

International NGO Partnerships for Development

December 2009

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Letter from the Managing Co-Director

Welcome to the 2009 edition of the *International NGO Partnerships for Development Report*. This report describes the activities carried out by working groups under the auspices of the VUFO-NGO Resource Centre (NGO RC) during 2009.

This has been a challenging year for the NGO RC as the global financial crisis made an impact on Vietnam and indirectly affected our members International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs). After the resignation of the previous Managing Co-Director there was a long gap in leadership before her successor was appointed. Both events slowed down our activities in the first months of 2009. Nonetheless, the centre maintained all core services during the critical period and our regular activities were never interrupted. We organised two INGO Forum meetings, facilitated the NGO RC working groups, maintained our website, email lists and library, sent out the fortnightly e-newsletter and produced the annual INGO Directory.

We recruited new team members: the Ethnic Minorities Working Group Coordinator, Information and Technology Advisor and Communications Advisor. Two international volunteers and two Vietnamese volunteers also spent time working for the centre. Office infrastructure was upgraded and equipment replaced. The website was migrated to a new improved platform.

We facilitated the election of two new members for the NGO RC Steering Committee, and the election of two representatives of INGOs to the Vietnam Consultative Group, the main platform for discussion between the Government and donor agencies. We hosted official delegations from Laos and Bhutan. We carried out the *2009 Salary and Benefits Survey of National Staff in INGOs*, submitted an article on Vietnam for the global publication *Social Watch Report 2009* and identified and recruited new members. Our image was further promoted through interviews with the Managing Co-Director for a daily paper, *Thanh Nien*, and the *Global Citizen* programme on the television station VTV3.

The NGO RC remains the main bridge between the INGO community, international donors and key government institutions in Vietnam. Our teams facilitated or supported many meetings and consultation processes, such as: INGOs' representation at Consultative Group meetings, completion of the NGO Complementary Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the first coordination meeting between the Ministry of Health and INGOs and a conference organised by the International Support Group of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the World Bank, which evaluated Official Development Aid for agriculture and rural development for 1993-2008 and the plan for 2011-2015. One of the most important discussions took place at the first INGO Forum in 2009 regarding a new decree on the registration and operation of foreign NGOs.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all our INGO members, other partner organisations and individuals for your continued support of the NGO RC. Our team looks forward to cooperating with you in 2010 and to further developing and improving the NGO RC's services for the benefit of people in Vietnam.

On behalf of the NGO RC team.

Sincerely,

Marko Lovrekovic, Managing Co-Director
VUFO-NGO Resource Centre

International NGO Partnerships for Development Report 2009

Seventeen working groups operate under the auspices of the NGO Resource Centre, including the newly established thematic groups that are part of the Ho Chi Minh City INGO Discussion Group, each focusing on an area of development work in Vietnam. While not all groups are always active, or maintain only an online presence, they provide a valuable resource for the development community in Vietnam to share information, ideas, resources and experiences.

The scope of the working groups has grown significantly in recent years. They frequently host information meetings, presentations, discussions, workshops and training sessions about current issues and on-going projects in Vietnam, and play a role in sharing resources and supporting consultations on new policies, laws and plans. Working group participants are implementing programmes across the country, and their practical experiences constitute a valuable resource for other organisations and decision-makers to draw upon. Some groups have established thematic subgroups focusing on specific areas.

In the interests of sharing the activities and contributions of these working groups with a wider audience, this report has been prepared to summarise their activities in 2009. The first edition of such report was released in 2005.

The NGO Resource Centre acknowledges the contributions of all the coordinators and other members of the working groups in the preparation of this report.

The VUFO-NGO Resource Centre

The VUFO-NGO Resource Centre was established in 1993 through a partnership between INGOs working in Vietnam, and the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations (VUFO).

Its objectives are to:

- promote, facilitate and contribute to the sharing of information, resources and experiences within and between INGOs, their partners and local organisations, in order to improve the quality and impact of their work in Vietnam; and
- strengthen relationships and enhance dialogue between INGOs and other development 'actors' in Vietnam, including government agencies, donors and local organisations.

The NGO RC had 137 members in 2009, but many others use the centre as well, including national NGOs and institutions, international and national researchers and donors.

History and Background

The NGO RC grew out of a loose network of foreign NGOs working in Vietnam. In the early 1990s their representatives started to meet on the last Friday of each month to discuss the practical details of establishing and managing programmes and projects in Vietnam. Since that time, INGOs have continued to share information on their programmes and collaborate to improve the quality of their work.

The NGO RC provides a variety of services to INGOs, their partner organisations, donors, government agencies, local organisations and others concerned with development issues in Vietnam.

In 1998, a strengthened partnership was developed between the NGO RC and VUFO. This involved the establishment of a co-directorship and an expanded Steering Committee, which has enabled the centre to continue to support the work of NGOs in Vietnam.

Our office is in Hanoi, staffed by a small secretariat headed by the Managing Co-Director. The other Co-Director works within the People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM) under the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations. We also employ additional staff and volunteers on a needs basis.

Activities and Services

- **INGO Forum**
The NGO RC hosts INGO Forums, which bring together member organisations and others from the development community. The forums elect INGO representatives for external meetings, host presentations by visiting experts, and formulate and endorse joint INGO statements for external use.
- **INGO Working Groups**
The NGO RC encourages and facilitates its INGO members to establish working groups for different issues. Apart from INGOs, national NGOs and other interested parties also participate in the working groups. The NGO RC presently has 17 active working groups. However, not all issue the annual reports included in this publication.

- **Library and Online Resources**

The NGO RC maintains a physical and online library containing a wide range of information on development and Vietnam, including studies, reports, handbooks and other resources.

- **Annual INGO Directory**

The NGO RC publishes an annual directory, in English and Vietnamese, of INGOs providing support to Vietnam. A summary of the Directory is also available online.

- **NGO RC website <www.ngocentre.org.vn>**

The website provides updated information and resources in English and Vietnamese to support the work of INGOs, VUFO, national NGOs and institutions and others focused on development issues in Vietnam.

- **Fortnightly email newsletter**

The NGO RC produces an informal newsletter that is emailed to member organisations and other supporters.

- **Dialogue and Advocacy**

The NGO RC works to increase awareness and clarify the roles of INGOs in the changing development context of Vietnam, and to improve coordination, dialogue, and relationships between INGOs and government institutions, local NGOs, donors and other development actors. The centre functions as an entry point for interaction between different development actors and the INGO community on development programmes, strategies and policies. It also conducts periodical consultation and studies into emerging development issues in Vietnam. The different activities of the NGO RC relating to coordination, dialogue, and advocacy include:

- facilitation of thematic working groups under the umbrella of the NGO RC;
- participation in drafting of government strategies and policies, such as in the drafting of the *Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010*;
- facilitation and support for consultation on donor strategies and reports, such as facilitation for NGO contributions to the *Vietnam Development Report 2008*;
- representation and participation in the mid-year and end-of-year Consultative Group meetings and preparation of a written collaborative NGO statement for that meeting;
- support for preparation of NGO reports, such as the *NGO Complementary Report on the Convention of the Rights of the Child*;
- participation in different partnership groups and local NGO networks, such as the People's Participation Working Group etc.; and
- participation in collaborative campaigns such as Global Campaign Against Poverty and Global Campaign for Education.

Organisational Structure

- **The INGO Forum**

The INGO Forum is the highest decision-making authority and selects the five INGO representatives for the Steering Committee, as well as INGO representatives to the Consultative Group Meetings (annual and mid-year) and partnership groups. Held according to need, the forum is open to all representatives of INGOs affiliated with the NGO RC, and offers INGOs working in Vietnam the opportunity to share, experience and better co-ordinate common activities. The centre also welcomes visitors wishing to attend or make

presentations. In such cases, arrangements are made in advance with the NGO RC. For more information, contact the Managing Co-Director at <director@ngocentre.org.vn>

- **The Steering Committee**

The NGO RC Steering Committee has the responsibility to govern, oversee and decide on the strategic direction of the centre, as well as to provide guidance, support and oversight of the activities of the Managing Co-Director. The Steering Committee meets each quarter and consists of 11 members, comprising five INGO representatives and six Vietnamese agencies.

- **Funding**

The activities of the NGO RC are primarily funded by membership fees, which cover approximately 70-80 per cent of the centre's operational budget. The NGO RC has to raise funds for the remaining amount on an annual basis.

Agent Orange Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/agentorange

Overview

In July 2004, the Agent Orange Working Group was established by a group of international NGOs in Vietnam with projects aiming to resolve the legacy of Agent Orange and provide humanitarian assistance to Vietnamese war victims.

This annual report will highlight important developments taken place in 2009 in work in general on dioxin, commonly called Agent Orange, that are not necessarily limited to the framework of the Working Group.

The chair of the Working Group is Thao Griffiths, Country Representative of Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation.

Key Objectives

The objectives of the Agent Orange Working Group are:

- To share information and views on international NGO projects and various Vietnamese and international initiatives relating to Agent Orange;
- To enhance participants' understanding of the range and complexity of issues relating to Agent Orange;
- To enhance communication and create space for relevant groups inside and outside Vietnam to meet and discuss current events and the changing environment around Agent Orange.

Background

From 1962 until 1971 an estimated 72 million litres of herbicide containing dioxin were sprayed over Vietnam in areas south of the former demilitarised zone along the 17th parallel. Vietnamese, American and international organisations continue to research the long-term impact of the dioxin, in relation to both public health and the environment. As this research continues, tens of thousands of people living in and around dioxin 'hotspot' areas - generally those areas around air bases where the substance was stored, used heavily to control vegetation around the perimeter of airbases, and loaded onto aircraft - continue to be exposed to the dioxin and remain at risk of contracting illnesses and disabilities, and/or passing them to future generations. In addition, veterans and others exposed to dioxin during the war continue to suffer consequences in non-hotspot areas throughout Vietnam. Thirty-four years after the war ended, dioxin remains a major threat to public health and greatly affects the socio-economic development in Vietnam.

Two approaches have been emerged over the last few years – legal and political / technical.

The legal approach is a class action suit which the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange filed in US federal court in New York in 2004. Plaintiffs claimed damages against 37 US chemical companies which manufactured dioxin-contaminated Agent Orange in the 60s. However, the district and appellate courts ruled that the Association's legal arguments did not merit a trial and in April 2009 the Supreme Court refused to hear their appeal.

The political / technical approach began to unfold in November 2006 when President George Bush, in Hanoi on an official visit, committed the US to helping Vietnam clean up dioxin-contaminated soil at former US military airports. Two appropriations, \$US3 million in 2007 and another \$US3 million in 2009, were approved by the US Congress and by President Bush for the US to start working with Vietnam in addressing the issue of dioxin/Agent Orange.

From 2006, the Ford Foundation has played a key role as a neutral working party with both sides – the Government of Vietnam and the Government of the US. The Ford Foundation has brought people together, funded confidence-building projects, and sought to mainstream this issue in the US. The Ford Foundation also supports the US-Vietnam Dialogue Group on Agent Orange-Dioxin, a bi-national committee of prominent citizens working together on solutions.

Key activities in 2009

- On February 24-25 the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and Committee 33 hosted the first workshop drawing together the principle stakeholders in the clean-up of environmental dioxin: Committee 33, the Ministry of Defence, the US State Department, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Czech Republic. Participants shared data on the principal dioxin hotspots in Vietnam funded by various sources - Da Nang (Ford Foundation) and Phu Cat and Bien Hoa (UNDP) - and reached conclusions about clean-up strategies for all three locations. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is likely to soon approve the UNDP proposal to develop remediation strategies for the identified hotspots.
- In Da Nang on February 24 an American philanthropist pledged funds for a new rehabilitation centre for children with disabilities associated with dioxin. The pledge was made through the US Fund for UNICEF.
- On March 3 HDNET World Report aired a documentary, 'Vietnam's Lingering Ghost: Facing the Legacy of Agent Orange', in the US. The documentary was rebroadcast in May.
- Vietnamese members of the US Vietnam Dialogue Group on Agent Orange/Dioxin and one American member met in Da Nang on April 20-21 to visit work in progress at the airport and in the community and to chart next steps. The meeting attracted leaders from national and local levels of the Government of Vietnam, local and international NGOs, UNDP and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) and USAID (United States Agency for International Development).
- The U.S. Congressional Research Service issued a report by Michael Martin, 'Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange and US-Vietnam Relations', on May 28.
- During June 1-4 the US Vietnam Dialogue Group on Agent Orange/Dioxin held its fourth meeting, this time in Washington, DC. Following a formal conference on the first day, the members met with senior officials in Washington, Environmental Protection Agency in New Jersey and Center for Disease Control in Atlanta. The Congressional Research Service sought a continuing liaison on the Agent Orange issue. The State Department described use of the first \$US3 million appropriated in 2007. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee requested a briefing note and the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific scheduled hearings on June 3 at which Dialogue Group members and Ford Foundation staff testified.

- On June 1 the National Organisation on Disability, a US NGO based in Washington, DC, published its study, 'US Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange: Understanding the Impact 40 Years Later', funded by the Ford Foundation.
- On June 2 Committee 33 published 'Summary of Dioxin Contamination at the Bien Hoa, Phu Cat and Da Nang Airbases, Vietnam' funded by the Ford Foundation. The report indicated that the Bien Hoa Airport is likely to contain substantial amounts of dioxin-contaminated soil, while contamination at the Phu Cat Airport is much less. The report also found that the primary means of dioxin exposure at the Da Nang Airport was through the food chain.
- In mid-2009 a Disability Coordination Group in Da Nang was set up in order to improve partnership and coordination among NGOs working in the area of disability in Da Nang. The group meets quarterly.
- The Government of Vietnam has prepared a draft National Action Plan to respond to Agent Orange/Dioxin.
- On September 8-10 the US-Vietnam Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) organised its fourth meeting in Hanoi. Both sides agreed to set up a Health Task Force. In addition, the JAC recommended continued, expanded and comprehensive remediation efforts at Da Nang and urged quick action by all participants, including rapid disbursement of USAID funds to take action to reduce dioxin exposure.
- On September 10 the English channel of the Al Jazeera television network ran two parts of the East 101 Program featuring 'Vietnam – After Agent Orange'.
- In late September, USAID Vietnam signed a contract with an American contractor regarding the Da Nang containment engineering design and environmental impact assessment.
- The US-Vietnam Dialogue Group on Dioxin is preparing a 10-year master plan for further international cooperation on addressing remnants of Agent Orange/dioxin in Vietnam.

Conclusion

Despite the complexities of this contentious subject, a great deal has been achieved in the period of 2006-2009. About \$US29.2 million has been committed by non-Vietnam sources, including \$US2 million from the US State Department and EPA, \$US4 million from USAID, \$US11.7 million from the Ford Foundation, and \$US11.5 million from other foundations, foreign governments and the UN. This sum has funded measurement, isolation and containment of dioxin at Da Nang, Phu Cat, and Bien Hoa as well as health and other services for people with disabilities in these locations and in eight other high-impact provinces.

Future Activities for 2010

In planning activities for 2010, members of the Agent Orange Working Group will continue to focus on expanding services to people with disabilities, and to their families, associated with Agent Orange/dioxin. They will also continue to focus on mainstreaming the issue.

Child Rights Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/childrights

Overview

The Child Rights Working Group was established in June 2006 to improve communication and coordination between all stakeholders and support Vietnamese society in fulfilling its commitment to upholding the rights of the child.

The Working Group brings together key stakeholders such as INGOs, mass organisations and other Vietnamese community groups to share information on child rights, including best practices, programmes and research, in order to mobilise efforts in working towards the fulfilment of child rights in Vietnam. Other organisations also participate in the group, such as UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), the ILO (International Labour Organisation) and UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), government ministries and organisations, research institutes and experts.

The Working Group is coordinated by an INGO, which chairs its activities and is elected annually by all Working Group participants. Plan International performed the role of chair for 2009. In 2008, a task-force on the Complementary Report on the Rights of the Child was formed, which was led by Save the Children, and it will continue working until the end of 2009.

In 2008, the Ho Chi Minh City-based Child Rights Working Group, currently led by Paul Finis of the Saigon Charity Organisation, began the process of establishing itself to promote coordination between child rights organisations in the south of Vietnam. It has also participated in the meetings of the Child Rights Working Group in 2009.

Goal

The overall goal of the Working Group is to increase communication and coordination and to share lessons learned between all actors working to support the Vietnamese Government to effectively manage and respond to issues related to children's rights.

Key objectives

- Sharing and disseminating information: the Working Group provides a forum for discussions on development issues related to children in Vietnam. It disseminates information as widely as possible regarding laws, policies, research, and the documentation of projects and programmes relating to children.
- Improving the development practices of member organisations: participants share experiences and lessons learned from their development activities, in order to improve the impact, both in quality and quantity, of their development interventions.
- Accessing resources: participants advise each other, when possible, on accessing resources, including human, financial and other resources. This includes suitable trainers or consultants, sharing information about potential sources of funding and applications for training courses, workshops and conferences.
- Policy dialogues are held to share experiences and information related to children to improve development practices and policies among members and their partner

organisations, which creates an opportunity for dialogues with relevant government and donor institutions and organisations.

Key Activities in 2009

The main themes in 2009 were:

- Sharing information related to child rights issues through the Working Group email list.
- Finalising the Complementary NGO Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and promoting participation by group members (both INGOs and local NGOs) and children in the process.
- Thematic discussions during Working Group meetings with focus on child protection-related issues

Working Group meeting June 10: The meeting focused on two objectives; firstly to reinforce and motivate Working Group meetings and activities and secondly to finalise the Complementary NGO Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (for which the fourth draft was available in November 2008). It was decided that Working Group meetings would be held every two months, with Plan Vietnam continuing to chair and with CEFACOM (the Research Centre for Family Health and Community Development) the co-chair. It was also agreed that after a widespread final commentary process involving all Working Group members, coordinated by Plan International in Vietnam, the CRC Complementary Report would be completed by Save the Children.

Finalising the CRC Complementary Report in June and July: In the month after the June 10 meeting the final commentary process for the CRC Complementary Report was conducted among Working Group members and 10 international and local NGOs provided detailed comments. These were consolidated and shared with all members before the meeting on July 21.

Working Group meeting July 21: The meeting reviewed members' comments on the CRC Complementary Report and discussing and agreed on five key recommendations for the report and a draft schedule for finalising the report to be led by Save the Children. The meeting also heard from representatives of the Ho Chi Minh City working group on their activities.

Finalisation process for the CRC Complementary Report: after finalisation of the report to take into account member comments and the agreed key recommendations a task force meeting on September 11 made technical inputs for the final draft report, which was then circulated to members.

Working Group meeting September 21: The meeting carefully reviewed and accepted the final draft of the CRC Complementary Report, with the addition of a few additional notes. It was also agreed that the report should be submitted in January-February 2010. The meeting also discussed child protection issues with the participation of HCM City Child Rights Working Group representatives, and decided that coming meetings should focus on this topic.

Working Group meeting November 9: The meeting focussed on child protection issue with a key presentation by UNICEF on a study of child protection-related laws and policies in Vietnam, carried out by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) with UNICEF support. After discussion, it was agreed that the report should be shared with MOLISA in

December, then signed off by Child Rights Working Group members in January and submitted to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Geneva in February 2010.

Future Directions for 2010

The Child Rights Working Group will continue to focus on child protection issue in 2010. Besides traditional meetings and sharing, the Working Group will discuss other practical activities at the first meeting in 2010.

NGO Climate Change Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/5457

Overview

The NGO Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) was established in February 2008 and provides a forum for Vietnamese NGOs and INGOs to participate in the climate change debate. It plays a significant role in facilitating information-sharing and coordination among NGOs engaged in addressing climate change across sectors and themes. CCWG is open to the participation of all interested INGOs, Vietnamese NGOs and agencies.

The Working Group has a core group which makes key decisions and deals with administrative and operational issues. In addition to the core group, there are three priority thematic groups: Climate Change Adaptation, Climate Change Mitigation and Climate Change Awareness and Behaviour Change. These groups meet separately to exchange information and ideas and report back to the core group.

In 2009 members of the core group were: the NGO Resource Centre, Oxfam, CARE, RECOFTC, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), East Meets West Foundation (EMW), WWF, Challenge to Change and Sustainable Rural Development (SRD).

Monthly Working Group meetings took place as planned except in September to share news, ideas, lessons, information relating to member organisations and events.

Goal

The Climate Change Working Group seeks to contribute to reducing the vulnerability of poor people in Vietnam to the impact of climate change through NGO coordination, advocacy and capacity building that enables environmentally and economically sustainable and socially just responses to climate change.

Key Objectives

- Coordination: coordinate and share NGO initiatives and knowledge on climate change through forums where INGOs and Vietnamese NGOs can interact in order to maximise impact and minimise overlap.
- Advocacy: provide a structure for NGOs to develop common advocacy agendas on climate change and build relationships between NGOs and decision-makers (government, donors, the private sector and others) for coordination, dialogue and advocacy on responses to climate change and on participation in policy processes nationally and sub-nationally.
- Capacity building: ensure NGOs in Vietnam have access to information, training, events and funding opportunities on climate change and support NGO climate change activities.

Key Activities in 2009

Capacity Building Program

The Climate Change Working Group and the Vietnam Network of Civil Society Organisations and Climate Change (VSO&CC) jointly developed the Climate Change Capacity Building Project based

on assessments done in 2008. The goal of the project is to raise awareness and build the capacity of NGOs in Vietnam to respond to climate change and integrate adaptation and mitigation into existing and future programs to contribute to long term sustainable development. The project has three components; communications and coordination, training on adaptation and mitigation and sharing and learning.

The Finnish Embassy approved funds and the three-year project began in 2009 hosted by one member, Sustainable Rural Development (SRD), and managed by a nine-member Steering Committee elected through the Climate Change Working Group. Work in 2009 include a planning workshop, start-up workshop, planning for database information collection, publication of e-bulletins and a newsletter on climate change, preparation for TOT (training of trainers) on adaptation and mitigation, identifying a group of trainers who will also be responsible for developing the TOT curriculum and holding a consultation workshop for curriculum development with potential trainees and trainers. Several local NGOs from all regions in Vietnam are participating in the project.

Policy Dialogue and Advocacy in 2009

As the United Nations conference on climate change in Copenhagen (COP15) in December aims to make major global decisions this was an important year for NGOs to engage with global advocacy as well as with the Vietnamese Government and donors. Climate Change Working Group members met in February at Oxfam to discuss NGO advocacy messages for 2009, which were then elaborated by the adaptation and mitigation thematic groups and used as key elements in CCWG statements to the mid-year and end-year Consultative Group meetings hosted by the World Bank and Government.

Adaptation messages focused on practical links between Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and how to mainstream these through the Government's Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) program and Social Economic Development Plan system. A joint statement on this topic was developed with the Disaster Management Working Group for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) to present at the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Global Forum on DRR in June. Mitigation messages focused on ensuring benefits to the poor through social and environmental standards are built into the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) mechanisms and other carbon finance mechanisms.

Climate Change Working Group members continued to participate in several donor, government policy and coordination dialogues, calling for improved coordination in Vietnam. In November the Working Group coordinated participation and prepared a joint presentation and a press release on NGO activities in community based adaptation for the high level Mekong Delta Climate Change Forum in Can Tho. The presentation included cases from three NGO projects in the Mekong Delta region and messages on adaptation developed by the Working Group.

The Climate Change Working Group supported Civil Society Organisation (CSO) representation on REDD issues in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meetings leading up to COP15, linked to the Accra Caucus on Forests and Climate Change. Mr Quynh from Forestry Inventory and Planning Institute (FIPI) attended the UNFCCC Poznan meeting on climate change and Vu Thi Bich Hop from Sustainable Regional Development attended meetings in Bonn, Bangkok and Copenhagen on behalf of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). To support communication between CSOs and Vietnam official delegates, the Working Group also negotiated for Ms Hop to participate in the preparatory meetings for delegates to COP15 hosted by the UN in

Vietnam. The Working Group also arranged for climate change experts from Oxfam, the Environmental Defence Fund (EDF) and CARE to address the workshops.

Thematic Group Activities in 2009

The Climate Change Adaptation Thematic Group organised a Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Mainstreaming workshop in January. INGOs, Vietnamese NGOs, representatives from The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and other institutions discussed plans, methodologies, tools and the challenges of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction, sustainable livelihoods and climate change adaptation. The thematic group decided to develop common tools and methodologies used in members' vulnerability and capacity assessments on disasters and climate change and have met regularly through the year. The thematic group also held a workshop in Nha Trang from July 30 to August 1 that focussed on how to mainstream climate change throughout every stage of any project - while also ensuring economic development that sustains people's livelihoods. Twenty participants from different NGOs developed draft guidelines on this important issue. After revision these will be presented to a consultation workshop involving all stakeholders from NGOs and the Government.

The Climate Change Awareness and Behaviour Change Thematic Group focused on public awareness campaigns, particularly in Hanoi. Caritas led a tree-planting campaign. *Live and Learn* and *Challenge to Change* held the *Green Generation Youth Forum* in Hanoi, which included a screening of a feature film 'The Age of Stupid' with the support of the Cinematheque cinema. *Action for the City* and the Climate Change Working Group organised *Green Transportation Week*. Twenty-four offices joined this campaign, which resulted in carbon emissions into the atmosphere being reduced by an estimated 43 kilograms. Among other initiatives of the group, members shared their green-office and carbon-auditing activities, and a list of media contacts for climate change issues was developed. During the year role of chair of the moved from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to Action for the City.

The Climate Change Mitigation Thematic Group was revived under the new leadership of RECOFTC. Three meetings were held focusing on REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), in which most members are active. Many CCWG members participated in the numerous workshops and trainings on REDD and REDD+. The group also hosted a presentation session at which Pham Manh Cuong from the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development presented an update on Vietnam's progress in developing a national REDD mechanism. First Climate gave a presentation on carbon markets to support NGO understanding and access to CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) and voluntary markets. The thematic group also decided to host an energy forum.

Other Activities

The Climate Change Working Group continued to improve coordination with other NGO Resource Centre working groups, such as the Disaster Management Working Group and the HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group and also the Vietnam Network of Civil Society Organisations and Climate Change through joining meetings, joint efforts such as the World Bank Matrix on studies and activities on climate change in Vietnam, policy dialogues and preparation for training of local partners.

Future Directions for 2010

- At the beginning of the year, the Climate Change Working Group will review its performance and consider the structure and action plans for 2010, including a review of the role of the chair and core group, agree on memberships for 2010, and discuss the need for a jointly paid coordinator for the group.
- The Working Group will continue to support the implementation of the capacity building project focussing on database and newsletter development, improvement of its website and TOT (training of trainers).
- On Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) the Working Group will continue dialogue on making sure social rights are incorporated and the poor communities benefit equally.
- The Working Group will host an energy forum for sharing and learning.
- On the *National Target Programme and Climate Change Mainstreaming* the Working Group will:
 - conduct a consultation workshop on its mainstreaming guideline with relevant stakeholders
 - support implementation at the local level with technical advice on mainstreaming and planning methodology and tools ensuring the meaningful participation of local communities.
 - The Working Group will work with the Vietnamese media in order to raise awareness and convey its messages.
 - The Working Group will develop plans for NGO support for action in Vietnam on post-COP15 agreements.

Disability Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/disabilitywg

Overview

In the past 15 years, support for people living with disabilities in Vietnam has developed rapidly, and many achievements have been made in, especially after the promulgation of the Ordinance for Persons with Disabilities in 1998.

The Disability Working Group (DWG) promotes co-operation, collaboration and better communication among INGOs, organisations of people with disabilities (PWD), relevant government ministries and donor agencies. Issues addressed by the working group include rehabilitation and health services, employment, inclusive and vocational education, disability prevention, public awareness of disability issues and barrier-free access to public places.

The Disability Working Group is coordinated by a voluntary chair, which is elected from a Core Group of six or seven INGOs and rotates on a yearly basis. The elected voluntary chair acts as both chair and secretary for Working Group meetings and activities.

Goal

The overall goal of the Disability Working Group is to increase communication and coordination and to share lessons learned among all stakeholders working to support people living with disabilities, which will contribute to promoting the empowerment of people with disabilities and a barrier-free society.

Key objectives

- Increase communication, coordination and information-sharing between Disability Working Group members and others working to support people living with disabilities.
- Share practical experience, successes and lessons learned to the mutual benefit of all participants attending Working Group meetings.
- Act as a time-efficient and effective mechanism for stakeholders to communicate and coordinate working plans.
- Contribute to workshops on inclusive development.

Key Activities in 2009

Main themes during 2009

- Share information and facilitate discussion on themes such as awareness of people with disabilities, community-based rehabilitation, education for people with disabilities, access to information and communication technologies (ICT) and vocational training, employment and self-help support for people with disabilities.
- Participate in the consultation workshop hosted by the National Committee of Cooperation on Disability (NCCD) and comment and contribute to the draft law on disability.

- Exchange information, experiences and lessons learned relating to programmes and projects that support people with disabilities.

Working Group thematic meetings in 2009

Working Group Core Group meeting May 6: After a period without a chair from January to May members met and reviewed the group's Terms of Reference. They also decided to keep the system of rotating the role of chair each year. The Core Group determined to meet twice a year and selected six themes for the remainder of 2009: laws on disability, raising awareness of people with disabilities (PWD), community based rehabilitation, PWD education; PWD accessibility to information and communication technologies (ICT) and PWD vocational training, employment and self-help group activities.

Working Group meeting May 28 on disability law: Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH) facilitated discussion on the new disability law, while a representative of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) introduced the topic of the draft law before discussion of the issue. That representative, who is from the drafting team for the legislation, said that comments and input from the meeting would be taken into account by the drafting team. There was also an update from the Landmines Survivor Network (LSN) on Disability Working Group involvement in a workshop on victim assistance, which is relevant to how the Working Group can better support people with disabilities.

Working Group meeting July 17 on raising awareness of people with disabilities: There were three presentations to the meeting, which was co-chaired by Handicap International and the Hanoi Association for Disabled People. Nghiem Xuan Tue, director of the National Committee of Cooperation on Disability (NCCD) office, made a presentation about awareness raising in the framework of the new Disability Law. Mr Tue briefed the Working Group on the historical background and the process of drafting the new law and also on the progress of a consultation workshop where people with disabilities make an input on the draft law. Virginie Hallet, a staff member of Handicap International in Cambodia, presented a case study from that nation on raising awareness of disability issues through theatre performances. The Landmines Survivor Network made a presentation on the outcomes of a workshop on international cooperation and supporting the victims of landmines.

Working Group meeting September 24 on community based rehabilitation: The meeting was facilitated by Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam (MCNV) and Landmines Survivor Network (LSN) and focussed on community based rehabilitation (CBR) activities in Vietnam through three presentations. MCNV presented on CBR approaches and practices. LSN shared information on the CBR approach implemented in Quang Binh. A representative of the Ministry of Health spoke about CBR activities as part of the implementation of Decree 239. Paul Zetter, Development Director of the Ensemble Creative Training and Development partnership, spoke about its new documentary, Still Life Moving.

Working Group Meeting November 20 on inclusive education: The meeting was chaired by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and there was a presentation about the work on inclusive education by CRS, Handicap International (HI) and Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam (MCNV). Issues discussed included what are the key components for success in inclusive education success and who are the potential stakeholders in implementing it. Discussion took place on how to achieve high-quality inclusive education at school and community levels.

Future directions for 2010

- Integrate disability issues into the activities of other NGO RC working groups, such as the Climate Change Working Group, Child Rights Working Group, Disaster Management Working Group and Ethnic Minorities Working Group.
- Continue to promote the sharing of information and experience through meetings and through the Working Group email list.
- Increase cooperation between INGOs and local NGOs and local partnerships.
- Participate in relevant meetings organised by IDEA (Inclusive Development Action).
- Take part in all consultation workshops on policies and laws relevant to disability issues.

Disaster Management Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/dmwg

Overview

The Disaster Management Working Group is a forum for NGOs and other development agencies and professionals to exchange ideas and lessons learned about how to improve development policies and practices on disaster reduction, meetings for emergency assessment and calls for support for disaster victims

The Working Group meets monthly, or more frequently as required in the event of disasters. One organisation assumes the role of Chair of the Working Group for a period of six months, selected by members of the Working Group's core group. Only core group member organisations are eligible to assume the role of Chair. In 2009 and early 2010 UN PCG 10 (the UN Natural Disasters and Emergencies Programme Coordinating Group) and Save the Children are the Co-Chairs of the group.

Goal

The Disaster Management Working Group's overall goal is enhance disaster management in Vietnam through improved information sharing, coordination of initiatives and joint action to promote the highest possible standards and practices.

Key objectives

- To improve coordination among all agencies working in disaster management through information sharing, experience exchange and joint initiatives.
- To build the capacity of relevant agencies and practitioners in disaster management.
- To initiate and contribute towards policy dialogues for improving the disaster-related policies and practices of policy makers and implementers.
- To improve coordination and collaboration in emergency responses, especially for big disasters.

Key Activities in 2009

Promote information sharing and experience exchange

The topics covered by monthly meetings included: general and disaster situation updates, emergency forecasts, advice on technical topics and information on issues ranging from coordinating emergency support to integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) with climate change adaptation (CCA) and mainstreaming community-based disaster reduction management (CBDRM) with socio-economic development.

Promote standards, accountability, best practices, research projects and guidelines

- Develop and share tools and guidelines for disaster management and climate change adaptation tools and guidelines - a joint activity with the Climate Change Working Group.

- Develop standards and best practices in disaster response - working with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNICEF and others from the UN Natural Disasters and Emergencies Programme Coordinating Group (UN PCG 10) to develop guidelines on water and sanitation, food security and education clusters. These would subsequently be applied during the Ketsana and Mirinae typhoon disasters in October and November 2009.

Undertake joint training and workshops

- Cooperation with JANI (Joint Advocacy Network Initiative) to organise:
 - tours for journalists in four regions of Vietnam that are at risk of disasters, with the assistance of Development Workshop France (DWF), in mid 2009;
 - a training course on disasters and communication for journalists in September 2009, with the assistance of Action Aid.
- Emergency response training courses on joint assessment in an emergency.
- Joint training on cash transfer programs in emergencies with Oxfam, Save the Children and the Red Cross.
- Joint training on integrating disaster risk reduction with climate change adaptation in Nha Trang.

Advocacy and policy dialogue

- Coordinated contributions and statements to all policy forums (including Consultative Group meetings and NDMP IAWG (Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership Inter-Agency Working Group) meetings and workshops.
- Humanitarian reform principles and international Sphere standards for response to disasters.
- Contributed to the development of the law on disaster preparedness and reduction.

Coordinated emergency preparedness and response

In 2009 the Disaster Management Working Group conducted two joint rapid-needs assessments after the highly destructive typhoons Ketsana and Mirinae. The Working Group sent six joint assessment teams after the Ketsana typhoon in late September to examine the provinces of Quang Tri, Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai and Kontum. After this many donors gave support to people affected by the typhoon. A month later, in the wake of the Mirinae typhoon, the Working Group sent two joint assessment teams to conduct rapid needs assessments in Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa and Binh Dinh.

Working Group meetings and external meetings

January meeting: The meeting discussed revising the Working Group's Terms of Reference, and a work plan for the group. Ms Ngan from the World Bank updated members on the bank's work on community-based disaster risk management and other activities. Ugo Blanco of UN PCG 10 spoke about the UN disaster risk management project undertaken with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).

February meeting: the meeting focused on collaboration between the Disaster Management Working Group and the Climate Change Working Group on joint activities related to disaster risk reduction, community-based disaster reduction management and climate change adaptation. The meeting agreed that UN PCG 10 would take the chairing role for the next six months.

March meeting: The meeting discussed the challenges of collecting information within 72 hours of a disaster, including mechanisms, methodology, human resources, questionnaires, software and hardware. It also considered an update on the World Bank's draft disaster information system.

April meeting: Topics the meeting discussed included disaster management information systems, disaster and pandemic response plans, the cluster approach and disaster funding mechanisms.

May meeting: the topics at the meeting included of a presentation about the Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership Phase III, and updates on cluster meetings and pandemic preparedness.

June meeting: The meeting discussed preparation for the disaster season, rapid assessments, assessment of availability of pandemic contingency plans and the cluster leadership approach.

July meeting: The meeting monitored the implementation of the Working Group annual work plan. Other topics included a presentation from IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) on international disaster response laws.

August meeting: there was an update on Typhoon Hagupit (Storm No. 6) and the response to it. Oxfam made a presentation on its cash transfer program for emergency support.

September meeting: the meeting was updated on the outbreak of the H1N1 virus and the response to it by NGOs, the community and government agencies.

Urgent meeting on Ketsana Typhoon, 28 September: the meeting reviewed the typhoon situation and province-level preparation by all participants - NGOs, government agencies and donors - and discussed preparations for joint rapid assessments by Working Group members.

Information session at MARD, 6 October: In close collaboration with the Central Committee for Floods and Storm Control (CCFSC) and UN PCG 10 the information session analysed the impact of the Ketsana typhoon and discussed how to support national relief efforts. Representatives from the joint assessment teams (Government, NGOs and the UN) that visited the six most affected provinces reported their findings. The session was co-chaired by the MARD Vice-Minister, the Director General of PACCOC (the People's Aid Coordinating Committee) and a representative of UN PCG 10.

Urgent meeting on Mirinae typhoon at PACCOC, 5 November: The meeting reviewed the impact of the typhoon and discussed preparations for conducting joint rapid assessment by Disaster Management Working Group members and also how members could quickly respond to the victims of the floods.

Debriefing Meeting on Typhoon Mirinae at PACCOC, 12 November: Joint assessment teams for Phu Yen, Binh Dinh and Khanh Hoa, the most affected provinces, reported to the meeting. There was also a statement from the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC) about the Government response and on donors' support. The meeting was co-chaired by the Director General of PACCOC and a representative of UN PCG 10.

Other activities

- The Disaster Management Working Group co-organised an event to disseminate information on rapid assessment reports in areas affected by Typhoons Ketsana and Mirinae.
- It organised an event to mark International Disaster day in Hue.
- The Working Group conducted capacity building training for joint assessment team members and co-organised workshops on climate change, disaster risk reduction and community-based disaster reduction management with the Climate Change Working Group.
- Working Group members participated in the Practitioners' Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific, which was held in Thailand.

Future directions for 2010

- Continue to host monthly coordination meetings.
- Strengthen capacity building programs, the cluster leadership approach and other work.
- Organise mainstreaming events, research and publications on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.
- Arrange emergency response management training for public health, water supply and sanitation and other sectors.
- Arrange a 'lessons learned' workshop on emergency preparedness and response.
- Undertake joint research on disaster risk reduction policies and practices.
- Continue to support the Government on the implementation of community-based disaster risk management and on the development of laws on disaster management.

Ethnic Minorities Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/emwg

Overview

The Ethnic Minorities Working Group (EMWG) is a forum for NGOs and other development agencies and professionals to exchange ideas and lessons learned about how to improve development policies and practices for the benefit of ethnic minority peoples.

The Working Group operates on a voluntary basis and is managed by a core group of INGOs who are most active within the group. Since the beginning of 2007, Oxfam Great Britain has been the chair of the organisation. The members of the core group are: Oxfam Great Britain, Caritas Switzerland, Oxfam Hong Kong, Save the Children, Enfants & Développement, Care International, ISEE (Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Development) and Action Aid Vietnam.

The Working Group has task-forces that work on different themes related to ethnic minority issues in Vietnam. It develops a yearly action plan in the first core-group meeting of each year. In 2009, the EMWG continued the activities of several task-forces from 2008 and focused on specific engagements with different Government agencies in charge at the central level of development programmes and projects for ethnic minorities.

The Working Group's daily activities are assigned to a coordinator. The coordinator undertakes such tasks as organising meetings and activities, compiling the database of agencies working with ethnic minorities, budgeting, facilitating group communication internally and externally, acting as moderator for the group's mailing list, updating its website and preparing the Working Group yearly report.

Goal

The overall goal of the Ethnic Minorities Working Group is to improve the livelihoods of ethnic minorities by improving the development assistance provided by members of the Working Group and by building the capacity of ethnic minorities to fully participate in development processes.

Key objectives

- **Sharing and disseminating information:** The Working Group provides a forum for discussions regarding development issues related to ethnic minorities in Vietnam. It disseminates information as widely as possible regarding laws, policies, research and documentation of projects and programmes relating to ethnic minorities.
- **Improving the practices of member organisations:** Working Group participants share experiences and lessons learned in order to improve the impact, both in quality and quantity, of their development interventions.
- **Policy dialogue:** The sharing of experiences and information relating to ethnic minorities leads to improved development practices and policies among members and their partner organisations. The group also acts as a venue for conducting dialogues with relevant government and donor institutions and organisations.

- Facilitating the voice of ethnic minority people: the Working Group facilitates different mechanisms for ethnic people to voice their opinions on the development projects and influence policies and decisions that affect their lives.

Key Activities in 2009

In early 2008, the core members of the Working Group identified task-forces and developed concept papers and timetables for each one. These work plans were followed in 2008-2009, with various activities carried out for each theme:

- Mass media and ethnic minorities
- Land conflicts and conflict solving mechanisms in mountainous areas where ethnic minorities live
- Develop an approach to work with ethnic minorities on a mechanism to enhance their voice in the decision-making processes of government bodies
- Capacity building and networking
- Bilingual education
- Ethnic minority culture and traditional customary laws
- Awareness raising for ethnic minorities on climate change and increasing their access to information on the issue

Work on these task forces activities in 2009 included:

In partnership with the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs the Working Group organised a workshop on ‘capacity building on socio-economic development planning at the communal level’ - February 2009: This two-day workshop in Ninh Thuan province, with a field trip to Bac Ai district, aimed to compile practical experiences and approaches on building capacity for the community on the socio-economic development planning that international and local NGOs have been applying in their programmes.

Meeting with NGOs after the Ninh Thuan workshop - March 2009: This meeting aimed to reach common voice and promote joint efforts among NGOs in reaching further engagement with the Government in policy making and implementation processes.

Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Development’s (ISEE) quick survey on activities related to ethnic minorities and HIV - April 2009: This survey was composed of two parts, a literature review and mapping of activities on ethnic minorities and HIV, with the aim of better understanding government and NGO support for ethnic minorities. It also aimed to help agencies to better support ethnic minorities.

ISEE's consultative meeting - April 2009 - on a new theory of three cultural foundations and their link to sustainable development of ethnic minority people.

Meeting with the vice-directors of the International Cooperation Department and Social Protection Department of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) -

April 2009: The meeting aimed to build partnerships and identify opportunities for the Working Group to further engage with the Government on certain policies and issues that affect the lives of ethnic minorities.

Consultative meeting to provide comments for the final version of the master plan on the social security system for poor people living in rural, mountainous and ethnic-minority areas - March-July 2009: Following a request from the Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs (ILSSA), MOLISA, the Working Group organised a series of informative and consultative meetings for developing and finalising this master plan, for 2010-2020. It is part of Resolution No. 24/2008/ND-CP of the Government's action plan for implementation of the program 'Tam Nong' (Agriculture-Farmer-Rural Area) with the aim to build a more comprehensive and sustainable social protection system that benefits poor people, and especially ethnic minorities.

Programme 135-II Implementation Cooperation with NGOs, Lessons Learned Sharing Workshop to be held in December 2009: Programme 135 Phase II is a poverty reduction program of the Vietnamese Government. The Working Group will work with the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, in coordination with the consultants working for P135-II projects, and with assistance from AusAID (Australian Agency for International Development) in designing the workshop. The objectives are to identify and agree on mechanisms for collaboration between NGOs and the Committee for Ethnic Minorities Affairs, development partners and Provincial Committees for Ethnic Minorities Affairs on implementation of Programme 135-II and also on inputs into the development of the next phase.

Future Directions for 2010

- The Ethnic Minorities Working Group will continue to focus on topics that will be crucial to and interest its members in relation to ethnic minority issues in Vietnam. The Working Group will also continue to support strategic work led by individual member agencies and will organise meetings and disseminate information on issues related to overcoming ethnic-minority poverty.
- In addition, the Working Group will continue to strengthen and enhance the dialogues between NGOs and Government agencies in order to make sure that NGOs' experiences and practices will be useful in the Government's programmes for ethnic minority areas.

Eye Care Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/5363

Overview

International eye-care non-government organisations have played a significant role in the development of eye care and blindness prevention in Vietnam over the last 10 years. The partnership working group for international NGOs working in this sector in Vietnam was set up in 2007, at the initiative of ORBIS International.

The founding members are ORBIS International, the Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF), Helen Keller International (HKI), CBM and the International Trachoma Initiative (ITI). The Eye Care Foundation, the International Centre for Eye-care Education (ICEE) and Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) joined in 2008.

The Eye Care Working Group promotes and supports national efforts to eliminate avoidable blindness in Vietnam by 2020, in line with the goals of the World Health Organisation's Vision 2020 Initiative. It is open to all international organisations working in the field of eye care in Vietnam.

The Working Group meets quarterly and members take turns to chair meetings. Representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Ophthalmologists Society and national eye care institutions are invited to attend as appropriate.

Key Objectives

- To advocate for and support the development and implementation of a National Vision 2020 Blindness Prevention Strategic Plan in Vietnam.
- To promote comprehensive eye care including prevention, education, rehabilitation and treatment in Vietnam.
- To serve as an open forum for information on programs, project activities, lessons learnt, experiences and best practices regarding comprehensive eye care in Vietnam.
- To discuss potential support by group members for national institutions in the development of Vietnam's national plan of action for comprehensive eye care.
- To discuss collaboration among organisations and institutions working on comprehensive eye care.

Key Activities in 2009

- Three quarterly meetings were held as planned, at which members updated their activities, shared information and make recommendations for eye care development and blindness prevention, at both the national and provincial levels.
- CBM, the Fred Hollows Foundation, Helen Keller International, ECF and ORBIS International committed to support activities of Office of the National Steering Committee for the Prevention of Blindness with a total of \$US33,652 committed for 2008-2010.

- ORBIS International supported the setting up of provincial committees for the prevention of blindness in 11 provinces and the Fred Hollows Foundation supported committees in six provinces.
- ORBIS supported the development of National Guidelines for the management of ROP (retinopathy of prematurity) and RE in 2008-2009.
- The International Centre for Eye-care Education (ICEE), Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF) and CBM are working under the umbrella of the Australian Avoidable Blindness Initiative to develop a blindness prevention project in Vietnam.
- Surveys, report results and lessons learnt:
 - ORBIS: baseline survey on refractive error among primary, secondary and high school students in Hai Phong, Ha Tinh and Da Nang;
 - International Centre for Eye-care Education: refraction training;
 - ORBIS International, Fred Hollows Foundation and ECF: school RE management;
 - ORBIS International and Helen Keller International: paediatric eye care training;
 - ORBIS International and Fred Hollows Foundation: community-based management model for some eye problems, such as RE, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma;
 - CBM RABB and KAP: surveys in Thanh Hoa, Son La and Nghe An;
 - ORBIS International: project evaluation and project mid-term review reports;
 - Fred Hollows Foundation and ORBIS International: training eye care professionals.
- Development of national guidelines, protocols and manuals for eye disease management:
 - ORBIS International: national protocols for retinopathy of prematurity, refractive errors, glaucoma and cataract management;
 - Fred Hollows Foundation: glaucoma guidelines;
 - Helen Keller International: community ophthalmology training manual.
- Members made recommendations to the Vietnam National Institute of Ophthalmology, the leading national eye-care organisation that makes guidelines for national policy. The recommendations included:
 - The Ministry of Health approve the *National Blindness Prevention Plan* and arrange for its implementation;
 - Standardise eye care institutions at the provincial level, and ensure each province has an independent eye care unit - an eye hospital or eye centre;
 - Advocate for health insurance to cover the costs of eye-care, especially cataract surgery.

Future Directions in 2010

- Continue to support the activities of the National Steering Committee for the Prevention of Blindness.
- Maximise information sharing among group members and related agencies.
- Support the development and implementation of Provincial Action Plans for the prevention of blindness in targeted provinces.

HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/116

Overview

The HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group continues to play a broad and impressive role in facilitating information sharing and coordination among individuals and organisations working on issues affecting those at risk of, living with, and affected by HIV. It brings together participants from international and local NGOs, the Communist Party, government, mass organisations, bilateral and multilateral donors, foundations, the UN, and groups for people living with HIV. Participation is open to all sectors and to both organisations and individuals. The Working Group has held regular meetings since 2004.

Co-Chair Dr Nguyen Thu Giang is from a Vietnamese NGO, LIGHT, and is committed to strengthening Vietnamese participation. Dr Mauro Guarinieri, Constella Futures Group, was Chair for most of 2009 and ended his able Chairmanship of the Group in September. Dr. Nguyen Thu Giang is now supported by the new Co-Chair, Simon Baldwin of Family Health International.

The UNAIDS Secretariat Vietnam serves as the secretariat for the Technical Working Group. The meetings are simultaneously translated, and all documentation is provided in both Vietnamese and English.

The Technical Working Group now oversees nine sub-groups that address HIV technical issues in more depth and also develop their own goals and work plans. They cover the following topics: Gender and Sexuality, Greater Involvement of People with AIDS, Harm Reduction, 05/06 Centres (rehabilitation centres), Care and Treatment, HIV and Communications; Children and HIV and MSM (men who have sex with men). Furthermore, a new group, based in Ho Chi Minh City, will provide more geographical representation and perspective. More information on these sub-groups is provided towards the end of this report.

The Technical Working Group continues to host and monitor an electronic 'listserve' forum, which is used 20 to 30 times a week and has grown to include more than 735 members who use it to rapidly receive and disseminate new information on HIV topics. The Secretariat is seeking a new moderator to update and revamp the listserve to encourage participation and discussion.

Key Objectives

- To advocate for a supportive and enabling environment for the implementation of HIV prevention and care projects in Vietnam in a multi-sectoral, non-discriminatory environment.
- To document, discuss and disseminate lessons learned.
- To collaborate on common areas for capacity building, particularly in the areas of training and development of resource materials.
- To analyse and exchange information based on field experience.
- To identify gaps in the overall national response to HIV and build partnerships between organisations to address these gaps.

- To identify other stakeholders with which the working group can build partnerships and enhance communications, including the media, the private sector, and sector specific networks.

Key Activities in 2009

In 2009 the Chair and Co-Chair continued to support more interactive Technical Working Group meetings to promote stimulating discussion.

Technical Working Group meetings

11 February 2009: Dr Guarinieri chaired the meeting, which was on HIV in closed settings such as prisons. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and PEPFAR/CDC (the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) provided background and comments on the issues surrounding work in closed settings.

15 April 2009: Dr Giang officially joined the Technical Working Group as Co-Chair in this meeting, which focused on children and HIV. The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) made a presentation on the National Plan of Action on Children and HIV, which would later be approved in June 2009 by the Prime Minister. There were two other presentations on interventions with children living with and affected by HIV.

17 June 2009: HIV and microfinance was the theme of the meeting, which featured a presentation by Oxfam from a non-HIV perspective. The meeting focused on how to apply microfinance models to the HIV sector, including whether cash payments or vouchers should be supplied instead of goods during disaster relief, and what services must accompany a microcredit scheme.

9 September 2009: Dr Guarinieri chaired his last meeting, which focused on sero-discordant couples. He made a presentation on controversial findings of recent studies which found that antiretroviral therapy was a viable option for HIV prevention among sero-discordant couples seeking to have children. The meeting also included findings from a survey of injecting drug users and their partners.

9 December 2009: Mr Baldwin was scheduled to join the Working Group as Co-Chair in this meeting, which will focus on HIV and human rights, and provide a forum for discussion and continued debate from the First International Conference on Realising the Rights to Health and Development for All that took place in Hanoi in late October 2009.

Other Activities

Lunchtime Seminars

The Technical Working Group Secretariat continued to host and support lunchtime seminars once a month - 11 in all on topics ranging from a qualitative study on happiness among people living with HIV on antiretroviral therapy, data triangulation methods, foster care models for children living with or affected by HIV, communication models for successful behaviour change and how to evaluate them, and a cohort study on injecting drug users undergoing antiretroviral therapy. The seminars average 60 participants a session, and presenters often contact the Working Group to present their work. It is an excellent forum for in-depth discussion on particular topics.

Partnership with Hanoi School of Public Health

The Hanoi School of Public Health has been providing logistical support to the Working Group Secretariat since April 2008. This partnership assists in ensuring continuity and quality of meetings as well as contributing towards the expansion of activities.

Activities of Sub-Groups of the Working Group

The sub-groups continue to engage in in-depth discussion and collaboration on areas of interest in the HIV response in Vietnam. In addition to serving as a forum for information exchange, sub-groups such as the MSM Working Group, Communications and HIV Group, and the 05-06 Centre Collaboration Group, continue to map ongoing activities in Vietnam in their area of work. Due to more coordination forums and the establishment of similar technical groups outside the Working Group, there have been fewer meetings this year, and participation varies from group to group. New terms of reference for sub-groups will be developed in 2010.

MSM Sub-Group

The MSM Sub-Group provides a platform for organisations to review policy, programmes, strategic information and resources for MSM and HIV issues in Vietnam. The aim is to improve and expand prevention, treatment, care and support services and interventions through strengthening multi-sectoral coordination and information-sharing. Members include civil society, government, donors, researchers and multi-lateral organisations. Sub-Group meetings were held in January, April, July and October and were attended by 20 to 40 participants from the MSM community, local and international NGOs, Provincial AIDS Committees (PACs), research institutes and donors.

National guidelines have been developed as a result of a national workshop on MSM and HIV held in October 2008. Members of the MSM Sub-Group participated in the rapid situation and response assessment, which informs the development of the guidelines, and they will participate in the consultation workshop on the draft guidelines.

A tool kit, 'Understanding and reducing stigma and discrimination related to HIV and MSM', is almost finalised with the participation of the MSM Sub-Group. A five day training workshop was organised in Hanoi from 24 to 28 August to provide basic knowledge on gender, sexuality, MSM and stigma against MSM and transgender people. Twenty-three people took part - representatives of the MSM community, PAC staff and program officers from local and international NGOs. Following the training, communication and advocacy activities have been organised at the community level.

Vietnam MSM participated actively in the regional MSM and TG (Technical Group) network, the Purple Sky Network, and used best practices to strengthen coordination and capacity building interventions in Vietnam. Two MSM representatives from Vietnam attended the annual planning meeting organised by the Purple Sky Network in Bangkok from 15 to 17 July, 2009.

A mapping exercise on HIV interventions for MSM in Vietnam was conducted in October. Data has been entered into the Purple Sky Network Regional Information System on MSM (PRISM) and results will be used for evidence-based advocacy and for scaling up activities at various levels. The MSM Sub-Group will develop an advocacy proposal based on the mapping results for the Purple Sky Network.

Three more provincial MSM working groups have been established in Can Tho, Da Nang, and Hai Phong in addition to the existing ones in Hanoi, HCMC, and Khanh Hoa. Grants enabled six provincial MSM working groups to organise activities to strengthen the MSM provincial network, build capacity for members and create an enabling environment for HIV interventions through advocacy efforts.

HIV and Communications Sub-Group

In 2009, the HIV and Communications Sub-Group met every second month. The focus remained on HIV, behaviour change communication (BCC) and communication in a broad sense. Fifteen to 25 people attended each meeting, including representatives from INGOS, government, local NGOs, donors and many new organisations. The Sub-Group is searching for a co-chair as the previous one stepped down for personal reasons. Activities this year included:

- Viewing and commenting on TV spots developed by the BBC World Service Trust under the Asian Development Bank-funded HIV-prevention project for youth;
- Presentations on various research topics dealing with communication, including how to assess the impact of communication programmes on behaviour and a content analysis of examples of stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV in the press and on the internet;
- Updates from national and international NGOs on HIV-related BCC programs;
- A discussion on the challenges of developing and implementing HIV BCC programs in Vietnam.

The 05-06 Centre Collaboration Sub-Group

The 05-06 Centre Collaboration Sub-Group was less active as it had difficulty finding meeting times when at least one co-chair was available. Several meetings were cancelled due to illness, travel and the weight of work obligations. The Sub-Group plans to meet in mid-December.

Despite the absence of regular meetings, the group nevertheless continued its development as a growing networking resource for individuals interested in work in rehabilitation centres. The 05-06 Group maintained an up-to-date matrix of international donor supported HIV/AIDS-related projects both in rehabilitation centres for drug-users and sex workers and in the community for those who have left the centres and their families.

Through meetings between individual group members, the collaboration group also provided orientation and information for representatives of new groups beginning HIV work in 05-06 centres (rehabilitation centres) and their communities. The group acted as a resource to help academics and graduate students learn about relevant issues and seek out appropriate research topics and projects. In all these activities, the group focused on keeping issues related to working with HIV and drug rehabilitation in the spotlight and introduced new topics for information sharing and group discussion.

- Recent activities and topics addressed in meetings included:
- Introduction to the Vietnam Workplace Project (Chemonics International);

- Updates on the revision of the Law on Drug Control and Prevention (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime);
- Outreach workers' activities to prevent HIV among primary sex partners of returnees from 05-06 centres, from a self-help group leader's perspective (Abt Associates and the Institute for Social Development Studies);
- The 05-06 group co-chair, Nina McCoy, joined a panel as discussant, as did Tran Tien Duc (Health Policy Initiative) during the HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group Meeting on February 11, 2009, which considered HIV in closed settings such as prisons. Other group members presenting included Vi Tran (UNODC), Peter Mahomet (PEPFAR/CDC) and David Jacka (WHO);
- Group members attended the International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA) conference in Bangkok (April 20-24), the International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) in Bali (August 9-13) and the International Conference on Realising the Rights to Health and Development for All in Hanoi (October 26-29). Some of them made presentations.

Future activities to consider are:

- Review of reports and studies that assess the work of projects within 05-06 centres and in the community;
- Exploration of the incidence of Hepatitis C in closed settings in Vietnam;
- Presentations on topics already made at conferences in 2009 but not yet shared in Vietnam (ICAAP, International Conference on Realising the Rights to Health and Development for All).

Harm Reduction Sub-Group

The Harm Reduction Sub-Group was reconstituted in 2009 with a new Chair and Co-Chair. It met in April and plans to convene a second meeting in mid-December.

The April meeting was the preparation meeting for the 20th International Harm Reduction Association Conference in Bangkok, and was attended by more than 20 participants from government organisations, international organisations, local NGOs, donors and individuals. The VAAC (Vietnam Administration for AIDS Control) made a presentation on Vietnam's HIV priorities and expectations of the conference.

The Sub-Group also supported the HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group Meeting in September on sero-discordant couples by arranging and commenting on the drafting of presentations for the meeting.

The December meeting will consider the topic of improving Vietnam's legal and policy framework on HIV and drug Use and will be collaboration with the 05-06 Sub-Group, which meets the same day.

Greater Involvement of People with AIDS (GIPA) Sub-Group

The Sub-Group organises bi-monthly meetings, focusing on: income generation for vulnerable people, rights and sexuality and sexual health for people living with HIV, further strengthening linkages among self-help groups in Hanoi and planning for the establishment of a provincial network of people living with HIV in Hanoi, and the impact of the withdrawal of donors from Vietnam in the near future. To make further improvements on logistics and content an evaluation form was distributed at meetings.

Meetings were not as successful as expected, partly due to lack of technical support and expertise from experts from other sub-groups. A limited budget barred members from groups and networks of people living with HIV from other provinces around Hanoi from participating. Less information was provided because fewer organisations working on HIV participated in the meetings. In particular, self-help groups outside Hanoi could not attend meetings because they did not meet their practical needs. The Chairs, as volunteers engaged in other work, did not have enough time to maintain regular communication among members.

For 2010, the GIPA Sub-Group plans to integrate the forums for income generation for people living with HIV and vulnerable groups into the GIPA Sub-Group. It also plans to develop a budget and request the HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group to support travel costs for representatives from provincial networks around Hanoi to participate in Sub-Group meetings. It intends to strengthen collaboration with the Working Group chairperson and other Sub-Groups to enhance technical support from experts for GIPA Sub-Group meetings. The GIPA Sub-Group will also continue to promote information sharing among members.

Care and Treatment Sub-Group

Following intensive discussions to harmonise this Sub-Group and the Vietnam Administration for AIDS Control's (VAAC) technical working group in 2008, a series of attempts have been made to approach the newly appointed leaders of the national HIV care and treatment program in VAAC in 2009. After discussions and agreement with the national HIV care and treatment programme managers, an HIV Care and Treatment Sub-Group meeting of the HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group was announced in mid-2009. However, since the announced meeting date coincided with a major international HIV conference held outside Vietnam, few people attended. The next meeting is to be held in December 2009.

Gender and Sexuality Sub-Group

The Gender and Sexuality Sub-Group held meetings every three months in 2009. Although the group has attracted a wide range of representatives from INGOs, local NGOs, mass organisations, research institutes, universities and donors, the number of participants has declined slightly: 15 to 13 people attended each meeting. The meetings served as a forum for sharing and exchanging information on new research studies and publications, conferences and workshops. In the year 2009, a number of topics were discussed dynamically in group meetings: Topics discussed were:

- Gender, sexual and reproductive health concerns of women living with HIV;
- National survey on sexuality and sexual health;
- The International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society (IASSCS) conference, 'Contested Innocence – Sexual Agency in Public and Private Space', co-hosted

from 15-18 April 2009 in Hanoi by the Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS) and The Consultation of Investment in Health Promotion (CIHP);

- Sexual harassment, sexual violence and HIV.

At its most recent meeting the Gender and Sexuality Sub-Group identified topics to discuss in 2010, which will highlight the linkages between gender, sexuality and HIV. Potential topics are sex work, sexual diversity, migration and gender based violence.

Children and HIV Sub-Group

The Children and HIV Sub-Group is a discussion forum for NGOs and other agencies, with Government partners, to learn about technical issues, share practical tools and experiences, exchange ideas and collaborate to implement policies and practices for the benefit of children affected by HIV and AIDS.

This year the five sub-group meetings, attended by 10 to 25 participants, focussed on key technical updates, at the request of members who are developing programmes in these areas. For example, UNICEF shared updates on alternative care policies and standards being developed with the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Family Health International (FHI) presented guidance on nutrition of children living with HIV, the Clinton Foundation shared updates on paediatric testing and treatment for children and several NGOs shared results of baseline surveys related to affected children. In addition, experiences were shared related to approaches to reach and serve affected adolescents, families and to train social workers.

The Sub-Group also monitored the approval process of the National Plan of Action (NPA) on Children and HIV-AIDS approved in June 2009. The Sub-Group has conducted a preliminary mapping of NGO activities which support the NPA and will continue to update this complementary document to the Government's work plan.

Future plans include continued sharing of technical updates and experiences, as well as dissemination of resources on children and joint issue papers. Dissemination of resources will involve collection of existing tools, materials and reports related to children and HIV in Vietnam. These materials will be posted on the HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group website for wide dissemination and easy access by organisations and people working with and for children throughout the country. Joint issue papers will be developed through literature review and experience collection on areas which are topics of interest to all members, such as how to support adolescents infected and affected by HIV and AIDS and income generation activities for families of affected children, as well as other topics proposed by members.

Ho Chi Minh City HIV Technical Working Group

In 2009 the Ho Chi Minh City HIV Technical Working Group (HCMC HIV TWG) became a member sub-group of the HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group, making it the only sub-group of that group focussed on a geographical location. The HCMC HIV TWG provides a platform for HIV programme implementers, advocates and other stakeholders in southern Vietnam to coordinate, share resources, identify gaps and build partnerships. It provides geographic representation and perspective to the HIV TWG in Hanoi.

Meetings were held in February, April, June and September and 15 to 35 participants attended each one. Participants came from a variety of international and local NGOs, the UN, self-help groups for

people living with HIV, community and faith-based groups and educational institutions. Since joining the Hanoi-based Technical Working Group, the group has also participated in the Chairs' meeting held in Hanoi and has presented a briefing of its activities at the meetings in Hanoi.

In 2009 the meeting themes have included: 'Children, Stigma and HIV in Southern Vietnam', 'Harm Reduction in HCMC', where the Provincial AIDS Committee (PAC) gave an update on the pilot methadone maintenance program in HCMC and the group received a report back of the Regional Harm Reduction Conference in Bangkok; and 'Inhalant Drug Use', where the group received an update on inhalant drug use, or glue sniffing, by youth in HCMC.

There was also a change in leadership roles, with a new Chair and Vice-Chair.

In 2010 the HCMC HIV TWG will continue to serve as a forum for information sharing, capacity building and coordination among organisations working in southern Vietnam. The group will run various meetings as seminars, with external experts and facilitators holding capacity-building workshops to build critical skills, such as developing evidence-based HIV programs and conducting effective literature reviews. The HCMC HIV TWG plans to recruit a group coordinator, who will facilitate logistics, planning and fund-raising.

Future Directions for 2010

In 2010, the Co-Chairs will focus on resource mobilisation, human rights and strengthening the HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group in a changing environment.

The Working Group will continue to serve as a platform for exchange of information and networking among the full range of organisations working on HIV in Vietnam. Its first Co-Chair from a local organisation represents the commitment to ensuring that the meetings encourage exchange at all levels of work. The Technical Working Group will focus on maintaining a balance between quality discussion and information sharing.

In addition, the new Chairs have decided to focus on evaluation and discussion on how better to improve the Technical Working Group. When formed in 2004 it played a unique role in bringing together people from different sectors working in HIV, and was the only forum to address informational and coordination issues for civil society and for all stakeholders. As the response to HIV has become more sophisticated and diverse, so have the needs of different stakeholders in the response to HIV. Many new groups have formed, including the Vietnam Network for People Living with HIV (VNP+). The challenge for the Technical Working Group is to build on its strengths as a forum for civil society organisations to conduct dialogue on HIV, and to continue to effectively deliver on its mandate. These challenges will be addressed in 2010.

Ho Chi Minh City INGO Discussion Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/hcmcwg

Overview

For the past six years, the HCMC INGO Discussion Group (formerly the INGO Child Discussion Group) has met regularly. Meetings are held quarterly at the HCMC Union of Friendship Organisations (HUFO) and bring together representatives and staff from foreign non-government organisations that have an office and are operating in Ho Chi Minh City or in the southern provinces. Occasionally, they are joined by speakers and guests from government agencies, donors and partner organisations.

A core group of six INGO representatives is responsible for organising meetings and other activities. Participation in the core team depends on willingness to stand for at least one year and to contribute to the planning of the group's activities.

Currently the core group comprises representatives of these foreign NGOs: Terre des hommes Foundation – Lausanne (which serves as the coordinating agency), Education for Development, Loreto Viet Nam – Australia Program, Saigon Children's Charity, and Vietnam Plus.

The group also facilitates four thematic working groups, on child rights, disability, HIV/AIDS and administration and finance.

Key objectives

The HCMC INGO Discussion Group provides a forum for the sharing of information, knowledge and experience. Its aim is to act as an entry point for more concrete forms of coordination or collaboration in areas such as research, training, advocacy and policy dialogue.

Key Activities in 2009

Networking

- Organisation of quarterly meetings
 - Meeting on 16 January 2009: Needs versus rights-based approach in development work
 - Meeting on 17 April 2009: Partnerships
 - Meeting on 17 July 2009: Partnership – The perspectives of the NGO RC
 - Meeting on 16 October 2009: Fundraising and Volunteering.
- Organisation of monthly lunch gatherings

Facilitating thematic working groups

- The group has set up four thematic working groups: the HCMC Child Rights Working Group, the HCMC Disability Working Group, the HCMC HIV/AIDS Technical Working Group; and the HCMC Admin and Finance Working Group.

Future Directions for 2010

- Maintain the dynamic of the HCMC INGO Discussion Group for information sharing, collective learning, joint advocacy and policy dialogue activities.
- Support the thematic working groups and ensure their smooth functioning.

HCMC INGO Thematic Working Groups

HCMC Child Rights Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/content/hcmc-child-rights-working-group

Overview

The HCMC Child Rights Working Group is an active and enthusiastic group of INGOs, Vietnamese NGOs and other stakeholders, set up in 2008. Its members share ideas and opportunities as well as concerns and struggles in relation to anything affecting children. The group intends to be action-oriented.

Its Terms of Reference are consistent with the Hanoi-based Child Rights Working Group and it works closely with that group. The HCMC Child Rights Working Group aims to be a forum for the collective expression of the views of organisations that operate in the southern region of Vietnam. The group also takes comments – individually or collectively – on documents or issues of local and national importance.

The group's overall purpose is to enhance communication and coordination between children-focused organisations, to share learning and to manage and respond to issues related to the rights of the child.

Saigon Children's Charity and Terre des hommes Foundation – Lausanne are the co-chairs of the group. This role is taken on an annual basis and reviewed each year. During 2009 the group met three times.

Key objectives

- To share practical experiences, successes and lessons learned for the mutual benefit of organisations and associations involved.
- To facilitate networking among child focused organisations and associations, and to serve as a focal point in HCMC for consultation, policy dialogue and common statements.
- To liaise with the Child Rights Working Group in Hanoi in contributing towards a national focal point.
- To organise joint activities related to the rights of the child.
- To collaborate in responding to opportunities for input on various documents, government policies and laws as well as to support the implementation of relevant government programmes.

Key Activities in 2009

The core issue in 2009 has been Child Protection Policy, which seeks to ensure the protection of children wherever they may be in Vietnam, and the development of practical and shared responses to this issue. The work has been coordinated with the Child Rights Working Group in Hanoi.

The HCMC Child Rights Working Group also contributed to the NGO Complementary Report to the Vietnamese State Report on the implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of the

Child in Vietnam. The Hanoi-based Child Rights Working Group drafted the report with contributions from member organisations in the south. The State Report covering the years 2002-2007 was finalised in August 2009 and the Complementary Report in October 2009.

Future Directions for 2010

The HCMC Child Rights Working Group will continue to focus on topics that are crucial to and attract a wide range of members. The group will continue to focus on Child Protection Policy, but other issues that might be taken up include education, health care and trafficking. It will also consider joint projects, research and studies and activities of mutual interest on all issues related to ensuring the best possible future for children in Vietnam.

HCMC Disability Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/content/hcmc-disability-working-group

Overview

The HCMC Disability Working Group currently draws its membership from around 18 organisations based in HCMC, including local and foreign NGOs, disabled people's organisations and other stakeholders that support people with disabilities.

The group's overall purpose is to address disability issues through joint work, information and resource exchange, events, training and workshops, guest speakers and the development of positive partnerships.

Information exchange and resource sharing has been invaluable to all and has enable areas for joint working to be identified such as employment.

The role of chair changed during the year, from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) to Disability Resource and Development (DRD) in July.

Key Activities in 2009

Working Group meetings were held in March, May, July, September and November. Each centred on understanding the work of each of member, identifying areas for collaboration and support, and sharing resources.

Working together to celebrate International and National Disability Day resulted in some excellent awareness raising events where many people with disabilities and other citizens came together. For National Disability Day in April an evening performance was organised called The Sky's the Limit, which showcased the musical and creative talents of many children and adults. The show has resulted in contact with Spotlight from Cambodia and invitations for some performers to travel to that country. At the time of writing several members were organising an event titled One World for All to celebrate International Disability Day on November 28.

Members of the group also attended the Hanoi-based Child Rights Working Group meeting on protecting children from abuse to raise awareness of the rights of disabled children.

Future directions for 2010

- The group is considering reviewing its Terms of Reference, which are based on those for the Hanoi-based Disability Working Group, in the light of new members and developments in the field of disability.
- The group will hold an employment workshop on January 8, 2010.
- Other areas of interest will be considered by the group as and when they arise.

HCMC HIV/AIDS Technical Working Group

<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/content/hcmc-hiv-aids-working-group>

Overview

The purpose of the Ho Chi Minh City HIV/AIDS Technical Working Group (HCMC HIV TWG) is to strengthen the implementation of HIV programs in the southern part of Vietnam through greater coordination and sharing among local HIV program implementers, policy makers, advocates, community based organisations and faith based groups.

The group was established in May 2008, in response to a survey conducted by the HCMC INGO Discussion Group, which recognised the need to strengthen, coordinate and share skills and resources between HIV program implementers and advocates in the southern part of Vietnam who do not have the resources to join meetings of the Hanoi-based HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group will be able to join with others working in the HIV/AIDS field.

The group meets every two to three months at the HCMC Union of Friendship Organisations (HUFO). CARE International in Vietnam is the current Chair and the Tinh Than Network (AIDS Program) is the local Vice-Chair

Key Activities in 2009

In 2009, the HCMC HIV/AIDS Technical Working Group became an official subgroup of the Hanoi-based HIV-AIDS Technical Working Group, bringing with it representation and perspectives from the southern part of Vietnam, and presenting briefings on its activities at meetings in Hanoi.

Its own meetings were held in February, April, June and September with each one attended by 15 to 35 participants from a variety of international and local NGOs, the UN, self-help groups for people living with HIV, community and faith based groups and educational institutions. The themes of the meetings included: Children, Stigma and HIV in Southern Vietnam, Harm Reduction in HCMC, and Youth Inhalant Drug Use in HCMC.

Future Directions for 2010

The HCMC HIV/AIDS Technical Working Group will continue to serve as a forum for information sharing, capacity building and coordination among organisations working in southern Vietnam. It will organise seminars, with external experts and facilitators running capacity building workshops to build critical skills, such as how to develop evidence-based HIV programs and conduct effective literature reviews. The group also plans to recruit a group coordinator, who will facilitate logistics, planning and fundraising.

HCMC Admin and Finance Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/content/hcmc-ingo-admin-working-group

Overview

A survey conducted by the HCMC INGO Discussion Group in 2008 identified the need to set up a thematic group on administrative and finance procedures. The HCMC Union of Friendship Organisations (HUFO) encouraged this initiative and underlined the importance of finance and administration officers being able to meet regularly and where HUFO representatives could share information on regulatory and administrative issues that apply to foreign NGOs. The HCMC Admin and Finance Working Group was formally established in 2009.

The overall purpose of the HCMC Admin and Finance Working Group is to share information on government policies and regulations and other administrative issues related to the operation of foreign NGOs in Vietnam. The group is a forum for sharing experience and practice on issues concerning administration, finance and human resources for INGOs based in HCMC and elsewhere in southern Vietnam that are not able to join the meetings of the Hanoi-based Administration Working Group.

Its main objectives are to:

- Increase access to information and resources on improving practices and operations;
- Liaise with the Hanoi-based Administrators Working Group and make contributions on topics of common interest.

Key Activities in 2009

The HCMC Admin and Finance Working Group organised two meetings, on March 6 and May 8. The group has two Co-Chairs, HUFO and a foreign NGO, Villes en Transition. The participants agreed on Terms of Reference and also decided to conduct a survey on staff salary and benefits among INGOs based in HCMC and southern Vietnam.

Future Directions for 2010

The group plans to invite to its meetings speakers from HCMC authorities, such as FOSCO, the Tax Department and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), and from the Hanoi-based Administrators Working Group.

ICT for Development Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/ictdwg

Overview

Through advising, training, and sharing resources and information, the ICT for Development Working Group (ICTDWG) seeks to help NGOs to improve and increase their use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in order to be more effective in their development work in Vietnam.

ICT for development refers to the effective use of information and communication technologies for sustainable development, utilising modern media (computers, the internet, email, multimedia and social networking) and traditional media (radio, television and print) for knowledge management and knowledge sharing.

This includes sharing practical information and tools relating to key issues such as knowledge management; the media and technologies including computers, the internet and email programs and systems. It also includes using technology in a way that includes everyone in the community.

Key objectives

- To facilitate an NGO ICT community focused on information-gathering, skills-sharing and peer learning, relating to ICT topics for sustainable development.
- To provide an opportunity for development organisations to expand their practical ICT knowledge.
- To increase the awareness, integration and adoption of free open source software (FOSS) tools by NGOs, thus helping to reduce licensing costs, software piracy, virus and copyright issues.
- To provide guidance on improving ICT infrastructure within the development community in Vietnam.
- To promote, through the use of ICT for development, practical and sustainable solutions using both modern media (computers, the internet, email, multimedia and social networking) and traditional media (radio, television and print) so that both NGOs and therefore the community in Vietnam can benefit from all these forms of media.

Key activities in 2009

- Workshop on communications and project management tools in January 2009.
- Workshop on moderating mailing lists in May 2009.
- On-site delivery of ICT training to INGO members in Ho Chi Minh City in September 2009.

Future activities for 2010

- Survey the most pressing current ICT needs of members of the NGO Resource Centre.

- Develop workshops based on the findings of this survey.
- Develop the ICT for Development Working Group's subpage on the NGO Resource Centre website to encompass both modern and traditional communication tools, including links, guides, tips and tricks and FAQs.

Landmines Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/127

Overview

The Landmines Working Group consists of a range of active member organisations that are engaged or associated with mine action activities such as clearance and surveying, survivor assistance and rehabilitation, mine risk education and other integrated development programs, including resettlement initiatives.

The Working Group is a forum for INGOs and other national and international stakeholders to share experiences, technical expertise and lessons learnt on mine action programs in Vietnam. Group members have also acted as an advocacy group to promote the profile of some international conventions, including the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Key Objectives

- Give organisations working in the field of mine action a recognised representative forum, in which organisations who specialise in clearance meet those who specialise in education, livelihoods, survivor assistance and so forth with a common voice to exchange information and experiences, discuss program issues and seek assistance to raise the profile of mine action in Vietnam to national and international stakeholders, including INGOs, donors, embassies, partners, mass organisations and relevant Vietnamese authorities.
- Facilitate frequent communication among mine action organisations to promote understanding, seek opportunities to cooperate and support the common efforts of group members in program activities.
- Disseminate mine action information, documents and reports among member organisations through individual and common activities, including Landmines Working Group quarterly meetings, email exchanges, the Working Group website, and other activities.
- Collaborate and share experiences, technical expertise and lessons learnt among members.
- Promote events such as dedication ceremonies, meetings, seminars and training workshops among members and others.
- Serve as a point of reference for interested parties seeking information and advice on mine action programs and activities in Vietnam.

Key Activities in 2009

- Held thematic meetings in April and October.
- Agreement on restructuring the group: form coordinating group including Landmines Survivors Network in Vietnam (LSNV), Solidarity Service International (SODI) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

- Co-signed letter sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Ministry of Defence (MOD) on the Convention on Cluster Munitions.
- Collaborated, contributed and shared experiences and voices from the ground in the national workshop on Victim Assistance and International Cooperation.
- Collaborated in collecting voices from the ground for the social security system of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA).

Thematic meetings organised by the Landmines Working Group

April 9, 2009: the meeting was hosted by the Landmines Survivors Network Vietnam (LSNV) in Dong Hoi city. Twenty-eight people participated from Vietnam Bomb and Mine Action Centre (VBMAC), LSNV, Project Renew (VVMF), VVAF, Golden West, Solidarity Service International (SODI), Clear Path International, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Landmines Monitor, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DOFA) and Peace Trees Viet Nam. The meeting included presentations on 'Introduction of VBMAC, its functions and operation in Vietnam' and 'Summary on Bangkok workshop on achieving a mine-free South East Asia'. The meeting also discussed the function of the Working Group core group and agreed on three members: Landmines Survivors Network Vietnam (chair, focus on victim assistance), Catholic Relief Services (focus on mine risk education) and Solidarity Service International (focus on mine clearance).

October 9, 2009: the meeting was again hosted by LSNV in Dong Hoi city with 17 participants from LSNV, Project Renew (VVMF), Solidarity Service International (SODI), Clear Path International, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and Peace Trees Vietnam. The meeting included an update on the Workshop on Victim Assistance and International Cooperation organised by LSNV, COMINGO (Committee for Foreign Non-Governmental Organisation Affairs) and Quang Binh People's Committee in July 2009, a summary of implementation of the Quang Binh action plan for supporting people with disabilities in 2009-10, information on the Cartagena Summit on a Mine Free World and a presentation on recent EWR accidents in central Vietnam. The core group was renamed the coordinating group, with the membership discussed at the previous meeting: LSNV (chair), CRS and SODI. The meeting decided that the committee would act as a focal point of the Working Group and liaise between members and external stakeholders.

Co-signed letter sent to MOFA and MOD on the Convention on Cluster Munitions

To encourage the Government to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions the Landmines Working Group, with other stakeholders, on 10 June co-signed a letter sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. Representing the Working Group, LSNV and CRS, signed the letter along with co-signatories including the Cluster Munitions Coalition and Norwegian People's Aid to urge the Government to sign and ratify the Convention as soon as possible. The Working Group understands that the Government is making progress on finalising an agreement to sign the Convention.

National workshop on victim assistance and international cooperation

Supported by the Working Group, LSNV collaborated with Quang Binh People's Committee and COMINGO (Committee for Foreign Non-Governmental Organisation Affairs) to organise a workshop on promoting international cooperation for socio-economic development and victim

assistance in Vietnam. Working Group members Clear Path International and SODI made a presentation about their activities on victim assistance and contributed to recommendations the workshop made on improving assistance to victims.

The workshop also emphasised that victim assistance should be structured according to the rights laid out in three international conventions: the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The workshop also provided a platform to encourage the Government to sign the CCM. Vietnam is already a signatory to the CRPD and plans to ratify it in 2010. In addition, the workshop also highlighted the need for development assistance in Quang Binh Province.

Collected voices from the community for the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs' (MOLISA) social security master plan

MOLISA has been collecting inputs and recommendations from the community for its draft master plan, 'Social security with rural population, population living in difficult rural areas and remote areas'. LSNV (supported by individuals, Working Group members and others) collected information from the community for the master plan. Clear Path International gathered information from local organisations and individuals in Quang Tri province.

A consultation workshop was held by MOLISA that raised awareness among local people about the draft master plan. It was a good opportunity for people from different organisations, especially people with disabilities and ethnic groups, to contribute their recommendations and inputs to the draft social security master plan.

Future Directions for 2010

- Continue improving communication among Working Group members and with external stakeholders.
- Continue to work on advocacy on the three conventions: the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), along with planned activities.
- Conduct the Ban Bus event in collaboration with other stakeholders in Vietnam in May 2010.
- Disseminate information related to the principles and progress of the MBT as well as the CCM and the CRPD in meetings and workshops and through e-communication to help the Government and general public know more about their benefits and impact.
- Maintain relationships and collaboration with government officials, policy makers, and international NGOs, landmine-cluster munitions victims and the media to raise the profile of the conventions.
- Share the stories of landmine and cluster munitions survivors to raise awareness of the problems of cluster munitions and UXO (unexploded ordinance) in Vietnam and call for more assistance for survivors.
- Collect ideas and input related to advocacy work for both the CCM and MBT conventions from civil society to make this campaign more national, through such forums of the Landmines Working Group and Disability Working Group.

- Combine and link clearance programs into development programs for comprehensive and effective support activities.
- Facilitate more cooperation among Landmines Working Group members for joint proposals that will have a greater impact in terms of the range of mine activities and geographical deployment.
- Promote effective collaboration between international INGOs and Government counterparts.
- Further seek international support and cooperation.

Microfinance Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/microfinance

Overview

The Microfinance Working Group (MFWG) was founded to create a forum for microfinance practitioners to exchange experiences, learn from one another and come to consensus on general principles and guidelines in order to speak with a unified voice to policy-makers. Founded in 2004 as an informal working group under the auspices of the NGO RC, according to the Working Group Guidelines approved by the Resource Centre Steering Committee in April 2003, the Working Group is open to all organisations and individuals interested in microfinance in Vietnam. All its activities are the result of voluntary contributions by members, led by the Working Group's Steering Committee.

The Working Group comprises more than 160 members from nearly 80 organisations, including NGOs, INGOs, international organisations, donors, individuals and other agencies. Forty organisations regularly participate in meetings and activities.

Goal

The overall goal of the Microfinance Working Group is to enhance the impact of microfinance on poverty alleviation by promoting the quality and sustainability of microfinance in Vietnam, both in the practice of institutions and in an improved enabling environment.

Key Objectives

- Encourage policy dialogue across relevant stakeholder organisations in order to facilitate the development of a favourable enabling environment.
- Promote sustainable microfinance among practitioners through disseminating information, sharing lessons learned and achieving consensus on best practices for microfinance in Vietnam.
- Identify and develop training and technical resources to be used in improving the quality of microfinance programs (MFPs), particularly in accounting systems.

Key Activities in 2009

- Enabling policy environment for industry development.
- Strengthening access by members to business development services (BDS).
- Striving to become a coordinator and information hub for the industry.
- Striving to become a representative and professional industry network.

The following pages list the activities the Working Group implemented in 2009 that support the objectives of its Five-Year Strategy Plan (2008-2013).

Objective 1: Enabling policy environment for microfinance-industry development in Vietnam

- Sharing information and exchanging between microfinance organisations (MFOs) on the best practices on microfinance and experience in preparing to become microfinance institutions.
- Cooperating with the State Bank of Vietnam to organise a seminar on the draft circular, 'Accounting system for small-scale financial institutions', with the participation of nearly 40 representatives of 20 microfinance programs and organisations in Vietnam. The seminar's collected comments were sent to the Accounting Department of the State Bank of Vietnam to assist it complete the accounting system for small-scale financial institutions.
- Coordinating activities for the project 'Study on Microfinance in Rural Areas', funded by the Ford Foundation.

Objective 2: Strengthening the access of members to business development services (BDS)

- The Working Group and the Microfinance and Development Centre (M&D Centre) organised a training course, 'Improve skills in building project documents', which was attended by 25 people from microfinance institutions.
- The TOT (training of trainers) course, 'Financial Education' helped equip managers and training officers of microfinance institutions with essential knowledge and developed their knowledge and skills in order to train their organisations' staff and customers in saving money, planning budgets and managing their money wisely.
- The TOT course, 'Risk Management and Insurance', provided essential knowledge on the challenges that must be resolved when risks arise. The training course also helped participants, who came from 13 organisations, to understand the definitions of insurance so that they can in turn advise their organisations' customers to make suitable decisions on insurance products.
- The Working Group and the M&D Centre organised the Workshop on Financial Education Sharing. Three organisations, TYM Fund, Binh Minh Community Development Consulting Company and the Dariu Foundation, shared with nearly 50 participants from 25 organisations their experiences in implementing financial education activities with their customers after undertaking TOT courses.

Objective 3: Striving to become a hub for coordinating and providing information for the microfinance industry

- Maintaining publication of the Vietnam Microfinance Bulletin: Bulletin 12 (January 2009), Bulletin 13 (July 2009) and Bulletin 14 (to be published in December 2009).
- Maintaining information exchange via the internet and on the Microfinance Working Group's website.
- Providing information on microfinance activities and related data which link microfinance institutions in Vietnam to relevant organisations and partners: State Bank of Vietnam (SBV), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Agence Française de Développement (ADF).

- Cooperating with the Microfinance Information Exchange (MIX) to standardise microfinance data in Vietnam according to international standards, helping networks and national and foreign organisations during the integration and development process to obtain information and clearly understand Vietnamese microfinance institutions in particular and the Vietnamese microfinance industry in general.
- Organising the third Citi Micro-Entrepreneurship Award for Vietnam in 2009 to recognise and honour outstanding micro-entrepreneurs, eminent credit officers and the best microfinance institutions in contributing to increasing incomes and developing local economies, thus alleviating hunger and reducing poverty. The award ceremony is tentatively scheduled for December 18,, 2009, in Hanoi.

Objective 4: Striving to become a representative and professional industry network

- The Steering Committee met regularly to determine the topics for the two meetings of the whole Working Group.
- The Annual Meeting for 2008, held in February 2009, summed up activities implemented by the Working Group during 2008 and develop its action plan for 2009.
- The Semi-Annual Meeting was held in July 2009 to evaluate the action results of the Group during the first six months of the year and develop the action plan the second six months. Member organisations shared information and strengthened cooperation in order to contribute to the Working Group's development. Almost 50 people from national and international organisations took part.
- Two field trips were arranged to member organisations, to share information, increase understanding, link activities and build the microfinance network.
- Working Group member organisations exchanged information and experienced during the process of becoming small-scale microfinance institutions under Decree 28 and 165/CP of the Government.
- External Relations:
 - Maintaining relationships with donors and partners: the Ford Foundation, the Citi Foundation, Small Enterprise Education and Promotion Network (SEEP), Appui au Développement Autonome (ADA) Luxembourg, IAD, Save the Children and the International Labour Organisation.
 - Participating in international activities. One delegation participated in the international and regional summit on building the network in Singapore in August 2009. The second delegation attended the SEEP Network annual conference in the US in November 2009.
 - Working with international delegations concerning microfinance activities in Vietnam.

Future Directions in 2010

The Microfinance Working Group's action plan in 2010 will focus on the following activities:

- Continue to organise microfinance activities for organisations and individuals in order to build the Working Group in to a strong organisation representing the Vietnamese microfinance sector.

- Implement follow-up activities to achieve the objectives of the Working Group's Five-Year Strategy Plan (2008-2013).
- Consolidate the Working Group's structure, more effectively manage its activities more effective, and maintain activities in order to meet the demands and aspirations of members.
- Build capacity among members through organising training courses; conferences, workshops, subject followed activities; increase the exchange of information and experiences between organisations.

Water Supply and Sanitation Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/node/138

Overview

The Water Supply and Sanitation Working Group (WSSWG) was established in 2003 to enhance the development of the urban and rural water sector in Vietnam. Its objectives are to create a forum for international and Vietnamese NGOs and other interested stakeholders to increase their knowledge of the issues related to water supply and sanitation (WSS) both within and outside Vietnam, and for participants to enhance their contributions to the development of the WSS sector. Within the sector, the focus is primarily upon rural water supply and sanitation (RWSS).

The Water Supply and Sanitation Working Group meets four times a year or more frequently if required

Goal

The overall goal of the Working Group is to share knowledge and experience to improve the quality and efficiency of water supply and sanitation facilities and services in both rural and urban areas of Vietnam.

Key objectives

- Facilitate communication and information exchange between INGOs, multilateral and bilateral agencies, local partners and Vietnamese authorities.
- Give organisations working in the WSS sector a recognised forum to discuss practical programme issues.
- Raise the profile of the sector in Vietnam so that other organisations providing water supply and sanitation services or information will be readily able to access information and advice in planning, implementing and improving the quality of water and sanitation services to project and program beneficiaries.
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of WSS activities and services.
- Share information on WSS policies, planning, procedures, and management, and improve understanding of sectoral issues among all interested parties.

Key activities in 2009

- Sharing information on the promotion of hygiene and sanitation behavioural change by addressing a variety of physical, cultural, financial and health conditions among different targeted communities, in a wide range of presentations on sanitation projects and programs on hand-washing initiatives, latrines at schools, and Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS).
- Household and small-scale commercial water filtration: as not everyone has access to piped treated water, developing household water filtration devices that can provide good quality water at a reasonable price is important in more remote areas.

- Management models for rural water systems: following several workshops and discussions with the Standing Office of the National Target Program, Phase II, presentations and discussions took place about water system management models to provide efficient and cost-effective rural water system management.
- Institutional aspects of rural water supply: water governance in the Mekong Delta.
- Information, education and communication related to water supply, sanitation, the promotion of health and hygiene and study and research by agencies in the sector.
- Water quality monitoring: regulations, testing protocols and water treatment processes in piped water systems.

Thematic meetings organised by the Working Group

Working Group meeting February 20

Researchers Kim Patrick and Alex Snelgrove presented a summary of their 'Study of Rainwater Catchment Practice', which considered the possible role of the local private sector in transferring technology to rural households in Vietnam. Their findings will be used by Enterprise Works/VITA, an American INGO, to design a five-year grant funded project for Vietnam, or one of a number of other countries in Asia or Africa, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The study included a desk analysis of various kinds of domestic rainwater harvesting systems in 20 countries throughout the world, a study of Thai rainwater jars, and field research in four countries. The purposes of the study were to assess demand for rainwater harvesting technologies, and implement a pilot project to test technology using a market-based approach. Participants noted that various types of rainwater catchment systems have been used in Vietnam, particularly in the Red River Delta where rainwater catchments have been widely used for many years. Cost, water quality and dry-season supplemental sources were discussed.

Nguyen Thi Khanh of the Centre for Water Resources Conservation and Development (WARECOD) made a presentation on the centre's goals and activities and on its water and sanitation project in Bac Giang.

Rick McGowan of the East Meets West Foundation facilitated a discussion about the foundation's report, 'Climate Change Adaptation Survey in Quang Nam Province, Central Coast Region of Vietnam', on the potential impact of climate change on rural infrastructure, particularly rural water systems and latrines and the social, economic and community health effects. The report used surveys that the East Meets West Foundation and its local partner, CBC, conducted in 125 households in Quang Nam Province, one of the provinces most commonly affected by natural disasters and severe weather.

Working Group meeting April 2009

A representative of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Partnership (RWSSP) facilitated discussion on the agency's 2009 work plan, and on cooperation with the NGO community. While RWSSP circulates monthly notices about its activities, it is always informative for Working Group members to discuss these activities directly with its staff.

Nguyen Thi Khanh made a presentation on a program the Centre for Water Resources Conservation and Development (WARECOD) is developing to increase access by fishing women who live near the Red River downstream of Hanoi to clean water and hygienic sanitation. The program also promotes their participation, with other rural women, in managing their water resources.

Rick McGowan from East Meets West Foundation spoke about the foundation's Water Supply and Sanitation Program. To strengthen the capacity of its water team and of its partner government water and sanitation organisations, the foundation is preparing a training program for piped-water-system managers to encourage the development of sustainable management services.

Working Group meeting October 2009

This meeting was called after the chair of the Working Group, Rick McGowan from the East Meets West Foundation, stepped down from the role. The meeting discussed selection of a new chairperson, reviewed the membership of its core group, discussed the work plan for 2010 and also cooperation with the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Partnership (RWSSP) and other Working Groups. A representative of RWSSP also expressed willingness to collaborate with group members on joint activities. Dr Juliet Waterkeyn, founder of the 'community health club' approach to hygiene and sanitation promotion, made a presentation.

Other activities

- Participation in workshops hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) on water and sanitation issues.
- Participation in the consultative meeting to provide official comments on the second draft of the Master Plan on the System of Social Security for Rural Population, People in Rural Disadvantaged Areas, Mountainous and Ethnic Minority Regions. The meeting was organised by the Ethnic Minorities Working Group in collaboration with the Institute for Labour Science and Social Affairs (ILSA) and the Community Participation Network (COMPANET).
- Members of the WSSWG also shared their experiences at a MARD workshop on conducting projects with different actors in Vietnam, including the private sector.

Future directions for 2010

The Water Supply and Sanitation Working Group will continue to promote the exchange of information between organisations working on issues related to the sector. Topics for discussion are likely to include water and disaster mitigation, construction costs and effective rural sanitation.

Information on water, sanitation and hygiene at schools will continue to be shared and discussed. The Working Group will facilitate coordination with the Government and donors through the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Partnership and other initiatives, and continue to provide feedback on issues related to RWSS policy.