**End-of-the Project Evaluation**

**VIE 02/001 project – ATLAS ID: 00015593**

**“Support to the Implementation and Improvement of National Target Programmes for Poverty Reduction”**

**2006-2011**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The end-of-the project evaluation for VIE 02/001 project focuses on reviewing and assessing the attained results, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project. The evaluation will also take into consideration the initial signals about the possible impacts and sustainability of the results attained by the project during period 2006 - 2010. The extension period in 2011 will also be reviewed.

This is an independent review, adopting the participatory and evidence-based approach. The information about the project mainly comes from the reports and documents provided by the PMU. The interviews and discussions with the focus groups have helped collection strategic information which can be used to consolidate the lessons learnt and the design of future interventions if deemed necessary.

The key findings from the evaluation can be summarised as follows:

**1. Achievements and Results:**

*Impact level:*

* The project has created basic impacts on the approach by the GoV when designing and implementing poverty reduction (PR) efforts.
* The project has made significant contributions to facilitate policy dialogues on PR.
* The project’s TA is oriented to well address the policy priorities of the GoV in the present context, e.g. Resolution 80, NTP-PR Document and Program 135/II and the guiding documents for the two programs.

*Outcome level:*

* With the support from the project, the design and implementation of the PR programs have made progresses in the way to become more strategic, more comprehensive and sustainable PR inclusive interventions.
* The capacity of the agencies in designing and implementing PR has been strengthened, including the capacity to organize policy dialogues and consultations.
* The project also gives chance for documentation of lessons learnt, provides proves for appropriate (even not completed) processes and models for the process of designing PR policies for the coming period.

*Output level:*

Although some of the outputs have not been completed as planned or have been cancelled, the evaluation results have shown that the project has been following quite closely the demands of the GoV relating to the design of PR intervention.

In the context of changing awareness, the PR approach in the period 2006 – 2010 (and continues until now) has faced significant influences on identification of outputs and the respective progress to attained these outputs. Some of the most important outputs can be presented as follows:

* *Output 1:*
  + Program documents of the two program approved by the GOV (P135/II in 2006, and NTP-PR in 2007), and circulars and implementation guidelines for the two programs.
  + Draft of the Poverty reduction program for 2011 - 2015.
  + Supportive studies and researches.
* *Output 2:*
  + Dec No. 1053/2007 on M&E framework for NTP-PR; Dec No. 23/2007 on the application of M&E indicators for NTP-PR; Dec No. 04/2008-UBDT on the application of forms and reporting formats for Program 135-II.
  + Modified AMT and PMT for application down to commune level.
  + Manual for Citizen Report Card (CRC) survey.
* *Output 3:*
  + Circular No. 04/2007/TT- BLĐTBXH on the procedures to identify poor households annually and poverty line reporting system.
  + Decision No.163, 164 by PM on the list of communes completing and benefiting P135/II; Criteria for communes eligible to be investment owners in P135/II.
* *Output 4:*
  + Circular No. 2849/KBNN- KHTH 2006 by MOF providing guidelines for financial management and disbursements under P135/II.
* *Output 5:*
  + Documentation and several lessons learnt shared in a systematic and methodological manner (incomplete, not ended).

**2. Evaluation perspectives and indicators:**

*Relevance*

The evaluation has shown that the project design as well as its actual implementation has made appropriate contributions to Vietnam’s PR policies and the institutionalisation of innovative and new approach in the context of fast changes in awareness about policies; in line with the current demand and capacity of the GoV; in compliance with the synchronization of various PR efforts and approaches so far piloted and practiced, well addressed the policy priority of Vietnam in PR, Concentrated in solving the development issues; in line with the current demand and capacity in terms of institutional and implementation arrangements of the two NTPs; and in line with the One UN Plan.

*Effectiveness*

The activities and outputs of the project have contributed effectively to improved implementation of the NTPs, if comparing the costs to the results and impacts produced by the project. The outcomes achieved at a level higher than the description of the actual outputs, show quite good spillover effects by the technical assistance provided by the project.

*Efficiency*

In term of standard evaluation indicators for efficiency (for example completion timeframe, the availability of the resources including management and technical resources, and the activities not implemented as planned, etc.), ones can say that the project seems to be of low efficiency.

However, from the view point of the evaluators, the efficiency of the project should be looked more toward the outcomes level rather than the direct activities and outputs, because the project activities are implemented in efforts to provide TA in response to the demands for policy development of Vietnam.

*Sustainability*

The sustainability of the project is evaluated based on the capacity to sustain the results attained at Outcome and Impact levels, especially presented in the following perspectives:

* The project’s results contribute significant parts to the capacity built for the national system in the following areas: Institutional capacity of the agencies that design and implement the poverty reduction policies strengthened through the processes of implementation of the NTPs; System and methodology building for policy analysis and design for GoV agencies.
* Establishment of focal point for promotion of new concepts and approaches, and facilitation of policy dialogue, lures the attention and mobilises contributions from stakeholders, especially the donors and has been highly appreciated by the stakeholders.

However, in order to sustain and multiply the results, the efforts can not be stopped at this point. The response evaluators got from the related groups has shown that there are still weaknesses in the capacity of GoV agencies. Therefore, there needs to be additional appropriate technical support if it is expected to shift the PR approach toward a more comprehensive and integrated approach. The GoV agencies in charge of formulation of PR policies also need to identify a vision which is long term enough for new designs of PR programs in the coming period, because new approach requires more comprehensive management capacity in the GoVs management system.

*Partnership and Coordination*

The project has become a good example of supporting the GOV agencies as the host in dealing with their partners, including other GOV agencies, donors, and all the NTPs’ beneficiaries. However, GOV agencies in charge of PR dialogue and implementation may not have enough capacity for stakeholder engagement and coordination.

**3. Lessons learnt**:

*Proper identification of areas for TA support* is the most important lesson. As VIE 02/001 can be understood as *governance for sustainable poverty reduction*, technical assistance provided by the project focuses on capacity building for the national system rather than provision of direct support to PR activities. Opportunity for transformational change has been best used in this case.

*Harmonised and synchronised management of TA*, attracting initiatives and experience is very important in the context that the TA management capacity of the relevant GoV agencies at national, provincial and local levels is still weak.

*Platform for dialogue and opportunity for influence* should be linked to the national programs and the GoV system.

*Demand driven support* is a typical experience of the project. Flexible design has allowed the project to support a continuous process of discussion, agreement, and application of initiatives based on the changing context. The Vietnamese partners have highly appreciated this approach as it can help identify limitations and obstacles, which cannot be found from designing stage.

*Ownership and decentralization reinforced by “one voice” effect* has been strengthened during the project implementation, by the consensus among stakeholders (One Voice).

**4. Conclusions**

* Mission of VIE 02/002 has been successfully completed.
* Project design is relevant and appropriate given different specific conditions of MOLISA and CEM, NTP-PR and P135. However there has been a risk of distracting if Vietnamese partners do not buy the concepts.
* Achievements and results are relevant and sustainable, especially its policy making influence and transformation impact.
* GOV may need further support in order to design the new intervention and implement it in several early phases.
* UN may want to include the project experience into its One UN roadmap, with better coordination across outputs, as the project has dealt with governance and institutional aspect rather than direct poverty reduction.

**5. Recommendations**

* UNDP should consider continuing its support in the new context, applying appropriate lessons, to the new comprehensive PR programme, especially CIO, M&E system, consultation procedure, and encouraging participation.
* Policy dialogue and sharing the lessons learnt from the previous phases will be certainly useful, and this will be the key contribution to Vietnam’s poverty reduction policy development and implementation, as well as One UN effort.
* A partnership hosted by the poverty reduction lead agency is a must, if the GOV wants to better engage the participant of more stakeholders and promote a participatory approach.
* Identification of areas for TA support should be done carefully. Studies for mapping poverty reduction technical supports in a large number of NTPs related to poverty reduction should be undertaken as soon as possible.
* TA management, as a critical lesson, should be taken into consideration when designing and implementing the new poverty reduction intervention. One TA plan (which can be flexible and demand-driven) is highly recommended.
* Experience and best practices of implementation at local level and partnerships at central level as well as approaches, methodologies, procedures, templates created during P135/II (CIO, M&E, participatory approach, consultation, etc.) should be institutionalized as much as possible. Resolution 80 has introduced a good concept, however has yet provided clear intervention description. A comprehensive programme document then needs to be developed.
* The new national sustainable poverty reduction programme 2012 – 2015 is a good chance to apply a comprehensive framework for all the poverty reduction efforts. It is highly recommended that an M&E framework, which is integrated in the national system, should be designed as a part of reform curriculum for implementing agencies. Results-based planning and M&E should be introduced for interventions which are undertaken by the national system.

# SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

* The project has achieved its objectives at impact, outcome, and output levels
* The achievements at impact and outcome levels are more significant than at the output level. This reflects the fact that indirect influence in combination with strong GOV ownership can lead to over-expected results.
* Project design and results are relevant to the Vietnam’s policy changing context
* The significant contribution of the project in changing policy development and implementation has confirmed the effectiveness of the project implementation
* Given the modest financial resource, outputs produced by the project are remarkable and considered efficient.

# LESSONS LEARNT

## Identification of areas for TA support

This can be considered the most important lesson. As VIE 02/001 can be understood as *governance for sustainable poverty reduction*, technical assistance provided by the project focuses on capacity building for the national system rather than provision of direct support to poverty reduction activities. Opportunity for transformational change has been best used in this case.

Managing for change, with indirect support through the NTP-PR and P135/II, requires a very high level of commitment from the GOV. Finding the changeable areas, where there is room for innovation, therefore is crucial for the intervention designers.

The features of support by VIE 02/001 to NTP-PR and P135/II are quite different due to the different conditions and status of the two programmes and their owners (MOLISA and CEM respectively). While the NTP-PR pursues the improvement of general social protection system with a comprehensive approach, P135/II is open for direct support from donor community in order to deliver resources and technical supports during the implementation process.

## Management of TA

Both NTPs especially P135/II have demanded a lot of TA services, which make management of TA complicated and beyond the recent capacity of the related GOV agencies from national to provincial and sub provincial levels. Support by VIE 02/001 thus becomes important.

Coordination among donors, Vietnam’s partners at central, local levels, using the manner of one plan, one TA framework (for both financial and technical supports) has significantly contributed to improving effectiveness of projects and effectiveness of both programs.

However, more results could have been seen if a synchronized TA plan (or “one plan” for TA).

The arrangement with different TA approaches for the two programmes has created difficulties for the both GOV agencies in charge of poverty reduction and donors.

This can be improved by insuring effective use of national and international advisors, especially those at policy advice in policy researches/studies, international experience sharing, capacity building on management and implementation of Vietnam agencies at all levels.

Implementation of Resolution 80, which is more comprehensive compared to the NTP-PR and P135/II, will require a wider range of agencies and stakeholders. TA design will have to be more complicated and more strategic.

## Platform for dialogue and opportunity for influence

The project becomes a good platform for dialogue and also provides good opportunity for NTP-PR and P135/II stakeholders to influence.

Technical assistance in this case has been aligned to national programmes. Technical advisors of several TA packages have had chances to work closely with or even “inside” the system and therefore can understand well the situation and contribute their values.

Incentive for change can be seen more clearly in P135/II compared to NTP-PR, as P135/II has a closer and more direct link between activities and resources. Programme support has a more specific budget line for implementation compared to general budget support. Implementing agencies and beneficiaries of NTP-PR can hardly see the linkage between PRSC funding resources and the GOV expenditures for their own activities. Furthermore, P135/II is heavily supported by various types and packages of TA.

Results from programme implementation, a series of dialogues and studies for both NTP-PR and P135/II have been used as inputs for the newly issued Resolution 80 and the recently draft comprehensive poverty reduction programme 2012 – 2015 led by MOLISA. The set of implementation guidelines for P135/II emphasizing commune investment ownership, M&E system, consultation procedures, and encouraging participation, etc. can now serve as best practices for the implementation of any development programmes.

## Demand driven support

Flexible design has allowed the project to support a continuous process of discussion, agreement, and application of initiatives based on the changing context. The Vietnamese partners have highly appreciated this approach as it can help identify limitations and obstacles, which cannot be found from designing stage.

The project has mobilized most of its resource for capacity building activities. Working closely with the GOV system requires the project activities to fit not only with the needs but also the functions and mandate of the GOV agencies and the changes of those during a reform process.

However, flexibility and often change of expected outputs would create uncertainty for the results, if the Vietnamese partners could not or did not want to apply new approaches and concepts.

Furthermore, expertise availability is also an issue of flexible planning. It has not been so easy to mobilize an appropriate advisor/consultant when needed.

## Ownership and decentralization reinforced by “one voice” effect

Both NTP-PR and P135/II are the GOV led processes. When the GOV agencies and donors have any agreed concept, approach, or solution which would come to a possible change in policy, the advocacy job becomes easier thanks to the higher pressure to policy makers.

Commune investment ownership in P135/II is an example. The GOV has for the first time ever empowered selected communes as the owners of investment projects in those communes. A series of dialogue have been organized, followed by instruction guidelines and even an indicator in the implementation roadmap of the programme. Decentralization has been for long advocated by donors. In this case the success probably come from a the effect of “one voice” or “chorus”. It is worth to note that the P135/II GOV-Donor Partnership has played an important role in this process.

## Some concerns and issues

* While M&E system is well developed for P135/II, this is still a concern of the NTP-PR with the national internal management system.
* The cease of P135 may lead to a risk that experience and best practices of implementation at local level and partnerships at central level will not be learnt and applied in the next processes. Approaches, methodologies, procedures, templates created during P135/II may be lost (CIO, M&E, participatory approach, consultation, etc.)
* Although the newly issued Resolution 80 has created an excellent direction for poverty reduction, there is still a need of appropriate design for a new comprehensive intervention and an effective built-in M&E within national system.
* Coordination between GOV agencies in poverty reduction is still an issue. This can only be solved if the same vision is introduced and understood across the agencies.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Conclusions

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## Recommendations

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* Experience and best practices of implementation at local level and partnerships at central level as well as approaches, methodologies, procedures, templates created during P135/II (CIO, M&E, participatory approach, consultation, etc.) should be institutionalized as much as possible. Resolution 80 has introduced a good concept, however has yet provided clear intervention description. A comprehensive programme document then needs to be developed.
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