



DFID UNDP Strategic Partnership Initiative
End of Project Review Report

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by

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This report reflects the perspective of the consultant and does not necessarily represent the views and opinions of DFID and UNDP, nor of the Vietnamese Authorities or any of the other agencies and individuals consulted during the Mission.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development
CC	Climate Change
CEBA	Committee for Economic and Budgetary Affairs (of the National Assembly)
CEU	Country Economics Unit (UNDP)
CEM	Committee on Ethnic Minorities
CIEM	Central Institute for Economic Management
DEBA	Department for Economic and Budget Affairs
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DLRE	Department of Local and Regional Economy (part of MPI)
GAPAP	Governance and Poverty Policy Analysis and Advice Programme
GBP	Great Britain Pound
GOV	Government of Vietnam
GSO	General Statistics Office
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation Agency
HEPR	Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction Programme (GOV)
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MIC	Middle Income Country
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NEX	National Execution
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NTP	National Target Programme (GOV)
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee
ONA	Office of the National Assembly
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PAR/AC	Public Administration Reform/Anti-Corruption
PCG	Programme Coordination Group (One UN)
PEP	Harmonizing Poverty Reduction and Environmental Goals in Policy and Planning for Sustainable Development
SLGP	Strengthening Local Government Capacities for Planning, Budgeting and Managing Public Resources Project
SPI	Strategic Partnership Initiative
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USD	United States Dollar
VDG	Vietnam Development Goal
VFF	Vietnam Fatherland Front
VIDS	Vietnam Institute for Development Studies (part of Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations – VUSTA)
VLA	Vietnam Lawyers' Association

Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Strategic Partnership Initiative (SPI) between DFID and UNDP in Vietnam was signed in September 2004 and implemented until June 2009. The initiative aimed at broadening and deepening UNDP's focus on the reform process in Vietnam and to contribute towards enhancing the effectiveness of the UN system in supporting Vietnam in achieving the VDGs and the MDGs. The SPI was meant to allow for a more comprehensive and strategic engagement between DFID and UNDP, moving away from an ad hoc project level approach. In practice the partnership focused on work in the following areas:
 - Strengthening democratic governance, accountability and voice
 - Supporting the process of economic and social transition
 - Strengthening environmental sustainability
 - Responding to emerging national priorities
- 1.2 The review focused on purpose and goal level and respective indicators of the SPI monitoring and evaluation framework and the extent to which the SPI implementation reflects the operating principles of the partnership. The review consisted of several stages, including desk review of existing documentation, briefing meetings in Hanoi, semi-structured interviews with DFID and UNDP staff, with GOV representatives, peer bi-lateral organisations and other UN agencies. A debriefing meeting focusing on findings and their validation was conducted and the draft report was presented and discussed to key stakeholders in Hanoi.
- 1.3 UNDP has as part of the SPI implemented a range of ten projects related to the priority areas mentioned above, which were all aimed at supporting the transformation process in Vietnam and of which several included work on politically sensitive areas. All projects were implemented making use of National Execution Modality (NEX) and there was a strong GOV ownership in all projects concerned.
- 1.4 Though there are differences in the extent to which the projects were successful, overall the implementation of these projects has contributed to reaching the purpose specified, i.e. supporting UNDP Vietnam in broadening and deepening its focus on the reform process in Vietnam. Through the financial arrangement of the SPI with yearly allocation and a hands off approach from the side of DFID in terms of management of SPI and its components, transaction costs could be reduced considerably both for DFID as well as for UNDP and partner agencies.
- 1.5 Making use of the opportunity provided by the SPI, UNDP Vietnam has been able to develop its programming to include policy analysis and advice functions which have started to inform high level decision makers in the on-going process of reform and transformation in Vietnam. This has been done on selected themes including economic policy, rule of law/access to justice, public administration reform/anti-corruption and climate change. UNDP has made use of its comparative advantage vis a vis GOV to engage in policy work, which has included working on politically sensitive issues, including legal reform and anti-corruption and has included establishing partnerships with new actors and developing new ways of engagement with GOV. With four policy advisory positions in place UNDP Vietnam has enhanced its capacity to contribute further to the reform process in Vietnam.
- 1.6 Assessing the outcomes of the SPI on the goal level, of main importance is the on-going cooperation between DFID and UNDP in Vietnam, which has been deepened through yearly review of SPI implementation and strategizing for the year ahead, through work on selected projects as well as through the development of policy analysis and advice. The aim of having UN agencies working in more joined up ways through the SPI could be less realised and appeared in practice to be less focused on. There are nonetheless good examples of cooperation between UNDP Vietnam and other UN agencies in project work as well as in the newly developed policy analysis work, but there are also cases in which important opportunities for cooperation did not materialize. In particular in view of the One UN initiative in Vietnam this will be an important area to further enhance. With more UN agencies moving

upstream and developing their policy analysis capacities there is a need to agree on comparative advantages amongst the various agencies and to build complementary rather than overlapping or competing capacities.

- 1.7 Regarding Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) various of the SPI supported projects built GOV capacities. On the other hand M&E of projects has often been relatively weak with attention focusing mainly on inputs, activities and outputs at the expense of outcome levels. This implies limitations to the practicing of results based management within projects and UNDP Vietnam at large.
- 1.8 Important lessons were learnt as a result of the SPI and its implementation. A lesson for DFID the issue of aid effectiveness, which in the case of the SPI has been enhanced by DFID's hands-off approach in terms of management as well as by its strategic and technical engagement on the level of the SPI and its components. It is in particular this combination of stepping back from managerial responsibilities paralleled with strategic and technical engagement that has provided the key to aid effectiveness.
- 1.9 Important lesson for UNDP is that policy analysis and advocacy require different partners to work with compared to implementing projects and pro-actively looking for parties to engage with has provided UNDP with new working relationships and new ways of engagement with GOV. Moreover, there appears to be considerable added value in the cooperation of policy advisors across UN agencies on topics that require the complementary capacities and competencies of various organisations. This has benefits for the results of the work and can enhance cooperation amongst agencies within the ONE UN system. There is a need for adaptation in organisational culture in UNDP and other UN agencies in order to enable this.
- 1.10 Key Recommendations include:
 - In order to extend the partnership with UNDP in Vietnam, there is a need for DFID to remain engaged with UNDP on a strategic and technical level and thus to further support the change process that it has encouraged so far.
 - There is a need for UNDP in its policy analysis and dialogue work to move towards a more strategic longer term approach in terms of what issues to address and whom to work with. Moreover, there is a need to reinforce the extent to which the various components of the programme mutually reinforce one another.
 - There is a need to further institutionalise the policy work within the country office
 - Policy advisory work needs to be linked more explicitly with capacity development of partner agencies in order to build capacities on national level
 - There is an urgent need to reinforce Monitoring and Evaluation within UNDP Vietnam. This concerns the quality of project M&E systems as well as the need to develop means for M&E of Policy analysis and advocacy work, making use of existing M&E methods and tools for these type of activities.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Strategic Partnership Initiative (SPI) between DFID and UNDP in Vietnam was signed in September 2004 and implemented until June 2009 (which includes an extension of 6 months within the existing budget). The initiative aimed at broadening and deepening UNDP's focus on the reform process in Vietnam and to contribute towards enhancing the effectiveness of the UN system in supporting Vietnam in achieving the VDGs and the MDGs. The SPI was meant to allow for a more comprehensive and strategic engagement between DFID and UNDP, moving away from an ad hoc project level approach. The rationale of the partnership, as described in the project memorandum was twofold, on the one hand it was meant to create greater coherence in the agencies engagement in the development context of Vietnam, strengthening the comparative advantage that a bilateral and multilateral bring to the development debate. On the other hand it was meant to enhance aid effectiveness as expressed in the Hanoi Core Statement¹ through avoidance of duplication amongst donor agencies and reducing the transaction costs for both agencies and thus enhancing the efficiency of development assistance provided. The partnership in Vietnam was related to a global framework arrangement that DFID and UNDP had entered into in March 2003.
- 1.2 The SPI started off with a number of projects, which included seven projects that were implemented or planned already by UNDP with the support from DFID². Moreover, additional projects were added which resulted in 10 projects funded through the SPI. In addition to these project activities, it was realised early on that non-project activities were needed in order to realise the aim of the SPI. In order to enhance UNDP's capacity for policy related analysis and advice a number of policy advisers were recruited. This started off with recruitment of an Economics Policy adviser, who became the head of the Country Economics Unit and at a later stage the recruitment of Policy Advisors on Public Administration Reform/Anti-Corruption, and Rule of Law/Access to Justice. The last advisor to be recruited was on Climate Change, in order to enhance programming in this emerging field³. The various advisors were instrumental in conducting a wide range of field research and studies regarding key issues in their respective fields which were aimed to inform the debate around these topics in Vietnam as well as informing policy and law making concerned.
- 1.3 The SPI funding arrangement concerned the provision of financial support from DFID to UNDP over a four year period, with part of the funding allocated to existing projects and a large part of the budget unallocated. Four thematic areas of support were indicated and decisions on funding were made by partners in annual review meetings. This meant in practice a large amount of flexibility in terms of use of the funds.
- 1.4 The SPI needs to be considered in the context in which it has been implemented. This context is characterised by a strong overall ownership by the Government of Vietnam (GOV) of the development process and with the Hanoi Core Statement guiding development aid, which was a response to and localisation of the Paris Declaration.
- 1.5 Over time, during its implementation, the SPI became increasingly related to two other processes, to which it also intended to contribute and respond. The first of those is the One UN initiative⁴ in which Vietnam is one of the pilot countries. In this process, UN agencies in Vietnam, under the leadership of GOV try to enhance their effectiveness through delivery as

¹ The Hanoi Core Statement is an agreement between GOV and development partners on actions to make aid more effective in order to achieve the VDGs and MDGs. It is a localisation of the conclusions of the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Paris in March 2005 (the "Paris Declaration") to reflect circumstances in Vietnam.

² DFID UNDP Strategic Partnership Initiative, Project Memorandum. September 2004.

³ Most of the policy advisory positions were covered under the SPI budget for most of the time. The exception to this is the position of the Climate Change Advisor, which was funded through an arrangements between AECID and UNDP, an arrangement which is comparable to the DFID – UNDP SPI arrangement.

⁴ United Nations, delivering as One: Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment, United Nations, New York, 9 November 2006.

one, based on one strategy and one set of goals. The initiative in Vietnam is based on five pillars: One Plan, One Fund, One Leader, One Set of Business Practices, and One Green House. UNDP was amongst the agencies to start the initiative in Vietnam together with UNICEF and UNFPA⁵ and is one of the six agencies⁶ that has developed the One UN Plan, that supersedes the individual CPAP. The second process concerns the changing development status of Vietnam, moving rapidly towards a Middle Income Country (MIC) with changing requirements in terms of support to economic and social development processes.

1.6 The SPI reflected the large overlap in terms of overall strategic objectives shared between the UNDP Country Cooperation Framework and DFID's Country Assistance Plan. The SPI was seen as a means for DFID to channel resources to UNDP in order to enable it to support core areas of reform across thematic areas critical to sustainable poverty reduction. The partnership focused on work in the following areas:

- Strengthening democratic governance, accountability and voice
- Supporting the process of economic and social transition
- Strengthening environmental sustainability
- Responding to emerging national priorities

1.7 The present report concerns the end of project review of the SPI which was conducted over a total of 15 days in the period between April 16th and June 5th 2009. The mission objectives included:

- Assess results and impact of the SPI against its framework and provide evidence base
- Draw lessons learnt for further strengthening of the United Nations in Vietnam in the context of the One UN initiatives.

1.8 The present report will first describe the methodology followed for this end of project review. Then it will present and analyse findings and provide conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations.

⁵ UNDP, UNICEF and UNCDF as resident members of the Executive Committee of the UN Development Group shared many common programmatic tools including synchronized Country Programme Documents and operational procedures. John Hendra, *Overview and Update on UN Reform in Vietnam*, November 2006.

⁶ The other UN agencies are UNICEF, UNFPA, UNV, UNAIDS and UNIFEM.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The review conducted consisted of five stages in which existing documentation was reviewed, briefing and de-briefing meetings were conducted, data were gathered from various stakeholders concerned and results were reported upon. An overview of the various stages and methodologies applied is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Key Stages of the Review Process and Methodologies used

Stage	Description	Methodology used
Stage 1	Review of Existing Documentation	Desk Review of available written information and documentation
Stage 2	Briefing with key UNDP and DFID staff	Briefing meeting with key UNDP and DFID staff
Stage 3	Data gathering from key stakeholders and peer organisations	Semi-structured interviews with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ DFID advisors, UNDP staff members including senior management, policy advisors, programme officers and M&E officer ➤ Project implementing partners and partners in policy work ➤ Selected officials from GOV ➤ Selected UN agencies and bi-lateral organisations De-briefing meeting
Stage 4	Reporting	Analysis and Report writing including Draft Evaluation Report and the DFID Project Completion Report
Stage 5	De-Briefing with key UNDP and DFID staff	Presentation and Discussion of Draft Evaluation Report

2.2 The first stage of the evaluation focused on review of existing written information sources⁷. Based on the findings of the first stage the methodology was further fine-tuned, including the identification of agencies to be visited in the consecutive stages of the evaluation. The second stage of the evaluation focused on discussions with DFID and UNDP representatives responsible for the implementation of the SPI in order to ensure a common understanding of the TOR and methodological issues, and to obtain further details regarding UNDP's and DFID's perspectives on the SPI.

2.3 The third stage of the review focused on primary data gathering and included semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the SPI, and selected UN and bilateral organisations. For comparative purposes, meetings were organised with two comparable initiatives: the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID) which is funding a similar Strategic Partnership with UNDP⁸ and the DFID partnership with the World Bank in Vietnam known as GAPAP⁹. In order to assess the way SPI is related to and has affected the One UN initiative, discussions with selected UN agencies were included. At the end of the third stage a two hour meeting was organised with key stakeholders of the SPI in which key findings of the evaluation were presented and validated and in which initial lessons learnt

⁷ For an overview of documents consulted see annex 3.

⁸ This AECID funded initiative is known as *Strategic Partnership with UNDP in Vietnam for the Reduction of Poverty*.

⁹ Unfortunately at the time of the mission all WB staff involved in GAPAP were attending meetings in Washington, so interviews could only be conducted with DFID staff concerned.

were presented. Both the second and the third stage of the evaluation were conducted in Hanoi.

- 2.4 The fourth stage of the review concerned further analysis of the data gathered and the writing of the Evaluation Report and the DFID Project Completion Report. The fifth and final stage of the evaluation consisted of a de-briefing with key UNDP and DFID staff and a presentation and discussion of the Draft Evaluation Report.
- 2.5 For the assessment of the achievements of the SPI use was made of the SPI logical framework, including the purpose and the goal levels of the framework. This was complemented with process issues, focusing on the extent to which the programme adhered to the Operating Principles of the Partnership. Thus the ways through which the project has tried to achieve its objectives was included in the evaluation. The Evaluation Framework is presented in table 2 below, and provided guidance to the review in terms of issues to be assessed.

Table 2: Evaluation Framework UNDP–DFID SPI End of Project Review

Goal	To enhance the effectiveness of the UN system in supporting Vietnam in achieving the VDGs and MDGs			
Objectively Verifiable Indicators	<i>DFID and UNDP working in more joined ways on issues of common interest</i>	<i>UN agencies working in more joined up ways</i>	<i>Rapid progress towards achieving the VDGs and MDGs</i>	
Purpose	To support UNDP in broadening and deepening its focus on the reform process in Vietnam for sustainable poverty reduction in line with Government's development strategy five year plan, and the CPRGS			
Objectively Verifiable Indicators	<i>UNDP using its comparative advantage to push for politically sensitive reform</i>	<i>UNDP supporting more transformation projects</i>	<i>UNDP Country Cooperation Programme (2006-2010) aligned with the Government five year plan</i>	<i>DFID-UNDP transaction costs reduced</i>
Process	The extent to which the SPI implementation reflected the Operating Principles of the Partnership			
Operating Principles of Partnership	<i>Foster national ownership and leadership by engaging directly in strengthening of GoV's own systems where possible</i>	<i>Support up-stream policy engagement and advocacy work</i>	<i>Support transformational projects</i>	
	<i>Collaborate with other development actors to avoid duplication & reduce transaction costs by</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pro-active sharing information with others</i> • <i>Building on and add value to work of others</i> • <i>Working with other donors on joint programmes</i> 	<i>Draw on the strength of the UN presence through greater UN collaboration</i>	<i>Focussing efforts only in those areas where there is a clear comparative advantage</i>	

- 2.6 As specified in the TOR (see annex 1), the End of Project Review of the SPI was meant to focus on goal and purpose levels and was not meant to cover all outputs¹⁰ that the SPI and its components had managed to realise. Therefore attention will be drawn to outputs only in order to enhance and illustrate findings at purpose and goal levels rather than presenting an

¹⁰ The four SPI outputs include: strengthened democratic governance, accountability and voice; supported the process of economic and social transition; strengthened environmental sustainability; and responded to emerging national priorities.

overview of outputs realised. Moreover, the SPI consists of a number of projects and non-project activities. In particular the projects funded through SPI have their own M&E systems including MTRs and end of project evaluations. Therefore the present review is not meant to evaluate the constituent parts of the SPI as such, but to assess the extent to which the various components contributed to realise the purpose and goal of the SPI, making use of the indicators provided in the SPI logical framework and process issues presented in table 2.

3 FINDINGS

- 3.1 In presenting the findings use will be made of the evaluation framework presented as part of the methodology (see table 2 above). In such a framework the purpose level is closest to the activities implemented and the outputs that the initiative has delivered. In order to relate to the level of implementation of the various components of the initiative the findings will thus start with the level of the purpose after which the level of the goal will be discussed. Finally process issues will be presented as well as aspects of sustainability of results.

INDICATORS ON THE LEVEL OF THE SPI PURPOSE

- 3.2 The purpose level indicators were used to monitor the extent to which UNDP has been able to broaden and deepen its focus on the reform process in Vietnam, this reform process is being aimed at sustainable poverty reduction. Key indicators on purpose level include UNDP making use of its comparative advantage, support for more transformation projects, alignment with GOV five year plan and reduction of transaction costs (see table 3 below).

Table 3: Purpose Level of the SPI Evaluation Framework

Purpose	To support UNDP in broadening and deepening its focus on the reform process in Vietnam for sustainable poverty reduction in line with Government's development strategy five year plan, and the CPRGS			
Objectively Verifiable Indicators	<i>UNDP using its comparative advantage to push for politically sensitive reform</i>	<i>UNDP supporting more transformation projects</i>	<i>UNDP Country Cooperation Programme (2006-2010) aligned with the Government five year plan</i>	<i>DFID-UNDP transaction costs reduced</i>

Making use of UNDPs Comparative Advantage

- 3.3 A key issue in this respect is the comparative advantage of UNDP, in particular the extent to which it has pushed for politically sensitive reform. Various parties consider UNDP relatively well positioned for this, given its long term relationship with GOV and its place within the UN system, which provides it with a relatively independent position compared to other multilateral and bilateral agencies. For the assessment of this indicator it is useful to look at support delivered through projects as well as at support provided through policy advisory positions that were created making use of SPI funds and which demonstrate new ways of working in UNDP Vietnam.

Support through projects

- 3.4 As part of the SPI a total of 10 projects were supported (for an overview of projects implemented see table 4 below). Several of the projects financed as part of the SPI pushed for politically sensitive reform. This includes the National Assembly and People's Councils project (A1 in table 4 below) which supports public consultations and hearings at provincial level, making use of international experience which was tailored to fit the Vietnamese context. This programme also works with Members of the National Assembly, building their individual capacities. This capacity building part of the project was difficult to introduce as elected members of the national assembly were regarded as relatively well educated persons with lots of experience. Nonetheless the project approach of experiential learning, focusing on the specific tasks of the members and exposing them to experiences from abroad convinced National Assembly leadership and members of the need of such an endeavour. UNDP moreover appeared to have the trusted position to play this role in this respect.

Table 4: Overview of Projects supported through SPI

Project Code	Project Title	Project Goal	Implementing Agency	Implementation period	Budget in USD ¹¹
A1	Strengthening the capacity of People's Elected Bodies in Vietnam (Phase II) (or National Assembly and People's Councils project)	To strengthen the capacities of the National Assembly (and its Secretariat) and People's Councils to perform their constitutional functions while increasing transparency and accountability	ONA	2003-2008	3,000,000
A2	Strengthening the capacities of the National Assembly and People's Councils in Vietnam in Examination, decision and oversight of State Budget (or CEBA project)	To strengthen the budget process and develop the budget oversight capacity of National Assembly and Provincial People's Councils in particular the CEBA and the DEBA of ONA	CEBA of ONA	2003-2008	3,000,000
A3	Improving the Regulatory Environment for Business (or Business Development)	To contribute to an increased income and employment and increased roles for smaller enterprises, enterprises located in rural areas, and those headed by groups that have less access to the bureaucracy including ethnic minorities and women	CIEM	2002-2005	1,983,000
A4	Support to the Improvement and Implementation of the National Target Programmes for Poverty Reduction	Support to poverty reduction efforts in Vietnam through the formulation and implementation of a sound poverty reduction strategy and corresponding action plans	MOLISA / CEMA	2002-2004 2005-2010	
A5	Harmonizing Poverty Reduction and Environmental Goals in Policy and Planning for Sustainable Development (or PEP)	To strengthen GOV capacity to integrate environment and poverty reduction goals into policy frameworks for sustainable development	MONRE	2004-2008	
A6	Strengthening Local Government Capacities for Planning, Budgeting and Managing Public Resources (or SLGP)	Addressing a range of policy issues linked to pro-poor and gender sensitive planning, budgeting and management of development resources by local government	DLRE/MPI	2005-2008	
A7	Support to Socio-Economic Development Monitoring (or SEDP)	To support strengthening of the national framework for monitoring the Socio Economic Development Plans, VDGs and MDGs	GSO	2005-2008	
A8	Support to Preparing the National Report on Millennium Development Goals	To provide support to the process of national monitoring and reporting on the progress towards achieving the MDGs including topics raised in the Millennium Declaration	MPI	2004-2005	162,100
A9	Partnership with Vietnam Lawyer Association	To strengthen the capacity of the Vietnam Lawyers' Association to play an active role in the ongoing legal and judicial reform process in Vietnam and to represent the needs and interests of its members.	VLA	2006-2009	628,110
A10	Participation and Civil Society Development for the Achievement of the MDGs in Vietnam (or Support to Civil Society)	To contribute to an enabling environment of people's participation and civil society development and a strengthened contribution of civil society to the development process and to achievement of the MDGs	VIDS		

¹¹ These figures concern totals, including cost-sharing arrangements with other donors so are not limited to SPI budget

- 3.5 The Partnership with the Vietnam Lawyers Association (A10) focused on strengthening of the VLA to play an active role in the ongoing legal and judicial reform process in Vietnam and to represent the needs and interests of its members. The project supported the VLA to become a more professional and independent organisation at a national as well as a provincial level. It tried to achieve this through building the VLA capacity to provide inputs into legal and judicial reform agendas and by strengthening the VLA legal aid centres. Moreover, it built institutional capacities of VLA.
- 3.6 Through the SPI support was provided to local governance capacity development. In the Strengthening Local Government Capacities Project (SLGP; A6 in the table above) capacities are built locally in terms of planning, budgeting and managing of public resources. This is done on multiple levels, including on GOV staff level, on the level of commune, district and provincial agencies. This is in order to enhance participation at the local level in planning and budgeting and to increase levels of accountability and transparency on investment schemes. Improved management and monitoring mechanisms were introduced to further institutionalise these aspects.
- 3.7 An innovative idea was introduced through the Harmonizing Poverty Reduction and Environmental Goals in Policy and Planning for Sustainable Development project (PEP, A5 in the table above). The project built on the realisation that poor households depend more heavily on natural resources, while degrading environmental conditions often affect poor and vulnerable groups most. It tried to turn this 'downward spiral' into an 'upward spiral' addressing issues of access, control and management of natural resources. The project sought to create direct linkages between poverty reduction and environmental protection. Pro-poor aspects were for example brought into the law on biodiversity, while on the other hand environmental aspects were incorporated into development issues. In addition to promoting knowledge and awareness the project focused on building capacities in MONRE to integrate both aspects and to coordinate donor support in these areas.
- 3.8 As part of the Business Development Project (A3) GOV was supported in the development of Laws on Enterprises and Investments. The support to these laws is generally recognized as an important achievement and is also referred to in the Country Programme Review of the DFID Programme conducted in early 2007¹². (DFID Evaluation Report EV 673, May 2007).
- 3.9 One of the projects supported through the SPI focused on support to the National Target Programmes of HEPR and Programme 135, the large poverty alleviation programmes of GOV. This project linked with the long standing support of UNDP in the field of poverty alleviation and related capacity development in Vietnam. The project aims to contribute to the wider country level outcome of pro-poor policies and interventions that support more equitable and inclusive growth. It tries to achieve this through promoting transparent and participatory design of the NTPs, including gender sensitivity, through enhanced M&E systems at central and local levels, effective targeting mechanisms, promoting transparent budget allocation and financial management systems and enhancing staff capacities on national and local levels. The MTR¹³ finds that the project support activities are designed based on actual needs of partners and that project products have contributed to improved implementation of both programmes, though to varying extents. Although this project does clearly link with the comparative advantage of UNDP, it is less clear how this was used to push for politically sensitive reform in this case.
- 3.10 The various projects supported through the SPI were integrated in terms of the outcomes that they need to produce on a programmatic level, but in practice each project very much stands on itself. There was found to be few cross-overs between projects, also in cases in which one would expect this, like in the case of the support to National Assembly and

¹² Clarke, Jeremy et.al. *Country Programme Review: Vietnam*. DFID Evaluation Report EV 673, May 2007.

¹³ *Mid-Term Evaluation Report TA Project VIE/02/001, Support for the Improvement and Implementation of the National Targeted Programmes for Poverty Reduction*, p 14.

People's Councils (A1) and CEBA (A2) and between these projects and the Strengthening Local Government Capacity project (A6)¹⁴.

- 3.11 All projects were implemented making use of National Execution (NEX) modality¹⁵, in which the GOV has a high degree of ownership over the project and its activities. The SPI is nonetheless considered to have pushed the agenda in several of the projects concerned. The NEX modality meant considerable limitations in terms of flexibility in adapting to changing circumstances as it works from a fixed project document with few opportunities for change.

Support through the creation of Policy Advisory Positions

- 3.12 The changing context in Vietnam, moving towards MIC status, with shifting positions amongst donor agencies and a different role to play for UNDP and other UN agencies, urged UNDP to look for a more flexible means of programming, that would allow them to play additional roles, in particular regarding policy analysis and dialogue. For this purpose, policy advisory positions were created within the UNDP country office in Vietnam, mainly funded through SPI. These positions focused on high level policy analysis and advice. These were a new type of position within UNDP Vietnam as the positions were not related to any project (as with technical advisory positions), nor did they concern a senior managerial role.
- 3.13 The work of the policy advisors responded on the one hand to immediate needs of several levels of GOV and related opportunities and was in that sense reactive. On the other hand, advisors started to analyse the status regarding the field that they worked in and began to identify the key issues that needed to be addressed. They started to explore opportunities for UNDP to engage in policy dialogue, based on the one hand on UNDP's mandate and on the other hand on its comparative advantage in Vietnam, in the mean time further developing this advantage in the respective selected fields of operation of the policy advisors. This more generic analysis and networking constituted the more pro-active part of the policy work.
- 3.14 In addition to their personal involvement in research and analysis the role of the advisors is explicitly to bring in other high level researchers and consultants for selected studies and research projects in order to enhance Vietnam's access to these kinds of high level knowledge networks, think tanks and other resources. This aimed to bring a number of key messages to GOV on selected issues in economic policy, access to justice / rule of law and PAR/AC, Climate Change. This proved to be an important role of advisors, as illustrated below.

Economics Policy Advisory Position

- 3.15 In an early stage of the partnership the SPI budget was used to fund the position of the head of the Country Economics Unit. This unit was the result of an internal reorganisation in which the strategic policy unit was transformed from a unit that had been mostly inward looking and had no clear engagement with GOV and other agencies, towards one that was outward oriented, identifying and addressing key socio-economic issues in the development context of Vietnam and engaging with GOV and supporting the building of GOV capacities.
- 3.16 The role of the advisor was to engage in particular with GOV and other donors on issues of economic policies and analysis. This provided UNDP and the wider UN organisation with the opportunity to provide an alternative voice on issues related to the economic transformation

¹⁴ The mid-term evaluation of the SLGP project points out this lack of formal cooperation amongst UNDP projects. Moreover, linkages with civil society in planning and oversights were considered to be weak. MPI/UNDP *Mid-Term Review Strengthening Local Government Capacity Project (SLGP)*. June 2008.

¹⁵ National Execution is defined as an operational arrangement whereby a national institution assumes overall responsibility and accountability for the formulation and the effective management, or execution, of all aspects of UNDP projects. NEX is distinguished from the project management arrangement common before 1990 when project execution was entrusted to UN Specialized Agencies. GOV/UNDP, *Provisional Guidelines on Project Management. Implementation of Nationally Executed Projects*. October 2005.

process in Vietnam. One of the immediate results was that UNDP was invited by GOV to provide their viewpoint on the Economic Crisis and its effects on Vietnam in addition to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Asian Development Bank. The creation of a Country Economics Unit (CEU) meant that the Economics Policy Advisor was more than just a single position and part of a larger whole.

- 3.17 The economics policy advisor started working on economic policy analysis with the Ministry of Finance and work on economic diplomacy issues with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Another theme dealt with early on was the issue of social security and various studies were conducted making use of consultants on this issue, including ways of how to finance social security in Vietnam. Together with the Academy of Social Sciences a review was made of the Doi Moi reform after 20 years of implementation, including identification of key challenges ahead. Moreover, with Harvard's Kennedy School of Government a paper on the policy framework for Vietnam's Socioeconomic development was prepared (see box below).

“Choosing Success”: A Key Paper produced with the Support of the SPI

Title of the Paper:

*Choosing Success: the Lessons of East and Southeast Asia and Vietnam's Future.
A Policy Framework for Vietnam's Socioeconomic development, 2011-2020.*

In this paper the authors compare economic development processes in East and Southeast Asia in order to inform policy recommendations for Vietnam, which they argue is at a cross-roads in its developmental process. Much of the future economic development in their view depends on a clear separation between economic and political power and decision-making. As another critical factor they identify education, which in their view played a central role in the East Asian model and which is assessed as being in crisis. Vietnam will, in their view, decide through the choices it is about to make, about the success of the development process in the decades to come. At the end of the paper a series of policy recommendations are included in the fields of education, infrastructure and urbanisation, firm competitiveness, financial system, state effectiveness and equity.

The paper was prepared at the request of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung by Harvard's Kennedy School of Government with support from UNDP Viet Nam. The Prime Minister requested a critical analysis of Viet Nam's draft socio-economic development strategy for the period 2011-2020 as part of a wider programme of policy dialogue consultations. The paper constitutes one in a series of policy dialogue papers.

- 3.18 In late 2006 a review was conducted on the Governance programming which identified limitations of on-going projects on governance and recommended to reduce UNDPs emphasis on supporting the PAR planning and management process, which had been stalled. The review, moreover, included the recommendation for UNDP to change its role and position in Vietnam with more attention to high level, targeted technical advice regarding Public Administration Reform and Anti-corruption.
- 3.19 In late 2007 additional policy advisers were recruited for Rule of law / Access to justice, and for Public Administration Reform / Anti-corruption. In this way UNDP enhanced the quality of its governance programming, in which they had previously been considered as merely one of the various donors with an unexceptional type of programming. Thus UNDP moved towards policy analysis and advice as key functions of its work. The flexibility of SPI funding made this possible in practice. The move towards policy analysis and dialogue was done while maintaining interest in projects that made use of a more traditional approach.

Topics identified for studies and research under UNDP-DFID SPI, focusing on national priorities in:

- Globalization, Poverty and Inequality in Viet Nam
- Towards an Integrated National System of Social Security
- Viet Nam's Industrial Competitiveness
- The Economic and Political Implications of Decentralization and Devolution

Rule of Law and Access to Justice Advisory Position

- 3.20 In November 2007 a policy advisor on rule of law and access to justice was appointed. At the start the advisor provided support to GOV on immediate requests that they had in the field of justice. This included contributions to the Judicial Reform Strategy of the Ministry of Justice and the issue of localisation of the Prison Management function within the Government system. Moreover, the advisor started to play a role in the donor – GOV policy dialogue and in donor coordination, which was considered necessary given the various donor initiatives in legal reform that were largely uncoordinated and for which UNDP was now in the right position. Finally, and most critically, the advisor started identifying issues that would be of key importance in the near future given the context and developments in Vietnam, but which issues were not yet fully recognized by GOV as important issues. Important topic concerned was the issue of rule of law in a socialist state. Support was also provided to the development of the “law on laws”, which concerns the process of development of legislation.
- 3.21 In addition to working through UNDP's relations with existing projects and programmes, the advisor, sought for opportunities to create new partnerships outside of existing project relationships. In this respect, he contacted working-level Party officials working on judicial reform which led to a high level meeting of the UN RC and the President of Vietnam in late 2008 in which it was agreed that the UN would step up its policy research and provide advice for the Judicial Reform Steering Committee. Working meetings in early 2009 led to an agreement on a component under a new UNDP-MOJ project (under formulation) working directly with the Secretariat of the Judicial Reform Steering Committee on cross-cutting research on judicial reform. In this way the adviser created a working relationship with a new partner that plays an important role in the judicial reform process and engages with this partner in a new way, through joint-research.

Public Administration Reform and Anti-Corruption Advisory (PAR/AC) Position

- 3.22 In October 2007 the Policy Advisor on PAR/AC was appointed. One of the first things the advisor started to work on was the interconnectedness of these two issues, which were often dealt with in separation from one another in Vietnam. Together with international and Vietnamese researchers the adviser published a paper that looked at the linkages between PAR and AC and which stated quite clearly that corruption is not a fault of the Public Administration System that would need to be repaired, but that it is part of the system itself. Therefore, they reason in the paper, in order to address corruption one needs to change the public administration system. Concrete policy recommendations are provided as part of the paper.¹⁶ This paper is part of a wider series of six Policy Discussion Papers on PAR and Anti-Corruption. The PAR/AC advisor has played a less prominent role in donor coordination, though contributes to the process. This can be partly explained by the fact that the anti-corruption donor coordination group in Vietnam is led by SIDA, Sweden.

¹⁶ Gainsborough et.al. *Corruption, Public Administration Reform and Development: Challenges and Opportunities*. 2009.

3.23 The PAR/AC advisor has put considerable effort in finding a suitable partner for the studies that were planned. The Ministry of Home Affairs would have been an obvious choice at first sight. In practice though they proved not very eager to join. They are also heavily involved in the PAR process itself. In an attempt to find a more independent partner, the advisor worked with both the National Academy for Public Administration and the Vietnam Fatherland Front. In particular the latter was a less obvious choice but proved to be very useful as the VFF is an umbrella organisation of all mass organisations in Vietnam and in a sense the Vietnamese equivalent to civil society, often referred to with the term "Society Forces". The role of the VFF includes amongst others to inform the planning process of the Party, assess laws before they are passed to the National Assembly and disseminate information. Like the mass organisations that it includes, the VFF is organised from national, through provincial, down to district and commune level. The relationship with the VFF proved an important way to connect with and engage with decision-makers in Vietnam on multiple levels and through nurturing relationships the adviser created a new means of engagement for UNDP, beyond existing project partners. For 2009 targeted research is planned on PAR case studies, civil society and anti-corruption, access to information and civil service reform¹⁷.

Climate Change Advisory Position

3.24 With AECID support in September 2008 UNDP was able to recruit a fourth advisor on the emerging issue of Climate Change. Though the policy advisor on climate change is not funded through the SPI the position is included here as the creation of the position itself can be seen as an important result of the UNDP – DFID SPI and of the relative success of the positions of policy advisors. The work of the Policy Advisor on Climate Change is meant to develop UNDP's role in dealing with Climate Change in Vietnam, including building strategic partnerships and joint dialogue initiatives between UN, national partners and the international community. The advisor has been focusing on knowledge generation in order to provide advice to senior government officials and leadership on policy and strategy issues regarding climate change as well as on ways to program and mainstream issues of climate change and on relevant partnership for the realisation of these issues.

3.25 The policy advisor on Climate Change is active as coordinator of the climate change group and has started developing the issue of gender and climate change together with UNIFEM and other UN organisations as one of the areas of research. Sharing of knowledge and information on sustainable development and climate change has been an important aspect of the work in order to promote awareness and advocate for change.

Relations between Policy Advisory Positions and Projects supported through SPI

3.26 Policy advisers on the one hand have made use of the relationships that existing projects had with GOV Ministries, Departments and agencies. On the other hand, as mentioned above, they have started to create relationships with other partners, based on the requirements of policy analysis and dialogue and worked on different types of engagement. The relationship between advisors and projects has been ambivalent. On the one hand advisers are meant to relate to UNDP's more traditional projects at key stages of the project cycle, including identification, design of the project document, moments of substantive discussion within a project and at the time of project review and evaluation. On the other hand, advisors are not meant to bear responsibility for the management of such projects, which is borne by the heads of the various clusters. In the mean time, policy advisors develop different kinds of undertakings, aimed at analysis, knowledge development and advice together with new partners.

¹⁷ Jairo Acuna-Alfaro, *The latent policy advice on PAR and AC in Vietnam: from a testing year (2008) to a challenging year (2009) and beyond*. UNDP Vietnam.

3.27 The division between policy analysis and advice on the one hand and support to existing projects on the other is not always that sharp. For example, support for the formulation of laws has been included in several of the projects supported through the SPI. As part of the PEP (A5), the GOV was supported in development of the Law on Biodiversity while in the Business Development project (A3) support was provided to the development of the Laws on Enterprises and Investments. Inclusion of policy advice to projects is not completely new, and is similar to support UNDP had already provided to its projects prior to SPI. Having policy advisors outside projects though, clearly provided additional opportunities that could not easily have been realised had policy advice merely been kept as part of support to projects and programmes.

Table 5: Comparison of Key Issues across the various Policy Advisory Positions

Key Issues	Economic Policy	Rule of Law and Access to Justice	Public Admin. Reform and Anti-Corruption	Climate Change
Date Policy Advisor started	July 2004	November 2007	October 2007	September 2008
Policy Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social security • Financial Policy • Grass roots democracy • Economic policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judicial Reform Strategy and process • Law on laws, process of development of legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAR and AC inter-relationship • Anti-Corruption • Role of civil society in AC • Press in AC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming on CC • Mainstreaming of Climate Change • CC, sustainable development and natural disasters
GOV partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences • Ministry of Finance • Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry • University of Bath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoJ • Secretariat of the Judicial Reform Steering Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vietnam Fatherland Front • National Academy for Public Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MONRE • MARD • MPI • MOIT • VASS
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass roots democracy study • Social security work • Doi Moi review • Policy Advisory Group Ministry of Finance • Financial Policy and analysis with Min of Finance • "Choosing Success" Paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project with MoJ to strengthen legal and judicial reform strategies • Research on cross-cutting issues regarding judicial reform with JRSC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAR Research Papers • PAR Case studies • Civil society & AC • Access to information and draft press law • Civil service reform • Network of AC Champions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study on CC and rice in the two main deltas • Study on CC, migration and resettlement • Study on CC and Gender equality

Policy Advisory Team

- 3.28 With the recruitment of three new policy advisors, in addition to the Economics Policy advisor, a new unit of policy advisors has been created within UNDP Vietnam. This unit includes all policy advisors¹⁸ and one Local Policy Support Officer. This team stands organisationally separate from the thematic clusters of Governance, Sustainable Development, Poverty and Social Development and the Country Economics cluster. Though Policy advisors were grouped together organisationally, physically they were located close to the unit that they needed to interact with. In the future it is planned for each of the advisors to have a Support Officer, meant to support the substance of the work, including relationships of advisors with various levels of GOV. Moreover, the policy advisory team has administrative support, though relatively limited at present.
- 3.29 The grouping of advisers in a team has separated them from the clusters and their projects, for which they have no direct responsibility. A location close to the cluster to which advisers belong based on the thematic area that they cover, does not seem to be sufficient to guarantee cooperation with the staff of the clusters. The four policy advisors report directly to the Deputy Country Director, there is no head of the policy team as such. This leaves the Deputy Country Director with at least eight direct reports. The Advisors have limited support, both in terms of research officers as well as in terms of administrative support. There remain various issues to be addressed for the further institutionalisation of the team, including line management of advisors and reporting lines, coordination amongst the advisory positions, and technical and administrative support required for their optimal functioning.
- 3.30 The issues to be addressed by policy advisors are not always theme specific. In one of the discussions a staff member of one of the Ministries concerned mentioned that the support provided by one of the policy advisors was useful, but that an underlying issue was not really addressed, which was the lack of analytical capacity of staff in the Ministry. There is a need for policy advisors to look at such more generic capacity issues and how to address these across the various partners and agencies that they are working with.
- 3.31 As part of the analysis and research work done by the various policy advisors and partner agencies concerned, capacities of partners have been built using a “*learning by doing*” approach. Moreover, in particular in the economics policy work which has been going on for a longer time, initiatives for capacity development have been undertaken. This is much less the case for the other policy advisors at this stage.
- 3.32 With the recruitment of policy advisors in the UNDP office it is clear that the expense pattern of the country office is changing, with a larger part of the budget spent on human resources. This change is a reaction on the changing context of Vietnam, which is moving towards a MIC status, in which the needs for support from UNDP have changed. Within UNDP though, there appears to be no different set of performance criteria for Country Offices working in MICs, meaning that a high amount of HR expenses means one scores relatively low in the internal performance management system.
- 3.33 Within UNDP there is a single set of rules that mainly relates to project modality as that has been the mode in which most of the work has been implemented. There is not a separate set of rules for non-project activities. Work is being done within the country office to adapt operational procedures and fine tune business processes accordingly.

Supporting Transformation Projects

- 3.34 Projects supported under the SPI can all in one way or the other, be considered as supporting Vietnam in its transformation process which includes shifting from a planned economy towards a socialist market economy and related changes in terms of governance

¹⁸ The Economics Policy Advisor is presently head of the Country Economics Unit, but once a new head for this unit has been recruited, he is meant to become part of the Policy Advisory Unit.

and aims in the longer term towards Vietnam becoming an industrialised country by 2020¹⁹. The projects concerned can be grouped into three broad categories of transformation including democratic governance, socio-economic transition and environmental sustainability. For a grouping of projects according to these transformation processes see table 6 below.

Alignment with GOV Five Year Plan

- 3.35 Overall the contents of the SPI programming is considered by all concerned to be in line with the GOV Five Year plan. The main thematic areas of the projects and initiatives supported through the SPI relate closely with the main tasks in the Plan as well as with the goals and tasks identified for specific sector areas. The SPI promoted national ownership and strengthening of GOV systems as principles of the partnership. The alignment with the SEDP is moreover, considered to be related to the regular way of working in terms of UNDPs programming.

Table 6: Projects supported through SPI grouped according to type of transition

Democratic Governance, Accountability and Voice	Economic and Social Transition	Environmental Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National Assembly and People's Council (A1) ➤ Budget Oversight (A2) ➤ Strengthening Local Government Capacity (A6) ➤ Partnership with Vietnam Lawyers Association (A9) ➤ Strengthening of Civil Society (A10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regulatory Environment for Business (A3) ➤ Implementation of National Targets for Poverty Reduction (A4) ➤ Harmonizing poverty reduction and Environmental Goals in policy and planning (A5) ➤ Socio-economic and MDG monitoring (A8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Harmonizing poverty reduction and Environmental Goals in policy and planning (A5)

Transaction costs reduced

- 3.36 An important aim of the SPI was the reduction of transaction costs between DFID and UNDP and thus an enhancement in the efficiency of development aid. The issue of transaction costs will be assessed from the perspective of DFID and UNDP. Aspects for implementing partners will be presented later as part of the issue of aid effectiveness.
- 3.37 DFID's management approach to the SPI was one of "hands-off", with DFID not involved in the day to day management of projects and non-project activities. DFID required overall financial statements on a 6 monthly basis. Though UNDP provided independent audit reports, under the agreement between DFID and UNDP these were not a requirement from DFID. DFID was involved was in the yearly review meetings. DFID headquarters staff participated in these meetings. DFID played an important role in reviewing progress obtained so far and setting out the directions for the next year, including identification of opportunities for funding in partnership with UNDP. From DFID's perspective this has certainly resulted in a reduction in transaction costs, in terms of their role in the design of projects as well as their implementation. Also DFID's direct involvement in terms of non-project activities has been limited and parties agreed that the hands-off approach had been implemented in practice, leading to a substantial reduction of transaction costs. Though DFID's transaction costs have been reduced based on their hands-off management practice, this was also considered to

¹⁹ Ministry of Planning and Investment, *The Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan 200-2010*, Hanoi March 2006.

have its downside in terms of limited involvement in some of the projects concerned, where staff considered that they did not benefit enough from other work DFID was doing in the field that they were working in. This though also relates to the limitations in staffing in DFID Vietnam, where a limited number of advisors are available.

- 3.38 Also for UNDP the SPI meant a considerable reduction in terms of transaction costs with DFID. This goes for the design of projects as well as for the reporting requirements. At the outset of the initiative the internal reporting requirements of UNDP were more frequent than those required by DFID. At a later stage the reporting requirements were streamlined and quarterly progress reports and an annual SPI report were agreed amongst partners. The reduction in transaction costs provided an important incentive for UNDP to engage in the SPI.
- 3.39 Though not explicitly included as part of the logical framework, transaction costs of implementing partners of projects funded through SPI are also an important aspects of overall transaction costs concerned. Reduction of transaction costs for partner organisations appear to have been mostly realised through harmonisation of reporting amongst DFID and UNDP, with both agencies requiring the same reporting frequency and formats from partner organisations.

Discussion

- 3.40 When looking at the issue of UNDP's comparative advantage, the projects supported through SPI can be grouped under three key themes that UNDP has been working on: democratic governance, economic and social transition and environmental sustainability, thematic areas where UNDP has a recognized comparative advantage. When including the issue of making use of one's comparative advantage **to push for politically sensitive reform** the conclusion differs for the various projects funded under the SPI. Some of the projects, in particular the project working with the National Assembly and People's Councils (A1) and to a lesser extent the project working with the VLA have played a much more important role in pushing the agenda than other projects (like Support to the Improvement of NTPs for Poverty Reduction - A4) in this respect.
- 3.41 With the creation of policy advisory positions UNDP Vietnam has further developed its comparative advantage, to include policy analysis and advisory services. It has done this in the fields of Economic Policy, PAR/AC, Rule of Law/Access to Justice and Climate Change. In addition to responding to direct requests from GOV on particular issues, policy advisors, in partnership with International and Vietnamese partners have started to analyse and provide advice on politically sensitive reform issues, including judicial reform, public administration reform, anti-corruption and key economic issues. In particular in the early days of their work, Policy Advisors have taken an exploratory approach, which suited the position they had to start from. In a relatively short time frame some of the advisors have managed to present new insights and viewpoints, which at times challenge existing views and perspectives in GOV and those of other key stakeholders. SPI enabled UNDP to make itself known as capable of high quality policy analysis and dialogue.
- 3.42 One can argue that the projects implemented using a NEX modality and the position that this provides to UNDP Vietnam as a trusted partner in development, was necessary for the policy advisory work to be initiated. In that respect the project work and the position that it provides UNDP has been used to start analysing and advocating on politically sensitive reform issues, partly responding to GOV demand and partly trying to influence the on-going debate with new issues and perspectives, and in this way trying to create demands based on new emerging needs.
- 3.43 The policy analysis undertaken by the advisors did seek opportunities to dig deeper than UNDP had done previously concerning the various themes and to address some of the underlying issues. An example from the field of Rule of Law and Access to Justice is the work done on the formulation of the "Law on laws", seeking to reinforce the lawmaking

process itself in addition to work conducted on individual laws and regulations. Establishing the interconnection between PAR and AC is another example in this respect.

- 3.44 Support of policy advisors is overall much appreciated by various parts of GOV and use has been made of the high quality advice that has been provided in various instances on various topics. This goes especially for the demand driven part of the advice provided. The part that is less demand driven, but based on the identification by the advisors and which concern issues that are not yet always on the radar of GOV agencies, clearly need a longer gestation period and results can only be expected in the years to come. There is a need for a clear communication and dissemination strategy in order to enhance use of results of studies and research conducted.
- 3.45 With the exploratory character of the policy advisory work, in particular shortly after initiation of policy advisory positions, activities do not yet necessarily form a clear and consistent whole. This goes in particular for the advisers on PAR/AC, Rule of Law/Access to Justice and Climate Change, which have been in place for up to a year and a half and applies less to the Economics Policy Advisory Position, which has been in place for almost five years. In this exploratory phase the advisors have on the one hand needed to show their capacities amongst others through publishing materials and participating in various workshops and meetings. This has provided initial results. Nonetheless, it is not always clear how issues are linked internally and whether the selected topics would be the optimal in terms of creating synergy. Also the relations of policy advisory work with on-going projects and programmes are less clear and the choice to put advisors at a distance from project management does not provide them with the means to forge these relationships in the short run.
- 3.46 The SPI has supported ten transformation projects in the thematic areas of Democratic Governance, Economic and Social Transition and Environmental Sustainability. In terms of its content the SPI programming was much aligned with the GOV Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan. The modality of the SPI, in which funds are provided for a four year period based on agreed upon thematic areas, and reviewed and further specified through annual review meetings has led to a substantial reduction in transaction costs for both UNDP as well as for DFID.

INDICATORS ON THE LEVEL OF THE SPI GOAL

- 3.47 The goal of the SPI relates to a more effective UN system to which the SPI is expected to contribute. This goal is further specified through the indicators identified of which the first two concern organisational issues, i.e. DFID and UNDP working more jointly and the UN Agencies in general working more jointly. The third indicator concerns the VDGs and MDGs and progress towards realising these. Details are presented in table 7 below.

Table 7: Goal Level of the SPI Evaluation Framework

Goal	To enhance the effectiveness of the UN system in supporting Vietnam in achieving the VDGs and MDGs		
Objectively Verifiable Indicators	<i>DFID and UNDP working in more joined ways on issues of common interest</i>	<i>UN agencies working in more joined up ways</i>	<i>Rapid progress towards achieving the VDGs and MDGs</i>

DFID and UNDP working in more joined ways on issues of common interest

- 3.48 On the level of projects funded through the SPI the involvement of DFID varied considerably across the various projects. In the NTP/HEPR project (A4) and in the Strengthening Local Government Capacities for Planning, Budgeting and Managing Public Resources project (SLGP) (A6) there appears to have been substantial discussion and exchange of information between DFID and UNDP staff. For the Improving the Regulatory Environment for Business project (A3) and Partnership with Vietnam Lawyers' Association (A9) project, programme managers indicated that not much discussion had taken place with DFID and some regarded this as a missed opportunity to learn from DFID's experience.
- 3.49 In the implementation of SPI use was made of common UNDP systems and mechanisms for its implementation. Over the life of the SPI increased attention was paid to monitoring and evaluation, and a specific programme officer position was created to provide a focal point for the initiative and to support monitoring and evaluation and reporting. This improved access to information for DFID substantially.
- 3.50 Activities implemented under the partnership and their outcomes were reviewed by both parties in Annual review meetings. In addition to DFID Vietnam staff, members of DFID Head Quarters participated in these meetings. UNDP was represented by UNDP senior level staff and staff of the UN resident coordinator office regularly participated in these meetings. In terms of policy analysis and advisory work DFID was clearly involved in setting of the overall agenda for the policy work though DFID was not seen as imposing its own agenda on the research and studies prioritized. These annual meetings were considered important occasions for learning and provided opportunities to discuss issues related to the partnership as well the wider One UN initiative in Vietnam.

UN Agencies working in more joined up ways

- 3.51 The expectation behind this indicator when formulated during the design stage of the SPI was that UNDP would be able to disburse funds to other UN agencies as part of the SPI initiative.²⁰ In practice though, this proved unrealistic and working together with other UN agencies was promoted using other means.
- 3.52 Working with other UN agencies varied across the various projects funded through SPI. Some projects, like Strengthening Local Government Capacities for Planning, Budgeting and Managing Public Resources (SLGP, A6) work closely with other development partners including UNICEF, SDC, JICA, and GTZ who implement comparable initiatives in other provinces in Vietnam. Parties coordinate their activities and share information and

²⁰ Discussion with Phil Harding, DFID

experiences. The manual produced by UNDP is used more widely by other organisations. A related donor group has been re-activated and DFID is regarded to have been instrumental in promoting and supporting donor coordination.

- 3.53 The newly established Programme Coordination Groups as part of the One UN initiative in Vietnam are considered to have enhanced information sharing and coordination across UN agencies in Vietnam. Project staff often appeared to participate in these groups. Participation of policy advisors was varied, with the Climate Change advisor playing a more active role and the PAR/AC Advisor playing a less prominent role. These differences also relate to wider issues, including the relatively high need for coordination in an emerging thematic field like climate change.
- 3.54 Other UN agencies in Vietnam, like UNICEF are also “moving upstream” like UNDP and are investing in building capacities in policy analysis and dialogue. They do this related to their own specific mandate. There was an early attempt to create a UN policy unit as part of the One UN initiative which failed as individual agencies wanted to retain their spokesman ship on issues related to their specific mandate and appeared not willing to share this with other members of a UN Policy Group. With the building of policy analysis capacities in various UN organisations, there is a need to come to a shared understanding on comparative advantages in terms of policy analysis and dialogue amongst UN organisations. This is also recognized by the GOV and they see a need to avoid duplication and to play complementary rather than overlapping roles. Though UNDP has made clear choices in terms of the fields that the policy advisors cover, in practice there is still a lot of work to be done regarding positioning UNDP’s policy work vis a vis the policy work of other UN organisations and to seek complementary strengths and synergies in concrete situations.
- 3.55 There are examples of good cooperation in terms of policy analysis between UN Agencies and there are examples of lost opportunities. A good practice example is the work of UNDP and UNICEF on the rising food prices in which both organisations used their comparative advantage (see box below). One missed opportunity was the analysis of the social impact of the SEDP in Vietnam, including rights aspects. Cooperation between the various UN agencies is still considered to depend substantially on personal initiative, and is not yet seen as an institutionalised way of working. It seems that agencies have to put their UN interest upfront and make that supersede their agency specific interests, otherwise genuine cooperation is not likely to happen in practice. It is realised also that organisational cultural of UNDP and other UN organisations differ substantially and that changes are required for more profound cooperation. Disadvantage of cooperation is that activities always tend to take a lot more time with multiple agencies involved, while the work often needs to be done with considerable time constraints. PCG meetings would be the place to work out modalities of working together as UN agencies on specific subjects.
- 3.56 Other UN organisations are also in the process of positioning themselves in a Vietnam that will have Middle Income Status. UNICEF sees its role as knowledge centre and convenor of partners around issues on children, advocate on child rights and related issues towards GOV and others, with a vision of children as laid down in the Rights of the Child, building required capacities.

Joint Policy Analysis of UNDP and UNICEF

UNDP and UNICEF worked jointly on the research on rising food prices in Vietnam as a result of the present global economic crisis. Agencies divided tasks according to their comparative advantages, UNDP working on economic and agricultural issues and UNICEF looking at children and aspects of poverty and vulnerability. Both organisations had the required expertise in-house for the tasks at hand and both needed the knowledge of the other party to complement its own. The paper produced got high level attention drawn to it and the joint analysis provided a good basis for further cooperation on the issues concerned between the two organisations.

- 3.57 One of the more immediate effects of the DFID – UNDP support through SPI was that the Spanish bi-lateral support agency AECID adopted the SPI model and created its own partnership initiative with UNDP for a total amount of Euro 800,000 agreed in October 2006 (see box below). This meant additional support for the process that UNDP had engaged in and allowed for a fourth Policy Advisor to be recruited on the emerging theme of Climate Change. In terms of the Hanoi Core Statement though it was a separate agreement while it could on the other hand possibly have been, as indicated by DFID staff, a joint undertaking and thus more in line with the ideas on harmonisation in the Statement.

THE AECID STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH UNDP

The AECID initiative called *Strategic Partnership with UNDP in Vietnam for Poverty Reduction* supports amongst others a policy advisor on Climate Change and provides resources for research and studies on climate change in Vietnam. Key thematic areas for the SP with UNDP so far have been Climate Change and Gender, Gender budgeting and the Global Economic Crisis and its effect on development in Vietnam. The work is research and analysis oriented and meant to inform the development debate in Vietnam and beyond. Overall management from AECID is low key. The funds of the SP with UNDP are untied. For AECID building UNDPs capacity has become a more important part of the initiative with the development of One UN in Vietnam. AECID is very much interested in concrete outputs of the work and considers UNDP more focused on the longer term process and issues of a wider dialogue. AECID is about to conduct a Mid-term review for their SP with UNDP.

AECID has a lot of experience as a donor providing support to middle income countries in Latin America and North Africa and has been involved in providing support to policy analysis and advice for a long period of time.

- 3.58 SPI played a role in terms of serving as a model for the One UN fund. In particular the way in which funds of SPI were used for the response to the bird flu epidemic in Vietnam proved important for the later development of the One UN Fund (see box below). Some of the issues of the use of resources in SPI are mirrored in the One UN fund. This concerns in particular the balance between funds used for more traditional projects versus funds used for more flexible non-project work including policy analysis and dialogue. The SPI funds were only partly earmarked for specific projects, and contained a relatively large flexible part that enabled UNDP to develop its policy analysis and dialogue capacity.

SPI Funds used for Pooled Funding for Avian Influenza served as Model for the ONE UN Fund

With the outbreak of Avian Influenza in Vietnam the flexible SPI funds proved their usefulness in relation to an emergency and its response. DFID agreed with part of the remaining funds for the year to be used for a pooled fund from which the various UN agencies could draw to finance the immediate response. This enabled both an early as well as a coordinated UN response. The way funds had been pooled and the rules and regulations applied in this respect would later be used to model the ONE UN fund. As the funds were in the end reimbursed to SPI once other funding sources had been found Avian Influenza as such does not figure in terms of the expenses of the SPI, though there is an unmistakable important linkage.

- 3.59 With the establishment of the One UN fund, the funding situation of bi-laterals towards individual UN agencies changed dramatically. With the agreement of non-earmarking of funding to the One UN fund, the type of support that DFID provided to UNDP through SPI is no longer possible. Thus for UNDP it is essential to be able to access flexible resources as part of the ONE UN Fund in order to continue the policy advisory activities that has by now become an important part of its work. Though direct financial support from DFID to build its capacity is no longer an option, it is important for UNDP to maintain policy support from DFID in terms of the policy analysis and advocacy work it has engaged with, in order to sustain this type of programming in the near future.
- 3.60 The SPI was developed with the idea to further reinforce the cooperation amongst UN agencies and thus to enhance aid effectiveness. There have been instances of increased cooperation amongst UN agencies, and some of these instances have produced enhanced results. In particular in terms of the policy work it appears to have been on an ad hoc rather than on a systematic basis.

Rapid progress towards achieving the VDGs and MDGs

- 3.61 Vietnam has overall made good progress to achieving the VDGs and MDGs and is well ahead of schedule in terms of reaching the first objective of eradicating extreme poverty²¹. Overall it is difficult to directly relate the SPI initiatives to changes in VDG and MDG indicators though it is quite clear that the SPI projects and non-project activities will have contributed indirectly to reaching the VDGs and MDGs. The support of the SPI did include the *Support to Preparing the National MDG Report* project, which supports Vietnam in monitoring and reporting on the MDGs. So also here there is a link with the MDGs and VDGs and their monitoring in order to enhance their realisation.

²¹ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *Vietnam achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, September 2005.

PROCESS LEVEL INDICATORS

3.62 In addition to the purpose and goal levels of the SPI it is useful to look at the way the initiative was implemented. For this purpose the six operating principles of the partnership will be looked at (see table 8 below). In some instances there is some overlap with selected indicators discussed above. Overall though, looking at these issues provides additional information regarding the way in which the partnership operated in practice.

Table 8: Process Level Indicators of the SPI Evaluation Framework

Process	The extent to which the SPI implementation reflected the Operating Principles of the Partnership		
Operating Principles of Partnership	<i>Foster national ownership and leadership by engaging directly in strengthening of GoV's own systems where possible</i>	<i>Support up-stream policy engagement and advocacy work</i>	<i>Support transformational projects</i>
	<i>Collaborate with other development actors to avoid duplication & reduce transaction costs by</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pro-active sharing information with others</i> • <i>Building on and add value to work of others</i> • <i>Working with other donors on joint programmes</i> 	<i>Draw on the strength of the UN presence through greater UN collaboration</i>	<i>Focussing efforts only in those areas where there is a clear comparative advantage</i>

Fostering National Ownership and Leadership, strengthening GOV's own Systems

3.63 Projects supported by the SPI are implemented making use of the NEX modality, meaning in practice that they are implemented by GOV partners. See table 4 on p 7 for the various implementing partners of the individual projects. The support to NTPs project (A4), is meant to support the two main poverty reduction programmes of GOV that are receive funding through targeted budget support. In these respects there is a high level of GOV ownership. Through implementation by GOV partners, use is made of GOV systems while at the same time capacities of partners are built as part of the projects implemented.

3.64 The support from policy advisers partly responded to immediate needs and demands from GOV agencies. On the other hand the policy advisors have played a more pro-active role, identifying key issues that are at the time not yet acknowledged as important by GOV (including for example social security issues and the relationship between PAR and Anti-Corruption) and supporting independent analysis and advice of a high quality regarding these topics and themes. In general the analysis and advice provided is highly regarded in terms of quality as well as its relative independence and well known by most parties. This has as such informed GOV systems with high level policy analysis. What is yet to be reinforced is more direct ways of capacity building of Vietnamese partners in terms of policy analysis and dialogue.

3.65 Several of the projects supported by the SPI had attention to M&E. This includes the support to NTPs (A4) which tried to enhance M&E capacities within the programmes targeted as well as the support to Socio-Economic Development Monitoring, which built capacities of GSO. In other projects, support to M&E was less clear and M&E systems less established. The evaluation of the Business Development Project (A3)²² for example points out that there was a weak monitoring system in place, which has made it difficult to assess the usefulness and impact of individual project activities. The MTR of the SLGP identifies a lack of progress in developing a system for monitoring project outcomes as a key management weakness of the

²² UNDP, *Evaluation of an On-going Project. Project VIE/01/025. Improving the Regulatory Environment for Business*, June 2006.

project²³. The evaluation of the CEBA project (A2) concludes that there is a need to have a better M&E system for the project²⁴. Monitoring and evaluation of policy analysis and advocacy is very much focused on planned activities within an agreed workplan.

- 3.66 For monitoring and evaluation of the SPI a results matrix was prepared. This matrix focuses on the level of the outputs of the initiative, including a number of performance indicators for each of the individual projects supported through the SPI. Though the matrix does represent a step in a results based direction (away from merely looking at inputs and activities), results are mostly regarded at the level of outputs. With the focus on outputs the results matrix focuses much less on the behavioural and institutional changes that are needed to reach the goals of each of the individual projects and/or to contribute to the One Plan goals. Thus it misses the opportunity to inform management decision making beyond outputs. Development of the One UN framework was based on the model of the M&E framework developed for SPI. The One UN M&E framework is also very much focused on output level indicators.
- 3.67 Within the SPI, reporting was done making use of UNDP procedures and requirements which were agreed between DFID and UNDP. Overall reporting has been very much on the level of inputs in particular financial inputs, activities and outputs. There is much less attention to outcomes and very limited attention to the level of impact. The latter nonetheless is overall relatively well covered with the VDGs and MDGs, though the disadvantage is that these can often not directly be linked with outputs achieved on the level of projects and non-project activities. The only SPI related report that includes outcomes systematically was the *Status Report* prepared for the annual SPI review meetings. This status report was though discontinued in the progress report for 2007, dated January 2008.
- 3.68 Overall the SPI can be seen to have a relatively high level of GOV ownership, in a direct way regarding projects supported and in a mixed direct and indirect way regarding policy analysis and advocacy work. Direct in terms of responses of policy advisors to demands of Ministries and Departments of GOV. Indirect in terms of the independent analysis of key issues in the various fields of support that have not yet been identified by GOV as most relevant, but which analysis is none the less appreciated and is informing the policy debates.
- 3.69 Use has been made to varying degrees of GOV capacities in M&E and in various instances GOV capacities have been built. In various of the projects though M&E is relatively weak. The M&E system of the SPI is activity and output oriented with a lack of systematic attention to the level of outcome level changes.

Support Upstream Policy Engagement and Advocacy Work

- 3.70 As was shown above in the discussion of purpose level indicators (p 8-12) the SPI has provided UNDP the opportunity to build its capacities in terms of policy analysis and dialogue. Three policy advisors have been appointed using SPI funds and a fourth one has been recruited making use of AECID SP funds. The policy advisors have shown to be able to produce high quality, relatively independent research and analysis on relevant issues in the various thematic areas concerned. This has enabled UNDP Vietnam to play additional roles of policy analysis and advocacy in the socio-economic development process in Vietnam. This is relevant in particular given the changing position of Vietnam, moving towards the status of a middle income country.

Support Transformational Projects

- 3.71 As discussed as one of the purpose level indicators (see p 13), all projects implemented can be considered to support Vietnam in its transformation process. Three types of

²³ MPI/UNDP, *Mid-Term Review Strengthening Local Governance Project (SLGP)*. June 2008.

²⁴ *Mid-Term Review Report Strengthening the Capacities of the National Assembly and People's Councils in Viet Nam in examination, decision and oversight of State Budget (CEBA Project)*. March 2007.

transformation processes in the thematic areas of democratic governance, economic and social transition and environmental sustainability have been supported.

Collaborate with other Development Actors to avoid Duplication and Reduce Transaction Costs

- 3.72 This Operating Principle consists actually of three parts of which the first concerns the proactive sharing of information with others. Most parties concerned consider that information produced as part of the SPI has been shared widely. Some stakeholders though indicate that more could have been done in this respect.
- 3.73 The second part of the principle focuses on building on and adding value to work of others. In terms of projects the picture is varied, with some of the projects (like the SLGP project / A6) cooperating with similar projects of other donors and sharing manuals and other information. The support to the NTP (A4) directly builds on work of GOV and donors supporting the NTPs through targeted budget support. Moreover, four of the projects implemented through SPI were co-funded by other donor agencies including ONA (A1), CEBA (A2), Support to NTPs (A4) and Strengthening Local Government Capacities (SLGP / A6).
- 3.74 In the policy advisory work there are examples of cooperation with other UN Agencies like UNICEF on policy analysis of rising food prices in Vietnam as a result of the present economic crisis (see box on p 19) while there are also examples of missed opportunities in this respect. The substantial role that some of the policy advisors play in donor coordination in donor working groups as well as in PCGs enhances sharing of information and coordination of activities amongst UN and other donor agencies and GOV.
- 3.75 The third part of the principle closely relates to the second one, and focuses on working with other donors on joint programmes. As mentioned above some of the projects are co-funded by other donor agencies and some of the policy analysis work was done jointly. In terms of joint-programming results have been less than expected partly due to the fact that expectations in this respect were relatively high in the design stage of the SPI which was partly linked to the idea of funding of other agencies through SPI funds. As this did not happen, options for joint-programming were much more limited.
- 3.76 Overall there does not appear to be a high amount of duplication. Project Mid-Term Reviews and Evaluations that were available for four of the project concerned consider the goals these try to achieve and activities implemented as relevant. Also the policy advice work is overall considered relevant and not as duplicating efforts of others. The Economics Policy work, which could have run the risk of duplication (with the economic policy analysis in the WB or ADB) has avoided this by selecting a specific focus as well as by taking an independent position, providing a different and in certain ways alternative standpoint with respect to various of the issues concerned, compared to other agencies. This gave UNDP an independent position in the debate, adding substance to the dialogue. The SPI did certainly led to a reduction in transaction costs as argued above (see purpose level indicator discussion in par 3.35 - 3.37 above). Nonetheless, this was much less the case a result of collaboration with other development actors as it was in particular a result of the modality of funding used by DFID in terms of the SPI and the management arrangements concerned.

Draw on the Strength of the UN Presence through greater UN Collaboration

- 3.77 Instances of collaboration with UN agencies on the level of SPI funded activities are present both on the level of projects as well as on the level of policy analysis and advice. Moreover, DFID and UNDP are proponents of the ONE UN Initiative in Vietnam. UNDP is one of the three agencies that actively participated from the start of the initiative. UNDP is seen by bilaterals and by other UN agencies as having built its capacity in terms of policy analysis and advice and thus better able to play its role in One UN as well as its role in Vietnam with Middle Income Country status.

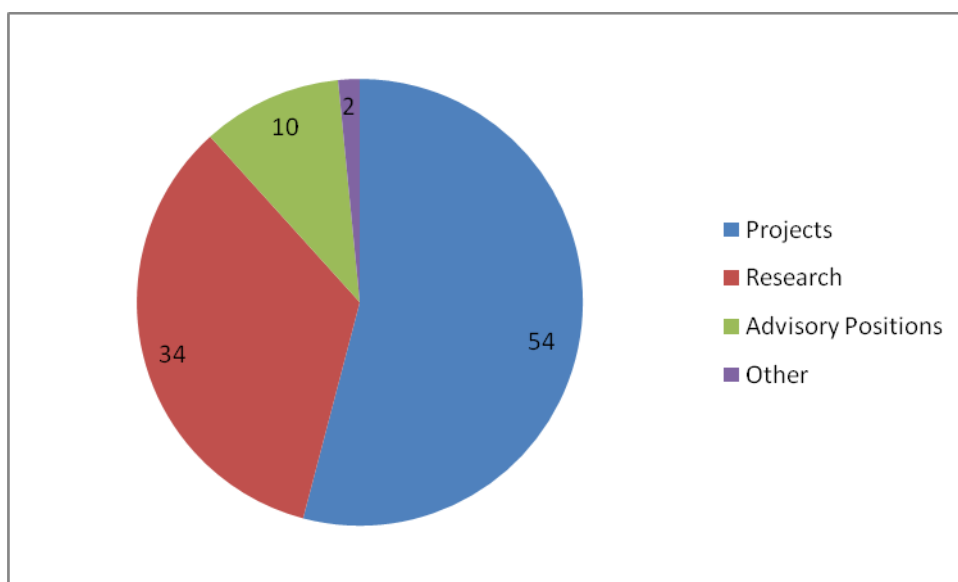
Focus Efforts only in Areas where there is a clear Comparative Advantage

- 3.78 The projects implemented under the SPI line up with the thematic comparative advantages of UNDP, including democratic governance, economic and social transition and environmental sustainability. UNDP Vietnam has made use of its position in these fields and its relationship with GOV based on implementation of project making use of the NEX modality to expand its capacities to focus on policy analysis and dialogue in the fields of economics policies, rule of law/access to justice, PAR/AC and Climate Change. These thematic areas closely link with the themes worked on in projects and thus further build UNDPs comparative advantage in Vietnam.
- 3.79 UNDP Vietnam's capacity development in the area of policy analysis and dialogue does not stand on itself but needs to be considered in the changing development status of Vietnam. As such also other UN organisations are developing their roles and related capacities and are 'moving upstream'. There is a need to get a common understanding on the comparative advantage of UNDP versus that of other UN organisations in order to build mutually enhancing capacities rather than overlapping and competing ones.

Financial Overview

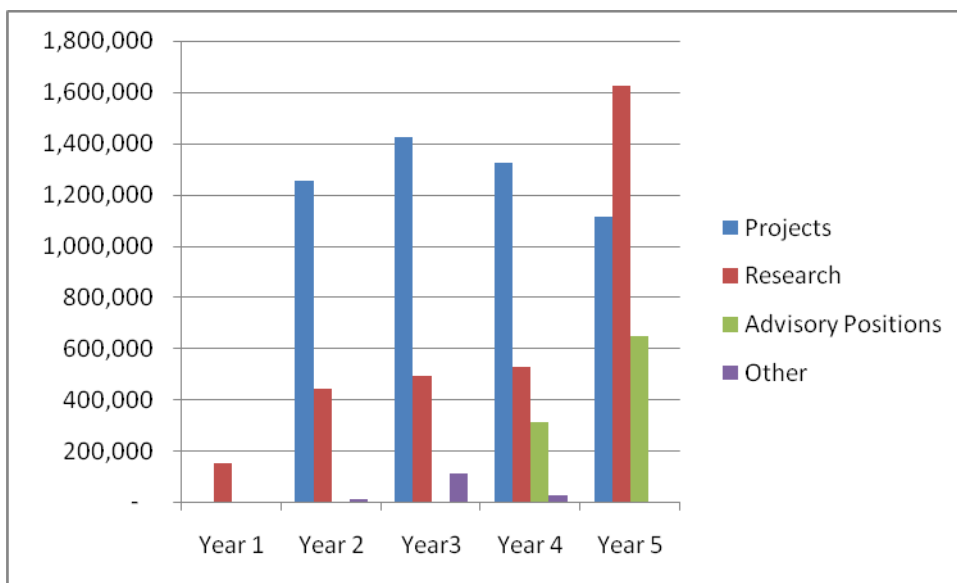
- 3.80 During the five year SPI a total amount of USD 9,447,792.44 was spent which equals an amount of GBP 5,000,000. In total 54 % of expenses have been spent on projects (A1-A10), 34 % on research activities and 10 % on Advisory Positions (Economics Policy, Access to Justice/Rule of Law, PAR/AC). A remaining 2 % was spent on other ad hoc issues. See for details Annex 4. This means that a bit more than half the funds were spent on project activities with a bit less than half used for policy analysis and dialogue. This means an overall balance in terms of funding regarding both ways of working (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1: SPI Expenses for Types of Budget Allocations (%)



- 3.81 When looking over the period of SPI implementation (2004-2008) the expenses of projects have increased in the first half of the period, while declining in the second half. Expenses of research increase steadily over the period of the SPI, in particular during 2008 (year 5) once policy advisors on governance have been recruited in the last quarter of 2007 (year 4) (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2: SPI Expenses for Types of Budget Allocations per Year (USD)



Note to figure: The expenses for Research in year 2 and possibly year 3 do include some salary costs as becomes clear from the independent audit report of year 2.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 SPI has provided UNDP with the opportunity to further develop and enhance its programming in Vietnam. On the one hand the SPI has supported a variety of projects in key areas of UNDPs comparative advantage. It has done this in a way that has reduced transaction costs involved, enhancing aid effectiveness. The flexibility of the SPI funds, moreover, provided UNDP with the opportunity to get involved more pro-actively in the field of policy analysis and advice, making use of the position that it had built within Vietnam based on support to implementation of projects making use of the NEX modality. It has realised this in the areas of economic policy, rule of law/access to justice, PAR/Anti-corruption and climate change. In this respect relationships have been established with new actors in addition to working with existing project partners, which has provided additional ways of engaging with GOV and other key stakeholders.
- 4.2 This has enabled UNDP to look more at bigger picture issues and to expand the roles it plays within the development process in Vietnam. It is in particular the flexibility of the funds provided under SPI that have enabled this, as well as DFIDs hands-off approach in terms of management, not interfering in daily management issues but engaged in the wider dialogue on the direction that the SPI should take on an annual basis. In order to continue this work under the One UN initiative, there is a need to access flexible resources through the One fund.
- 4.3 The shift in terms of policy analysis and advice is a shift in the way that UNDP looks at capacity building, moving away from a focus on building capacities of GOV staff members, towards informing the decision making process with policy analysis and advice. Decision-makers on multiple levels are targeted in this respect, responding to the needs on each of those levels. That also means that the capacity within UNDP needs to be top notch and UNDP has been able to deliver according to various parties involved in this respect.
- 4.4 With more UN agencies moving “upstream” and working on policy analysis and advice there is a need for agreeing on comparative advantages of the various UN agencies and to create complementary rather than overlapping or competing capacities. There is a need for further strategizing regarding the policy work in close cooperation with other UN agencies in order to ensure coherence of the work. Cooperation in policy analysis and advocacy is needed in order to make use of complementary comparative advantages across various UN agencies and other organisations.
- 4.5 The picture regarding Monitoring and Evaluation varies. In selected projects M&E capacities of GOV have been built. On the other hand, M&E has been identified as weak in several evaluations and MTR conducted for projects funded through the SPI. Overall project as well as SPI monitoring and evaluation has been input, activity and output oriented, implemented in relation to work plans and their targets. Though this has meant a move towards results and results based management, it limits results mainly to the output level with hardly any attention to the level of outcomes. This limits the opportunities for management for development results within projects and programmes as well as within the organisation at large.

5 LESSONS LEARNT

For DFID

- 5.1 Aid Effectiveness in the SPI has been enhanced by DFID's hands-off approach in terms of management as well as by its strategic and technical engagement on the level of the SPI and its components. It is this combination of stepping back from managerial responsibilities paralleled with strategic and technical engagement that provided the key to aid effectiveness.

DFID's hands-off approach in terms of management of the SPI as a whole as well as of its constituent parts meant a reduction of transaction costs for both DFID as well as for UNDP and thus enabled enhanced aid effectiveness. On the other hand the role that DFID did play of a "critical friend" in terms of the whole of the initiative as well as in terms of selected projects and non-project activities is regarded to have enhanced the quality of the initiative. Thus a certain level of strategic and technical engagement is contributing to aid effectiveness.

- 5.2 The response to the Avian Flu crisis in Vietnam with the use of SPI resources which were used by a group of UN agencies, served as a model for how funds can be pooled in ONE UN. This was made possible by SPI modality / funds. Though in the end funds were returned and no SPI money was spent on this, it proved an important lesson to inform the ONE UN Fund.

For UNDP

- 5.3 Policy analysis and advocacy require different partners to work with compared to implementing projects and pro-actively looking for parties to engage with has provided UNDP with new working relationships and new ways of engagement with GOV.

In development of policy work the focus has been on exploration of opportunities, looking for possible parties to engage with in this type of work. Though use has been made of existing project partners, advisors have pro-actively sought for new parties to work with and have established working relationships with agencies that provide new ways of engagement with GOV. SPI funding has played a critical role to enable UNDP to do this.

- 5.4 There is considerable added value in the cooperation of policy advisors across UN agencies on topics that require the complementary capacities and competencies of various organisations. This has benefits for the results of the work and can enhance cooperation amongst agencies within the ONE UN system. There is a need for adaptation in organisational culture in UNDP and other UN agencies in order to enable this.

- 5.5 The NEX modality is not a way of working that enables UNDP to play its role effectively and efficiently in a country that is moving towards middle-income status. It appears to be time to rethink the NEX modality and have alternative ways for dealing with national ownership.

The NEX modality is oriented towards implementation of projects through GOV partners. It appears less useful in terms of policy analysis and advisory work and lacks the flexibility required in that type of work. Thus it becomes more of a constraint than an enabling mechanism in terms of enhancing UNDP Vietnam towards an increased focus on policy analysis and dialogue as part of programming and exploring alternative ways of engaging with actors in modalities that are not necessarily project oriented.

- 5.6 A relatively long overlap period of two months between the two economic policy advisors, though not initially planned for, enabled the second advisor to take over many of the contacts and relationships that the first advisor had established and he could make a "flying" start in this respect. Relatively long hand-over periods seem to be a pre-requisite to retain relationships and knowledge in policy analysis and advisory work.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 In the new set-up of One UN in Vietnam, DFID financial support will be provided unearmarked to the One UN Fund. In order to extend the partnership with UNDP in Vietnam, there is a need for DFID to remain engaged with UNDP on a strategic and technical level and thus to further support the change process that it has encouraged so far.
- 6.2 Much of the work on policy analysis and dialogue has been exploratory, making use of ad hoc opportunities and responding to immediate needs that existed in various parts of GOV. There is a need to move in the future towards a more strategic longer term approach in terms of what issues to address and whom to work with.
- 6.3 With the work of the policy advisors the type of activities conducted and roles played by UNDP have become more diverse. In addition to implementing existing projects there is a variety of non-project activities being implemented and new type of projects emerge, which are analysis and knowledge building oriented. Over time there is a need to look more explicitly at how these various parts mutually reinforce one another in order to create the synergy needed to contribute to realisation of the the One UN goals.
- 6.4 There is a need to further institutionalise the policy work within the country office including:
 - Create a clear organisational structure for the policy advisory function
 - Need for senior level Vietnamese programme staff to provide substantive support to advisors in terms of relations with partners and contents of programming and whose capacity can be built in the process, one on one relationships would be preferable in this respect
 - Provide administrative support to policy advisers / policy advisory unit
- 6.5 Policy advisory work needs to be linked more explicitly with capacity development of partner agencies in order to build capacities on national level.
- 6.6 There is an urgent need to reinforce Monitoring and Evaluation within UNDP Vietnam. This concerns the quality of M&E systems of the various projects and needs to include the use of outcome level assessments. Moreover, there is a need to look at means for Monitoring and Evaluation of policy analysis and advocacy initiatives. This needs to consider the specific requirements of M&E of research initiatives on the one hand and of information dissemination and advocacy / policy influencing on the other hand. M&E of policy analysis and advocacy needs to include process issues and needs to be adapted to be able to deal with longer gestation periods which are more characteristics for this type of work. The International M&E Adviser that will be recruited will need to have experience with M&E in research and advocacy issues, in addition to projects level M&E.
- 6.7 UNDP needs to reconsider the role of NEX modality in countries that move towards middle income status and provide additional means of engagement for country offices in addition to the NEX modality.

Annex 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR SPECIAL SERVICE AGREEMENT

ASSIGNMENT TITLE:	DFID SPI End of project review
AGENCY/PROJECT NAME:	UNDP/DFID SPI
COUNTRY OF ASSIGNMENT:	Viet Nam

1) GENERAL BACKGROUND

The purpose of the DFID - UNDP Strategic Partnership Initiative (SPI), which came into effect on 27 September 2004, was to support UNDP in broadening and deepening its focus on the reform process in Viet Nam.

The SPI would allow DFID and UNDP to move away from an ad-hoc project level approach towards a more comprehensive strategic engagement thereby ensuring greater coherence in the development context of Viet Nam.

The overall goal of the SPI was to enhance the effectiveness of the UN system in supporting Viet Nam in achieving the Viet Nam Development Goals (VDGs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The output of the SPI would involve:

- a) Strengthening democratic governance, accountability and voice;
- b) Supporting the process of economic and social transition;
- c) Strengthening environmental sustainability; and
- d) Responding to emerging national priorities.

The list of projects and research studies can be found in Annex II.

2) OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

- + Assess the results and impact of the SPI against its framework and provide evidence based;
- + Draw lessons learnt for further strengthening of the United Nations in Viet Nam in the context of the One UN Initiatives;

3) SCOPE OF WORK

The review will be based on the Project Framework, and will focus on assessing the impact of the SPI with respect to the Goal and Purpose identified in the framework. Consequently the review will

assess the results of the SPI against the following sections of the Framework:

Goal:

To enhance the effectiveness of the UN system in supporting Vietnam in achieving the VDGs and the MDGs

- *DFID and UNDP working in more joined ways on issues of common interest*
- *UN agencies working in more joined up ways*
- *Rapid progress toward achieving the VDGs and the MDGs*

Purpose:

To support UNDP in broadening and deepening its focus on the reform process in Vietnam for sustainable poverty reduction in line with Government's development strategy five year plan, and the CPRGS.

- *UNDP using its comparative advantage to push for politically sensitive reform*
- *UNDP supporting more transformation projects*
- *UNDP Country Programme aligned with the Government five year plan*
- *DFID-UNDP transaction costs reduced*

Selected outputs may be reviewed as illustrations of the impact made on the points listed above.

4) DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT, DUTY STATION AND EXPECTED PLACES OF TRAVEL

The assignment is estimated at 15 working days of which 5 estimated working days at home base to study the documents and 10 estimated working days in Ha Noi to validate information by conducting interviews, briefing and present the key findings.

However, it is up to the consultant to propose the exact number of working days required to complete the assignment.

5) FINAL PRODUCTS

1. The consultant is expected to **produce the End of UNDP DFID SPI project review report** that provides evidences on the results and impact of the SPI as well as lessons learnt and give a rating of performance. The report is maximum 30 pages including annexes, which might include, but is not limited to, the following components:

- Executive summary;
- Introduction;
- Description of the evaluation methodology;
- Analysis of the results and impacts of the SPI with regard to outcome, outputs, resources, partnerships, management and working methods;
- Key findings and lessons learnt;
- Conclusions and recommendations

2. The consultant will be required to **update/finalize the DFID project completion report** prepared by the joint technical DFID + UNDP M&E team (see the DRAFT report in Annex II).

6) PROVISION OF MONITORING AND PROGRESS CONTROLS

The End of UNDP DFID SPI project review report will be submitted to UNDP/DFID in draft forms, followed by a presentation to be attended by representatives of DFID and UNDP.

The final versions of the End of UNDP DFID SPI project review report and updated DFID project completion report will be submitted two weeks after receipt of the comments made by DFID and UNDP.

Supervision:

UNDP Viet Nam will be the key focal point responsible for overall supervision of the consultant's assignment to ensure timely production of the expected results. The consultant should consult and report to DFID during the assignment as well.

7) DEGREE OF EXPERTISE AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Consultant will have the necessary qualifications and experience listed below:

Mandatory:

- At least a Master degree in social science or other subjects of relevance;
- Experience in results-based management;
- Excellent English writing skills evidenced by publications;
- At least 10 years of working experience in conducting evaluation;

Optional:

- Knowledge on Vietnam's development context, Government's development policies, institutional knowledge of UNDP and DFID
- Working knowledge of Vietnamese language as an asset.

8) REVIEW TIME REQUIRED

At least two weeks are required to review and certify the quality of the final reports before proceeding with payments to the consultant

9) CONSULTANT PRESENCE REQUIRED ON DUTY STATION/UNDP PREMISES

NONE

PARTIAL

INTERMITTENT

FULL-TIME

Implementation support. UNDP will support as follows:

- Providing office space including provision of a computer with Internet connection;
- Obtaining visa, if necessary;
- Supplying project-related documents as indicated in Annexes;
- At request, arranging appointments for all meetings/interviews.

Annex 2

Overview of Persons Consulted

DFID

Phil Harding, Deputy Head of Office
Quynh Hoa, Development Effectiveness Sector Manager
Kirsty Mason, Governance Adviser
Than Thi Thien Huong, Social Development Sector Manager
Nguyen Thi Kim Lien, Governance Adviser
Nguyen Thi Thu Trang, Programme Support Manager

UNDP

Setsuko Yamazaki, Country Director
Christophe Bahuet, Deputy Country Director
Le Le Lan, M&E Programme Officer
Ugo Blanco, Programme Officer (SPI AECID)
Nicolas Booth, Policy Advisor Rule of Law / Access to Justice
Alex Warren-Rodriguez, Economics Policy Advisor, Country Economist Unit
Jairo A. Alfaro, Policy Advisor Public Administration Reform / Anti-Corruption
Do Thi Thanh Huyen, Support Officer PAR
Koos Neefjes, Policy Advisor Climate Change
Jonathan Pincus, former Economic Policy Adviser, Harvard Kennedy School Vietnam Program
Bui Phuong Tra, Programme Officer (A1, A2)
Tim McGrath, International Advisor in Local Representative Institutions (A1)
Robert Mellor International Training Advisor (A1)
Nguyen Tien Phong, Cluster Head Poverty and Social Development (A3, A8)
Vo Hoang Nga, Programme Officer (A4)
Dao Xuan Lai, Programme Officer (PEP)
Tran Hai Dung, Programme Officer (A6, A7)
Le Thi Nam Huong, Programme Officer, Partnership with Vietnam Lawyers Association (A9)
Constance Hybsier, Programme Officer (A10)

GOV Partners

Dao Trinh Bac, MPI – Foreign Economic Relations Department, Head of UN and INGO Division
Truong Manh Tien, General Director Vietnam Environment Protection Fund, MONRE; NPD (A5)
Truong Quoc Hung, Office of the National Assembly, Deputy National Project Manager (A1)
Kim Thoa, Ministry of Justice
Prof. Dang Ngoc Dinh, Director Center for Community Support Development Studies (CECODES)
Le Tuyet Nhung, Molisa, DNP, NTP HEPR (A4)
Le Minh Tuan, CEMA National Technical Coordinator 135 project (A4)
Ms. Phuong, CEMA NTP 135 project (A4)
Mr. Thuat, CEMA NTP 135 project (A4)

Other Bi-lateral Agencies in Vietnam

Elena M. Ferreras, AECID Programme Director, Multilateral Cooperation and Gender

Andrew Smith, CIDA Head of Aid, Counsellor (Development)
Snofrid Byrlokken Emterud, Norwegian Embassy First Secretary

Other UN-Agencies in Vietnam

Geeta Narayan, UNICEF Chief Planning and Social Policy Section
Paul Quarles van Ufford, UNICEF Social Policy Specialist
Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative and Head of Office

Annex 3

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- Strengthening Local Government Capacities for Planning, Budgeting and Managing Public Resources (SLGP)
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Annex 4: FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

	Award ID	Description	Year 1 (From 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2004)	Year 2 (From 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2005)	Year 3 (From 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2006)	Year 4 (From 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2007)	Year 5 (From 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2008)	Whole Project 2004-2008
A	Project Allocation							
A1	00015600	National Assembly and PCs (ONA)	-	-	58,951.15	377,241.68	2,597.00	438,789.83
A2	00015602	Budget Oversight (w CEBA)		236,610.40	245,618.43	207,071.96	(63,418.00)	625,882.79
A3	00015594	Improving the regulatory env. for business (CIEM)		235,728.95	239,745.35	22,672	(18,771.00)	479,375.46
A4	00015593	HEPR (w MOLISA)	-	451,061.02	83,095.22	81,621	402,454.00	1,018,231.06
A5	00041406	PEP	-		203,303.88	250,919.84	(13,390.00)	440,833.72
A6	00039111	Strengthening capacity of local gov. (w MPI).		116,866.89	259,752.98	309,764.41	348,177.07	1,034,561.35
A7	00040722	Socio-Eco & MDG M&E (w MPI)		76,484.40	269,244.52	45,709	404,151.00	795,588.94
A8	00037167	MDG report		117,496.39	44,305.85	-	-	161,802.24
A9	00042690	Strengthening Capacity for VLA				26,316.95	52,389.00	78,705.95
A10	00039776	Strengthening civil society		18,533.10	18,567.23	-	-	37,100.33
		<i>Sub Total of project allocations</i>		1,252,781.15	1,422,584.61	1,321,316.84	1,114,189.07	5,110,871.67
B	Research Allocation							
	00037744	Economic Policy Research & Papers	150,223.72	439,403.21	490,710.80	465,192.64	202,368.12	1,747,898.49
	00047278	Governance Policy Research & Papers					398,644.50	398,644.50
	00047278	Consultancies & Miscellaneous				60,351.51	227,806.22	288,157.73
	00037744	Higher Education Reach					796,145.00	796,145.00
		<i>Sub Total of research allocation</i>	150,223.72	439,403.21	490,710.80	525,544.15	1,624,963.84	3,230,845.72
C	Policy Advisers							
	00047278	Governance advisor on PAR				93,403.22	168,699.57	262,102.79
	00047278	Governance advisor on Rule of Law				18,612.31	181,841.69	200,454.00
	00047278	Sr. Country Economist				199,536.88	296,722.95	496,259.83
		<i>Sub of strengthen substantive capacity</i>				311,552.41	647,264.21	958,816.62
D	Other							
	00043392	Support to VUSTA on draft Law on Associations			26,867.80			26,867.80
	00040724	Partnership w/ VN Lawyers' Ass. (VLA) Formulation		11,236.69	-	-		11,236.69
	00044423	Ad-hoc SPI (Proj ID 00052228)-Civil Society Discussion Paper			85,164.78	23,989.16		109,153.94
		<i>Sub Total of other</i>		11,236.69	112,032.58	23,989.16		147,258.43
		GRAND TOTAL (A+B+C+D)	150,223.72	1,703,421.05	2,025,327.99	2,182,402.56	3,386,417.12	9,447,792.44