

The Ethnic Minorities Working Group

www.ngocentre.org.vn/emwg

Background

The Ethnic Minorities Working Group (EMWG) was formed in 2002, under the VUFO-NGO Resource Centre with the aim of providing a forum for Vietnamese non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international NGOs, development partners, Government agencies and interested individuals to exchange ideas and lessons learned about good practices of development projects for the benefit of ethnic minorities. Additionally, the EMWG prioritizes policy consultations and dialogues in the development of ethnic related policies by the government, in order to advocate for improvements of policies targeting ethnic minority communities in Vietnam.

The EMWG is managed by a core group who voluntarily contribute human resource, time and financial support to the working group's activities. Up to date, there are 12 core group members, including: ActionAid Vietnam (AAV), Care International in Vietnam, Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD), Center of Help for Indigenous value promotion and Sustainable environment (CHIASE), Centre for Community Empowerment (CECEM), Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE), Oxfam, Plan in Vietnam, Save the Children, the Culture Identity and Resources Use Management (CIRUM), the Agriculture and Forestry Research & Development Center for mountainous Region (ADC), and Action for H'mong Development (AHD).

CARE International in Vietnam and iSEE act as co-chairs of the group in the term 2015–2017. The chairmanship role will be rotated every two years on the basis of nomination and election.

Activity planning and implementation mechanism of the EMWG

Annually, the core group members organize a planning workshop to develop a work-plan, select priorities and contribute human resource and finance to the group activities. Based on the set-up work plan, the core group members meet up quarterly or have additional meetings to exchange information, discuss and agree about approaches of activity implementation and task division amongst the members.

The Working Group's daily activities are assigned to a coordinator. The coordinator works closely with the group's co-chairs to organize meetings and activities, take minutes of meetings, compile the database of agencies working with ethnic minorities, budgeting, facilitate group communication internally and externally, manage the group's email, website and fan-page, implement the group's activities, and prepare its annual report. The coordinator is assigned to participate in external meetings and workshops on behalf of the group in the case when the co-chairpersons are not available.

Goal and Objectives

The overall objective of the EMWG is, together with efforts of the government, to **contribute to the improvement of living conditions of ethnic minorities in Vietnam**, through by increasing direct intervention actions in project sites, building capacity of ethnic minority communities, encouraging and empowering them to fully participate in development process.

The goal is specified through objectives as below:

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 programs relating to ethnic minorities.

Improving the development practices of member organizations:

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 group share about experiences and information on issues and policies related to ethnic minorities, seek for opportunities of dialogues, cooperation with governmental agencies and other development partners, which aims to positive changes of the planning, consultation and development process of ethnic minority policies.

Facilitating the voice of ethnic minority people:

The working group enable and facilitate different mechanisms/channels with governmental agencies at all levels so that ethnic minority people can voice out their opinions on the development programs and their influence towards their lives.

EMWG's main activities from November 2016 - October/2017

Information sharing:

Learning forum with topic “Leadership role of ethnic minority women: Active or Passive?” (December 2016)

This event is a part of “the regular learning forum on development issues of ethnic minorities” - an initiative for partners, organizations and individuals interested in the development issues of ethnic minorities in Vietnam, which is under the framework of *the Civil Action for Socio-economic Inclusion Program in Northern Vietnam programme (CASI)* funded by DANIDA and co-implemented by CARE, iSEE, CIRUM and ADC.

32 participants representing different NGOs and communities attended the forum, including: ethnic minorities (EMs) in the EM Leader Network¹, community – based organizations in Bac Can, NGOs, research institutions and individuals interested in the forum topic.

The EM representatives talked about their daily – life stories and experiences they have had with all their hearts. Having shared about her story, changes since the participation in community activities, she expressed: *“initially, our women did not want to, but latter on, they totally believed in what we are doing, we have got new knowledge, had a chance to voice out and feel very proud of that, also we can increase our incomes... By showing that, the communal People’s Committee sees the capacity of women, they are more interested in our*

¹ *The Ethnic Minority Leader Network: The network includes more than 25 ethnic minority members from 12 provinces across the country. The network is the representation of EM communities to voice out at national policy dialogues and forums. At the community level, they join iSEE as well as implement their own initiatives to create changes at their local level. They also join different local programs to voice out EM needs and rights.*

ideas and we feel respected and fully engaged in community activities. She stressed "Leadership does not mean that some one has to hold/be at the top position in one organization. Simply, we actively identify our problems, actively find solutions and be confident that we can do, that is".



Photo: EMWG

Learning forum on vocational training in ethnic and mountainous areas - Challenges and solutions (September 2017)

Provided with technical support from Oxfam, EMWG hosted the learning space #2 entitled "Vocational training in ethnic and mountainous areas - Challenges and Solutions". 39 people attended the event, representing local and international NGOs, consultancy firms, researchers, ethnic minority youths, EMWG members and reporters.

Hoang Xuan Thanh (Mr.), Oxfam's consultant said at the forum: Presently, Vietnam have issued many policies and legal papers related to vocational training for rural labours.

Mr. Thanh stressed on the shortage of coordination and management mechanism among governmental bodies, a lack of training need assessment (TNA) and mainstreaming the training plan into SEDPs, National Targeted Program with participatory method. Additionally, most of the poor and EM people are not provided with adequate information on vocational/job opportunities. Importantly, discrimination against and bias towards the poor and EM people still remains, especially in mass media and propaganda programs.

Some recommendations to improve the effectiveness of vocational training in ethnic minority areas have been discussed and shared by speakers and participants, such as: renewing plans of vocational training in a close link with participatory communal planning; specifying the coordination mechanism among the concerned agencies; raising budget for information dissemination and TNA; building capacity of teachers and trainers; monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of vocational training; applying practical training methods such as Farmer Field Schools (FFS) to agricultural training courses and "on-the-job training" for non-agriculture training courses.

Link to presentations: <http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/pub/presentations-learning-forum-vocational-training-ethnic-and-mountainous-areas-challenges-and-sol>

Furthermore, in 2017, the EMWG has developed its logo, fan - page and updated its database of organizations working in ethnic minority areas and promoted the participation of youths in CEDAW related activities.

Networking to promote the implementation and monitoring the implementation of CEDAW in Vietnam (March - November 2017)

In the framework of project funded by UN Women, early 2017, Centre for Education Promotion and Empowerment for Women (CEPEW) in collaboration with other networks (including EMWG) sharing the same interest have implemented some activities in order to promote accountability mechanism for gender equality in Vietnam.

One of the effective methods that is capable of meeting and overcoming challenges to promote gender equality in Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

Representatives of EMWG and The EM Leader Network participated in some ToT training on GRB and its tools (from August - October 2017)

Post the training, core members of the EM Leader Network in Thanh Hoa and Lao Cai provinces proposed their initiatives to apply GRB tools in their communities. EMWG/iSEE staff have provided technical support for them during the whole pilot process (from September - November 2017)

- In Thanh Hoa, the initiative was implemented in Giau Ca village, Luong Ngoai commune, Ba Thuoc district. Two core members who participated in the GRB ToT training sessions conveyed their acquired knowledge to the rest five members in the village. They exchanged information, analyzed the local issues and finally they selected to apply the tool "citizen reporting card" (CRC) to survey community people's satisfaction with commune health services. They trained together and jointly developed the survey toolkit (questionnaires) and conducted it by their own. They are gathering survey results.
- In Lao Cai, an initiative was implemented in Giang Tra village, Ta Phin commune and Ma Tra village, Sa Pa commune, Sa Pa district with the same process as in Thanh Hoa. Seven (07) community members selected their issue in the pilot "survey of quality of commune agricultural extension service"



Ảnh: EMWG

Training on co-research approach in EM development projects for EMWG core group members (2 days, June 2017)

Aims of the training:

The training aims: trainees:

Learn about the co-research approach in development projects

- Definition of “co-research approach”
- Features and steps in co- research approach
- Tools for application in the co-research approach

Discover values of the co-research approach in building capacity and raising public awareness.

The training lasted two days with the participation of 22 staff of EMWG core member

organizations. Facilitators of the training are Nguyen Thi Bich Tam (M.A) and Pham Thanh Tra (M.A), together with EM guest speakers from Women's Union in Bac Can province who conducted the co-research project initiated by iSEE/CARE

Participating in the training, participants actively discussed, shared and exchanged stories about the co-research approach, steps and some of the tools in this approach.

Co-research approach is a process in which outside researchers together with researchers from the community choose research issues, develop research questions, collect information, analyze information. and write reports.

The trainers provided with steps to conduct a co-research activity, some of its tools and considerations in the application of the approach



Photo: EMWG

Link to presentations: <http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/pub/presentations-emwg-training-co-research-approach>

Achievements and challenges of the EMWG in 2016

Achievements:

1. Through the group's activities, the participation of representatives of EM communities and local authorities in policy consultation and development is promoted;
2. Messages of community's inner power, equality and non-discrimination, respect to diversity of ethnic minorities are promoted among EMWG members, networks, governmental bodies and other partners.
3. Through the group's activities, information on governmental policies and programs related to EM development, as well as the group member's activities is efficiently exchanged among the members, which contributes to the better cooperation among the group in supporting governmental bodies.
4. Partnership between the EMWG and governmental agencies such as CEMA is much strengthened;
5. The EMWG's engagement in other networks and working groups which share the same concerns is greatly increased to avoid the overlap in group activities.

Challenges:

1. Because of the members' commitments and staff turnover, the group's focal persons often change and miss group meetings;
2. Core members' financial commitment to the group activities depends much on their organizational budget plan.

Direction to the 2018

In 2018, the EMWG will continue collective activities developed by the members to fulfill the group objectives as follows:

1. Continuously promoting the EMWG as a open forum to share information and discuss topics related to ethnic minority development issues in Vietnam;
2. Fostering policy advocacy work and policy dialogues between NGOs and governmental bodies related to development issues of ethnic minorities;
3. Increasing opportunities to strengthen the voice of ethnic minorities in the EMWG activities and policy dialogues at all levels.
4. Promoting the cooperation between the group and related governmental agencies through concrete activities.
5. Strengthening connection and resource contribution among the EMWG core members and between the EMWG and other networks sharing the same concerns about development issues of ethnic minorities in Vietnam.

For any further information on the EMWG and subscribe to the EMWG mailing list to receive updated information on the EMWG activities, please contact Ms. Nguyen Thi Hoa, EMWG coordinator at: emwg@ngocentre.org.vn or log in the website:

<http://ngocentre.org.vn/mailman/listinfo/ngo-emwg> or EMWG fan-page:

HYPERLINK

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