

Mid-Term Evaluation of AECID-UNDP Strategic Partnership Initiative

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Section I Executive Summary

1. Brief Description of the Project

In 2007, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) together approved a Strategic Partnership Initiative (SPI) for Poverty Reduction in Vietnam (2007-2010). The primary purpose of this SPI is to enhance and increase support to the Government of Vietnam in achieving its development goals (VDGs), and specifically, its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Another is to promote the UN and UNDP roles in Vietnam and thus to foster UN reform at the country level by supporting the implementation of UN joint programs. The AECID-UNDP SPI includes three key components: the UNDP component of the UN's Kon Tum Project; policy research and dialogue; and emerging priorities. The UNDP component of the UN's Kon Tum Project focuses on planning-linked-with-budgeting, while the policy research and dialogue component focuses on issues of economic development, public administrative reform/ anti-corruption, and climate change. The SPI's "emerging priorities" component serves to support newly emerging issues not previously included in the other two programs.

2. Context and Purpose of the Evaluation

Although annual reviews by the UNDP and AECID are regularly carried out to assess the progress of the SPI, the SPI Project Document also calls for a mid-term review. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the overall implementation of the SPI, review lessons learned so far, and generate discussion among relevant partners on further initiatives that may be incorporated into the working plan for the remainder of the SPI.

3. Main Conclusion, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned

The SPI has fulfilled its two purposes. It has strengthened the UNDP's support to the government of Vietnam in achieving both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Vietnam's Development Goals (VDGs). It has also provided opportunities for different UN agencies to work closer together and thus has directly helped foster the One-UN Initiative.

While the SPI arrangements are suitable as mechanisms for the UNDP to strengthen its support to the Vietnamese government, there remain implementation challenges that need to be addressed for the SPI to have a sustaining impact. For the SPI framework, the key challenge centers around the development of an indicator system that quantifies the success of the two SPI purposes. For each SPI component, the key challenge is the clarification of an expected outcome, the fine tuning of implementation methods, and the development of a more rigorous impact monitoring system.

The report puts forth two sets of recommendations. The first deals with SPI arrangements while the second deals with the strengthening the SPI's three components at the operational level. In summary, in regard to SPI arrangements, the report recommends:

- AECID and UNDP should compile an annual master plan to use as a tool to monitor the SPI as well as each of its components.
- AECID and UNDP should agree on how to measure progress toward the two purposes of the SPI in preparation for the final evaluation. During the remainder of the SPI, AECID and UNDP should regularly monitor the extent to which SPI arrangements contribute to the two purposes of enabling the UNDP to assist the Vietnamese Government effectively while promoting the One UN initiative.
- Information on the three SPI components, that is, achievements and challenges of the UNDP component in Kon Tum, activities and results of policy research and policy dialogue, and regulations for emerging priorities support be shared with relevant Vietnamese partners and potentially interested participants.
- Relevant UN agencies and AECID consider each SPI component as a window of opportunity for the promotion of the One UN Initiative.

Based on the examination of the three SPI components, the report puts forth the following recommendations with an aim to strengthening the effectiveness of the three components during the remainder of the SPI term:

- To clarify the strategic directions, to review the expected scope of change at the local and national level, and to amend implementation mechanisms of the UNDP component in Kon Tum.
- To clarify the short and long term roles of political advisory groups in order to identify strategies for their consolidation.
- To identify short and medium term strategies for the policy research and dialogue component with emphasis going to entry and exit points for engagement as well as methods for tracking influence.
- To clarify the roles of the UNDP in policy advocacy and implementation and how to balance the two.
- To strengthen the local governance component, either through (1) the incorporation of local governance aspects into agendas on economic development, public administration reform, anti-corruption, and climate change; or through (2) the revival of a full-time or a part-time/a one-person or a team-based local governance policy advisor position.
- To consider key local governance issues raised in Annex IV of this report as the basis for future policy agendas as well as the development a list of "emerging priorities".
- To initiate a dialogue with government agencies on local governance issues.
- To design a master plan for monitoring the impact of issues which fall under the rubric of "emerging priorities".

The report identifies the two lessons which can serve as the basis for the implementation of the SPI during the remainder of its term:

Previously, the UNDP had a Strategic Partnership Initiative with the United Kingdom's Department of Foreign and International Development (DFID). As the past and the present SPIs both support policy research and policy dialogue, the AECID-UNDP SPI may learn from successes and shortcomings of the preceding SPI model. Nevertheless, the AECID-

UNDP SPI has broadened the scope of its partnership, leading to two key differences between the two SPIs. The first difference is that the DFID-UNDP SPI mostly supported UNDP projects while the AECID-UNDP SPI supports a joint UN project. The difference is evident in project management and transaction costs. The second difference is that the AECID-UNDP has a component called “emerging priorities”, a component that was not part of the earlier DFID-UNDP partnership. These new initiatives should be regularly reviewed for the remaining term of the SPI.

Secondly, the three components of the SPI provide opportunities for UNDP and other UN agencies to work together. In implementing the UN Joint Project in Kon Tum, for example, the three UN organizations are given an opportunity to interact with each other and understand each other's regulations. This is a preparatory step for their integration in the One UN as they can anticipate how to adapt themselves or produce adequate programs designed to work with partner regulations. Opportunities for the UNDP and other UN agencies to work together at the implementation level help foster the concretization of the One UN initiative.

- To open a dialogue with government agencies responsible for local governance; the Department of International Relations and the Department of Local Government at MOHA are among appropriate partners.²¹

2.4 The Emerging Priorities Component

- To formulate a master plan for issues falling under the rubric « emerging priorities » that have been approved and/or completed for monitoring purposes.

Section 6 Lessons Learned

This report identifies two lessons learned which can serve as the basis for the implementation of the SPI during the remaining duration of its term.

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Section 7 Annexes

The annex section consists of four key sub-annexes. Annex 7.1 presents the Terms of Reference (TORs) governing the International Consultant/Team Leader's responsibilities in working with team members to produce the SPI Mid-Term Evaluation Report and its local governance annex. Annex 7.2 lists the names of informants in Hanoi and Kon Tum interviewed. Annex 7.3 lists the documents reviewed for the SPI report. Annex 7.4 is the local governance report with a special focus on Kon Tum as required by the TORs.

²¹ The Team had a meeting with the Department of International Relations and the Department of Local Government at MOHA. Owing to limited time, the Team was not able to explore all the emerging priorities related to local governance. The two departments saw the need for follow-up exchanges.