



**DFID UNDP Strategic Partnership Initiative  
End of Project Review Report**

June 2009

by

**Frank Noij**

**The Performance Assessment Resource Centre**  
*is managed by*  
**International Organisation Development (IOD) Ltd**



Omega Court  
362 Cemetery Road  
Sheffield  
S11 8FT  
United Kingdom



[www.parcinfo.org](http://www.parcinfo.org)  
[www.iod.uk.com](http://www.iod.uk.com)



+44 (0) 114-267 3620

## 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 UNDPs 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.