

# **INGOs Comments on draft SEDP 2011-2015**

*(based on draft SEDP dated 11 May 2010)*

## **Overall Generic Comments**

The following consolidated comments from the INGO community in Vietnam have captured the key issues which should be strengthened or added in the SEDP 2011-2015:

- In Part 1 of the document, 'Results of the Implementation of the Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010', the report failed to provide any background of the SEDP 2006-2010 implementation. The achievements, weaknesses, obstacles and lessons learnt have been mentioned broadly, but not analysed against set objectives. For example, the effectiveness / efficiency / impact of public expenditure has not been assessed against the objectives. Consequently, the causes and lessons learnt are not very clear.
- In Part 1 of the document, 'Results of the Implementation of the Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010', the issue of municipal waste water or waste water from other different sources in rural areas has not been addressed as an environmental problem. In Part 2 of the document, 'Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan 2011-2015', the strategy for waste water and solid waste has not been elaborated, although implementation of the existing national target program has been mentioned in relation to some other sectors.
- In order to set the context / policy environment for implementation of the SEDP the following should be included in Part 2 of the document: a) background information (e.g. governance issues); b) key institutional reforms (amendment of Constitution, Laws on Organizations of People's Councils, abolishment of People's Council at district levels, Public Administration Reform); and c) monitoring and evaluation framework.
- The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) should be mentioned in the SEDP 2011-2015. Two MDG indicators have not been achieved in the period 2006-2010 (HIV/AIDS, Water Hygiene & Sanitation). There should be a clear plan on how to deal with MDGs in the next period, particularly since they are set to be achieved by 2015.
- Although Climate Change is an urgent issue for Vietnam in the next 5 years, it has been mentioned only briefly and without a clear solution, under the headline 'Effective Use and Management of Land Resources, Improving the Quality of Forecast and Warning, Reducing Natural Calamities' Impact'. This issue requires further elaboration.
- The SEDP 2011-2015 is focused on economic growth, with less emphasis on social development and the environment. Governance issues such as institutional reforms, decentralization and grass-roots democracy are insufficiently addressed in the document.
- The need for comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents should be mentioned in the SEDP 2011-2015, considering the increasing rate of teenage pregnancies, abortions etc.
- The results of poverty reductions should be further analysed to determine their sustainability. The SEDP 2011-2015 estimated that poor-household rate would be reduced to lower than 10% by 2010, with the annual average rate of poor households decreasing more than 2%. This means that there will be no poor households in Vietnam by 2015. This needs to be reconsidered.

## Specific Comments

page 41

PART I

B. RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION IN KEY SECTORS

III. SOCIAL SECTORS

2. Hunger eradication, poverty reduction and social security

Vietnam has made striking achievements in poverty reduction. However, the rate of poverty reduction is slowing down, and hunger and illiteracy are still significant problems in the poorest communes. The nature of rural poverty has changed profoundly in the last decade. Rural poverty is now concentrated more intensively in the “poverty pockets” in mountainous and remote ethnic minority areas and has distinctive characteristics for each ethnic group, village and household. The two groups of “chronic” and “temporary” poor differ in terms of employment opportunities and capacity to earn a living. Specific solutions should be integrated in a comprehensive rural social security system. Increasing numbers of near-poor households require further support to ensure they remain above the poverty line.

How to implement support measures suitable to the culture, customs and local knowledge of each ethnic minority group in each locality remains the key challenge to sustainable poverty reduction in rural areas of Vietnam. So far, support for ethnic minority areas has adopted a conventional approach, targeting each aspect of poverty reduction. There is still a lack of breakthrough policies and measures that improve poor people’s participation and empowerment for poverty reduction in close interaction with the market and natural environment so that each poor community and individual becomes the owner of their own destiny, to change the passive mentality and eliminate over-reliance on state support.

There are now many policies and programmes aimed at narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor, most prominently Programme 30a. The poor have better access than before to infrastructure, education, healthcare, capital, agro-forestry extension services, housing and production land. However, the rich-poor gap between ethnic groups, between regions and between the better-off and the poor within communities remains large as wealthier households can pursue a greater range of livelihood strategies to generate a higher income.

In 2009, rural communities continued to suffer from risks and shocks, the most serious of which included natural calamities and the impact of global financial crisis. The rural poor, mountainous ethnic minority people and groups with special difficulties are those most vulnerable to such shocks. Social protection is crucial for the people, households and communities to manage risk and reduce vulnerability, so that their rights are respected and protected in the face of risks and a socially acceptable minimum living standard is maintained. Poverty reduction support is an integral component in such a social security system.

The official urban poverty data does not consider migrant groups. The poverty status of migrants is more serious when considered within the context of “social integration” and the hardships they face in terms of loss of social and familial relations and lack of access to support networks and services, as opposed to poverty simply in terms of “income” or “expenses”.

Diversified and complicated urban poverty also has many specific social groups with their own difficulties and disadvantages and vulnerabilities to risks and shocks. The vulnerability of urban poverty groups is highly evident in the context of the effect of the global financial crisis on Vietnam, and the ongoing impact of the persistent increasing price of commodities since 2008. Since these impacts, many urban poor people, including local people and migrants, have not felt

that their lives have improved to any significant degree. Some people have even seen a degradation in the quality of their lives over the last year. The migrant worker group, in particular, suffered major shocks in the first months of 2009 when businesses had a drop-off of export orders.

**page 51**

**PART I**

**B. RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION IN KEY SECTORS**

**III. SOCIAL SECTORS**

**5. Gender equity and Child protection**

Progress on gender equality has been made. However, women still suffer from disadvantages. Men have pre-eminence in decision making concerning the use of resources and services. Poor education, busy family lives and prejudice present barriers to the more effective participation of rural women in social affairs.

Prejudices and stereotypes on gender roles are still strong, and in many cases are being reinforced by media. Women still shoulder the greater part of the burden in production activities and time consuming housework without being paid. Women's access to vocational training and capacity building is still limited, especially for women in mountainous ethnic minority areas. Little education, hectic family life and gender role prejudices continue to limit further participation of women in social affairs.

At macro level, measures for mainstreaming gender into all policies and socio-economic development and poverty reduction programmes, communication on gender equality, supervision in the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality and sub-law documents, need to be further pushed for promoting gender equality. At micro level, implementation of community-based poverty reduction programmes in rural areas with emphasis on activities of farmer groups (including both men and women) is significant in raising awareness (reducing prejudices and stereotypes unfavourable for women in the family and community) and adjusting behaviours (women becoming more confident and men more sharing), towards gender equality within families and communities.

**page 59**

**PART I**

**B. RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION IN KEY SECTORS**

**VI. ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM, ECONOMY PRACTICE, PREVENTION OF LOSS..**

**1. Administrative Reform**

Despite many achievements in participation over the past months, there is still a gap between official documentation and actual implementation which demands further effort in implementation at grass-roots level.

Village heads have an important role in boosting people's participation. Village heads organise and chair village meetings - the most important information channel of the poor. Capacity building for village heads, better allowance and working conditions for village heads and village officials are critical to promoting participation and empowerment of the people and community in the implementation of policies, programmes and projects.

Participation capacity for the poor and communities should be built on the foundation of promoted community institutions represented by village heads, self-governing groups, patriarchs, mass organisations and community groups at village level. Attention should be paid to boosting the role of groups with community functioning objectives. Support should be proportioned appropriately to avoid excessiveness which leads to over-reliance and passivity while providing enough impulse to

usher in positive changes. No common answer can be provided for the question as how to keep the support “sufficient”. There is a need for specific consultation with the people, especially with the poor and women at each village using the community development approach.

**page 106**

PART II

B. DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATION FOR SECTORS AND FIELDS

III. SOCIAL FIELDS

2. Population, Family Planning and People's Health Care

a) Objectives

The document says that: ...*'The population growth rate will decrease gradually and fall under 1% / year by the end of the period 2011-2015, maintaining the birth rate of 0.25% / year. The population will be less than 91.5 million by 2015, reducing the gender imbalance with the gender ratio at birth of 115 by 2015'*... The present Sex Ratio at Birth is 112 boys for every 100 girls. Therefore, if the ratio is 115 in 2015 this represents an INCREASE not a decrease. Please correct.

**page 107**

PART II

B. DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATION FOR SECTORS AND FIELDS

III. SOCIAL FIELDS

2. Population, Family Planning and People's Health Care

b) Orientation and solutions

The document says that: ...*'Changing from free provision of population and pregnancy health services into the free market and social marketing. This change will meet the demand of all subjects, reduce the burden on the State budget and ensure a sustainable population and family planning program'*... It is not clear how charging for a service that was previously free will enable poor people to access that service more easily. Please clarify.

**page 113 and 117**

PART II

B. DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATION FOR SECTORS AND FIELDS

III. SOCIAL FIELDS

(page 113) 4. Conduction of poverty alleviation mission and guarantee of social security

(page 117) 7. Promotion of Gender Equity and Women's Progress

***Some recommendations towards sustainable poverty reduction in rural areas, especially mountainous ethnic minority areas, are as follows:***

To carry out institutional reforms in poverty reduction programmes following the community development approach to increase community participation and empowerment through the use of participatory planning tools at commune / village levels and operating self-governed community funds to implement small projects and small-size community initiatives. The community development approach should be institutionalised in the future poverty reduction programmes as well as in socio-economic development planning at local levels, to help in shifting from sectoral support to integrated support and from non-refundable aid to the facilitation and capacity building of the poor and the poor community.

To utilise a multi-dimensional approach to poverty which accommodates non-income criteria such as human resources, assets, and access to support services etc. Some support policies should not necessarily be attached to income but to non-income poverty instead. The multi-dimensional

poverty approach shall boost decentralisation and empowerment at grass-roots level in identifying beneficiaries of each policy and support programme while keeping them under the guidance and supervision of the higher administrative levels.

To provide synchronised support to the development of human resources of the poor in mountainous ethnic minority regions in four areas: child education, Vietnamese language skills, vocational training, and extension services for adults. In terms of child education, stronger support is needed for semi-boarding schools (“locally funded boarding”) without discrimination between poor and non-poor students, and for the training and promotion of the “assistant teacher” network to get equal scope as the formal teachers to work in mountainous ethnic minority areas.

In terms of illiteracy eradication among adults, the “community-development linked education” approach (Reflect) should be expanded based on the link between commune community learning centre (CLC) and community development clubs (CDCs) in villages. In terms of vocational training, there needs to be a focus on training in vocations with better local employment opportunities (based on a vocational needs survey conducted for each commune / village), along with enhancing the role of informal networks, groups, and village communities in the transfer and maintenance of trades / crafts and in employment creation for learners. In terms of agricultural extension work, pro-poor participatory agricultural extension methods proved effective in many places and should also be promoted.

To improve market access, aimed at social capital development for the poor, through establishment of farmer groups linked with enterprises in localities with favourable conditions for contract-based cultivation. Further support is needed to promote local non-agricultural and migrant employment.

To design a poverty reduction programme in close coordination with comprehensive rural social protection, emphasising social support measures for the “chronic” poor and sustainable livelihood support measures for the “temporary” poor. A “policy matrix” should be added to the draft proposal “Social security system for rural residents during 2011-2020” to clearly identify the groups that need support, policies that need revision or supplementation, as well as identify necessary coordination and connection measures among support levels, appropriate forms of implementation of social security, necessary resources and steps, and criteria to define beneficiaries, and roles of related stakeholders. To design a supplementary policy scheme to support near-poor households, especially those who have just escaped from poverty, to achieve sustainable poverty reduction.

To mainstream gender contents into all policies and socio-economic development and poverty reduction programmes, to disseminate information on gender equality, and to monitor the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality and sub-law documents as important measures to promote gender equality. At grass-roots level, implementation of community-development-based poverty reduction programmes in rural areas, in which significance is attached to support for farmer groups with participation by both men and women, is crucial in enhancing the awareness and adjusting the behaviour towards gender equality in families and communities.

To promote the positive role of community institutions, including that of village heads, self-governed groups, patriarchs, clan heads, mass organisations and community groups at village level in order to enhance the capacity for participation of the poor and the poor communities. To provide further support for groups with community functions. Specific consultations should be conducted with the people, especially the poor and the women in each village with a view to design support levels that are “enough” to provide a boost for positive change but which do not create passivity and an over-reliance mentality in the people and communities.

Donors and Government need to commit sufficient resources to new poverty reduction programmes

which recognise the new poverty line and the need for greater investment per capita into the poorest communes.

***Some recommendations for more effective urban poverty alleviation are as followed:***

Accurate understanding of urban poverty: Urban poverty alleviation cannot be conducted effectively without a thorough understanding of the scale and role of the migrants. Supplementary data and assessment of migrant groups in urban areas and their poverty situation would help the agencies who manage infrastructure utilities (electricity, water), who provide social services (education, healthcare) and social protection services (employment, support for the poor and specific social groups) to have adequate information in planning their budgets and investment in order to address the urgent needs of both the local poor and the migrant poor groups.

Close monitoring of the impact of risks and shocks on urban poor groups: Urban poverty reduction in the context of many risks and shocks (such as price disadvantages, the global financial crisis, global climate change, changes in urban management policies, land use policies and urban planning) cannot be effectively implemented without clear identification of the difficulties of local people and migrants and without updating the migration flows of labour and the rural-urban linkages (e.g. job redundancies, income reduction in migrant worker groups and informal sector works). It is necessary to improve the systems of statistical labour-employment surveying and build monitoring sites in each locality, to improve the labour reporting of companies and businesses, in order to gain an accurate representation of the situation, identify emerging problems, and therefore effectively respond to risks and shocks in a timely manner.

Improved and coordinated support policies are needed for households that have had their agricultural lands (e.g. over 30% of agricultural lands) repossessed to build industrial parks. These coordinated support policies should focus on solving irrigational system problems, and issues relating to water supply, drainage, waste water, and waste disposal, and on methods of support for sustainable livelihood change that encourage people to attain social security. There should be clear regulations to augment the responsibilities of industrial park investors in terms of providing support for the aforementioned policies. Investor responsibilities should begin from the period of land use planning, and continue to include a thorough assessment of the environmental and social impacts of any completed project. It is also necessary to improve the capacity of local management (number of staff, planning and implementation of policies, increased transparency and accountability) in the peripheral urban communes. In this time of transition to urbanization there should be a focus on planning in terms of managing the standards of rental houses and services to improve local people's lives such as, expanding education and medical centre facilities (including services for migrant workers' children), building cultural, sports, and entertainment facilities, and putting in place preventative measures against criminal activity.

Building a social protection program for migrants in urban areas, such as creating opportunities for migrant workers to be able to obtain insurance (social insurance, unemployment insurance, medical insurance), supporting people who have lost their jobs due to risks and shocks, supporting costs of vocational training and education (for migrant workers who study and work), and vocational and psychological counselling, is important. Helping migrants to have better access to social services and fairly-priced utilities (electricity, water), and improving migrants' "social capital" by creating more opportunities for them to participate in the activities of unions, residential quarters, community and cultural groups, requires active participation of all key stakeholders (government and management and representatives of residential quarters, unions, trade unions, enterprises).

Strengthening the role of community self-management groups is an effective measure to increase social capital and improve the capacity of vulnerable people in urban areas (including local people

and migrants) to cope with risks and shocks. Self-management groups may take a variety of forms and serve one or more functions, such as mutual sharing and support, access to programs supported by localities and donors / philanthropists, improvement of access to public services, organization and implementation of services to serve communities, e.g. waste collection.

**page 116**

PART II

B. DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATION FOR SECTORS AND FIELDS

III. SOCIAL FIELDS

5. Children care and protection

According to the 2009 census, 7.8% of the population have disabilities. In the SEDP 2011-2015 there is hardly any mention of disability except in this section (page 116) to say the Government will 'protect and care' disabled children. This requires further elaboration and there needs to be an approach to enable the disabled to engage as active citizens.

**page 120**

PART II

B. DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATION FOR SECTORS AND FIELDS

IV. RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. Objectives

The efforts for developing of environmental-standard system for sewerage disposal are only a target for industry and export processing zones (70%). Vietnam is facing a big problems in urban / suburban areas as well as craft villages for domestic demand and in other rural areas with food processing enterprises and high contaminated waste water. The efforts / goals should be expanded to this problems.