

MIDTERM REVIEW EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

‘BUILDING CAPACITY AND ACCESS FOR COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS’

Hanoi, June 2018



Vietnam Representative Office

ACRONYMS

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AOP	Action on Poverty
ANCP	Australian Government's NGO Cooperation Program
CBT	Community Based Tourism
CCD	Centre for Community Development (Dien Bien)
CDF	Community Development Fund
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
FGD	Focus group discussion
HCCD	Centre for Community Development (Ha Tinh)
IDI	Individual Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview
MTR	Mid-term review
PMU	Provincial Management Unit
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

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- Leaders and staffs of AOP in Vietnam for providing overall guidance and sharing information relating to the programme; coordinating with partners for information collection and execution of the field works.
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- Representatives of local authorities including Da Bac, Vu Quang, and Nga Nam for supporting with necessary administrative support during the field works, and for participating to working sessions with the review team.
- Evaluation team especially appreciates the collaboration and support of farmer groups, clubs, cooperatives at project sites, who provided essential information and comments to complete this review.

Midterm review team

Truong Quoc Can

Vu Ngoc Dung

Nguyen Van Hieu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AOP Vietnam with its local partners have been implementing the long-term project '**Building Capacity and Access for Community Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods**' since June 2014 with funding from the Australian Government's NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). The Mid Term Review (MTR) aims at reviewing the progress, efficiency, achievements and lessons-learnt of the project to date. The Mid Term Review (MTR) was conducted through direct consultation with 286 informants (194 women and 92 men), using a variety of methods. Based on these, the review provides recommendations to ensure adjustments will be carried out as and where necessary to maximize the project's impacts and reinforce its sustainability. The results show that:

Project relevance: The project has been designed and implemented in accordance with the strategic direction set in AOP program strategy for 2014-2018. The project activities are suitable to the needs of the beneficiaries, in line with the government policy orientation, and suitable to the local conditions.

Project effectiveness: In comparison with the prioritized activities set out in the strategy of the organization, activities under the strategic priority 2 'Improving incomes and developing sustainable livelihoods' have been implemented effectively with good results in most of the prioritised actions. For strategic priority 2 'Strengthening Adaptation Capacity for Climate Change,' some activities have not yet been implemented in the project locations or implemented with minimal results.

Project efficiency: The project showed high efficiency in terms of using funding sources, high investment efficiency for livelihoods models, efficiency in mobilising and using external resources. The use of human resource, reporting channels and information exchange were also found to be effective. However, the monitoring and evaluation system of the project has not been comprehensive.

Project impact: The project has the following impacts: 1) Increased the capacity, role, and income for women; 2) Created more job opportunities and changing local economy; 3) Improved business mindset among small farmers; 4) Improved confidence and self-esteem of women; 5) Raised awareness of environment protection; 6) Contributed to government's effort to alleviate poverty and build new rural countryside and 7) Opened up investment and development policies at locality.

Project sustainability: Some of the activities and results of the project have initially been sustainable, being maintained and replicated well such as community development fund, community tourism, honey bee keeping. These models have been institutionalised/integrated in to government agendas of some localities such as Hoa Binh and Ha Tinh province. However, environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation have not been clearly demonstrated in some models.

Lessons learnt

On programme and activities design:

- The participation of stakeholders helped ensure the project's relevance and effectiveness.

- Community Development Fund model has been maintained well among local farmers, the report listed some comments and suggestion from communities and partners, which should be considered for future adjustments.
- Although the cooperative/farmers cooperation models have gained initial successes, many challenges remain to remain the effectiveness and sustainability of the models.
- Supporting livelihood models through CBT development is a significant success but yet to be sustainable.
- Limited budget and thin spread of the project make it difficult to create sustainable and significant changes.
- Some livelihoods models are not effective (banana in Da Bac and moringa in Nga Nam).

On coordination and implementation.

- Good cooperation and regular communication among implementation partners.
- Good mobilization of existing resources of local partners and other partners to support project activities.
- Communities' groups are well operated and effective.
- The project has increased active participation and decision-making role of women.

On monitoring and evaluation. Although field monitoring activities are relatively well done, the monitoring and evaluation system, particularly at program/organization level, is not comprehensive.

Recommendations

On program design

- AOP to work with partners to make concrete the intervention strategy for location specific programme design for 2018-22. Consider concentrating the budget and narrowing down the coverage if needed, to make more significant impacts. In addition, collaborations with national networks/organizations should be reinforced to enhance the project's effectiveness and update policy information to guide field intervention activities.
- Continue to support, maintain, and replicate successful livelihood models (CBT and cage fish in Da Bac, bee and fruit trees in Vu Quang, etc.). To replicate the project's models, it is necessary to take into account and thoroughly analyse market demand and the ability of local community and relevant stakeholders to organize and manage the quality of production.
- Support branding and market access for products. For models and products which are produced towards commodity commercialisation with significant production scale, support to connect products and market is required, particularly products with high output (high quality rice, tea, fish, soursop, chicken, bee, etc.)
- For CBT model, current situation of CBT development (including external conditions) should be re-examined to assist local authorities in developing detailed tourism plans. Special attention should be paid to awareness raising activities in the community about CBT's sustainability, avoid unorganized and unsustainable development trends, and continuous technical support to enhance professionalism and service quality. Piloting CBT in Vu Quang and Nga Nam should be considered.
- Continue to replicate cooperative/farmers' cooperation models. In particular, for commodity-based livelihood supporting models, supporting and promoting cooperation between farmers should be carried out in the early stage via farmer's groups. These can

be used as foundation for developing more advanced methods of cooperation for cage fish, fruit tree or bio security chicken models.

- New livelihoods models need to be carefully piloted before implementation, closely monitored and provided with technical assistance, avoiding wide spread implementation that doesn't ensure the models' relevance to local conditions. Seasonal factors also need to be considered during implementation.
- Improve participation and benefiting levels for poor and near poor households: The project should establish separate criteria for livelihood model for poor/near poor and medium households to provide suitable capital/technical support for poor households. Providing support to poor households via medium households is also applicable if participating households make a clear commitment to the project from the beginning.
- For the Community Development Fund model: Communication and sharing information between project partners and CDF groups should be strengthened. The report lists out some recommendations from communities and partners which should be considered for potential adjustments.
- Provide technical training for local technical staff and farmers. Technical training needs to be designed based on local demands. Further training requested by local communities and partners during FGDs under this MTR include fish models, clean production, market connection (in Da Bac) and IPM (in Vu Quang).
- More attention/investment should be paid to ensure ecological sustainability/adaptability of livelihood models, converting from intensive production to clean production towards ecological sustainability. In addition, climate change adaptation factors such as adaption measures for saline intrusion, droughts, storms and floods in project areas should be clarified in livelihood models.

On partnerships and implementation

- Continue building capacity for partners and local government officials particularly on building perception and knowledge on ecological sustainability, production, and market development. Besides, it is essential to continue to improve capacity for facilitators and leaders of community groups.
- Strengthen interactions between AOP in Vietnam and provincial, district and communal authorities, strengthen policy advocacy, and promote sharing of AOP's visions and strategies with local partners and staff.
- Better hand-over/induction for new staff who works as focal point for program implementation, better communication with partners on the change.

On monitoring and evaluation

Establish and operate an M&E system at organizational level:

- Specify the strategic objectives, outcomes and indicators of the program at both organizational and regional level
- Build an information management system at organizational/project level, paying attention to long-term impact and objective indicators.
- Standardize M&E process
- Invest more in documentation and improve donors' visibility at locality.
- Complete CDF reporting software