

VANGOCA

**Vietnam Australia NGO Cooperation
Agreement Program**

REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

22 June 2009

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Vietnam-Australia NGO Cooperation Agreements (VANGOCA) (the Program) is a part of Australia's development cooperation with Vietnam, as outlined in the 2003-07 Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy (June 2003). A Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015 is currently being finalised.

The overall goal of VANGOCA is to contribute to poverty reduction and achievement of sustainable development in Vietnam, in accordance with the AusAID country strategy for Vietnam. VANGOCA addresses two key themes: 1) water supply and sanitation (WSS); and 2) disaster preparedness and mitigation (DPM). VANGOCA has provided approximately A\$ 22 million over five years (2004-2009) to 5 Australian NGOs (ANGOs) for 6 projects across the 2 themes as outlined below.

Water Supply and Sanitation

AFAP	Dengue-Safe Water Supply in Southern Vietnam
CARE Australia	Options and Ownership: Water and Sanitation for Rural Poor in the Mekong Delta
Plan Australia	Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Improvement Project

Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation

CARE Australia	Community Resilience to Natural Disasters in the Mekong Delta
OXFAM	Participatory Disaster Management in Dong Thap and Tien Giang provinces
World Vision	Reducing Flood and Storm Vulnerability in Quang Ngai Province

Review Approach

The objectives of the VANGOCA Review are to:

1. Assess the overall performance of VANGOCA through two levels of analysis:
 - a) at the level of the Program's overall objectives; and
 - b) at the level of the specific objectives of the six funded activities;
2. Recommend actions necessary to improve the performance of VANGOCA up to its due completion date; and
3. Provide insights and lessons learned from the VANGOCA experience for consideration of future programming with NGOs, including options to strengthen the role of NGOs in the Australian development assistance program in Vietnam.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Review is presented as Annex 1.

The Review was conducted in 2 parts: 1) in-Australia consultations and desk review (16-20 February 2009); and 2) in-Vietnam consultations (1-20 March 2009). The Review approach was to undertake as an open, consultative and collaborative review process, by engaging key stakeholders in a dialogue that provides an accurate assessment of the strengths and challenges of VANGOCA, and develops the basis for lessons learned and suggestions for possible future options. The overall approach to the Review, methodology and data collection was outlined in the VANGOCA Review Issues Paper (IP) (Annex 2). Annex 3 provides the in-Vietnam schedule; and Annex 4 lists Guiding Questions for in-Vietnam Consultations.

The Review Team would like to extend its sincere thanks to all those stakeholders who provided their extensive support for logistics, and time to answer the Review Team's questions, provide data and contribute ideas on the performance of VANGOCA, and suggestions for future programming. Annex 5 lists all stakeholders consulted, and Annex 6 provides a list of key references.

The Final Report (June 2009) incorporates feedback from Government of Vietnam (GoV), AusAID, Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and VANGOCA NGOs. While hopefully capturing and reflecting the views of key stakeholders, the findings and recommendations presented in this report are those of the VANGOCA Review Team alone.

Key Findings

The Review finds that overall VANGOCA projects have made positive progress towards achieving project objectives, and contributing to the overall goal of the VANGOCA Program of poverty reduction and sustainable development in relation to WSS and DPM. There is strong evidence that VANGOCA projects are contributing to making positive impacts in terms of improving health by increasing access to clean water

and sanitation; reducing the vulnerability of poor communities to the impacts of floods and storms; and contributing to enhancing livelihoods, at the village and commune levels, in relation to DM and WSS in Quang Ngai province and the Mekong Delta. The Review concludes that VANGOCA projects provide valuable evidence and examples for linking good local (sub-national) practice, with efforts to enhance and implement the national policy efforts of GoV, through action plans in both the WSS and DM sectors.

VANGOCA Program

The positive progress made by VANGOCA projects has been achieved despite the fact that the Review finds that the VANGOCA Program, which was designed during 2003, does not operate as a "program", but rather as 6 separate VANGOCA projects. (Annex 6 summarises VANGOCA program goals.) From a program management perspective there has been no coordinated sharing of experiences or lessons learned, across or between VANGOCA projects, or within the VANGOCA themes – DPM and WSS. As such this Cooperation Agreement (CA) represents one of the earlier NGO CAs designed by AusAID, and is characterised by a number of the design and implementation issues which have been addressed in subsequent CAs.

- Overall the program lacks a clear "learning" framework, which would facilitate and feedback lessons, as well as good practice to contribute to the overall enhancement of the implementation of Australia's bilateral development assistance program, and to national policy discussions in Vietnam.
- Program management has been characterised by a "hands off approach", limited human and program management resources, and has reflected changes due to devolution of VANGOCA from AusAID Canberra to AusAID Ho Chi Minh; then to Hanoi.
- This type of "program" design and management has not facilitated opportunities for AusAID, GoV and VANGOCA NGOs to capitalise on the achievements, good practice and lessons identified and learned across the life of VANGOCA.

However, the Review notes that there is still an opportunity to coordinate learning and advocate successful models and experiences before project and Program completion. This remaining period should be seen as an important opportunity for consolidation to ensure sustainability of project (and program) knowledge, approaches, and lessons, and to promote a positive transition to GoV's Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) Program and Phase 2 of its Rural Water Supply and Sanitation National Target Program (NTP2).

VANGOCA Projects

The Review finds that overall VANGOCA projects have made positive progress towards achieving objectives, and have had most significant impacts at the village and commune levels, by demonstrating good practice in community based approaches; capacity development of partners; ownership across all levels of government; and effective linkages between service delivery, awareness raising/ knowledge dissemination, and poverty alleviation, in relation to DPM and WSS in provincial locations, in Quang Ngai and the Mekong Delta.

Both WSS and DPM themes show consistent patterns in contributions to positive change and sustainable outcomes. There is strong evidence that VANGOCA projects are contributing to making positive impacts in terms of improving health by increasing access to clean water and sanitation; reducing the vulnerability of poor communities to the impacts of floods and storms; and contributing to enhancing livelihoods. However, the Review Team also notes that these efforts have not been without challenges and lessons continue to be learned.

The Review concludes that VANGOCA projects provide valuable evidence and examples for linking good local (sub-national) practice, with efforts to enhance and implement the national policy efforts of GoV, through action plans in both the WSS and DM sectors, as well as complementing and/or providing leverage for GoV Programs 133 (National Hunger and Poverty Reduction Program) and 135 (Program on Socio-economic Development in Especially Disadvantaged Communes in Mountainous, Isolated and Remote Areas). Annex 8 provides a summary overview of project timeframes, locations and budgets, while Annex 9 presents Review comments on individual VANGOCA projects.

The Review has been impressed by the broad based and consistent endorsement by stakeholders across all levels of the positive impacts of VANGOCA projects across both WSS and DPM themes.

Future Programming

The Review has been asked to provide insights and lessons learned from the VANGOCA experience for consideration of future programming with NGOs, including options to strengthen the role of NGOs in the

Australian development assistance program in Vietnam. The Review notes that the comments presented here are a summary overview of an important and substantive set of considerations which merit further detailed consultations, including a detailed review of possible options for future engagement. Therefore, these comments should be read in this light, as reflections on the VANGOCA experience.

Among the many changes in Vietnam in recent years is the emergence of civil society (CS). There is great diversity in the use of terms such as CS and Civil Society Organisation (CSO) in Vietnam and across different stakeholders. Organisations have multiplied, and CSOs range from community based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), umbrella organisations, faith based organisations, to former government research institutes, professional associations, Mass Organisations (MOs), with some definitions including international NGOs (INGOs) (CIVICUS, 2006). Recent studies (Forms of Engagement Between State Agencies and Civil Society Organizations in Vietnam: Study Report, 2008) also indicate changes in engagement between state and civil society organisations, including: 1) improved engagement between civil society groups and state authorities over time; 2) some agreement about key elements for societal-state engagement; 3) service delivery constituting the most robust form of engagement; and 4) engagement being more pronounced at sub-national levels, with more policy making and engagement than previously assessed.

Several observations can be made about the characteristics of VANGOCA NGO engagement and the achievements of VANGOCA projects. A number of the VANGOCA characteristics parallel the comments cited above.

- **Approach:** VANGOCA NGOs have successfully introduced and implemented community based participatory and multi-stakeholder approaches. This approach integrates service delivery, capacity development and support to government programs and policies, with advocacy for the poor and vulnerable (particularly women, elderly, ethnic minorities, children and youth), and monitoring of activities.
- **Partnerships with Government:** Overall VANGOCA projects are integrated within partner government planning and budgeting systems, at the provincial level and below.
- **Funding:** VANGOCA NGOs played a financing role (with the majority of funding being managed by and through Vietnamese government partner systems).
- **Levels of engagement:** The majority of VANGOCA partnerships were at the provincial, district, commune and village levels (the exception being AFAP partnering through National MOH through to sub-national levels).
- **Integration of policy and practice:** Most VANGOCA NGOs and/ or their government partners were involved in different levels of sector (WSS and DPM) based dialogues. Individual project activities had the potential to contribute to sector policy, research, practice-based discussions and lessons across all levels; national, provincial, district and commune.
- **Capacity development:** Beneficiaries and key stakeholders expressed positive responses and confidence with knowledge, and skills transfer elements of VANGOCA projects, particularly at the district level down. This is clearly demonstrated in terms of planning skills, actions plans, community engagement, and examples of replication of project activities and lessons.
- **Service Delivery:** Service delivery is an umbrella term which includes multiple elements, and should not be "simply" interpreted as INGOs delivering "services". VANGOCA NGOs play a facilitation role in strengthening the links between communities and local government authorities, and providing access to capacity development, technical assistance and other resources. In many cases poverty reduction was also integrated with livelihoods and income generation activities.
- **The "demonstration effect" and sustainability:** One of the critical factors in the success of VANGOCA projects was the ability to support "demonstration" of activities/ plans/ skills, and to assist partners to plan for and begin to replicate what they had learned.
- **Role of VANGOCA NGOs as INGOs:** VANGOCA projects have provided an important model for successful partnerships, project outputs, and build the basis for sustainable outcomes in WSS and DPM. VANGOCA NGOs have brought to their endeavours, previous Vietnam and sectoral experience, institutional and professional networks, and linkages from the commune to national policy levels. This highlights their value added contribution and a strong comparative advantage to contribute further to the WSS and DPM sectors, as well as more broadly in terms of engagement with government partners, MOs and communities.

The implications of these observations for future programming are that VANGOCA NGOs have demonstrated a clear comparative advantage in facilitating community based approaches, partnering in

capacity building mass organisations, government authorities (at different levels) and communities, as well as providing "practice-based" evidence as a link to policy dialogue, and to support further accountability, in the WSS and DPM sectors.

At the same time, stakeholder consultations indicate that there is also recognition that INGOs are entering a period of transition where it will be increasingly important to build the capacity of, and partner with Vietnamese NGOs (VNGOs). However, this transition will take time, and the implication for future programming, is not an either/ or approach, but rather a balanced approach by donors to support and facilitate civil society engagement in Vietnam. For example, this balanced approach can provide support for both INGOs and VNGOs, particularly for capacity development of VNGOs, including in service delivery support, as part of enhancing initiatives, sub-national community based mechanisms and accountability across various levels of stakeholders.

Recommendations

Program Recommendations

The Review provides GoA (AusAID) and VANGOCA NGOs a timely opportunity to consolidate and showcase the achievements and lessons from VANGOCA projects, and capitalise on investments and existing learning and have the potential to improve program policy, operations and effectiveness. The key recommendations are to:

1. Establish a **coordination and learning framework for the VANGOCA Program**: It is suggested that at the overall VANGOCA Program level, AusAID in partnership with VANGOCA NGOs, facilitate at least one Lessons Learned Workshop across the VANGOCA Program and 6 projects in the next 6 months. Various options could be considered:
 - bring together all VANGOCA NGOs and key partners
 - showcase VANGOCA projects in 2 sector workshops, with key partners and stakeholders
 - integrate VANGOCA case studies into existing forums
 - consider periodic meetings (e.g. every 6 months) and/ or site visits to the VANGOCA NGOs during the remainder of VANGOCA
 - produce a VANGOCA Program Report summarising key achievements and lessons (e.g. electronic or hard copy)
 - integrate VANGOCA projects (and program) into GoA's (AusAID's) overall DPM and WSS sector portfolios as part of overall development assistance.
2. Promote **enhanced participation in sector working groups and policy dialogue**: It is suggested that at the overall VANGOCA Program level, AusAID in partnership with VANGOCA NGOs, facilitate and share VANGOCA lessons learned and experiences in the relevant policy and sector working groups, including AusAID facilitating VANGOCA NGO participation in relevant sectoral dialogue.

There are many alternatives which could be considered further. Therefore, a useful next step may be for AusAID to canvas VANGOCA NGOs as to their responses and suggestions. In actioning this recommendation AusAID will need to consider its financial and human resources to support coordination, both in the short and medium term.

Project Recommendations

In the time remaining before project completion, the Review provides the following recommendations to VANGOCA NGOs and AusAID.

- Build on the project learning and consolidate it with project partners, community volunteers, and community groups. For example, part of this consolidation could be to leave behind a "comprehensive manual" of all approaches, methods, tools and materials, including capacity development, awareness raising and training materials; develop a series of information pamphlets and/ or videos for learning purposes.
- Provide an opportunity and/ or mechanism for developing evidence based activities which can be used as a part of a demonstration effect, and linkage to national policies and government partners;
- Develop strategies to promote local management and a more central role for communities in project planning, coordination, implementation and M&E, in development and implementation of procedures and activities.
- Prepare and develop in partnership the project exit strategy, including opportunities to reach the poorest of the poor.

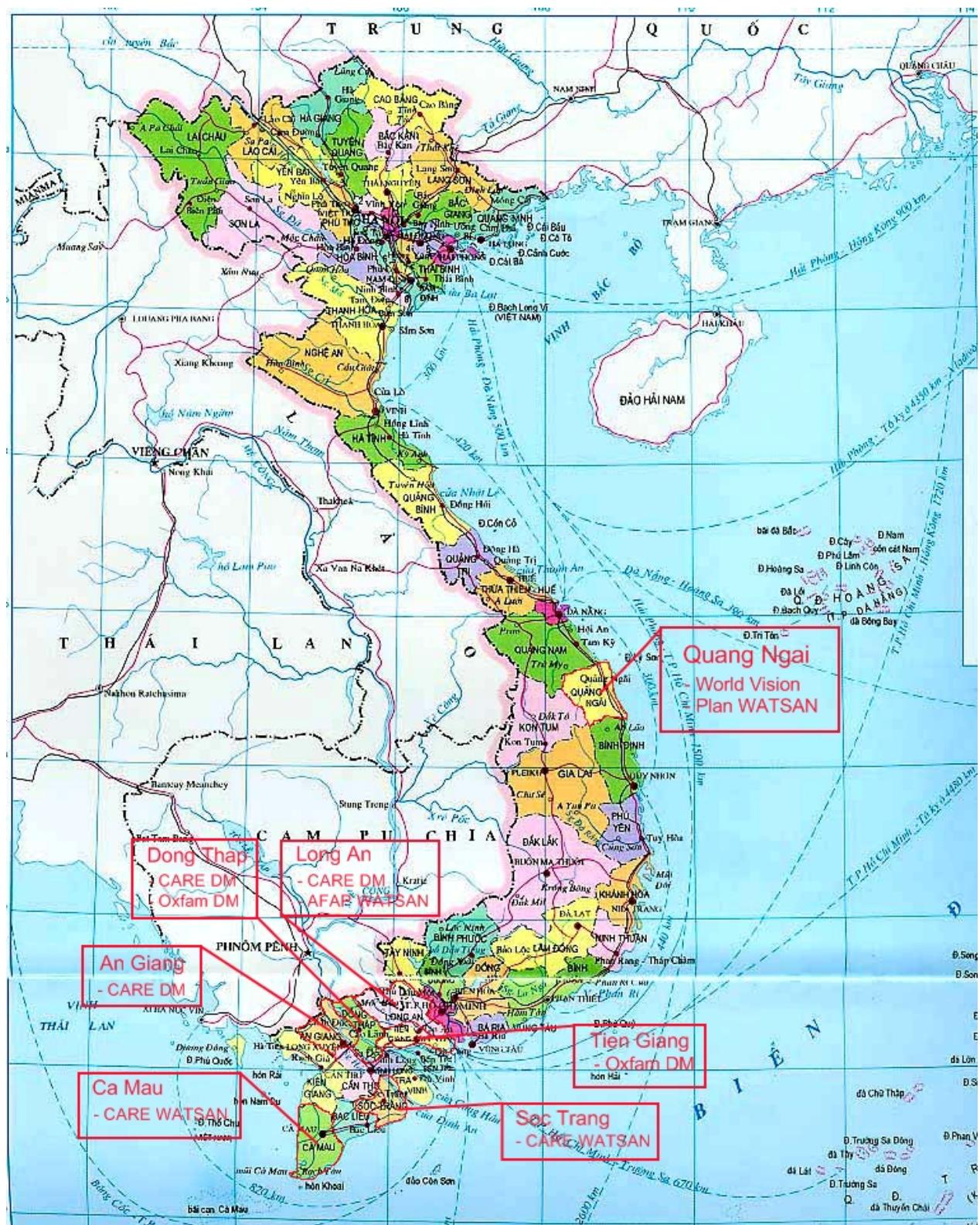
- Build on successes, and capitalise on the strengths and comparative advantage of VANGOCA NGOs, the investments and achievements of VANGOCA projects (across the 2 sectors); and continue to share experiences and promote the integration of VANGOCA project approaches.
- It would also be useful for some VANGOCA NGOs to consider requesting extensions for a minimum of 12 months, so that there can be further progress towards project objectives and consolidation. The type of extension (cost/ no cost) would need to be considered on a case by case basis.

Future Programming and Next Steps

The Review Team suggests that AusAID Vietnam give consideration to:

1. Undertaking (or participating in) a structured comprehensive review process, as it awaits confirmation of the Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015. These consultations should include further discussions with the NGO Community Engagement Section (AusAID), ANGOs, INGOs, Vietnamese NGOs/ CSOs, GoV and other donors. In addition, AusAID should undertake a full stocktake and review of funding to all NGO related activities, both within the aid and development portfolio and the Embassy (e.g. including ANCP, small grants etc.)
2. Developing a detailed Options Paper (contextualised in the Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015) and expanding and fully assessing the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, of the Options proposed in the VANGOCA Review, as well as canvassing additional options and potential transition strategies, with key stakeholders (as above).
3. Reviewing four broad options for future programming discussions. These options are not mutually exclusive.
 - 1) **VANGOCA 1 Extension:** to July 2011 which would allow VANGOCA projects to come into alignment and to come to completion within a similar timeframe. This also provides an opportunity to consolidate the learning from the program, integrate sector lessons, and evaluate outcomes, as well as advocate VANGOCA achievements with key GoV partners in the CBDRM sector and for RWSS/ NTP2. Equally it would allow time for AusAID to plan and design its next phase of support once the Draft Cooperation Strategy is approved.
 - 2) **VANGOCA 2: WSS and DPM focused:** would build on the good practice and lessons of VANGOCA 1 and expand activities in the WSS and DPM sectors (as identified in the Draft Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015). This would be a coordinated program approach. The purpose would be to support and strengthen national policy articulation, and further build the potential for sustainable outcomes through government systems including replication of successful community based approaches into adjacent districts and communes.
 - 3) **Multi-Donor Facility (MDF):** The MDF would focus on strengthening and funding a broad range of Vietnamese NGOs and CSOs, in terms of technical assistance, capacity development, service delivery and management, including the potential for supporting INGO-VNGO partnerships as appropriate. This Facility could take a broader approach to the sectoral approach identified above, and address broader civil society issues. Various options could be considered, including: building on the WB civil society facility; another donor takes the lead/ management of the MDF; and/ or AusAID participates as a contributor to the MDF.
 - 4) **Umbrella Civil Society Strengthening Program:** The Umbrella Program would complement the focus on strengthening government systems, through the development of an overarching GoA program supporting civil society engagement, within the framework of the Draft Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015. It would provide an opportunity to address various aspects of civil society engagement, while maintaining an overarching, integrated approach and coordinated management. Various activities could be considered under such a program including: an MDF (Option 3); INGO-VNGO partnerships focused around thematic funding, such as disability; ANCP; VANGOCA 2 type programs; and targeted scholarships and volunteer placements in fields which contribute directly to civil society strengthening.

Location Map



Acronyms

AAA	Accra Action Agenda
AAP	Annual Activity Plan
ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADPC	Asia Disaster Preparedness Center
AFAP	Australian Foundation for the People of Asia & the Pacific
ANGO	Australian Non government organisation
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AYAD	Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development
BCC	Behavior Change Communication
CA	Cooperation Agreement
CAP	Commune Action Plan
CBDM	Community Based Disaster Management
CBDRM	Community Based Disaster Risk Management
CBDRR	Community Based Dengue Risk Management
CBO	Community based organization
CBRR	Community Based Risk Reduction
CCFSC	Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control
CCG	Commune Core Group
CERWASS	Center for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation
CFSC	Committee for Flood and Storm Control (province, district and commune)
CLDRWSS	Cuu Long Delta Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project
CMC	Community Management Committee
CMU	Commune Management Units
CPC	Commune People's Committee
CPMB	Commune Project Management Board
CPMU	Commune Project Management Unit
CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy
CRND	Community Resilience to Natural Disasters
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DDMFSC	Department of Dyke Management and Flood and Storm Control
DEC	District Extension Centre, of DARD
DET	Department of Education and Training (Viet Nam)
DF/ DHF	Dengue Fever/ Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DM	Disaster Management
DMC	Disaster Management Centre (within DDMFSC)
DMU	District Management Unit
DMWG	Disaster Management Working Group
DNPM	Department of National Planning and Monitoring (formerly DNPRD)
DOC	Department of Construction
DOET	Department of Education and Training
DoF	Department of Fisheries
DOH	Department of Health
DPC	District Peoples Committee
DPI	Department of Planning and Investment
DPM	Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation
DPMU	District Project Management Unit
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRRP	Disaster Risk Reduction Plan
DSPC	District Steering Project Committee
FU	Farmer's Union
GoA	Government of Australia
GoV	Government of Vietnam
GRDD	Grass Roots Democracy Decree

HEPR	Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction (Program 133)
HF	Hamlet Facilitator
HVCA	Hazard Vulnerability Capacity Assessment
HWTS	Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
INGO	International non-Government organisation
IP	Issues Paper
IPHCMC	Institute Pasteur Ho Chi Minh City
IPSC	Inter-Provincial Steering Committee
IVWSP	Integrated Village Water and Sanitation Plan
JANI	Joint Advocacy Networking Initiatives in Vietnam
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MSC	Most Significant Change
MTR	Mid Term Review
NCE	NGO and Community Engagement (Sector – AusAID)
NCERWASS	National Rural Clean Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy
NDCP	National Dengue Control Program
NDMP	Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership
NDMPQN	Natural Disaster Mitigation Project in Quang Ngai
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NIHE	National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology
NRCWSSS	National Rural Clean Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy
NTP	National Target Program
O&M	Operation and Management
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OGB	Oxfam Great Britain
PACCOM	People's Aid Coordination Committee
PC	Peoples Committee
PCERWASS	Provincial Center for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation
PDD	Project Design Document
PHAST	Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PM	Project Manager
PMB	Project Management Board – at Commune, District and Provincial levels
PMC	Preventative Medicine Center
PMP	Preparedness and Mitigation Plans
PMT	Project Management Team
PMU	Provincial Management Unit
PO	Project Officer
PPC	Provincial Peoples Committee
PPSC	Provincial Project Steering Committee
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSB	Provincial Steering Board
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PSWHP	Participatory Safe Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Promotion
QAI	Quality at Implementation
RFSVP	Reducing Flood and Storm Vulnerability in Quang Ngai Project
RWSS	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation
SPB	Social Policy Bank
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations

UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VANGOCA	Vietnam Australia Non Government Organisation Cooperation Agreement
VAP	Village Action Plan
VDMAP	Village Disaster Management Action Plan
VDG	Village Development Group
VNGO	Vietnamese Non government organisation
VWSC	Village Water and Sanitation Committee
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSG	Water and Sanitation Groups
WSM	Water and Sanitation Motivator
WSS	Water Supply and Sanitation
WU	Women's Union
WUG	Water User Groups
WV	World Vision

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to Review

The Vietnam-Australia NGO Cooperation Agreements (VANGOCA) (the Program) is a part of Australia's development cooperation with Vietnam, as outlined in the 2003-07 Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy (June 2003)¹.

The overall goal of VANGOCA is to contribute to poverty reduction and achievement of sustainable development in Vietnam, in accordance with the AusAID country strategy for Vietnam. VANGOCA addresses two key themes: 1) water supply and sanitation (WSS); and 2) disaster preparedness and mitigation (DPM). VANGOCA has provided approximately A\$22 million over five years (2004-2009) to 5 Australian NGOs (ANGOs) for 6 projects across the 2 themes, as outlined below.

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1.2 Review Objectives

The objectives of the review are to:

1. Assess the overall performance of VANGOCA through two levels of analysis:
 - a) at the level of the Program's overall objectives; and
 - b) at the level of the specific objectives of the six funded activities;
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3. Provide insights and lessons learned from the VANGOCA experience for consideration of future programming with NGOs, including options to strengthen the role of NGOs in the Australian development assistance program in Vietnam.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Review is presented as Annex 1.

1.3 Review Approach and Methodology

The Review was conducted in 2 parts: 1) in-Australia consultations and desk review (16-20 February 2009); and 2) in-Vietnam consultations (1-20 March 2009). The VANGOCA Review Team included Dr Ludmilla Kvitko (Team Leader) and Ms Do Van Nguyet (NGO Representative), who participated in both in-Australia and in-Vietnam consultations.²

Review Approach

The Review was undertaken as an open, consultative and collaborative review process, by engaging key stakeholders in a dialogue that provides an accurate assessment of the strengths and challenges of VANGOCA, and develops the basis for lessons learned and suggestions for possible future options. The overall approach to the Review, methodology and data collection was outlined in the VANGOCA Review Issues Paper (IP) (Annex 2).

The overall approach to the Review, methodology and data collection is:

¹ AusAID is the process of finalising a new country strategy for the period 2009-15. The Draft strategy anticipates working in Vietnam in the NGO sector, but programming details will be developed once the strategy is finalised.

² Mr Nguyen Cong Thanh (Local Consultant and Translator) joined the Review from 2-20 March. In addition, Ms Anna Clancy (NGOs and Community Engagement, AusAID, Canberra) participated in the Review from 2-12 March; and several AusAID Hanoi post staff also joined the mission for short periods of time (Van-Thuan Nguyen: 6 March; Le Minh Nga: 10-11 March and Thu-Phuong Nguyen: 12-13 March).

- Evidence based: integrating valid, reliable, relevant and verifiable information, with expertise and professional judgment;
- Strengths based: focused on identifying the strengths and important outcomes of the program and projects. This approach encourages stakeholder collaboration, dialogue and participation in the Review, as well as learning across the program. It provides an opportunity for forward thinking about program improvement and future options;
- Consistent: the methodology is applied consistently and transparently across all aspects of the Review, including program and project assessment, as well as in consultations with all stakeholders; and
- Comprehensive: incorporating a variety of methods, including qualitative and quantitative data from a range of information sources and stakeholders. This approach facilitates feedback on the same issue from different perspectives (i.e. triangulation), and strengthens the validity of the evidence based approach.

The overall focus for the Review is to understand at the program and activity level:

- key achievements and progress to date;
- key challenges and issues;
- key contributions and issues from the perspective of the VANGOCA program level;
- lessons learned; and
- to make suggestions for the remainder of VANGOCA, and for future programming.

The Issues Paper was developed as an outline framework for the Review, and was utilised as an "iterative tool" for: 1) planning purposes; 2) informing methodology; 3) to shape ongoing discussions of Review progress with key stakeholders; and 4) as a framework for the structure of the Review Findings. The methodology was finalised in Vietnam after confirmation of the in-Vietnam schedule (Annex 3). Table 1 presents a summary of the methodology. In addition, a list of Guiding Questions was developed (once the in-Vietnam schedule was confirmed) to guide data gathering and stakeholder consultations in Vietnam (Annex 4).

Table 1: VANGOCA Methodology

Stakeholder	Method
In-Australia	
AusAID, ANGO, background information	Document review
AusAID, ACFID	Semi-structured interviews
ANGOs	Individual semi-structured interviews
AusAID, ACFID, ANGOs	Workshop
In-Vietnam	
AusAID, NGO, background information	Document review
AusAID in Hanoi	Semi-structured interviews; Workshop with NGOs
Government partners in Hanoi	Semi-structured interviews
Donors in Hanoi	Roundtable discussion
NGOs and civil society experts, outside of VANGOCA	Roundtable discussion
VANGOCA NGOs in Hanoi	Workshop with AusAID
VANGOCA NGOs in regional and/or project site	Semi-structured interviews with project staff
Partners in regional and/or project site	Small group discussions
Community members and beneficiaries	Small group discussions, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, visits to project sites

A Preliminary Findings Report was presented to key stakeholders (AusAID, ANGOs and Government of Vietnam) on 20 March in Hanoi, at the conclusion of the in-Vietnam mission, and a second debrief was presented to ANGOs, AusAID and the Australian Council for International development (ACFID) in Canberra on 2 April. A List of Persons Consulted is provided at Annex 5. Key Reference documents are listed at Annex 6.

Limitations

One of the limitations identified in conducting the Review was the short time frame, in which the Review was to be undertaken, particularly given the scope to be covered which included: 1) a Program Review; 2) review of 6 activities; and 3) broader consultations about future options. The Review Team was mindful of these limitations, and has tried to accommodate these concerns as best as possible in consultations with key stakeholders, developing the approach, methodology, and by providing suggestions to the in-Vietnam schedule.³

1.4 Structure of the Review Report

The Review Report is structured in 5 parts: 1) Introduction: provides an overview of the Review objectives, approach and methodology; 2) Key Findings: VANGOCA Program; presents a summary of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability at the Program level, and addresses Objectives 1a) and 2, of the Review TOR; 3) Key Findings: VANGOCA Projects, presents an analysis at the project level and addresses Objectives 1b) and 2, of the Review TOR; 4) Insights from the VANGOCA Experience for Consideration of Future Programming, includes an overview of lessons from the VANGOCA Review, and a brief overview of the NGO and civil society sector in Vietnam, with options for future programming and addresses Objective 3 of the Review TOR; and 5) Conclusion: provides a summary of recommendations and suggests next steps.

The Final Report (June 2009) incorporates feedback from Government of Vietnam (GoV), AusAID, Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and VANGOCA NGOs. While hopefully capturing and reflecting the views of key stakeholders, the findings and recommendations presented in this report are those of the VANGOCA Review Team alone.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks are extended to all those stakeholders who provided their extensive support and time to answer the Review Team's questions, provide data and contribute ideas on the performance of VANGOCA, and suggestions for future programming.

2. VANGOCA Program: Key Findings

The findings of the Review are presented in two parts: Section 2 will focus on findings at the Program level; and Section 3 will focus on findings at the level of VANGOCA projects. The guiding questions outlined in Table 3 of the Issues Paper, are used as a framework for the Key Findings in both Sections 2 and 3. In reviewing the performance of the VANGOCA Program and its projects, it is important to keep in mind the context of Program development in AusAID and GoV, including the evolving nature of AusAID Cooperation Agreements (CAs).

2.1 VANGOCA Program Structure and Policy

The VANGOCA Program was designed in 2003 and is outlined in the VANGOCA 2003-2008 Funding and Application Guidelines. Its stated purpose was to "...be a partnership between AusAID and Australian NGOs, linking NGO programs and expertise to Australia's overall development cooperation strategy for Vietnam so as to ensure the Australian Government's funding of NGOs in Vietnam is effectively targeted to development priorities." The development priorities were identified in the Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Program 2003-2007. The overall goal of VANGOCA is to contribute to poverty reduction and

³ Specifically, the Review Team adjusted the Review methodology to accommodate opportunities to debrief with each ANGO after project site visits, and to regularly debrief as a Team, given the changing composition of the Team during project field visits.

achievement of sustainable development in Vietnam, and focuses on water supply and sanitation (WSS) and disaster preparedness and mitigation (DPM).

The following VANGOCA Guideline parameters have been key in shaping the design, implementation, outputs and outcomes of VANGOCA. (Specific Sections from the Guidelines are identified where relevant.)

- **Geographic focus:** "The Viet Nam country strategy, including NGO activities, will be expected to focus on the geographic regions of the Central Coast⁴ and/or Mekong Delta⁵. However, there may in some instances be a need or opportunity for activities to include aspects that would have broader coverage at national level (e.g. policy development/implementation), or to be replicable in other regions, etc." (Section 2.4)
- **Impact:** "emphasises the achievement of impact. ...produce quality, flexible outcome-oriented designs which focus on sustainability, accurate costing and resourcing, incorporation of lessons learned, and sound poverty analyses. Credible baselines will be established to allow the measurement of impact, as well as outputs." (Section 1)
- **Eligible Counterparts:** "Activities must be implemented in conjunction with a key counterpart, for example: GoV-approved indigenous NGOs; Government Ministries or Provincial/District Departments; mass organisations (e.g. Women's Union, Youth Union, Farmers' Union); Peoples' Committees at provincial, district, or commune level; farmers associations." (Section 5.5)
- **Funding:** "Cooperation Agreements are for up to 5 years of funding. Agreements will include a design phase tranche ... on a cost shared basis (NGO 50%/ AusAID 50%). Phase 1 – Design and appraisal. Phase 2 – Program implementation (up to 4.5 years) ... AusAID will provide 100% funding for program implementation. ... Extensions will not be funded by AusAID." (Annex 4)

The structure and design of the VANGOCA CA and Guidelines represents one of the earlier NGO CAs designed by AusAID. This CA therefore, reflects the assumptions and characteristics of the design and implementation issues current in development policy and practice of their time, and many of the limitations identified by this Review have been addressed in subsequent CAs.

2.2 Relevance

Relevance: does VANGOCA contribute to the higher level objectives of the aid program? Was the design relevant to the need? Were objectives and performance indicators clearly specified? Were management and institutional arrangements appropriate?

An essential step in analysing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability is to assess how VANGOCA – the "Program" is understood by key stakeholders. Consultations with stakeholders confirm that VANGOCA does not operate as a "program", but rather as 6 separate ANGO / VANGOCA projects; without any substantive linkages between the projects, or across the 2 thematic areas - water supply and sanitation (WSS) and disaster preparedness and mitigation (DPM). This raises important questions for VANGOCA:

- what is the meaning of "program" in this context;
- where does VANGOCA as a program (or as individual projects) fit within the 2 thematic areas; and
- what is the "role" of VANGOCA as a program within the context of the Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Program overall?

Consistency with Government of Australia aid strategy

The Review finds that at a broad level the goal of the VANGOCA program (as outlined in the VANGOCA Guidelines 2003) is consistent with the Government of Australia (GoA) Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy (June 2003). A summary of the VANGOCA Program and Thematic Goals is presented at Annex 7. The goals for both WSS and DPM CAs (as outlined in the VANGOCA Guidelines) have been structured to be parallel to specific Cooperation Strategy objectives.

⁴ Defined for the purposes of this funding round as: Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai. (VANGOCA 2003-2008 Funding and Application Guidelines, Section 2.4)

⁵ Defined for the purposes of this funding round as: Long An, An Giang, Tien Giang, Dong Thap, Vinh Long, Ben Tre, Can Tho, Tra Vinh, Soc Trang, Kien Giang, Ca Mau, and Bac Lieu. (VANGOCA 2003-2008 Funding and Application Guidelines, Section 2.4)

- **WSS Goal:** *improve health by increasing access to clean water and sanitation* (Intermediate Objectives 2.3.1)
- **DPM Goal:** *implement programs to mitigate the impact of floods, droughts and storms on rural populations* (Intermediate Objectives 2.4.1)

However, as demonstrated in Annex 7 the relationships between the VANGOCA Thematic and Program goals and performance indicators are not clear, and at times inconsistent.

During the life of VANGOCA, additional international aid and development policy initiatives have also influenced the implementation of GoA aid strategy and include:

- International agreement for the support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and
- Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and the Accra Action Agenda (AAA).

In addition, AusAID has undertaken the development of a Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015 as its next phase of engagement with GoV's reform agenda poverty reduction agenda. At the time of the VANGOCA Review, this Draft was yet to be confirmed, and at that point incorporated a focus on both of the VANGOCA themes: WSS and DPM. While, the VANGOCA Program has spanned a period of changing policy and development context, the themes of WSS and DPM have remained largely constant during its implementation.

Clarity of objectives and indicators

The VANGOCA Goal supports at the broad level, poverty reduction and sustainable development in Vietnam. The VANGOCA Guidelines (particularly Annex 1 and 2) take the approach of directly transferring the WSS and DPM objectives, indicators, and means of verification identified in the 2003-2007 Cooperation Strategy, as equivalents for VANGOCA goals, and constituting this as the "VANGOCA Program". (Annex 7) However, the relationship between "goals" and "purposes", and performance indicators, is not clear, and leads to questions about how VANGOCA projects should be designed and how they should address the various levels. This structure may also have inadvertently contributed to some of the raised expectations and complexity of project design structure, scope and targeting, seen in a number of the VANGOCA designs.

While this approach may have been useful in reinforcing the linkages and consistent with the GoA aid strategy, it is not as useful in defining the characteristics of the VANGOCA Program, particularly as it relates to the key element of "cooperation", and the specific contribution of ANGOs. Rather, the primary purpose served by the Guidelines is as guide for the funding structure and the application process, for ANGOs, rather than as a design document which clearly outlines the components, performance framework, risks, resources, and management approach for the VANGOCA Program.

As demonstrated in Annex 7, the goals are WSS and DPM specific as they relate to the Vietnam Country Strategy, but are not specific to the VANGOCA Program. Therefore, the question as to what constitutes the "program" remains. The underlying assumption expressed in the objectives and indicators (Annex 7) is that VANGOCA projects will be assessed as individual activities. Therefore, the programmatic and coordinated outputs and outcomes are not accommodated, and a VANGOCA Program Performance Framework as such has not been developed. This further reinforces the "individual VANGOCA project" focus.

As noted above this reflects, an early AusAID approach to CAs, where the so-called programmatic approach did not always facilitate linkages and synergies across themes, projects, partners, good practice and overall learning, which could be supported through a "cooperative and collaborative" initiative. This has implications for how:

- the goals and objectives of VANGOCA "projects" have been designed and implemented;
- key stakeholders understand the program in terms of achievements, outcomes and effectiveness;
- management of VANGOCA has been undertaken and relationships between stakeholders developed;
- the level of coordination, learning and performance assessment across the Program; and

- VANGOCA has been linked with other large bilateral activities in the 2 thematic and geographic areas (e.g. Quang Ngai Disaster Mitigation Project, Sector Programme Support to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion in Vietnam).⁶

However, despite the shortcomings of this type of "program" design and management, the Review notes that there are still important opportunities available for AusAID, GoV and VANGOCA NGOs to capitalise on project and program initiatives, good practice and lessons identified and learned across the life of VANGOCA. Recommendations for suggestions as to how to build on these lessons before the VANGOCA Program completion date are provided in Section 2.6.

Consistency with GoV Partner Government priorities

The Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) 2001-2010 sets Vietnam's over-arching policy framework, and the GoV's Vietnam's Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) is intended to be a practical action plan for poverty reduction and economic growth within the SEDS and 5 year Socio-Economic Development Plans 2001-2005 and 2006-2010. VANGOCA program objectives are consistent with both policy and action plans. In addition, the VANGOCA goal is also consistent with the objectives of Program 133 National Hunger Elimination and Poverty Reduction (HEPR) and Program 135 on Socio-Economic Development in especially Disadvantageous Communes in Mountainous, Isolated and Remote Areas. Links to Programs 133 and 135 were cited by provincial, district and commune GoV officials in discussions about VANGOCA activities, and recognised as opportunities for complementing and/or providing leverage for GoV programs.

Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation: Vietnam has also moved to localise the Paris Declaration as the Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and consolidate targets based on the MDGs, including MDG 7 which includes water and sanitation, disaster mitigation and climate change. Strengthening disaster management remains a priority with water related DPM managed by the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC), under the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and focusing largely on infrastructure.

In November 2007, GoV approved the Viet Nam National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020, with a focus on non-structural measures such as community based disaster risk management measures. The Department of Dyke Management and Flood and Storm Control (DDMFSC) is currently preparing a proposal and assessing the feasibility of a nation-wide Government run Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) program with the intention to establish CBDRM initiatives in 10,000 communes across Vietnam by 2020 (NDMP 2009, NDMP Phase III Planning Mission Report). It is anticipated that this will be starting from the end of 2010.

To enhance coordination and policy advice across GoV, donors and NGOs, the Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership (NDMP) was set up after the historic floods in central Vietnam in 1999. GoA (AusAID) has contributed to the NDMP policy dialogue through the Quang Ngai Disaster Mitigation Project. NDMP also maintains strong relationships with most NGOs currently working in DPM in Vietnam on an individual basis and collectively through the Disaster Management Working Group (DMWG), the Climate Change Working Group and involvement in the DIPECHO funded JANI - Joint Advocacy Network Initiative in Viet Nam project (NDMP 2009, NDMP Phase III Planning Mission Report). VANGOCA NGOs (CARE, OXFAM, World Vision) are active in the working groups in sharing their CBDRM experiences.

This is a timely opportunity to capitalise on the experience of VANGOCA NGOs, and AusAID's investment, and to share their experiences, CBDRM models, achievements and lessons with the NDMP and relevant government departments (DPI, DARD and National level MARD and DMC), with a view to the future rollout of a nation-wide CBDRM program in 2010.

Water Supply and Sanitation: The National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy till 2020 (NRWSSS) was approved in 2000 and focuses on sustainability of WSS services, recognising the importance of links between sanitation facilities, water supply and health. It is based on principles of allocating decision-making and management at the lowest appropriate level. Center for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (CERWASS) at the national and provincial levels (PCERWASS) (under DARD) were established under the mandate of the NRCWSSS (National Rural Clean Water Supply and Sanitation

⁶ Australian Government. AusAID. Vietnam. Aid Activities.
http://www.ausaid.gov.au/vietnam/projects/sector_support.cfm

Strategy) to plan, implement and monitor rural water supply and sanitation efforts in Vietnam, in partnership with Women's Union at the community level.

Australia has provided assistance to both the 1st phase of the National Targeted Program for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (NTP1) (1999-2005) and the 2nd phase NTP2 for 2005-2010. VANGOCA projects reinforce the community based focus of rural WSS initiatives and provide good practice examples for the further rollout of NTP2. VANGOCA NGOs (AFAP, CARE, Plan) are active in the working groups in sharing their WSS experiences. Again this is a timely opportunity to capitalise on the VANGOCA Project experience and AusAID's investment, and to share models, and lessons to inform future implementation.

In addition, the AFAP project is also aligned with the GoV National Dengue Control Strategy and regional efforts through WHO to focus on an inter-sectoral approach to water supply infrastructure and vector borne disease.

Overall relevance of program design and implications for management and institutional arrangements

The VANGOCA Guidelines do not provide guidance for management and institutional arrangements, and there have been no program funds allocated for resourcing on-going M&E, program coordination, program promotion, and learning across projects. Therefore, there has been no real "Program" management since the initial design of the VANGOCA Guidelines, and selection of ANGOs, which was managed from AusAID in Canberra. Once VANGOCA projects had completed the design phase and funds, the VANGOCA Program was devolved to the post in Ho Chi Minh.

AusAID Program management has been characterised by a "hands off approach", limited human and program management resources, and has reflected changes due to devolution from AusAID Canberra to AusAID Ho Chi Minh; then to Hanoi. Currently VANGOCA Projects are managed as individual projects by 2 Activity Managers based in Hanoi (one each for WSS and DPM) who are involved in review of project documentation, consultations with ANGOs, occasional monitoring (as time permits), and completion of Quality at Implementation (QAI) documentation. At this point the Vietnam/ Mekong Program in Canberra plays no active role in VANGOCA.

Therefore, from a program management perspective there has been no structured sharing of experiences or lessons learned, across or between VANGOCA projects, or within WSS and DPM thematic groups.

2.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of the VANGOCA? How effectively was the VANGOCA managed and how did this impact on the achievement of outcomes?

Program Achievements

The Review concludes that overall the VANGOCA projects are making positive progress in their contributions to the goals of the VANGOCA Program; i.e. WSS - *improving health by increasing access to clean water and sanitation*; and DPM - *by implementing programs to mitigate the impact of floods, droughts and storms on rural populations*. The details of these project achievements, challenges and lessons are discussed in Section 3 and Annex 9.

Program Management, Project Design and Pre-Implementation

As noted in Section 2.2 the approach to program management has been largely "hands off." It is acknowledged by various stakeholders that the Program would have benefited from some form a structured framework for sharing of experiences or lessons learned during the last 4 years. However, there is another issue related to the design and pre-implementation stage of VANGOCA which has had a negative impact on project effectiveness, in several cases, and could have benefited from some intervention/ support at the VANGOCA Program level. It provides a valuable lesson for future designs and CAs.

Annex 8 provides a summary of the project cycle timeframe. The design process began in April - July 2004 and concluded between September 2004 and March 2005, ranging from 6-12 months. AusAID contributed 50% of design costs, as well as costs for the interim to implementation phase. This process included all aspects of design and partner consultation, design appraisal, peer review and design amendment. Some ANGOs required more time to negotiate with partners; others required additional time to negotiate with peer reviewers, who in a number of cases raised unrealistic expectations of some NGO projects to be

implemented in the Vietnam context. This may have inadvertently contributed to the complexity of some project designs, which are now requiring modification.

Once project design documents (PDDs) were approved, the next step was to seek GoV approval.⁷ As Annex 8 illustrates, this process took from 5-14 months before implementation could commence, and meant that in real terms implementation commenced from between 11-23 months after the start of the design. Various reasons were provided for these delays including: lengthy approval processes at the National level, and delays and changes in finalisation of key partners at provincial levels.

There are a number of implications from this process, both for individual projects and the program as a whole:

- There is no common (implementation) "start date" to VANGOCA, and ranges from June 2005-May 2006
- There is no agreed "end date" for VANGOCA; and it currently ranges from Sept 2009 to November 2010. There is a strong likelihood that a number of VANGOCA NGOs will seek extensions, and this will vary even further.
- These types of variations have implications at the program level for budgeting, evaluation, and future planning.
- At a project level, significant delays in GoV approvals have had an impact on partner relations and commitment, particularly as there may also have been changes in NGO and GoV personnel during these periods.
- A Program approach could have utilised the resources of Program management to facilitate project negotiations, particularly given their geographical clustering, and the linkages that already existed with previous GoA bilateral projects.
- These are important operational and policy issues for CAs and donors to consider in promoting and supporting a program approach in Vietnam, given the interest in alignment and harmonisation.

Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation and Program Leaning

Overall the VANGOCA program lacks any clear performance framework. As illustrated in Annex 7 VANGOCA Thematic and Program goals and performance indicators are not clear, and at times inconsistent, providing a mixed message for individual designs and the final Program Completion Evaluation. The VANGOCA Guidelines stipulated that there would be a Program Mid Term Review (MTR). While this current Review began as being referred to as an MTR it is clearly not so, and for at least 1 project (WV) could almost have been a project completion Review.⁸

In terms of Program monitoring, as discussed in Section 2.2 incidental monitoring of individual projects is carried by the Activity Managers, and QAIs are submitted annually (for 2007 and 2008).

In addition, there is no framework for Program learning, which would facilitate and feedback lessons, as well as good practice to contribute to the overall enhancement of the implementation of Australia's bilateral development assistance program, and to national policy discussions in Vietnam. Therefore, this is an opportune time to address a coordinated Program effort, given the GoV's implementation of NTP2 and a national CBDRM expansion.

2.4 Efficiency

Efficiency: were resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes, and did the VANGOCA provide value for money?

It was beyond the scope of the Review to undertake a full analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the program or individual projects. However, the Review Team concludes, based on a review of project documents, consultations with ANGOs, partners and stakeholders, that overall the projects have represented value for

⁷ GoV Decision of the Prime Minister of the Government on the Issuance of the Regulation on the Management and Utilization of Aid from International Non-Government Organizations No.64/2001/QD-TTg, provides the guidance for Regulation of appraisal and approval processes of INGOs. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) was not able to meet with the Review Team during the review consultation period. However, a representative from MPI was able to participate at the Preliminary Findings presentation on 20 March 2009, and MPI provided comments on the Draft Report.

⁸ Therefore this review is known simply as the VANGOCA Review.

money, and have utilised appropriate systems and processes. Most importantly, overall they have integrated with GoV systems from the province to the commune level, including funding mechanisms. This is not only an efficient and effective use of a small amount of funds (approximately \$A23 million across 6 projects for "5 years")⁹ it strongly reinforces the principles of harmonisation and alignment.

2.5 Development Impact and Sustainability

Impact and sustainability: to what degree has the VANGOCA Program produced positive or negative changes directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? Are the benefits of the VANGOCA Program sustainable?

The Review has concluded that there is strong evidence that VANGOCA projects are making positive impacts in terms of improving access to clean water and sanitation; reducing the vulnerability of poor communities to the impacts of environmental shocks; and contributing to enhancing livelihoods. In addition, the majority of projects have made significant steps to laying the foundations for sustainable outcomes.

The key factors contributing to impact and sustainability are detailed in Section 3 and Annex 9.

At the Program level it is not possible to assess development impact or sustainability for VANGOCA at this point. However, if structured learning opportunities of the VANGOCA Program are undertaken before the completion of VANGOCA, then a platform may be created to integrate the lessons from projects at a program level, and promote them with the GoV, other stakeholders and donors. While there are clearly "thematic" lessons to be learned, equally there are lessons which can be shared across the 2 themes, particularly given some of the issues related to WSS which are also relevant to floods and storm disasters; and lessons from working with partners in different geographic areas.

2.6 Lessons and Recommendations

In this section lessons relevant to the Program CA are discussed, and project specific lessons are highlighted in Section 3.

Lessons for AusAID NGO Cooperation Agreements

This section has been brief given that the "Program" structure for VANGOCA was not well developed at the point of its design, in facilitating the "cooperation/ coordination" element of the CA. There, are some clear lessons from VANGOCA for further CA development and implementation.

- CA designs need to take an integrated program approach, which includes an overall program framework for performance assessment, a learning framework, and a coordination and management model, as well as the substantive sectoral objectives. During the design and pre-implementation phase they need to be supported in case of delays in approval. Programs are more than the just the sum of their parts, therefore CAs need to be more than the sum of the participating projects and NGOs.
- CAs work best when they are partnerships, but the nature of being a partner needs to be clearly defined for each stakeholder. CAs work best when there is clear ownership and participation in decision making from all stakeholders.
- CA designs need to be context specific and well informed about civil society and stakeholder relations in their country.
- CAs need to be flexible to accommodate and adapt to changing development circumstances at the program and project level.
- CAs need to be adequately managed and resourced, and budget needs to be provided for the length of the program.

The Review Team notes that these various points (and lessons from other CA Reviews) will contribute to a broader policy review being undertaken by the AusAID NGO and Community Engagement Section, which will provide guidance for future CA models and further engagement with ANGOs.

Recommendations for Improving VANGOCA Performance at the Program Level

⁹ While VANGOCA Projects are nominally for 5 years, delays in implementation and the prospect of no-cost extensions could extend this timeframe.

The Review provides GoA (AusAID) and VANGOCA NGOs some opportunities to showcase the achievements and lessons from VANGOCA projects, and to capitalise on investments. This is a timely initiative for the program, as GoV has indicated its commitment to community based approaches in the DPM and WSS sectors, and plans to roll out programs in CBDRM and NTP2. Given that VANGOCA projects may start to come to completion as early as September 2009 (if there are no extensions) it seems critical to share innovations, lessons learned with ANGOOs, AusAID, partner governments, and other donors, and to learn from the innovations that already exist. Such a process would capitalise on existing learning and have the potential to improve program policy, operations and effectiveness.

The key recommendations are to:

- Establish a **coordination and learning framework for the VANGOCA Program**: It is suggested that at the overall VANGOCA Program level, AusAID in partnership with VANGOCA NGOs, facilitate at least one Lessons Learned Workshop across the VANGOCA Program and 6 projects in the next 6 months. Various options could be considered:
 - bring together all VANGOCA NGOs and key partners
 - showcase VANGOCA projects in 2 sector workshops, with key partners and stakeholders
 - integrate VANGOCA case studies into existing forums
 - consider periodic meetings (e.g. every 6 months) and/ or site visits to the VANGOCA NGOs during the remainder of VANGOCA
 - produce a VANGOCA Program Report summarising key achievements and lessons (e.g. electronic or hard copy)
 - integrate VANGOCA projects (and program) into GoA's (AusAID's) overall DPM and WSS sector portfolios as part of overall development assistance.
- Promote **enhanced participation in sector working groups and policy dialogue**: It is suggested that at the overall VANGOCA Program level, AusAID in partnership with VANGOCA NGOs, facilitate and share VANGOCA lessons learned and experiences in the relevant policy and sector working groups, including AusAID facilitating VANGOCA NGO participation in relevant sectoral dialogue.

There are many options which could be feasible for implementation of the recommendations. Specifically, the purpose and anticipated outcomes of the coordination and learning activities will need to be clear and explicit, as will the audience. A useful next step would be for AusAID to canvas VANGOCA NGOs as to their responses and suggestions to these recommendations. In considering these recommendations AusAID will need to also consider its financial and human resources to support coordination and promotion, both in the short and medium term.

3. VANGOCA Projects: Key Findings

Introduction

Section 3 focuses on key findings about the overall performance of VANGOCA projects. The approach adopted in this section is to discuss key project findings as an overall group of VANGOCA projects, and then to present detailed individual project comments in Annex 9. The VANGOCA Review findings are based on the in-Australia, in-Vietnam consultations with stakeholders, and review of documentation (as described in Section 1 and Annex 2). Specifically, the VANGOCA Review has also reflected on the findings of individual project Mid Term Reviews (MTRs) as relevant, and commented where appropriate on the implications of MTR findings and recommendations.

As defined under the VANGOCA Program the 6 projects are grouped under 2 themes: WSS and DPM. VANGOCA projects were largely designed during 2004, and implementation commenced between June 2005 to May 2006, with delays due to variation across approval processes and negotiations with key partners. In specific terms, VANGOCA project implementation is for 4.5 years (even though projects are sometimes referred to as 5 year projects).

These timeframes are important to understanding the context for the implementation of VANGOCA projects and the implications for community based and participatory approaches which are new to many partners in Vietnam, and which take time to be developed, understood and owned by GoV partners and communities. In real terms, if groundwork (such as capacity development, developing and integrating project systems, baseline activity, developing infrastructure or livelihoods options) is laid in the 1st year and preparation for exit strategy begins in the last 6 months, the core of project implementation takes place essentially over a period of 3 years. Therefore, a clear design and strategies, consistency in project and GoV staff over the

life of the project, ease of communication and transportation can play important roles in enhancing project implementation.

Currently, end dates for implementation of VANGOCA projects range between September 2009 (World Vision) to November 2010 (Plan), depending on their final approval dates. Annex 8 provides a detailed outline of VANGOCA projects, their locations, timeframe and budget across the project cycle.

In terms of geographic location, 2 of the projects (World Vision and Plan) are located in Quang Ngai Province, and the remaining 4 are spread across the Mekong Delta (see Map). As noted in Section 2, project locations were determined in broad terms by the VANGOCA Program Guidelines, so that they would be aligned with the overall geographic focus of the 2003-2007 Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy. While both the projects in Quang Ngai have their main project offices located in the main provincial town, the remainder of projects are spread across 8 provinces across the Mekong Delta, and require long periods of travel to access the various rural locations. There is some overlap at the provincial level in the DPM group, however, in terms of actual district locations there is no overlap. Therefore, direct face to face contact between projects is not easily negotiated.

While this would suggest some good geographic spread, it also raises issues about the opportunities for ease in communication, coordination, opportunities for cross-fertilisation between projects (e.g. site visits), facilitating linkages between GoV partners, and the sharing of resources (e.g. common training or development of IEC materials). These aspects could also contribute to further considerations in relation to long term sustainability. Table 2 provides a reference point for the following discussions and a summary of VANGOCA projects, goals, objectives, components, key partners, as well as location, implementation timeframe and budget.

Summary

The Review concludes that:

- overall VANGOCA projects have made positive progress towards achieving objectives, laid the foundation for sustainable outcomes, and contributed to significant impacts at the village and commune levels.

VANGOCA projects have achieved this progress through demonstrating good practice in:

- community based approaches;
- capacity development of partners;
- ownership across all levels of government, particularly at commune and district levels;
- effective linkages between service delivery, awareness raising/ knowledge dissemination, and poverty alleviation, in relation to DPM and WSS in provincial locations in Quang Ngai and the Mekong Delta; and
- by providing valuable evidence and examples for linking good local/ sub-national practice, with efforts to enhance and implement the national policy efforts of GoV, through action plans in both the WSS and DPM sectors at sub-national levels.

These efforts have not been without challenges and lessons continue to be learned.

3.1 Relevance

Relevance: does VANGOCA contribute to the higher level objectives of the aid program? Was the design relevant to the need? Were objectives and performance indicators clearly specified? Were management and institutional arrangements appropriate?

All VANGOCA Projects are consistent with the VANGOCA thematic goals – to *improve health by increasing access to clean water and sanitation* and to *implement programs to mitigate the impact of floods, droughts and storms on rural populations*. In addition, each project is in broad alignment with relevant GoA and GoV aid and development priorities (as identified in Section 2.2). In addition, the majority of VANGOCA NGOs are active participants in sectoral working groups for DPM, WSS and climate change, and contribute to national policy dialogue, by sharing their practice based experience. In addition, the AFAP Dengue-Safe Water project also brings together the water and the health sectors in a more structured way through its partnership with MOH. However, there has been limited and ad hoc interaction between VANGOCA NGOs specifically around VANGOCA.

Table 2: VANGOCA Projects Summary

Project		Location (Province)	Timeframe (Implementation)	Budget \$A (Implementation)
Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation				
CARE Community Resilience to Natural Disasters in the Mekong Delta	<p>Goal: Build sustainable community and household resilience to floods in highly flood prone, inland areas of the Mekong Delta</p> <p>Purpose: Vulnerability reduction of household and communes in Long An, Dong Thap and An Giang Provinces.</p> <p>Objectives/ Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen capacity in hazard impact reduction, emergency response and recovery through appropriate mitigation and preparedness planning and training ▪ Expand sustainable locally based flood season employment opportunities ▪ Enhance poor households sustainable access to low cost financial services to smooth income and expenditure flows ▪ Effective and efficient project coordination and management 	An Giang Dong Thap Long An	June 2005- Mar 2009	5,516,536
OXFAM Participatory Disaster Management in Dong Thap and Tien Giang Provinces	<p>Goal: To mitigate the negative impact of floods on rural men, women and children</p> <p>Purpose: To reduce the risk of floods to rural men, women and children in Tien Giang and Dong Thap by decreasing their vulnerability and increasing the capacity of communities and institutions.</p> <p>Objectives/ Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To build knowledge, skills and resources to mitigate, prepare for and respond to floods amongst leadership and households in 24 flood-affected communes. ▪ To enable the Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CFSC) to facilitate a more targeted, coordinated, timely and effective response to floods in Dong Thap and Tien Giang. ▪ To reduce the incidence of flood-related diseases affecting people in the project area. ▪ To improve flood-time food security, and the income of selected poor and vulnerable households. ▪ To ensure effective and timely programme management and coordination. 	Tien Giang Dong Thap	May 2006- Oct 2010	2,804,445
World Vision Reducing Flood and Storm Vulnerability in Quang Ngai Province	<p>Goal: To reduce negative economic and social impacts of natural disasters in Quang Ngai</p> <p>Purpose: To increase the extent of recovery from flood and storm damage in two target districts – Duc Pho and Mo Duc</p> <p>Objectives/ Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Output 1: Alternative income generation opportunities for vulnerable households facilitated ▪ Output 2: Revolving fund scheme established to support alternative income generation activities and household flood-preparedness improvements ▪ Output 3: Small-scale flood-preparedness infrastructure in hamlets constructed, reinforced or planted (i.e. forestry trees) ▪ Output 4: Household and Hamlet Disaster Risk Reduction Plans (DRRPs) Developed, using the Hazard 	Quang Ngai	Sept 2005- Sept 2009	3,051,202

Education and Training, Provincial Department of Fisheries, Provincial Women's Union, Provincial Red Cross	<p>Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (HVCA) Methodology, and Disseminated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Output 5: Integration of Household and Hamlet Plans with commune, district and provincial level plans ▪ Output 6: Schools-based programs on disaster preparedness supported and integrated with household/hamlet systems ▪ Output 7: Research to support sustainability of benefits and replication of Project processes and outcomes completed ▪ Output 8: Management of project processes and procedures successfully implemented. 			
Water and Sanitation				
AFAP Dengue-Safe Water Supply in Southern Vietnam Key partners: Ministry of Health (MOH)	<p>Goal: to maximize the CLDRWSS project's impacts on human capital and health by ensuring that the water it provides is safe from water-related vector borne diseases</p> <p>Purpose: to facilitate and support affected communities and water and health organisations to adopt evidence-based methods, practices and new institutional arrangements to mitigate water supply related dengue risk.</p> <p>Objectives/ Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community-Based Dengue Risk Reduction: to enable communities in which water supply related dengue risk exists to implement appropriate water management practices to mitigate this risk. ▪ Health Sector Capacity Building: to enable the National Dengue Program to collaborate with and support CERWASS agencies and affected communities to monitor and address water related dengue risk. ▪ Water Sector Capacity Building: to enable Centre for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (CERWASS) agencies to address water supply related dengue risk during infrastructure planning, design and construction. ▪ Project Management: to ensure quality of program implementation, outputs and impacts. 	Long An Ben Tre Vinh Long	Nov 2005-April 2010	4,701,227
CARE Options and Ownership: Water and Sanitation for Rural Poor in the Mekong Delta Key partners: Soc Trang: Center of Co-operative and Rural Development, Women's Union. Ca Mau: Provincial Center for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, Women's Union	<p>Goal: Improved health through increased access to clean water and sanitation</p> <p>Objectives/ Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water and sanitation service providers (public and private) respond to user demand and community needs for appropriate timely, quality advice, information and service provision. ▪ Men and Women in the target communities demonstrate improved hygiene and sanitation awareness, behaviors and practices. ▪ Enhanced RWSS inter-agency and program coordination ▪ Effective and efficient project coordination and management 	Ca Mau Soc Trang	Oct 2005-Mar 2010	4,880,632

<p>Plan Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Improvement Project</p> <p>Key partners: Provincial Department of Health; and sub-agencies Centre for Health Education and Communication (CHEC), Centre for Preventive Medicine (CPM); Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development; and sub-agency Centre for Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation; Provincial Women's Union</p>	<p>Goal: to contribute to improved health and greater gender equity Purpose: to enable vulnerable men, women and children to sustain year-round improvements in clean water, sanitation and hygiene conditions and ease related burdens on women and other family members". Change Areas: 1) Partner Capacity; 2) Community Choices in Sanitation, Hygiene and Water; and 3) Project Management.</p>	Quang Ngai	May 2006-Nov 2010	1,811,362
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Overall relevance of project design and implications for management and institutional arrangements

Program design has played an important role in shaping management and institutional arrangements and timely implementation. Overall VANGOCA Projects with less complex designs (e.g. WV, OXFAM, AFAP) have generally had less complex management structures, and consistent institutional arrangements. The remaining projects have needed to make some adjustments to component, management structure and/ or indicators to accommodate MTR recommendations. All designs have been flexible enough to accommodate change where it was required.

However, the Review comments that it should be stated at the outset that relevance of design was not alone in impacting management and institutional arrangements. Several other factors need to be considered including: the level/ status of project partners, partner engagement and ownership, and particularly the ability to recruit and retain project staff to rural locations to maintain a stable and consistent work environment, retain relationships and build project history and experience.

3.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of the VANGOCA? How effectively was the VANGOCA managed and how did this impact on the achievement of outcomes?

Approach

The Review finds that VANGOCA NGOs have successfully introduced and implemented effective community based participatory and multi-stakeholder approaches at the sub-national level, particularly district and below, in DPM and WSS. This approach has included capacity development of partners and communities; delivery of "services" such as DPM plans, latrines, and livelihoods initiatives; with advocacy for the poor and vulnerable (particularly women, elderly, ethnic minorities, children and youth); integrated project implementation into existing government systems; and provision of support to national initiatives, government programs and policies, including Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM), Rural Water Supply and sanitation (RWSS) and Community Based Dengue Risk Reduction CBDRR.

This approach is innovative and demonstrates an appreciation of the complexities of the development context, geographic location, stakeholder and partner relations, and the sub-national operating environment. It further demonstrates the value added that VANGOCA NGOs have brought in their own right as INGOs, and also as part of GoA's contribution to development assistance in Vietnam.

Project Achievements

Based on an analysis of project documents and consultations with stakeholders, the Review concludes that achievements can be clustered around a core group of characteristics (applying equally to both themes - WSS and DPM). (Detailed achievements in relation to individual projects are presented in Annex 9.)

- **Community based and participatory approaches:** Community based approaches promote community ownership and strengthen capacity at commune and village levels.
- **Structural/ non-structural activities:** A positive balance of infrastructure (e.g. roads, latrines) and non-infrastructure (e.g. disaster management planning, awareness raising, capacity development, livelihoods options) has been supported and promoted, but this is also a source of tension and often an area of delay for a number of projects.
- **Service delivery:** The model of service delivery adopted by the majority of VANGOCA projects is to support capacity development, facilitate activities, and to utilise local resources, community groups, and government systems at different levels to "provide the service". In the main VANGOCA NGOs do not themselves directly provide "services" (e.g. build latrines) but work with stakeholders to facilitate funds, materials, resources and provide capacity development and technical assistance for the activity.
- **Poverty focused:** VANGOCA projects provide an effective mechanism for supporting services, enhancing livelihoods, and awareness raising for the poor and vulnerable groups (e.g. single elderly, female headed households, ethnic minorities, children/ youth, disabled)
- **Capacity development and awareness raising:** Capacity development particularly at village, commune and district levels has been an important achievement, with demonstrated learning, knowledge and skills transfer occurring across such activities as development of action plans,

- community supervision of infrastructure projects, awareness of practical health and WSS links (e.g. hand washing, covering water jars, dengue awareness), and replication of project activities
- **Replication and sustainability:** the project has supported capacity development to enable partners and community members to replicate and sustain project benefits beyond the original geographic and beneficiary scope and targets, and number of partners have already distributed IEC materials to adjacent districts and plan to undertake replication of activities in neighbouring locations
- **Integration with government systems:** Overall VANGOCA projects are integrated within partner government management and budgeting systems, at the provincial level and below. Plans are being utilised for commune, district and provincial level reporting and budgeting.
- VANGOCA projects consistently receive high praise for the community based methodology and approach from all levels of stakeholders

In summary, VANGOCA projects are overall effective and have made good progress towards reaching their objectives. There are however a number of challenges which also need to be acknowledged.

Management

The Review has noted that there are 4 factors which appear to contribute to effective project management across VANGOCA projects:

- a simple and clear design and management structure;
- staff retention;
- close partner relations, particularly at the district level and below; and
- agreement on funding mechanisms and integration into GoV systems where feasible.

The majority of VANGOCA projects have functioning management systems in place, although a number of projects continue to be challenged (CARE-WSS, CARE - DPM, Plan) and have moved to simplify management structures based on MTR recommendations. Also, staff recruitment and retention has in particular been an on-going critical issue for project management particularly in rural locations. Not only does this have implications for timely implementation, but it also has implications for partner relations, efficiency, and sustainability.

Coordination and Partnership

- The Review concludes that overall there is strong ownership at all levels (province to commune) across VANGOCA projects, and great appreciation by partners for the approach, capacity development, and infrastructure support. The Review took was impressed by the overall appreciation and endorsement of VANGOCA projects by stakeholders.
- Most projects have created good linkages between levels (from province to village), and multi-stakeholder collaboration between different agencies and MOs (e.g. Red Cross, Farmers Union, Women's Union, schools, Youth Union, Health Centers).
- The majority of VANGOCA partnerships were at the provincial, district, commune and village levels (the exception being AFAP partnering through National MOH through to sub-national levels).
- There have also been a number of challenges with partners, due to delays in project approvals and implementation, changes in project and GoV staff, differences in project priorities and overall understanding of project purpose and financial mechanisms. Projects and partners are working to resolve these differences and continue to move forward. However, it is critical to appreciate that developing a common understanding of project objectives and practical implementation strategies and procedures, by all project partners and project teams, requires time and flexibility.

M&E

- All projects have developed a basic M&E Framework, including baselines, and the majority focus on quantitative targets and monitoring. Projects are also utilising a variety of qualitative methodologies as part of their M&E and project learning overall (e.g. Plan has integrated the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology and qualitative reviews; AFAP has utilised MSC, surveys and focus groups; CARE-CRND has integrated beneficiary surveys; and CARE-WSS has utilised water user satisfaction surveys). AFAP also utilises the opportunity created through various research projects (conducted by students and partners) to feed into on-going M&E.
- The Review notes that there is room to expand upon qualitative M&E as a learning tool, and to integrate participation of the community into monitoring, to expand upon the community based approach. This could be an opportunity to utilise various techniques, including oral (e.g. story telling),

- written (e.g. surveys) and visual (e.g. photos/ video, drawings) to communicate with a variety of stakeholders, and to build learning experiences, as well as lay foundations for the exit strategy.
- Also, across partner government agencies monitoring project progress is essentially quantitative and focusing on targets. There is great scope for more in depth understanding of the project approach, process and M&E by lead partners, who would also benefit from additional capacity development in M&E and overall performance assessment, as part of their on-going relationship with VANGOCA partners.

Integration of Cross-Cutting Issues

- Overall there is good recognition and integration of cross-cutting issues in relation to the participation of women, integration ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, single households, children, youth and disabled, at goal/ purpose and activity levels. In particular, many women are involved and committed to voluntary community awareness raising activities. There is less involvement by women in management and decision making, although representation by the Women's Union exists across all projects, and in some cases Women's Union is responsible for implementing project components.
- There is also an explicit focus on the poorest of the poor in a number of the projects (e.g. CARE-CRND by registering the poorest of the poor; CARE-WSS in focusing on options for poor and vulnerable households; WV through livelihoods and income generation activities; Plan in targeting vulnerable groups).
- Environment is also integrated, but not specifically highlighted unless discussed within a technical context (e.g. the WHO, GoV and GoA Environment Guidelines) and the AFAP project has played an important role in making explicit connections between health and the environment for safe water.
- Communities and stakeholders have also appreciated the community based and participatory approaches as good practice for grassroots democracy (participation, transparency and accountability). Through capacity development efforts, project activities have also helped to strengthen the accountability of local government and participation of the community through trainings, workshops, meetings, and especially to support the implementation of the government Grassroots Democracy Decree/ Ordinance.

Responses to the MTR

Each of the projects has conducted an MTR (except for AFAP who have undertaken technical reviews). Overall the Review Team is in agreement with the majority of findings across the individual MTRs (see Annex 9 for details). MTRs have been balanced in identifying achievements and critical issues, and VANGOCA NGOs have been flexible and willing to incorporate changes as appropriate.

Perhaps 2 of the most consistent areas of change have been: 1) design: components and indicators have been adjusted and/ or restructured; and 2) major changes have been undertaken to the management structure to promote clearer processes and partner ownership. It remains to be seen what outcomes these changes bring to project implementation, but the Review highlights the implications for changing risks and the need for adjustments to M&E, which will also emerge as an outcome, and need to be given greater consideration as well.

Challenges/ Issues

A number of the key issues and challenges have already been flagged in the previous sections, and are discussed in detail in Annex 9. By way of summary, the Review notes the following points.

- There has been limited sharing of lessons and good practices across VANGOCA projects.
- Ambitious and complex design structure and delays in approval processes have contributed to on-going delays in implementation.
- There are significant challenges from the constant changeover in government and project staff, and recruitment of project staff to work in remote district locations (particularly in the Mekong) has proven to be difficult.
- Additional time is needed initially (during the 1st year) for developing partner understanding of project approaches and building partner capacity.
- M&E (particularly qualitative aspects) needs to be enhanced.
- Some projects would benefit from additional technical support and quality assurance.
- There are some difficulties in reaching the poorest of the poor despite comprehensive project implementation.

- Most projects still need to develop exit strategies with partners.
- There have been more challenges in building partner relationships at the provincial level than at district and below.
- While district and provincial level decision makers have been impressed by the bottom up approach they retain a tendency to consider participatory approaches as more relevant to the local level, and will need further support and advocacy to recognise the potential it holds for their own planning (including budgeting) and implementation.

3.3 Efficiency

Efficiency: were resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes, and did the VANGOCA provide value for money?

The Review Team did not undertake a full analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the program or individual projects, as it was beyond the scope of the Review. Project implementation budgets have ranged from \$A1.8 million (Plan) to \$A5.4 million (CARE-CRND) across 5 years. (Annex 8) However, the Review concludes that overall the projects have been efficient in expending funds, have utilised appropriate systems and processes, and represent value for money. There are also some on-going challenges, particularly in relation to underspending due to delays in implementation (CARE-CRND, CARE-WSS), and these projects would benefit from no-cost extensions (see Section 3.4 for further recommendations).

VANGOCA NGOs have also come to play a financing role (with the majority of funding being managed by and through Vietnamese government partners). A significant percentage of project budgets have gone directly into Project Management Units (PMUs) for disbursement to district and commune level activities. In addition, a number of projects were also being supported through government budgets, particularly for staffing and technical support. This has promoted efficiency and reinforced integration with PMU/ GoV systems from the province to the commune level.

Projects have tended to be most efficient:

- when there have been clear agreements with partners from the outset about funding mechanisms (particularly in relation to infrastructure projects) and
- where funds have gone directly through to district PMUs and below, with fewer steps for approval processes (although AFAP is the exception with links direct to national MOH).

3.4 Development Impact and Sustainability

Impact and sustainability: to what degree has the VANGOCA project produced positive or negative changes directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? Are the benefits of the VANGOCA projects sustainable?

The Review was impressed by the broad based and consistent endorsement by stakeholders of the positive impacts of VANGOCA projects across both themes. There is strong evidence that VANGOCA projects are contributing to making positive impacts in terms of improving health by increasing access to clean water and sanitation; reducing the vulnerability of poor communities to the impacts of floods and storms; and contributing to enhancing livelihoods. Both WSS and DPM themes show consistent patterns in contributions to positive change and sustainable outcomes.

DPM Projects (CARE, OXFAM, WV)

- an increase in the level of awareness of disaster preparedness and mitigation
- development and utilisation of quality training and IEC materials
- development and integration of DPM plans at local levels
- positive change in the enabling environment within government agencies (such as the CFSC) at the province, district, commune and village levels for supporting CBDM
- strong willingness from government partners to replicate at the province and district levels (e.g. simulation exercises and IEC materials)
- mobilisation of local systems, network and resources, such as the Women's Union, Youth Union and the Red Cross, as well as other MOs, and have the potential existing networks to continue with CBDM beyond the life of the project
- commitment of communes and villages; local community and government authority engagement and enthusiasm for project activities

- IEC volunteers/ facilitators/ DPM club members have demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm for continuing knowledge transfer and community awareness training after the project finishes
- stakeholders show their commitment in sustaining project outcomes to continue livelihoods activities; maintain early warning systems and construction works; facilitate transfer of DPM knowledge in households, villages and schools.

WSS Projects (AFAP, CARE, Plan)

- an increase in the level of awareness about the links between access to appropriate safe water, improved sanitation and health and hygiene practices, including dengue awareness
- progress towards building intersectoral approaches to WSS and vector borne disease (dengue) both nationally through CERWASS and MOH, and internationally through WHO
- increased capacity and participation from government partners PCERWASS/ CORD, WU, MOH at province, district and commune levels (also at national MOH for AFAP)
- strong interest from communes and villages and local communities for project activities
- a focus on providing poor and vulnerable households and community members affordable access to WSS facilities and support, in order to contribute to improving health
- demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm by motivators/ collaborators/ community volunteers for continuing community awareness raising activities after the project finishes
- mobilisation of local networks and resources, such as the Women's Union, Farmers, Youth, as well as other MOs and schools, which have the potential existing networks to continue beyond the life of the project.

The Review also concludes that there is evidence that most projects have begun to lay the foundations for sustaining the outcomes of project activities, particularly at the community level, and begun to plan/ prepare for exit strategies where relevant. However, there is some risk to sustainability where projects have been delayed and under spent in implementation of activities (i.e. CARE-CRND and CARE-WSS). The Review Team recommends that no cost extensions for a minimum of 12 months be considered so that there can be further progress towards project objectives and steps towards project sustainability can be consolidated.

3.5 Lessons and Recommendations

The Review concludes that overall there is strong evidence and endorsement of VANGOCA projects, which have made positive and effective progress in achieving their objectives and contributing the VANGOCA Program goal. In addition, projects have demonstrated the value added that ANGOs bring to community based, sub-national efforts; the WSS and DPM sectors; and opportunities for future engagement.

Some valuable lessons have been learned which provide important points of reflection for current experiences, and for future programming (discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3).

Lessons

- An over ambitious design, scope, complex components and indicators can increase the risk of implementation difficulties and delays.
- It is crucial to build in time to develop a clear understanding and ownership from local partners to be developed at the outset from the design stage through implementation and into post project exit planning. This promotes the success of the project and later the opportunity to replicate and sustain benefits and impacts, including integration into government systems.
- The development of effective grass-roots networks of IEC volunteers is significant in strengthening the ownership of local communities and asset development. It helps to build confidence and enthusiasm of "local experts" to facilitate knowledge transfer and networks in local communities, and to replicate and continue after the project ends.
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration across different agencies and GoV levels is essential to ensure an enabling environment for implementing community based approaches, scaling up project initiatives, integrating with GoV systems and to help to ensure sustainability.
- Effective and locally relevant technical assistance combined with the development of comprehensive training materials and capacity development programs are crucial to project success and sustainability.

Recommendations

In the time remaining before project completion, the Review recommends the following to VANGOCA NGOs and AusAID:

- Build on the project learning and consolidate it with project partners, community volunteers, and community groups. For example, part of this consolidation could be to leave behind a "comprehensive manual" of all approaches, methods, tools and materials, including capacity development, awareness raising and training materials; develop a series of information pamphlets and/ or videos for learning purposes.
- Provide an opportunity and/ or mechanism for developing evidence based activities which can be used as a part of a demonstration effect, and linkage to the WSS and DPM sectors, national policies and government partners.
- Develop strategies to promote local management and a more central role for communities in project planning, coordination, implementation and M&E, in development and implementation of procedures and activities.
- Prepare and develop in partnership the project exit strategy, including opportunities to reach the poorest of the poor.
- Build on successes, and capitalise on the strengths and comparative advantage of VANGOCA NGOs, the investments and achievements of VANGOCA projects (across the 2 sectors); and continue to share experiences and promote the integration of VANGOCA project approaches as relevant to the upcoming CBDRM and roll out of NTP2.
- VANGOCA NGOs (where relevant) consider requesting extensions for a minimum of 12 months, so that there can be further progress towards project objectives and consolidation of efforts. There may be a need for both no cost and costed extensions. However, each extension will need to be considered on a project by project basis.

4. Insights from the VANGOCA Experience for Consideration of Future Programming

The third objective of the Review is to provide some insights from VANGOCA lessons and good practice for consideration of future programming by GoA in Vietnam in relation to the broad area of civil society and NGOs. The Review Team has approached this objective by: 1) briefly reviewing current literature¹⁰; 2) undertaking brief consultations with key stakeholders (AusAID, other donors, civil society representatives and experts, GoV representatives, VANGOCA NGOs) as part of broader VANGOCA discussions (see Annex 3); and 3) reflecting on key findings from VANGOCA projects.

The Review notes that the comments presented here are a summary overview of an important and substantive set of considerations which merit further detailed consultations and a review of possible options for future engagement. The Review Team suggests that AusAID Vietnam give consideration to undertaking (or participating in) a structured comprehensive review process, as it awaits confirmation of the Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015. These consultations should include further discussions with NCE (AusAID), ANGOs, INGOs, Vietnamese NGOs/ CSOs, GoV and other donors. Therefore, these comments should be read as reflections on the VANGOCA experience given the current context.

4.1 Civil Society and NGOs in Vietnam

Context

Vietnam has changed rapidly over the past 20 years, since the launch of "Doi Moi" (Renovation) policy with development of a market economy, administration reform, the decentralization process and international integration. Among the many changes in Vietnam in recent years is the emergence of civil society (CS).

There is great diversity in the use of terms such as CS and Civil Society Organisation (CSO) in Vietnam and across different stakeholders. CSOs range from community based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), umbrella organisations, faith based organisations, to former government research institutes, professional associations, Mass Organisations (MOs), which are closely

¹⁰ Literature reviewed included: Forms of Engagement Between State Agencies and Civil Society Organizations in Vietnam: Study Report (2008); CIVICUS (2006); Thayer (2008); Vasavakul and Bui The Cuong (2008); Norlund (2007).

related to the Party (for example the Women's Union, Fatherland Front, Youth Union), and other hybrid government-non-government or government-private sector entities, with some definitions including international NGOs (INGOs) (CIVICUS, 2006). In addition, the media occupies an ambivalent position as it is rarely included in definitions of civil society, but is increasingly giving voice to civil society issues and has played a key role in highlighting governance and corruption issues.

Recent years have seen a proliferation of organisations described as non government or not for profits, and these organisations are widespread and diverse in Vietnam. There are estimates of 300 in operation nation-wide, over 2000 at provincial levels and tens of thousands at lower levels (with estimates that about 25% of the Vietnamese population are members of an organisation).

While there is a lack of a comprehensive and clear legal framework for the formation and operation of NGOs/ CSOs, the principle "people know, people discuss, people execute and people supervise" which has been repeatedly mentioned in documents and policies of the Vietnam's Communist Party, particularly The Grassroots Democracy Decree 79 (2003) and later Grassroots Democracy Ordinance (2007), reflects the wish of the Government to encourage social organisations and citizen participation in formulating, implementing and monitoring policies.

A recent study¹¹ has highlighted several interesting changes in engagement between state and civil society organisations.

- Engagement between civil society groups and state authorities has improved over time and the general political and legal environment has become more conducive to civil society-state interactions. Through exposure and experience of trying to work with each other, citizen groups and authorities often develop productive relationships where previously they had none.
- There was considerable agreement about key elements for societal-state engagement: including what civil society is, its importance for Vietnam's progress, and the meaning and purpose of civil society organizations.
- Currently, service delivery by CSOs constitutes the most robust form of engagement, and is a multi-faceted activity including: helping to carry out government programs aimed at benefiting citizens; providing services the state has not initiated and that thereby enlarging public space for civil society activities; getting involved in policy matters; being advocates for specific constituencies, and monitoring authorities' actions.
- There is more policy and law-making engagement, including lobbying, than indicated by previous studies; including activity by MOs, as might be expected, as well as NGOs and CBOs, and engagement is more pronounced at sub-national levels than at the national one.

This study also highlights several areas for potential strengthening including:

- improving the institutional and regulatory environment to expand engagement and dialogue;
- strengthening engagement and capacity in state and civil society organisations for further engagement; and
- promoting/ informing key stakeholders and communities about civil society activities and engagement with government.

Role of International NGOs

International NGOs (INGOs), by some definitions, are not included as Vietnamese CSOs, but rather have been seen as facilitators and supporters of both CSOs and government. INGOs are largely engaged in implementing development programs at the level of the commune/ district and piloting innovative development interventions for poverty reduction. More recently there has been a trend amongst some of the more progressive INGOs to operate through Vietnamese NGOs (VNGOs). This has allowed INGOs to play a role in strengthening VNGO capacity in implementing development programs while increasing their outreach. Some INGOs have also successfully engaged in National policy making, while others have been engaging in issue based advocacy.

For example, INGOs in building partnerships with civil society groups and the state, as well as efforts to share resources, promote joint advocacy and build capacity for VNGOs and associations, in recent years have developed a number of networks (e.g. Disability Forum Network, Vietnam Rivers Network, Civil Society Inclusion in Food Security and Poverty Elimination Network, Gender and Community Development

¹¹ Forms of Engagement Between State Agencies and Civil Society Organizations in Vietnam: Study Report (2008).

Network); and several Working Groups in sectors such as Disaster Mitigation, Water Supply and Sanitation, Child Rights, Ethnic Minorities.

Many stakeholders see complementary roles for INGOs and VNGOs in the foreseeable future. However, they also recognise that the nature of the relationship between INGOs and VNGOs will need to be redefined to transition to one based more on partnership principles and focused on facilitation, skills transfer and capacity building, within the emerging development context of Vietnam. These comments may apply equally to the nature of relationships with donors.

4.2 Key Reflections from VANGOCA Projects

In summary, the Review has found that overall VANGOCA projects, i.e. Australian NGOs and their Vietnamese INGO partners, have been successful in partnering with government authorities and MOs at various levels, and with communities. They have made a positive contribution to improving water and sanitation, disaster preparedness and management, and contributing to improved livelihoods in Quang Ngai and the Mekong Delta. These efforts have not been without various challenges (as discussed in Section 3 and Annex 9), but these challenges have provided opportunities for further learning across stakeholders.

Several observations can be made about the characteristics of VANGOCA NGO engagement and the achievements of VANGOCA projects. A number of these characteristics parallel the introductory comments made about civil society in Vietnam and highlighted in the recent study¹² (in Section 4.1).

- **Approach:** VANGOCA NGOs have successfully introduced and implemented community based, participatory and multi-stakeholder approaches. This approach integrates service delivery, capacity development and support to government programs and policies, with advocacy for the poor and vulnerable (particularly women, elderly, ethnic minorities, children and youth), and monitoring of activities.
- **Partnerships with Government:** Stakeholders at all levels (including National PACCOM) have expressed their appreciation and commended the role and achievements of VANGOCA NGOs and projects. Overall VANGOCA projects are integrated within partner government planning and budgeting systems, at the provincial level and below. Government partners were also actively involved in developing action plans and monitoring, with VANGOCA NGOs, and these plans were being integrated and utilised for commune, district and provincial level reporting and budgeting.
- **Funding:** VANGOCA NGOs played a financing role (with the majority of funding being managed by and through Vietnamese government partners). A significant percentage of project budgets have gone directly into Project Management Units (PMUs) for disbursement to district and commune level activities. In addition, a number of projects were being supported through government budgets, particularly for staffing and technical support.
- **Levels of engagement:** The majority of VANGOCA partnerships were at the provincial, district, commune and village levels (the exception being AFAP partnering through National MOH through to sub-national levels).
- **Integration of policy and practice:** Most VANGOCA NGOs and/ or their government partners were involved in different levels of sector (WSS and DPM) based dialogues. This included for ANGOs representation in national level sector working group meetings through NGO Vietnam Headquarters offices. As such, individual project activities had the potential to contribute to sector policy, research, practice-based discussions and lessons across all levels; national, provincial, district and commune.
- **Capacity development:** Beneficiaries and key stakeholders expressed positive responses and confidence with knowledge, and skills transfer elements of VANGOCA projects, particularly at the district level down. This is clearly demonstrated in terms of planning skills, actions plans, community engagement, and examples of replication of project activities and lessons.
- **Mass Organisations:** MOs, as well as local government authorities, were being effectively supported and integrated into capacity and organisational development by VANGOCA projects. In addition, the majority of projects were also building on, or utilising existing GoV and/ or MO IEC and other materials.

¹² Ibid.

- **Service Delivery:** Service delivery is an umbrella term which includes multiple elements, and should not be "simply" interpreted as INGOs delivering "services"; e.g. providing latrines. Predominantly, project service delivery is carried out by government and MO partners, along with community members. ANGOs play a facilitation role strengthening the links between communities and local government authorities, and providing access to capacity development, technical assistance and other resources. This provides an opportunity also for advocacy for the community based approach, supporting vulnerable groups, as well as engaging with partners relevant to sectoral policy issues, while also "delivering services and working towards poverty reduction. In many cases poverty reduction was also integrated with livelihoods and income generation activities.
- **Community based activities:** "Community based organisations" (CBOs) (e.g. collaborator networks, credit and savings groups, income generation groups) have been facilitated and have emerged as potentially sustainable entities, as part of VANGOCA project implementation. A number of these loosely defined "CBOs" indicate that they are committed to sustaining activities and services after project completion, and have requested further support from VANGOCA NGOs on capacity development, as well as a gradual and consultative exit strategies.
- **The "demonstration effect" and sustainability:** One of the critical factors in the success of VANGOCA projects was the ability to support "demonstration" of activities/ plans/ skills, and to assist partners to plan for and begin to replicate what they had learned. Evidence to date indicates that this approach bodes well for future impact and sustainability. Equally important, this demonstration effect can be built upon to provide accessible information, and consolidated to promote good practice and learning across additional geographic and sectoral contexts, as appropriate.
- **Role of VANGOCA NGOs as INGOs:** VANGOCA projects have provided an important model for successful partnerships, project outputs, and build the basis for sustainable outcomes in WSS and DPM. VANGOCA NGOs have brought to their endeavours, previous Vietnam and sectoral experience, and linkages from the commune to national policy levels. This highlights their value added contribution and a strong comparative advantage to contribute further to the WSS and DPM sectors, as well as more broadly in terms of engagement with government partners, mass organisations and communities.

4.3 Future Programming

Implications for Donor Support

The implications of these observations for future programming are that VANGOCA NGOs have demonstrated a clear comparative advantage in facilitating community based approaches, partnering in capacity building mass organisations, government authorities (at different levels) and communities, as well as providing "practice-based" evidence as a link to policy dialogue, and to support further accountability, in the WSS and DPM sectors. At the same time, there is also a recognition that INGOs are entering a period of transition where it will be increasingly important to build the capacity of, and partner with VNGOs. However, this transition will take time, and the implication for future programming, is not an either/ or approach, but rather a balanced approach by donors and INGOs to support and facilitate civil society engagement in Vietnam.

There is a wide variety of donor and multilateral support for civil society through partnerships with local and international NGOs, as well as through government and MOs. Overall the Vietnamese Government essentially sees the role of VNGOs and INGOs as contributors to the government's socio-economic development strategy rather than necessarily offering alternative perspectives. This takes place within the context of the Hanoi Core Statement and Paris Declaration (PD) with current donor emphasis on predominately supporting national government systems and national policy dialogue. If this is taken too narrowly, there is a risk then that only government related activities and organisations may be exclusively supported, and that the broader understanding of the Paris Declaration and emphasis on "local ownership", including participatory decision making and accountability could be inadvertently diminished. A more balanced approach would look to supporting both national government plans and strategies, as well as to strengthening the capacity of civil society to participate more equitably in "local ownership".

For example, as demonstrated by VANGOCA, partnerships between donors and NGOs recognise ANGOs' complementary and value-added roles particularly in terms of their direct experience in implementing programs at community level, linking communities to services, appreciation of community views, building relationships with government partners, extending the reach of donor supported programs, and promoting the overall governance

reform agenda. They also help create demand in communities for better quality government programs that meet the community needs and expectations, through the promotion of more consultative and community based approaches to dialogue and planning.

In addition, a strategic role played by NGOs is their ability to assess the impact of national development strategies at the sub-national, including community level, and thereby contribute to policy dialogue. Therefore, a total separation of service delivery and policy dialogue is not advantageous, given the leveraging effect of service delivery in terms of bringing evidence to the policy table, and in building partnerships and engagement across levels and stakeholders.

Options for Future GoA Support

Therefore, future programming should canvas a number of options for supporting civil society and NGOs in Vietnam. The VANGOCA experience has provided some important insights and it would be useful to consider a number of guiding principles in reviewing options.

- Build on successes, and capitalise on the strengths and comparative advantage of VANGOCA NGOs, the investments and achievements of VANGOCA projects (across the 2 sectors).
- Consolidate learning, practice and experience; promote lessons; and plan/ prepare exit and transition strategies with partners.
- Provide an opportunity and mechanism for developing evidence based activities which can be used as a demonstration effect, and linkage to national policies and government partners.
- Take a balanced approach, by providing support for both INGOs and VNGOs, particularly for capacity development of Vietnamese NGOs, including in service delivery support, as part of enhancing initiatives, sub-national community based mechanisms and accountability across various levels of stakeholders.
- Build on sectoral achievements and contributions and align with the Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015.

Four broad options are presented as initial discussion points. It should be noted that the Review Team does not consider that these options are mutually exclusive, or that only a single option should be taken forward. The Review Team recognises that a more comprehensive assessment will need to be undertaken to assess the full range of options and to fully analyse the strengths and weaknesses of various options.

OPTION 1: VANGOCA 1 Extension

- The extension of VANGOCA 1 until 1 July 2011 would allow VANGOCA projects to come into alignment and to come to completion within a similar timeframe. For some projects this would be part of a no cost extension proposal, for others it may involve provision of some small amount of transitional funding. Extensions would need to be negotiated on a project by project basis and clearly need to be undertaken following current GoV regulations.
- The extension provides an opportunity to consolidate the learning from the program, integrate sector lessons, and evaluate outcomes, as well as advocate VANGOCA achievements with key GoV partners in the CBDRM sector and RWSS/ NTP2.
- Equally it would allow time for AusAID to plan and design its next phase of support once the Draft Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015, is finalised. Should AusAID decide to proceed with VANGOCA 2 there is less risk of VANGOCA 1 achievements being dissipated by lengthy and costly delays, and against the loss of experienced staff and partner commitment.
- For this option to be undertaken effectively, a transition strategy should be developed which incorporates close consultation with ANGOs, while AusAID assesses next steps and directions for future NGO support.

OPTION 2: VANGOCA 2 Program

- VANGOCA 2 would build on the good practice and lessons of VANGOCA 1 and expand activities in the WSS and DPM sectors, with the possibility of including aspects of climate change (as identified in the Draft Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015).
- The purpose would be to support and strengthen national policy articulation, and further build the potential for sustainable outcomes through government systems including replication of successful community based approaches into adjacent districts and communes.
- However, the major change would be to develop a "full program approach" (not multiple project approach) with resources to "manage" a program that would fully support a learning framework for VANGOCA 2 stakeholders, and policy dialogue across various levels of government, which would reinforce the

“demonstration effect” and contribute sub-national perspectives to national policy, planning, financing, monitoring and accountability.

OPTION 3: A Multi-Donor Facility (MDF)

- The MDF would focus on strengthening and funding a broad range of Vietnamese NGOs and CSOs, in terms of technical assistance, capacity development, service delivery and management, including the potential for supporting INGO-VNGO partnerships as appropriate. This Facility could take a broader approach to the sectoral approach identified above, and address broader civil society issues.
- In addition, various activities to facilitate an enabling environment for VNGOs could be supported (e.g. directory of VNGOs and CSOs; raising awareness about NGO models/ activities in other countries; and raising awareness with key government agencies).
- One of the strengths of this option is that MDFs can have a positive impact on reducing the susceptibility of NGOs to individual donor changes in priorities/ preferences.
- However, donors would require substantial initial investment of donor time and resources, and there is a risk that this type of Facility approach may over time lead to a reduction in first hand knowledge by donor staff, of VNGOs and CSOs.
- Various options could be considered, including: building on the WB civil society facility; another donor takes the lead/ management of the MDF; and/ or AusAID participates as a contributor to the MDF.

OPTION 4: Umbrella Civil Society Strengthening Program

- The Umbrella Program would complement the focus on strengthening government systems, through the development of an overarching GoA program supporting civil society engagement, within the framework of the Draft Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015.
- It would provide an opportunity to address various aspects of civil society engagement, while maintaining an overarching, integrated approach and coordinated management. Various activities could be considered under such a program including: an MDF (Option 3); INGO-VNGO partnerships focused around thematic funding, such as disability; ANCP; VANGOCA 2 type programs; and targeted scholarships and volunteer placements in fields which contribute directly to civil society strengthening.
- Funding the Civil Society Programs through an intermediary (such as a Facility) could also provide more flexibility in terms of types of activities funded and fewer transaction costs.

Recommendations

The Review Team suggests that AusAID Vietnam give consideration to:

- undertaking (or participating in) a structured comprehensive review process, as it awaits confirmation of the Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015. These consultations should include further discussions with NCE (AusAID), ANGOs, INGOs, Vietnamese NGOs/ CSOs, GoV and other donors. In addition, AusAID should undertake a full stocktake and review of funding to all NGO related activities, both within the aid and development portfolio and the Embassy (e.g. including ANCP, small grants etc.);
- the 4 Options for future programming identified: 1) VANGOCA 1 Extension; 2) VANGOCA 2: WSS and DPM focused; 3) Multi-Donor Facility; and 4) Umbrella Civil Society Strengthening Program; and
- developing a detailed Options Paper (contextualised in the Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015) and expanding and fully assessing the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, of the Options proposed in the VANGOCA Review, as well as canvassing other additional options and potential transitional strategies, with key stakeholders (as above).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Major Conclusions

The Review finds that overall VANGOCA projects have made positive progress towards achieving objectives, and have had most significant impacts at the village and commune levels, by demonstrating good practice in community based approaches; capacity development of partners; and effective linkages between service delivery, awareness raising/ knowledge dissemination, and poverty alleviation, in relation to DPM and WSS in provincial locations. These efforts have not been without challenges and lessons continue to be learned.

The Review concludes that VANGOCA projects provide valuable evidence and examples for linking good local (sub-national) practice, with efforts to enhance and implement the national policy efforts of GoV, through action plans in both the WSS and DM sectors.

5.2 Recommendations and Next Steps

Program Recommendations

The Review provides GoA (AusAID) and VANGOCA NGOs an opportunity to showcase the achievements and lessons from VANGOCA projects, and capitalise on investments and existing learning and have the potential to improve program policy, operations and effectiveness, prior to program completion.

The key recommendations are to:

1. Establish a **coordination and learning framework for the VANGOCA Program**: It is suggested that at the overall VANGOCA Program level, AusAID in partnership with VANGOCA NGOs, facilitate at least one Lessons Learned Workshop across the VANGOCA Program and 6 projects in the next 6 months.
2. Promote **enhanced participation in sector working groups and policy dialogue**: It is suggested that at the overall VANGOCA Program level, AusAID in partnership with VANGOCA NGOs, facilitate and share VANGOCA lessons learned and experiences in the relevant policy and sector working groups, including AusAID facilitating VANGOCA NGO participation in relevant sectoral dialogue.

Various alternatives could be considered. For example:

- bring together all VANGOCA NGOs and key partners
- showcase VANGOCA projects in 2 sector workshops, with key partners and stakeholders
- integrate VANGOCA case studies into existing forums
- consider periodic meetings (e.g. every 6 months) and/ or site visits to the VANGOCA NGOs during the remainder of VANGOCA
- produce a VANGOCA Program Report summarising key achievements and lessons (could be electronic or hard copy)

A useful next step may be for AusAID to canvas VANGOCA NGOs as to their responses and suggestions. In considering this recommendation AusAID will also need to consider whether it has the financial and human resources to support coordination, both in the short and medium term.

Projects Recommendations

In the time remaining before project completion, the Review recommends the following to VANGOCA NGOs and AusAID:

- Build on the project learning and consolidate it with project partners, community volunteers, and community groups. For example, part of this consolidation could be to leave behind a "comprehensive manual" of all approaches, methods, tools and materials, including capacity development, awareness raising and training materials; develop a series of information pamphlets and / or videos for learning purposes.
- Provide an opportunity and/ or mechanism for developing evidence based activities which can be used as a part of a demonstration effect, and linkage to national policies and government partners;
- Develop strategies to promote local management and a more central role for communities in project planning, coordination, implementation and M&E, in development and implementation of procedures and activities.
- Prepare and develop in partnership the project exit strategy, including opportunities to reach the poorest of the poor.
- Build on successes, and capitalise on the strengths and comparative advantage of VANGOCA NGOs, the investments and achievements of VANGOCA projects (across the 2 sectors); and continue to share experiences and promote the integration of VANGOCA project approaches as relevant to the upcoming CBDRM and NTP2.
- ANGOs consider requesting extensions for a minimum of 12 months, so that there can be further progress towards project objectives and consolidation. The type of extension (cost/ no cost) would need to be considered on a case by case basis.

Future Programming Recommendations

The Review Team suggests that AusAID Vietnam give consideration to:

1. undertaking (or participating in) a structured comprehensive review process, as it awaits confirmation of the Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015. These consultations should include further discussions with NCE (AusAID), ANGOs, INGOs, Vietnamese NGOs/ CSOs, GoV and other donors. In addition, AusAID should undertake a full stocktake and review of funding to all NGO related activities, both within the aid and development portfolio and the Embassy (e.g. including ANCP, small grants etc.);
2. reviewing the 4 Options identified for future programming: 1) VANGOCA 1 Extension; 2) VANGOCA 2: WSS and DPM focused; 3) Multi-Donor Facility; and 4) Umbrella Civil Society Strengthening Program, noting that these options are not mutually exclusive; and
3. developing a detailed Options Paper (contextualised in the Draft Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015) and expanding and fully assessing the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, of the Options proposed in the VANGOCA Review, as well as canvassing other additional options, and potential transition strategies, with key stakeholders (as above).

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Vietnam-Australia NGO Cooperation Agreements (VANGOCA) Review

February – March 2009

Terms of Reference

1. BACKGROUND

The Vietnam-Australia NGO Cooperation Agreements (VANGOCA) (the Program) is a part of Australia's development cooperation with Vietnam, as outlined in the 2003-07 Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy (June 2003)¹³.

The Program is a partnership between AusAID and Australian NGOs (ANGO), linking ANGO activities and expertise to Australia's development cooperation strategy for Vietnam. This partnership aims to ensure that the Australian Government's funding of ANGOs in Vietnam is effectively targeted to Vietnam's development priorities. The Program provides an allocation of around \$22 million over five years to selected ANGOs with clear parameters defining the use of those funds. VANGOCA encompasses broad programmatic objectives as well as objectives that are specific to each activity.

The overall goal of VANGOCA is to contribute to poverty reduction and achievement of sustainable development in Vietnam, in accordance with the AusAID country strategy for Vietnam. VANGOCA addresses two key themes:

- water supply and sanitation
- disaster mitigation and preparedness.

Activities currently funded under the Program are:

<i>Water Supply and Sanitation</i>	
AFAP	Dengue-Safe Water Supply in Southern Vietnam
CARE Australia	Options and Ownership: Water and Sanitation for Rural Poor in the Mekong Delta
Plan Australia	Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Improvement Project
<i>Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation</i>	
CARE Australia	Community Resilience to Natural Disasters in the Mekong Delta
Oxfam Great Britain	Participatory Disaster Management in Dong Thap and Tien Giang provinces
World Vision	Reducing Flood and Storm Vulnerability in Quang Ngai Province

2. RATIONALE

AusAID wishes to review the performance of VANGOCA in order to allow it to make any necessary adjustments so as to maximize the benefits of the Program.

AusAID also wishes to use the review to commence a process that will allow it to consider the design of an NGO partnership program in Vietnam to commence after VANGOCA finishes. This future program, if established, would reflect the objectives of the Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15, the requirements of Vietnam as a middle income country and the emerging role of indigenous Civil Society Organisations as a development actor.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the review are to:

1. Assess the overall performance of VANGOCA through two levels of analysis:
 - a. at the level of the Program's overall objectives; and
 - b. at the level of the specific objectives of the six funded activities;
2. Recommend actions necessary to improve the performance of VANGOCA up to its due completion date;
3. Provide insights and lessons learned from the VANGOCA experience for consideration of future programming with NGOs, including options to strengthen the role of NGOs in the Australian development assistance program in Vietnam.

4. OUTPUT & OUTCOMES

¹³ AusAID is finalizing a new country strategy for the period 2009-15. The draft strategy anticipates working in Vietnam in the NGO sector, but programming details will be developed once the strategy is finalised and in conjunction with the finding of this review.

The principal product of the review will be a report that addresses the above objectives and the below scoping criteria in these terms of reference for distribution to AusAID, ANGOs, peak NGO / civil society organisations in Vietnam and Australia, and relevant GoV agencies at the central and local levels. Other outputs are listed under "Reporting Requirements".

Through the process and outputs of the VANGOCA Review, the following outcomes are expected:

- improved effectiveness of the management of the VANGOCA Program;
- strengthened partnership between AusAID and ANGOs; and
- enhanced programming model for future NGO engagement in the Australian development cooperation program.

5. SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The Review will address the following issues:

At the Program level assess:

- how flexible has the VANGOCA design been during implementation; how effective and relevant have its monitoring and management mechanisms been; and what was the quality of its sustainability strategy, drawing out lessons from the management of the VANGOCA program for other Cooperation Agreement windows in AusAID;
- the achievements of VANGOCA to date and contributions to achieving Australia's specific country strategy objectives (2003-07 Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy), including by drawing out successes, challenges, and lessons learned for the potential future development of Australian support for NGOs and civil society organisations in Vietnam in the context of the new Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15;
- NGOs' and Vietnamese government and community perceptions of AusAID's contribution to the partnership, and AusAID's perception of the contribution of the ANGOs to the partnership;
- the adequacy of AusAID's support and capacity to allow delivery on Program level outcomes, and the commitment of the ANGOs to deliver at that level.

At the Activity level assess:

- the performance of the ANGO activities;
- how flexible were the relevant activity level designs during implementation; the effectiveness of the relevant monitoring and management mechanisms; and the quality of the relevant sustainability strategies, including any evidence of replication beyond the activities' target areas;
- the management performance of the ANGOs, including in terms of their working and coordination mechanisms with their central management agencies, other VANGOCA ANGOs, AusAID, local authorities and partner communities;
- what has been achieved, including the thematic linkages to other bilateral activities and contributions to achievements of the objectives of the 2003-07 Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy;
- how cross cutting issues, in particular gender equity, have been addressed during project implementation.

Future Programming:

- recommend how VANGOCA may be strengthened in the period up to its due completion date;
- assess the value that the Government of Vietnam (GoV) gives to funding mechanisms such as VANGOCA, in the context of its policies and plans for the development of civil society organisations in Vietnam, and the role of international NGOs, including ANGOs, in assisting to reduce poverty in Vietnam;
- consider the strengths and challenges of the VANGOCA partnership model, especially by assessing how the Program's activities link to other Australian development activities in Vietnam, to Vietnam's national development programs in the relevant sectors, to community development and civil society strengthening in Vietnam; and by assessing key differences with more recent AusAID Cooperation Agreements;
- make recommendations on how AusAID may strengthen its partnership with NGOs based on the VANGOCA experience, including options on how to enhance their role in achieving the objectives of the Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15.

6. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The review will be conducted in four phases in Australia and Vietnam. It will commence on 9th February 2009 and conclude on 30th March 2009.

Phase 1: Desk review in Australia: 9th February 2009 (up to 7 days)

- review VANGOCA documentation supplied by AusAID;
- review findings and reports of recent MTRs of other AusAID NGO cooperation agreements;

- review relevant AusAID documentation, including regarding emerging consideration of policy approaches to strengthening the role of NGOs in the Australian aid program;
- draft an outline of an Issues Paper to share with ANGOs in phase 2. The Issues Paper should outline the approach, methodology and workplan for the review, including a summary of issues and major points/questions for in-country consultation and discussion and a proposed format for the Review Report. This Issue Paper needs to take into account lessons learned from previous Cooperation Agreements reviews.

Phase 2: In-Australia consultation: 16 February 2009 (approx 4 days)

- meet with Community Partnership Section, AusAID Canberra;
- meet with ANGO representatives in Australia, facilitated through ACFID;
- finalise the Issues Paper and send to AusAID Hanoi for circulation before the in-country review.

Phase 3: In-Vietnam mission: 23th February 2009 (approx 20 days)

- attend briefing by AusAID Hanoi on arrival;
- meet with VANGOCA ANGOs, relevant GoV ministries; agencies and other donors;
- travel to activity sites, meet with project teams, Vietnamese counterparts, and relevant local authorities;
- prepare a draft Aide Memoire consisting of initial findings and recommendations for discussion with AusAID;
- hold an end-of-mission workshop with relevant stakeholders to present initial findings and recommendations.

Phase 4: In-Australia report preparation: 16th March 2009 (approx 10 days)

- conduct in-Australia debriefing with ANGO representatives facilitated through ACFID;
- prepare a draft Review Report with findings to guide AusAID's consideration of the development of a future NGO/civil society partnership mechanism to support the Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15;
- finalize the Review Report after receiving comments and feedbacks.

7. TEAM SPECIFICATION

The Review Team will comprise:

The team leader (independent consultant)

The team leader is responsible for directing, coordinating and managing the assignment, including the submission of the Review Report to AusAID.

The team leader will have: (i) demonstrated experience in the monitoring, evaluation and assessment of development assistance activities, in particular NGO program assessment and performance evaluation; (ii) demonstrated understanding of the socio, political and economic situation in Vietnam, including in respect to the GoV's policies pertaining to civil society organizations and NGOs; (iii) strong leadership skills; and (iv) sound cross-culture knowledge.

The team leader will be responsible for:

- finalizing his or her own international travel for in-country mission;
- liaising with AusAID Canberra and/or ACFID for in-Australia consultation;
- liaising with AusAID Hanoi (Mr Andreas Zurbrugg; Ms Minh Nga) on the team's work program and meetings schedule prior to the mission commencing in-country;
- initial planning and review of relevant documentation as listed below;
- coordination among team members on specific tasks during the mission;
- cooperating with AusAID to present and discuss the mission's Aide Memoire at the end-of-mission workshop; and
- finalizing the review report after receiving comments and feedbacks.

The second team member (ACFID-nominated NGO representative)

The team member will have: (i) demonstrated experience in the monitoring, evaluation and assessment of development assistance activities in particular NGO program assessment and performance evaluation; (ii) demonstrated understanding of the socio, political and economic situation in Vietnam, including in respect to the GoV's policies pertaining to civil society organizations and NGOs; (iii) strong teamwork skills; and (V) sound cross-culture knowledge.

The team member will be responsible for:

- finalizing his or her own international travel for in-country mission;
- liaising with the team leader on the team's work program and meetings schedule prior to the mission commencing in-country;
- working with the team leader on initial planning and review of relevant documentation as listed below;
- working with other team members on specific tasks during the mission;

- cooperating with the team leader to present and discuss the mission's Aide Memoire at the end-of-mission workshop; and
- working with the team leader to finalize the review report after receiving comments and feedbacks.

Local consultant/interpreter

This member will have (i) demonstrated understanding of the socio, political and economic situation in Vietnam, including in respect to the GoV's policies pertaining to civil society organizations and NGOs; (ii) demonstrated strong knowledge in institutional capacity building/development and community development, particularly in terms of the role of domestic NGOs and civil society organizations in an emerging middle income country, such as Vietnam.

This team member will be responsible for interpretation services and assisting the team leader to undertake in-country activities leading to the final production of the review, under the direction of the team leader.

AusAID Canberra participant

An AusAID Canberra officer from the Community Partnership Section will support the review team to facilitate discussions relating to AusAID's policies and guidelines on cooperation with NGOs and feed-in lessons learned from similar reviews in other countries.

AusAID Hanoi participant

This officer will provide local knowledge and necessary support to the review team as required.

8. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The review team will produce the following papers:

- An Issues Paper to be developed in phases 1 and 2, discussed with ANGOs, and sent to AusAID Hanoi Post for circulation to relevant stakeholders before the in-country visit commences;
- An Aide Memoire for the end-of-mission workshop;
- A draft Review Report (electronically) in a format outlined in the Issues Paper. The draft Review Report will be marked as draft and will have the revision date on the cover. The team leader should submit the draft Review Report to AusAID Hanoi by 30th March 2009.
- Review Report (30 hard copies and electronically) in a format outlined previously in the Issues Paper. The team leader should submit the final report to AusAID Hanoi within five working days of receiving comments and feedback, in writing, on the draft review.

The team leader is responsible for preparing and submitting the above documents in consultation with the other team members. AusAID will have ownership of all documentation.

9. READING DOCUMENTS

The review team should consider all relevant documentation, including the following:

VANGOCA Program documents:

- VANGOCA Funding and Application Guidelines
- Recent MTRs and cluster evaluations of other AusAID NGO cooperation agreements, including those for Solomon Islands and Africa

Documents for each of the six ANGO activities:

- Original designs
- Annual reports and plans
- Mid-term review reports
- Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15

Government of Vietnam:

- Any current guidelines and decrees on the operation of NGOs or civil society groups

Other:

- Relevant research and analyses of the role and performance of NGOs and civil society organisations in Vietnam

Annex 2: Issues Paper

VIETNAM-AUSTRALIA NON GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION COOPERATION AGREEMENT (VANGOCA) REVIEW ISSUES PAPER

Introduction

The Vietnam-Australia NGO Cooperation Agreements (VANGOCA) (the Program) is a part of Australia's development cooperation with Vietnam, as outlined in the 2003-07 Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy (June 2003)¹⁴.

The **overall goal of VANGOCA** is to contribute to poverty reduction and achievement of sustainable development in Vietnam, in accordance with the AusAID country strategy for Vietnam. VANGOCA addresses **two key themes**:

- water supply and sanitation (WSS); and
- disaster mitigation and preparedness (DM).

Based on VANGOCA Guidelines¹⁵, and an open selection process, VANGOCA has provided A\$22 million over five years (2004-2009) to 5 Australian ANGOs for 6 projects across the 2 themes.

Table 1: VANGOCA Activities by Theme

Water Supply and Sanitation	
AFAP	Dengue-Safe Water Supply in Southern Vietnam
CARE Australia	Options and Ownership: Water and Sanitation for Rural Poor in the Mekong Delta
Plan Australia	Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Improvement Project
Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation	
CARE Australia	Community Resilience to Natural Disasters in the Mekong Delta
Oxfam Great Britain	Participatory Disaster Management in Dong Thap and Tien Giang provinces
World Vision	Reducing Flood and Storm Vulnerability in Quang Ngai Province

VANGOCA Review

The **objectives** of the review are to:

1. Assess the overall performance of VANGOCA through two levels of analysis:
 - a. at the level of the Program's overall objectives; and
 - b. at the level of the specific objectives of the six funded activities;
2. Recommend actions necessary to improve the performance of VANGOCA up to its due completion date; and
3. Provide insights and lessons learned from the VANGOCA experience for consideration of future programming with NGOs, including options to strengthen the role of NGOs in the Australian development assistance program in Vietnam.

The Review is to be conducted in 2 parts: 1) in-Australia consultations (16-20 February 2009); and 2) in-Vietnam consultations (2-20 March 2009). The Terms of Reference (TORs) for the Review are attached as Attachment 1.

The VANGOCA Review Team includes Dr Ludmilla Kwikko (Team Leader), Ms Do Van Nguyet (NGO Representative), Ms Anna Clancy (NGOs and Community Engagement, AusAID, Canberra), and Mr Nguyen Cong Thanh (Local Consultant and Translator). The Team will also be joined by representatives from AusAID Hanoi post during the mission. Their participation will be confirmed upon finalisation of the In-Vietnam Schedule.

¹⁴ AusAID is finalising a new country strategy for the period 2009-15. The draft strategy anticipates working in Vietnam in the NGO sector, but programming details will be developed once the strategy is finalised and in conjunction with the findings of this Review.

¹⁵ AusAID *VANGOCA 2003-2008: Funding and Application Guidelines*. 2003.

Issues Paper

The Issues Paper (IP) has been developed as an outline of a framework for the Review, and for identifying key issues to be considered during the Review.¹⁶ It is to be viewed as an “**iterative tool**” which can be utilised for: 1) planning purposes; 2) to inform methodology; and 3) to shape ongoing discussions about the progress of the Review with key stakeholders. Therefore, it is expected that the IP will be periodically revised.

The IP has been based on:

- a preliminary review of key documentation (as identified in the TORs, including key ANGO reports, VANGOCA Guidelines, and AusAID Country Strategy); and
- initial consultations in-Australia with AusAID, Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), individual consultations with ANGOs, and a joint Workshop with all key stakeholders in Australia (See Attachment 2).

It is expected that the IP will be updated based on feedback from ACFID, NGOs and AusAID, prior to commencement in Vietnam on 2 March. In addition, further discussion will take place in Vietnam on 2 March at initial meetings with AusAID and NGOs.

Review Approach

The overall approach is to undertake an open, consultative and collaborative review process, by engaging key stakeholders in a dialogue that provides an accurate assessment of the strengths and challenges of VANGOCA, and develops the basis for lessons learned and suggestions for possible future options.

The overall approach to the Review, methodology and data collection is:

- Evidence based: integrating valid, reliable, relevant and verifiable information, with expertise and professional judgment;
- Strengths based: focused on identifying the strengths and important outcomes of the program and projects. This approach encourages stakeholder collaboration, dialogue and participation in the Review, as well as learning across the program. It provides an opportunity for forward thinking about program improvement and future options; and
- Comprehensive: incorporating a variety of methods, including qualitative and quantitative data from a range of information sources and stakeholders. This approach facilitates feedback on the same issue from different perspectives (i.e. triangulation), and strengthens the validity of the evidence based approach.

Limitations

One of the key limitations identified in undertaking the Review is the short time frame, in which the Review is to be undertaken, particularly given the scope to be covered including: 1) a Program Review; 2) review of 6 activities; and 3) broader consultations about future options. The Review Team is mindful of these limitations, and has tried to accommodate these concerns as best as possible in developing the approach, IP, methodology and by providing input to the in-Vietnam schedule.

Proposed Methodology

The proposed methodology has been developed to reflect the approach. A general indicative outline is provided below In Table 1. Detailed methodology and specific questions will be finalised in Vietnam, once the Schedule is confirmed.

Table 2: Proposed VANGOCA Methodology

Stakeholder	Method
In-Australia	
AusAID, ANGO, background information	Document review
AusAID, ACFID	Semi-structured interviews
ANGOs	Individual semi-structured interviews

¹⁶ The Team Leader has developed the IP in consultation with Do Van Nguyet.

AusAID, ACFID, ANGOs	Workshop
In-Vietnam	
AusAID, NGO, background information	Document review
AusAID in Hanoi	Semi-structured interviews; Workshop with NGOs
Government partners in Hanoi	Semi-structured interviews
Donors in Hanoi	Roundtable discussion
NGOs outside of VANGOCA	Roundtable discussion
VANGOCA NGOs in Hanoi	Workshop with AusAID
VANGOCA NGOs in regional and/or project site	Semi-structured interviews with project staff
Partners in regional and/or project site	Workshop discussion and small group discussions
Community members and beneficiaries	Workshop discussion, small group discussions, visit to project sites

Guiding Questions for Examination of Key Issues

The overall focus for the Review is to understand at the program and activity level:

- key achievements and progress to date;
- key challenges and issues;
- key contributions and issues from the perspective of the VANGOCA program level;
- lessons learned; and
- suggestions for the remainder of VANGOCA, and for future programming.

The IP provides a list of Guiding Questions to examine the key issues identified in the Scope for the TORs for the Review, and issues confirmed during initial in-Australia consultations. Rather than repeat the TOR issues, the IP clusters issues under broad categories which will then be examined further during in-Vietnam consultations. As noted above detailed methodology and specific questions for key stakeholders to address key issues will be developed once the in-Vietnam schedule is confirmed.¹⁷ The Review notes that it will be important to report on the different stages of progress for each of the individual projects; i.e. some are close to completion, others still have some time before they reach completion, and this will be addressed during the consultations on the field visits. The Guiding Questions are grouped into 2 sections: 1) the program level, and 2) the activity level and presented as Table 3.

VANGOCA Review Schedule

The following are key dates for the Review.¹⁸

2-20 March	In Vietnam Mission
20 March	Aide Memoire Workshop in Vietnam
2 April	Debrief Workshop in Australia
6 April	Draft Review Report to AusAID

Next Steps

The Draft IP is being submitted to AusAID Hanoi on Monday 23 February, and stakeholders are requested to provide feedback by Thursday 26 February. Given the short time frame, please provide feedback directly to the VANGOCA Review Team Leader: Ludmilla Kwitko (Luda.kwitko@bigpond.com). The IP will be revised on Friday 27 February for distribution.

¹⁷ At the time of the writing of the IP, the in-Vietnam schedule was being finalised, and a specific program was yet to be confirmed.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Table 3: Guiding Questions for Examination of Key Issues: At Program and Activity Levels

PROGRAM	ACTIVITY
<p>RELEVANCE</p> <p>Issue: Linkages to GoA and GoV Development Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does VANGOCA contribute to the higher level objectives of the GoA (e.g. AusAID Country Program Strategies) and GoV aid and development programs? ▪ Was the VANGOCA design relevant to the need? ▪ Were VANGOCA objectives and performance indicators clearly specified? ▪ Were management, institutional and resource arrangements appropriate, including the form of aid; i.e. Cooperation Agreement (CA) mechanism? 	<p>RELEVANCE</p> <p>Issue: Linkages to GoA and GoV Development Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the activity coherent with the NGO's broader development strategy/programs and VANGOCA goals and objectives? ▪ Is the activity grounded in rigorous contextual analysis (e.g. historical, socio-cultural, gender, technical, economic, ecological, and political)? ▪ Was the activity design relevant to the need? ▪ Were the activity objectives and performance indicators clearly specified? ▪ Were management, institutional and resource arrangements appropriate?
<p>EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>Issue: Program Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At the program level: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of VANGOCA? ▪ How effectively and to what degree were the outcomes of VANGOCA achieved? <p>Issue: Program Achievements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What were the strengths and weaknesses of the program? ▪ What were the major challenges and how effectively were these addressed? ▪ What were the major achievements at the program level? <p>Issue: Program Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effectively was the VANGOCA Program managed and how has this management impacted on achievement of outcomes? ▪ How effectively was risk management addressed by different stakeholders (AusAID, NGOs, GoV)? ▪ From an overall management perspective, how effectively was VANGOCA managed by AusAID? <p>Issue: Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effective were joint coordination mechanisms, and what was the level of coordination across key stakeholders, including ANGOs and AusAID, as well as other key stakeholders? 	<p>EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>Issue: Activity Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of the activity? ▪ How effective was this approach within the context of Vietnam and the activity location? ▪ How effectively and to what degree were the objectives of the activity achieved? ▪ How responsive and flexible were activities? <p>Issue: Activity Implementation and Achievements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What were the major achievements at the activity level? ▪ What were the strengths and weaknesses of the activity? ▪ What were the major challenges at the activity level and how effectively were these addressed? ▪ To what extent has AusAID involvement contributed to activity effectiveness? <p>Issue: Activity Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effectively was the activity managed and how has this management impacted on achievement of outcomes (e.g. staff capacity and continuity, resources, activity management systems and processes, reporting)? ▪ Have implementation strategies, responsibilities and schedules been clear, achievable, coordinated and professional?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effective was coordination with other activities (GoV and other donors)? ▪ How effectively have linkages been created between VANGOCA and key sectoral and policy working groups in Vietnam? <p>Issue: Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effective were partnerships across the VANGOCA program (ANGOs, AusAID and other key stakeholders)? ▪ What was the role of partner government in fulfillment of responsibilities in the MoU including in terms of staffing, resources and support from officials etc? <p>Issue: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effective was VANGOCA's program monitoring and evaluation system in measuring progress towards meeting objectives? ▪ How was it implemented and were appropriate management decisions taken in response to emerging issues? ▪ How did M&E contribute to continuous program learning? <p>Issue: Integration of Gender and Crosscutting Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effectively have gender equality and other crosscutting issues (e.g. environment, good governance) been integrated across the program? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what degree has the participation of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NGO/project team ○ Local government partners ○ Beneficiaries and ○ Other stakeholders contributed to activity effectiveness? ▪ How effectively was activity risk management addressed? <p>Issue: Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effective were coordination mechanisms, and what was the level of coordination across ANGOs, AusAID, partners, and key stakeholders? ▪ How effectively have linkages been created between activities, NGOs and key sectoral and policy working groups in Vietnam? ▪ How have the learning and networking capacity, processes, and mechanisms been developed within the activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ within the NGO/ project team ○ across activity stakeholders and partners ○ in the same location, in the same theme, and ○ with other ANGOs and NGOs in Vietnam? <p>Issue: Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effective were partnership relationships between key stakeholders? Were roles and mutual responsibilities clear, participatory and inclusive? ▪ What have been the strengths and challenges and how have these challenges been addressed? <p>Issue: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effective was the activity M&E in measuring progress towards meeting objectives? ▪ How was it implemented by different stakeholders; i.e. what was the role of partners and beneficiaries in M&E? ▪ How were appropriate management decisions taken in response to emerging issues? ▪ How does the M&E system enable responsive decision-making, accountability/compliance, learning and continuous improvement? <p>Issue: Integration of Gender and Crosscutting Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effectively have gender equality and other crosscutting issues (e.g. environment, good governance, anti-corruption) been integrated into activity implementation, management and M&E?
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<p>EFFICIENCY</p> <p>Issue: Program Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were VANGOCA Program resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes? ▪ Does the VANGOCA program represent value for money? 	<p>EFFICIENCY</p> <p>Issue: Activity Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were activity resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes? ▪ Were activities and outputs completed on schedule and within budget? ▪ Does the activity represent value for money?
<p>IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY</p> <p>Issue: Impact at the VANGOCA Program Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What has been the likely impact of the VANGOCA program; i.e. what long-term changes may result from VANGOCA (positive, negative, planned and unplanned) in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poverty reduction ○ Capacity development ○ Gender equality and other crosscutting issues ○ Environment ○ Policy contribution to the DM and WSS sectors ○ Partnership and promotion of coordination and cooperation ○ Long-term development of the capacity of individuals, civil society, organizations and government ▪ How can this be assessed and what data is available? <p>Issue: Sustainability at the VANGOCA Program Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the prospects for sustainability of any financial, technical, institutional, sectoral, policy, community based or any other changes and benefits brought about by VANGOCA? This should include some comment on the exit strategy. 	<p>IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY</p> <p>Issue: Impact at the Activity Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What has been the likely impact of the activity; i.e. what long-term changes may result from the activity (positive, negative, planned and unplanned) in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poverty reduction ○ Capacity development ○ Gender equality and other crosscutting issues ○ Environment ○ Communication for behaviour change ○ Policy contribution to the DM and WSS sectors ○ Partnership and promotion of coordination and cooperation ○ Long-term development of the capacity of individuals, civil society, organizations and government ▪ In what ways have the activity outputs fostered desirable changes for direct beneficiaries? ▪ What have been the significant and lasting changes for target communities? <p>Issue: Sustainability at the Activity Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the prospects for sustainability of any financial, technical, institutional, sectoral, policy, community based or any other changes and benefits brought about by the activity? ▪ Are there any examples of replication, and/or good practice? ▪ Is there a project completion and/or exit strategy? How clear and actionable is it, and has it been shared with stakeholders? ▪ How effective has implementation of the exit strategy been so far? ▪ What are key risks to sustainability given the implementation timeframe and context?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How adequate is the level of capacity of implementing partners and beneficiaries to sustain activity benefits and obligations beyond the life of the activity?
<p>LESSONS LEARNED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was VANGOCA based on sound technical analysis and continuous learning? ▪ What have been the key lessons learned from the VANGOCA Program? 	<p>LESSONS LEARNED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was the activity based on sound technical analysis and continuous learning? ▪ What have been the key lessons learned from the activity? ▪ What have been the key lessons learned which could inform the VANGOCA Program?
<p>FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has “future” planning at the AusAID Country Strategy level taken into account “civil society”? ▪ What options are there for strengthening VANGOCA in the period remaining to completion? ▪ What options are there for strengthening future NGO programming mechanisms with AusAID? ▪ What are the future options for types of sectors, partnerships, and work with civil society organizations in Vietnam? ▪ How do key stakeholders understand, identify and work with “civil society” in Vietnam? 	<p>FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What recommendations could be made to strengthen the activity in the period remaining prior to the end of the activity?

ATTACHEMENT 1
Vietnam-Australia NGO Cooperation Agreements (VANGOCA) Review
February – March 2009
Terms of Reference

1. BACKGROUND

The Vietnam-Australia NGO Cooperation Agreements (VANGOCA) (the Program) is a part of Australia's development cooperation with Vietnam, as outlined in the 2003-07 Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy (June 2003)¹⁹.

The Program is a partnership between AusAID and Australian NGOs (ANGO), linking ANGO activities and expertise to Australia's development cooperation strategy for Vietnam. This partnership aims to ensure that the Australian Government's funding of ANGOs in Vietnam is effectively targeted to Vietnam's development priorities. The Program provides an allocation of around \$22 million over five years to selected ANGOs with clear parameters defining the use of those funds. VANGOCA encompasses broad programmatic objectives as well as objectives that are specific to each activity.

The overall goal of VANGOCA is to contribute to poverty reduction and achievement of sustainable development in Vietnam, in accordance with the AusAID country strategy for Vietnam. VANGOCA addresses two key themes:

- water supply and sanitation
- disaster mitigation and preparedness.

Activities currently funded under the Program are:

<i>Water Supply and Sanitation</i>	
AFAP	Dengue-Safe Water Supply in Southern Vietnam
CARE Australia	Options and Ownership: Water and Sanitation for Rural Poor in the Mekong Delta
Plan Australia	Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Improvement Project
<i>Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation</i>	
CARE Australia	Community Resilience to Natural Disasters in the Mekong Delta
Oxfam Great Britain	Participatory Disaster Management in Dong Thap and Tien Giang provinces
World Vision	Reducing Flood and Storm Vulnerability in Quang Ngai Province

2. RATIONALE

AusAID wishes to review the performance of VANGOCA in order to allow it to make any necessary adjustments so as to maximize the benefits of the Program.

AusAID also wishes to use the review to commence a process that will allow it to consider the design of an NGO partnership program in Vietnam to commence after VANGOCA finishes. This future program, if established, would reflect the objectives of the Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15, the requirements of Vietnam as a middle income country and the emerging role of indigenous Civil Society Organisations as a development actor.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the review are to:

1. Assess the overall performance of VANGOCA through two levels of analysis:
 - a. at the level of the Program's overall objectives; and
 - b. at the level of the specific objectives of the six funded activities;
2. Recommend actions necessary to improve the performance of VANGOCA up to its due completion date;
4. Provide insights and lessons learned from the VANGOCA experience for consideration of future programming with NGOs, including options to strengthen the role of NGOs in the Australian development assistance program in Vietnam.

¹⁹ AusAID is finalizing a new country strategy for the period 2009-15. The draft strategy anticipates working in Vietnam in the NGO sector, but programming details will be developed once the strategy is finalised and in conjunction with the finding of this review.

4. OUTPUT & OUTCOMES

The principal product of the review will be a report that addresses the above objectives and the below scoping criteria in these terms of reference for distribution to AusAID, ANGOs, peak NGO / civil society organisations in Vietnam and Australia, and relevant GoV agencies at the central and local levels. Other outputs are listed under "Reporting Requirements".

Through the process and outputs of the VANGOCA Review, the following outcomes are expected:

- improved effectiveness of the management of the VANGOCA Program;
- strengthened partnership between AusAID and ANGOs; and
- enhanced programming model for future NGO engagement in the Australian development cooperation program.

5. SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The Review will address the following issues:

At the Program level assess:

- how flexible has the VANGOCA design been during implementation; how effective and relevant have its monitoring and management mechanisms been; and what was the quality of its sustainability strategy, drawing out lessons from the management of the VANGOCA program for other Cooperation Agreement windows in AusAID;
- the achievements of VANGOCA to date and contributions to achieving Australia's specific country strategy objectives (2003-07 Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy), including by drawing out successes, challenges, and lessons learned for the potential future development of Australian support for NGOs and civil society organisations in Vietnam in the context of the new Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15;
- NGOs' and Vietnamese government and community perceptions of AusAID's contribution to the partnership, and AusAID's perception of the contribution of the ANGOs to the partnership;
- the adequacy of AusAID's support and capacity to allow delivery on Program level outcomes, and the commitment of the ANGOs to deliver at that level.

At the Activity level assess:

- the performance of the ANGO activities;
- how flexible were the relevant activity level designs during implementation; the effectiveness of the relevant monitoring and management mechanisms; and the quality of the relevant sustainability strategies, including any evidence of replication beyond the activities' target areas;
- the management performance of the ANGOs, including in terms of their working and coordination mechanisms with their central management agencies, other VANGOCA ANGOs, AusAID, local authorities and partner communities;
- what has been achieved, including the thematic linkages to other bilateral activities and contributions to achievements of the objectives of the 2003-07 Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy;
- how cross cutting issues, in particular gender equity, have been addressed during project implementation.

Future Programming:

- recommend how VANGOCA may be strengthened in the period up to its due completion date;
- assess the value that the Government of Vietnam (GoV) gives to funding mechanisms such as VANGOCA, in the context of its policies and plans for the development of civil society organisations in Vietnam, and the role of international NGOs, including ANGOs, in assisting to reduce poverty in Vietnam;
- consider the strengths and challenges of the VANGOCA partnership model, especially by assessing how the Program's activities link to other Australian development activities in Vietnam, to Vietnam's national development programs in the relevant sectors, to community development and civil society strengthening in Vietnam; and by assessing key differences with more recent AusAID Cooperation Agreements;
- make recommendations on how AusAID may strengthen its partnership with NGOs based on the VANGOCA experience, including options on how to enhance their role in achieving the objectives of the Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15.

6. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The review will be conducted in four phases in Australia and Vietnam. It will commence on 9th February 2009 and conclude on 30th March 2009.

Phase 1: Desk review in Australia: 9th February 2009 (up to 7 days)

- review VANGOCA documentation supplied by AusAID;
- review findings and reports of recent MTRs of other AusAID NGO cooperation agreements;
- review relevant AusAID documentation, including regarding emerging consideration of policy approaches to strengthening the role of NGOs in the Australian aid program;
- draft an outline of an Issues Paper to share with ANGOs in phase 2. The Issues Paper should outline the approach, methodology and workplan for the review, including a summary of issues and major points/questions for in-country consultation and discussion and a proposed format for the Review Report. This Issue Paper needs to take into account lessons learned from previous Cooperation Agreements reviews.

Phase 2: In-Australia consultation: 16 February 2009 (approx 4 days)

- meet with Community Partnership Section, AusAID Canberra;
- meet with ANGO representatives in Australia, facilitated through ACFID;
- finalise the Issues Paper and send to AusAID Hanoi for circulation before the in-country review.

Phase 3: In-Vietnam mission: 23th February 2009 (approx 20 days)

- attend briefing by AusAID Hanoi on arrival;
- meet with VANGOCA ANGOs, relevant GoV ministries; agencies and other donors;
- travel to activity sites, meet with project teams, Vietnamese counterparts, and relevant local authorities;
- prepare a draft Aide Memoire consisting of initial findings and recommendations for discussion with AusAID;
- hold an end-of-mission workshop with relevant stakeholders to present initial findings and recommendations.

Phase 4: In-Australia report preparation: 16th March 2009 (approx 10 days)

- conduct in-Australia debriefing with ANGO representatives facilitated through ACFID;
- prepare a draft Review Report with findings to guide AusAID's consideration of the development of a future NGO/civil society partnership mechanism to support the Vietnam-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15;
- finalize the Review Report after receiving comments and feedbacks.

7. TEAM SPECIFICATION

The Review Team will comprise:

The team leader (independent consultant)

The team leader is responsible for directing, coordinating and managing the assignment, including the submission of the Review Report to AusAID.

The team leader will have: (i) demonstrated experience in the monitoring, evaluation and assessment of development assistance activities, in particular NGO program assessment and performance evaluation; (ii) demonstrated understanding of the socio, political and economic situation in Vietnam, including in respect to the GoV's policies pertaining to civil society organizations and NGOs; (iii) strong leadership skills; and (iv) sound cross-culture knowledge.

The team leader will be responsible for:

- finalizing his or her own international travel for in-country mission;
- liaising with AusAID Canberra and/or ACFID for in-Australia consultation;
- liaising with AusAID Hanoi (Mr Andreas Zurbrugg; Ms Minh Nga) on the team's work program and meetings schedule prior to the mission commencing in-country;
- initial planning and review of relevant documentation as listed below;
- coordination among team members on specific tasks during the mission;
- cooperating with AusAID to present and discuss the mission's Aide Memoire at the end-of-mission workshop; and
- finalizing the review report after receiving comments and feedbacks.

The second team member (ACFID-nominated NGO representative)

The team member will have: (i) demonstrated experience in the monitoring, evaluation and assessment of development assistance activities in particular NGO program assessment and performance evaluation; (ii) demonstrated understanding of the socio, political and economic situation in Vietnam, including in respect to the GoV's policies pertaining to civil society organizations and NGOs; (iii) strong teamwork skills; and (V) sound cross-culture knowledge.

The team member will be responsible for:

- finalizing his or her own international travel for in-country mission;

- liaising with the team leader on the team's work program and meetings schedule prior to the mission commencing in-country;
- working with the team leader on initial planning and review of relevant documentation as listed below;
- working with other team members on specific tasks during the mission;
- cooperating with the team leader to present and discuss the mission's Aide Memoire at the end-of-mission workshop; and
- working with the team leader to finalize the review report after receiving comments and feedbacks.

Local consultant/interpreter

This member will have (i) demonstrated understanding of the socio, political and economic situation in Vietnam, including in respect to the GoV's policies pertaining to civil society organizations and NGOs; (ii) demonstrated strong knowledge in institutional capacity building/development and community development, particularly in terms of the role of domestic NGOs and civil society organizations in an emerging middle income country, such as Vietnam.

This team member will be responsible for interpretation services and assisting the team leader to undertake in-country activities leading to the final production of the review, under the direction of the team leader.

AusAID Canberra participant

An AusAID Canberra officer from the Community Partnership Section will support the review team to facilitate discussions relating to AusAID's policies and guidelines on cooperation with NGOs and feed-in lessons learned from similar reviews in other countries.

AusAID Hanoi participant

This officer will provide local knowledge and necessary support to the review team as required.

8. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The review team will produce the following papers:

- An Issues Paper to be developed in phases 1 and 2, discussed with ANGOs, and sent to AusAID Hanoi Post for circulation to relevant stakeholders before the in-country visit commences;
- An Aide Memoire for the end-of-mission workshop;
- A draft Review Report (electronically) in a format outlined in the Issues Paper. The draft Review Report will be marked as draft and will have the revision date on the cover. The team leader should submit the draft Review Report to AusAID Hanoi by 30th March 2009.
- Review Report (30 hard copies and electronically) in a format outlined previously in the Issues Paper. The team leader should submit the final report to AusAID Hanoi within five working days of receiving comments and feedback, in writing, on the draft review.

The team leader is responsible for preparing and submitting the above documents in consultation with the other team members. AusAID will have ownership of all documentation.

9. READING DOCUMENTS

The review team should consider all relevant documentation, including the following:

VANGOCA Program documents:

- VANGOCA Funding and Application Guidelines
- Recent MTRs and cluster evaluations of other AusAID NGO cooperation agreements, including those for Solomon Islands and Africa

Documents for each of the six ANGO activities:

- Original designs
- Annual reports and plans
- Mid-term review reports
- Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2009-15

Government of Vietnam:

- Any current guidelines and decrees on the operation of NGOs or civil society groups

Other:

- Relevant research and analyses of the role and performance of NGOs and civil society organisations in Vietnam

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ATTACHEMENT 2
VANGOCA REVIEW – IN AUSTRALIA CONSULTATIONS
16-20 February 2009

Date	Name	Organisation	Position Title	Phone Contact	Email Contact
17 Feb	Neva Wendt	ACFID	Senior Policy Advisor	02 6281 9232	nwendt@acfid.asn.au
17, 19 Feb	Cetana Das	ACFID	Policy Advisor	02 6281 9219	cdas@acfid.asn.au
17, 19 Feb	Anna Clancy	AusAID	Acting Director, NGO and Community Engagement	02 6206 4375	anna.clancy@ausaid.gov.au
19 Feb	Andy Isbister	AusAID	Mekong Section		
19 Feb	Erin Gleeson	AusAID	Mekong Section		
18 Feb	Brian Kay	AFAP	Technical Adviser Deputy Director, Australian Centre for International and Tropical Health	07 3362 0350	Brian.Kay@qimr.edu.au
18, 19 Feb	Uma Menon	AFAP	South East Asia Program Manager	0407482127	uma.menon@afap.org
19, 20 Feb	Sophie Davies	CARE	Asia Coordinator	02 6279 0218	sophie.davies@careaustralia.org.au
19, 20 Feb	Jenny Clement	CARE	Country Programs Manager	02 6270 0200	jenny.clement@careaustralia.org.au
19 Feb	Di Kilsby	Plan Australia	Senior Program Manager	03 9672 3648	di.kilsby@plan.org.au
19 Feb	Megan Tucker	Plan Australia	Program Manager	03 9672 3679	megan.tucker@plan.org.au
19, 20 Feb	Christine Gregory	Oxfam Australia	Senior Program Manager – Mekong Program	03 9289 9242	christineg@oxfam.org.au
19 Feb	Natalie Purcell	Oxfam Australia	Program Support Coordinator – Mekong Program	03 9289 9487	nataliep@oxfam.org.au
19 Feb	Phearak Svay	World Vision	Program Coordinator	03 9287 2511	pheark.svay@worldvision.com.au
19 Feb	Stephen Collins	World Vision	Program Coordinator	03 9287 2622	stephen.collins@worldvision.com.au

Annex 3: VANGOCA In-Vietnam Schedule (1-20 March 2009)

Date/ Time	Meetings/ Activities	Objectives	Organisation/Location
Sun 1 Mar 09	Anna Clancy - arrive from Bangkok EAT 9.35 (TG0682); transfer to Daewoo hotel		
18.30-20.30	Kerry, Andreas, Anna, Ludmilla, Nguyet	Dinner/ Briefing	Au Lac Café 57 Ly Thai To Tel: 38257807
Mon 2 Mar 09			
8.30-10.00	Andreas, Minh Nga, Thu Nga, Thuan	Briefing with AusAID Hanoi	AusAID Hanoi 2 nd floor, 8 Dao Tan, Ba Dinh, Hanoi Tel: 84-4 38317754
11.00-12.00	Mr Vu Xuan Hong, Chairman Vietnam Union Friendship Organizations Ms Tran Thi Thu Thuy, Deputy Director, PACCOM	To discuss coordination and reporting mechanism relating to INGOs	PACCOM , 105A Quan Thanh, Hanoi Tel: 38433077 or Mr Tung 0913591575
14.00-15.30	VANGOCA ANGOs, AusAID Hanoi	Kick-off-meeting with ANGOs	Australian Embassy Multi-purpose room, ground floor, 8 Dao Tan, Ba Dinh, Hanoi Tel: 84-4 38317754
16.00-17.00	Mr Nguyen Thanh Luan, Deputy Director, Centre for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (CERWASS) Ms Nguyen T. Thuy Ai, Vice chief of IEC section, NCERWASS	Discuss Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS)	MARD – CERWASS 73 Nguyen Hong road Tel: 38358934 (Ms Ngoc) or Mr Can 0936163619
Tue 3 Mar 09			
8.30-10.30	Mr Peter Newsum, Country Director	Discuss Water Supply and Sanitation(WSS) and Disaster Mitigation (DM) – CARE	CARE 66 Xuan Dieu, Hanoi Tel: 37161930/0913044818
11.00-12.30	Mr Provash Mondal, Humanitarian Programme Coordinator	Discuss DM (OXFAM)	OXFAM UK 16 Mai Hac De Tel: 39454362/0913520770
13.30-15.00	Mr Peter van Dommelen, Program Support Manager	Discuss WSS (PLAN)	PLAN Level 10, Capital building 72 Tran Hung Dao Tel: 38220661
15.30-17.00	Mr Le Van Duong, National DM Coordinator	Discuss DM (WV)	WORLD VISION 4 th floor, HEAC building, 14-16 Ham Long, Hoan Kiem Tel: 39439896/0904162634
Wed 4 Mar 09			
9.00-11.30	Team discussion		
11.30-12.30	Kerry, Phuong, Thu Nga, Thuan, Minh Nga and Review team	To review methodology, team tasks, key findings	Big meeting room of AusAID
14.30-16.00	Mr Nguyen Thanh Phuong, NDMP Coordinator Mr Peter Grzic, NDMP Facilitator	To discuss DM	MARD Building A4, No 2 Ngoc Ha, Ba Dinh, Hanoi Tel: 37335698; e:mail: phuongnt@ccfsc.org.vn

16.00	Team discussion		
Thur 5 Mar 09			
9.00-10.00	Team discussion		
10.00-11.30	Mr Lars Udsholt, Director, Capacitate a/s Ms Elke Forster, Aid Effectiveness Adviser Ms Tran Thi Ngoc Mai, Program Coordinator, Center for Cooperation Human Resources Development Ms Vu Thi Hien, Director, Centre of Research & Development (CERDA)	To discuss: NGOs context in Vietnam: Civil society organisations (CSOs) and their contribution to aid effectiveness	AusAID Hanoi 2nd floor, 8 Dao Tan, Ba Dinh, Hanoi Tel: 84-4 3 8317754
12.00-14.00	Working lunch with World Bank, DANIDA, Finland Embassy, UNDP Ms Bo Thi Hong Mai, WB Ms Tran Thi Lan Huong, Finland Embassy Ms Nguyen Kim Quy, Project Officer, DANIDA Mr Ugo Blanco, UNDP	To discuss other donors' experience working in WS, DM and supporting local NGOs and CSOs	Wild Lotus, 55A Nguyen Du, Tel: 38226917
15.30-17.00	Mr Phan Anh Son, Acting Director of International Relations Department Contact: Ms Duong Thi Nga	To discuss development of CSOs in Vietnam	VUSTA 53 Nguyen Du, Hanoi Tel: 39439911 E:mail: htqtvusta@gmail.com
Fri 6 Mar 09			
6.00	Leave Daewoo hotel for airport – Flight from Hanoi to Can Tho – VN289 ETD7.30, ETA 9.40 Thuan, Anna, Ludmila, Nguyet, Thanh		
10.00-12.00	Travel to Soc Trang by car – Check in hotel		Ngoc Suong hotel Km 2127, Highway 1, Soc Trang Tel: 079-3613108
14.00-16.00	CARE – In Soc Trang Meeting with Options and Ownership Project Team		
16.00-17.30	Meet with partners		
17.30	Back to Ngoc Suong hotel		
Sat 7 Mar 09	CARE – In Soc Trang		
8.30 – 11.30	Field visit		
11.30-13.30	Lunch break		
13.30-17.00	Field visit		
17.00-19.00	Travel to Can Tho by car – Overnight in Can Tho		Golf Can Tho hotel 02 Hai Ba Trung St, Tan An Ward, Ninh Kieu district, Can Tho Tel: 710-3812210

Sun 8 Mar 09	In Can Tho	Free time	
12.30 – 15.30	Lunch and discuss with David Sandilands, Team Leader Team Leader of CRND		
	Overnight in Can Tho		
Mon 9 Mar 09	CARE – In An Giang		
7.15 – 8.30	Leave Golf Can Tho hotel for Long Xuyen – Travel to Long Xuyen by boat		
8.30-10.00	Breakfast and meeting with partner		
10.00-12.30	Travel to O Long Vi commune - Lunch with local partners		
12.30-16.00	Field visit	Visit CRND activities in O Long Vi commune	
16.00-19.00	Travel to Cao Lanh Debrief with Care CRND Overnight in Dong Thap		Nha khach tinh uy Dong Thap 48 Ly Thuong Kiet, Phuong 1, Cao Lanh, Dong Thap Tel: 067 387 2670 Contact: Ms Nga or Thu
9.00	<i>Leave Embassy for HCMC – Flight VN 215 ETD10.30 Minh Nga and Phuong</i>		
Tue 10 Mar 09	OXFAM – In Dong Thap Minh Nga to joint the team		
8.00-9.30	Meeting with project staff		
9.45-11.30	Meeting with partner at DPI office (PMB, CFSC, WU)		
13.00 -17.00	Visit one commune in District 1		
17.00	Back to hotel – Over night in Dong Thap		
Wed 11 Mar 09	OXFAM – In Dong Thap		
7.30-11.00	Visit one commune in District 2		
11.00-14.00	Travel to Tien Giang – Lunch at Cao Lanh town		
14.15-16.15	Meeting with partners (PMB, CFSC)		
16.30-17.45	Meeting with project staff at Tien Giang office		
17.45-18.45	Dinner at My Tho city (Tien Giang)		
18.45-20.30	Travel to HCMC by car – Overnight in HCMC		New World Hotel Sai Gon 76 Le Lai, District 1, HCMC Tel: 8-38228888
Thur 12 Mar 09	AFAP – In HCMC		
8.45	Leave hotel for project office		

13.30 – 16.30	Presentation and discussion on Dengue Safe Water project and WSS on VANGOCA		
Fri 13 Mar 09	AFAP – In Long An		
7.00	Leave hotel for Binh Hoa Lac Commune, Long An province		
9.00-10.30	Meet project partner staff and collaborators		
10.30-11.30	Visit households		
12.00-13.00	Lunch break		
13.00-15.00	Travel back to HCMC Debrief with AFAP project		
17.50 – 19.00	Flight from HCMC to Da Nang (VN 326 ETD 17.50)- Overnight in Da Nang (Ludmila, Nguyet, Thanh)		Furama 68 Ho Xuan Huong, Da Nang Tel: 0511-3847888/Fax: 3847666
Sat 14 Mar 09			
8.00-11.00	Travel to Quang Ngai by car – Check in hotel Ludmila, Nguyet, Thanh		Hung Vuong hotel 45 Hung Vuong Tel: 055-3710477
12.30-13.30	Lunch break		
14.00-15.00	Meeting with WV staff		World vision office
15.30-18.00	Meeting with Plan staff		PLAN office
Sun 15 Mar 09	PLAN – Field visit		
7.45	Leave hotel		
8.00-11.30	PLAN: Visiting communities, Commune Core Group (CCG)/ commune Implementing Committee (PIC), district Technical Supporting Groups (TSG) in Nghia Son Commune, Tu Nghia District		
13.30-17.00	PLAN: Visiting communities, Commune Core Group (CCG)/ commune Implementing Committee (PIC), district Technical Supporting Groups (TSG) in Hanh Duc commune, Nghia Hanh district		
Mon 16 Mar 09			
8.00-9.30	Joint meeting with World Vision, PLAN, Provincial authorities		Meeting with Quang Ngai provincial authorities at PPC meeting hall
9.30-12.00	PLAN Meeting with provincial PMB		
12.00 – 13.15	PLAN Field visit – meeting with Tu Nghia district authorities		

13.30-17.00	World Vision Meeting with district PMB Field visit to Duc Loi commune, Mo Duc district – visiting the inter- hamlet roads relocation households, upgrade houses		
Tue 17 Mar 09			
7:45	Check out hotel		
8.00-12.00	World Vision Field visit to Pho Thuan commune, Duc Pho district – Visiting the irrigation dam, wireless boasting system, DRR plan		
12.00-15.00	Travel from Quang Ngai to Da Nang by car		
16.15-17.20	Flight back to Hanoi – VN316 ETD16.15 Ludmila, Nguyet, Thanh		
Wed 18 Mar 09	Aid Memoire preparation		
Thur 19 Mar 09	Aid Memoire preparation		
9.00-10.30	Meeting with AusAID to discuss draft Aid Memoire Kerry, Andreas, Thu Nga, Thuan, Phuong, Minh Nga and the team		
Afternoon	Aid Memoire preparation		
Fri 20 Mar 09	End-off-mission workshop (two sessions)		Australian Embassy Multi-purpose room, ground floor, 8 Dao Tan, Ba Dinh, Hanoi Tel: 84-4 38317754
8.30-9.30	Debriefing with GOV agencies (MPI, PACCOM, CEWASS, NDMP)	Findings and observation on VANGOCA activities	
9.30-11.30	VANGOCA ANGOs	Discuss findings/views from VANGOCA experience on future programming with NGOs, including options to strengthen the role of NGOs in the Australian Development assistance program in Vietnam	
14.00-14.30		Debriefing with Ambassador	Australian Embassy 3nd floor. Ext 304 (Ms Thuy)

Annex 4: Guiding Questions: In-Vietnam Consultations

PROJECT PARTNERS (Government and Mass Organisations at National, Province, District, Commune, Village Levels)

1. Who are the main partners and what is the partner's role and responsibility in relation to the project?
 - What are the links/ relationships between the partners, and across different levels?
 - Has the project appropriately engaged with government departments?
 - Have government departments engaged effectively with the project?
 - How is the community involved?
2. How are the decisions made on the project; e.g. in relation to design, finances, planning, capacity development, M&E, participatory processes etc?
3. In the opinion of each partner, what are the key achievements and challenges with the project, and what is the overall benefit/ impact of the project?
 - Do partners think the project is working to meet its objectives? Are the project's objectives and strategy still appropriate?
 - What opportunities for capacity building has the project brought for partners and the community?
 - What are the major changes that have taken place since the implementation of the project?
 - Compared to other, similar, projects partners have been involved in, what do they think is the impact and effectiveness of the project?
 - What are recommendations for improving the effectiveness and impact of the project?
 - What project approaches, models and technologies were relevant/ not relevant to provincial/ districts conditions?
4. How can the achievements and ideas from the project be continued after the completion of the project? What are your suggestions?
5. What has been experience in working with INGOs on this project, and others?
 - How do partners evaluate the performance of project staff?
 - How often do partners meet with project staff?
6. How would partners evaluate the performance of all project stakeholders, including themselves? What suggestions are there or improvement?

COMMUNITY

1. Please tell us about what this project is doing in your community.
2. What have been the major changes as a result of the project?
 - How has the project assisted you with your WSS/ DPM needs?
 - What do you find most useful / least useful about the project?
 - What are the project areas or activities which should be improved? What are your recommendations for improvement?
 - What do you think will happen at the end of the project? Will the activities /plans still be ongoing?
 - Compared to other, similar, projects you have been involved in, what do you think is the impact and effectiveness of the project?
3. How is the community involved?
 - How often do you meet with project staff and related agencies? How are decisions made?
 - What is the specific role of men and women, and poor households in this project? Who participates more: men, women, young, old people?
 - Are you happy with your participation in the project? (Design of project, Receive information, Decision making, Provide labour, Make a financial contribution, Monitor progress, Other (specify))
4. How do you evaluate the performance of project stakeholders (project staff, government partners, mass organisations)?
 - What are the roles of government partners / members of mass organisations in this project?
 - What could the project staff and local government do to improve the quality of the project?
5. (DPM) Are all your household members aware of the plan and what they should do in a disaster? Explain what you and your household members, according to your plan, would do in a disaster. If a

disaster occurs, do you have the ability (skills, resources) to implement the plan? Do you know to what extent the Hamlet Disaster Preparedness Plan links to the District Plan?

6. (WSS) Which type of tube well/ toilet are you using? How do you access to the support/ options you were offered by the project? What recommendations would you have for improvements?

PROJECT OFFICE

1. Tell us about the project achievements and progress:
 - Do you think the project is working to meet its objective?
 - Are the objectives responding to the needs and priorities of the target populations?
 - To what extent have the goals of the project been achieved? Are the poor and vulnerable women, men and children benefitting from the project?
 - How does the project contribute to achievement of gender equity?
 - How has the project addressed the findings and recommendations of the Mid Term Reviews/ Evaluations? What have been the major implications to project implementation?
2. How has the project been managed?
 - What challenges have been faced by the project in terms of management and how have these been addressed?
 - Describe the M&E system.
 - What are the plans for an exit strategy? How has sustainability been addressed?
3. What has been the involvement of stakeholders in the project (design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, planning, financial management, information sharing)
 - How is the community involved?
 - How are the mass organisations and different levels of government involved?

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

1. What are your perceptions of civil society and CSOs in Vietnam?
2. What are interactions like between INGOs and CSOs (VNGOs and other parts of civil society)? What is the contribution of INGOs to CS in Vietnam?
3. How do you see the role/ relationship of INGOs to CS in Vietnam evolving in the next 5-10 years?
4. What are your recommendations for where donors should focus their efforts in the future to strengthen CS in Vietnam?

DONORS

1. What are your perceptions of civil society and CSOs in Vietnam?
2. Where is the donors' current support and modalities for CS in Vietnam focused?
3. What do you think about the relationship between INGOs, CSOs and GoV? What is the contribution of INGOs to CS in Vietnam?
4. How do you see the role/ relationship of INGOs to CS in Vietnam evolving in the next 5-10 years? How are donor strategies for this support changing in the future taking into account the Paris Declaration /Accra Action Agenda and changes within Vietnam CS itself?

AUSAID POST – HANOI

1. RELEVANCE

Issue: Linkages to GoA and GoV Development Objectives

- Does VANGOCA contribute to the higher level objectives of the GoA (e.g. AusAID Country Program Strategies) and GoV aid and development programs?
- What were the origins of VANGOCA?
- Was the VANGOCA design relevant to the need?
- Were VANGOCA objectives and performance indicators clearly specified?
- Were management, institutional and resource arrangements appropriate, including the form of aid; i.e. Cooperation Agreement (CA) mechanism?

- How does VANGOCA link into to other aspects of the Country Program?

2. EFFECTIVENESS

Issue: Program Management

- How is VANGOCA managed at the post?
- What is the relationship with AusAID Canberra?
- How effectively was the VANGOCA Program managed and how has this management impacted on achievement of outcomes?
- How effectively was risk management addressed by AusAID?

Issue: Coordination

- What are the key communications strategies between AusAID and VANGOCA?
- How effective were joint coordination mechanisms, and what was the level of coordination across key stakeholders, including ANGOs and AusAID, as well as other key stakeholders? Whose responsibility is coordination across the program?
- How effective was coordination with other activities (GoV and other donors)?
- How effectively have linkages been created between VANGOCA and key sectoral and policy working groups in Vietnam?

Issue: Program Approach

- At the program level: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of VANGOCA?
- Has there been anything learned from other Cooperation Agreements?
- How effectively and to what degree were the outcomes of VANGOCA achieved?

Issue: Program Achievements

- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
- What were the major challenges and how effectively were these addressed?
- What were the major achievements at the program level?

Issue: Partnership

- How effective were partnerships across the VANGOCA program (ANGOs, AusAID and other key stakeholders)?
- What was the role of partner government in fulfilment of responsibilities in the MoU including in terms of staffing, resources and support from officials etc?

Issue: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

- What is the role of AusAID in M&E: at the program and activity level? How often does M&E take place?
- How effective was VANGOCA's program monitoring and evaluation system in measuring progress towards meeting objectives?
- How was it implemented and were appropriate management decisions taken in response to emerging issues?
- How did M&E contribute to continuous program learning?

Issue: Integration of Gender and Crosscutting Issues

- How effectively have gender equality and other crosscutting issues (e.g. environment, good governance) been integrated across the program?

3. EFFICIENCY

Issue: Program Resources

- How does AusAID manage VANGOCA resources; what are the mechanisms in place and are they effective?
- Were VANGOCA Program resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes?
- Does the VANGOCA program represent value for money?

4. IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Issue: Impact at the VANGOCA Program Level

- What has been the likely impact of the VANGOCA program; i.e. what long-term changes may result from VANGOCA (positive, negative, planned and unplanned) in terms of:
 - Poverty reduction
 - Capacity development
 - Gender equality and other crosscutting issues

- Environment
- Policy contribution to the DM and WSS sectors
- Partnership and promotion of coordination and cooperation
- Long-term development of the capacity of individuals, civil society, organizations and government
- How can this be assessed and what data is available?

Issue: Sustainability at the VANGOCA Program Level

- What are the prospects for sustainability of any financial, technical, institutional, sectoral, policy, community based or any other changes and benefits brought about by VANGOCA? This should include some comment on the exit strategy.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

- Was VANGOCA based on sound technical analysis and continuous learning?
- What have been the key lessons learned from the VANGOCA Program?

6. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

- To what extent has "future" planning at the AusAID Country Strategy level taken into account "civil society"?
- What options are there for strengthening VANGOCA in the period remaining to completion?
- What options are there for strengthening future NGO programming mechanisms with AusAID?
- What are the future options for types of sectors, partnerships, and work with civil society organizations in Vietnam?
- How do key stakeholders understand, identify and work with "civil society" in Vietnam?

Annex 5: List of People Consulted

IN AUSTRALIA CONSULTATIONS

Date	Participants and Positions	Location
16-20 Feb 2009	<p>ACFID Neva Wendt, Senior Policy Advisor Cetana Das, Policy Advisor</p> <p>ANGOs AFAP Brian Kay, Technical Adviser, Deputy Director, Australian Centre for International and Tropical Health Uma Menon, South East Asia Program Manager</p> <p>CARE Sophie Davies, Asia Coordinator Jenny Clement, Country Programs Manager</p> <p>PLAN Di Kilsby, Senior Program Manager Megan Tucker, Program Manager</p> <p>OXFAM AUSTRALIA Christine Gregory, Senior Program Manager – Mekong Program Natalie Purcell, Program Support Coordinator – Mekong Program</p> <p>WORLD VISION Phearak Svay, Program Coordinator Stephen Collins, Program Coordinator</p> <p>AUSAID Anna Clancy, NGO and Community Engagement Andy Isbister, Mekong Section Erin Gleeson, Mekong Section Kenneth Harri, Mekong Section</p>	Canberra
2 April 2009	<p>ACFID Cetana Das, Policy Advisor</p> <p>ANGOs AFAP: Uma Menon, South East Asia Program Manager CARE: Sophie Davies, Asia Coordinator PLAN: Megan Tucker, Program Manager WORLD VISION: Catherine Johnson, Asia Regional Manager</p> <p>AUSAID Anna Clancy, NGO and Community Engagement</p>	Canberra

IN VIETNAM CONSULTATIONS

Date	Participants and Positions	Location
2 Mar 2009	<p>AusAID meeting Kerry Groves, Counselor; Andreas Zurbrugg, First Secretary; Nguyen Thi Thu Phuong, Senior Program Manager (QA); Doan Thu Nga, Nguyen Van Thuan, Activity Manager; Le Minh Nga, Program Assistant</p> <p>ANGOs meeting in AusAID office: Peter Rwan, Research Scientist; Le Nguyen, Project coordinator; Simon Kuctcher, project manager, AFAP Anna Clancy, manager NCE; Le Minh Nga, Program Assistant, AuSAID Peter Newsum, country director; Heather Robinson, Assistant country director, Care Brion Beckett, Business Development, Plan Nguyen Dinh Kien, Program manager, World Vision Provash Mondal, Humanitarian program coordinator, Oxfam</p>	Hanoi
	GoV meetings: Vu Xuan Hong, Chairman, Vietnam Union Friendship Organizations Tran Thi Thanh Thuy, Deputy Director, Pasco Nguyen Thanh Luan, Deputy Director; Nguyen Thi Thuy Ai, Vice chief of IEC sector officer; Nguyen Bich Ngoc, Foreign Relations Department, NCERWASS	
	ANGOs interview in Hanoi: Peter Newsum, Country Director, Heather Robinson, Assistant Country Director, Care Provash Mondal, Humanitarian Program Coordinator, Oxfam Peter Van Dommelen, Program Support Manager, Plan Le Van Duong, National DM Coordinator, World Vision	
3 Mar 2009	GoV meetings: Nguyen Thanh Phuong, Coordinator; Peter Grzic, Facilitator, NDMP	ANGOs office in Hanoi
4 Mar 2009	Lars Udsholt, Director; Elke Froster, Aid Effectiveness Adviser, Capacitate Tran Thi Ngoc Mai, Program Coordinator, Centre for Cooperation Human Resources Development Vu Thi Hien, Director, CERDA	AuSAID Hanoi
	Bo Thi Hong Mai, World Bank Tran Thi Lan Huong, Finland Embassy Nguyen Kim Quy, Project Officer, DANIDA Ugo Blanco, Program Officer, UNDP	
	GoV meetings: Phan Anh Son, Acting Director of International Relations Department, VUSTA	
5 Mar 2009	Nguyen Thi Dieu Hien, Team leader; Dinh Cong Tri, Project Officer; Huynh Thanh Long, M&E Officer, WATSAN	Hanoi
	Nguyen Thanh Dung, CORD Director – PMU Director, CORD Nguyen Thu Cuc, Chairwoman, WU Pham Thanh Huong, WU officer – PMU member Tran Kim Anh, Deputy Director, Preventive Medicine Centre Mr Hai, Dept. of Planning and Investment officer	
6 Mar 2009		Care's project in Soc Trang

7 Mar 2009	Lam Ngoc Dan, Vice chairman CPC- leader of CWSC Tang Thiet, Leader, VWSC-Tra Teo village Ly Thi Lan; Thach Thi Luol, Motivators Lam Thi Luol; Son Linh, Household, Beneficiary	Care's project in Soc Trang Hoa Dong commune
	Son Na Rinh, Leader, VWSC Kim Thi Sang; Son Phanh, Motivators Thach Del; Son Va Vet; Son Va Vet wife, Household, Beneficiary	Care's project in Soc Trang Vinh An villages
9 Mar 2009	David Sandilands, Team Leader; Pham Tran Hong Thanh, PM, CRND Tran Pham Thai Giang, M&E supporting officer Nguyen Trong Ninh, Short term component coordinator Tran Trong Thang, AG coordinator	Care's project in An Giang Meeting at Irrigation department of An Giang DARD
	Do Vu Hung, Deputy director of An Giang, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Phan Van Le, Director, member of PSC; Do Thoai Son, Deputy Director, Member of PSC; Truong Tan Dat, Assistant PSC member, Irrigation dept – AG DARD	
	Tran Van Tam, Chairman, Leader of Commune Management Unit "CMU"; Tran Van Thang, accountant, O Long Vy commune PC Visit households and Mushroom Club, Long Binh, Long Dinh Village	Care's project in Long Dinh Village
10 Mar 2009	Bui Kim Huu, Project Coordinator; Bui Thi Minh Hue, Project Officer, Oxfam GB Nguyen Huu Hong, Deputy; Huyen Lien, Accountant project, Department of Planning & Investment Le Van Tan, Provincial Project Coordinator Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy, Vice chairwoman of WU district lever, member of Project Steering Committee Nguyen Van Hung, Chief of the Provincial Committee for Flood and Storm Control, Irrigation department.	Oxfam's project in Dong Thap province
	Phan Quoc Tien, Secretary; Dinh Minh Tan, Chairman; Vo Van Hau, Vice chairman, Ba Sao Commune Nguyen Hong Quan, Staff information; Nguyen Van Trieu, Chairman of Farmer's Union; Nguyen Thi Luu, Vice chairman of Women's Union; Nguyen Van Thoi, leader of 3 Hamlet, Ba Sao Commune PC Nguyen Thanh Cong, volunteer, 5 Hamlet Club Nguyen Van Khu, volunteer, 1 Hamlet Club Nguyen Thi Luong, volunteer, 4 Hamlet Club Nguyen Van Ut Muoi, volunteer, 6 Hamlet Club Nguyen Thi Hien; Le Thi Nhung, Motivator, Dong Thap Provincial WU Nguyen Thi Ket, member, 4 Hamlet Club	Oxfam's project in Dong Thap Ba Sao Commune
11 Mar 2009	Tran Van Sa, Vice Chairman; Le Hoang Vu, Traffic officer; Nguyen Hong Dep, Chairman of WU; Le Van Thon, Chairman of Farmer Union; Chau Van De, Vice secretary; Tran Van Dien, Chairman of Veteran Union; Le Van Phung, Chairman of Red Cross; Nguyen Chi Tam, IEC officer, Tan Thanh commune PC Nguyen Kim Phuong, Hamlet Nam Club Ha Thi Lan, Hamlet Tay Club Bui Van The, Phan Thi Viet, Hamlet Bac Club Le Thi Kim Xuan, Hamlet Nam Club Nguyen Thi Thanh Tuyen, volunteer Dung (Hau), Officer, Tan Thanh commune PC	Oxfam's project in Tan Thanh commune, Thanh Binh district, Dong Thap province

	Tran Hoang Ba, Deputy Director, VANGOCA Project Manager; Nguyen Thien Phap, Chief of Tien Giang Committee Flood and Storm Control, Tien Giang Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	Oxfam's project in Tien Giang Tien Giang DARD
	Provash Mondal, Huu, Hue Nguyen Thanh Hai, Provincial Project Coordinator, Le Tran Dung, Officer; Pham Thi Thao, assistant accountant, Oxfam in Tien Giang	Oxfam office in Tien Giang
12 Mar 2009	Tran Ngoc Huu, Director; Bui Van Duc, Dean; Ly Huynh Kim Khanh, CPO in Vinh Long province; Huynh Thi Thuy Trang, Project officer, Pasteur Institute Ho Chi Minh City Simon Kuctcher, Project manager, AFAP Peter Ryan, Technical advisor, Queensland Institute of Medical Research Nguyen Hoang Le, Project coordinator; Nguyen Thi Yen, Technical advisor; Vu Trong Thang, CPO in Long An province, National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology Vu Sinh Nam, Project manager, Viet Nam General Department of Preventive Medicine and Environment	AFAP project – In HCMC
13 Mar 2009	Steering committee (CMC): Ngo Van Hoang, Phan Quoc Phuong, Tran Thi Nga, The centre for preventive health services in Long An Le Huu Nhi, Duc Hue District Health Centre Nguyen Van Khoi, Binh Hoa Bac commune PC Dao Van Loi, Binh Hoa Bac commune health station Pham Thi Nam Commune Women's Union` Nguyen Thi Khanh, Commune Red Cross Pham Huynh An Pha, Commune Youth's Union Le Thi Kim Thu, Primary school Nguyen Van Phu, Steering Secondary school	AFAP project in Long An province
13 Mar 2009	Collaborators: Nguyen Van Thanh, Mai Van Thang, Nguyen Thi Ly, Hoa Tay Hamlet Le Cong Khanh, Le Ngoc Ninh, Chanh Hamlet Le Thi Miet, Nguyen Van Chien, An Hoa Hamlet Tran Thi Hiep, Uong Thi May, Nguyen Van Ra, Tan Hoa Hamlet	
13 Mar 2009	AFAP: Nguyen Thi Yen, CPO in Long An province; Nguyen Hoang Le, Project coordinator, National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology Ly Huynh Kim Khanh, CPO in Ben Tre province, Pasteur Institute Ho Chi Minh City Simon Kuctcher, Project Manager, AFAP	
14 Mar 2009	Nguyen Dinh Kien, VANGOCA project manager; Huynh Quang Nha, Ngo Van Tin, Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy, Vo Nguyen Uyen Thi, Project officer, World Vision Di Kilsby, Megan Tucker, Program Manager, Plan Australia Ho Ha, Project Manager; Nguyen Van Duong, WATSAN Officer; Nguyen Tan Duoc, GCP Coordinator; Truong Tuan, Project Officer; Ho Thi Quynh Diem, Tran Minh Quang, Project Officer, SHWIP, Plan Vietnam.	World Vision office in Quang Ngai Plan International Office in Quang Ngai
15 Mar 2009	Meeting at CPC:	

	<p>Pham Van Son, chair person of CCG, Vice-chair person of CPC Pham Van Thang, Commune party committee secretary Pham Van Quang, Chair person of CPC Pham Van Nep, Vice, Commune party committee secretary Pham Van Binh, Finance officer of CCG Pham Van Pho`ng, Village leader of village 1 Pham Thi Nga, Accountant officer of CCG Pham Thi Hong Nghia, Chair person , leader of PIC, Commune WU Pham Van Muoi, Youth Union Pham Tieu, Village leader of village 2</p> <p>Meeting with household group: Pham Nai, Pham Van Binh, Pham Trinh, Pham Van Thoi, Pham Thi Hai, Pham Thi Din, Pham Thi Tuyet Nga</p> <p>Visit households: Pham Thi Be, Pham Thi Mang, Pham Van Nien</p>	Plan project in Quang Ngai Nghia Son Commune, Tu Nghia district
	<p>Meeting at CPC Truong Quang Ba, Chair person of CPC, chair person of CCG Phan Ninh, Finance officer of CCG, SHWIP point person Phan Phu Thai, Secretary of CCG Nguyen Kim Tien, Vice-chair person of CCG Huynh Tan Buu, , Leader of PIC, Commune health station officer Nguyen Thi Lien, chair person of CWU, Commune credit leader Nguyen Thi Thuy Kieu, Xuan Vinh village WU Tran Thi Toan, Ky Tho Bac village WU Nguyen Thi Kieu Hoanh, TSG member, officer of district WU Luong Thanh, TSG member, officer of district DARD</p> <p>Meeting with household group: Ho Tan Thi, Ky Tho Bac village leader; Nguyen Tho, Nguyen Mau, Che Thi Loan, Bui Van Duc, Nguyen Nhon, Nguyen Thi Thu, Nguyen Thi Lan, Tran Thi Toan, Nguyen Phuc, Nguyen Thi Thuan, Household.</p> <p>Household visits: Vo Van Son, Tran Tuan, Nguyen Kim, Nguyen Tan Le</p>	Plan Project in Quang Ngai Hanh Duc Commune, Nghia Hanh district
16 Mar 2009	<p>Tran Dinh Le, Vice chairman of VANGOCA Project Management Board, Mo Duc District People's committee Pham Thi Ngoc Bieu, VANGOCA Project Management Board, Mo Duc District Women's Union</p> <p>Tran Nhu The, Vice Chairman of Commune - Chairman of Commune Steering Committee; Bui Van Dam, Fatherland Front chairman; Than Thi Cu, Chairwoman of Women's Union; Vo Van Minh, Chairman of Farmer Union; Phan Tan The, Party committee secretary; Luong Thanh Cong, Chairman, Duc Thanh CPC Nguyen Thi Menh, Nguyen Thi Phuong, Vo Bon, Collaborator Phan Van Dung, Secondary school Teacher Pham Thi Thu Huong, Woman commune Truong Cong Thanh, Luong Nong Nam, Ho Thanh Tien, Luong Nong Bac, Than Van Thu, Don Luong Hamlet manager</p> <p>Visit households</p>	World Vision in Quang Ngai Mo Duc district

	<p>16 Mar 2009 16 Mar 2009</p> <p>Nguyen Van Huong, Vice chairman of commune - chairman of commune steering committee; Nguyen Quang Kham, Vice Chairman of Farmer's Union; Nguyen Van Hao, Chairman of Farmer's Union; Pho Thuan Commune People's Committee Vo Dinh Tien, Nguyen Huu Tinh, Van Tinh, Nguyen Van Hung, Thoi Xuan Nam, Nguyen Van Chin, Pham Van Bay, Lu Ngoc Luong, hamlet manager Vo Thi Minh Tam, Huynh Thi Thu Anh, Woman commune Nguyen Van Chinh, Fatherland Front Vice Chairman Pham Chac, Tran Thi Hong, Vu Thi Tuan, Nguyen Minh Tuan, Collaborator</p>	<p>World Vision's project in Quang Ngai Pho Thuan Commune</p>
20 Mar 2009	<p>GOV agencies: Le Thi Thu Trang, Officer in charge of Asia-Pacific program; Tran Thi Thu Thuy, Deputy Director; PACCOM Nguyen Thanh Phuong, NDMP Coordinator Vu Sinh Nam, Deputy Director - Vietnam Administration of Preventive Medicine, MOH Nguyen Thanh Luan, Deputy Director, CERWASS Nga, MPI, NGO section</p>	
	<p>ANGOs Simon Kucher, Health Program Manager; Nguyen Hoang Le, Program Coordinator, AFAP Steve Price-Thomas, Country Director; Provash Mondal, Humanitarian Program Coordinator, Oxfam UK Stephen Collins, Country Program Coordinator; Nguyen Dinh Kien, VANGOCA Project Manager, World Vision Neeraj Rana, Research and Evaluation Manager; Megan Tucker, Program Manager, Plan Vietnam Heather Robinson, Deputy Director Program, CARE</p>	<p>Australian Embassy, Hanoi</p>
	<p>AusAID Hanoi Kerry Groves, Counselor; Andreas Zurbrugg, First Secretary; Nguyen Thi Thu Phuong, Senior Program Manager (QA); Doan Thu Nga, Nguyen Van Thuan, Nguyen Tu Uyen, Activity Manager; Le Minh Nga, Program Assistant; Duong Hong Loan, Executive Officer/PFM Specialist, AusAID Hanoi</p>	
	<p>VANGOCA Review team Ludmilla Kvitko, Team Leader Do Van Nguyet, NGO representative Nguyen Cong Thanh, Local consultant/Interpreter</p>	

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Annex 7: VANGOCA Program and Thematic Goals

VIETNAM-AUSTRALIA DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY 2003-2007	
GOAL: to advance Australia's National interest by assisting Vietnam to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development	
VANGOCA PROGRAM	
GOAL: to contribute to poverty reduction and achievement of sustainable development in Viet Nam in accordance with AusAID's Viet Nam Country Strategy (VNCS)	
VANGOCA WSS AGREEMENT	
<i>Broad Aim</i>	to develop human capital in order to improve productivity and links to markets for the rural poor in the Mekong Delta and Central Coast (Strategic Objective 2 of the VNCS)
<i>Goal</i>	improve health through increased access to clean water and sanitation (Intermediate objective 2.3.1 of the VNCS)
<i>Monitoring Indicators</i>	<p><i>Means of verification</i></p> <p>MOH statistics</p> <p>CPRGS monitoring data; MARD statistics</p>
<i>Purpose</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ contribute to the achievement of the above goal by facilitating the development and management of appropriate water and sanitation systems and institutions, promulgating related health and hygiene knowledge and practices, and implementation of appropriate policies. ▪ development impact will be maximised through activities developed and implemented in partnerships, which complement or support bilateral projects, other donor initiatives and Vietnamese programs. The promulgation of new ideas, skills, approaches and strengthened institutions are seen as crucial adjuncts to infrastructure in supporting growth and alleviating poverty.
<i>Evaluation Framework of the VANGOCA-WS&S: Purpose</i>	Facilitate and support the adoption of institutional arrangements, technologies, practices and implementation of policies that meet the health, water and sanitation needs of the rural poor in the Mekong Delta and Central Coast of Viet Nam.
<i>Performance Indicators</i>	<p><i>Means of verification</i></p> <p>Surveys of GoV and donor WSS programs</p> <p>Surveys of beneficiaries</p> <p>MOH statistics; Beneficiary surveys</p>
VANGOCA DPM AGREEMENT	
<i>Broad Aim</i>	to reduce the vulnerability of rural populations to environmental and economic shocks. (This is inherent in component 2.4 of Strategic Objective 2 of the Viet Nam country strategy 2003-2007: <i>Improved productivity and links to Markets for the rural poor in the Mekong Delta and Central Coast</i>)

Goal	implement programs to mitigate the impact of floods, drought and storms on rural populations (Intermediate Objective 2.4.1 of the VNCS)
Monitoring Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cost of disaster relative to intensity▪ Time taken to return to normality	<i>Means of verification</i> GoV assessment data (provided by DOLISA and the Committee for the Control of Floods and Storms) GoV monitoring data, reports and post-disaster survey
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ improve planning, management, technologies and practices for natural disaster mitigation demonstrated and widely adopted. VANGOCA-DPM will pursue this goal and purpose through a participatory approach to the implementation of activities that reduce the impact of floods, drought and storms on rural populations. A holistic approach to risk reduction initiatives will be adopted employing mitigation and preparedness strategies.▪ maximise development impact through a range of community safety interventions that are based on the outcomes of formal or recognised hazard and risk assessment processes.▪ more specifically, AusAID is seeking to ensure that such interventions will be developed and implemented in partnerships, and encourages activities which complement or support existing bilateral projects, donor initiatives and Vietnamese Programs.
Evaluation Framework of the VANGOCA-DPM: Purpose Performance Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Extent of adoption of program-supported planning and management approaches▪ Extent of adoption of appropriate technologies and practices by targeted beneficiaries▪ % change in attitude to safety	Improved planning, management, technologies and practices for natural disaster mitigation demonstrated and widely adopted. <i>Means of verification</i> Surveys of GoV and donor natural disaster mitigation programs Surveys of stakeholders/beneficiaries Survey of beneficiaries Mitigation measures/infrastructure in place and maintained Surveys of beneficiaries, local authorities (e.g. Dept of Fisheries)

Source: VANGOCA 2003-2008 Funding and Application Guidelines, and Vietnam Australia Development Cooperation Strategy 2003-2007

Annex 8: VANGOCA Projects Summary

WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION							
NGO	Project	Location (Province/ District)	Budget (A\$)	Timeframe			
				Design	Interim to Implementation	Start Implementation	End Implementation
AFAP	Dengue-Safe Water Supply in Southern Vietnam m	Long An (Duc Hue, Ben Luc, Thu Thua) Ben Tre (Binh Dai, Giong Trom) Vinh Long (Mang Tri, Tam Binh)	Design: \$91,227.40 (AusAID) Interim to Inter-Phase Maintenance Period \$31,508.00 (AusAID) Implementation: \$4,578,492 (AusAID) TOTAL: \$4,701,227.40 (contribution by AusAID)	April-Sept 04	Sept 04-Nov 05	Nov 2005	April 2010
CARE Australia	Options & Ownership: Water and Sanitation for Rural Poor in the Mekong Delta	Ca Mau (U Minh, Cai Nuoc, Dam Doi, Ngoc Hien) Soc Trang (My Tu, My Xuyen, Thanh Tri, Vinh Chau)	Design: \$94,117/ 94,117 (CARE/ AusAID) Total: \$188,234 Pilot: \$111,661 (AusAID) Interim to Implementation: \$24,315 (AusAID) Implementation: \$4,650,539.5 (AusAID) TOTAL: \$4,880,632.5 (not inclusive of GST) (contribution by AusAID)	April-Nov 04 (Design & Pilot)	Dec 2004-Sept 2005	Oct 2005	Mar 2010
Plan	Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Improvement Project (SHWIP)	Quang Ngai (Nghia Hanh, Tu Nghia, Son Tinh)	Design: \$ 88,362 (Plan/ AusAID) Total: \$176,724 Interim to Implementation: <i>Note:</i> Plan acquitted the design and interim phases	April 04-Mar 05	Mar 05-May 06	May 2006	Nov 2010

			<p>together, so the expenditure for the interim period is included in the figures above.</p> <p>Implementation: \$1,723,000 (AusAID) TOTAL: \$1,811,362 (contribution by AusAID) \$88,362 (contribution by Plan)</p>				
DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION							
NGO	Project	Location (Province/ District)	Budget (A\$)	Timeframe			
				Design	Interim to Implementation	Start Implementation	End Implementation
CARE Australia	Community Resilience to Natural Disaster (CRND)	An Giang (Chau Phu, An Phu) Dong Thap (Thap Muoi, Tam Nong) Long An (Vinh Hung, Tan Hung)	Design: CARE/ AusAID \$89,938/ 89,937 Total: \$179,875 Interim to Implementation: \$22,210 Implementation: \$5,404,38 TOTAL: \$ 5,516,536 (not inclusive of GST) (contribution by AusAID)	April-Oct 04	Nov 04-Mar 05 (Maintenance)	June 2005	Nov 2009
Oxfam Australia – Oxfam Great Britain	Participatory Disaster Preparation and Mitigation Project in Dong Thap and Tien Giang	Tien Giang (Cao Lanh, Thanh Binh) Dong Thap (Cai Be, Cai Lay, Tan Phuoc)	Design: \$169,900 (AusAID) Interim to Implementation: \$65,021 (AusAID) Implementation: \$2,569,524 (AusAID) TOTAL: \$2,804, 445 (contribution by AusAID)	July 04–Jan 05	July 05–April 06	May 2006	Oct 2010

World Vision	Reducing Flood and Storm Vulnerability in Quang Ngai	Quang Ngai (Duc Pho, Mo Duc)	Design: \$67,257 (AusAID) \$59,436 (WV) Total: \$126,693 Interim to Implementation: \$2,667 (AusAID) Implementation: \$2,921,842 (AusAID) TOTAL: \$3,051,202 (\$2,991,766 - AusAID \$59,436 - WV)	July 04-Mar 05	April 05-Aug 05	Sept 2005	Sept 2009
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Source: Data provided by VANGOCA NGOs to VANGOCA Review (April 2009)

Annex 9: Reviews of Individual VANGOCA Projects

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION

CARE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Title: Community Resilience to Natural Disasters (CRND)

Start-End date: June 2005-November 2009 (Implementation)

Budget: \$A 5,425,500

Goal: Build sustainable community and household resilience to floods in highly flood prone, inland areas of the Mekong Delta

Purpose: Vulnerability reduction of household and communes in Long An, Dong Thap and An Giang Provinces.

Objectives/ Components:

- Strengthen capacity in hazard impact reduction, emergency response and recovery through appropriate mitigation and preparedness planning and training
- Expand sustainable locally based flood season employment opportunities
- Enhance poor households sustainable access to low cost financial services to smooth income and expenditure flows
- Effective and efficient project coordination and management

Key Partners: Provincial and District DARD, and Women's Union. Social Policy Bank (former partner)

PROJECT SUMMARY

The CRND project focuses on two low-lying areas in the Mekong Delta, the Plain of Reeds, which includes large areas of Long An and Dong Thap Provinces and the Long Xuyen Quadrangle which spans several districts in An Giang Province. CRND operates in 12 communes, 6 districts in 3 provinces. The project aims to build the strengths of communities to identify hazards, assess their vulnerability and realise their capacity to prepare for and mitigate against natural disasters. Through this project, vulnerable communities will not only be able to protect themselves and their property and overcome the impact of floods, droughts or storms but also optimise opportunities to improve their livelihood security during flooding and throughout the year. The project aims to fill the gap that currently exists in the Mekong Delta region, to comprehensively address vulnerability and livelihood issues in natural disaster prone areas.

CRND is working on a large geographic scale with highly scattered implementation sites, through three complimentary components and through multiple partners. In recognition of the complexities involved, the project design allowed for a phased approach to implementation, with work beginning in An Giang Province in 2005 then in Dong Thap and Long An Provinces in 2006.

REVIEW FINDINGS

Relevance: does the VANGOCA project contribute to the VANGOCA program and higher level objectives of the aid program? Was the design relevant to the need? Were objectives and performance indicators clearly specified? Were management and institutional arrangements appropriate?

- The project was designed and has been implemented and contributed to the Vietnam Australia Development Cooperation Strategy 2003 – 2007, specifically Intermediate Objective 2.4.1: 'implement programs to mitigate the impact of floods, drought and storms on rural populations'. The content of the project is also aligned with the GoV National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 (approved in 2007). In addition, several key and relevant GoV policies, such as the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy, the Grassroots Democracy Decree are supported by the project's objectives and implementation.
- At the national level, CARE-CRND (through its Headquarters office) is an active part of JAN (Joint Advocacy Networking Initiatives in Vietnam) as a consortium of 10 NGOs advocating on disaster mitigation and CARE provides active input into National strategies and policies through the DM Working Group. In addition there has been some ad hoc coordination with VANGOCA NGOs.
- However, the Review Team agrees with the findings of the MTR that the existing project Log frame, goal and purpose do not sufficiently foreground the links between vulnerability to flooding and poverty.

despite heavy emphasis being paid to these links in both AusAID's Mekong Delta Poverty Analysis (2003) and the PDD. The MTR suggested that the Log frame should be revised to emphasise more clearly that while the project does undertake general community level disaster preparedness work, it places particular emphasis on addressing the increased vulnerability of the most marginalised and needy households.

- Following MTR recommendations, the project team has developed sub indicators for the Log frame, as well as clarifying the "Output" matrix. The CRND team has also drafted up further indicator recommendations for CARE's senior management team, and for AusAID's consideration.
- In response to the MTR recommendations, CRND has adopted several additional major changes to the Log frame and the overall scope of the project.
 - Component 3 has been suspended due to changes in savings and loans schemes, at the Social Policy Bank, and CRND has moved to pilot a credit scheme (the "Mushroom Club") as part of Component 2;
 - Component 2 is moving from handicrafts production to the agriculture sector amongst others, and continuing to focus on small business training;
 - The component approach as a whole has been collapsed so that the divisions between planning and reporting in Components 1 and 2 are now removed and collapsed into each other in one annual plan.
- These are major structural changes to the scope, objectives and outputs of the overall original design. The Review Team notes that it will be critical to ensure that all stakeholders and staff understand and own these changes, and appreciate the "rescoping" of the project. Otherwise there is a risk that despite the fact that what are seen as positive MTR initiatives, could contribute to further confusion and reduce even further the opportunities for "cross-over learning" and "maximization" of partner expertise. These aspects will have to be carefully negotiated, facilitated and agreed with partners in the upcoming Annual Plan, with clear direction given as to how the project will move forward on "micro-credit/ low finance aspects", particularly given the project's emphasis on "addressing the increased vulnerability of the most marginalised and needy households". It would be useful to see a clearly revised Log frame and Risk Matrix, as well as implications for M&E fully articulated in the Annual Plan.
- The Review Team also observes that it is likely that the complexity of the design/ Log frame , the widespread project locations and target selections, have further contributed to difficulties in developing a unified understanding of the project across all staff and partners; ownership; building partner relations; coordination issues; costs - in time, resources, logistics, transport and staff retention; and inhibited practical implementation in a timely manner. However, it is not appropriate at this stage to revise project locations given the investments to date. It would be useful for CRND to explore further opportunities to build cross province coordination and partner ownership, otherwise sustainability will be at risk.
- Therefore, given the disbursed nature of the project and CRND staff, and reluctance by partners to rotate Project Steering Committee meetings across locations, it is clear that the geographic spread has major implications for the management and institutional arrangements, as well as the costs of implementing the project, and has created an additional level of hardship for the project. The Review Team was not able to clearly ascertain why these locations were chosen, however, it is clear that from the outset of the design, there would be additional risk and costs to managing such a project, let alone reduced opportunity for easy cross fertilisation between locations.

Effectiveness: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of the VANGOCA project? How effectively was the VANGOCA project managed and how did this impact on the achievement of outcomes?

Overall, the Review Team finds that based on consultations with stakeholders, there is a positive endorsement that CRND is making a contribution to "community resilience" to natural, social, cultural and economic shocks, across the 3 provinces. However, these achievements are not without their challenges.

Approach

- The Review Team notes that the project faces challenges given its complex design and integrated 'building livelihoods and community resilience' approach to disaster prevention.
- A three-pronged approach was adopted based on the result of community assessments, negotiation with key gatekeepers and stakeholders and analysis of a range of potentially strategic options.

- Strategies selected were: 1) Reduce immediate physical vulnerability; 2) Expand employment opportunities, and 3) Enhance existing coping strategies of poor households.
- Provincial, district and commune partners have supported the livelihoods approach and also understand the difficulties in finding effective income generation activities in the Mekong Delta, as well as impacts of the global economic crisis.
- While participatory planning approaches and tools are new to commune government officers, they have gradually found them useful and adopted them as part of disaster preparedness practices. One commune leader commented to the Review Team: "we don't sit inside the office to do planning as in other projects".

Implementation and Achievements

- The Review Team finds that the CRND has faced some significant challenges in its first half of implementation (including high project and government staff turnover in the Mekong Delta and the geographical spread of project sites). Currently, the project appears to have stabilised a committed and enthusiastic team of local staff; developed a good partnership with project partners; and continues to work towards the goal of building sustainable community and household resilience to floods and its purpose of vulnerability reduction of household and commune in the three target provinces.
- There have been delays to many CRND project activities, but the implementation is progressing, with several changes in project indicators and activities (as identified above).
 - Component 1: the visible and practical impact of has been significant (over 500 poor and remote households have been provided with boats, over 600 poor households have been provided with water filters and more than 350 houses have been strengthened in preparation for the next flood season; 10 kindergartens that also serve as safe areas in the flooded season have been built or rehabilitated).
 - Component 2: is moving livelihood development/ income generation from the conventional pig and cow banks to utilisation of fibrous plants (notably water hyacinth, but also in some cases banana trunks for handicraft and everyday products) and earth worm raising, and there are spill-over activities in neighbouring communes in Long An province. A micro-credit mushroom raising project has recently commenced, and further planning for a low cost financial services will take place in Year 4.
 - Component 3: is suspended based on MTR recommendations (as above) from MTR, as the Social Policy Bank has provided loans to many households from all 3 project Provinces.

Major achievements of CRND include:

- The project has assisted in identifying and registering the "non-registered" poor and vulnerable at the commune and village level, who are not on the Poor Household List according to GoV criteria. During community interviews, one ethnic minority woman who had just moved to one of the target communes, stated that she felt empowered as her non-registered household is included and supported by CRND. This is a significant achievement which is enabling the most vulnerable access to funding and social safety net services, which is a key step in reducing their vulnerability.
- CRND has established strong partner relations at commune level. Commune officials appreciate the benefits of the participatory planning approach and see the link to the implementation of grassroots democracy decree/ ordinance.
- After 3 years of this participatory approach, project partners are demonstrating a far more inclusive planning and decision making style. The participatory planning activities have also contributed to strengthening linkages and synergies across government departments and government levels (i.e. Commune, District and Province).
- There is a diversity of support including infrastructure, income generation, and school support responding to the needs of the community.
- Government partners value the livelihoods components and non-infrastructure measures in DM and preparedness, and can identify a link between DM and preparedness with the GoV Socio-Economic Development Plan.
- There was a strong enthusiasm and commitment from community members and project partners that CRND is assisting communities across all 3 Provinces to become more resilient in the face of potential flood and storm disaster.

Management

- High turnover of staff has been a limitation on project progress. Currently, project staffing appears to have stabilised with a group of committed, enthusiastic locally-recruited team and an international Team Leader, and there has been little staff turnover in the past 12 months. The project staff demonstrate an openness about the strengths and weaknesses of the project, and to work towards addressing issues. For example, the project has been responsive to many of the MTR recommendations, in particular to integrating the project more to enable cross learning.
- However, the project office is not centrally located in Long Xuyen, An Giang Province, and distance and time constraints add challenges for cross province and project team communication and learning.
- A positive relationship has been developed with project partners and project staff work particularly closely with the district and commune levels.
- Along with the PSC (which includes DARD from the 3 provinces) the key management structure includes the District PMU (DPMU), Commune PMU (CPMU) and Village Development Group (VDG). Funds are transferred from CARE to the DPMU and then to CPMUs.
- Management support has been provided by CARE staff (both in Vietnam and in Australia), and indirect partners include CFSC, Red Cross, Farmers Union.

Coordination and Partnership

- The project has created strong ownership at the commune level and has generated support from provincial and district PMUs.
- There has been positive information exchange and some cross learning in the 3 project locations, across communes, provinces, and phases. This has also included participation in exchanges and visits with DM projects in Mekong Delta (e.g. ADPC, OXFAM).

M&E

There is a clear M&E system in place, which includes:

- A simple baseline survey was conducted at the beginning of the project, by an external team for each of the 3 provinces, and then repeated prior to the MTR. The last survey is anticipated prior to completion for the final evaluation. The Review Team suggests that this may have to be reviewed given the changes to the component structure, and reporting post MTR.
- In addition the project monitors every 2 months, reporting against the base line. This includes some qualitative techniques such as semi-structured interviews with beneficiaries.
- The project is also making progress in applying the MTR recommendations to M&E and has moved to incorporate a more balanced quantitative and qualitative approach, and to increase opportunities for internal project learning and responsiveness to field-based experience. Intervention plans, progress reports and results are now integrated into an upgraded M&E system, which is disseminated to the team and shared with partners every two months, where lessons learned are acknowledged and incorporated into subsequent plans.

Integration of Cross-cutting Issues

- A variety of gender focused activities are being implemented, including women's participation in the development of Living With Flood plans, as well as specific opportunities for women's employment in identified sub-sectors. Challenges exist to deepen an understanding of gender equality and to empower women in their decision making roles, and CARE has begun to address these challenges with recent training (2008) for project staff provided by the Gender Advisor.
- The project has assisted in the process of recognising non-registered poor (including ethnic minorities moving to the project area).
- Stakeholders and the CRND project team also note that the project has assisted in identifying community needs and in implementation of the government Grassroots Democracy Decree/ Ordinance.

Responses to the MTR

- The CRND Progress Report for November 2007-December 2008 details progress against the MTR recommendations. The majority of MTR recommendations have been accepted by the project, and are being implemented.
- As discussed above (Relevance) there have been substantive changes made to the component structure and Log frame indicators. The Review Team notes however, that there are few comments on the implications of these changes for M&E, new risks arising from these changes, and sustainability. These aspects will need to be considered further by the CRND and it would be useful to see them addressed in the next Annual Plan.

Challenges/ Issues

Given these responses the MTR, and the achievements identified, there are several challenges and issues experienced during project implementation.

- Distances are challenging, given that project locations are spread across districts not closely located in 3 provinces.
- The project design was complex and over-ambitious, particularly for the 1st year of implementation. It needed more time for community and government partners to understand and learn about the project. This has contributed to delays in implementation and under-spending. In addition, linkages between project components were not altogether clear.
- There appears to have been limited and consistent technical expertise at the project level, and it is unclear the level of technical support which has been provided by CARE.
- The Review notes that there has been a parallel process for developing DM Plans. The MTR notes further that this not only duplicates things, but also costs in terms of process and time, before activities can be implemented.
- Limited capacity building has taken place at the village level which has implications for the sustainability of a community based approach, including project partners needing to develop a more structured feedback mechanism to receive community views. In discussions with the Review Team the project team noted that the project is meeting project objectives but is not yet fully meeting immediate and underlying beneficiary needs at the grassroots level (for example food and income security).

Efficiency: were resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes, and did the VANGOCA project provide value for money?

- It was beyond the scope of the Review to undertake a full analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the project. However, the Review Team concludes, based on consultations with partners and stakeholders, that overall the project is under spent; distance between project locations contributes to high cost for transportation and communication; and there was a high staff turnover initially, and difficulty in recruitment. All of these factors have a significant impact on inhibiting project efficiency and effectiveness to date.
- Close integration with the commune and government organisations simplifies processes and contributes to a more efficient project management structure. The Provincial PMUs provide overall guidance, without being involved in detailed implementation.

Impact and sustainability: to what degree has the VANGOCA project produced positive or negative changes directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? Are the benefits of the VANGOCA project sustainable?

- The Review notes that despite many challenges, the current project team appears to be working together well, and project partners demonstrate an overall strong commitment to and interest in CRND activities.
- The CPMU see a real change/ difference when comparing project communes with other communes in terms of community preparedness. Children are not drowning as occurred prior to the project, and there is an improvement in economic situation of some poorer households.
- Project partners have commented that the bottom up planning model had been successful and project related information and approaches have also been shared with neighbouring communes. Given the changes undertaken in response to the MTR it will be important for CRND to further support partner understanding and ownership of the project.
- In addition, officials have realised the importance of understanding the needs and demands of the community. Interviews with commune leaders indicate that they are now applying these approaches to other aspects of their work, and seeking community views on other planning aspects and providing feedback to the community. This is an important example of replication at the commune level.
- The issue of integrating disaster plans upwards is difficult and important. The Review notes that this is an area which requires further discussion with partners, particularly since the restructuring adopted post the MTR.
- One strategy to address some of these issues would be to request a "no cost extension" (for at least 12 months) in order to use unspent funds, to meet CRND's objectives.
- The Review Team concludes that despite some positive achievements to date, if the project were to conclude as currently scheduled in November 2009 it is difficult to see how there would be

sustainability of benefits, and additional time is required to put the MTR changes into place to move towards meeting CRND's objectives.

Lessons Learned

- An over ambitious design structure and geographic challenges increase the risk of implementation difficulties and delays.
- Time needed initially for developing partner understanding, commitment and ownership of project approaches and building partner capacity, should not be underestimated as critical to implementation and sustainability.
- Learning about project activities, processes and outcomes, should be included in community participation activities, in a more structured way, to increase community ownership, as well as the quality and sustainability of the project outputs.

Recommendations

- These are major structural changes to the scope, objectives and outputs of the overall original design as a result of responses to the MTR. The Review Team recommends that it will be critical to ensure that all stakeholders and staff understand and own these changes, and appreciate the "rescoping" of the project. As a beginning it would be useful to see a clearly revised Log frame and Risk Matrix, as well as implications for M&E fully articulated in the Annual Plan.
- CRND should develop clear and strategic support for participation and capacity development for community groups; such as a network of facilitators/ collaborators, organised trainings, meetings to support community feedback, learning and ownership.
- In addition, CRND should look at facilitating participatory M&E to strengthen the role of local communities, in participation, monitoring accountability, and supporting communities to understand their rights and obligations.
- The Review Team recommends that CRND consider requesting a no cost extension for a minimum of 12 months (and AusAID agree) in order to make further progress towards project objectives and to build towards project sustainability. During this period an exit strategy should be developed with partners.
- Given that GoV has approved the National Strategy for Disaster Management, and plans to introduce CBDRM projects in all communes of Vietnam starting from end of 2010, this is a timely opportunity to consolidate achievements to date and build towards sustainable benefits.

OXFAM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Title: Participatory Disaster Preparation and Mitigation Project in Dong Thap and Tien Giang Provinces

Start-End Date: May 2006-October 2010 (Implementation)

Budget: \$A 2,804,445

Goal: To mitigate the negative impact of floods on rural men, women and children

Purpose: To reduce the risk of floods to rural men, women and children in Tien Giang and Dong Thap by decreasing their vulnerability and increasing the capacity of communities and institutions.

Objectives/ Components:

- To build knowledge, skills and resources to mitigate, prepare for and respond to floods amongst leadership and households in 24 flood-affected communes.
- To enable the Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CFSC) to facilitate a more targeted, coordinated, timely and effective response to floods in Dong Thap and Tien Giang.
- To reduce the incidence of flood-related diseases affecting people in the project area.
- To improve flood-time food security, and the income of selected poor and vulnerable households.
- To ensure effective and timely programme management and coordination.

Key Partners: Provincial DPI (Dong Thap), DARD (Tien Giang), and member agencies of Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CFSC)

PROJECT SUMMARY

The project aims to reduce the impact of seasonal flooding on vulnerable people through awareness raising, training, various capacity building initiatives and the provision of resources. Project activities are focused on 24 communes in 5 districts in 2 of the most flood prone provinces in the Mekong Delta; Tien Giang and Dong Thap. It is expected that the local government authorities and community will be: "better able to prepare for and mitigate the effects of floods on their well being and dignity".

Members of the CFSC in both provinces were provided with a broad range of training opportunities, including in community based disaster management (CBDM), monitoring and evaluation (M&E), Sphere, damage assessment and needs analysis (DANA), leadership and gender equality, for which new materials were designed and developed. The effectiveness of the CFSC in coordination, was also strengthened and the links between the different government bodies with the Mass Organisations (MOs) from village to provincial levels, enhanced. Equipment for early warning and search and rescue was procured for use by commune and village leaders and volunteers.

The initial ideas to provide credit and livelihoods support to some of the poorest in the communities were adjusted in light of easier access to credit from the "banks for the poor" and the project's "flexible fund" (for disaster risk reduction measures), were bolstered. Projects to improve access to clean water, with complementary information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns, using new materials specifically developed on water, sanitation and hygiene and health practices, and swimming training for women and children, were also initiated.

The project's primary socio-cultural impacts were aimed at enhanced participation, particularly of women. Furthermore, the project provided training in participatory methodology and support to village, commune, district and province level leadership and was expected to create opportunities to incorporate these into regular government practice. Through capacity building initiatives to resist environmental shocks and plan for disaster mitigation, the project has aimed to contribute to the achievement of VANGOCA goals.

REVIEW FINDINGS

Relevance: does the VANGOCA project contribute to the VANGOCA program and higher level objectives of the aid program? Was the design relevant to the need? Were objectives and performance indicators clearly specified? Were management and institutional arrangements appropriate?

- The project was designed and has been implemented and contributed to the Vietnam Australia Development Cooperation Strategy 2003 – 2007, specifically Intermediate Objective 2.4.1: 'implement programs to mitigate the impact of floods, drought and storms on rural populations'. The content of the project is also aligned with the GoV National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 (approved in 2007). In addition, several key and relevant GoV policies, such as the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy, the Grassroots Democracy Decree are supported by the project's objectives and implementation.
- In addition, at national level, OXFAM (through its Headquarters office in Hanoi) has been very active in participating in (and for a period coordinating) various DM working group and other networks, as well as sharing and contributing its experience, approaches and resources through the various networks. There has been some ad hoc coordination and sharing of IEC materials with other VANGOCA projects.
- Overall the Review finds that the design was relevant to the needs identified, and objectives and performance indicators clearly specified. In addition the design was flexible enough to accommodate changes as identified with partners, during various phases of implementation. For example, there has been a change in the micro-credit plan because the initial target audiences (i.e. the rural poor) are now able to access funds through Social Policy Bank. As a result, there was no need for to include a separate project component. Partners in Dong Thap province and OXFAM made a constructive decision, albeit challenging, to reallocate programme funds from the livelihood support fund to the flexible fund and to integrate the livelihood sub-objectives (e.g. IEC) into other project components.
- The OXFAM project team is small and effective based in the provinces and supported from the Hanoi office, and works in partnership in mobilising GoV systems and resources from the provincial to the village level. There is a close engagement from CFSC members at all levels, particularly district, commune and village (e.g. Women's Union, Youth Union, Farmers' Union, Red Cross). However, at the time of design, GoV decided that there would be different lead GoV partners for implementation in the 2 provinces Dong Thap and Tien Giang, which has brought different priorities, experiences and values to the coordination and partnership and implementation. In particular, this arrangement presents an additional challenge for future replication of the projects lessons across the sector.

Effectiveness: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of the VANGOCA project? How effectively was the VANGOCA project managed and how did this impact on the achievement of outcomes?

- Overall, the Review Team (as well as the MTR) finds there is strong endorsement from provincial to community level stakeholders for the effectiveness, appropriateness of the content and location of the project, and the balance between structural (infrastructure activities) and non-structural (such as capacity, development, training, human resource development, and IEC). The non-structural measures of the project have been strongly appreciated and clearly understood by partners. One partner commented: "for provincial DM work, we often focus on constructions for immediate response, but the project uses non-structural measures which have good and long-term impacts to the local people". Small scale infrastructure activities are on the whole complementary to capacity building components, although there have been some delays and difficulties in implementing the structural activities and flexible funds. Training programs and materials have been developed based on needs assessments and with inputs from local trainers, so that they are relevant and focused at the local level and specific to communities.

Approach

- The project takes a strong capacity building approach, to support and develop the capacity of communities to plan for, and respond to floods, and to enhance government support to those communities.
- In both provinces, it has worked closely with government systems from provincial to the commune levels to improve DM practices. Both GoV stakeholders in Dong Thap and Tien Giang give high

compliment for the Project approach, specifically non-structural measures from the project, and show strong interest and commitment to replicate the methodologies outside of target communities.

- And working with communities, particularly through the IEC clubs, to reduce their vulnerability to environmental and economic shocks as well as their dependence on government relief activities.
- The implementation of many project activities require and strengthen the accountability of provincial and local government and participation of the poor in their governance through training, workshops, meetings, which has broader implications for good practice in supporting the full implementation of the government Grassroots Democracy Decree/ Ordinance.

Implementation and Achievements

- The project has been effective in making good progress to date, achieving all its main project activities and indicators, as identified in the Log frame. Of particular note are the training and IEC materials developed and disseminated; the village/ commune DM Action Plans developed; IEC club meetings; and the number of people benefiting from different types of training events in both provinces. Some indicators are "over achieved", such as the 75 villages, not the planned 30 villages, which have now developed their DM Action Plans (32 in Tien Giang and 43 in Dong Thap).
- Review Team consultations also indicate that the project has built a good level of knowledge, skills and capacity in DM among commune, district and province leaders. Trainings have been conducted with a wide range of local authorities and stakeholders from different sectors. Stakeholders in both two provinces confirmed their understanding and importance of the local need for disaster preparedness, such as being ready to respond to emergencies, preparedness with action planning, simulation exercises, formation of emergency response teams and participation in training events.
- Review Team interviews and focus groups indicated that there has been a broad level of positive DM awareness built among local communities. IEC clubs have organised interactive group discussions with 20 DM topics in all targeted villages, ensuring the participation of men and women, children and the elderly. Households and IEC volunteers show a positive level confidence and enthusiasm in terms of clearer information on and increased know-how of disaster preparedness, flood related diseases, and sanitation issues.
- The project has helped to develop village and commune DM Action Plans in strong consultation with local people and different stakeholders. These include detailed actions of disaster preparedness plans to be taken before, during and after flooding, and clear roles and responsibilities of each community and household member. Priorities for activities, including small scale mitigation works, have been developed during the participatory planning process. Commune representatives interviewed were appreciative of the knowledge and skills that they had developed in disaster preparedness and mitigation.
- GoV stakeholders noted in Review meetings that they now had a strong appreciation of the need for disaster preparedness planning, particularly as a participatory undertaking, based on local needs and including the voices/ suggestions from community members. They commented how this had improved existing DM, where previously plans were based on a budget allocation and not on local needs.
- There has been effective development of comprehensive capacity building modules and materials (e.g. CBDM, gender mainstreaming in DM, leadership training, search and rescue). Feedback to the Review (and MTR) show that the training materials are local, practical, relevant and reflect the various perspectives and needs of the different audiences at provincial, district, commune and village levels. The project has also utilised and developed skilled local trainers and facilitators.
- One of the key achievements is the effective network of IEC volunteers and clubs at village level, who are enthusiastic to continue after the project ends. Each club has up to 30 members, participating in IEC training and responsible for dissemination amongst households and neighbours. The model is based on a multiplier principle, in which each member is required to share the knowledge and information to 5 other community members. This model has been well received by partners, MOs and village leaders as they believe it is one of the more effective ways to promote greater outreach of the messages in the IEC materials. IEC volunteers interviewed by the Review Team also suggested other projects should apply the same community education model and proposed that it be developed and adapted to different topics on related social development issues for local communities.

Management

- The OXFAM project team is small and effective, despite some turnover in staff. Activities are integrated into the GoV system resources are also activated at the provincial to the village level.

- Finances have been closely managed by both OXFAM and GoV, with funds transferred from OXFAM to Provincial partners for project implementation. There were some initial difficulties in aligning OXFAM and GoV finance requirements, which have now been largely resolved. However, at a practical level issues continue in the timely implementation of the Flexible Fund.
- The local OXFAM staff - the Project Coordinator, Project Officers and Provincial Coordinators - and the Humanitarian Programme Coordinator (from Hanoi), demonstrate a high degree of commitment to the project and are experienced, knowledgeable and skilled in project management and community based issues. There appears to be a sound learning process within the project team, and as noted by the MTR the Team is open about the projects strengths, limitations, opportunities and the challenges that lie ahead.
- Given the different GoV partners in the 2 provinces, there are some additional challenges in project management. There is a close relationship with CFSC members at all levels. In addition, the relationship between OXFAM staff, partner staff and the Project Management Board (PMB) in both provinces is frank and open, with cross learning promoted between the 2 provinces.

Coordination and Partnership

- There is strong ownership at all levels (province to commune) with clear responsibilities in all aspects of project management. Key partners, such as DPI in Dong Thap, have a strong role in coordinating within the GoV system and relevant stakeholders in project implementation, while DARD in Tien Giang has played a strong technical role in DM and confirmed to the Review Team that they had the view that "it's our project, not the project of OXFAM or any donor".
- The project creates good linkages between all levels (from province to village), and multi-stakeholder collaboration between different agencies (from the Planning Department, Agricultural Unit, Red Cross, Farmers Union, Women's Union, schools, Youth Union, and health centers).
- Both the review and MTR find that the PMBs and Steering Committees in both provinces have provided active support; the IEC clubs, MOs and local communities are engaged and enthusiastic. The fact that all the objectives and indicators in the logical framework have been achieved to date indicates a commitment to the project by partners, local people, and OXFAM staff.

M&E

- OXFAM has developed monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) material for training and guidance of participatory monitoring and evaluation processes. Based upon this, a detailed and relevant MEL component was produced as part of the project design. However, there is further potential to increase a more bottom-up input into the M&E processes as well as sharing of lessons between the two project sites and amongst partners.
- The Review finds that the GoV agencies at all levels, take an active role in M&E and reporting which is integrated into their systems, but that this is focused predominantly at quantitative indicators. Qualitative indicators as well as process oriented M&E could be enhanced further.

Integration of Cross-cutting Issues

- Although MTR and Annual Plans mention some difficulties in gender mainstreaming, the Review observed that there appears to be some reasonable participation by women in the project, both in government agencies, as IEC volunteers, and community beneficiaries, often linked to the Women's Union.
- For example, IEC materials reviewed incorporated both a gender and age sensitive approach. In addition, DM Action Plans were specifically aware of the needs of children and the elderly.

Responses to the MTR

MTR Report was completed in June 2008. OXFAM staff developed a follow up matrix based on the report recommendations in order to work with partners, to maximise effectiveness of the time remaining on the project and to make post-project plans. The major items identified for attention and development were:

- development of more Train the Trainer (TOT) courses at all levels;
- diversification of IEC activities to broaden coverage of targeted population in project sites;
- close coordination between various departments and agencies to take full advantage of the project activities;
- distribution of water containers and pails to the poor beneficiaries in the remote and rural areas in the project sites; and
- to link further with other INGOs in sharing information and lessons.

Challenges/ Issues:

Given these responses the MTR, and the achievements identified, there are several challenges and issues experienced during project implementation.

- There were initial difficulties in partner relations in Dong Thap in understanding the roles, responsibilities, and financial management implications for the partners and OXFAM.
- Staff turnover finding experienced staff (willing to work out in the provinces) is difficult for both OXFAM and GoV.
- The outreach of disaster awareness and preparedness through IEC through IEC materials, to wider communities beyond IEC club memberships is a challenge, particularly in the outreach to poorer households.
- Although government agencies monitor project progress, there is scope for more in depth understanding of the project approach and process, which moves beyond checking the planned outputs and indicators. Monitoring by the lead partners and their staff would benefit from review and additional capacity development, to provide better support seconded staff.
- Challenges to implement the Flexible Fund are on-going, which is referred to by provincial partners as "not flexible", given the difference in OXFAM and government financial procedures. These differences, combined with the fact that private sector companies are not interested in bidding for small-scale infrastructure projects, have caused delays and unrealistic, increased budgets due to inflation. It is clear that this has also caused some further tension between OXFAM and partners, particularly in Dong Thap.
- An issue mentioned by some stakeholders (and noted by the MTR) is that at a broader level (and despite extensive training and IEC) relatively few people in the communities have so far directly benefited from the project's activities. This may have the potential to create feelings that some have "missed out". This raises questions about scale-up during the remaining period of VANGOCA and beyond to better engage particularly the poor of the community.

Efficiency: were resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes, and did the VANGOCA project provide value for money?

- It was beyond the scope of the Review to undertake a full analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the project. However, the Review Team concludes, based on consultations with partners and stakeholders, that overall the project represents value for money, has appropriate systems and processes in place, has been responsible in allocating funds for staff and supporting resources, and has effectively utilised GoV systems and expertise from the provincial to the commune level. The only area which is of concern is the Flexible Fund which is discussed above.
- All activities were implemented according to schedule (with the exception of the utilisation of the Flexible Fund and the safe water component), and only a small amount of budget is under spent.

Impact and sustainability: to what degree has the VANGOCA project produced positive or negative changes directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? Are the benefits of the VANGOCA project sustainable?

The Review Team concludes that the project has made positive steps towards putting in place solid foundations for sustainable outcomes. There are many good opportunities for project benefits to be sustainable across a number of aspects including: the support from provincial agencies, the widespread engagement with the CFSC membership at all levels; the commitment of communes and villages; local community and government authority engagement and enthusiasm for project activities; strong investment in facilitators at all levels; development of quality training and IEC materials; establishment of disaster management clubs and a growing network of trained and committed IEC volunteers; and a strong participatory approach.

However, given that the project is not due for completion until October 2010, it is not possible to evaluate project impact, without further qualitative data and follow up impact studies.

- However, stakeholders have reported that they consider that the project has made positive changes in terms of poverty alleviation and in reducing vulnerability to environmental and economic shocks, given the human, physical, financial and physical capital (assets) developed by the project from the provinces down to the village level, particularly the investment in human capital.
- Interviews with government agencies and community members indicate that there is a positive increase in the level of awareness of disaster preparedness and mitigation, as well as a positive

change in the enabling environment within government systems at the province, district, commune and village levels for supporting CBDM.

- The strong willingness from government partners to replicate at the province and district levels, bodes well for sustainability. For example, Dong Thap has already planned for replication of scenario simulation in every district, while IEC materials have been widely distributed outside target location.
- The strong mobilisation of local systems, network and resources, such as the Women's Union, Youth Union and the Red Cross, as well as other MOs, also have the potential existing networks to continue with CBDM beyond the life of the project. In addition, IEC volunteers also demonstrated their enthusiasm for continuing knowledge transfer and community awareness training after the project finishes.
- In addition, OXFAM has indicated that they are in discussion with stakeholders and partners in preparation for an exit strategy.
- Given that GoV has approved the National Strategy for Disaster Management, and planned to introduce CBDRM projects in all communes of Vietnam starting from end of 2010, this is a good opportunity to capitalise and build on the achievements to date.
- At a broader level, OXFAM contributes its DM experience as good practice examples to the DM Working Group at the national level.

Lessons Learned

- It is crucial to have clear understanding and ownership from local partners at the outset from the design stage through implementation and into post project exit planning. This promotes the success of the project and later the opportunity to replicate and sustain benefits and impacts, including integration into government systems.
- The development of effective grass-root networks of IEC volunteers is significant in strengthening the ownership of local communities and asset development. It helps to build confidence and enthusiasm of "local experts" to facilitate knowledge transfer and networks in local communities, and to replicate and continue after the project ends.
- Effective and locally relevant technical assistance combined with the development of comprehensive training materials and programs are crucial to project success: "other projects should apply the methods of IEC clubs and training like OXFAM's project".
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration across different agencies (DPI, DARD, WU, YU, RC, Schools, Health centers) and GoV levels is essential to ensure an enabling environment for implementing community based approaches, scaling up project initiatives and to help to ensure sustainability.

Recommendations

In the time remaining before the project end date, the Review Team recommends that OXFAM:

- Build on the ownership, learning process and network of IEC motivators and other community groups and give more emphasis to their civic role in building participation and accountability.
- Review the qualitative M&E and look for opportunities to increase the participation of the community in M&E.
- As part of the consolidation of project achievements OXFAM develop strategies to promote a more central role for communities in project planning, coordination, implementation and M&E, in development of procedures and activities.
- Consolidate and disseminate the Project approaches, methods, tools, and materials in a comprehensive guideline to all stakeholders. The Review suggests OXFAM develops a comprehensive training manual/ guide or similar product as a whole on CBDM for stakeholders to replicate.
- Continue to share experiences and promote the integration of methods into the coming GoV program on CBDRM locally and nationally.
- In preparing for the exit strategy, consider how methods developed and transition can be promoted further to reach the poorest of the poor and increase their participation in the project.
- Support GoV's approved National Strategy for Disaster Management, with plans to introduce CBDRM projects in all communes from end of 2010. This is a good opportunity to advocate a successful DM model and experiences to DPI, DARD and National level MARD/ DMC. The remaining period should be seen as important for consolidation to ensure sustainability of project knowledge, approach and

facilities (e.g. early warning equipment, training manuals, IEC materials), and to promote a positive transition to the GoV's CBDRM program.

WORLD VISION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Title: Reducing Flood and Storm Vulnerability (RFSV) in Quang Ngai Province

Start-End Date: September 2005–September 2009

Budget: \$A 2,921,840

Goal: To reduce negative economic and social impacts of natural disasters in Quang Ngai

Purpose: To increase the extent of recovery from flood and storm damage in two target districts – Duc Pho and Mo Duc

Objectives/ Components:

- Output 1: Alternative income generation opportunities for vulnerable households facilitated
- Output 2: Revolving fund scheme established to support alternative income generation activities and household flood-preparedness improvements
- Output 3: Small-scale flood-preparedness infrastructure in hamlets constructed, reinforced or planted (i.e. forestry trees)
- Output 4: Household and Hamlet Disaster Risk Reduction Plans (DRRPs) Developed, using the Hazard Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (HVCA) Methodology, and Disseminated
- Output 5: Integration of Household and Hamlet Plans with commune, district and provincial level plans
- Output 6: Schools-based programs on disaster preparedness supported and integrated with household/hamlet systems
- Output 7: Research to support sustainability of benefits and replication of Project processes and outcomes completed
- Output 8: Management of project processes and procedures successfully implemented.

Key partners: Provincial People's Committee, Provincial DARD, Provincial Department of Education and Training, Provincial Department of Fisheries, Provincial Women's Union, Provincial Red Cross

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Project works cooperatively with households through hamlet and district level agencies and networks within Duc Pho and Mo Duc districts, as well as broader networks in the disaster management and development contexts. The Project will deliver an integrated range of outputs to address the causes of vulnerability. The Project's dominant strategy will be the promotion of local capacity through a combination of practical steps, including:

- Assistance with planning and delivery of two new schemes (income production and a revolving loan fund)
- Training in disaster reduction planning/ implementation within hamlets, agencies and networks
- Joint implementation of infrastructure activities
- Joint research and documentation of lessons learned in relation to disaster mitigation and recovery strategies

REVIEW FINDINGS

Relevance: does the VANGOCA project contribute to the VANGOCA program and higher level objectives of the aid program? Was the design relevant to the need? Were objectives and performance indicators clearly specified? Were management and institutional arrangements appropriate?

- RFSV was designed and has been implemented in contribution to the Vietnam Australia Development Cooperation Strategy 2003 – 2007. Specifically, Outputs 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 contribute to Intermediate Objective 2.4.1: 'implement programs to mitigate the impact of floods, drought and storms on rural populations'; and Outputs 1, 2, 3 and 7 to Intermediate Objective 2.4.2 "increase stability of household income through encouraging diversification of production & marketing".
- The content of the project is also aligned with the GoV National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 (approved in 2007). In addition, several key and relevant GoV policies, such as the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy, the Grassroots Democracy Decree are supported by the project's objectives and implementation.
- In addition, at the national level, WV (through its Headquarters) has been active in participating in various DM working group and other networks, as well as sharing and contributing its experience,

approaches and resources through the various networks. There has been some ad hoc coordination with other VANGOCA projects.

- Overall the project design, goal, outputs and indicators are clearly specified, and the scope of the project is manageable with districts located at a manageable distance from one another and the project offices. The project location and problems identification was selected during PRA and baseline survey in consultation with local stakeholders to focus on two major areas of concern for communities and institutions in relation to water related natural disasters: 1) economic shock (through the destruction of or damage to means of production and livelihood assets); and 2) physical shock (through personal injury and death).
- Overall the project is well-run and management and institutional arrangements are appropriate to the scale and scope of the project. RFSV has a realistic design and targets, with clear implementation mechanisms and flexibility in options for activity implementation.

Effectiveness: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of the VANGOCA project? How effectively was the VANGOCA project managed and how did this impact on the achievement of outcomes?

Overall, the Review Team finds that the project has been effective in making substantive progress towards achieving its objectives and in contributing to building resilience to coping with and recovering from flood and storm damage.

- The approach and outputs of RFSV received high praise and strong endorsement from both government agencies and communities.

Approach

To support and complement its overall practical capacity building approach, the project applies the following strategies and principles:

- Strong emphasis on community participation in planning, management, implementation and monitoring of project activities (for the purposes of generating ownership and sustaining project benefits).
- Integration of gender and development principles and practices to maximise project quality and relevance.
- Assets-based approach, to build on and mobilise existing community and organisational strengths to achieve locally determined objectives.
- Commitment to participation by children in appropriate project activities, based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child.
- Effective M&E to ensure lessons learned are incorporated into the implementation phase and future activities, as well as to assure accountability.
- The community based DM approach is new to government partners, but the combination of infrastructure, non-structural measures and community based approaches receive positive endorsements from all stakeholders. The Review particularly notes a comment by a senior provincial leader, who compared RFSV to other DM and poverty reduction projects (with significantly larger budgets), and highlighted the effectiveness of RFSV, because of its specific links to livelihoods and income generation.

Implementation and Achievements

- As stated above, WV is making highly satisfactory progress against the project outputs and indicators. Most of the outputs have been achieved in a timely and have already exceeded the target. Except for some delays in the infrastructure work, RFSV has over-achieved most of its outputs and quantitative indicators.
- For example, Output 4 has trained 100 Hamlet facilitators (HF), not 90 HF as planned. This group of 100 HFs, have attended a total 279 training sessions. In Output 5, there have been 7345 Household and 50 Hamlet plans in the 10 communes developed and consistent with Commune and District level plans; 132% higher than planned target.

The following provides a summary of the main achievements of RFSV:

- Hazard and Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (HVCA) training, developing disaster risk reduction plans (DRRP) at household level, hamlets, communes and schools help villagers and government organisations to assess risks, vulnerability, and capacity and identify solutions and action plans. This has built a positive level of DM awareness and preparedness at household levels, hamlets, in MOs,

schools and government agencies. One hamlet leader said "the project help us, household, hamlet and commune to have better attitudes and share vision for disaster preparedness".

- In both districts, stakeholders stated that the target hamlets/ communes suffered fewer consequences during flood seasons than the non-target areas. There was increased knowledge of DM among parents and students, and there had been no accidents with children happening during floods, since the training.
- Livelihoods activities, and house upgrading loans have supported local people to increase income and security, successfully reducing the negative economic and social impact of disasters.
- There has been a combination of non-infrastructure and infrastructure measures, with diversity of activities to develop human, physical, financial and physical assets to vulnerable communities.
- Microfinance and small infrastructure work have been effective and incorporated the voluntary participation of villagers, who have planned, discussed, and supervised the project implementation, particularly construction work.
- Government officers have gradually come to adopt the community based, bottom-up and multi-stakeholder approach in taking guidance from hamlets on project priorities, beneficiary selection and implementation monitoring, and coordination with different service delivery. The Review was particularly impressed by the strongly participatory and inclusive and inclusive nature of both meetings in target communes.
- The project have developed an effective network of hamlet facilitators (HF), who are active and enthusiastic to transfer DM knowledge, support the vulnerable to access project activities as well as to provide close monitoring in target hamlets.
- RFSV has developed simple, user friendly training and DM planning materials. There is genuine flexibility in livelihoods options and training.
- The project activities have reach to poorest of poor, and taken on board the recommendations of the MTR.

Management

- The project management structure, focuses on the commune level, and is simple and effective. The Provincial PSC fulfils an overview function, in terms of alignment with overall provincial strategies and projects and Project Management Boards (PMB) managing implementation at different levels. Funds are transferred directly from WV to CPMB.
- Both the MTR and the VANGOCA Review observe that WV has a small and effective project team, with strong teamwork and mutual support, where the staff fulfil a skilled generalist role related to all components of the project. The team is comprised of 9 staff, and includes the Project Manager, Finance Officer, 1 Project Officer in the province; each district has 1 Project Officer, managing 2 Local Collaborators. The 1st international Project Coordinator spent the first two years establishing, building and managing the RFSV, and left the project in a strong position. There was then a succession with the Senior Project Officer, becoming the current Project Manager coordinating the team. This has been important for continuity and has minimised the disruption so frequently caused by staff turnover.
- The RFSV utilises a continuous learning model for both the project team and commune organisations. The MTR also provided an opportunity for government officers to participate in evaluation and project learning, and then to follow-up after the MTR.

Coordination and Partnership

- The Review notes that there are demonstrations of strong functional partnerships between the project and relevant stakeholders, including government departments and MOs. RFSV has enabled strong ownership at hamlet and commune levels. The Women's Union in particular has become a very strong partner, as is Red Cross.
- Relationships with project beneficiaries are also healthy and positive. Findings from MTR and from Review field visits to 2 communes, indicate that the CPMB has moved towards a bottom-up approach, taking guidance from hamlets on project priorities, beneficiary selection and implementation monitoring.
- WV Australia works closely with the project team to implement the project. There is also support and coordination from the DM coordinator of WV in Hanoi who is responsible for DM integration into all WV projects.

- Coordination with and sharing of materials between RFSV and other initiatives in Quang Ngai province also takes place; e.g. the Center for Mitigation and Management of Natural Disaster (were invited to train HFs in flood modelling demonstrations), Rural Development Program in Quang Ngai (RUDEP), and with Plan International and other organisations operating in the areas.

M&E

- There is a clear monitoring mechanism developed that maximises the capacity building and involvement of local resources, particularly Hamlet Facilitators (HFs). The income generation participants are identified by hamlet leadership supported by HFs, and endorsed at a hamlet meeting. Those selected are confirmed by CPMB, and then cross checked and verified by the Local Collaborators (LCs). There is monthly reporting by the HF to the CPMB and upwards to the DPMB. Within WVV the LC submits written reports to the WV District office and then on to the Provincial office. HFs and LCs regularly monitor the performance of service delivery agents, such as the DoF and the DEC of the Department of Agriculture
- A monitoring tool was developed for HFs and they have been trained in its use by the Red Cross. Other internal monitoring and reporting mechanisms, to both PMBs and within WVV, are in place and applied. The M&E framework developed under this project includes an Indicator Tracking Table where targets per district and output are recorded and progress measured against them. Hamlet Facilitators and local collaborators have monitoring formats, with guidelines to measure specific activities, which are then submitted to the Project Officers.
- The focus is on quantitative targets and monitoring, and the project would benefit from integrating qualitative monitoring to assess changes over time, particularly as the project comes to an end in September 2009.

Integration of Cross-cutting Issues

- There is good participation of women in all project activities, from beneficiary selection, to HFs, training and meetings, with the Women's as a very active partner in the project. There is also a strong school program promoting a child centered focus on DM.
- RFSV has also focused on vulnerable groups, ethnic minorities and livelihoods. In particular, single-headed households, the elderly and disabled people are selected to benefit from appropriate support from project grants, microfinance and livelihoods development.
- Communities and stakeholders appreciate the community based and participatory approaches of RFSV as good practice in grassroots democracy (participation, transparency and accountability). Project activities help to strengthen the accountability of local government and participation of the poor through trainings, workshops, meetings, and especially support the implementation of the government Grassroots Democracy Decree/ Ordinance.

Responses to the MTR

- While the MTR was overall positive about the significant achievements of the project, it did note 2 issues: improving quality of existing programs to reach the poorest of the poor, and post-project sustainability. RFSV has integrated these recommendations into ongoing implementation, particularly in facilitating the access of the poorest of the poor, and has begun discussions about an exit strategy.
- During the period of the last Annual Plan, the project will emphasise the positive impacts, which have been made on the communities. The following activities will be expanded and strengthened: income generation, the revolving fund scheme, small-scale infrastructure, strengthening the capacity of households and local institutions in improving Household Disaster Risk Reduction Plans (HDDRPs), Hamlet Disaster Risk Reduction Plans (HDRRPs), Commune Disaster Risk Reduction Plan (CDRRPs) and promoting the integration of these plans into the district and province Risk Reduction Plans. The project will strengthen school-based activities, the effective performance of the commune rescue teams and the Committees for Flood and Storm Control (CFSCs) at different levels to ensure they are capable to maintain the current activities when the project phases out by the end of September 2009.

Challenges/ Issues

- The Review notes that to ensure sustainability there is a key challenge to integrate DM plans into government systems from the district level (Output 5). While district and provincial level decision makers have been impressed by the bottom up approach they retain a tendency to consider participatory approaches as more relevant to the local level, and will need further support and advocacy to recognise the potential it holds for their own planning (including budgeting) and implementation.

- The issue of integrating disaster plans upwards is difficult and important. WV has been successful in discussions with the District PMB and CFSCs, and since November 2008 has started training CFSCs on DM as well as providing equipment to make the district DM plans more realistic and effective.
- The quality of household plans needs to be improved and ensured that each plan is in fact specific to each house and household.
- Qualitative monitoring could benefit from additional review and integration into the last phase of activities.
- Linkages among components are not clear to all partners, particularly Output 7 and 8. MTR also mentions “project staff had good knowledge of the design document but they didn’t understand the logic behind some of the decisions, for example the much discussed income generation grant versus revolving fund loan”. This needs to be addressed particularly in developing an exit strategy and possible handover to the Women’s Union.
- Slow infrastructure approval processes have been a serious challenge. However, since 2008 processes have improved considerably, compared to previous years, after some effort from the project and WV advocacy at the annual INGO meeting organised by Quang Ngai PCC.
- Difficulties with high inflation rates in 2008 are an issue for the remaining implementation activities.

Efficiency: were resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes, and did the VANGOCA project provide value for money?

- It was beyond the scope of the Review to undertake a full analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the project. However, the Review Team concludes, based on consultations with partners and stakeholders, that overall the project is efficiently managed and that funds have been largely expended in a timely and transparent manner.
- This is supported by a simple and effective project structure utilising GoV and community resources, with particularly close coordination with commune level, and a small and skilled project team.
- There is also clear recognition, particularly from provincial leaders, about the impact and cost-effectiveness of infrastructure and livelihoods support. For example, the comment was made to the Review Team that “small-scale irrigation work in one district cost less and has wider applicability than similar infrastructure projects in Government programs supporting poor communes”.
- As the 2 target districts are in the same provinces, RFSV can efficiently coordinate resources and facilitate linkages among service providers and government stakeholders easily from Quang Ngai town.

Impact and sustainability: to what degree has the VANGOCA project produced positive or negative changes directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? Are the benefits of the VANGOCA project sustainable?

- The Review Team concludes that the project has made positive steps towards putting in place solid foundations for sustainable outcomes.
- The Review acknowledges that it will be sometime before impacts are fully known. However, the Review also supports the findings of the MTR, that the project has made a significant impact in reducing the negative economic and social impact of disasters within the beneficiary population, namely the poor of Mo Duc and Duc Pho district. In addition, there is strong endorsement from the provincial and district level as to the impact of the project from DM and poverty reduction aspects.
- Discussions about project exit strategies, and roles and responsibilities in post project maintenance have been discussed since April 2008. Stakeholders show their commitments in sustaining project outcomes: to continue livelihoods activities; maintain early warning systems and construction works; facilitate transfer of DM knowledge in households, villages and schools; continue household/ village DRRPs and to integrate DRRP into government planning systems in commune levels, share and replicate experiences from the project to non-target areas. The capacity development of government officers and network of HFs are also a sound foundation for sustainability.
- The connection of WV with NDMP, DM working groups and also close linkage with the government’s program to implement the National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 can help to enhance the likelihood of sustainability.

Lessons Learned

- Project designs and project scope which is clear, simple and not overly ambitious, has a higher likelihood of "success" or at least fewer challenges for implementation and sustainability.
- To involve local partners in the running of the project from an earlier stage is crucial to the successful implementation of the project, particularly to the understanding of the community based approach.
- The linkage with local services, resources and expertise ensure the sustainability of project activities.
- Government stakeholders and communities appreciate CBDRM projects with a balanced combination of non-infrastructure and infrastructure measures, and with diversity of activities.
- Networks of local facilitators play significant roles in facilitating learning and sharing among households as well as participatory monitoring.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of household plans, and the linkages among project outputs/ components.
- Facilitate the project infrastructure approval process more actively.
- Design and implement gradual exit strategy with appropriate capacity development and time for partners to understand the implications for the post-project phase.
- Place a greater emphasis on engagement and capacity development with the district and province governments so that disaster preparedness strategies and funding can be institutionalised at district level and above.
- Support an early focus on effective government data collection for relevant indicators so that GoV can evaluate the effectiveness or otherwise of the model used.
- Facilitate information exchange among VANGOCA NGOs and work with GoV/ NDMP to promote/ support lessons which could be fed into nation wide replication of the community based disaster risk management activities.
- Given that GoV has approved the National Strategy for Disaster Management, and plans to introduce CBDRM projects in all communes of Vietnam starting from end of 2010, this is a good opportunity to capitalise and build on the achievements to date.

WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION

AFAP

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Title: Dengue-Safe Water Supply in Southern Vietnam

Start-End Date: November 2005–April 2010

Budget: A \$4,701,227.40

Goal: to maximise the Cuu Long Delta Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Projects (CLDRWSS) project's impacts on human capital and health by ensuring that the water it provides is safe from water-related vector borne diseases

Purpose: to facilitate and support affected communities and water and health organisations to adopt evidence-based methods, practices and new institutional arrangements to mitigate water supply related dengue risk.

Objectives/ Components:

This project will mitigate water supply related dengue risk by applying evidenced based interventions at three stages of water infrastructure development - planning and design, construction and post construction.

There are four main components:

- Component 1: Community-Based Dengue Risk Reduction: to enable communities in which water supply related dengue risk exists to implement appropriate water management practices to mitigate this risk.
- Component 2: Health Sector Capacity Building: to enable the National Dengue Program to collaborate with and support CERWASS agencies and affected communities to monitor and address water related dengue risk.
- Component 3: Water Sector Capacity Building: to enable Centre for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (CERWASS) agencies to address water supply related dengue risk during infrastructure planning, design and construction.
- Component 4: Project Management: to ensure quality of program implementation, outputs and impacts.

Key partners: Ministry of Health (MOH)

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project arose out of the recognition that water infrastructure projects such as the AusAID funded Cuu Long Delta Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Projects (CLDRWSS) can increase dengue mosquito breeding sites through the provision of additional water jars to householders. The project has particularly introduced the use of *mesocyclops* to control dengue mosquito larvae and organised, trained and paid stipends for collaborators to perform household checks of water jars. Schools programs are also being run. The project is being carried out in three model communes in Southern Vietnam; Binh Hoa Bac, Thanh Tri and Chanh Hoi, and being expanded into further communes. This project has a number of Australian scientific advisors and PhD and Masters students attached to it.

In addition, the AFAP project is also aligned with the GoV National Dengue Control Strategy and National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy, as well as regional efforts through WHO to focus on an inter-sectoral approach to water supply infrastructure and vector borne disease.

This project builds on 2 earlier phases where lessons learned have assisted in planning for the current phase, and facilitate long term monitoring of the northern and central Vietnam projects to inform strategies for sustainability.

REVIEW FINDINGS

Effectiveness: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of the VANGOCA project? How effectively was the VANGOCA project managed and how did this impact on the achievement of outcomes?

At the outset it should be stated the Review Team does not have the technical capacity to evaluate any of the health or epidemiological aspects of the project. Therefore, comments are based on issues related to

overall project implementation utilising project reports, and discussions with the project team, and stakeholders -in communities and in Ho Chi Minh City.

Overall the Review Team finds that based on consultations with stakeholders and discussions with the project team, the project is on target to achieve its goal of improved health through increased access to safe water. The project reports that there has been significant reduction in the dengue risk in all target communities, including total prevention of all locally acquired dengue cases in 2 out of 3 model communes after 3 years of activities. In addition, there is evidence that household behavior is beginning to change across the 3 model communes. At the policy level, while there is little progress on influencing water policy, the project has been actively engaged with the National Dengue Strategy and international networks through WHO to promote "Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage" to include vector-borne diseases in safe water policies.

Based on consultations in Vietnam and Australia, the Review Team concludes that the project is being managed effectively, with a committed team at the project office based in Ho Chi Minh City, strong ownership from MOH and implementing agencies, and strong support from AFAP Australia on project management, research and technical advice.

Approach

- Component 1: Builds on institutional capacity building activities, with health sector agencies to support communities to develop and manage community-based vector control programs, and emphasises integration of community-based programs within existing "vertical" government programs for dengue control.
- Components 2 and 3: focus on building capacity of health and water sectors to manage and implement dengue mitigation interventions. Capacity building includes: 1) developing an institutional technical skill base in evidence based methodologies, technologies, and approaches for monitoring and mitigating water related dengue risk; 2) supporting the development of evidence-based model programs, guidelines and interventions which can serve as demonstration models; and 3) creating an enabling policy and management environment within each agency to facilitate wider adoption of practices and methodologies.
- Component 4: focuses on project management and effective implementation.

Implementation and Achievements

The Review Team concludes that the project is making positive progress to achieving its objectives.

- Overall there has been significant reduction in the dengue risk in all target communities, including total prevention of all locally acquired dengue cases in 2 out of 3 model communes after 3 years of activities.
- There has been significant reduction in larval densities by up to 99% in all model and expansion communes.
- Household behaviour change in managing water around the house has been observed in the 3 model communes.
- The model provides a low cost and cost effective approach to reducing dengue risk in rural water supplies.
- Collaborators express enthusiasm and commitment to continuing their work after the project is completed.
- The project is promoting, increasing and consolidating capacity of local experts in dengue through supporting 2 PhDs and 3 MPHs undertaking research projects, and with continuous training of a cadre of GoV public health and water staff, as an investment into the future and as direct support to MOH staff, particularly as a number of Institute Pasteur staff are working as CPOs on the project, and have undertaken PhDs as part of the project. This is also part of the broader capacity building strategy for the project, which is supporting strong scientific partnerships and a commitment to building local scientific research capacity.
- The project is contributing to influencing healthy policy through Department of Environmental Health (MOH) to mitigate vector breeding in new water supply infrastructure, through the Health Impact Assessment legislation.
- The involvement of students and schools in dengue awareness, clean up campaigns, and dengue drama, is an important investment for the next generation, and supports overall household/ community awareness raising.

- The project has developed an information kit; web based surveillance tools, which should assist in improving management of community based projects and response to disease outbreaks, and a "dengue website" www.dengue.qimr.edu.au.

Management

Program activities will be implemented through existing GoV institutions with responsibility for specific activity areas. Activity implementation will build on the relevant GoV policies of both the water and health sectors, specifically the National Dengue Control Strategy and the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy.

- The key partner is MOH at the national level, with the Project implementing organisation being the Vietnam Administration of Preventative Medicine and Environmental Health (APMEH), and coordinating organisations: National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE), Institute Pasteur Ho Chi Minh City (IPHCMC), Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR), Queensland University of Technology (QUT).
- There is a vertical approach to management from MOH (at the national level), IPHCMC, Provincial Preventative Medicine Centre, District Health Centre, through to the Commune Health Centre. For example, the Institute Pasteur HCMC (IPHCMC) has the mandate for dengue prevention and control for the Mekong Delta provinces, and therefore is the project's link to each Provincial Preventative Medical Centre (PPMC).
- The project's Community Project Officers (CPOs) are all seconded from IPHCMC. Each PPMC has the mandate for dengue prevention and control in their province, and the project works with health officials at the province, district and commune levels. The Commune Management Committee (CMC) for each model commune is made up of members from each level of the provincial health sector, a representative from the PCERWASS, representatives from local authorities including the Peoples Committee, Women's Union, Youth Union and school principals.

Coordination and Partnership

- The partnership model utilised is based on AFAP taking on the project management role; the various research institutes providing technical project advisory role, research support and mentoring, in partnership with GoV agencies. The model also includes joint appointments, institutional linkages between Vietnam and Australia, two-way training and exchanges.
- The Review Team notes the strong relationship that exists between all the "health" partners and their ownership of and commitment to the project.
- However, the Review Team was not able to see the same level of engagement from CERWASS. The Review Team understands there are work load issues for Provincial and National CERWASS, and some delays in construction of the CLDRWSS, which have delayed the planned dengue risk assessments (and a PhD study). In addition, a collaborative study of water tank design has also been delayed by more than a year. The difficulty to get "engagement" with CERWASS has implications for influencing policy and practice in regard to health impacts, institutionalising collaboration between health and water agencies, and therefore an impact on making progress on Component 3 objectives.

M&E

- There is a clear and structured M&E Matrix in place, which was revised in the Annual Plan for Year 4. The majority of tools are quantitative, including epidemiological and surveillance tools, as well as monitoring tools tracking collaborators and capacity development. Qualitative tools including MSC, focus groups and surveys have also been utilised.
- The information presented to the Review Team and at the commune level meeting was largely epidemiological, and it did raise questions for the review Team about how well the information was understood by all the stakeholders at the meeting.
- From discussions with collaborators and community members, the Review Team suggests that it would be useful (in terms of building ownership, awareness raising, and building capacity) to utilise the opportunity before expansion to facilitate a meeting of collaborators from the 3 model communes to share experiences, and develop strategies for the future.
- There is a heavy workload on project staff and volunteers (AYAD) have been used to support project monitoring, particularly qualitative monitoring. While this observation makes no comment about the skills of these individuals, it does specifically raise the issues of: sustainability of these inputs (given that volunteer inputs are time limited); prioritisation of project resources; and the place of M&E in overall project learning and planning.

Integration of Cross-cutting Issues

- Gender awareness is integrated across the project in terms of various activities including: training, monitoring (where all focus group discussions used in qualitative assessments of community responses to the program have separate male and female groups) and gender balance in participating collaborators.
- However, there is little involvement from male householders in overall participation in the project.
- Children and youth are also integrated into the project through the school program which contributes to intergenerational awareness raising, and will be useful for building awareness into the future.

Responses to the MTR/ Independent Evaluation

The Year 2 Independent Evaluation was integrated as an Annex into the Annual Plan for Year 4: 2008/2009. The Review Team notes 4 particular sets of comments:

- Sustainability after by the project ends, and reliance on volunteer collaborators
- Project use of *mesocyclops* alone to address dengue intervention, suggesting that the project should also look at water jars
- Availability of data
- Lack of engagement from CERWASS

The project has taken on board the evaluation comments and responded that "there is no project mandate to becoming involved in reducing jars, and that sustainability can be ensured through a microenterprise scheme. The Review Team notes these comments, and endorses the Independent Evaluator's concern about sustainability of collaborator activities (which will be discussed below).

Challenges/ Issues

- In discussions with collaborators the Review Team noted their commitment and also their concern about the sustainability of their activities after the project ends. While collaborators receive a small stipend, a number of people commented that it was not adequate for travel costs.
- Collaborators also expressed a desire to have more "health related" information. While satisfied with training from the project staff, they felt they would be better informed if they had the opportunity to work more closely with health workers. This raises an interesting challenge for the project in terms of shifting and broadening roles of collaborators. While this is admirable on the part of collaborators, there is also an element of risk.
- Delays in the CLDRWSS construction schedule have affected the infrastructure survey, and hindered progress on a student PhD.
- The workload for CMC's and CPOs in monitoring collaborator activities and maintaining regular meetings and feedback is significant. This will become even more challenging with expansion to new communes.
- There is little involvement from male householders.
- Some community members report that it is too difficult to make and sustain behavioural changes required by dengue prevention practices, and that they don't have time to devote to dengue prevention practices. Use of multiple water jars is part of cultural practice.

Efficiency: were resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes, and did the VANGOCA project provide value for money?

- It was beyond the scope of the Review to undertake a full analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the project. However, the Review Team concludes, based on consultations with partners and stakeholders, that overall the project is well managed, appropriate systems and processes are in place, and integrated in GoV systems.
- In addition, the project has calculated that the cost of continuing the dengue control program was less than \$1.71/ person/ year, with average cost of treating one person with dengue at a cost of \$816; utilizing a baseline of average household income of \$639/ year.²⁰ This makes a strong case for a cost effective strategy.
- There is a heavy workload on project staff, and use of volunteers (AYAD) to support project monitoring, particularly qualitative monitoring. While this observation makes no comment about the skills of individuals, it does specifically raise the issue of prioritisation of project resources, the efficiency and

²⁰ In "international dollars".

effectiveness of this approach, the sustainability of these inputs and the place of M&E in project learning and planning.

Impact and sustainability: to what degree has the VANGOCA project produced positive or negative changes directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? Are the benefits of the VANGOCA project sustainable?

Overall the Review concludes that the project has taken fundamental steps for putting in place a solid foundation for sustainable outcomes, particularly from a scientific perspective. AFAP has utilised the findings from the 2 earlier phases (in northern and central Vietnam) to inform project planning, project strategies and to provide some indicators of sustainability. However, some caution should be exercised in imputing sustainability to the current VANGOCA projects based on earlier post-project results.

In addition, there are a number of concerns at the community level and in relation to policy engagement from the water sector, which could have an influence on sustainability.

- One of the key areas in building sustainability has been in capacity building and in consolidating capacity of local experts in dengue through supporting scientific research capacity and degrees, and with continuous training of a cadre of GoV staff from the public health and water sector, as an investment into the future.
- While there is GoV commitment to expansion of the dengue project, there are no GoV funds, and MOH has requested international assistance to develop and implement a national program to mitigate dengue risk associated with water supply infrastructure. Given that this is the 3rd phase of a VANGOCA-like project, the lack of financial commitment from GoV, and other donors raises some concerns for long-term sustainability.
- The project is contributing to influencing healthy policy through Department of Environmental Health (MOH) to mitigate vector breeding in new water supply infrastructure, through the Health Impact Assessment legislation. However, the Review Team is concerned that there is not parallel engagement from CERWASS and the water sector, in order to institutionalise the "dengue" message and to promote appropriate policy.
- In discussions with collaborators the Review Team noted their commitment and also their concern about the sustainability of their activities after the project ends. The project has responded that the future will be addressed through setting aside funds to invest in a micro-enterprise scheme. The Project expects that the model communes will become self-sufficient, with the CMC and collaborator network maintained through a "project-funded micro-enterprise scheme."
- However, the nature of this scheme/ investment, how it will be managed, and what arrangements there will be to link it the community and collaborators network, and whether the micro-enterprise investment itself will be sustainable, still remain to be developed.
- In addition, some community members report that it is too difficult to sustain behavioural changes required by dengue prevention practices, particularly as use of multiple water jars is part of everyday practice. Therefore, some questions remain about how community ownership will be sustained.
- Currently the project operates in 12 communities in 5 districts, with the capacity to expand to another 5 districts (with approximately a population of 600,000 people). The Review Team notes that the workload for CMC's in monitoring collaborator activities and maintaining regular meetings and feedback is already significant. This will become even more challenging with expansion to new communes, raising the issue of how activities will be sustained in the original 5 districts.

Lessons Learned

- Sustainability of community activities requires fostering local management, ownership and meaningful community leadership in activities.
- Past experience has demonstrated that the most appropriate and effective community based dengue control initiatives are those that combine the use of the biological control agent *Mesocyclops* with social mobilisation and behaviour change.
- In developing capacity it is important to ensure that the interventions promoted fall within the mandated roles of the agency if adoption of the approaches is to be sustained.
- Success requires that the capacity building program is flexible, and responsive to target agencies needs. This will be particularly important in working with water sector agencies where, for most staff, consideration of the broader health impacts of their work is a new concept.

Recommendations

In the time remaining before the project end date, the Review Team recommends the following:

- Seek technical advice and support for developing the micro-enterprise initiative. Work with the community to clarify the nature of this scheme/ investment, its sustainability, how it will be managed, and what arrangements there will be to link it the community and collaborators network.
- Promote further engagement with the water sector, including CERWASS, MARD and NTP2 to ensure vector breeding is an element in all future water infrastructure projects.
- Work with partners to develop a clear exit strategy, across all levels.
- Explore promotion of some "preventative strategies" with AusAID and other donors, who are in supporting safe water projects, so that the impact of projects supplying water containers is not to create additional breeding sites.

CARE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Title: Options and Ownership: Water and Sanitation for Rural Poor in Mekong Delta

Start-End Date: October 2005–March 2010

Budget: \$A 4,880,632

Goal: Improved health through increased access to clean water and sanitation

Objectives/ Components:

- Component 1: Water and sanitation service providers (public and private) respond to user demand and community needs for appropriate timely, quality advice, information and service provision.
- Component 2: Men and Women in the target communities demonstrate improved hygiene and sanitation awareness, behaviors and practices.
- Component 3: Enhanced RWSS inter-agency and program coordination
- Component 4: Effective and efficient project coordination and management

Key partners: Soc Trang: Center of Co-operative and Rural Development (CORD) and Women's Union (WU). Ca Mau: Provincial Center for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation as key partner (PCERWASS), and Women's Union

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Options and Ownership Project presents an innovative approach to Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) service delivery in 48 poor and remote villages in the Mekong Delta (8 districts, 16 communes). It is working in partnership with the Provincial Centre for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (PCERWASS) and the Women's Union, as well as other government authorities, MOs, the private sector and the target communities. It builds on Vietnam government policies on Poverty Reduction and Clean Water Supply and Sanitation.

The project is working to achieve this through a combination of multi-stakeholder capacity building and training; the introduction of a range of proven and innovative mechanisms and small scale low cost infrastructure designs; as well as integrated village level water and sanitation planning and consumer marketing approaches.

REVIEW FINDINGS

Relevance: does the VANGOCA project contribute to the VANGOCA program and higher level objectives of the aid program? Was the design relevant to the need? Were objectives and performance indicators clearly specified? Were management and institutional arrangements appropriate?

- The project was designed and has been implemented and contributed to the Vietnam Australia Development Cooperation Strategy 2003 – 2007, specifically Intermediate Objective 2.3.1: '*improve health by increasing access to clean water and sanitation*'. The content of the project is also aligned with the GoV National Program for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Plan, within the overall framework of the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy 2005-2010. In addition, several key and relevant GoV policies, such as the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy, the Grassroots Democracy Decree are supported by the project's objectives and implementation.
- In addition, at the national level, CARE (through its Headquarters office) is a part of WSS working groups and climate change discussions.
- Given some of the issues and delays in project implementation the Review Team raises the concern that it may be reasonable to consider whether the project may have been overly ambitious in its design, approach, scope and management structure, and therefore set itself unrealistic targets and expectations, given the length of time for implementation and the location.
- The project has experienced on-going management issues in relation to difficulties in terms of recruitment and retention of staff, adequate staffing for the project, and clear partner commitment, which are still being resolved and will take time to settle.
- In moving forward (and in responding to MTR recommendations), the Review notes that it will be important to balance expectations, particularly from partners, and targets, with the need to secure foundations for a sustainable transition to local ownership of a community based project, which will

require maintenance and support, and can be sustained within the parameters of NTP2 as it is rolled out.

- CARE has responded positively to the MTR findings and has begun to address the issues identified. However, the Review Team notes that without an extension to the project completion date, currently March 2010, it will be difficult for the project to achieve its objectives and to build towards sustainable outcomes. The Review therefore suggests CARE consider requesting a no cost extension.

Effectiveness: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of the VANGOCA project? How effectively was the VANGOCA project managed and how did this impact on the achievement of outcomes?

Overall, the Review finds that the project has experienced a series of problems since inception which have resulted in delays in implementation and under spending of budget. Progress towards project goals has been achieved in Component 1, but many challenges remain. Progress in the remaining components has been hampered by management difficulties.

Approach

The project approach has been innovative in trying to work through: 1) a combination of multi-stakeholder capacity building and training; 2) the introduction of a range of proven and innovative mechanisms and small scale low cost infrastructure designs; as well as 3) integrated village level water and sanitation planning and consumer marketing approaches. However, the Review notes that several factors such as the building of partner relations, understanding of concepts, capacity and time needed for partners to develop a clear appreciation and ownership of the project approach were underestimated.

Implementation and Achievements

The project has made progress towards achieving targets in Component 1, including developing Integrated Village Water and Sanitation Plans (IVWSPs) and supporting the establishment of WATSAN Committees and Management Units at the Commune level. Achievements have included:

- 26 out of 48 targeted IVWSPs have been developed (Soc Trang – 18, Ca Mau - 8) and are being implemented.
- While the MTR has noted that there maybe a need for some revisions as to their implementation, as the full menu of steps was not being implemented, there was further clarification of the process from CARE in relation to the IVWSPs. CARE notes that the full menu of steps is only required in the 1st cycle of village plan development. Subsequent plan cycles then only require Steps 3-7, otherwise repeating Steps 1-2 would be duplication. (Step 1 = village profile; Step 2 = identification of appropriate options)
- In addition, from July 2008, PMU agreed to multiple cycles of IVWSPs in order to facilitate greater access to project assistance for the poor (originally the PDD indicated one IVSP for each village.) The MTR also noted that IVWSCs and Commune Management Units (CMUs) were confident to formulate IVWSPs by themselves, indicating therefore that the process was not overly complicated
- 918 additional households (in project areas) have constructed appropriate latrines (increasing the latrine coverage from 9% at baseline surveys to 18% or 1,819 households. (This uptake is still low despite the decision to lower the household contribution to latrine construction from 30% to 20% of costs in March 2008).
- 3,943 additional households have access to clean water, increasing water supply coverage to 73% (7,380 households), compared to a baseline of 34%.
- 303 additional households have access to appropriate garbage disposal (the equivalent of 13% or 1,297 households, compared to a baseline of 9%).
- 16 Commune Water and Sanitation Committees (CWSCs), 30 Village WSCs (VWSCs), and 34 WATSAN motivator groups were established and are operational.
- 14% of inhabitants in the project area report always washing hand with soap before meals and after defecating compared to 13% at the baseline.
- 37% people in the project area report drinking boiled water compared to 15% of baseline.
- An active network of motivators (many of them ethnic minority women has been established).
- The project's capacity building program has provided training to VWSCs, CWSCs, CMUs, WUs, motivators and households on monitoring the construction process, operations and maintenance and WATSAN options. CARE informed the Review that the construction teams/ service providers are

- trained in technical design/ specifications, construction, water borne diseases and give instruction on options use and maintenance to the households after completing the service.
- Households are providing feedback to the CWSC, VWSC, motivators and project staff. Motivators are then responsible for reporting any issues and feedback to WU every month. However, the IVWSP process still needs to be followed through to assess its effectiveness, as do the water user satisfaction surveys which had been delayed by 1 year.
- In addition, there has been some improvement in stakeholder and partner relations at the provincial level since the new implementation strategy became effective in January 2008, however various challenges still remain.
- In discussions with the Review Team, some stakeholders noted that the project has been able to reach some of the poorer, vulnerable and ethnic minority households, and interviewed households report health benefits from improved access to WSS.
- Commune and provincial CORD officials also commented that they saw the value of the participatory planning approach as a useful application to their work more broadly, with some potentially useful learning for NTPII.
- In addition the participatory approach was supported by partners as it gave them some tools to apply the Grassroots Democracy Decree.

Management

The Review notes that there have been ongoing difficulties in partner relations, and the MTR has recommended that structures be simplified. These changes were undertaken in January 2008 and have significantly reshaped the structure and roles of all the key partners and stakeholders. The major changes include:

- Deleting the Central and District Management Units.
- Establishing the Provincial Management Unit including CORD/ PCERWASS, WU and the Team Leader, who now play key roles in running the project. This has increased the capacity of the 2 PMUs to deal with provincial issues without delay.
- CORD/ PCERWASS now play the main role in implementing Component 1; WU takes the lead in Component 2, while the CARE team supports the partners in the implementation process, capacity building of partners and monitoring.
- Frequent PMU meetings and regular contact has been organised and the participation of partners has improved.
- However, the Review would like to note that there are some risks to management and program implementation in this "simplified" approach, which will also need to be monitored. These include issues such as: the centralisation of decision making and funds; the potential for "siloing" of the various components given the move to lead partners (who have had a history of difficulty in working together); different levels of partner capacity; and the potential for different agendas and priorities to emerge within project components.
- CARE has noted that potential risk has been mitigated as decision making and fund allocation and approval is made based on common agreement between all members of the PMU, which includes the project Team Leader, CORD/ CERWASS and WU.

Coordination and Partnership

- While there has been some improvement in communications and relations with partners at the provincial level since the implementation of the new management strategy in January 2008, significant and various challenges still remain.
- The Review Team notes that in its meeting with project partners in Soc Trang, there was still some considerable discord and dissatisfaction expressed by one of the partners as to the focus of the project, decision making about project components and IEC, funds distribution and project commitment. The Team Leader clearly has a major and continuing task in negotiating and facilitating partner relations, which is an on-going challenge and concern for timely project implementation and sustainability.

M&E

- Delayed implementation has also had impacts on delays in consistent monitoring across the project's activities. This has had roll on effects for both Components 1 and 2.
- The Review notes that prior to the MTR monitoring was largely quantitative and outputs based, but has been subsequently reviewed to include a balance of qualitative and quantitative monitoring. This includes an annual household assessment survey of hygiene and sanitation awareness, behaviour and

practice. The 1st survey took place in December 2008, and has been compared to the KAP baseline data collected for Annual Plan 2. In addition, focus groups on water user satisfaction are to be conducted annually (April 2008, May 2009).

- The Review notes that given changes in component and management structure, the project may also need to reexamine its overall monitoring framework, and indicators. This may be challenging given the variable capacity of partners to undertake monitoring as part of their lead on project components, and the need for capacity development and support to community volunteers.
- The Review recommends that M&E be addressed as part of the Annual Plan and that practical strategies be put into place to accommodate the component changes.

Integration of Cross-cutting Issues

- The project has focused on supporting vulnerable groups (such as ethnic minorities, elderly, single-headed female households) access to safe water and sanitation.
- Women are particularly active participants as motivators in community based support and awareness raising. With the active participation of WU in Component 2, there is an anticipation that this will be enhanced.
- The Review Team in their discussions with communities and stakeholders found that there was appreciation for the community based and participatory approaches.

Responses to the MTR

The MTR identified some significant concerns with project progress. The Review Team, while not having an opportunity to review the project in the same depth, has been able to substantiate the major findings and agrees with the majority of the recommendations.

- CARE has responded positively to the MTR findings and has begun to address the issues identified. The 2 key recommendations related to:
 - a new field management team with the capacity to negotiate and build relationships with provincial partners. However, there continue to be staffing problems, and while a new Team Leader was recruited in December 2007 and has worked to build positive relations with the province, recruitment of an IEC officer is pending since September 2008.
 - developing a strategy to accelerate implementation in preparation for project hand-over has been actioned. The project indicated that key partners were now taking a leading role in their respective components, with WU having agreed to implement Component 2, and PCERWASS and CORD taking a lead role in implementing the village plans.

Challenges/ Issues

The Review has noted that there have been numerous significant challenges to project implementation.

The major challenges include:

- Significant delays in progress towards objectives; particularly Component 2. However, IEC materials were approved by project partners in October 2008, and are awaiting implementation in the target communities.
- The Review Team notes that this does raise some questions about the basis on which households in Component 1 are making their "choices" and selecting their options, given the importance of IEC and social marketing aspects in assisting with informing choice and reinforcing behaviour change. While the project notes it has been able to undertake its Annual Household Assessment in December 2008, and compare it with KAP baseline data, the Review Team finds it difficult to identify a clear linkage between the 2 elements.
- Overly ambitious objectives for the 1st year of implementation have also contributed to delays and resulted in under spending. The project needed more time for partners (both community and government partners) to learn about the project.
- There have been ongoing difficulties with poor communication across the project, and poor Provincial partner relations (e.g. particularly in relation to the transfer of finances in the past and the capacity to integrate a community approach).
- The high turnover of project and partner staff has further impacted partner relations and project continuity.
- Delays have had an impact on not only partner relations, but as the MTR also notes on community confidence and trust in the project.
- While, the project has moved to improve partner relations, there is some question as to whether partners are able to provide sufficient time for project related activities, which raises further questions for the Review Team about project ownership and commitment.

- Economic issues have had an impact on inflation which has subsequently influenced the capacity of households to invest in water and sanitation.
- Given all the delays in implementation, there is now the challenge of disbursement pressure which could inadvertently affect the quality of project activities.
- In discussions with government partners and community and household visits the Review Team noted some technical concerns which may have health implications. For example, in one location a septic tank was located where there is no access to water supply; several households in another location, had covered water jars to prevent mosquitoes, but the cover was a piece of asbestos, and the area surrounding the base of the water jar had pooled standing water.
- The small examples are cited as part of the Review Team's community visit, and also raise questions about follow up and maintenance of WSS activities and the need for effective IEC and behaviour change activities to be endorsed and implemented as soon as possible.
- The issue which raised most concern for the Review Team was that of arsenic, when the CORD partner explained that arsenic had been identified in a small number of stand pipes. The Review Team did not have the confidence during the meeting that a mitigation strategy and systematic assessments of groundwater quality were planned and/ or taking place. This was clarified in further discussions with CARE who had provided technical input on the status and proposed mitigation strategies (December 2008). However, it would be useful to have a clear action plan, timeframe and agreed strategy in place and to be clear about who will take the responsibility for managing the next set of technical steps.
- CARE has had a volunteer (AYAD) water engineer providing technical assistance to the project since it began (who has just recently left the project). It is also in the process of seeking an external Watson consultant to provide a detailed overview of the water and sanitation options offered by the project, as well as making cross checks with AusAID's environmental guidelines.
- The project also relies on project partners for relevant technical expertise. The partners have suggested deleting the Technical Coordinator, Social Marketing Coordinator, Community Development Coordinator positions. The proposal is for CERWASS to undertake technical work and for WU to use its expertise in IEC to take over Component 2 implementation.
- This does raise another level of concern for the Review Team who note the history of poor cooperation and communication between partners, and the MTR's comments that there has been a failure to incorporate some regulatory and planning issues into the IVWSPs, because of poor information sharing with PCERWASS. The question remains as to how the project will manage these issues particularly given the pressure to scale up and spend "unspent funds." The Review Team suggests that CARE also consider undertaking additional technical assessments to ensure technical and environmental quality of project activities.
- The MTR has also raised some important questions about the IVWSP approach and how well it is aligned with the National RWSS Strategy, which focus on core values of supporting the role of women, self-help and provision of economic opportunities. With CORD taking the lead on Component 1 there is a further opportunity to reexamine the approach, and clarify its focus to parallel the National Strategy. Again this is an area where the project team would benefit from additional technical assistance and monitoring.

Efficiency: were resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes, and did the VANGOCA project provide value for money?

- It was beyond the scope of the Review to undertake a full analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the project. However, the Review Team concludes, that based on consultations with the project team, overall the project is under spent; with 47% of total budget spent (\$A2.1 million) as of 31 January, 2009 and the project scheduled for completion in March 2010.
- Staff turnover and difficulty in recruiting staff to a rural location has played a significant role and contributes to ongoing delays. In addition, the original complex management structure inhibited partner relations and streamlined decision making.
- While the project has promoted cost-effective options in WSS to the community it has not been able to be as efficient as originally designed, as delays in Component 2 for example, have meant that capitalising on IEC and awareness raising about WSS and health issues, has not gone hand in hand with Component 1 in deciding on WSS options.
- The project has carried forward an underspend from Annual Plan 2 and 3, however, CARE notes that spending is now on track according to a carefully planned budget for Annual Plan 4.

- Given the changes initiated since January 2008, positive progress is being made to progress towards achieving objectives. However, efficiency and effectiveness continue to be inhibited with on-going concerns related to staffing and partner relations, partner commitment and capacity.

Impact and sustainability: to what degree has the VANGOCA project produced positive or negative changes directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? Are the benefits of the VANGOCA project sustainable?

- The Review Team finds that given the delays to project implementation and the history of poor communication and relationships with partners, the risk to sustainability at this point in time is significant. In addition, delays may have also had unintended negative impacts on relationships with communities in terms of building trust in the project.
- However, since the MTR there has been positive progress across the project.
- The project is currently due for completion in March 2010. However, it will be difficult for the project to achieve its objectives and to build towards sustainable outcomes by this date. Therefore, the Review recommends that a minimum of 12 months no-cost extension be considered by CARE and AusAID, to increase the likelihood for sustainable outcomes.
- In addition, for the household infrastructure benefits to be maintained and sustainable, households will need to be trained further.

Lessons Learned

- An overly ambitious design and management structure increase the risk of implementation difficulties and delays.
- Time needed initially for developing partner understanding, commitment and ownership of project approaches and building partner capacity, should not be underestimated as critical to implementation and sustainability.
- Stability in project staff makes a significant contribution to partner relations, project ownership and the potential for sustainable outcomes.
- Learning about project activities, processes and outcomes, should be included in community participatory activities, in a more structured way, to increase community ownership, as well as the quality and sustainability of the project outputs.

Recommendations

- MTR findings have begun to be addressed. However, the Review Team notes that without an extension to the project completion date, currently March 2010, it will be difficult for the project to achieve its objectives and to build towards sustainable outcomes. Therefore, the Review recommends that a minimum of 12 months no-cost extension be considered by CARE and AusAID, recognising that additional time would be further beneficial.
- In moving forward (and in responding to MTR recommendations), the Review notes that it will be important to balance expectations, and targets, with the need to secure foundations for a sustainable transition to local ownership, which will require maintenance and support, and can be sustained within the parameters of RWSS as it is rolled out across the provinces. It will be important to begin thinking about these implications for the exit strategy.
- While the WU and CORD/ PCERWASS have lead responsibility for each of their components, it is strongly recommended that mechanisms be developed to bring the implementation and reporting of these 2 components together to reinforce the structural and non-structural aspects, health and WSS messages and choices.
- The Review recommends that the M&E implications of the restructuring are also addressed as part of the Annual Plan and that practical strategies be put into place to accommodate the changes.

PLAN

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Title: Quang Ngai Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Improvement Project (SHWIP)

Start-End Date: May 2006–November 2010

Budget: A\$1,723,000 (Implementation)

Goal: to contribute to improved health and greater gender equity

Purpose: to enable vulnerable men, women and children to sustain year-round improvements in clean water, sanitation and hygiene conditions and ease related burdens on women and other family members".

Change Areas:

In order to meet the goal and objectives, the project document proposed following change areas:

- 1) Partner Capacity;
- 2) Community Choices in Sanitation, Hygiene and Water; and
- 3) Project Management.

Key partners:

- Provincial Department of Health (PDOH) and their sub-agencies Centre for Health Education and Communication (CHEC) and Centre for Preventive Medicine (CPM);
- Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (PDARD) and their sub-agency Centre for Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation (CERWASS);
- Provincial Women's Union (PWU)

PROJECT SUMMARY

SHWIP activities contribute to ameliorating health problems and gender inequities through improving water supply and sanitation conditions, hygiene practices and linked social/ cultural values and attitudes. The project motivates communities and households to make clean water and improved sanitation a priority goal, increases water supply and sanitation coverage and reduces poverty for poor children and their families.

There are 3 strategic areas: gender; communication and participation.

REVIEW FINDINGS

- The project was designed and has been implemented and contributed to the Vietnam Australia Development Cooperation Strategy 2003 – 2007, specifically Intermediate Objective 2.3.1: '*improve health by increasing access to clean water and sanitation*'. The content of the project is also aligned with the GoV National Program for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Plan, within the overall framework of the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy 2005-2010. In addition, several key and relevant GoV policies, such as the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy, the Grassroots Democracy Decree are supported by the project's objectives and implementation.
- In addition, at the national level, Plan (through its Headquarters office) is a part of WSS working groups and climate change discussions.
- While SHWIP has made some substantive achievements in terms of training and building partner capacity some concerns still remain about: the number of people accessing grants to part fund household Water Supply and Environment Sanitation (WES) improvements; the options menu for choices for water and sanitation information; engagement of project partners; and delays in implementation.
- Given some of the issues identified by the MTR in project implementation, and confirmed by the Review, the Review notes that it may be reasonable to consider whether the project may have been ambitious in its design, approach, scope and management structure, and therefore set itself some unrealistic expectations, in its original PDD and log frame. While Plan has identified that they are currently on track to reach targets by scheduled end date, equally Plan has also responded to implementation issues and revised and updated quantitative log frame indicators, as evidenced in Annual Plan documents.

Effectiveness: was an effective approach developed and implemented to support the objectives of the VANGOCA project? How effectively was the VANGOCA project managed and how did this impact on the achievement of outcomes?

Overall, the Review Team finds that based on consultations with community, commune and village level stakeholders, there is a positive endorsement of the project approach and support to improve access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene conditions. However, this response is not balanced by the partners' perspectives, particularly at the Provincial level. This has resulted in difficulties in moving towards full partner commitment and implementation.

Approach

SHWIP seeks to demonstrate a holistic, sustainable and high-impact approach to Rural Water Supply and Sanitation programming with water safety, sanitation, hygiene and health at its centre. The project design is an integrated approach directed at fostering behaviour change, with strategies to address issues of gender, children's and community participation that fundamentally impact decisions relating to water, sanitation and hygiene. The project is targeted at the poor and vulnerable through participatory processes (such as village mapping and wealth ranking).

Implementation and Achievements

The project has made progress across the 3 change areas.

- **Change Area 1: Partner Capacity.** Conducted training to enhance partner's capacity on the following:
 - Gender; Most Significant Change; loan managing for WU; Participatory Hygiene And Sanitation Transformation (PHAST); Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools such as village mapping and wealth ranking;
 - Training of Trainers (115 commune level participants) and household training (4417 households and masons and suppliers) on models of water supply and environment sanitation (WES) facilities.
- **Change Area 2: Community Choices** from technical dynamic options menu with low cost latrines and bathrooms using locally cheap, available materials (bamboo, thatch, leaves, etc. for superstructures).
 - 7,818 WES improvements (7,229 latrines & hygiene supporting facilities and 589 Water supply) completed by 6,190 households with 6,965 grants;
 - Preschools water and sanitation facilities in 9 communes

Change Area 3: Project Management:

- Gender, Communication, and Participation (GCP). GC strategies developed and implemented
- Commune GCP WU groups been established
- Community monitoring system developed through Sanitation & Water situation maps
- wealth ranking

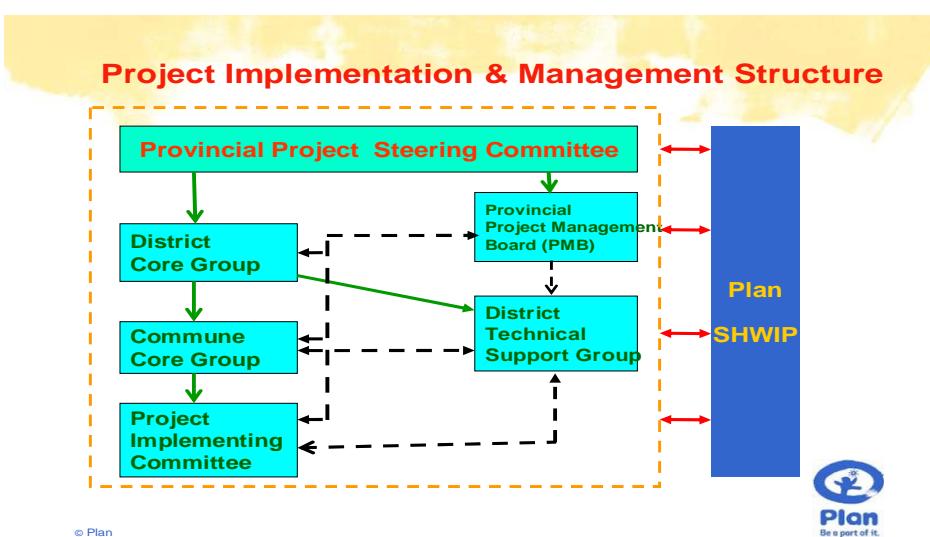
In summary:

- The Review notes that the project adopts a strong community based, pro-poor and participatory approach, targeting vulnerable groups, including elderly and ethnic minority groups. However, some poor households are reluctant to take out SHWIP loans as then they may be ineligible for government loans. In community discussions people indicated they may be more willing to take out a loan for agricultural production than WES. But the Review asks how does SHWIP understand what leverage it has developed to motivate the community to self-fund? The Review notes that it would be useful for further demand for WES to be created and loan access needs and priorities to be further clarified.
- While the project has created demand for Social Policy Bank loans, it may also have created a potential source of conflict as the level of the SHWIP grant is currently below the level of support currently provided by GoV programs. In discussions with the Review Team, various stakeholders expressed their concerns about the tension this creates for GoV and across households.
- The project has supported various project implementation mechanisms from district to household levels, including district Technical Service Groups (TSG). However, the MTR notes that in some communes there had been issues around allowances paid to the TSG and not to other community participants. During Review Team discussions in the community a number of stakeholders mentioned the need for an allowance for commune and village collaborators, in order to cover basic costs such as petrol and travel.
- Another key element has been the strength of capacity building of local authorities at district and commune levels. The majority of this training has been focused on project methodologies and targets. This raises the issue for the Review Team as to how this capacity building is applied to the

regular work of trainees and how it might be integrated into the task outlined in Component 1 "to build partner agency staff capabilities and foster necessary institutional reform for agencies mandated under NRWSS Strategy 2020 to effectively plan and manage projects outputs and apply methodologies in line with their own programs." The Review Team suggests that perhaps additional training focused on strategic planning, data analysis, M&E, project implementation and project management is also necessary, with regular follow up to reinforce the experiences and to move towards institutional reform.

- The Review Team notes that gender strategies are being put into practice with a considerable number of women reported to have participated in household training on technical models of WES, and the Review Teams community consultations indicated that many women are now jointly with their husbands deciding on an selecting the model.
- The project has been successful at leveraging project grants with the District Peoples Committee (DPC) and commune authorities, who have made contribution in cash and labour to match project grant for constructing preschool water supply and latrines.
- The project notes that it is working through government partners and activities aligned with GoV's National Target Program (NTP). For example, the project has developed pro-poor targeting processes, including wealth ranking and village mapping. These processes were conducted in a participatory and inclusive way involving women, men, girls and boys. The tools developed and used by the SHWIP project are being reviewed by a consultant team preparing a pro-poor targeting guideline for The Vietnam National Target Program for Rural Clean Water Supply and Sanitation (NTP II).
- The Review Team notes that while there is progress towards achieving SHWIP related activities, there appears to be a gap between these achievements and their integration into GoV and RWSS systems so that achievements, tools, approaches, training can be used for both SHWIP and GoV and RWSS purposes.

Management



- The SHWIP management structure reflects an attempt to integrate management, implementation and technical support functions into a single structure. In May 2008 the restructured PMB was approved by the Provincial People's Committee (PPC), more than 12 months after initial discussions. It has been expanded to include all provincial project partners (including 3 new members - WU, DoH and Department of Foreign Affairs). However, the project informed the Review Team that expansion of the PMB has not resulted in increased substantive engagement from CERWASS or ownership from other members (CHEC). Therefore, the PMB does not function effectively in sharing information, providing critical comment, planning and taking part in engaged decision making and project implementation.
- Another issue which also emerged during Review consultations, was the lack of clarity about the roles, responsibilities and procedures for the CCG and PIC and particular their roles with respect to the TSG. Equally it is not clear what level of feedback there is between the DCG and PMB. This is further complicated by tensions related to the TSG (as discussed above).

- Overall the Review concludes that there is a lack of cohesion and a lack of effective consultation across the layers of the management structure.

Coordination and Partnership

The Review Team has identified that management, coordination and partner relations are key on-going concerns for SHWIP. This comment supports the findings of the MTR. In the Review Team's meetings with the Provincial People Committee (PPC) strong comments were made about the dissatisfaction with project progress and institutional arrangements, including the inconsistency between the SHWIP grant and the GoV policy. There were serious concerns expressed about SHWIP's lack of engagement with project partners to invest in GoV systems, so that the responsibility for SHWIP implementation could be gradually transferred to the PMB as the representative of DARD, the key partner. These are significant issues which need to be addressed if there is to be viable post-project sustainability.

M&E

The project has prioritised innovation and learning about sanitation and hygiene. A number of different tools have been used to capture lessons learned.

- Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is used by Plan staff and partners to understand changes as a result of the project at the household level.
- Small studies have also been conducted in specific areas within the project. With the active participation of the Women's Union, a survey on gender equity and behaviour change was conducted in Year 1 and will be repeated in Year 4.
- Annual analysis is conducted on institutional capacity and engagement, as well as health data statistics.
- Village maps have also been utilised, but the Review Team noted on their community visit that these need to be updated.

Also, Plan recently held an M&E workshop with staff and partners to provide updates on new tools. However, the Review Team is concerned that there may not be a thorough understanding of M&E (including MSC) by all staff and partners; and engagement by community members in monitoring particularly infrastructure and construction activities. The Review Team suggests that this is an area of capacity development and sharing of lessons which could benefit from regular follow up with partners and staff, and may assist in contributing to further institutionalisation of the project with partners.

Integration of Cross-cutting Issues

- Gender is promoted as 1 of the 3 key strategies for project implementation. For example, considerable numbers of women have participated in household training on technical models of WES, and implemented this with joint household decision making.
- The project emphasizes a pro-poor approach (targeting vulnerable groups, including elderly and ethnic minority groups, and has supported this with wealth ranking and village mapping methodology).

Responses to the MTR

- The SHWIP team has begun to address the recommendations of the MTR completed in December 2008. A number of the major recommendations relate to issues of partnership, institutionalisation and working within GoV systems. SHWIP continues to work on these areas, having restructured the PMB in May 2008. Equally there continue to be difficulties with partner engagement, ownership, and cooperation as discussed above. The Review Team anticipates that SHWIP will be working to integrate further suggestions from the MTR into the next Annual Plan.
- However, the Review Team recommends that Plan give serious consideration to prioritising issues around partner relations, and look at seeking technical assistance in the area of institutional/ organisational strengthening and/or change, to assist with this process. The project is currently scheduled to end in November 2010. Therefore, there is ample time to address these concerns in a systemic and planned way, and in fact to begin to put in place transitional steps for the exit strategy and GoV's management of the project after SHWIP.
- The Review Team recommends that Plan prioritise this aspect in the next Annual Plan.

Challenges/ Issues

- **Design:** The Project design is based on thorough research and combines innovative approaches informed by up-to-date knowledge and experience, with an understanding of the local context. The Project aims to break away from traditional approaches to RWSS programming which tends to focus on water supply, by creating significant change particularly in relation to sanitation and hygiene beliefs and practices. It also aims to go beyond the traditional "IEC" approach to information provision and

aims to use a positive, promotional "social marketing" approach. In keeping with current national policy on RWSS, the Project activities will emphasise both the stimulation of demand and the fostering of supply to create a dynamic RWSS sector in project locations, contributing to long-term improvements in community health and well-being. However, it is perhaps this attempt to "break away from traditional approaches" without adequate buy in from partners, that is contributing to on-going tension.

- **Project Approval and Implementation Date:** It took over 14 months from the completion of the design (March 2005) for project approval to be granted and implementation to commence on 8 May 2006. The delay had an impact on the start up of the project in terms of staff retention and maintenance of partner commitment.
- **Ownership:** There is a lack of overall ownership of the project and SHWIP strategies by partners. This may be related to numerous factors such as an innovative approach requiring more time for both community and government partners to learn about the project; delays in approval; staff turnover; difficulty of GoV recognising the relevance of training for GoV systems; applicability of current training to current GoV tasks; and a dysfunctional management structure. However, given that 18 months remains for implementation, SHWIP still has opportunity to address this issue and improve communication across all levels from the community to the province.
- **Poorest of the poor:** There is a risk in not being able to reach the poorest of the poor, given the fixed grants mechanism and guidelines of the Social Policy Bank.
- **Behaviour Change:** Delays in implementation of IEC/ Behaviors Change Communication may also have had an impact on choice of options.
- **Staff recruitment and retention:** There have been significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, which has influenced the timing of project implementation. The SHWIP team at present appears to be stable and committed to SHWIP.
- **Technical options:** There is further consideration needed of the appropriateness of various technical options for different local situations and environmental conditions. During the Review Team's community visit the majority of households selected just 2 of the options offered on the WES menu.

Efficiency: were resources well managed using appropriate systems and processes, and did the VANGOCA project provide value for money?

- It was beyond the scope of the Review to undertake a full analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the project. However, the Review Team concludes, based on consultations with partners and stakeholders, that while overall the project has useful systems and processes, there are a number of areas where efficiency could be increased.
- For example, GoV partners expressed a view that the inconsistencies between SHWIP grants and GoV policy is actually inefficient, and puts poor households in a difficult situation.
- The MTR also notes that, some of SHWIP's administrative processes for implementation and contracting are hierarchical with the result that there is little linkage between different levels.
- Also, the Review Team asks the question about how efficient it is to have a "menu" of options if the majority of households select only 2 of the options?

Impact and sustainability: to what degree has the VANGOCA project produced positive or negative changes directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? Are the benefits of the VANGOCA project sustainable?

- The Review Team concludes that while SHWIP has made progress towards achieving WES improvements, building a community based and participatory approach, and undertaking broad based training, there remains a level of concern about the sustainability of benefits after the project end date.
- This concern also applies to the maintenance aspects of the WES investments.
- The Review concludes that ownership of the project and its activities among key partners is a significant challenge and has serious implications for sustainability. SHWIP is yet to forge sustainable institutional links at the district and provincial levels, and with the Quang Ngai NTP2 Steering Committee.
- Capacity building involving partners would be more sustainable if it was linked to on-going current GoV and RWSS activities, and could build towards transfer of the project to GoV, by developing training which might also be focused on strategic planning, data analysis, M&E, project implementation and project management and which could be regularly followed up. This would also encourage partner ownership particularly in relation to data collection, M&E and information sharing.

Lessons Learned

- It is crucial to have clear understanding and ownership from partners at the outset from the design stage through implementation and into post project exit planning. This promotes the success of the project and later the opportunity to replicate and sustain benefits and impacts, including integration into government systems.
- Linkages with local services, resources and expertise ensure the sustainability of project activities.
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration across different agencies (DARD, WU, DOH) and GoV levels is essential to ensure an enabling environment for implementing community based approaches, scaling up project initiatives and to help to ensure sustainability.

Recommendations

In the time remaining before the project end date:

- The Review Team recommends that SHWIP give serious consideration to prioritising issues around ownership and partner relations, and investigate getting technical assistance in the area of institutional/ organisational strengthening and/or change, to assist SHWIP to work through these aspects with partners. Transitional steps for the exit strategy and GoV's management after the project ends should be put into place in a planned manner. The Review Team recommends that Plan prioritise this aspect in the next Annual Plan.
- The Review Team suggests that additional training, involving GoV also be focused on strategic planning and project management in order to prepare for project transition and exit strategies.
- The Behaviour Change Communication strategy should be accelerated to stimulate demand for WES. SHWIP should undertake a study to understand what motivates households to make the choices that they do, and to consider modifying funding mechanisms to better enable the poorest of poor to get access to WES.
- Communities and core groups should receive training to enable them to be involved in monitoring and supervising construction activities to ensure quality, maintenance, transparency and sustainability. This would strengthen community ownership.