and those who have been released have not been released unconditionally.

In addition, the protracted conflicts between the central government and various ethnic groups, which continue to cause great human suffering and violations of human rights, pose a serious obstacle to progress. The ceasefire agreements rest on shaky grounds. The armed conflict in Kachin and northern Shan continues. There is extensive discrimination against minorities such as the Rohingya. The role of the army in the conflicts in ethnic minority areas is still key.

Myanmar is one of the world's least developed countries with widespread poverty. All assessments point to an enormous need for social, economic and institutional development. The country is ranked 149th of 168 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index (2013). There are major shortcomings with regard to access to basic social services. From a regional perspective, both infant mortality and maternal mortality are high. Two thirds of the population earn their living from agriculture (including fishing and forestry).

Within the above context VAHU has navigated its location, its programmes, and its relationships during the period under review. The VAHU leadership has assessed the change in government in 2010-11 as the long awaited window-of-reform and an opportunity to be seized. Much of the VAHU programme has moved in-country. CESD has deeply engaged with reform elements in the government, especially those linked to the office of President, and has offered its policy-research expertise, its international networks and its nation-wide association of alumni. As a civil-society organisation, CEDC has promoted engagement of civil society with reform initiatives, and works to address the huge capacity requirements of the Myanmar society and state. In Chiang Mai, CDCE increasingly draws government officials into its 12-week programme and alumni activities.

The window-of-reform is not universally subscribed to – VAHU's own assessment is that reform elements remain a minority. Within government there are very significant vested interests that resist and oppose change. Within civil society, there are many who fundamentally distrust the current leadership and write off the initiatives of recent years as a cosmetic ploy to retain power and to win international approval.

The outcome will affect VAHU both in Yangon and Chiang Mai in terms of whether and how VAHU can continue and expand its programmes. The worst case scenario is that VAHU may need to operate very carefully in Myanmar and use the Chiang Mai base as a fall-back position. In any case VAHU will continue its CDCE training in Chiang Mai.

5 Findings

5.1 RELEVANCE

Building on previous rounds of support the unconditional, core grant that Sida provided was highly relevant. Firstly, it provided continuity to earlier support and enabled VAHU to continue its core activities, including training, research and outreach to the media and international organisations. Secondly, the support was intended to attract other donors – which materialised. Earmarked contributions from other donors were forthcoming. Denmark financed a local governance training programme while Norway financed 2 years of CDCE training.

A missed opportunity, however, was the failure to consolidate on the donor-side of the relationship, where Sida was to take a lead role. The latter never happened amongst others as a result of Sida's human resources constraints. Once, Sida moved to Yangon, however, coordination never took place among VAHU supporting donors and in particular those sharing one office.

The CDCE training has been offered to Myanmar NGO representatives, and increasingly government officials, without interruption, on average 2 batches of 30-32 persons per year. This training has been relevant to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in order to enable them to apply development oriented theories and practices to their own practice, organisations and localities. The learning, group work, development orientation and exposure to Thai governance and development programmes provided participants with practical tools, models and skills. In addition it created group cohesion and trust which has been an important factor in creating an alumni network once participants returned to Myanmar.

The VAHU alumni are an important source to strengthen CSO's capacity, to build a local governance network and strengthen grassroots in development related activities. The network that has been established over the years now reaches almost 1000 with the CDCE programme alumni network reaching 500. They have been and continue to be relevant resource persons for grassroots, governance and democracy activities, including in the states. Before the move to Yangon, VAHU alumni were the only active source for VAHU for grassroots activities and advocacy.

Research that was undertaken was also relevant since very little research was being done from a development perspective inside the country. Moreover, there was a lack

of data to work with and data were owned by government. Research was also relevant to the extent that scholars could come together, debate and exchange so that they could develop strategies to induce/provoke change, create platforms for discussion and take part in international conferences. This was also a way to inform the international community, including development partners and mobilise their support. It led to media exchanges and informing a global audience about what was going on in Myanmar. CESD's work on the national Framework for Economic and Social Reforms and the governance research it has done with The Asia Foundation are widely acknowledged as premiere policy contributions.

Given the shifting environment not all areas may have been covered as planned but Sida's provision of core funding was very relevant to the context - it enabled VAHU to use the grant flexibly and in some cases opportunistically. For example, Sida's core funding was critical in enabling CESD to respond quickly to the FESR opportunity in 2012, and to many other requests from government to set up international expertise and linkages. It was also very relevant to the shifting context of development assistance – some of the Sida grant was used as bridging support for CDCE in 2013 to maintain programme continuity when Norwegian funds were not granted in 2013.

The support was also relevant in enabling VAHU to become a partner or discussant when other policy or development opportunities arose. VAHU grasped the opportunity to be part of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) which is a tripartite agreement between government, the private sector and civil society. CSOs are involved in order to create a long term accountability checks-and-balances mechanism once the country moves forward in this area and foreign capital is attracted to invest in natural resources.

The Director of VAHU openly praises the relevance of this Sida support to the transition in Myanmar – its flexibility, its core nature, and its timeliness. We heard from a range of informants that Sida, alone amongst the OECD donors, was willing to make this type of investment in 2010. At the same time we heard the current concern that, just when Myanmar needs more “entrepreneurial” and “investment-based” support from development partners, there are few recent signals of similar types of support which allow CSOs to work flexibly and grasp opportunities for reform when they arise.

5.2 EFFECTIVENESS

Sida's contribution as an unconditional grant was used for both core support and programme activities. This grant modality enabled the VAHU leadership to use the resources for organisational costs, including salaries; program activities and linkages

and relationships. It was also used to bridge gaps and as the core funding it attracted resources from donors who provided grants for program activities only.

The financing of the Chiang Mai offices, and later Yangon, put VAHU in a position to attract additional resources, for example, programme resources from the European Union (EU).

The CDCE programme has been the flagship VAHU programme since 2006. It is a 3 month capacity building training program aiming to support a new generation of grassroots-level change makers. It has multiple components and the curriculum is changed for each batch depending on their needs and the changing situation in Myanmar. The training is available primarily for civil society actors from communities and local NGOs. Since 2013, government staff from the Ministry of Rural Development and Livestock and Fisheries and Ministry of Home Affairs have also been participants. VAHU leadership pointed out that this was a deliberate choice in order to target reform minded officials in government. In addition, Training of Trainers (ToT) programs were also developed so that ex-students could train others in country and create a snowball effect in terms of empowering grassroots CSOs and developing locally relevant development initiatives.

The training has been developed in close cooperation with Chiang Mai University and the Faculty of Social Sciences. For each batch 30-32 students are selected and the latest batch, number 16, is selected in Yangon with the assistance from Chiang Mai based staff. The selection criteria include having a university degree, two years of experiences in community work, work in an organisation and Basic English. Gender balance, ethnicity and representation of different areas in the country are also taken into account.

Without exception, the teachers, VAHU staff, alumni and current students report that the programme is very effective and empowering. We heard descriptors such as “transformative”, “life-changing” and “turned our CSO practice on its head”. Individual careers have also been advanced through the CDCE. We heard frequent examples of subsequent promotion in their organisations, and of further graduate studies at MA level or beyond. Some alumni have gone on to establish their own CSO or grassroots group. Also for the University of Chiang Mai, it has been a good experience and helped in shaping their international relations programme.

This evaluation finds, based on interviews both in Chiang Mai and Yangon that effectiveness of the training is based on:

- The environment in which students work together, including exposure to development initiatives and experience in Thailand

- Excellent teachers and scholars who address both theoretical and practical topics, including skills development and project visits.
- An excellent partnership with Chiang Mai university which provides a critical resource for relevant training to students
- Participants from different backgrounds working together and being exposed to different ideas and concepts – including more recently government and civil society participants.
- Providing space for thinking, debating and discussing how they could apply what they learned in the Myanmar context
- Excellent organisation and support from both Chiang Mai VAHU team and the Yangon CDEC team.
- The increasing in-country field-work component – batches 16 and 17 will spend up to one month in supervised, thematic field-work in Myanmar.

It is less known to what extent organisations or beneficiaries benefitted from the CDCE programme alumni's training. There is anecdotal evidence that training has mobilised smaller CSOs in advocacy work and engaging with authorities on various development issues, including basic services and that alumni meet voluntarily to discuss what can be pursued. The team did not have the opportunity to systematically visit smaller CSOs in some of the states where VAHU alumni are working. Although there is an alumni database in Yangon and active alumni network support from CDEC, it appears that there is no systemic monitoring of alumni's activities, how they progress and what the impact is at grassroots level.

Creating and building capacity based on needs, included targeting ethnic states and religions has helped to establish action-oriented CSOs with a development orientation towards social transformation and democracy. The alumni network has also proven to be a good source for continued VAHU advocacy and development related activities, also in the states. It is also starting to create an entrance to government officials although most of the VAHU government officials are still relatively junior. Reform minded individuals may not serve in key posts and need to manoeuvre cautiously.

Given the uncertain situation in Myanmar, all those who were interviewed suggested that the CDCE programme should stay in Chiang Mai since the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and the students have such important and relevant exposure to university staff and examples from elsewhere, including Thailand itself. It continuous to

be a safe set-up if any changes occur that would threaten or undermine VAHU's existence in Yangon and in particular after the upcoming elections. In comparison to Myanmar universities it is the best educational facility nearby⁸ and from an overall perspective a high return on investment for both VAHU and students.

The move to Yangon enabled VAHU to work more closely with Government, CSOs, politicians, and create networks for advocacy and change. Without exception it has provided important opportunities for engaging with all of the above mentioned entities, establishing VAHU and continuing activities in-country. In principle the CDCE course could move to Yangon but VAHU has concluded that time is not yet right due to the uncertainty of the reform process and the continued effectiveness of this long standing cooperation with Chiang Mai university. The evaluation agrees that in the meantime, the CDCE programme provides an excellent option to continue building a strong civil society in Myanmar.

A new training course was developed in 2012-13 to develop state-society working knowledge and relationships at the sub-national level, the Promoting Governance for Local Government Program (PGLG). This program led to the cooperation with the Faculty of Political Sciences at Chiang Mai University. The programme was convened twice in 2013. It targeted four townships and selected a mix of political-party members, local officials (including the General Administration Department and Township Development Committees), and civil society people. There were 5 participants from each township in each course. Participants learned about local governance and decentralisation, participatory budgeting, public administration theory, process facilitation and were exposed to a wide range of rural and municipal governance actors and programmes in Thailand. After completing the PGLG programme, all participants were required to lead two-day workshops in their townships for similar mixed groups. At the time of evaluation, funding for these replicated workshops had dried up, though the ToT alumni-groups remain active – and hopeful.

Another VAHU programme that was being implemented during the period under review was Local Governance for Economic Development (LGED) course. This was a more high-powered programme targeting political parties, MPs and a few civil society people. The main topics subjects were decentralisation, electoral systems, public policy and media advocacy. Again, exposure to local governance programmes and

⁸ CDCE participants are required to travel "overland".

actors in Thailand was heavily emphasised.

The evaluation team met two LGED alumni. One came back from the course in 2009, immediately founded a political party, and is now the State Minister of Planning. The other did the course in 2012 when he was already an MP and he reports now that he has used what he learned to draft 10% of the total legislation that has gone through the state parliament between 2013 and 2015.

The unavailability of resources means that both these governance programmes are not currently being offered. With options for decentralised administration looming in Myanmar, the demand for this type of programme will increase exponentially. The VAHU targeted training approach in this context appears to be the only one on offer according to various interviewees.

The media training programme⁹ was provided only once. Early in the period under review, VAHU made the tactical decision to de-prioritise its intended media initiatives which also included web-platforms, a biannual Development Review, blogs and radio shows. Direct policy-research and policy-influencing opportunities arose much more quickly than anticipated, and these became the primary focus. Working with media in Myanmar's transition has proved a very challenging prospect for all development actors as journalistic freedoms blow hot and cold, and ownership of the media landscape is heatedly contested. The evaluation-team is also doubtful that the VAHU team has the right capacity-mix for this area of work.

Early in the grant-period (2012) VAHU's research programme moved to Yangon and housed itself within the Centre for Economic and Social Development (CESD) within the newly-established MDRI. This has proved a highly effective decision and CESD is now widely seen as the premiere policy institute in the country. Its Yangon base has provided many international donors and academics with access to local researchers and policy advisors, data, insider-information, translations of more technical policy-papers, and to a lesser extent to the policy discussion itself. It has been a key link also for government officials at the highest level to access international policy practice and advice. Informants from different backgrounds, including CSO representatives consider that CESD is the best performing centre within MDRI and its research of good quality and relevant.

⁹ This is the "development journalism" programme in the original VAHU proposal.

Sida has stated clearly that its support for VAHU was partly motivated in order to have access to this national-international policy discussion. It is therefore puzzling that we find Sida has been largely inactive during the grant-period in availing themselves of the networks, actors and research products that they have helped to fund. It is possible that the link between VAHU and CESD has not been clearly understood - very few of our informants knew of it. It is MDRI as the umbrella for CESD (and two other Centres) that occupies the public profile as a prominent and visible institute.

VAHU has also chosen not to highlight this relationship, particularly as MDRI's independence is increasingly questioned since the VAHU Director was appointed a Presidential Advisor in August 2013. This questioning is discussed further in Section 5.4 (Sustainability).

For VAHU this has been a constant balancing act in terms of making choices and trade-offs, and its ability to balance has been largely due to the connections and skills of the Director and support from the Chiang Mai office. Despite this indispensable leadership-role, we found clear indicators of an emerging "second-line" leadership within all the teams in both Yangon and Chiang Mai. This was amply demonstrated when the evaluation team joined the final day of preparation for a major household-based research project in Mon State. While the Director had been unexpectedly called away to another meeting¹⁰ the project-team of CSED researchers and CDCE alumni was very effectively facilitating a group of 60 community enumerators in the final stages of training and preparation.

5.3 EFFICIENCY

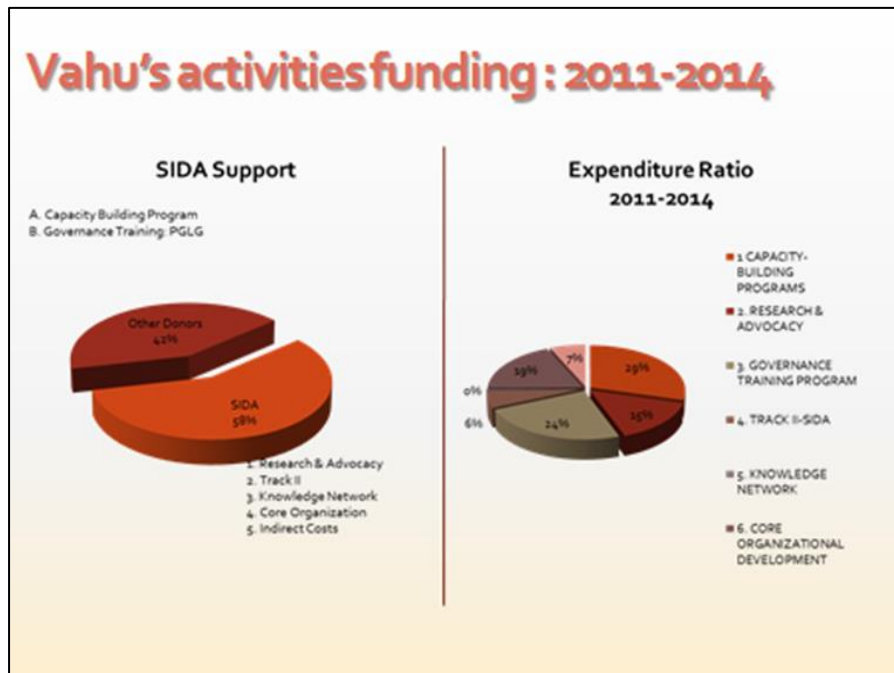
The Sida grant has provided VAHU with flexibility allowing VAHU to operate in a challenging situation, responding to different needs and grasping opportunities when they arose. The move to Yangon has been a key driver to engage directly with stakeholder in Myanmar, including that VAHU can now operate directly with government, civil society, the private sector and other institutions. This has increased the programme's effectiveness and efficiency.

Both Yangon and Chiang Mai offices have finance and administration support and the

¹⁰ The ADB Annual Meeting in Azerbaijan.

operations between both is now running smoothly after some start up challenges. The Chiang Mai office remains the key leading office and includes the VAHU Deputy Director; it now also has an independent board structure.

The table below shows the relative contribution of Sida and what areas of the VAHU strategy it has funded. Resources have been used both to mobilise programme money from other donors and to finance basic operations.



Box 2: VAHU Funding and Sida's contribution (with permission from the VAHU management)

There were some differences in informants' opinions about costs, for example, that it may be more efficient to hold the CDCE training in Yangon. This evaluation finds these opinions to be rather Yangon-centric. Unlike some of the other programmes available to Myanmar "development-workers", the CDCE does not draw the majority of its participants from Yangon and the Delta. Many of its participants come from localities closer to Chiang Mai than to Yangon. Even if there were cost-efficiencies in moving the programme, these would be false savings as the range of exposure, freedom of discussion and education facilities cannot yet be offered in Myanmar.

The highest direct return on investment is by far the VAHU alumni network which has created a VAHU identity. Alumni are well regarded and respected because of their CDCE training. VAHU has the potential for reach and influence across Myanmar civil society and each batch of student receive training that reflects the situation of Myanmar at that time. This asset is and continues to be very valuable and in that sense Value for Money is very positive.

For reasons outlined above (rf. 5.1) the return on investment in policy-research cannot

yet be determined. If the incoming government in 2016 endorses, prioritises, and accelerates “irreversible reform that meets the aspirations of Myanmar’s people”¹¹, then VAHU (and its donors) should rightly be given significant credit.

In some years of the Sida support, we find that the grant-management capacity was insufficient for an increasingly complex and multi-sited programme. As CSOs have gained more room to establish themselves, scale up and manoeuvre, it has become increasingly challenging in Myanmar to retain staff and skills pertaining to CSOs.

VAHU reporting, including financial reporting has not met the donor standards of timeliness and attribution and has no doubt contributed to the distance we observed between Sida and VAHU. At the same time narrative reports have increased in detail and analysis with each annual report and more description is now being provided of what kind of activities have been undertaken. The annual reports reflect the programme objectives and report in an accumulative sense over the years reflecting a better understanding of CSO’s needs, policy challenges and engaging with a range of stakeholders across the country.

Reporting efficiencies were also commented on by other donors we met. Of particular concern is the difficulty in filling the Programme Co-ordinator position at CESD which has been vacant for four months now. We found the internal reporting generated by both the CDEC and CDCE teams to be of an above-average to high standard. Any fiduciary risk of sub-standard reporting has been largely negated by the annual external audit during the life of the grant. The evaluation team certainly found no suggestion whatsoever that system inefficiencies were being exploited.

VAHU also requested two no-cost extensions as a result of remaining unused funds and some activities undertaken at a later date. Unevenness in planned expenditures are a results of grasping opportunities as they occur, including the move to Yangon. It is expected that the resources will be used by the end of the extended period and that reporting will be as agreed with Sida.

The terms of reference for this evaluation specifically preclude a review of impact and sustainability. Notwithstanding this, questions of impact and sustainability were raised by the evaluation and brief comment follows.

¹¹ The first objective of the FESR refers.

5.4 SUSTAINABILITY

All the alumni we met, government and civil society, emphasised to us that the alumni network will continue to exist and will remain an important source for continued individual and CSO strengthening. While few formal alumni meetings have been organised due to a lack of resources, the alumni informants are all active via local networks and social media.

The CDCE training model is sustainable in the sense that donors will most likely be able to fund more batches. We found no indication that the co-operation with Chiang Mai University will be discontinued in the foreseeable future. However, VAHU itself and its wider activities are dependent on core resources. Core support will continue to be necessary for overheads, building the teams' capacities, and for being immediately responsive to opportunities when they arise. At the same time CESD/VAHU is also well-positioned to earn revenue via commissioned studies, policy-briefs, convening power, etc. It can already mobilise resources for training offered locally.

The engagement with government and reform minded individuals is emerging but many interviewees have pointed out that the election results could have unexpected impact on VAHU. Sida, given all its previous investment, has laid important foundations for change. The strengthening of CSOs is irreversible and they will continue their work even if the election results are negative. This means, however, that core, flexible support is necessary to enable VAHU to push for reforms without interruption.

Sustaining the VAHU programme is therefore somewhat dependent on the emergent political landscape. The evaluation also finds social risks to sustainability which especially apply to CESD and less so to CDEC and CDCE. As a Centre within MDRI and with its Director serving as a Presidential adviser, many of the CSO informants reported that CESD is widely seen as "too close to government" and thus unable to fully play its civil society role. Some CSOs representatives feel that they have been ignored and left out of consultation and information loops on initiatives where MDRI plays a leading or convening role. Some report that too much responsibility is being allocated or claimed by MDRI to the exclusion of other civil society actors and concerns.

From the VAHU perspective, engagement with government is a deliberate choice in order to get close to the leaders in power, to build state capacity and confidence, to be able to negotiate and introduce change and reforms. It also wants to engage further with those who are reform minded, including with those who have been exposed to

VAHU before.

MDRI's convening role in Myanmar's EITI candidacy was the commonly-cited example. We heard that some CSOs felt left out and considered that MDRI focused on the most expedient paths, being too closely linked to the government's agenda. It was reported to us that critical documents for civil society have been withheld or held in "unreleased draft mode" until too late to be used effectively. CSO's who focus on more cross-cutting issues such as human rights, report that opportunities have been missed to engage with government and hold government to account. This has resulted in alienating parts of civil society with the risk that trust may not be easily restored, and VAHU's civil society role and relationships cannot be sustained.

Some claim that MDRI has monopolised the discussion and excluded groups, who could have done parts or whole pieces of work to contribute. As a result they have been less visible and had no access to donors.

5.5 IMPACT

The continuous engagement of alumni appears to be about 50% of the total alumni. Through the VAHU alumni network CSO capacity is being strengthened and mobilised with a multiplier effect, including training. This has led to the establishment of a VAHU identity that will be further expanded with continuous CDCE and other training in Chiang Mai and Yangon.

The web-based networks, local clusters and the CEDC database are strong foundations for building on the untapped potential and human resources in the network. More could be done to engage and use the network and ensure that the snowball effect of training, advocacy and grassroots mobilisation continues and expands. To date, it is largely the lack of resources which has constrained this growth. This is an excellent opportunity for a donor seeking to support impact through an existing resource.

This evaluation finds that VAHU has positioned and navigated itself very successfully in this complex context to meet the overall objectives of the project that Sida has supported. Looking ahead, however, the jury is still out. On the immediate horizon, national and regional elections are scheduled for late November this year.

VAHU has managed to become a part and member of reform through research, advocacy, international cooperation and grassroots mobilisation but with the risk of monopolising that agenda and alienating other CSOs who work in a complementary fashion to VAHU and are still willing to cooperate. Through its training and engage-

ment it has contributed to institutionalising social transformation and democratising. Scholars and exiles are now in different institutions and often in the driver seat, including VAHU's Director. Their continuous dialogue and debate with government and exposing them to development appears to have impact but not without a risk of becoming too closely and associated with 'government' as it still functions: an oppressive regime that shows little reform effort and the elections only creating more uncertainty.

EITI is an investment in long term engagement from civil society and in particular once the country opens up further. The grant has contributed to this investment and if the EITI is concluded then civil society has a strong basis to hold both government and the private sector to account.

Creating trust among representatives from different backgrounds in the different trainings under the VAHU umbrella has empowered them and created options for VAHU alumni to successfully pursue their careers. Their exposure to development and providing them with skills and practical examples has made a lasting effect on their lives and this is irreversible. Some of those may indeed be future leaders.

6 Conclusion

The Sida support has been highly relevant to Myanmar's shifting context over the grant-period – much more relevant than either partner could have foreseen or hoped for at the time of engaging in a partnership. The “innovative” nature of the support has been richly rewarded.

The Sida support has been effective. An important element in the effectiveness of the grant has been that it was available for both core and program funding, which was critical for building a generation of CSO's, and flexible money for seizing opportunities in a shifting context.

During this phase of support, Sida has largely failed to capitalise on its partnership with a leading actor in Myanmar's transition. Efficiencies were somewhat constrained by insufficient grant management capacity within VAHU, weak communications between the donor and VAHU, and some mixed expectations on how core funding should be reported on.

Immediate impact from VAHU's training programmes are very visible. While many outputs and some outcomes can be tracked, it is a little too early to confidently gauge the impact of their work on research, advocacy, international cooperation and knowledge-building. For this reason alone, Sida should endeavour to continue the relationship.

There are political risks to the sustainability of the VAHU programme as currently implemented. While these are largely beyond VAHU's control, they are managing these risks astutely by creating a range of organisational options post-2015. There are also risks to the civil-society-leadership element of the programme, due to a growing perception that VAHU/MDRI is “too close to government”. These risks are much more within VAHU's ability to control.

7 Recommendations

For VAHU:

1. Ensure that its legal base, governance and management lay-out is clearly spelled out for future donor funding.
2. Consider smaller umbrellas of funding support in line with the multi-sited nature of VAHU. A single stream of core funding has advantages, but is also more difficult to manage, track and report on. CDEC, CDCE and CESD are all fundable entities in their own right.
3. If VAHU decides to maintain the “large umbrella” approach, it is essential that adequate grant management capacity is built into the programme and into the funding, including reporting.

Sida:

1. Continue the grant. Sida could consider a division between core grant for office operations both in Chiang Mai and Yangon so that the CSO VAHU has a good basis to operate from and scale up if they can, and mobilize additional resources for programme activities. The other part could be programme resources for specific VAHU objectives in the strategy, in both cities, which also responds to Sida’s Myanmar strategy.
2. Capitalise on significant partnerships such as this, ensure dedicated staff-resources, participate actively in the programme, network development and context awareness.

Donors:

1. Myanmar’s transition will continue to be bumpy and somewhat unknown. The ever increasing aversion to any political and fiduciary risk in donor portfolios comes at the cost of potential impact. Follow Sida’s (2010) example.

Annex 1 – Terms of reference

- Background

Sida Co-operation with Vahu (Vahu Development Institute/VAHU Foundation) has a long history. The founders were in the 1990s associated with the Burma Fund, the think-tank of the US-based government in exile, but established the independent Young Scholars' Network (YSF) in 2001. YSF got a small, two-year support from Sida in 2003-04, and based on these experiences the then recently Thailand-based Vahu Development Institute received a three-year, 8 MSEK support for 2006-08.

During this period Vahu established itself in Chiang Mai and started its two major training programmes for civil society activists from inside Burma, the Community Development and Civic Empowerment Program (CDCE). which had reached almost 260 participants (50% women) by the end of 2010, as well as a similar, but shorter Buddhist Leadership in Civic Empowerment (BLCE) programme for monks and nuns. These former students now form an important alumni network in Burma and some were deeply involved in the monitoring of social impact after Nargis during 2008-2010. Vahu has also been active in training journalists and politicians as well as in producing a number of policy briefs, articles, reports and inputs to radio and TV debates. The senior members of Vahu's leadership are frequently interviewed by international media.

Sida's experience of Vahu's administrative reporting capacity has not been impressive. The final reports for the 2006-09 cooperation were seriously delayed and were not finally approved until October 2010. In the mean-time, the organisation has managed to strengthen its administration, lay down internal rules and regulations etc. in accordance with the recommendations of the appraisal report (see below). It now seems that the reporting capacity has improved and a number of reports have been produced during the first quarter of 2011.

However, even in the new phase the reports continue to be delayed and extensive correspondence to this effect have been sent between Sida and VAHU.

The new phase was entered into in May 2011 and during this period VAHU had the chance to move staff and parts of its activities into Myanmar, which provided a window of opportunity for VAHU. The question is now to what extent this move and shift affected the original project outline.

VAHU leadership has worked from both VAHU as well as Myanmar Development Research Institute. How much of the activities remain in Chiang Mai and what distinguishes VAHU and its Yangon office from the VAHU office and activities working out of Yangon?

- Evaluation Purpose and Objective

The objectives of the evaluation are to generate information on how effective the Project has been in achieving results, identifying how much the move to Yangon that influenced positive results and the original program outline. An important aspect for assessment and analysis is

how the partial move from the VAHU office in Chiang Mai to Myanmar with some of the activities now falling under MDRI, and how this have affected the results.

Sida and VAHU are the primary users of the conclusions of the evaluation, while VAHU is the object of the evaluation and implementer of possible recommendations. Sida and VAHU will cooperate in the performance of the evaluation.

- Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the evaluation comprises:

- Assessing results achievement, at predominantly output level, directly related to the activities set out in the 2011 Project work plan;
- Providing suggestions, in terms of lessons learned from Project implementation during the period of evaluation, for furthering effective results achievement.

The evaluation shall take review the whole period and especially assess how the move to within Myanmar and the collaboration with MDRI have impacted on the outputs.

- Organisation, Management and Stakeholders

Sida is responsible for the evaluation, and as such a principal stakeholder. In addition, VAHU is the principal stakeholder as object of the evaluation. Sida and VAHU will cooperate in the performance of all phases of the evaluation. Sida and VAHU are the primary users of the conclusions of the evaluation, while VAHU additionally is the implementer of possible recommendations. In the performance of the evaluation, the evaluators shall at all times remain in close contact and consult with Sida and VAHU for purposes of relaying the work done and receiving feedback and input on the ongoing work.

Moreover, the results of the evaluation shall benefit the stakeholders and identify lessons learned in this respect from Project implementation during the period of evaluation.

The evaluators shall for the carrying out of the evaluation further specify how quality assurance will be handled by them, by drawing on the participation in the evaluation of the principal stakeholders and their contributions in this respect. The evaluation must be an inclusive process, involving principal stakeholders.

- Evaluation Questions and Criteria

The evaluation shall generate information on how effective the Project has been in achieving its expected results during the period of implementation, identifying, where possible, factors influencing positive results achievement.

Evaluation Questions:

The evaluation shall address questions related to the effectiveness of the Project and evaluate if the project provided value for money and the outlined outputs.

With regard to effectiveness, and guided by the objectives and purpose of the evaluation, the following questions shall be addressed:

1. To what extent have Project activities led to the following results:
 - Strengthened impact of civil society in the reform process;
 - Development of national plan for economic and social reform through participatory consultations;
 - Enhancing the policy-advocacy capability of CSOs;
 - Coordinated multi-sector efforts for increased transparency;
 - Utilized media for advocacy on economic and social development.
2. To what extent has the outputs been achieved by VAHU as an organisation as opposed to any individual's capacity and work?
3. To what extent have results achieved contributed to laying a solid foundation for future effective Project delivery, and what is the likelihood that they will lead to the achievement of expected Project outcomes?

In addition, and considering the success/failure of the Project in relation to achieving the above-mentioned results, the evaluation shall address what main factors should be in place/or are currently in place to positively contribute to results achievement, and what main factors, if any, have likely prevented or will substantially challenge achieving further results.

In answering the evaluation questions and in providing suggestions, the evaluators are asked to take particular note of issues of gender, conflict sensitivity and social marginalisation. Due to the scope and timing of the evaluation, impact and sustainability are not criteria that will be applied or shall be considered in this evaluation.

The relevance of the project should be seen in the light of the results strategy for Sweden's international development cooperation in Myanmar 2013-2017 (July 2013).

With regard to efficiency, it is vital to study if the project has been managed with reasonable regard for efficiency.

- Conclusions, Recommendation and Lessons Learned

Well-informed and reliable conclusions shall be provided as a result of the evaluation in relation to the evaluation questions. They shall provide suggestions, in terms of lessons learned from Project implementation during the time period of evaluation, for furthering future effective results achievement.

- Approach and Methodology

The evaluation shall be carried out according to an inclusive and participatory approach. This shall comprise a design that draws on and mobilises the knowledge and experiences of the Project implementing partners, and that is, for the evaluation conclusions, based on a shared understanding among the evaluation stakeholders and evaluators as to what affects and con-

stitutes effective Project delivery within the scope of the Project. The evaluation shall accordingly support – in process and outcomes – the evaluation stakeholders in their efforts to meet Project objectives.

For information and data collection concerning the Project and its implementation, and so as to address the evaluation questions, the evaluators are expected to conduct interviews with stakeholders and to review existing Project documentation including, VAHU work plans and Result Summary Framework and Project progress reports. For the purpose of stakeholder interviews, the evaluators are expected to conduct a field visit to Myanmar. In addition, concerned (current and past) Sida and VAHU staff respectively shall be met with at their respective locations.

In addressing the evaluation questions, focus should be kept on the shift from activities managed by the VAHU office in Chiang Mai into Myanmar and the collaboration with MDRI. The evaluation must be stakeholder inclusive in order to make an informed assessment in relation to the evaluation questions.

On the basis of the above-mentioned, the evaluators are expected to elaborate on the proposed methodology in the tender and/or inception report.

The evaluation shall, in all relevant parts, conform to OECD/DAC's quality standards.

- Time Schedule and Evaluation Process

The evaluation process is composed of the following steps (indicative time in parenthesis):

Step 1: Initial review of available Project documentation (one week, including writing of inception report.)

Step 2: Inception report to Sida and VAHU

Step 3: Data collection process, including field visit (two weeks)

Step 4: Data processing and analysis (one week, including writing of draft report)

Step 5: Submission and discussion of draft report to Sida and VAHU

Step 6: Subsequent to comments from Sida and VAHU, submission of final report (one week)

The estimated total time of the assignment is five weeks, the evaluation should commence March 30 and be finalised May 30, 2015.

- Reporting and Communication

The evaluators are expected to deliver a draft inception report. The inception period shall include an initial review of available Project documentation as well as a dialogue between VAHU and the evaluators regarding the approach and methodology to be used, in accordance

with these Terms of Reference. In the inception report, the evaluators shall list the risks that may be faced during the evaluation process and the assumptions which may have an impact on the evaluation process, and propose alternatives for facing those risks.

The inception report shall be submitted to Sida and VAHU for stakeholder comments, and, subsequently, Sida's approval.

Following data collection, processing and analysis, a draft evaluation report shall be prepared and submitted to VAHU and Sida. The aim is to make it possible for VAHU to comment on any factual errors and misunderstandings, and for Sida as well as VAHU to assess if the draft has reached an acceptable standard in relation to the terms of reference and accurately addresses the evaluation questions. Comments shall be submitted to the evaluators within ten days, whereupon the final report shall be submitted to Sida within one week.

During the course of the performance of the evaluation, the evaluators shall at all times remain in close contact and consult with Sida and VAHU for purposes of relaying the work done and receiving feedback and input on the ongoing work. The evaluators shall at all times quickly respond and relate to comments made by stakeholders regarding the process and findings of the evaluation. For reporting purposes, close consultation with VAHU as to the rationale and feasibility of any such suggestions made is required.

The evaluators shall, in relevant parts and unless otherwise agreed, adhere to the terminology of the OECD/DAC Glossary on Evaluation and Results-Based Management.

The methodology used must be described and explained in the final report. The scope and limitations of the evaluation indicated in section 3 shall be made explicit and shall be clearly reflected in the report.

English should be the language of all written communication including, e-mails, drafts and final versions of the evaluation report.

Expected deliverables in English language accordingly include:

- Inception Report
- Draft Evaluation Report
- Final Evaluation Report (maximum 20 pages, including an executive summary, but excluding annexes)

Annexes, at minimum, should include:

- Terms of Reference;
- Data gathering instruments (observation guides, interview questionnaires, etc.);
- Names and contact information of stakeholders met/interviewed (to the extent it does not violate considerations of confidentiality).

- Resources

The estimated total time of the assignment is six weeks, to be divided among the members of the evaluation team.

- Evaluation Team Qualification

The evaluation team shall be composed of one person. The person shall possess the following competences:

- Solid and diversified experience in the field of democracy and human rights
- Good knowledge about evaluation methods and techniques
- Experience of evaluating human rights capacity development projects, and projects
- Good knowledge of the historical, political, legal, and social context of Myanmar, including specific knowledge of the human rights situation in particular
- Good knowledge of and practical experience of gender equality and gender integration analysis
- Good knowledge of and practical experience of conflict sensitivity approaches
- Fully conversant with the principles and working methods of results based management, and ‘theory of change’ principles
- Cultural sensitivity and strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Fluency in English, as well as excellent report writing skills

The consultant shall be responsible for all stakeholder contacts. This person must have sound knowledge about evaluation methods and experience from similar capacity development projects and evaluations.

The evaluator shall exercise reasonable skill, care and diligence in the performance of services and shall carry out responsibilities in accordance with recognised professional standards.

The evaluator must be independent of the evaluated activities and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

- References

“Looking Back, Moving Forward”, Sida Evaluation Manual, 2nd revised edition. Sida. Stefan Molund, Göran Schill. 2007.

DAC Principles of Evaluating Development Assistance, 12

www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork

Annex 2 – Inception report

1. Assessment of Scope of the Evaluation

1.1 BACKGROUND

Sida's cooperation with VAHU (VAHU Development Institute/VAHU Foundation) has a long history. The founders were in the 1990s associated with the Burma Fund, the think-tank of the US-based government in exile, but established the independent Young Scholars' Network (YSF) in 2001. YSF received a small, two-year support from Sida in 2003-04, and based on these experiences the then recently Thailand-based VAHU Development Institute received a three-year, 8 MSEK support for 2006-08.

During this period VAHU established itself in Chiang Mai and started its two major training programmes for civil society activists from inside Burma, the Community Development and Civic Empowerment Program (CDCE) which had reached almost 260 participants (50% women) by the end of 2010, as well as a similar, but shorter Buddhist Leadership in Civic Empowerment (BLCE) programme for monks and nuns.

These former students now form an important alumni network in Burma and some were deeply involved in the monitoring of social impact after Nargis during 2008-2010. The evaluation team also understands that VAHU has been active in training journalists and politicians as well as in producing a number of policy briefs, articles, reports and inputs to radio and TV debates. The senior members of VAHU's leadership, in their new roles, are frequently interviewed by international media.

Sida's experience of VAHU's administrative reporting capacity has not been impressive. VAHU's experience of Sida's grant management is not yet known. Pre-dating the support being evaluated, the final VAHU reports for the 2006-09 cooperation were seriously delayed and were not finally approved until October 2010. In the meantime, Sida reports that the organisation has managed to strengthen its administration and establish internal rules and regulations. It now seems that the reporting capacity has improved and a number of reports have been produced during the first quarter of 2011.

However, even in the new phase the reports continue to be delayed and extensive correspondence to this effect has been sent between Sida and VAHU. Only recently Sida received an annual and financial report for 2013.

The new phase was entered into in May 2011 and after the first year of this period VAHU had the chance to move staff and parts of its activities into Myanmar, which provided a window of opportunity for VAHU and it could capitalise on the work they had undertaken until then. MDRI was formally opened in March 2012.

Since 2012, VAHU leadership has worked from both VAHU and the Myanmar Development Research Institute (MDRI) and the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC)¹². It is not clear how much of the activities remain in Chiang Mai and to what extent VAHU activities have been subsumed under MDRI and MPC auspices in Myanmar.

1.2 VAHU AND MDRI

The VAHU Development Institute (VDI) is a think tank dedicated to policy research, advocacy and citizen diplomacy in promoting broad-based social transformation and sustained economic development in least-developed countries of South East Asia. VDI also contributes to capacity building initiatives undertaken by Community Development and Civic Empowerment Program at the Chiang Mai University, Thailand. It promotes educational development and exchanges, people-to-people networks and partnerships, resource sharing and knowledge transfer essential to comprehensive and sustainable development. It had 3 level basic strategies: (1) civil society development at grassroots levels (2) community coalition building at the subnational level (3) reform advocacy at the national level. The Community Development and Civic Empowerment (CDCE) Program was founded in 2006 by the VAHU Foundation. It is a three-month certificate training program at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Chiang Mai University for community leaders, NGO workers, and other civil society actors from Myanmar. CDCE's key strategy is the capacity building of young leaders and engaged citizens who are in a position to positively influence the development process in the country. To this end, the CDCE program provides active learning experiences that develop participants' practical skills in development programming as well as their understanding of participation, empowerment, transparency, accountability, and sustainability of civil society activities and the greater development process.

¹²This needs to be confirmed. The ToR do not mention this institution but MCP may have been involved as an implementer of VAHU activities.

The shorter Buddhist Leadership in Civic Empowerment (BLCE) programme for monks and nuns is based on the CDCE programme.

MDRI is a political Myanmar think tank focusing on research and programs aimed at delivering effective policy solutions to further Myanmar's reform process. Some of the leadership of VAHU principals were instrumental in establishing MDRI in 2012. One of MDRI's key areas of work is conducted by their Centre for Economic and Social Development (CESD). The Centre undertakes research and other initiatives on critical economic, governance and development issues.

2. Sweden's Country Strategy

Sweden has provided support to the Burmese refugees in Thailand and to the media in exile during the last two decades. Since the early 2000s, Sweden also financed activities inside the country.

The EU Council Decision concerning restrictive measures against Burma, together with the Swedish Government Communication "Freedom from Oppression" (2009) sets the framework and the goal for Sida's operations in the country.¹³

Swedish aid is clearly focused on democracy and human rights and on meeting urgent humanitarian needs. The Swedish Government Communication "Freedom from Oppression" emphasizes support for democratization and respect for human rights and is a guiding star for Sida's work in the country.

The strategy applies to the period 2013-2017 and a sum of SEK 750 million is available. Target groups are mainly women and ethnic minorities.

The purpose of activities within the framework of the strategy is to contribute to peaceful and democratic development, as well as reducing poverty in all its dimensions in Myanmar.

¹³ Council conclusions on Burma/Myanmar 3082nd FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting Luxembourg, 12 April 2011: Under current circumstances, the EU deems it necessary to renew the restrictive measures for a period of twelve months. In doing so, however, the EU reiterates its willingness to encourage and respond to improvements in governance and progress, in the hope that a greater civilian character of the Government will help in developing much needed new policies. The application of the visa ban and asset freeze will be suspended for certain civilian members of the Government, including the Foreign Minister as an essential interlocutor, for a period of one year, subject to continued review. The ban on high level visits to the country will also be lifted, anticipating access to senior levels of the Government, and to key opposition figures. The EU will assess the new Government by its deeds, and will review the set of restrictive measures accordingly.

The strategy focusses on three specific areas of intervention:

1. Increased respect for human rights , freedom of expression and accountability

- Increased capacity of civil society and strengthened democracy actors.
- Increased political influence of women and ethnic minorities.
- More independent media and higher journalistic quality.

2. Broad popular participation in peace processes

- Strengthened capacity of national and regional institutions to manage and resolve conflicts in a peaceful way.
- Increased participation of women in the peace processes.
- Increased participation of ethnic minorities in the peace processes.

3. Improved health for women and children, focusing particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights

- Increased access to basic health services for women and children, especially in those parts of the country where access is poorest.
- Increased number of births taking place in the presence of trained staff, with the ambition that Sweden's contribution leads to at least an additional 2 800 births taking place in the presence of trained staff.

The team assumes that the support through VAHU meets the first two Sida support areas. VAHU and MDRI, however, have interacted with officials representing the Health Ministry. ¹⁴It is not clear from the 2013 annual report whether any specific activities have been undertaken in this area. Training has been provided in the area of public administration reform, decentralization and local governance and health may have been addressed as one of the social sectors but the team's first impression is that health has not been a systematic objective in the support.

¹⁴ VAHU annual report 2013, page 2 refers to VAHU conducting policy meetings with, amongst others, officials from the Ministry of Health

Since 2009, Sweden has emphasised support for democratic development and human rights, especially civil and political rights, in addition to humanitarian aid. This has resulted in increased capacity of various actors in civil society. Supporting a vibrant, pluralistic and accountable civil society is to continue to be a priority.

Civil society organisations are important for supporting ethnic minorities in the pursuit of their rights and the conduct of policy dialogue. Through its support to civil society, Sweden also aims to actively contribute to ensuring that legislation and other instruments include a gender equality perspective and strengthen women's and ethnic groups' political influence in order for their rights to be respected.

In its strategy it's asserted that 'possible support in the area may include initiatives that strengthen or build trust between the government and ethnic groups, and between different ethnic groups'.¹⁵ In this context the support to VAHU appears to fit well given the different activities and intervention areas that the annual report 2013 mentions.

3. Changes in Myanmar: the context¹⁶

A process of political and economic reform began in 2011. Most political prisoners have been released and relatively free and fair by-elections have been held. Censorship of the media has been softened and formerly exile media are gradually establishing in the country. Negotiations have begun with the armed ethnic resistance groups and ten individual truce agreements have been entered into. Myanmar's political transition from military authoritarianism to an evolving parliamentary system has gained worldwide attention and praise. Local and international scepticism regarding the flawed national elections of November 2010 gave way to outright optimism once the by-elections of April 2012 brought representatives from the opposition party into politics.

In particular, Nobel Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's metamorphosis from long-

¹⁵ Results strategy for Sweden's international development cooperation in Myanmar, 2013 – 2017. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Government Offices of Sweden page 5.

¹⁶ This section relies heavily on documents collected from the Internet by the team, including work by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Asia Foundation, International Crisis Group, and a Master thesis by Yee Yee Htun.

term political prisoner into national parliamentarian was seen as key evidence of the government's sincerity in its reform agenda. Since then, the country has embarked on a journey towards fundamental change, encountering severe challenges, setbacks, and renewed criticism but also encouraging developments.

During the previous period, however, there were a high number of diaspora outside Myanmar of which four million in Thailand and smaller communities around the world. Many different social movement organisations (SMO) were created, including VAHU in the US and Chiang Mai. Many of these movements linked up with other international movements such as regional and international parliamentarian and women's networks. Once the authorities removed many exiled from the Immigration blacklist a few prominent exiles visited Yangon in 2011 amongst who was one of the co-directors of MDRI and a former VAHU leader.

The movement towards reform and democratisation in Myanmar still rests on fragile grounds. Moving most of VAHU's activities from Chiang Mai to Yangon was discussed with Sida. It is not clear whether the program document was revised but the information Sida [received was](#) not very satisfactory.

Myanmar still faces major democratic challenges. The constitution lacks popular support and guarantees the military a quarter of the seats in parliament, which gives them a veto on constitutional amendments. The capacity to implement political will in practice is low. Implemented political and economic reforms must be institutionalised. There are still political prisoners, and those who have been released have not been released unconditionally.

In addition, the protracted conflicts between the central government and various ethnic groups, which continue to cause great human suffering and violations of human rights, pose a serious obstacle to progress. The ceasefire agreements rest on shaky grounds. The armed conflict in Kachin and northern Shan continues. There is extensive discrimination against minorities such as the Rohingya. The role of the army in the conflicts in ethnic minority areas is still key.

Myanmar is one of the world's least developed countries, with widespread poverty and an enormous need for reforms relating to democracy and the rule of law. The country is ranked 149th of 168 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index (2013). There are major shortcomings with regard to access to basic social services. From a regional perspective, both infant mortality and maternal mortality are high. Two thirds of the population earn their living from agriculture (including fishing and forestry).

4. Proposed Approach and Methodology

Step 1 - The Inception Phase

The inception phase produced this Inception Report. The lack of availability of documents and other information has impeded the team to get a good overview of the support to VAHU, the possible impact of the move from VAHU's office in Chiang Mai to Yangon and of what will be the most appropriate approach to the field work.

The activities undertaken and planned in this phase include:

- Collecting documents from the web about VAHU and MDRI
- Reading the available documents, including Sida's current strategy for Myanmar 2013 – 2017 (obtained from Sida's website). The team managed to obtain documents that provide a direction for its support for the period before 2013 which is relevant since the VAHU support programme started in 2011. The VAHU annual progress report 2013 and the VAHU financial report 2013 have been received by the team and are categorized confidential. Reports of the previous years were not obtained and neither the original project document. The latter is classified information under Sida's protocol.
- Start-up discussion with the Program Manager (completed)
- Start-up discussion with the previous Program Manager (completed)
- Start-up discussion with Mr. Alffram who conducted an appraisal of VAHU in early 2010 (requested)
- Start-up discussion with Mr. Alffram who conducted an appraisal of VAHU in early 2010
- Start-up discussion with Mr. Engvall, Stockholm School of Economics, based in Chiang Mai (planned)
- First meeting with Zaw Oo, former VAHU leader and now Director of MDRI, (completed)
- Field dates confirmed from May 4 – May 14 with the first full week, including the weekend for meetings in Yangon, and then a follow up visit to Chiang Mai

Step 2 – Field visit

It is intended that the field-work will be based on interviews and focus groups in Yangon, Naypyidaw, works-sites in Myanmar of VAHU alumni, and Chiang Mai. At the time of writing this inception report the evaluation-partners (Sida/VAHU) have not confirmed any of these arrangements. The desk study phase was limited as explained above.

The team will use the evaluation matrix below which is based on the information we now have. We expect that a meeting with Zaw Oo would move things forward before we start the field work in early May, and we are using non-Sida communication channels to try and schedule this. It will also help us fine tune the questions we have now prepared in response to the ToR.

Given the above we will need to get a better understanding how the VAHU programme was managed from Chiang Mai, what the critical factors were to move most of VAHU's operations to Yangon and how relevant, effective and efficient the support has been. Moreover, given that the VAHU training programmes run in Chiang Mai have produced a high number of alumni who returned or were based in Myanmar they will be key informants on the outcome and impact of Sida's support.

Our main data collection tools will be:

- **In-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews** with key stakeholders (MDRI, NGOs, CSOs, local partners, national and local authorities, trainers, media, donors, experts etc.).
- **Focus group discussions** with stakeholder groups if relevant to draw on specific groups' experience. For example, persons who have received training through VAHU.
- For the **conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity** approach we will draw upon open sources, resource centres and International NGOs. We could also include work from VAHU and MDRI itself. The latter may help in understanding which activities from the project may have been particularly relevant to VAHU's move to Yangon.

To ensure the accuracy and validity of the data and the findings the team will ensure that:

- More than two data sources are used to support the key findings of the study (triangulation).
- Interlocutors can speak openly and findings cannot be attributed to one interlocutor only

- The team members conduct their work in a neutral and independent manner with an open and unbiased view on all aspects of the evaluation. They will liaise closely with Sida's project officer and Zaw Oo who is the counterpart for the implementation of VAHU's programme in Myanmar.
- Conclusions are clearly based on findings, and recommendations are clearly based on conclusions. Where the evaluation partners (VAHU/Sida) are unable or unwilling to provide data or access to data, we will identify findings as "tentative".
- All outputs are practical, easy to read, and useable for the target audience, VAHU and Sida.

Step 3: Data processing and analysis

Following the field visit the team will analyse the data and start synthesising its findings. Given that the team is highly dependent on interviews and most documents are classified, we will pay particular attention to triangulation. The team may call upon the Embassy or VAHU/MDRI to ensure that basic data such as dates, resources and volumes are correctly reported upon. The findings will lead to the conclusions and recommendations. The report will not exceed 20 pages without the Annexes.

Step 4: Draft Report

The draft report will be submitted for comments to the Embassy and VAHU.

Step 5: Final Report

Based on comments from the Embassy and VAHU the team will develop the final evaluation report. The final report will be submitted to Sida no later than June 12th 2015.

Based on the 2013 reporting available key interviewees could include:

1. Former alumni from VAHU programme's
2. Government officials who have been interacting with VAHU and MDRI but also those officials who have been invited to VAHU training programmes. These include representatives from Home Affairs, Agriculture and Irrigation, Livestock, Fisheries, and Rural Development. VAHU has also interacted with regional governments in some of the States
3. Faith based organisations that VAHU cooperated with such as Myanmar Council of Churches, Young Women Christian Organisation, Karuna Myanmar Social Services
4. EITI representation
5. Transparency International

6. Other civil society and social movement organisations that VAHU and MDRI work with
7. MDRI researchers
8. MPC
9. Other donors who support MDRI
10. Other donors who could comment on VAHU's and MDRI's performance, including the UN, the EU, ADB, and multi-donor Funds.

4.1 LIMITATIONS

The team has had very few documents to work with since some of the key documents are classified as a result of the fact that Sida has an informal strategy towards Myanmar. The team, however, received most of the documents in order to prepare the field work at the inception phase. The team had a short interview with the program manager.

The team will before its departure for Yangon try and follow up with other resource persons within and outside of Sida to increase its understanding of Sida's support to VAHU and the evolving context in Myanmar.

VAHU's reporting has been poor although the 2013 progress report provides details about different interventions in many sectors often consisting of training and collaboration efforts with many stakeholders, including facilitation, research and creating platforms for interaction, including with the media. Since VAHU moved its activities to MDRI it could be that the reporting covers more than the VAHU resources only and that resources were merged with contributions from others or with MDRI after the move.

The ToR questions therefore reflect that Sida would like to gain more insight into how the program has been implemented and with what results, including moving most of VAHU operations to Yangon. The team will try and meet as many stakeholders in order to get a broad picture of VAHU's achievements. Hopefully that will contribute to organising a programme for the mission, including meeting people in Chiang Mai. If this is not the case we will need to get as many interviews organised as possible and the team can split up to maximize data collection. The number of interviews we may be able to obtain in such case may be limited since we have no access to officials for example. The team is fully flexible and we can split up and move around the country as needed in order to maximize data collection. Only the Team Leader will travel to Chiang Mai and the regional expert can remain in Myanmar to continue with interviews.

If indeed VAHU and MDRI's reporting includes joint resources then contribution and attribution to Sida's support will be challenging as there are multiple forces and players at stake, particularly in MDRI which has several other donors supporting it. Moreover, the team is fully aware that we are conducting an evaluation of Sida's support to VAHU and therefore we will limit ourselves to VAHU's activities to the extent possible and avoid evaluating MDRI's activities.

4.2 PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME MAY-JUNE 2015

In line with the proposal we suggest the following programme:

April 24	Submission of Inception Report
April 29	Approval and no objection of the Inception Report
May 3 rd	Consultants arrive in Yangon: Hotel M. Yangon
May 4 th	Interview with Project Officer Sida in Yangon and other officials. During this meeting the team can schedule a debriefing towards the end of the mission.
May 4 th – May 11 th	Full week on interview program, including the weekend.
May 11 th – May 13 th	Team Leader leaves for Chiang Mai while the Regional Expert remains in Yangon.
May 14 th	Mission ends, consultants meet in Bangkok for debriefing and can hopefully debrief by Skype to Sida in Yangon. See Monday 4 th above.
May 15 – June 12	Drafting report and submitting the draft report June 12 th Draft submitted for QA on June 8 th
June 23	Feedback from stakeholders on the report to the team
June 30	Team submits final report to the Embassy in Yangon
July (tbc)	Publication by Citat of report

4.3 EVALUATION MATRIX

CRITERIA/ SUB-CRITERIA	MAIN QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED	DATA COLLECTION METHODS / DATA SOURCES
1. RELEVANCE		
Relevance in terms of Sida's strategies and the situation in Myanmar	• Is the choice of continuous support to VAHU based on analysis of previous support (since 2002) and is the rationale clear how this support meets both Sida's strategies from before and after 2013? • Were other institutions considered given the high number of exiled persons who set up SMO's abroad? • Are the activities developed by VAHU relevant to respond to needs by SMOs and CSO's in Myanmar before and after the move? • How are VAHU's activities aligned to those needs and have these activities changed in light of political and social changes in Myanmar? • Were the 2 key training programmes in VAHU Chiang Mai relevant to the needs of individuals?	Interviews and group meetings - Sida - VAHU Chiang Mai and Yangon - MDRI - Other SMOs - Alumni Document reviews and analysis - Prodoc - Annual reports VAHU and MDRI - Other correspondence between VAHU-MDRI and Sida
2. EFFECTIVENESS		
Progress toward achieving strategic objectives (please note we do not have the project document)	• Did Sida define clear and achievable results in the project document and were activities developed in response to outcomes? If not why not? For example, VAHU may have had existing programmes which needed continuous funding without reviewing these. • Did VAHU and later VAHU's activities in MDRI and MPC contribute to progress toward the stated objectives?	Interviews and group meetings - Sida - VAHU Chiang Mai and Yangon - MDRI - MPC - Other SMOs

	Why and Why not? • Did VAHU work effectively with other Yangon based institutions before MDRI was established? What were the limitations and risks given the oppressive environment? • To what extent have VAHU, MDRI and MPC been able to coordinate or merge activities effectively? • Did VAHU have sufficient capacity to continue activities in Chiang Mai? • What were the key considerations for moving activities to Yangon and what are the expected and unexpected results of this move? • What have alumni been able to achieve as a result of working with VAHU? • How has VAHU strengthened collaboration with other CSOs in country and what concrete coalitions emerged? • What has VAHU achieved in terms of policy reforms? • Has VAHU addressed the gender and (ethnic) minority dimensions of the reform process? • What is MDRI/VAHU's contribution to gaining Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) membership? • To what extent has VAHU contributed to building capacity across its target groups, including alumni and SMOs and what knowledge has been built for what purpose?	- Alumni - Government officials - Donors - Media - Human Rights and Women networks - Parliamentarians Document reviews and analysis - Prodoc - Annual reports VAHU and MDRI - Other correspondence between VAHU-MDRI and Sida Interviews with: - Sida - VAHU Chiang Mai and Yangon - MDRI - MPC - Other SMOs - Alumni - Government officials - Donors - Media
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		- Human Rights and Women networks - Parliamentarians - UN/EU ?
Adapting to the move and change	• Have there been unexpected and unintended results from moving activities and approaches? • How have VAHU and MDRI responded to the move and managed it? • How did MDRI react to VAHU's move and what were the consequences in terms of MDRI's independence, status as think tank, capacity, and original activities as envisaged in the prodoc? (This question assumes that we will be able to read the document before or at the start of the field work) • Were activities merged in existing programmes or new activities developed to respond to the new circumstances? • Is VAHU (and VAHU/MDRI and VAHU/MPC) perceived as promoting innovative and creative approaches to help initiate reforms in the country? • What other donors support VAHU and what is the relative contribution of Sida's support? • What is the rationale for continuing a VAHU office in Chiang Mai? • What other analysis and facts underpin this decision and what trade-offs (if any) were discussed? • How were selected that would be moved to Yangon and	

	were any of those considered to increase the chance of achieving results as planned?	
3. EFFICIENCY		
Managerial efficiency	• Have activities been implemented within deadlines and costs estimates? • To what extent were value for money principles taken into account, for example on training, use of materials and training locations? • Has there been adequate monitoring and evaluation of the activities undertaken and if so with what results?	Interviews with - VAHU Chiang Mai - MDRI - Finance UNIT Review of audit reports
Efficiency of Sida/VAHU Governance issues VAHU/MDRI	• Have decision-making processes between Sida and VAHU been timely and effective? • Did VAHU's move to MDRI reduce or increase particular costs of activities? • Is the administrative and financial capacity of VAHU in Myanmar and Chiang Mai adequate? • What grant-support or grant-management was provided by Sida? Did this increase the chance of achieving results as planned? • What explains the weak and untimely reporting of VAHU's support received from Sida? • To what extent was Sida's and VAHU's risk management and conflict sensitivity used when VAHU decided to move activities to Yangon? • Are there any structural and governance issues that affect VAHU's effectiveness?	Review of the internal rules and regulations for both VAHU and MDRI Review of the Project Document Interviews with both VAHU and MDRI

	• To what extent did MDRI adapt its human and financial resources to accommodate VAHU's activities? • How has leadership within VAHU been exercised? What have been the opportunities and the risks? • Is MDRI considered independent enough and what role does VAHU play in guarding this independence? • Are there any structural and governance issues that affect VAHU's effectiveness? • How were the Sida financial resources handled and did they finance the activities as described in the prodoc? • To what extent did MDRI adapt its human and financial resources to accommodate VAHU's activities? • How has leadership within VAHU been exercised? What have been the opportunities and the risks? • Is MDRI considered independent enough and what role does VAHU play in guarding this independence? Prodoc ? Any deviances ?	
4. SUSTAINABILITY		
Adequacy of human and financial resources	• Does (did?) VAHU have sufficient resources to achieve its mission? • Can VAHU adopt work plans and budgets on the basis of predictable resources?	Review of financial reports, variations in budgets and expenditures Interviews with: - Government - Donors - Sida - Other reform institutions ? - MPC
Opportunities and Threats to sustainability	• What issues emerged over the past years that constituted an opportunity, support or threat to the sustainability of the VAHU goals? • Is there a rationale for VAHU's continued existence or is it more likely that other organisation (e.g.MDRI) will be	

	the locus of operation for activities in future? • Is VAHU perceived as a contributor to change within Myanmar? What other critical organisations exist and do they duplicate VAHU/MDRI's or VAHU/MPC's efforts given its broad range of activities?	
5. IMPACT		
	• How has VAHU's programme contributed to: ○ SMOs initiating reforms and holding government to account in Myanmar ○ Policy changes in Myanmar ○ Contributing to a conducive environment for peace and dialogue ○ Increasing more exiled to return • Has the move had a positive impact on achieving the objectives? • Were individuals receiving the training empowered to use what they learned? What evidence exists to demonstrate this? • Did the programme staffing and participant-selection address the inevitable gender-biases? • Were women participants provided appropriate post-certificate support and follow-up?	Interviews with: - Alumni - Sida - Other Donors - Government - Representatives of Parliament



The Evaluation of VAHU Foundation on core support for the period 2011-05-30 – 2015-03-31

In 2009 VAHU was created with a legal basis and office in Chiang Mai. After a move to Yangon, VAHU created a local office in Myanmar and is legally registered as an NGO there since early 2015. The Swedish support to VAHU is a continuation of support to Myanmar since the early 2000s.

The key objectives of this evaluation were to generate information on how effective the VAHU foundation has been in achieving results and identifying how much their move to Yangon influenced positive results and the original program outline.

The grant that Sida provided was highly relevant to CSOs in Myanmar and enabled VAHU to continue its work in Chiang Mai and later in Yangon. The core support also attracted other donors who provided programme support. The core training programmes and research were relevant to Myanmar NGO representatives as well as government officials and others.

The move to Yangon enabled VAHU to work more closely with government, CSO, politicians, and create networks for advocacy and change.

The Sida grant has provided VAHU with flexibility allowing VAHU to operate in a challenging situation, responding to different needs and grasping opportunities when they arose. VAHU has the potential for reach and influence across Myanmar civil society and this model has visible impact.