

VUFO-NGO RESOURCE CENTRE

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INTRODUCTION BY THE NGO RC MANAGING Co-DIRECTOR

Welcome to the 2008 edition of the VUFO-NGO Resource Centre (NGO RC) *International Partnerships For Development Report* - a summary of activities carried out by working groups under the NGO RC during 2008.

This year has been a busy year for the NGO RC as we took on new initiatives while continuing to carry out our regular activities, including organising the INGO Forum meetings, facilitating the NGO RC Working Groups, maintaining our website, email lists and library, sending out the fortnightly e-newsletter to members, and producing the annual INGO Directory.

In addition to this, the NGO RC continued to play an important role in the overall relationship between INGOs and the Vietnamese and donor communities by organising or supporting a range of meetings and consultation processes for government agencies, donors and local organisations. This has included facilitating INGO input for the Consultative Group (CG) Meetings, in coordination with Vietnamese NGO participants, taking up the chairmanship of the People's Participation Working Group, participating in and linking the NGO Aid Monitoring Group (AMG) with the Partnership Group for Aid Effectiveness (PGAE), supporting the preparation of the NGO Complimentary Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and participating in the Vietnam Global Campaign for Education alliance etc.

Furthermore, four new working groups were established under the NGO RC in late 2007 and the first half year of 2008 – the Community-based Tourism Network (CBTN), the Eyecare Working Group (EWG), the NGO Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) and the Information & Communications Technology for Development Working Group (ICT4DEV WG). In 2008, the NGO RC also facilitated the Ho Chi Min City INGO Discussion Group in initiating thematic working groups in based in Ho Chi Minh City, presently three thematic groups have been established. You'll find more information about these new groups in this report.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to thank all our members, organisations and individuals for your continued participation and support of the NGO RC in 2008. The NGO RC looks forward to further developing and improving the NGO RC's work to better meet the needs of our members and reflect the ever-changing nature of development in Vietnam.

On behalf of the NGO RC team.

Sincerely,

Trine Glue Doan
Managing Co-Director
VUFO-NGO Resource Centre

INTERNATIONAL NGO PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2008

There are 20 sector-specific Working Groups (WGs) operating under the NGO RC, including the newly established thematic groups under the Ho Chi Minh City INGO Discussion Group, each focusing on a specific area of development work in Vietnam. While not all groups are always active, or maintain only an online presence, these partnership groups provide a valuable resource for the sharing of information, ideas, resources and experiences within the development community in Vietnam.

The scope of the working groups has grown significantly in recent years. In late 2007 and 2008, the Community-based Tourism Network, Eye Care WG, NGO Climate Change WG, Information & Communications Technology for Development WG, and thematic groups based in HCM City were initiated, the majority of which have already held several meetings and have finished, or are in the process of finalising their terms of reference.

There is a great variety in how often the different WGs organise meetings, as well as the number of participants attending each event. In addition, some WGs have established thematic subgroups focussing on specific areas.

Working groups frequently host information meetings, presentations, discussions, workshops and training sessions about current issues and on-going projects in Vietnam, and play a role in sharing resources and supporting consultations on new policies, laws and plans. Working group participants are implementing programmes across the country, and their practical experiences constitute a valuable resource for other organisations and decision-makers to draw upon.

In the interests of sharing the activities and contributions of these working groups with a wider audience, this report has been prepared to summarise WG activities in 2008. The first edition was released in 2005.

The NGO RC acknowledges the contributions of all the coordinators and other contributors from the WGs, together with the NGO RC team, in the preparation of this report. The NGO RC would also like to express its gratitude to Oxfam Great Britain and Bread for the World for sponsoring the printing of this publication.

THE VUFO-NGO RESOURCE CENTRE

The VUFO-NGO Resource Centre (NGO RC) was established in 1993 through a partnership between international non-government organisations (INGOs) working in Vietnam, and the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations (VUFO).

The objectives of the NGO RC are to:

- *promote, facilitate and contribute to the sharing of information, resources and experiences within and between INGOs, their partners and local organisations, in order to improve the quality and impact of their work in Vietnam; and*
- *strengthen the relationship and enhance the dialogue between INGOs and other development 'actors' in Vietnam, including government agencies, donors and local organisations.*

The NGO RC had more than 160 INGO members as of May 2008, however the users of the centre include national NGOs and institutions, international and national researchers, donors etc.

History & Background

Originally, the NGO RC grew out of a loose network of foreign NGOs working in Vietnam whose representatives started to meet on a regular basis (every last Friday in the month) in the early 1990s to discuss the practical details of establishing and managing programmes and projects in Vietnam. Since that time, INGOs have focused increasingly on sharing information on their programmes and working together to improve the quality of their work.

The NGO RC provides a variety of services to INGOs, their partner organisations, donors, government agencies, local organisations and others concerned with hunger eradication, poverty reduction and sustainable development in Vietnam.

In 1998, a strengthened partnership was developed between the NGO RC and VUFO. This involved an official name change (previously we were called the NGO Resource Centre), the establishment of a co-directorship and an expanded Steering Committee, all of which has enabled the centre to continue to exist and provide services to support the work of NGOs in Vietnam.

We have an office located in Hanoi, Vietnam staffed by one Managing Co-director, one Administrator/Librarian, one Working Group Coordinator, one Communications Advisor and one ICT Advisor. In addition, another co-director works within the People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM) under the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations (VUFO). We also employ additional staff and volunteers on a needs basis.

Activities & Services

- **INGO Forum**

The NGO RC organises and hosts the INGO Forum Meetings, which provide a space for elections to take place for INGO representatives at various development fora. The forum also is used for visiting experts to make presentations to the INGO community in Vietnam, and for collaborative NGO statements to be discussed and formally endorsed by NGO RC members.

- **INGO Working Groups**

The NGO RC encourages and facilitates its INGO members to establish a range of Working Groups focusing on different sectoral and/or cross-sectoral issues. Apart from INGOs, national NGOs and other interested parties also participate in the working groups. The NGO

RC presently has 16 active working groups, however, not all issue the annual reports included in this publication.

- **Library & Online Resources**

The NGO RC maintains a physical and online library containing a wide range of information from NGOs and others concerned with development and Vietnam, including studies, reports, sectoral handbooks and other resources.

- **Annual INGO Directory**

The NGO RC produces an annual directory of INGOs providing support to Vietnam in English and Vietnamese. A summary of the Directory is also available online, which will be expanded in the future.

- **NGO RC website: www.ngocentre.org.vn**

The NGO RC website provides updated information and resources in English and Vietnamese to support the work of INGOs, VUFO, national NGOs and institutions and others focused on hunger eradication, poverty reduction and sustainable development in Vietnam.

- **Fortnightly email Newsletter**

The NGO RC produces an informal newsletter that is sent out via email to member organisations and friends of the NGO RC.

- **Dialogue & Advocacy**

The NGO RC works to increase awareness and clarify the roles of INGOs in the changing development context of Vietnam, and to improve coordination, dialogue, and relationships between INGOs and government institutions, local NGOs, donors, and other development actors. The centre functions as an entry point for interaction between different development actors and the INGO community on development programmes, strategies and policies, and in addition the NGO RC conducts periodical consultation and studies into emerging development issues in Vietnam. The different activities of the NGO RC relating to coordination, dialogue, and advocacy include:

- organisation and facilitation of thematic Working Groups under the umbrella of the NGO RC;
- participation in drafting of government strategies and policies, e.g., in drafting of the Socio Economic Development Plan 2006 – 2010;
- facilitation and support for consultation on donor strategies and reports, e.g., facilitation for the NGO contributions to the Vietnam Development Report 2008;
- representation and participation in the mid-year and end-of-year Consultative Group Meetings and preparation of a written collaborative NGO statement for that meeting;
- support for preparation of NGO reports, such as the NGO Complementary Report on the Convention of the Rights of the Child;
- participation in different partnership groups and local NGO networks, such as the the People's Participation Working Group etc.; and
- participation in various collaborative campaigns such as GCAP (Global Campaign Against Poverty), GCE (Global Campaign for Education) etc.

Organisational Structure

- **The INGO Forum**

The INGO Forum is the highest decision-making authority and selects the five INGO

representatives for the Steering Committee, as well as INGO representatives to the Consultative Group Meetings (annual and mid-year), partnership groups etc. Held according to need, the forum is open to all representatives of INGOs affiliated with the NGO RC, and offers INGOs working in Vietnam the opportunity to share, experience and better co-ordinate common activities. The centre also welcomes visitors wishing to attend and/or make presentations. In such cases, arrangements are made in advance with the NGO RC. For more information, contact the Managing Co-Director of the NGO Resource Centre on director@ngocentre.org.vn.

- **The Steering Committee**

The NGO RC Steering Committee has the responsibility to govern, oversee, and decide on the strategic direction of the centre, as well as to provide guidance, support and oversee the activities of the Managing Co-director. The Steering Committee meets once every quarter and consists of 11 members, including five INGO representatives and six Vietnamese agencies.

- **Funding**

The activities of the NGO RC are primarily funded by membership fees, which cover approximately 70-80 per cent of the centre's operational budget. The NGO RC has to carry out fund-raising for the remaining amount on an annual basis.

ADMINISTRATORS WORKING GROUP (AWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/100>

The AWG was formed to bring together administrators, accountants and human resources officers to exchange ideas and "lessons learned" about how to improve development policies and practices for the benefit of INGOs and their staff in Vietnam. It includes staff in charge of the full range of administrative, financial and personnel tasks for project or representative offices.

The overall goal of the AWG is to enhance members' capacities by improving the impact of developed models in office and administration and by strengthening cooperation between members, related government agencies and other work-related groups.

Key objectives

- **Sharing and disseminating information:** quarterly meetings and an email forum for discussions regarding the development of ad-hoc issues related to office management. AWG disseminates information as widely as possible regarding laws, policies, administrative issues and labor force procedures relating to the INGO operations in Vietnam.
- **Improving work-related practices:** participants exchange experiences and lessons learned/case studies from their work-related practices in order to improve the impact (quality and quantity) of their development performance.
- **Policy dialogue:** Sharing cases studies and information related to the management of projects or representative offices that leads to improved development practices and policies among members. This creates a venue for dialogue with relevant government institutions and other organisations.

The AWG is coordinated by a voluntary Core Group comprising five representatives from the INGO community. The Core Group is chosen annually and takes a lead role as the secretariat/coordinator of the AWG.

Key activities during 2008

Main themes during 2008

- Conducted quarterly meetings, which were hosted voluntarily by participating INGOs. The host acts as the secretariat/coordinator for the registered meeting.
- Re-vote held for Core Group members. Core Group members are responsible for the working group's operations and contribute ideas and activities for the group.
- Opened a dialogue with PACCOT to share and discuss the regulations and support from PACCOT, as well as how to deal with ad-hoc situations relating to the legal status of INGO operations in Vietnam.
- Continued to share information and work on tax issues for INGOs.

Thematic meetings organised by the AWG in 2008

As planned, the AWG organised thematic meetings on a quarterly basis during 2008.

- **Working Group Meeting – 20 December 2007**
The main topic of this meeting was to: share experiences on the Personal Income Tax Department audits; discuss the 2007 Salary Survey update and social insurance policy from Dipserco; and review license/permission granting processes for projects.
- **Working Group Meeting – 20 April 2008**

The following topics were discussed at the meeting: rental office space including prices and service suppliers; archiving issues and service providers; discussion on the terms of reference of the AWG which was led by Hong Ha from ActionAid. Participants at the meeting provided comments and input for the TOR, which was then redrafted. Procedures for closing offices were also discussed by different organisations.

- **Working Group Meeting – 20 July 2008**

This meeting was canceled due to a lack of relevant topics.

Other activities

Daily sharing of information on administration topics through the AWG mailing list.

Future directions for 2009

In the coming year, AWG will continue to facilitate the exchange of information between organisations working on issues related to office administration and financial management. Key themes will be similar to 2008 and group members will provide inputs for the benefit and salary surveys, which will be conducted by the NGO RC in early 2009.

AGENT ORANGE WORKING GROUP (AOWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/101>

Background

The spraying of millions of gallons of herbicides over South Vietnam from 1961-71 led to severe consequences on the environment and human health. Thirty years after the end of the war, the after-effects of herbicides (referred to collectively by the name of the most commonly-sprayed chemical, Agent Orange) remain a key unresolved legacy of war.

The AOWG was initiated by INGO members of the NGO RC in July 2004. Participation is open to (I)NGOs, Vietnamese agencies, international organisations and other interested local and foreign personnel.

The overall goal of the AOWG is to improve the life of Agent Orange victims in Vietnam by improving the development assistance provided by members, boosting financial support from different NGOs operating projects aimed at resolving the legacy of Agent Orange, and providing humanitarian assistance to war victims.

Key objectives

- Share information and views on INGO projects and various Vietnamese and international initiatives relating to Agent Orange.
- Enhance participants' understanding of the range and complexity of issues relating to Agent Orange.
- Enhance communication and create space for relevant groups inside and outside Vietnam to meet and discuss current events and the changing environment around Agent Orange.

The AOWG is currently coordinated by Vietnam Veterans of America (VVAFA).

Update on key activities during 2008

Main themes during 2008

- Continued to share information on the lawsuit that was filed by the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA) against manufacturers of Agent Orange.
- Continued to disseminate information on development activities related to victims of Agent Orange and discuss solutions to the problems caused by chemical contamination in Vietnam, as well as support provided by organisations to AO victim.

Thematic meetings organised by the AOWG in 2008

No meetings were organised by the AOWG in 2008, however the AOWG email list continued to be an active forum for exchanging news, views and research ideas relating to AO activities in Vietnam and around the world. The following key AO and dioxin activities held during 2008 were not organised by the AOWG, however a number of active AOWG members took part in the events.

- **Third Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)**

Third annual Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) meeting between the governments of the US and Vietnam took place in Hanoi in September 8-11, 2008. Dr Le Ke Son, Director of Committee 33 and Dr Kevin Teichman, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Science at EPA co-chaired the JAC, which is conceived as a technical/scientific consultative body between the two governments. Danang has been identified by the Government of Vietnam (GoV) as the first priority for environmental remediation, followed by Phu Cat and Bien Hoa. The GoV wants to "quickly remediate Danang to address community concerns and support

planned airport expansion, including a new runway over currently contaminated areas". This JAC meeting was more politically significant than the previous two meetings as it opened with speeches by high-level officials from both countries: Pham Khoi Nguyen, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment and Michael Michalak, US Ambassador to Vietnam. The JAC minutes, signed by both sides, are now the vehicle through which the official dialogue on AO moves forward. JAC members agreed to set up two task forces, one on the environment and the other on health, to develop more detailed plans for work to resolve the AO/dioxin issue.

- **US Ambassador Donor Roundtable Meeting on Agent Orange/Dioxin - September 12, 2008**

Roger Carlson, then Acting Director of USAID-Vietnam, chaired the meeting, flanked by Dr. Le Ke Son and Dr. Kevin Teichman. Other participants were from bilateral donors to Vietnam (Canada, Czech Republic, Sweden, Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Japan¹), from multilaterals (UNICEF and UNDP) and from US private foundations (Atlantic Philanthropies and Ford Foundation). This meeting was significant as it was the first time the US had convened a donor meeting to mobilise funds for AO/dioxin health and environmental efforts. It also signalled to other donors that the US Government welcomes their engagement with the AO/dioxin issue.

Future directions for 2009

AOWG will continue to cultivate and disseminate information exchanges between organisations working on issues related to victims of AO. The AOWG's coordination role will be rotated among group members. Information sharing, ideas and comments from different NGOs will continue to form the key part of the group's activities. The group will strive to increase involvement from different NGOs, including Disability Working Group members.

Recommendations for 2009

Donors should work with Committee 33 and the Danang People's Committee to "complete Danang", that is, to demonstrate, to the fullest extent possible, solutions to both the ongoing needs of people with disabilities in Danang and to clean up dioxin-contaminated hotspots at Danang Airport.

¹ Of these donors, Canada funded the first Hatfield/10-80 Committee dioxin assessments in A Luoi district, Thua Thien Hue province in the 1990s. The Czech Republic supports a 678,000-euro project in adjacent Phong My district to assess dioxin levels and introduce measures to reduce exposure. Ireland has also shown strong interest in dioxin and people with disabilities in Danang, taking their Deputy Prime Minister and now Prime Minister to the airport site in spring 2007.

CHILD RIGHTS WORKING GROUP (CRWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/141>

Background

Vietnam was the first country in Asia to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Vietnamese Government has also shown great concern by establishing the CPCC/CPFC and promulgating the Law on Protection, Care and Education of Children. During the last 15 years, support for the implementation of the CRC has developed rapidly and many achievements have been made in this area.

International assistance has made significant contributions in the implementation on the CRC in Vietnam. As part of this process, the CRWG was established in June 2006 to improve communication and coordination between all actors involved, and support Vietnamese society in fulfilling its commitment to upholding the rights of the child.

The CRWG brings together key stakeholders such as (I)NGOs, mass organisations, and other Vietnamese community groups to share information on child rights, including best practices, ongoing programmes and research and studies, in order to mobilise concerted efforts in working towards the fulfillment of child rights in Vietnam. Other relevant agencies and organisations, such as UN bodies and specialised agencies (UNICEF, ILO, UNODC, etc.), government ministries and organisations, research institutes and experts also participate in the group.

The CRWG is coordinated by an INGO, which chairs CRWG activities and is elected annually by all working group participants. Plan International has continued to be the focal point of the Working Group and has performed the role of chair for 2008. However, in 2008, a Task Force on the Complementary Report on the Rights of the Child was formed, which was led by Save The Children Sweden.

In 2008, a HCM City-based CRWG began the process of establishing itself to promote coordination between the child rights-based organisation in the south of Vietnam. Led by Paul Finis of the Sai Gon Charity Organisation, the HCMC CRWG held its first meeting in July 2008 to discuss its terms of reference and workplan for 2008/09.

The overall goal of the CRWG is to increase communication and coordination and to share lessons learned between all actors working to support the Vietnamese Government to effectively manage and respond to issues related to children's rights.

Key objectives

Sharing and disseminating information: CRWG provides a forum for discussions regarding development issues related to children in Vietnam. CRWG disseminates information as widely as possible regarding laws, policies, research, and the documentation of projects and programmes relating to children.

Improving the development practices of member organisations: participants share experiences and lessons learned from their development activities, in order to improve the impact (quality and quantity) of their development interventions.

Accessing resources: participants advise each other, when possible, on accessing resources, including human, financial and other resources (eg., identification of suitable trainers or consultants; passing on information regarding potential sources of funding; applications for training courses, workshops and conferences etc.).

Policy dialogues: are held to share experiences and information related to children to improve development practices and policies among members and their partner organisations, which creates an opportunity for dialogues with relevant government and donor institutions and organisations.

Update on key activities during 2008

Main themes during 2008

- Sharing information related to child rights issues through the CRWG email list.
- Supporting the preparation of the Complementary NGO Report on the Convention on the Rights on the Child (CRC), and promoting participation by group members (both INGO and local NGOs) and children in the process.
- Setting up the HCMC-based CRWG.

Thematic meetings organised by CRC subgroup in 2008

Save the Children Sweden took the lead in facilitating the preparation of the Complementary CRC Report. The aim of the report was to: provide an NGO perspective on the situation of children's rights in Vietnam; make recommendations on the third and fourth Periodic State Report on the Implementation of the CRC in order to support and improve government's work on children's rights in Vietnam; and to present NGO experiences on the implementation of the CRC in Vietnam.

The NGO RC supported the process and many INGO and Vietnamese NGO members of the CRWG took part in the CRC sub-group, preparing the report through a range of meetings in 2007. This process was delayed until the end of 2008 because the third and fourth periodic report by the Government of Vietnam on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 2002-2007 has been delayed and postponed until the end of the year. A series of task force workshops relating to the CRC Complimentary Report were held, during which the group discussed procedures, workplans and budgeting, and finalised NGO reports on thematic key areas.

- **Meeting on March 6, 2008**

The main purpose of meeting was to further discuss the possibility of producing an alternative report for the CRC. A team was set up to work on including the child consultations conducted by NGOs in January and February in the report and a timeline for producing the report was agreed upon. Participants also discussed developing a child-friendly report, which Plan offered to take lead in preparing. A workshop for local NGOs on the Vietnamese version of the report was also scheduled for April 2008, to be run by Ms. Quy from local NGO GENCOMNET and the NGO RC. It was agreed that this meeting should receive priority attention as efforts to include local NGOs need to be strengthened.

- **Consultation meeting with local NGOs on May 22, 2008**

The purpose of meeting was to provide Vietnamese NGOs (VNGOs) with an update on the drafting of the Complimentary Report and the status of the government report, and receive and discuss feedback on the content of the third draft report. All participants reviewed the report chapter-by-chapter during the meeting and then provided comments regarding the content, style and language of the report.

- **Meeting on September 18, 2008**

At this meeting, all the comments/observation from local NGOs and INGOs were considered by participants and there was an overall discussion on the Child Friendly Report. Plan informed participants that a first draft of the report was now available and would be circulated to the CRWG for comment. Further discussion were held on a sign off procedure for the report and all participants agreed that it must be signed-off by the directors of

participating organisations as signing-off implies endorsement of the entire report. The CRWG agreed that sign-off could be postponed until the Complementary Report was finalised (after submission of State Report). The CRWG intends to mention every participating organisation in the preamble of the report and hopes for an endorsement from all organisations.

- **Meeting on October 30, 2008**

The semi-final draft report was sent to participants for comment prior to the meeting and formally presented during the meeting. An agreement was made that the Vietnamese version of semi-final report should have a last consultation with local NGOs who had involved in the process already. A meeting with local NGOs was set up on November 7 to that end and a revised version of the Complementary Report was to be circulated one more time to all participants.

The next meeting will be held on December 2 to finalise the Complementary Report. By then, relevant changes in the State Report will have been taken into consideration in the Complementary Report. The sign-off procedure would be launched in December 2008.

Future directions for 2009

- The group will continue to focus on the CRC Complementary Report in the next period of time. This report is considered extremely important for the group and will act as a benchmark for future collaborative efforts between CRWG members, as well as for civil society in Vietnam.
- Strengthening the working group in Hanoi and improving coordination with the CRWG in HCMC to ensure joint efforts are carried out more effectively.

NGO CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP (CCWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/5457>

Background

The CCWG was established in February 2008 and provides a forum for Vietnamese NGOs and INGOs to actively participate in the climate change debate. CCWG plays a significant role in facilitating information-sharing and coordination among NGOs currently engaged in addressing climate change across a number of sectors and themes. The CCWG is open to participation by all interested INGOs, Vietnamese NGOs and agencies.

CCWG Goal Statement

CCWG seeks to contribute to reducing the vulnerability of poor people in Vietnam to the impacts of climate change through NGO coordination, advocacy and capacity building for environmentally and economically sustainable and socially-just responses to climate change.

CCWG Key Objectives

- **Coordination:** coordinate and share NGO initiatives and knowledge on climate change, in order to maximise impact and minimise overlap through providing forums for INGOs and Vietnamese NGOs to interact.
- **Advocacy:** provide a structure for NGOs to develop common advocacy agendas on climate change and build relationships between NGOs and decision-makers (government/donors/private sector/others) for coordination, dialogue and advocacy in relation to climate change responses and participation in policy processes nationally and sub-nationally.
- **Capacity Building:** ensure NGOs in Vietnam have access to information, training, current events and funding opportunities in climate change and provide support as feasible to individual NGO climate change activities.

CCWG Structure

The CCWG consists of a Core Group which deals with administrative and operational issues related to the working group.

The 2008 Core Group members were: the NGO RC; Oxfam Great Britain; CARE; CRS; SNV; EMW; WWF; Challenge to Change; and SRD. In addition to the core group, the CCWG maintains three priority thematic groups: Climate Change Adaptation; Climate Change Awareness & Behaviour Change; and Climate Change Mitigation. Thematic groups meet separately to exchange relevant information and ideas and report back to the Core Group.

Key activities during 2008

Capacity needs assessment

A significant achievement of the CCWG this year was holding a Climate Change Capacity Building Needs Assessment Workshop for NGOs in July 2008. The objective of the workshop was to collect information to support the CCWG in developing a comprehensive capacity building programme of events to meet the specific needs of the local NGO community.

The workshop was attended by approximately 100 representatives from a diversity of backgrounds and professions, including NGOs, government and the private sector. The majority of participants were from Vietnamese NGOs working on environmental and socio-economic development issues

and currently addressing or planning to address climate change in their programming within Vietnam.

The workshop was held over one day with two sessions. During the first session a series of presentations were delivered on the potential impacts of climate change in Vietnam and current pro-poor responses being delivered by NGOs. The second session involved a facilitated discussion designed to draw out the information required to meet the workshop objectives. Discussion questions focused on:

- current and planned activities, the knowledge and skills of NGOs active in Vietnam and interested in delivering pro-poor climate change programming;
- opportunities and constraints faced by NGOs in developing climate change responses in Vietnam;
- gaps in the knowledge and skill base of NGOs that need to be filled to realise plans and opportunities and overcome constraints; and
- modalities preferred by NGOs for the delivery of capacity building events.

The findings of the workshop are currently being finalised in a report to be made available on the CCWG website. A working group has been formed to progress the Capacity Building Programme Proposal and secure funding.

Climate change policy dialogue

During 2008, the CCWG also developed close links with the recently established Climate Change and Policy and Coordination Donor Group and the Donor Technical Working Group, through which NGOs are actively participating in national policy processes. A relationship has also been developed with the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Standing Office for Climate Change (OCCA). CCWG assisted in developing inputs and dialogue on both the MARD Climate Change Action Plan Framework and National Targeted Programme developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MONRE), advocating for pro-poor responses to climate change. The CCWG, together with MARD, organised three consultative workshops in three areas, inviting provincial, district and communes authorities to participate. The aim of the workshops was to enhance local awareness on climate change and get further practical inputs in order to develop local plans within an integrated national framework of action.

In addition, the NGO Statement on Climate Change was developed by the CCWG, in consultation with donors, for the Mid-Year Consultative Group (CG) Meeting in Sapa on June 6, 2008. The CCWG has also developed a statement for the End-Year CG Meeting to take place on December 4-5 in Hanoi.

In collaboration with the Donor Technical Working Group, the CCWG coordinated NGO and other member inputs for a stakeholder matrix of climate change activities to be maintained by donors and MONRE.

Beyond Vietnam

The CCWG sent a representative, Mr. Quynh from the Forestry University, to a workshop in Ghana on the role of civil society in REDD mechanisms. The workshop covered a range of issues, including strengthening the voice of indigenous peoples and local communities in the debate about the design and implementation of REDD mechanisms to ensure protection of their rights and interests; and how to develop recommendations and strategies for influencing international climate negotiations. Members of the CCWG expressed interest in these topics and therefore a REDD workshop was organised to further the debate and dialogue on the development of a REDD strategy in Vietnam, and how poor communities dependent on forests can equitably benefit from REDD.

Two members of the CCWG also attended a climate justice workshop in Bangkok, which provided insights relating to rights of indigenous peoples and the impact of climate change responses on their access to resources.

Other activities

The CCWG undertook other activities during the year, including: improving coordination with other working groups such as the Disaster Management Working Group, donor groups such as the Like Minded Donor Group, and other mass organisations such as the Civil Society Network for Climate Change.

The CCWG holds regular monthly meetings, which are open to all (as of September 2008), and uses these gatherings to ensure information is shared on events held and workshops attended. Meetings are now fixed for the first Thursday of each month at 2pm at the NGO RC.

CCWG thematic group activities

Climate Change Adaptation Thematic Group: seeks to build the capacity of NGOs to assist vulnerable communities to adapt to climate change through sharing and learning adaptation approaches, influencing government policy and supporting community-based adaptation practices and financing. The group held its first meeting in March 2008, during which it established its terms of reference and identified initial priority actions. Key activities during 2008 included: organising inputs for the MARD action plan described above; providing information for the adaptation resource page on the CCWG website; collating information on current adaptation projects in Vietnam; and identifying sources of funding for climate change adaptation programming.

Climate Change Awareness & Behaviour Change Thematic Group: seeks to raise awareness on the issue of climate change throughout all spheres of Vietnamese society. The group held its first meeting in March 2008, during which it established its terms of reference, identified key objectives and formulated an action plan. Key activities during 2008 included: developing an inventory of current initiatives being undertaken by NGOs aimed at raising awareness and/or changing behaviour; developing a comprehensive list of current climate change awareness-raising materials; participating in Green Transportation Day; and participating in a Behaviour Change Fair with other local NGOs in Hanoi. The ABC group are in the process of developing a media strategy to support coordination with mass media on climate change issues.

Climate Change Mitigation Thematic Group: seeks to contribute to the development of national climate change mitigation strategies that address social equity and biodiversity conservation, engage with private sector stakeholders to link investment in carbon finance with Vietnamese NGOs, and to promote the use of pro-poor standards in carbon markets. The group held its first meeting in March 2008, during which it established its terms of reference, identified key objectives and formulated an action plan. Key activities during 2008 included: providing information, posters and materials for the Asia Pacific Forestry Week; organising two sessions on REDD for interested members to learn more about this mechanism; and providing information for the mitigation resource page on the CCWG website.

Future directions

In 2009, CCWG will focus on developing and implementing the NGO Capacity Building Programme on Climate Change. This programme will focus on developing capacity across three main components:

- Communication and coordination: this will include database development; website

- development; newsletters; and development of climate change awareness materials.
- Training: this will include supporting members to attend training workshops; forums and events; developing a 'train the trainers' programme; training on community-based assessment tools; and organising training on specific topics such as CDM and REDD.
- Sharing and learning: this will include study tours both inside and outside Vietnam; internship opportunities; collating IEC materials; the production of applied case studies; and regular workshops.

CCWG will also focus on building advocacy on climate change issues, including:

- REDD - Continuing the dialogue to make sure social rights are incorporated and poor communities benefit equally;
- NTP & MARD Action Framework - Supporting implementation at the local level with technical advice on mainstreaming and planning methodology and tools in selected provinces to ensure the meaningful and full participation of local communities;
- Adaptation - supporting access to financing for community-based adaptation; and
- Media - enhancing the cooperation and capacity of Vietnamese media for awareness-raising and conveying CCWG messages.

DISABILITY WORKING GROUP (DWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/103>

Background

In the last 15 years, support for people living with disabilities in Vietnam has developed rapidly, and many achievements have been made in providing support for people living with disabilities, especially after the promulgation of the Ordinance for Persons with Disabilities in 1998.

The Disability Working Group (DWG) promotes co-operation, collaboration and better communication among INGOs, organisations of People with Disabilities (PWD), relevant government ministries and donor agencies. Issues addressed by the working group include rehabilitation and health services, employment, inclusive and vocational education, disability prevention, public awareness of disability issues and barrier-free access to public places.

The overall goal of the DWG is to increase communication, coordination and to share lessons learned among all actors working to support people living with disabilities, which will contribute to promoting the empowerment of people with disabilities and a barrier-free society.

Key objectives

- Increase communication, coordination and information-sharing between DWG members and other actors working to support people living with disabilities.
- Share practical experience, successes and lessons learned to the mutual benefit of all participants attending DWG meetings.
- Act as a time-efficient and effective mechanism for actors to communicate and coordinate working plans.
- Contribute to workshops on inclusive development.

The DWG is coordinated by a voluntary chair, which is elected from a Core Group of six or seven INGOs and rotates on a yearly basis. The elected voluntary chair acts as both chair and secretary for DWG meetings and activities.

Update on key activities during 2008

Main themes during 2008

- Sharing information on disability policy in the areas of education and employment; research on the educational and health needs of PWD.
- Exchanging information and experiences about programmes and projects being implemented to support people with disabilities, as well as sharing lessons learned from disability-related projects conducted in Vietnam

DWG thematic meetings in 2008

- **DWG Core Group meeting – January 9, 2008**
Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Hoa made a brief presentation about the activities conducted by the Landmine Survivor Network (LSN) regarding disability issues. LSN is currently in the process of deciding what to do and all input from NGOs is welcomed. The issue of handover of the chairperson role and selection of organisations to host DWG meetings in 2008 was also discussed.
- **DWG meeting – March 13, 2008**
Handicap International presented its communication tools to facilitate community inclusion

for children with disabilities. The tools include a 60-minute film, a handbook with pictures from the film and a user-guide that helps community members organise meetings to easily disseminate information on disabilities to other people. Handicap International has used this tool package to provide training for leaders from the Women's Union, Community Learning Centres, Association for Disabled People and other concerned agencies so that they are equipped with basic knowledge to support and facilitate children with disabilities and their families, as well as change attitudes regarding people with disabilities. A summary of the establishment of DPOs at the district level was also provided. The Hanoi DPO has organised two workshops for all districts in Hanoi on procedures to set up a DPO at the district level, as well as to raise awareness and encourage PWD to set up DPOs. The real problem is not setting up a DPO, but rather to ensuring it remains sustainable and effective.

- **DWG meeting – May 28, 2008**

First, an update on disability policy in the areas of education and employment was provided. Regarding employment, Decision 51/2008/QĐ-TTĐ promulgating state assistance policies for businesses for the disabled has been approved. It implies tax exemptions for businesses that have disabled people comprising more than 51 per cent of their employees. On education, the government has issued regulations and national standards on preschools and primary schools that mention inclusive education for children with disabilities. A presentation from CRS was made on research regarding the educational and health needs of PWD identified as affected by Agent Orange/dioxin. The main objectives of this study were: 1) assess the health situations and levels of disabled children and youth who are recognized as affected by dioxin in IVWD project sites; 2) assess and compare the educational and health care needs between dioxin- affected PWD and PWD in general, in order to identify any special needs of the former; and 3) give recommendations for further intervention on education and health care for PWD who are recognised as dioxin-affected. The key recommendations of the study were to: place as many children as possible in mainstream schools; provide training and support for education and social inclusion for all PWD and support them to be included in the community; and focus on assistance for children with severe disabilities.

- **DWG meeting – July 31, 2008**

At this meeting, the main issues discussed included:

1. NCCD updates on disability data collection activities.
2. Mr. Tue presented information on Decision “94/2008/QĐ-TTĐ” on carrying out the housing and population census in 2009, and the government circular on the 2009 housing and population census.
3. A presentation was made on the results of the General Statistic Office's (GSO's) Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey (Disability Module). The GSO conducted a workshop supported by UNESCAP, WB/WG and MCNV to introduce the ICF approach to data collection, and developed a framework on disability data collection from 2005-2010, in which the ICF approach is applied.
4. Disability data collection activities for the 2009 census were discussed.
5. MCNV introduced their efforts to strengthen disability data collection and management.
6. The main findings from a qualitative research project on the sexual life of women with disabilities were presented by researchers Ms. Nguyen Thi Hong Ha from the Bright Future group and Ms. Do Thanh Toan from the Hanoi Medical University. This research aim to explore what woman with disabilities think of their sexuality and how much their relatives are aware of the sexuality of woman with disabilities.

Future directions for 2009

- Integrate disability issues into the activities of other NGO RC working groups such as the CCWG, CRWG and DMWG.
- Continue to promote information- and experience-sharing through meetings and the DWG email list.
- Increase cooperation between INGOs and local NGOs and/or local partnerships.
Active participation in relevant meetings organised by IDEA.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP (DMWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/104>

Overview

The origins of the DMWG began in the period immediately following the flood of 1999, when it was felt that NGOs in Vietnam needed to coordinate their relief operations more closely. The group continued to meet on an ad-hoc basis as a forum for discussions and information sharing, focusing in particular on the Mekong Delta floods of 2000 and 2001. As the number of organisations active in the field increased and the focus shifted from disaster relief to a more long-term, disaster management approach, it was felt that more regular meetings would be helpful, and in 2001 the group began meeting on a monthly basis. In 2002, the group was formalised as a working group under the NGO RC in collaboration with the NDM Partnership.

DMWG acts as a national platform that can support the effectiveness of all agencies working in disaster management in Vietnam (hereunder disaster risk reduction, mitigation/preparedness, relief and recovery) through improved information-sharing and coordination of interventions amongst all relevant agencies.

Key objectives

- To improve coordination among all agencies working in disaster management through information-sharing, experience exchange and joint initiatives.
- To build the capacity of relevant agencies and practitioners in disaster management.
- To initiate policy dialogues for improving the disaster-related policies and practices of policy-makers and implementers.
- Ensure that contributions by the international community to disaster relief in Vietnam are timely and appropriate.

Update on key activities during 2008

Main themes during 2008

- Organised successful training course on Emergency Response Management.
- Successfully conducted one in-time joint assessment event and provided quick responses to victims of typhoon number 4, coordination on response activities for victims of typhoon number 6/7 and the heavy rain and flooding in the northern provinces.
- Contingency plan and how DMWG can share best practices.
- Developed a terms of reference (TOR) for the cluster approach.
- Revised the DMWG TOR to be more appropriate with the current context.
- Explored links with other sectoral working groups, especially the CCWG.
- Encouraged DMWG members to become more active and make greater commitments to DMWG activities.
- Promoted and achieved closer cooperation between the DMWG and high-level government officers in providing support to victims during or after disasters.
- Maintained monthly thematic meetings to share the latest information relating to typhoon response programmes, as well as other disaster management activities.

Thematic meetings organised by DMWG in 2008

• DMWG Meeting February 21, 2008

The meeting discussed the following topics:

1. How to maximize the impact of INGOs' work on community development in Vietnam;
2. Improving coordination/information sharing;

3. The reforming of the Inter-Agency Joint Assessment Team and humanitarian needs assessment training for joint assessment team members;
4. Updates on ongoing disaster response activities and ongoing events; and
5. Preparations for the meeting with the OCHA Regional Office Representative, who requested a meeting with DMWG/DANI during his visit to Vietnam on February 25.

- **DMWG Meeting April 25, 2008**

Participants discussed the challenges and opportunities and lessons learned from current disaster risk reduction (DRR) projects in Vietnam. Oxfam also presented a survey report on cold weather and participants discussed ways to develop interventions for such conditions, as well as what actions are needed to improve disaster preparedness and response capacity in Vietnam.

- **DMWG Meeting on Improving Coordination, June 5, 2008**

This was a special meeting to explore how to improve coordination for disaster response mechanisms among organisations cooperating with relevant government agencies.

- **Hazard and Vulnerability Mapping Meeting, July 3, 2008**

Vu Xuan Viet from Oxfam gave a presentation and provided summary information on hazard and vulnerability mapping in Vietnam. The gap analysis was shown in detail and participants commented by going through each section in terms of institutional issues, legal issues, information issues, planning and integration issues, and financial issues. Emergency Contingency Planning was also discussed, along with preparations for the Emergency Management Training Course - an initiative of Oxfam and CARE International in Vietnam aimed at humanitarian response teams and DMWG joint assessment members who are willing to participate in humanitarian needs assessment and emergency project management.

- **Emergency Response Management Training Course for Joint Assessment Team Members, August 2008**

The training course was held for around 40 members of the DMWG in the first week of August by Oxfam, in cooperation with a number of other agencies. The overall objective of the training was to help all participants gain a common understanding and skills on conducting assessments of key frameworks, systems and standards which guide humanitarian responses. Training activities also focused on the ways of working, communications and coordination among agencies. All of the training was based on the principles of the Humanitarian Charter, Code of Conduct and international standards in humanitarian response derived from the Sphere Project. The training had an interactive approach, utilising exercises, experience-sharing and discussions, as well as informative presentations from national and international experts. Participants learned and practiced different steps of field assessments, including collecting sectoral information such as emergency food livelihood, health, shelter, WATSAN, gender, children protection, data analysis, and writing assessment reports and project proposals. The training also went through basic knowledge on logistics in emergencies and the roles of media and communication in emergency responses.

- **Emergency Meeting to Respond to Flooding/Flash flooding following Typhoon Kammuri – (Storm No. 4), August 11, 2008**

At the meeting, a summary of the impact of the typhoon was presented by the NDM-Partnership and participants also shared further information they collected from their project sites. There was a discussion on the need for joint assessments and action points that the DMWG should follow up on immediately. Three joint assessment teams (JATs) in three provinces were formed (Phu Tho, Lao Cai, Yen Bai were the targeted provinces for JATs)

and three team leaders selected.

- **Coordination Meeting on Typhoon Kammuri at PACCOM, August 13**

An special meeting was held at PACCOM to discuss the areas affected by floods after Typhoon No.4. Decisions were also made on joint assessments concerning the intensity and severity of the floods, and participants in the meeting agreed to carry out a joint assessment trip to Phu Tho, Lao Cai, Yen Bai - the most affected areas. It was decided the team will be divided into three groups, with each group conducting an assessment in one province. PACCOM will coordinate the trip, taking charge of logistics and contacting partners to arrange working agenda. Participating organisations will provide technical support by preparing checklists and data collection. The preparation meeting for this action was set for August 14 and it was agreed all assessment reports after the trip will be shared as soon as possible.

- **Debriefing Meeting at UNDP relating to Rapid Joint Assessments following Typhoon Kammuri, August 20**

The meeting was chaired by MARD Vice Minister Hoc. The National Manager of the NDMP (the Vietnamese institution responsible for information-sharing and supporting donor coordination) presented an official update from the GoV on damage caused by storm No. 4 and relief activities. As facilitator of the DMWG, Mr. Provash Mondal (Oxfam) presented the emergency response mechanisms put in motion right after the storm and what steps were taken to ensure the quality of the Rapid Joint Assessments in the provinces. Mr. Vinh, from PACCOM, expressed his gratitude for organising the meeting and indicated the coordinating role of PACCOM in terms of INGO responses to the disaster. The fact that 11 provinces were affected by the disaster and all of them need some form assistance was stressed by PACCOM's representative. Three reports on Rapid Joint Assessments in three provinces (Phu Tho, Lao Cai, Yen Bai) were presented by the Save The Children Alliance; Oxfam; and Plan. In his closing remarks, Vice Minister Hoc said the government appreciated the importance of the meeting and stressed that the GoV has been very active since the beginning of the emergency but international support is welcomed to assist provincial authorities in the most affected areas. According to Dr. Hoc, this disaster has proved the importance of Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) strategies. The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) in MARD will be tasked with preparing a master plan on CBDRM. Evacuation plans must be prioritised in the mid-to-long term.

- **Urgent meeting on Typhoon No. 6 and No. 7, September 30**

CCFSC/NDMP summarised the current situation and total damage caused by Typhoon Hagupit (Storm No. 6) and Typhoon Mekkhala (Storm No. 7) and initial response activities in the provinces by the central government and mass organisations. Then there was a discussion on how DMWG members can take action to respond to the damage. It was agreed that DMWG member will collect more information. Another coordination meeting for this purpose was set for October 7, 2008.

- **Coordination Meeting on responding to Typhoons 6/7**

The key points of this meeting were to:

1. Review meeting minutes and action points;
2. Review the emergency situation following Typhoons 6 and 7 and follow up action;
3. Ongoing activities responding to Typhoon No 4 (Kammuri);
4. Presentation by JANI on following up on the DANA initiative;
5. Cluster Leadership Approach study (ToR discussion); and
6. The DMWG revised ToR.

In terms of responding to Typhoons 6 and 7, all three action points from the last meeting

were followed up: PACCOM sent an appeal letter to INGOs on October 1; NDM-P made a needs/gaps template and updated the Relief Aid Matrix (Typhoon No. 6) on its website; NDMP will continue to collect information; and DMWG members working in affected areas (SCUK in Bac Giang, Quang Ninh; CARE in Quang Ninh; German Red Cross in Lang Son province, World Vision/SC in Yen Bai province) collected further detailed information on damages/needs and the government's response activities to identify the gaps and which organisation was doing what. Compiled reports were circulated to the DMWG mailing list.

- **DMWG Meeting, November 4, 2008**

Key agenda items were: updates on damage caused by heavy rain and flooding in northern provinces and recovery activities; discussion on how DMWG members can quickly respond to the victims of the floods; report on the findings of the Cluster Leadership Approach Applicability Study by UN PCG 10 and NDMP; case studies on progress of Hyogo Framework for Action UN ISDR; the government's CBDRM Plan was presented by the Deputy Head of DMC; and a report on progress of developing the DMWG's revised TOR.

- **Meeting November 7, 2008**

Further information was shared on damage caused by heavy rains and flooding in the northern provinces and recovery activities in affected provinces. However, clarification was still required about gaps in need/response activities and it was agreed further information would be collected by DMWG members.

Other activities

- The DMWG co-organised an event to disseminate information on rapid assessment reports in areas affected by Typhoons 4, 6 and 7.
- The DMWG conducted capacity building for joint assessment team members and co-organised workshop/meetings on climate change.

Future directions for 2009

- Promote coordination among INGOs, Vietnamese agencies and government departments.
- Improve the quality of humanitarian responses to disasters in Vietnam.
- Build the capacity of joint assessment team members (rapid assessment, livelihood assessment, water supply and sanitation assessment etc.).
- Standardise disaster risk reduction approaches (manuals, IEC materials, etc.).
- Conduct more advocacy work with related government departments following the development of the national strategy on disaster management.
- Identify future opportunities for integrating disaster works into climate change adaptation activities.

ETHNIC MINORITIES WORKING GROUP (EMWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/108>

Overview

The EMWG acts as a forum for NGOs and other development agencies and professionals to exchange ideas and 'lessons learned' about how to improve development policies and practices for the benefit of ethnic minority peoples.

The overall goal of the EMWG is to improve the livelihoods of ethnic minorities by improving the development assistance provided by group members, and by building the capacity of ethnic minorities to promote their full participation in development processes.

Key objectives

- **Sharing and disseminating information:** The EMWG provides a forum for discussions regarding development issues related to ethnic minorities in Vietnam. EMWG disseminates information as widely as possible regarding laws, policies, research, and documentation of projects and programmes relating to ethnic minorities.
- **Improving the practices of member organisations:** EMWG participants share experiences and lessons learned in order to improve the impact (quality and quantity) of their development interventions.
- **Policy dialogue:** The sharing of experiences and information relating to ethnic minorities leads to improved development practices and policies among EMWG members and their partner organisations. The group also acts as a venue for conducting dialogues with relevant government and donor institutions and organisations.
- **Facilitating the voice of ethnic minority people:** The EMWG facilitates different mechanisms for ethnic people to voice their opinions on the development projects and policies/decision that affect their lives.

The EMWG works on a voluntary basis and is managed by a core group of different INGOs who are most active within the group. Since the beginning of 2007, Oxfam GB has been the chair organisation. In 2008, the members of the core group comprised: Oxfam Great Britain, Caritas Switzerland, Oxfam Hong Kong, Save the Children UK, Enfant et Développement, Care International, ISEE (Institute for

Studies of Society, Economy and Development) and Action Aid Vietnam (AAV).

EMWG has no sub-groups but it has established taskforces, which work on different themes, related to ethnic minority issues in Vietnam.

Main thematic task-forces in 2008

In 2008, EMWG focused its activities on the following themes:

- EMWG's engagement with national targeted programs on poverty reduction/135 phase II;
- mass media and ethnic minorities;
- land conflicts and conflict-solving mechanisms in mountainous areas where ethnic minorities live;
- development approach review to working with ethnic minorities, and mechanisms to enhance the voice of ethnic minorities in decision-making processes;
- capacity building and networking;
- bilingual education;
- ethnic minority traditional customary laws; and
- awareness-raising for ethnic minorities on climate change and increasing their access to

climate change information.

Update on key activities during 2008

- **Core group meeting to prepare EMWG Action Plan 2008, March 2008**
The meeting was organised with the participation of six core group members of EMWG. During the meeting, core group members reviewed and set priorities for the 2008 annual action plan, including thematic task forces, tentative timeframe and nominating organisations to take lead in implementing the action plan.
- **Round table discussion with the head of Department for Ethnic Minority Policy – Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, April 2008**
This discussion aimed to provide NGOs and the development community with updated information about situations, policies and guidance related to ethnic minorities in Vietnam.
- **Discussion forum to share practical experiences and approaches on poverty reduction for the poorest areas in Vietnam, May 2008**
This meeting aimed to provide policy-makers with information on the successes and challenges of programmes focused on poverty reduction that NGOs have been carrying out in their project areas. These experiences provided significant input for the proposal that MOLISA submitted to the Prime Minister in August.
- **Presentation on ethnic minority development in Vietnam from an economic perception, May 2008**
Presented by Bob Baulch, Hung T. Pham and Nguyen Thu Phuong from VASS, and Barry Reilly from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Department of Economics, University of Sussex, UK.
- **Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs workshop on capacity building on socio-economic development planning for communities, December 2008**
This workshop will be organised over two days in December in Tuyen Quang to compile practical experiences and approaches on building capacity for communities on socio-economic development planning that international and local NGOs have been applying in their programmes. The workshop is expected to provide clear guidance on strategies, approaches, recommendations and processes in terms of building capacity for local people on socio-economic development planning in their areas.
- **Consultative meeting on land conflicts and land policies in ethnic minority areas, December 2008**
Within the working plan of EMWG, the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE) is carrying out research to identify key land issues in areas where ethnic minorities live. This research aims to provide recommendations for the government and related agencies on developing/revising land policies and legal frameworks that are more appropriate and supportive to the development of ethnic minorities.
- **National Symposium on language issues and quality basic education for ethnic minority people, December 2008**
This is an event conducted under the bilingual education task force, of which Save the Children UK was nominated to take lead in organizing, in collaboration with other organisations. The symposium aims to: discuss the use of language in school and the role of mother tongue and Vietnamese in teaching and learning; to share practical experiences and lessons learned in different approaches to bilingual education and Vietnamese language

strengthening; and to agree on recommendations/solutions and to identify opportunities for coordination and support across organisations and provinces.

Future directions for 2009

As EMWG is task-focused, it will continue to focus on topics that will be crucial to/and attract its members in relation to ethnic minority issues in Vietnam. Simultaneously, EMWG will continue to support strategic works led by individual member agencies of the EMWG and will organise meetings and disseminate information on issues related to overcoming ethnic minority poverty.

In addition, the EMWG will continue to try to strengthen and enhance dialogues between NGOs and responsible state and government agencies, in order to ensure that the valuable experiences and practices that NGOs have been achieving will be useful to the government's programmes in ethnic minority areas.

EYE CARE WORKING GROUP (ECWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/5363>

Overview

The Eye Care Group was established in line with the Vision 2020 to support national efforts to achieve the goal of eliminating avoidable blindness in Vietnam. After several informal meetings among some eye care-related NGOs, the idea of having a working group was raised. Many eye care-related NGOs have already played a significant role in developing eye care services in Vietnam, and some of them have established permanent offices in Vietnam. The term eye care relates to all aspects of activities related to vision care, promotion of eye health, prevention of eye diseases, treatment and rehabilitation, including education of the visually impaired.

The Eye Care Group is open for members of all eye care-related NGOs operating in Vietnam. The founding members are ORBIS, FHF (Fred Hollows Foundation), HKI (Helen Keller International), CBM, ITI (International Trachoma Initiative) and Mekong Eye Doctors. Atlantic Philanthropies has also joined the group as a new member.

Key objectives

- Advocate for and support the development and implementation of a National V2020 Blindness Prevention Strategic Plan in Vietnam.
- Promote comprehensive eye care, including prevention, education, rehabilitation and treatment in Vietnam.
- Serve as an open forum for information on programmes, project activities, lessons learned, experiences and best practices regarding comprehensive eye care in Vietnam.
- Discuss potential support provided by members of the group to national concerned institutions in the development of Vietnam's national plan of actions for comprehensive eye care.
- Discuss potential collaboration among related organisations and institutions working on providing comprehensive eye care.

Update on key activities during 2008

Main themes during 2008

- Enhancing the sharing and exchange of information and experiences between member organisations in developing and implementing projects/programmes for the prevention of blindness in Vietnam.
- Collaborating with and supporting the Vietnam National Institute of Ophthalmology in conducting a survey the status of blindness in 16 provinces in eight geographic areas of Vietnam.

Future directions for 2009

- Support activities of the National Steering Committee for the Prevention of Blindness.
- Support the setting up of a Task Force (or a working group) for the development of a national strategy for blindness prevention in Vietnam.
- Support the development and implementation of Provincial Action Plans for the prevention of blindness in targeted provinces.

HIV/AIDS TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (HIV/AIDS TWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/116>

Background

The HIV/AIDS TWG continues to play a broad and impressive role in facilitating information-sharing and coordination among individuals and organisations working on issues affecting those at risk of, living with, and affected by HIV/AIDS. It is registered with the NGO RC and brings together participants from international and local NGOs, the Communist Party, government, mass organisations, bilateral and multilateral donors, foundations, the UN, and PLHIV groups. Participation in the TWG is open to all sectors, and to both organisations and individuals. The TWG has held regular meetings since 2004.

Key objectives

- To advocate for a supportive and enabling environment for the implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention and care projects in Vietnam in a multi-sectoral, non-discriminatory environment.
- To document, discuss and disseminate lessons learned.
- To collaborate on common areas for capacity building, particularly in the areas of training and development of resource materials.
- To analyse and exchange information based on field experience.
- To identify gaps in the overall national response to HIV/AIDS and build partnerships between organisations to address these gaps.
- To identify other stakeholders with whom the working group can build partnerships and enhance communications, including the media, the private sector, and other sector specific networks.

The TWG meets every two months and selects a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, both from NGOs. Efforts to promote Vietnamese participation include ensuring that the Chair and Vice-Chairperson alternates between senior international and Vietnamese staff of INGOs. To promote continuity, the tenure of each position is six months, and the Vice Chairperson rotates up to Chairperson. The UNAIDS Secretariat Vietnam serves as the secretariat for the TWG. The meetings are simultaneously translated, and all documentation is provided in both Vietnamese and English.

The TWG continues to oversee seven sub-groups that address HIV technical issues in more depth and also develop their own goals and workplans. These groups, which meet about every two months, cover the following topics: Gender and Sexuality; Greater Involvement of People with AIDS; Harm Reduction; 05/06 Centres; Care and Treatment; and HIV and Communications; and Men Who Have Sex with Men. A new group, Children and HIV has just joined the TWG in November and a Ho Chi Minh City-based working group is considering joining the TWG in the next year to provide more geographical representation and perspective. More information on the work of these sub-groups is provided below.

The TWG continues to have an email list hosted by the NGO RC, which has grown to include over 735 members. Group members receive and disseminate new information on HIV topics through this mechanism in a rapid manner. The email list is utilised approximately 20-30 times per week. Topics include gender and HIV, civil society, and establishment of the Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV.

Main themes during 2008

In 2008, the TWG expanded the number of seminars on specific topics to allow for more extensive

discussion of current developments. The Chair and Vice-Chair implemented several measures to allow for more interactive meetings to promote more stimulating discussions. There was a definite shift to moving towards themed meetings and multiple, shorter presentations grouped around topical themes. The core presentation will facilitate discussions on policy implication and formulation to programme development and implementation. Topics tackled a variety of various developments of the HIV response such as upscaling harm reduction, civil society engagement, and coordination.

Thematic meetings organised by HIV/AIDS TWG in 2008

- **TWG Meeting, January 16, 2008**

Under the chairmanship of Peter Barnard (Mdm), the first meeting of the year began with two presentations, one on a communications campaign to reach male clients of sex workers with prevention messages, and the other on healthcare subsidies.

- **TWG Meeting, March 12, 2008**

Youth and HIV was the first themed TWG meeting of the year. Presentations included an overview, a study conducted in HCM City with young people living on and off the streets, and a video presentation on Dance 4 Life.

- **TWG Meeting, May 21, 2008**

Chair Peter Barnard chose the theme of coordination for his last meeting. It was the first TWG meeting held at Hanoi School of Public Health. The first part of the meeting focused on the findings of the AIDS in Asia Report: Crafting an Effective Response. The other two presentations covered an overview and a more in-depth discussion of the Hai Phong coordination model.

- **TWG Meeting, July 16, 2008**

Dr. Bao's first meeting as Chair of the TWG focused on drugs and HIV. Presentations included one on context and policy, the new methadone pilot project in Hai Phong and a third presentation on community recovery support programme based in Hanoi. Most importantly, clients from the methadone pilot project came to the meeting to share their experiences.

- **TWG Meeting, September 17, 2008**

Men who have sex with men (MSM) and HIV was the theme of the meeting. The main presentations covered a general overview of MSM in Vietnam by the MSM Technical Working Group, a peer education intervention in Hanoi by Lighthouse, and reaching MSM via the internet.

- **TWG Meeting, November 19, 2008**

The theme of the last meeting of the year was civil society and HIV. Presentations from the newly established Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+), Vietnam Civil Society Platform, and Xuan Vinh, a community-based organisation, highlighted the diversity of civil society groups and their integral role in the HIV response.

Dr. Vu Ngoc Bao of FHI officially handed over his Chairmanship to Dr. Mauro Guarinieri. Asia Nguyen, Programme Officer Coordination remains the UNAIDS Secretariat Focal Point.

Other activities

Lunchtime Seminars

In March 2008, PEPFAR approached the UNAIDS Secretariat about co-hosting a series of monthly exchanges on technical aspects of the HIV response. These meetings were to be informal and held during lunchtime. The TWG Secretariat agreed to co-host and took on all logistical and technical responsibility for arranging the seminars. They are quite successful, with approximately 60 participants per session. Sessions have included methadone maintenance therapy, the revision of the Law on Drug Prevention and Control, civil society, a film showing of the documentary, "A Powerful Noise", and providing community-based care to children infected and affected by HIV.

Partnership with Hanoi School of Public Health

The Hanoi School of Public Health entered into a partnership with the TWG Secretariat in April 2008 to provide logistical and technical support for the TWG Meetings and Lunchtime Seminars. This partnership is significant to ensuring the continuity and quality of the TWG meetings as well as contributing towards the expansion of TWG activities.

Summary HIV/AIDS Technical Working Group Subgroups

The sub-groups continue to engage in in-depth discussions and active collaboration on specific areas of interest in the HIV response in Vietnam. In addition to serving as a forum for information exchange, sub-groups like the MSM Working Group and the 05-06 Center Collaboration Group are continuing mapping ongoing activities in Vietnam in their area of work. The MSM Working Group and the Gender and Sexuality subgroups are implementing joint activities with various other organisations and groups. Sub-group accomplishments are highlighted below.

a. MSM Subgroup

The aims for 2008 were to develop the capacity of MSM in drop-in centres and community-based organisations and to establish linkages between institutions and organisations working in HIV prevention for MSM, in order to maximise resources and support for MSM. The MSM subgroup held regular coordination meetings in March, July and December. The meetings served as a forum for sharing and exchanging information on working with MSM in Vietnam, including a size estimation of the 'hidden' MSM community, MSM and internet use, and MSM and mass media and other topics, including development and testing of the MSM stigma and discrimination toolkit. An average of 30-40 people attended each meeting. The HCMC Provincial AIDS Committee coordinated the second meeting, which helped to promote networking among groups and individuals working on MSM issues in the south. Experts and guest speakers helped to raise issues in the meetings and local focal points contributed to the practical discussions on related topics.

With the assistance of UNAIDS, the MSM sub-group has conducted a mapping of capacity building and training among INGOs and local NGOs and secured a number of co-funding agreements between FHI and UNADS for training such as BCC training and advocacy training for focal points and MSM in drop in centres. Approximately 25 participants attended each of the training sessions.

In October, the national MSM review workshop was organised by VAAC, Hanoi Provincial AIDS Center and UNAIDS. The review meetings reported about the existing programmes for MSM in HIV/STI prevention and also raised practical recommendations for further support and intervention for HIV prevention in the MSM community.

The MSM subgroup was also involved in the annual meeting of the Purple Sky Network (PSN), a forum for coordination on MSM activities in the Greater Mekong Sub-region in July. Through the PSN, the MSM subgroup provided opportunities to Vietnamese Government and local NGO staff in study visits on Thai MSM and HIV prevention programmes. A handbook on stigma and discrimination and MSM stigma and discrimination toolkit is complete and will be finalised in the near future. The sub-group was also involved in the translation and dissemination of two

publications, including MSM: The Missing Piece in HIV National Programmes.

b. HIV and Communications Sub-Group

In 2008, the HIV and Communications Sub-Group was re-activated as it had not met for many months in 2007. No chair committing to the work and the unclear role of the group were factors contributing to this period of inactivity. As the new chair took over, the focus shifted towards HIV, behavior change communication and communications in a broader sense. This year, about 15-30 people attended each meeting, including representatives from many new organisations. The communications sub-group gathered a matrix of different communication activities/projects.

Selected topics and activities addressed this year included:

- TV slots developed by the BBC World Service Trust under the ADB-funded HIV-prevention project for youth (viewing and commenting on the programme before it went to air);
- introduction of BCC projects focusing on MSM (FHI-supported Adamzone website and Population Services International's Behavior Change Communication campaign targeting male clients of sex workers); and
- comments on a draft of the Media Handbook on HIV developed by the Joint UN Team on HIV and Vietnam Journalist Association.

c. The 05-06 Centre Collaboration Sub-Group

In 2008, the 05-06 Centre Collaboration Sub-Group continued its development as a major, growing networking resource for individuals interested in work in the rehabilitation centres. This year, 35-40 people attended each meeting, including representatives from many new organisations. The 05-06 Group maintained an up-to-date matrix of international donor-supported HIV/AIDS-related projects in the rehabilitation centres for drug users and sex workers and in the communities for those who have left the centres and their families. Through meetings between individual group members, it also provided orientation and information for representatives of new groups beginning HIV/AIDS work in 05-06 Centres and their communities. The group acted as a resource to help academics and graduate students learn about relevant issues and seek out appropriate research topics and projects. In all these activities, the group focused on keeping issues related to working with HIV/AIDS and drug rehabilitation in the spotlight and introduced new topics for information-sharing and group discussion.

Selected topics addressed this year included:

- Updates on the revision of the Law on Drug Control and Prevention (UNODC).
- HIV prevention for sex partners of Injecting Drug Users in Rehab Centres or returning to the community: study and intervention (Abt Associates and ISDS).
- Results of a joint evaluation of B93 Clubs (DOLISA and MCNV).
- Phase II of Drug Relapse Prevention Programme in Lang Son, Vietnam: lessons learned and other findings and plans for Phase II (DOLISA, CRS and COHED).
- Briefing on the 19th International Harm Reduction Association Conference May 12-15, 2008 in Barcelona (ESTHER).
- Photo essay on visits to Rehab Centres I and IV in Hanoi (Medicins du Monde, DOLISA).

d. Harm Reduction (HR)

In 2007-8, the HR Collaboration Sub-Group was reconstituted after it had been dormant for six months due to the unavailability of a (co)-chair. As HR is gaining more interest and attention from all sides of the government-donor spectrum, there is a growing number of organisations and individuals interested in attending the meetings in order to exchange key information. The emphasis has been on developments in the legal framework for HR, cooperation with VAAC and its action plan, new innovative approaches at the provincial level (GTZ/AHRN), the new NL-AusAID project and IEC initiatives. We are in regular contact with the (co)chair of the 05-06 subgroup and normally

ensure that reciprocal participation in meetings is continued, or meet "back-to-back" the same afternoon.

The group remains an active resource to bring actors, development partners and academics in contact with each other through information sharing and group discussion.

e. Greater Involvement of People with AIDS (GIPA) Sub-group

In 2008, the GIPA group held a meeting every two months with participation of national and international organisations such as UNAIDS, CARE, HPI, COHED, IOM, HIH, VSO, VICOMC, SMARTWork, Hanoi HIV/AIDS Centre, Vietnam Women's Union, HIV/AIDS Consultation and Legal Support Centre, GIPA Hanoi office, and PLHIV groups in Hanoi, including Hoa Huong Duong, Hoa Xuong Rong, Pegin, For You and Me, Hoa Sua, Suc Moi, Bright Futures, and MSM groups in Hanoi as well.

Key themes addressed throughout the year included employment, health care for PLHIV, community prevention, and elimination of stigma against children infected and affected by HIV at schools.

Key achievements included involvement of various organisations, PLHIV are invited to join the activities and give comments and opinions; and distribution of the latest information concerning PLHIV.

Key challenges included some PLHIV groups are not yet mobilised to participate in the meetings and the meeting venue is not fixed.

Future orientations include strengthening job opportunity activities for PLHIV; ensuring the subject of the meetings is in line with PLHIV's expectations; and finding a fixed venue for the meetings.

f. Care and Treatment

In 2008, the Care and Treatment Sub-group continued to be an important forum for organisations and individuals to share information and opinions among those working for and interested in HIV care and treatment. It also served as a great learning opportunity for many participants and also for national and international participants to interact with each other through discussing care and treatment topics. Debate also took place whether and how to maintain Care and Treatment Sub-group activities in the context where VAAC initiated regular Care and Treatment Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings. However, people attending the sub-group proposed to continue having the activities, in addition to the VAAC TWG. In 2008, the following topics were presented and discussed:

- report from International Task-Shifting Conference (VAAC);
- regular updates on ARV status and introduction to pharmacovigilance (SCMS);
- family-centered care through the continuum of care (FHI);
- pediatric care and treatment experiences (CDC); and
- anthropological study on PMTCT (MCNV).

g. Gender and Sexuality

In 2008, the Gender and Sexuality Sub- Group continued its development as a major, growing networking resource for individuals and organisations interested in this area. About 25-40 people attended each meeting, including PLHIVs, NGOs and international organisations. The sub-group focused on issues related to sexuality and reproductive health for PLHIV and also introduced new topics around group discussions.

Selected topics addressed this year included: sexual and reproductive health of PLHIV; UNFPA needs assessment on sexual and reproductive health of women living with HIV; national guidelines on reproductive health services for women living with HIV; and discussion on gender equality in sexuality and reproductive health.

Other activities included publishing Women and HIV/AIDS in Vietnam; promotion of provision of information on reproductive health and services for PLHIV clubs/groups; and exchange between PLHIV clubs/groups in Hoa Binh province on gender and reproductive health.

Future directions for 2009

In the coming year, the HIV/AIDS TWG will continue to serve as a platform for exchange of information and networking among the full range of organisations working on HIV in Vietnam. The TWG will focus on maintaining a balance between quality discussion and information sharing.

HO CHI MINH CITY INGO DISCUSSION GROUP (HCMC INGO)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/5364>

Background

For the past five years, the HCM City INGO Discussion Group (formerly the INGO Child Discussion Group) has been meeting on a regular (quarterly) basis. Meetings are held at the Ho Chi Minh City Union of Friendship Organisations (HUFO) and bring together representatives and staff from foreign non-governmental organisations that have an office and are operating in Ho Chi Minh City or in the southern provinces. Occasionally, they are joined by speakers and guests from government agencies, donors and partner organisations.

A core group of six INGO representatives is responsible for organising meetings and other activities. Participation in the core team depends on willingness to stand for at least one year and to contribute actively to the planning of the activities of the HCM City INGO Discussion Group.

Currently the core group is composed of the representatives of the following six foreign NGOs: Education for Development; Loreto Viet Nam – Australia Programme; Norwegian Mission Alliance; Saigon Children's Charity; Terre des hommes Foundation – Lausanne; and Vietnam Plus. Tdh Foundation serves as the coordinating agency.

Key objectives

The HCM City INGO Discussion Group provides a forum for the sharing of information, knowledge and experience. Its aim is to act as an entry point for more concrete forms of coordination or collaboration in areas such as research, training, as well as advocacy and policy dialogue.

Update on key activities during 2008

1. Organisation of quarterly meetings

- Meeting on January 10, 2008
Discussed setting up thematic working groups based on a mapping exercise compiling the expressed interest of INGO representatives and staff; and inclusive education.
- Meeting on April 11, 2008
Discussed decision to establish four specific working groups and the chairs or co-chairs; process of establishment and follow up; and HIV/AIDS and the implications for INGOs.
- Meeting on July 18, 2008
Rights-based approaches to development work.
- Meeting on October 17, 2008
Vietnam's Economy.

2. Setting up of thematic working groups

In the course of 2008, three thematic working groups have been set up: the HCMC Child Rights Working Group; the HCMC Disability Working Group; and the HCMC HIV/AIDS Technical Working Group.

HCMC thematic working groups

1. HCMC Child Rights Working Group

Since its inception on May 13, 2008, the HCMC Child Rights Working Group has held three meetings, concentrating mainly on finalising a terms of reference (in both English and Vietnamese) and determining the main areas of interest, namely education (including vocational training), legal recognition, health care, and keeping children safe within child-oriented and child care organisations. The intention is to embark on a mapping exercise, but the group still needs to mobilise greater participation from local agencies, organisations and/or individuals. The HCMC CRWG wants to be action-oriented and plans to start working on guidelines for the promotion of child protection policies, not only for its member organisations but also for other stakeholders.

2. HCMC Disability Working Group

The main activities of the HCMC Disability Working Group in 2008 have been to focus on sharing updates of projects amongst all DWG member organisations, the establishment of the working group and the setting up the terms of reference for its operation. Representatives of the HCMC DWG meet every two months at Sesame restaurant. The first meeting was on May 9, 2008. The meetings are held to create opportunities/forums for sharing information, lessons learned from project operations and coordinating events for people with challenges/disabilities. The following discussions and activities have taken place: establishment of the HCMC DWG; finalising a TOR for the DWG; sharing websites, links with agencies who organise tasks amongst people with disabilities; sharing information on processes and procedures for people with challenges/disabilities among HCMC DWG member organisations; updating activities for people with challenges/disabilities both within Vietnam and internationally; and coordinating the International Day for the Disabled, which will take place on Sunday November 30th.

3. HCMC HIV/AIDS Technical Working Group

The HCMC HIV/AIDS TWG has met a total of five times with the participation of approximately 61 people representing 34 organisations. The group meets bi-monthly and averages between 25 and 30 people per meeting and is currently chaired by CARE International in Vietnam. Meetings are conducted in English with Vietnamese translation. Since its first meeting in April, the group has accomplished the following:

- drafted a TOR;
- developed an action plan;
- applied for membership in the Hanoi-based HIV Technical Working Group;
- hosted guest speakers, including individuals who returned to the community after residing in a drug rehabilitation centre;
- recruited an international volunteer to help coordinate the groups activities;
- conducted a preliminary mapping exercise of the members of the group;
- held additional meetings between group members to organise activities/events; and
- facilitated the sharing of resources and information to all members of the groups if and when the need arises so that all the members of the group benefit, e.g., when potential funding opportunities arise and training workshops are conducted.

The group has been an active force in forming and consolidating interaction and collaboration between group members. Further progress and accomplishments can be expected in the future as the group explores other avenues and activities that will help to maintain the momentum of the group.

Future directions for 2009

- Maintain the dynamic of the HCM City INGO Discussion Group for information-sharing and collective learning, as well as for joint advocacy and policy dialogue activities.

- Support the thematic working groups and ensure their smooth functioning.
- Set up a HCMC Administrators Working Group.

ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP (ICT4DEV)

<http://ngocentre.org.vn/node/7105>

The aim of the working group is to help NGOs enhance their use of ICT to improve the quality of their development work in Vietnam. Through advising, training, sharing resources and inviting special expert guest speakers, the ICT4DEV WG seeks to maximise productivity and communications in the development community in Vietnam by helping NGOs to fully harness the power of ICT in their development activities.

The ICT4DEV WG currently hosts a blog site within in the NGORC website. The blog acts as a central resource and information on ICT issues within Vietnam and IT development globally. The ICT4DEV WG functions under the umbrella of the NGO RC.

Key objectives

- To help bridge the ICT gap and capacity levels between different stakeholders in the development community in Vietnam.
- To increase awareness, integration and adoption of free open source (FOSS) software tools within development organisations.
- To encourage information-gathering and sharing on ICT topics and skills.
- To improve ICT infrastructure within the Vietnamese development community and to introduce the latest ICT ideas, applications, technologies and best practices from around the world to development workers in Vietnam.
- To develop an ICT4DEV Task force to help build the ICT capacities of development organisations.
- To facilitate an environment of skills-sharing and intensive peer learning relating to ICT for development.
- To provide an opportunity for development organisations working at the grassroots level to expand their practical expertise in areas such as: multi-media tools, data collection and analysis, ICT security and crisis management etc.
- To act as a catalyst for improved ICT for development awareness and best practices within the ICT development community in Vietnam.
- To conduct research and disseminate advice and results relating to technical developments the development community in Vietnam.

Key activities during 2008

- **ICT4DEV WG Inaugural Meeting, July 16, 2008**

This was the group's first meeting to explore the potential and relevance of establishing the ICT4DEV WG. The main discussion points were developing the key objectives and seek input on the potential range of activities that the working group will address.

- **The Art of Communications Workshop, October 24, 2008**

The workshop covered the following topics: how to use the internet more pro-actively; communicating news to a larger audience by using social networks; using ICT technology to convey a more dynamic message; ICT for fund-raising; and using technology more dynamically by instantly providing communications with people in isolated areas and up-to-date messages in disaster zones.

Future activities for 2009

Two further workshops will be carried in 2009: Collaborating and Communicating More

Effectively with your Staff; and Building a Website/Blog.

LANDMINE WORKING GROUP (LWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/127>

Overview

More than 30 years after the war, Vietnam is still contaminated with hundreds of thousands of tonnes of landmines and UXO are scattered all over the country's 64 provinces. One source estimates that UXO of various types make up 97 per cent and landmines 3 per cent of the current contamination (Catholic Relief Services), with particular concentrations in the central provinces and in certain border areas, contaminating every category of topography, including forests, mountains, pastures, cultivated land, lakes, rivers, streams, and coastal settings. Contamination lies on the surface in some areas, but considerable quantities also remain below the surface, generally at depths ranging from between zero and five meters, while some heavy ordnance has been found at depths in the 10-to-20 metre range.

It was estimated by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) by end of 2005 that only 20-25 per cent of explosives left by the war have been cleared up to date, accounting for 9-12 per cent of the country's contaminated land area.

In a collaborative effort to reach an impact-free environment for the Vietnamese people, the Landmine Working Group (LWG) was established in 1995 under the NGO RC in order to provide a forum for INGOs and other stakeholders to come together to share their experiences, present relevant research findings, and discuss possible points for future collaboration in mine action in Vietnam. The LWG's participating organisations' activities include clearance and survey, survivor assistance and rehabilitation, mine risk education, and other integrated development programs, including income generation and resettlement initiatives.

The LWG is dedicated to promoting collaboration amongst INGOs and other stakeholders active in the various fields of mine action within and outside of Vietnam.

Key objectives

- Give organisations working in the field of mine action a recognised representative forum in which organisations who specialise in clearance meet those who specialise in education, livelihoods, survivor assistance and so forth with a common voice to exchange information and experiences, discuss programme issues, and seek assistance to raise the profile of mine action in Vietnam to national and international stakeholders, including the INGO sector, donors and embassies, partners, mass organisations and relevant Vietnamese authorities.
- Facilitate frequent communication among mine action organisations to promote understanding, seek opportunities for cooperation, and support common efforts of group members in program activities.
- Disseminate mine action information, documents, reports etc. among member organisations through individual and common activities including LWG quarterly meetings, e-mail exchanges, the LWG website under the NGO RC website, and other activities etc.
- Collaborate and share experience, technical expertise and lessons learned among working group members.
- Promote events such as dedication ceremonies, meetings, seminars, and training workshops among LWG members and others where appropriate.
- Serve as a point of reference for interested parties seeking information and advice on mine action programmes and activities in Vietnam.

The LWG is coordinated by a voluntary chair, currently the Vietnam Veteran's of America Foundation (VVAFA). With a view to promoting a more flexible role among the working group in

facilitating common activities of the group such as the LWG quarterly meeting, since 2006, the group have decided to apply rotating chairs among the group members, regularly shift the LWG quarterly meetings between Hanoi and the provinces where mine action activities take place, and added field activities to supplement the agenda discussed during periodical meetings. However, VVAF will remain the contact point and overall coordinator of the group.

Update on key activities during 2008

Main themes during 2008

- Maintain quarterly meeting, including meetings at project site in Quang Binh province.
- Advocacy work to promote the Government to sign in International Cluster Munitions Convention.
- Restructured and improved the layout and content of group's website under the NGO RC.
- Shared information on different surveys and studies on UXO clearance work.
- Conducted experience and information exchanges on developing the management skills of Vietnamese staff and transferring further responsibilities for all programme activities.

Thematic meetings organised by LWG and LWG members in 2008

In 2008, LWG has been successfully organised the following meetings and workshops.

- **LWG meeting, March 24, 2008**

The meeting was organised and chaired by LSNV in Dong Hoi, Quang Binh to discuss victim assistance in Vietnam and other topics, as well as upcoming events. In the meeting, Mr. Nguyen Trung Thuc-Vice Director of Quang Binh DOFA reported about activities of seven INGOs specialised in landmine/UXO clearance and victim assistance in Quang Binh. He also detailed the specific activities each INGO carried out within the province and ways to strengthen collaboration and support between INGOs. He especially emphasised the key role of Quang Binh DOFA as an administrative body to facilitate communication and coordination among all INGOs in the province and the INGOs' quarterly meeting organized by Quang Binh DOFA, which is a useful forum for experience-sharing and strengthening collaboration among existing INGOs and local counterparts in the province. He also delivered several recommendations to the INGOs such as:

1. Mine clearance INGOs should expand activities to support local people to develop their economies.
2. UXO disposal should be carried out effectively and safely. Mine clearance should be done completely in each area.
3. Landmine-related INGOs should expand their work in mountainous and remote areas to help the poor there, as well as post-clearance development tasks. All landmine-related INGOs should increase their operations budget and activities for support to the beneficiaries.

CPI Project Coordinator Mr. Chi presented an analysis of casualties data by the CPI in 2007. From January 1 to December 31, 2007, CPI responded to 61 UXO related incidents in eight provinces with 94 people involved, of which 46 per cent were killed and 54 per cent injured. LSNVN director Ms Nguyen Thi Dung gave a presentation on victim assistance, which addressed six sectors: medical health care, physical rehabilitation, psychological support, social integration, economic integration and law and public policies. All meeting participants agreed that the essential tools for the implementation of victim assistance include advocacy groups, a good contact in the government, an existing law that supports the activity and a good strategic action plan which puts all these factors together to create leverage. Special attention was paid to the role of LWG members as an advocacy group for victim assistance in Vietnam.

- **LWG meeting in Quang Tri, July 9, 2008**

This meeting was chaired by SODI with a focus on experience exchange on mine/UXO clearance and the development programme of SODI for the last 10 years in Quang Tri province. Mr. Chuck Searcy said he highly appreciates the co-operation between SODI and Quang Tri province and mentioned that funding from the US government will be decreased for projects in Vietnam and there will be changes in priorities for funding. He emphasised that the survey work on ERW contamination in six provinces of central Vietnam has been finished and the clearance task will be prioritised for this region. MRE activities should be linked with EOD and clearance tasks. Victim assistance tasks includes assistance for victims, their families and their communities. It is necessary to boost the co-ordination work and information-sharing to avoid overlapping in the coming time. Mr. Searcy will contact with American Embassy to Vietnam for detailed information regarding funding for its projects in Vietnam in the coming years.

All participants agreed with LSNV that victim assistance is an important part of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is necessary to campaign the Vietnamese Government to sign the convention and to establish a steering board for the campaign. It was suggested that Mr. Searcy, Ms. Kim Hoa (LSN), and Mr. Toan (VNAH) will be the members of the steering board. Activities to collect signatures supporting the convention are needed. VNAH will organize a workshop at the national level to campaign the Vietnamese Government to sign the convention.

Other activities

UNICEF supported the second workshop to review draft national standards for Mine Risk Education (MRE) in October 2008. The workshop involved around 30 participants from line ministries, institutions, local and non-governmental organisations that have been facilitating MRE in Vietnam. As a result, the draft national standards for MRE are currently in the process of being revised and are expected to be finalised in December for submission to the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs for approval by the government.

In December 2008, UNICEF will support a training workshop to develop a training manual on child-to-child MRE for child peer educators. The workshop will take place in Hue and all the organisations involved in child-to-child MRE will be invited.

Following consultation by LSNV and VVMF, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam organised a workshop on the Cluster Munitions Convention in Hanoi over two days on October 27-28, 2008 following the South-East Asia Cluster Munitions Workshop in Lao. The event aimed to: (i) provide information on the issue of cluster munitions and overall information on the Oslo Process; (ii) provide a forum for a legal review of the proposed Oslo Convention and analyse what its ratification would mean for Vietnam. The workshop was considered very successful and provided a very good introduction to the CCM. It was the first national workshop of its kind in Vietnam to deal with an international convention, with a wide range of participants and stakeholders, in particular active participation of all government officials from six heavily affected provinces.

Following the workshop in Hanoi, on 21 November 2008, the Land Mine Survivors Network in Vietnam organised another workshop on the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Ho Chi Minh City. This workshop aims to disseminate information on the convention and promotion of international cooperation on landmine/UXO/Cluster Munitions clearance and victim assistance. The workshop focused on improving participants' understanding of the convention and the negative impacts of the cluster munitions in Vietnam, as well as several appropriate approaches for further promotion of supports to mine/UXO/cluster munitions clearance and victim assistance. The workshop was organised successfully in Ho Chi Minh City and attracted a great deal of attention

and a wide range of participants and stakeholders from foreign consulates, UNDP, mine action INGOs and government agencies in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and central provinces. Most of the workshop participants agreed on the meaningful positive impacts of the convention on clearance and victim assistance work in the affected areas, and that Vietnam should sign in the convention for mobilising more international support and collaboration in terms of landmine/UXO/cluster munitions victim assistance.

Future directions for 2009

- Continue improving the data-sharing mechanism among the group and external stakeholders.
- Combining and/or linking clearance programmes into development programmes for comprehensive and effective support activities.
- Facilitate more cooperation opportunities among the LWG for joint proposals, which will have greater impact in terms of the range of mine action activities and geographical deployment.
- Promote effective collaboration between INGOs and local counterparts.
- Seek more international support and cooperation for landmine/UXO/cluster munitions activities.

MICROFINANCE WORKING GROUP (MFWG)

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/127>

The Vietnam Microfinance Working Group (MFWG) was founded to create a forum for microfinance practitioners to share experiences with each other, come together to debate relevant issues, and speak to policy-makers with a unified voice. Founded in 2004 as an informal organisation under the NGO RC, the MFWG is open to all individuals and organisations interested in microfinance in Vietnam.

The overall goal of the MFWG is to enhance the impact of microfinance on poverty alleviation by promoting the quality and sustainability of microfinance in Vietnam, both in the practice of institutions and in an improved enabling environment.

Key objectives

- To encourage policy dialogue across relevant stakeholder organisations in order to facilitate the development of a favorable enabling environment.
- To promote sustainable microfinance among practitioners through disseminating information, sharing lessons learned and achieving consensus on best practices for microfinance in Vietnam.
- Identify and develop training and technical resources to be used in improving the quality of MFPs, particularly in accounting systems.

Currently the network includes more than 160 participants from approximately 80 organisations, including NGOs, INGOs, international organisations, donors, individuals and government agencies. Up to 30 organisations regularly attend meetings.

Since 2007, the MFWG is coordinated by a Standing Committee currently comprising 10 local NGOs, international organisations, the NGO RC and individuals who were elected in the 2007 Working Group Meeting. Each year, a Secretariat and Co-Chair is chosen from among these organisations to lead the MFWG. The role of Chair and Vice-chair are currently filled by TYM Fund and Save The Children US. The role of secretariat is filled by the M&D Center (Microfinance and Development Centre).

Key activities during 2008

Main themes during 2008

- Studying institutional models and preparing for transforming the MFWG into the Association of Vietnam Microfinance Institutions.
- Keep delivering information to members through communication vehicles such as: bulletins, brochures, websites, group emails etc.
- Organise forums on microfinance to promote the group's image and raise awareness among communities of microfinance.
- Encourage the development of good practice microfinance institutions by continuing to organize the annual Citi Micro Enterprise Awards.

Thematic meetings organised by MFWG in 2008

- Meetings of all group members every six months, including: the 2007 end-year meeting on February 25, 2008; the six-month summary meeting in July 2008; and the 2008 end-year Meeting, will be held in mid-January, 2009.
- The MFWG Standing Committee also meet on January 4, June 3, August 28 and October 9,

2008

- Round table meeting on introduction of the circular guiding the implementation of Decree 28 and 165, on April 2008, with the cooperation of SBV
- Organised four training courses (two in Hanoi, one in Danang and one in HCM City) for staff of State Bank branches and Finance/Foreigner Affair Departments in provinces/cities that engage in microfinance activities, with the cooperation of the ILO.
- Successfully organised the Asia Microfinance Forum in August 2008.
- Organised a workshop on indicators for the assessment of poor on November 19, 2008.

Other activities

- Organised a forum and ceremony for the 2008 Citi Micro-enterprise Awards on December 1, 2008.
- Published Microfinance Bulletins No. 11 and 12.
- Recruited more full-time personnel, including an Executive Director and Accountant/Administration Assistant.
- Training for MFWG staff.
- Maintained relations with SBV for information-exchange and contributed ideas to policies/regulations on microfinance.
- Maintained good relations with donors and partners such as the Ford Foundation, ADA, SEEP Network, IFAD, the MIX, and others related to MFWG activities.

MFWG business plan for 2009-2011

- Promote an enabling policy environment for MF development.
- Continue dialogue with SBV, MoF and other decree authorities to identify resolutions to constraints for transforming members, and share results with all members in the Transformation Notes and Handbook.
- Engage BIDV and the World Bank in the revision of eligibility criteria for MLF to ensure access to capital by licensed MFIs.
- Engage BIDV, the World Bank, VWU central (ACCESS), ADB, AFD, and policy-makers in dialogues on wholesale capital loan funds based on a concept paper agreed upon by members, and seek international technical assistance for design if necessary.
- Present the VAMFI Code of Ethics and Policy Concept Note (including interest rate deregulation) to SBV and donors (ADB and AFD) as input to the National Microfinance Policy Paper and follow-up.
- Conduct public/policy-maker education sessions and solicit SBV/VNBA assistance to host at least two educational dialogues per year.
- Disseminate progress on discussions in Bulletins, annual reports and at members' meetings, and solicit comments and additional input, including member presentations at public meetings.

WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION WORKING GROUP

<http://ngocentre.org.vn/node/138>

Overview

The NGO RC Working Group on Water Supply and Sanitation (WatSan WG) was established in 2003 to enhance the development of the urban and rural water sector in Vietnam. Its objectives are to create a forum for International and Vietnamese NGOs and other interested stakeholders to increase their knowledge of the relevant issues related to water supply and sanitation (WSS) in and outside Vietnam, and for participants to enhance their experiential and intellectual contributions to the development of the WSS sector. Within the WSS sector, the focus is primarily upon rural water supply and sanitation (RWSS).

Church World Services (CWS) had chaired the group for more than three years, therefore in January 2007, the Chair rotated to Mr. Rick McGowan, the Water, Sanitation, Environmental and Climate Change Specialist from the East Meets West Foundation (EMWF). Mr McGowan assumed the role in September 2007. The WatSan WG meets four times per year, approximately quarterly.

The overall goal of the WSS-WG is to share sectoral knowledge and experience to improve the quality and efficiency of water supply and sanitation facilities and services for rural and urban users of water supply and sanitation services in Vietnam.

Key objectives

- Facilitate communication and information exchange between INGOs, multilateral and bilateral agencies, local partners and Vietnamese authorities.
- Give organisations working in the WSS sector a recognised forum to discuss practical programme issues.
- Raise the profile of the WSS sector in Vietnam so that other organisations providing WatSan services and/or knowledge will be readily able to access information and advice in planning, implementing and improving the quality of water and sanitation services to project and program beneficiaries.
- Collaborate and share technical, planning and financial expertise on WSS issues across a wide range of issues such as improving sanitation (school and household latrines), hygiene behavior (in collaboration with the WSP hand washing initiative), management, design, operation and maintenance of rural water systems, and affordability of improved WSS services for poor and marginalized communities.
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of WSS activities and services.
- Share information on WSS policies, planning, procedures, and management, and to improve understanding of sectoral issues among all interested parties.

Key themes during 2008

- Sharing information and experience in promoting the use of appropriate types of sanitary latrines, including physical, financial and cultural assessments of latrine designs, construction, costs, operation and maintenance, for different conditions and user groups (e.g., households, schools, public buildings).
- Sharing information on hygiene and sanitation behavioral change promotion, addressing a wide variety of physical, cultural, financial and health conditions among different targeted communities, in a wide range of presentations on sanitation project/program on hand-washing initiative, latrines at schools, and Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS).
- Household and small commercial scale water filtration – As not everyone has access to piped treated water, developing household level water filtration devices that can provide

good quality water at a reasonable price is important to water consumers in the more remote areas.

- Management models for rural water systems – Following several workshops and discussions with the Standing Office (SO) of NTP-II, presentations and discussions took place about water system management models to provide efficient and cost-effective rural water system management.
- Institutional aspects of rural water supply – Water governance in the Mekong Delta.
- Information, education and communications related to water supply, sanitation, health and hygiene promotion.
- Water quality monitoring – Regulations, testing protocols, and water treatment processes in piped water systems.
- Monitoring and evaluation – the new NTP-II SO M&E protocols have been released.
- Cooperation with water and sanitation organisations – A broad range of organisations have actively participated in the WatSan WG this year, including SNV, Path, Care, East Meets West Foundation (EMWF), VUFO, French Red Cross, German Red Cross, MARD SO/NTP-II, Sanivat, GHD, Habitat for Humanity, Helvetas, East Vietnam, Samaritan's Purse, International Development Enterprises (IDE), Medrix, Oxfam, World Vision, FrogTech, GVI, Child Fund Australia, PACCOM, World Vision, CHEERS, AFAP Australia, Lien AID, NGO RC etc.

Thematic meetings organised by WSS-WG in 2008

WSS-WG Meeting – January 2008

Presentations/discussions included the following:

- Improved sanitation - Being the first meeting in 2008 (a year designated as the International Year of Sanitation), the main theme of this meeting was sanitation. The usefulness and applicability of the so-called EcoSan latrines were discussed. It was found that although donors are very supportive of EcoSan latrine dissemination, the Vietnamese people might be more skeptical about EcoSan latrine use for cultural reasons.
- Latrine options - Other latrine options and promotion issues were discussed such as: sufficient water supply; improvement of school latrines; research; projects by Oxfam GB, World Vision Vietnam, BORDA, Child Fund Australia, and Helvetas; local people's acceptance of improved latrines; awareness-raising of health benefits; urban areas; and various pricing levels, subsidies and affordability among coops and NGOs. The issue of school latrines was discussed more in depth. It is a high priority area, which has also received more funding lately. Many NGOs have also been involved in providing improved sanitary latrines to their beneficiaries.
- Water quality testing and long-term monitoring protocols - There are several different water quality standards used by different organisations under different conditions and the different parameters were presented and discussed. Another water quality issue that was briefly discussed was pesticides and herbicides testing. Typically, pesticide and herbicide testing is not commonly undertaken because of the wide variety of different chemicals that would have to be tested for, often requiring specific tests for each type of pesticide or herbicide, which would be prohibitively expensive.

WSS-WG Meeting - March 2008

Presentations/discussions included the following:

- IDE Vietnam's sanitation marketing project - has resulted in an increase in latrine coverage of project areas from 4-22 per cent in many communities. All these latrines were financed by the households themselves, without any external subsidies.
- Water and Sanitation Projects carried out by EMWF – EMWF was awarded a competitively

bid \$3-million contract for providing piped and treated rural water supply in the central coastal region of Vietnam under the Global Partnership for Output Based Aid (GPOBA), managed by World Bank in Vietnam.

- Water Sanitation projects carried out by UNICEF and German Red Cross - There was a consensus about the importance of following the government's guidelines about water and sanitation planning and development.
- A Water demand estimation model for rural craft villages with central and local water supply in the Red River Delta was presented by German geographer Steffen Grothe, on the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Project in Nam Dinh province.
- Updates on the nearly completed NTP-II Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) protocols were discussed, along with a brief discussion on the recurring issue of water quality monitoring, procedures, costs, protocols, and institutional responsibilities.

WSS-WG Meeting – May 2008

Presentations/discussions included the following:

- Ms. Nga Nguyen, Coordinator of the National Handwashing Initiative of the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) of the World Bank in Vietnam, gave a brief summary of the status of the nearly completed hand washing promotion materials. This initiative, led by MoH and the WB, is being implemented in an initial 500 communes in 10 provinces, including Nghe An, Thanh Hoa, Binh Dinh, Ninh Thuan, Dong Thap, Vinh Long, Tien Giang, and An Giang.
- Nadine Reis, a German PhD candidate working in Can Tho, presented an analysis of water governance in a state and donor-centered setting. Rapid economic development has taken place without adequate measures for ensuring the sustainability of natural resource use. People are facing increasing problems due to the considerable contamination of domestic water sources. Recent studies stress the need for broad reforms to formulate, implement and manage water supply and sanitation programmes.
- A brief presentation on PATH US' water, sanitation and health programme activities was given by Mr. Dung. So far, PATH has completed more than 35 projects in Vietnam.

WSS-WG Meeting, August 2008

Presentations/discussions included the following:

- The SANIVAT Project was presented by Le Thi Thanh Xuan from the Hanoi Medical University. It is a study of hygiene and sanitation in communities using qualitative research methods. The objective is to generate in-depth information on how school children perceive hygiene, how they practice hygiene (including sanitation in school settings), what motivates their hygiene behavior and how they respond to participatory school-based hygiene promotion activities.
- Sanitation/Hygiene Study of Ethnic Minority Communities in Lao Cai Province study was presented, which is using a health-focused approach.
- Other issues discussed at the meeting included: SNV Household Level Water Filters, Cost-Benefit Analysis of Sanitation Interventions in Vietnam presented by Nguyen Hoang Yen (CEFACOM), and the WSP Handwashing Initiative presented by Ms. Minh From WB.
- Discussion of various water and sanitation issues at a conference hosted by MARD. Members of WATSAN WG shared their experience on conducting water sanitation projects, including the private sector, and discussed how to cooperate with MARD RWSS development efforts, and future directions for WatSan activities in 2009.

WSS-WG Meeting, November 2008

Presentations/discussions included the following:

- Private Sector Water System Management, and the East Meets West Rural Water Supply Program – this presentation was prepared by the Manager of the EMWF Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program Mrs. Hoang Thi Tam, and presented by Rick McGowan.
- Ms. Hanh of Child Fund gave a presentation on Child Fund's experience with installing Biosand filters for household-level water treatment.

Other activities

- Active participation in different workshops hosted by MARD related to water and sanitation issues.
- Members of the WATSAN WG also shares their experiences on conducting projects in the sector with different actors in Vietnam, including the private sector, through MARD workshops.

Future directions for 2009

In the coming year, the WATSAN WG will continue to promote the exchange of information between organisations working on issues related to the WSS sector. Thematic topics will likely include water and disaster mitigation, construction costs, and effective rural sanitation.

Information on water, sanitation and hygiene at schools will continue to be shared and discussed. The working group will enhance coordination with the government and donors through the RWSS Partnership and other initiatives, and continue to provide feedback on policy-related issues surrounding RWSS.