

Independent evaluation
VIET NAM

Entrepreneurship development programme
for women in food processing
in central Viet Nam (phase II)



UNIDO EVALUATION GROUP

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Independent evaluation of the project
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This document has not been formally edited.

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Acknowledgment

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
CPC	Commune People's Committee
DPC	District People's Committee
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FAO	Finance and Administration Officer
FERD	Foreign Economic Relations Department
FIRI	Food Industry Research Institute
GDI	Gender related Development Index
GHP	Good Hygiene Practices
GoF	Government of Finland
GoV	Government of Viet Nam
GSO	General Statistical Office
HACCP	Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points
IP	Integrated Programme
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MIS	Management Information System
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NPD	National Project Director
NPM	National Project Manager
PCI	Provincial Competitiveness Index
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PO	Project Officer
PPC	Provincial People Committee
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PWU	Provincial Women's Union
QTRDP	Quang Tri Rural Development Programme
RRC	Rural Resource Centre
SC	Steering Committee
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan
SER	Self Evaluation Report
SHG	Self-Help Group
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Dutch Development Cooperation)
SRV	Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
TM	Training Manager
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
TOT	Training of Trainers
TPR	Tri-Partite Review
UCO	UNIDO Country Office
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UR	UNIDO Representative
VDR	Viet Nam Development Report
VIAEP	Viet Nam Institute for Agricultural Engineering and Post-Harvest Technology
VNCI	Viet Nam Competitiveness Initiative
VND	Viet Nam Dong
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
VWU	Viet Nam Women’s Union
WTO	World Trade Organization
WU	Women Union

Glossary of main evaluation terms used ¹

<i>Conclusions</i>	Conclusions point out the factors of success and failure of the evaluated intervention, with special attention paid to the intended and unintended results and impacts, and more generally to any other strength or weakness. A conclusion draws on data collection and analyses undertaken, through a transparent chain of arguments.
<i>Effectiveness</i>	The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.
<i>Efficiency</i>	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.
<i>Impacts</i>	Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
<i>Indicator</i>	Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor.
<i>Institutional development impact</i>	The extent to which an intervention improves or weakens the ability of a country or region to make more efficient, equitable, and sustainable use of its human, financial, and natural resources, for example through: (a) better definition, stability, transparency, enforceability and predictability of institutional arrangements and/or (b) better alignment of the mission and capacity of an organization with its mandate, which derives from these institutional arrangements. Such impacts can include intended and unintended effects of an action.
<i>Lessons learned</i>	Generalizations based on evaluation experiences with projects, programs, or policies that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design, and implementation that affect performance, outcome, and impact.
<i>Logframe</i>	Management tool used to improve the design of interventions, most often at the project level. It involves identifying strategic elements (inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact) and their causal relationships, indicators, and the assumptions or risks that may influence success and failure. It thus facilitates planning, execution and evaluation of a development intervention. Related term: results based management.
<i>Outcome</i>	The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs. Related terms: result, outputs, impacts, effect.
<i>Outputs</i>	The products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, quality, or efficiency of a development intervention; at redesigning the objectives; and/or at the reallocation of resources. Recommendations should be linked to conclusions.

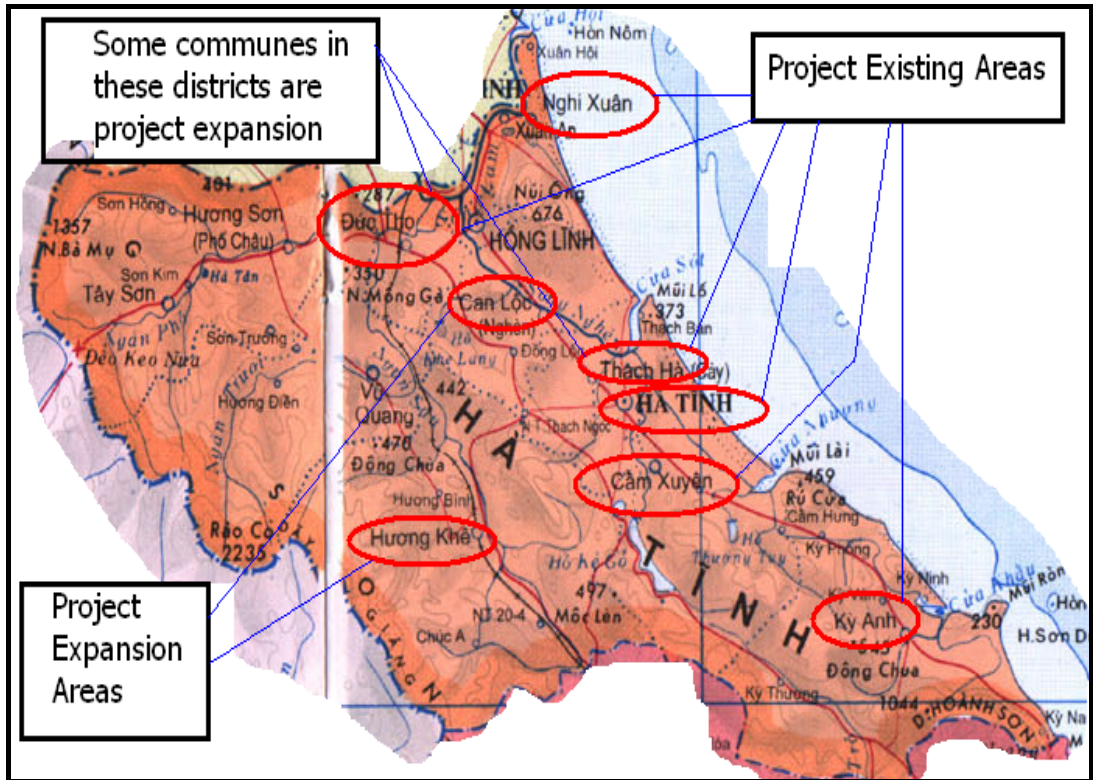
¹ Based on a glossary prepared by OECD's DAC Working Party on aid evaluation, May 2002

<i>Relevance</i>	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies. Note: Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances.
<i>Results</i>	The output, outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) of a development intervention. Related terms: outcome, effect, impacts.
<i>Sustainability</i>	The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.

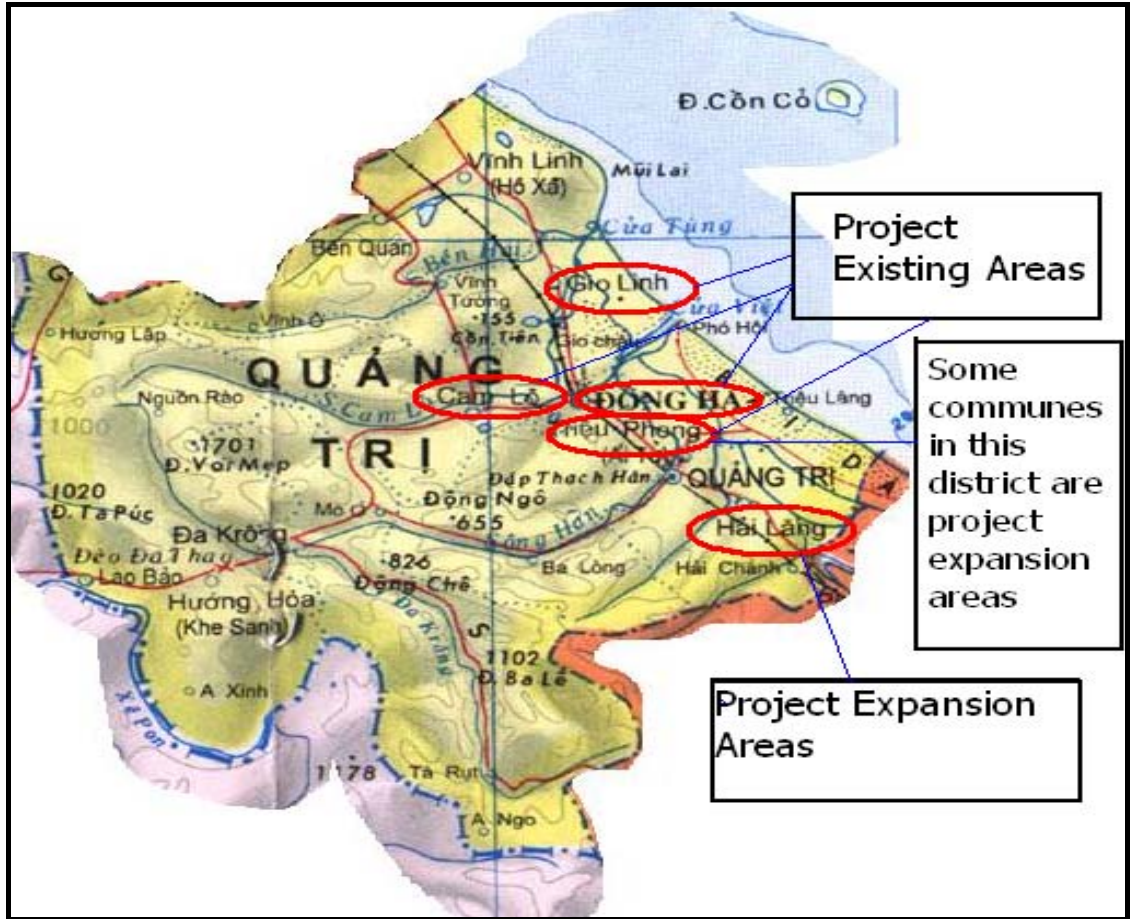
Map of Viet Nam



Map of project location (operations in 3 Provinces)



Project Operation Areas in Ha Tinh province



Project Operation Areas in Quang Tri province

Executive summary

Overall assessment

Summarizing the assessment of the overall performance of the project, it can be stated that this was a highly relevant, effective and very efficiently run project that indeed is likely to have impact. The Vietnamese counterparts can be considered the owners of the activities initiated that they meanwhile have started to expand to additional districts within the three Provinces. Major weakness was that sustainability aspects were not adequately built into the design of the project. Time will tell to what extent the work started by the project will be sustained at the same speed and with the same depth.

Formulation

The main observations on the design of this Phase II project are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Assessment of the project's design and formulation phase

Strong points	Weak points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance as regards support for implementation of socio-economic development plans at national and local levels (employment and income generating, poverty reduction strategy; implementation of national plan of action for women) • Selection of a key partner organization with large membership and strong outreach (provincial, district, commune levels) • Targeted location of PCU in WU premises • Detailed description of project rationale (context and justification) • Continuity, taking advantage of experience of previous projects as source of expertise, training methodology, materials and learning opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The large time span between preparatory consultations and the final approval of the project document combined with some staff changes in key partner organization implied that part of institutional memory was lost, requiring renewed consultations on basis of the then approved document • Too ambitious in terms of geographic coverage and time frame • Weakness in logical framework (linkage between immediate objective and outputs not fully coherent; formulation of immediate objective and outputs) • Capacity building indicators are quantitative (number of staff trained) and do not enable proper measurement of results • Sustainability aspects not adequately built into the project design at the overall objective, immediate objective, result and activity levels • Adjustments during inception work of Phase II not formalized in project revision (also to reflect more explicitly lessons learned from Phase I, ongoing during the formulation/start of Phase II) • No detailed description nor assessment in the

Strong points	Weak points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Envisaged cooperation and collaboration with relevant organizations and other donor supported projects • Explicit planning of baseline survey and of training needs assessment at the enterprise level in order to base project activities on real needs and priorities • Monitoring system envisaged to measure results at enterprise level 	<p>project document itself of the key implementing partners and their organizational capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility of RRC (beyond its use as project infrastructure for ToT and practical training) including potential for cost-recovery not examined in the design • No explicit linkage envisaged in project document with other components/projects within the context of the UNIDO IP; reference to other projects that have no direct link to the project (e.g. MPDF) • No activity envisaged in the project document to discuss achievements and scope for replication in the current provinces and possibly to other provinces (post project strategy); no explicit role foreseen for Central Viet Nam Women Union (VWU) in view of replication.

Funding

An amount totaling Euro 864,612 was spent (including outstanding obligations). This corresponds to a balance of Euro 64,392 and an implementation ratio of 93.1% as at end 2006. The amount was adequate given the set targets. The delay of six months in the receipt of the second installment required some juggling at the time in order for project operations not to be affected.

Achievements

The project has produced impressive results by carrying out a vast number of activities under each of the three outputs, described in detail in progress and self-evaluation reports, supported by a Management Information System set up at the start of the project to facilitate measurement of results. The evaluation team assessed the project's achievements in accordance with the evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, ownership, impact and sustainability. Its assessment can be summarized as follows:

Relevance

The activities were highly relevant, in line with the policies and priorities policy makers at all levels, the partner organizations and the target beneficiaries. They also were in line with UNIDO's corporate vision as regards the Organization's mandate and contributions pertaining to poverty reduction efforts.

The training was based on thorough preparatory work and filled a gap for the target beneficiaries, for whom it was often the first time to receive such hands-on training. The packaging of the training content around three modules (Technology, Finance, and

Marketing) was appropriate and involving local expertise (particularly product specific expertise) in post-training follow-up activities was very important. The creation of Self Help Groups (SHG) was essential for outreach and had both economic and social benefits. The small lease-purchase scheme introduced by the project has generated some interest, but is not fully used. What seemed to be most valued by the beneficiaries was the training as well as the technical/marketing related post-training advice.

Introduction of Good Hygiene Principles (GHP) was a relevant feature of the training and its follow-up. As was recognized by FIRI based on the baseline survey carried out, the targeted enterprises were to become first and foremost models in terms of GHP implementation, HACCP being difficult to apply in enterprises engaged in traditional processing methods, unable to trace the origin of or test the inputs used, operating in basic premises, with lack of finance, with weak record keeping etc.

Capacity building focus on WU in each of the three Provinces was highly relevant, although it was not based on a detailed assessment of the implementation capacities and training needs of all the relevant partners as an organization. Involving both trainers from the WU and trainers from other organizations within the province was appropriate and pivotal for the sustainability of efforts.

Time will tell to which extent the RRCs, so far mainly used in the ToT's, will become an important instrument for the WUs in supporting micro enterprise development. The use of mobile equipment in field-based training activities (mainly done in Ha Tinh) was important.

Effectiveness

Many positive changes were reported by women entrepreneurs, such as regarding their work load, use of energy, production time, hygienic practices, quality of end product (confirmed by lab test results in some cases), overall workshop organization and working environment. Also, they said to have gained self-confidence. In addition to engaging in joint business activities (such as common purchase of inputs; equipment sharing; joint labeling; creation of group household enterprise/cooperative), the social dimension of common efforts was highlighted.

Post-training efforts focused initially on technical/quality improvements. Marketing support was added later, with focus on packaging and labeling. More intensive and a wider ranging marketing and market linkage efforts will be needed to truly increase demand for improved products.

The number of people covered is considered too high. Particularly in a project focused on capacity building, the quality of inputs and of results merit more emphasis than quantitative results (such as number of participants in events, number of SHG, number of training sessions etc.). Active monitoring took place, particularly through project officers stationed in each of the Provinces, supported by periodic advisory and monitoring visits by the Ha Tinh based project team. Available data however focus mainly on numbers and there would have been scope for more reporting on qualitative indicators now limited to few indicators of change (such as progress in the quality of certain products over time based on laboratory tests).

Since August 2005 the WU in each of the Provinces took the lead in organizing the training activities and since August 2006, they have initiated promotional efforts in expansion areas. The WUs decided themselves on the selection of the expansion areas. On-the-job training and the availability of detailed guidelines prepared by the project team enables the WUs to pursue the promotional activities at the level of micro enterprises, equipped with the tools in guiding and coordinating support interventions.

It is not possible to assess the use of the RRC in all 3 Provinces, as facilities in Quang Binh and Quang Tri are respectively under construction/under renovation, nor the appropriateness of the selection of the equipment for the RRCs, as there has been little demand so far in Ha Tinh.

Efficiency

The counterpart contribution corresponded to the planned inputs in terms of staff assigned and office space. The ability to use the WU network (large membership and outreach at different levels – up to communes) increased the speed of start-up operations.

The quality of the overall and of day-to-day management was good and decision-making was transparent, supported by the MIS to facilitate monitoring and reporting. Also, cooperation between the PCU and counterparts was good at all levels. Reporting was extensive. The envisaged expenditures for international expertise have considerably decreased (about half from what as planned as per the project document), with corresponding increase in the use of national expertise (doubled). The expenditures for local training even tripled compared to the initial project plan.

The implementation approach (return missions of CTA rather than full-time presence) was appropriate, allowing for the sharing of project responsibilities and also generating savings on international expertise (that were proportionally high in the initial project document). Active and increased involvement of national expertise also enhanced local capacities. At this stage it is difficult to foresee to what extent the training courses will continue in the absence of a project budget (in terms of availability of trainers and logistics to conduct the training in the districts).

The use of trainers from Phase I as facilitators in the ToT, as well as of available training materials that needed only marginal adjustment in Phase II was both relevant and efficient. Flexibility was shown by adding technical manuals on products not covered in the Pilot Phase/ Phase I, yet relevant in the Provinces covered in Phase II.

Procurement of equipment for RRC's planned to be set up in Quang Binh and Quang Tri only at the very end of the project should have been avoided. Also, there could have been more discussion on the performance of the first RRC and the implication for further investments in such centres.

Linkages with other organizations and donor-supported programmes and projects, both at the central level and in the three Provinces, were established but some of these could have been more regular, leading to joint activities and more sharing of experiences, tools, trained experts etc. Both the project team and the partner organizations have a role in this

respect, even if taking into consideration that cooperation is a “two-way street” (such as in the case of QTDP that was approached several times by project staff, which however did not lead to effective cooperation) or faces hurdles related to variations in selection criteria of target beneficiaries (as was the case with SNV). Most obvious cooperation was the linkage with a JICA project (support to the Food Industries Research Institute, FIRI) through a subcontract covering food security related training and testing. There was no real scope for active linkages with other activities in the UNIDO Integrated Programme beyond information sharing.

Ownership

There was generally high ownership by key partners during the life of the project (though affected by delays in funding and changes in staff), even though the design and formulation phase could have been more participatory. The local governance structures at the level of the Provincial, District and Communal Peoples’ Committees, were found to be well aware of the project’s activities, closely cooperated with the WU and other local government organizations and even provided additional support to some activities.

The WU in the 3 Provinces were actively involved throughout the implementation phase of the project. Decision-making was shared with them in all stages based on work plans (discussed and jointly decided upon). Nonetheless, the PCU often took the lead, which has affected to some extent ownership during implementation and particularly sustainability of those activities that were mainly led by the PCU (such as post training follow-up/technical assistance). As part of the project’s exit strategy, the WU took since August 2005 the lead in organizing training sessions for SHG’s and engaged as of August 2006 in work in expansion areas, i.e., beyond the districts covered by the project (still supported by the project).

The women entrepreneurs have shown the strongest ownership. The SHGs created at the start still exist, periodically meet and have engaged in common activities of both business and social nature. Some enterprises have expanded their business, with examples of sub-groups within the SHG having jointly created group household enterprises. Some of these are evolving into cooperatives, based on the recognition that formalization enables enterprises to benefit from certain incentives or is a precondition for common trademark etc.

It is evident that there are variations in terms of the degree in which enterprise performance has been affected by the support (“champions” were found particularly among the fish sauce and rice wine producers). However, overall the target group has ‘internalized’ the SHG and also sub-group linkages within the SHG are seen as an effort that is their own and not necessarily as an approach brought and sustained by outside actors.

Impact

Taking into consideration the development objective, it is likely that the project effects beyond the project target group will materialize. At a more general level, the project has created a model for the project Provinces on how to promote micro-scale businesses. The model was appreciated by the PPCs. There is clear indication that apart from expanding the project activities with the available Government resources, PPCs will use the project

model also in other externally funded projects. Because of the concrete results, the project increased awareness of the higher decision-makers on the importance of micro-enterprises as a strategy - and women's role in job creation - to alleviate poverty at the community level. They are interested also to use the model in other sectors. It reformed thinking of people at the decision-making and operational level

The project exceeded expectations in quantitative terms, apart from output 3. It had tangible benefits in terms of revenue, work environment etc. It made a difference for the household businesses included in the project activities, especially those for whom the business activity is their only source of revenue (such as single headed households). The data emanating from the last business review further substantiate the project's outcome.

Both the financial and social benefits are considered important for women in a rural context. The benefits had a wider overall effect on them beyond the business (building confidence; providing for safety net for social emergencies through a group fund; improving the quality of their lives; reducing support needed from children to fetch wood etc.). The results also generated the interest of other women entrepreneurs in their vicinity (outside the existing SHGs). There was no explicit plan how to deal with new interest beyond the created SHGs in the selected districts.

Technology improvements had a demonstration effect and generated business initiatives beyond the level of the immediate users (such as the smokeless stove' construction becoming a new business activity in some district).

The WU in the three Provinces is now taking initiatives to expand outreach to generate wider impact. Expansion plans focus for now more on covering new districts rather than supporting additional women entrepreneurs in the already selected districts outside the SHGs. The pool of trainers and the training materials are available for the expansion work and can also be used in other programmes. PPC/DPC's are keen to help secure additional funding to enhance the benefits beyond the project's achievements.

Sustainability

The project has the potential to become sustainable. The exit strategy put the WU in the 'driver's seat', but it is rather early to assess the achievements in the project expansion areas. There is no doubt about WU's ability to mobilize entrepreneurs and foster the creation of SHGs. There is however a risk that the duration of the training programmes is reduced to lesser days (also depending on the continued availability of trainers and their willingness to offer services at reduced or no fees), thus possibly also affecting the quality and effectiveness of the training. Availability of adequate WU's operational budget to carry out the field work targeted at promoting micro enterprise development and expansion is also a condition affecting continued longer-term benefits. The vast geographical coverage dilutes resources thus reducing the likelihood of sustainability.

Technical and marketing advice at the plant level (post-training support) facilitated by the project was appreciated by the target group. There is a concern how to continue such assistance without external resources (the ability of micro enterprises, even as a group, to pay for such support can be questioned, even if they should share in the cost for such hands-on advice). Productivity improvement and market development will need to

continue to be addressed jointly. There is scope for deepening market development support to ensure that better/new/more products are sold. Longer-term prospects for products now emanating from micro-enterprises need to be considered, as competition from domestic and imported industrially produced goods will likely become fiercer over time.

With a view to help the WU partners prepare for taking over the flow of activities technically, financially and managerially, the first steps towards implementing the exit strategy were taken in August 2005. In addition, sustainability plan preparation which started in 2006 culminated in the idea to hold “way forward” workshops now planned to be organized during January 2007 in each of the 3 Provinces. This is a good initiative, expected to result in plans focused on the financial and economic sustainability aspects, albeit being a long process. As its results are not available at this point in time, the evaluation mission is not in a position to assess the sustainability plans that will be formulated by the WU with the support of the project. It is regrettable that these workshops are held rather late in the project life.

It is recognized that the time to reach full sustainability (project duration) was short, requiring not only building in sustainability aspects more explicitly into project design, but also establishing longer partnerships with the WUs as well as synergies with related donor programmes (including the bilateral programmes of Finland).

The establishment of stronger linkages of SHGs with other support schemes related to income creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and women empowerment (local/donor support) is expected to contribute to sustaining the positive outcomes of the project. These initiatives will be able to use the SHGs as platform for their respective activities, complementary to the support provided by the project.

Finally, it is unlikely that full cost-recovery of the RRC operation can be achieved, also considering current indications of demand for the only RRC in place so far. There seems potential for intensifying the use of the existing premises in Ha Tinh and for ensuring active use of the ones under preparation in the two other Provinces by offering courses that respond to existing needs in the respective regions (such as restaurant management), which will require adequate resources for this purpose. In this respect, it will be important to assign trainers (selected from those trained by the project) to develop and run RRC's training courses. More intensified use of the RRC to achieve full cost-recovery requires development of a specific strategy and action plan, which could be included as part of the sustainability plans.

Recommendations

The evaluation's recommendations are categorized into three interrelated priorities pertaining to (1) the completion of the current project; (2) its consolidation and (3) its replication.

1. Completion of current project operations

The evaluation supports the idea of holding "way forward" workshops, already included in the project's Jan-March 2007 work plan. In support of the forthcoming sustainability plans that will be prepared by the WU in each of the three Provinces and that will be presented at the final TPR, the evaluation mission recommends that the project team:

(i) Ensures that WU partners in each of the Provinces:

- are in position to use the MIS;
- know how to operate the equipment purchased for the RRC;
- take over full responsibility for managing the lease-purchase scheme.

It is for the TPR to decide on the most appropriate and equitable way to transfer the project equipment among the three Provinces.

(ii) Prepares for the final TPR a reliable estimate of total expenditures up to the end of the project (31 March 2007) and thus of the expected balance of funds. The mission proposes this balance to be utilized for the organization of a marketing event by the WU in each of the three Provinces to stimulate exposure of products and to promote linkages with potential new buyers.

The balance should be equally divided among the WU in the three Provinces. The events are recommended to be sequenced (not at exactly same time) and may require the return mission of the local marketing expert who could assist the WUs in preparing the event but should not engage in organizing the event on their behalf. Depending on the views of the WUs on the most appropriate timing for this market promotion activity, some flexibility may be called for as regards the closing date of the project. As and when needed, a limited extension of the project duration may be considered for a period of maximum two months (up to 31 May 2007 latest), without increase in the current total budget.

2. Consolidation of project achievements (minimum scenario for extension)

Even though the project has clearly achieved results, there is the danger of losing its demonstration effects at the level of the existing beneficiaries and of not fully using its potential to reach out to other women entrepreneurs interested in receiving similar hands-on support.

The evaluation team thus recommends a consolidation phase of the project covering a period of about 18 months to ensure that the benefits of the project are solidified and spread out to a larger group of beneficiaries across each of the provinces (in the vicinity of the existing SHG's and beyond). Focus is proposed to be on an area of support needed and welcomed by the target group, namely hands-on technical and marketing/market

development expertise (local). Enterprises of this size in rural areas cannot afford to fully pay for such assistance themselves, yet the support can make a difference in the performance and gradual upgrading of their businesses.

The approach during the consolidation phase would not be identical to the main phase now almost completed. Requests for the assistance will have to emanate from the existing and new SHGs/subgroups/group household enterprises/cooperatives formed by women entrepreneurs. In line with the exit strategy in which the project already engaged, each Provincial WU will be responsible for SHG formation and for organizing the training of the target groups. The cost of technical and marketing/market development expertise needed in post-training follow-up would be covered using a fund to be established, using external and local financial resources according to cost-sharing principles.

This next phase would be characterized by local partners taking over and also expanding the outreach of the efforts undertaken under Phase II, with a reduced external participation and contribution compared to Phase II. Overall local efforts are thus not expected to diminish but rather increase, though external support would be reduced and phased out. In this respect, local partners would take over day-to-day management of activities related to mobilization of SHG's, organization of training, cost-sharing of follow-up support as well as active use of the RRC facilities. The external (project) contribution would go particularly towards follow-up support to SHGs and spin-off subgroups/household enterprises and cooperatives and also cover roving management and monitoring expertise.

The details of the strategy and interventions during the consolidation phase would have to be described in the form of a full fledged project extension document (to be formulated in a participatory manner with the three WU), as well as, subsequently, in a MOU with those stakeholders who should take over the management of activities. The same applies to the budget required for the consolidation phase, which is estimated to remain limited (probably around 25-30% of the current total). This document would also include the main features of the fund (type of activities supported; ceiling per request; format of requests; submission/review/decision making/monitoring and evaluation procedures etc.) as well the overall implementation arrangements of the project extension.

It is proposed that the operations of such consolidation phase are planned and conducted in each of the three Provinces by a steering group involving relevant stakeholders (WU as well as provincial industrial service centres, supported by roving international/regional expertise acting as project coordinator). The latter would come to the Provinces 3 to 4 times per year to take part in decision making on the use of the fund based on analysis of requests from the target groups, review of progress and discussion on deepening of cooperation with and of potential for collaborative funding emanating from other projects within each Province.

3. Project replication

As recommended earlier (see also IP evaluation mission report, 2005), after a first pilot experience in North Viet Nam followed by two projects in Central Viet Nam, the time has come for the relevant authorities to develop a strategy for replication elsewhere in Viet Nam, taking into consideration lessons learned. The key actors in this respect are the

Central WU and MPI, who can involve also other organizations such as the Rural Industries Development Department of the Ministry of Industry and ASMED, as well as potentially interested PPCs.

Based on the results of the above discussions and decisions made for follow-up, the next step would be to seek sources of funding at the level of Central and Provincial Government using existing programmes as well as to contact donors to seek their interest. The main actors to this end are the Central WU, MPI/FERD and interested PPCs.

Lessons learned

A number of lessons can be learned from this project, in particular:

- Sustainability aspects (such as inclusion of an exit strategy; organizational and management capacity assessment and capacity building of all partners included in implementation; qualitative indicators to measure success; participatory approach) need to be build into project design and implementation, placing sufficient emphasis on ensuring that activities supported will continue after the project support ends;
- Being over ambitious in terms of geographic coverage and time frame severely reduces chances for sustainability of interventions;
- Risk aversion of micro enterprises implies that it takes time to change their way of doing business; such socio-cultural aspects need to be considered in the design and implementation of similar projects, such as by allowing for more time to introduce changes;
- Project formulation needs to be truly participatory (design workshops at different levels) to ensure good understanding of and required commitment to the project at the level of local counterpart organizations and beneficiaries;
- When different sections of UNIDO are planned to be involved in project implementation, it is advisable that all take active part in the project design stage;
- In case of large time span between the preparation and the final approval of a project document, it is necessary to adjust/redesign the project document with the key partner organizations during the inception phase. The results of a project's inception phase (inception report) should then be reflected in a formally approved project amendment at the level of project Steering Committee/TPR;
- UNIDO and project donor(s) should at the very start of the project agree in writing (e.g. as part of the project document) on overall project operation procedures (such as reporting formats; budget information; frequency of reporting); different practices and expectations need to be aligned at the start of a project;
- In projects of this relatively small size, donors should avoid payment in installments, which, in case of delays in payment compared to the initial schedule, affects project implementation;
- Capacity building should focus on assisting the counterparts in the agreed upon activities and be careful not to carry out the activities on their behalf;
- For the design and implementation of ToT type of interventions, the practices applied by locally/donor funded programmes with regard to fees paid for trainers,

etc. should be investigated beforehand, to which project practices are recommended to be aligned where feasible.

- RRC type infrastructure should be linked where possible to existing vocational training centres engaged in food/food processing related training in order to enhance sustainability and to avoid sub utilization of equipment and infrastructure;
- If there is no mid-term evaluation foreseen in a project, it is advisable to conduct and have the results of the final evaluation at least six months prior to the planned end of the project.

1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

This evaluation assesses the Entrepreneurship Development Programme for Women in Food Processing in Central Viet Nam (Phase II) in terms of:

- the relevance of its objectives within the context of Viet Nam and UNIDO's Integrated Programme in Viet Nam;
- the efficiency of its implementation as regards quantity, quality, cost and timeliness of UNIDO and counterpart inputs/activities;
- its achievements concerning outputs, outcomes and impact;
- lessons learned in view of its possible replication.

The independent assessment, involving Vietnamese counterparts, the donor and UNIDO, takes stock of progress to date and extracts lessons. The evaluation was conducted in compliance with UNIDO evaluation policy. The summary of the Terms of Reference of this evaluation is attached as Annex I.

The fieldwork was carried out from 3 – 12 January 2007 by a team consisting of Mr. Tran Quoc Trung (consultant representing the Government of Viet Nam), Mr. Pirkko Poutiainen (consultant, representing the donor) and Ms. Helena van Oyen (consultant, team leader).

Considering the timing of the project's Tri-Partite Review (TPR) meeting on 7 February 2007 and as requested by UNIDO, the evaluation team submitted on 27 January 2007 an interim report with the mission's main findings, conclusions and recommendations. The report was among the documents to be discussed during the final TPR. The current report constitutes the full report of the evaluation team.

1.2 Methodology of the evaluation

The team collected and analyzed project specific documentation, such as the project document, progress reports, consultants' reports, minutes of review meetings. Reporting on project activities was found to be extensive and self-evaluation reports provided detailed information on progress, also based on the project monitoring system put in place.

Interviews were conducted both at UNIDO Headquarters (Vienna) and in Viet Nam. Annex I includes the mission programme and the list of organizations and persons met. At the end of the mission (12 January 2007), the preliminary conclusions and recommendations were shared in a meeting with the donor, as well as in a meeting with representatives of the key counterpart organizations, the project team and the UNIDO Office in Hanoi. This provided an opportunity for receiving feedback on the preliminary findings of the mission.

Observations received on the draft interim report during a debriefing of the team leader in Vienna (22/23 January 2007) were discussed within the team prior to finalization of the team's interim report. The team also reviewed comments of the UNIDO HQ project manager as well as of (non specified) participants in the TPR meeting (cf. email dated 15 February to the team) and reflected these, where considered appropriate, in the current final report.

1.3 Structure of the evaluation report

This report presents the findings of the evaluation team in line with the project cycle logic (identification/design; funding; implementation), based on a set of evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and ownership. The report follows the following structure: after a general description of the project and the country context (Chapter 2), an assessment is made of the design stage (Chapter 3) and of the funding process and expenditure status to date (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 analyzes the implementation of the project along the lines of the evaluation criteria. The conclusions on the overall implementation of the project are presented in Chapter 6 which highlights its strong and weak points. The recommendations and lessons learned are presented at the beginning of the report, in accordance with the UNIDO format for reporting.

2

Summary of the project and country situation

2.1 Project background

The project has been developed, following a pilot experience in Northern Viet Nam targeting women entrepreneurs in food processing in the period 1995-1999 (“Pilot training programme for women entrepreneurs in food processing in Northern Viet Nam”, funded by the Government of Belgium). Based on the request of the GoV to extend such training to other Provinces, a larger scale project proposal was developed in the year 2000, aimed at covering six Provinces in Central Viet Nam.

Based on availability of funding (Japan and Belgium), a first project in Central Viet Nam (Phase I) was implemented in the Provinces of Da Nang, Quang Nam and Hue between 2001 and 2005. The second phase, which covered Ha Tinh, Quang Tri and Quang Binh Provinces, was funded by Finland and is the project covered by the current evaluation.

The Phase II project overlapped with Phase I during the first year of Phase II operations.

2.2 Project summary

Table 2 (page 4) provides a short overview of the main structure of the project. The key milestones during the project cycle are described in Table 3 (page 5).

Table 2: Snapshot overview of the project structure

Development Objective: <i>increased contribution of women entrepreneurs in food processing sector to the socio-economic development in Central Viet Nam in order to reduce poverty</i>		
Indicators: <i>approx. 650 businesses improves; number of new businesses; number of jobs created disaggregated by sex</i>		
Duration: <i>Three years (2004-2007)</i>	Amount: <i>Euros 929,004.29 (excl. agency support cost)</i>	
Planned starting date: <i>First quarter of 2004</i>	Actual starting date: <i>March 2004</i>	
Government Cooperating Agency: <i>Women's Union of Ha Tinh</i>	Project location: <i>Three provinces in Central Viet Nam: Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tri</i>	
Immediate Objective: <i>Increased income of small-scale food processing entrepreneurs, particularly women</i>		
Indicator: <i>income of entrepreneurs increased by 10-15% on average</i>		
Outputs	Activities	Performance indicators of outputs
<i>1. Enterprises have been expanded, are more efficient and viable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 gather good practices in enterprise development from other projects, analyze and assess them, and incorporate suitable initiatives into the project operations 1.2 carry out training needs assessment and prepare baseline 1.3 prepare training manual 1.4 select trainers and trainees 1.5 train trainers 1.6 train enterprise owners 1.7 set up/strengthen existing self-help groups, provide services to them 1.8 facilitate trainees' access to credit through training and establishing partnerships with credit institutions/projects 1.9 design follow-up service mechanisms and provide services to entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profit/net revenue of enterprises on average increased Production output of enterprises on average increased Enterprises have invested at a rate of approximately 20% in equipment and production processes Enterprises wishing to expand and grow have obtained credit
<i>2. Capacities of counterparts (three WUs) have been strengthened in providing enterprise development services in (small-scale) food processing sector</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 involve WU staff/leaders in daily project implementation 2.2 provide on-the-job training/mentoring to WU staff/leaders 2.3 introduce UNIDO procedures, rules and regulations 2.4 prepare a work plan 2.5 sign memorandum of understanding with partner organizations/projects 2.6 organize staff and other meetings as per project document 2.7 prepare a monitoring system, monitor activities 2.8 maintain collaboration with authorities and partner organizations 2.9 prepare progress and other reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-15 WU employees/leaders have been trained 40-50 trainers have been trained disaggregated by sex
<i>3. RRC and mobile technology are operational</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 establish RRC/PCU 3.2 procure equipment 3.3 train RRC staff to operate centre 3.4 prepare guidelines to operate RRC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30-35 courses conducted in RRC or at other facilities using mobile project equipment

Table 3: Project cycle milestones

Timing	Milestone
2001/2003	Formulation process (partially overlapping with Phase I project)
23/07/2003	Trust Fund Agreement signed
16/09/2003	First PAD printed (receipt of installment I)
02/03/2004	Final Project document signed
03/2004	Start of project implementation (inception mission)
18/05/2004	Technical Review Meeting
03/2005	Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
11/03/2005	First Project Steering Committee (PSC)
26/04/2005	First Tripartite Review Meeting (TPR)
21/09/2005	Receipt of installment II
30/09/2005	Second Project Steering Committee (PSC)
04/2006	Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
27/04/2006	Second Tripartite Review Meeting (TPR)
10/2006	Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
30/10/2006	Third Project Steering Committee (PSC)
01/2007	Independent Evaluation mission

2.3 Country context

2.3.1 Overall situation of the country

After more than twenty years of reforms, Viet Nam is seen as one of the most successful economies in transition, its economy having experienced high economic growth rates by on average 7.6 percent annually over the 1991-2006. More importantly, under the wave of economic growth, the poverty incidence dropped dramatically from 58 percent of the population in 1993 to 37 percent in 1998 and 19.5 percent in 2004. Around 20 million people were lifted out of absolute poverty over the period 1993 – 2004 and also equality gradually improved (SRV 2005 and GSO, 2006b). These achievements have been made by bringing into full play the country's available resources, with active participation of all people across economic sectors. Driven by private investment, real GDP growth is expected to be further enhanced by Viet Nam's recent WTO membership.

The private sector has developed at a remarkable pace in terms of both the number and performance of enterprises. The highly dynamic private enterprises (roughly 95% of them are small and medium enterprises²) created about 28% of the total of 7.5 million new jobs in the period 2000-2005 (SRV, 2006). Roughly every household runs a small business of one kind or the other. The business development has also been one of the main forces behind rapid poverty reduction and economic growth (VDR, 2005).

Viet Nam has also achieved significant success in promoting gender equity and in empowering women. Gender disparities in education and employment have been reduced and the participation of women in leadership and management increased. Constituting 51% of the population, women account for 48.2% of total labour force and contribute strategically to the socio-economic development of the country. The gender related

² Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Viet Nam are defined as businesses and production establishments that have registered capital of less than VND 10 billion (about USD 625,000) or an average number of annual permanent employees of less than 300 or both.

development index (GDI) of Viet Nam increased from 0.668 in 1998 to 0.708 in 2004 (SRV, 2005 and UNDP, 2006).

However, Viet Nam remains among Asia's poorest countries with a low per capita income (GDP per capita of just around US\$ 720 in the year 2006) and, despite the above-mentioned achievements, the poverty rate is still high, especially in rural areas: with some 95% of the poor living in rural areas, 25% of its rural population lives below the poverty line in 2004 (GSO, 2006a). UNDP's Human Development Index (2006) ranks Viet Nam as 109 out of 177 countries (UNDP, 2006).

In spite of progress, obstacles to the promotion of gender equality in the sphere of policy formulation and implementation remain and persisting traditional practices and attitudes prevent women from achieving gender equality. This is reflected in gender inequality in income; unequal access to health, education, vocational and technical training; gender differences in highly skilled and professional labour market participation, leadership and participation of social activities; unequal distribution of the burden of domestic work, child care and caring for other family members. Such differences are greatest in rural areas, in poorer households and amongst ethnic minorities. This means that the benefits of economic development are not shared equally between women and men.

The Government thus keeps a strong focus on poverty reduction efforts aimed at promoting more inclusive and sustainable development and promoting gender equality in education, employment, health and leadership (SRV 2006 and EIU, 2006).

2.3.2 Major changes in legal framework conditions

Liberalization of the business environment and increased integration into the world economy has been key themes in Viet Nam's open door policy since 1986. Most notably, the central government has made great efforts in promoting and facilitating the development of the private sector by promulgating and implementing a number of business and investment promotion laws since early 1990s, simplifying the business registration procedures for new private enterprises and eliminating around 160 business licenses since 2000. Furthermore, trade policy has changed significantly from inward-oriented import substitution toward outward-orientation. In addition, the government has recently revised important laws and initiated regulations and programs supporting business development, promoting gender equity and empowering women as presented in Box 1 next page.

Box 1: Recent important changes in legal framework conditions

- Enterprise Law 2005 and Investment Law 2005 were approved on 29 November 2005 and came into effect on 1 July 2006. The laws set up the leveled playing field including one business registration system for all investors and the same rights for both domestic and foreign investors. More specifically, these laws: simplify the business and investment registration procedures; provide more freedom to doing business/investing; create a more transparent business environment by furthering administrative reforms; address issues related to national treatments, most favorite nations and WTO; and improve corporate governance practices.
- The GoV promulgated Decree No. 134/2004/ND-CP on 09 June 2004 on promotion of rural industries and Decree No. 66/2006/ND-CP on 07 July 2006 on development of rural trades. Their objectives are to promote and support the development of rural industries and trades through providing rural extension services and implementing incentives for rural industrial development.
- Prime Minister promulgated Decision No. 236/2006/QD-TTg on 23 October 2006 on approval of the five-year SME development plan 2006 - 2010. The overall objectives of the plan are to boost the rate of SME development, create a healthy competition environment, strengthen the national competitiveness, as SMEs are expected to contribute more and more to the economic growth of the country. The plan of action for the development of SMEs is endorsed by Decree No. 90/2001/ND-CP on 23 November 2001 and by Prime Minister Decision No. 94/2002/QD-TTg on 17 July 2002 which defines the Government's Programme of Action for implementation of the Resolution of the Fifth Plenum of the Party Central Committee, IXth Congress on further renovating, developing, and raising the efficiency of the collective economy; renovating mechanisms and policies for encouraging and creating the conditions for the development of the private economy.
- A National Strategy for the Advancement of Women by 2010 was approved by the Prime Minister in Decision No. 19/2002/QD-TTg on 21 January 2002. It plays a crucial role in the Government's overall framework to achieve and sustain gender equality targets. The overall goal of the strategy is to improve the quality of women's material and spiritual life, as well as establishing the conditions necessary for women to experience their fundamental rights, and to fully and equally participate in and benefit from all aspects of political, economic, cultural and social life. The implementation of the strategy involves the coordination and support of key line ministries.
- The GoV promulgated Decree No. 19/2003/ND-CP on 7 March 2003 regulating responsibilities of government agencies to support and promote the participation of women in governance. In addition, the GoV launched in August 2004 a provincial process where gender will be mainstreamed into all GoV projects, programmes and plans.
- The Gender Equality Law was approved on 22 November 2006 and will come into effect on 1 July 2007. The purpose of the new law is to institutionalize national policies on gender equality, to empower women and to reduce the gender gap and gender related discriminations.

2.3.3 Overall socio-economic development in Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tri

Despite the remarkable socio-economic development achieved by Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tri Provinces over the last few years, these provinces are still very poor, underdeveloped and continue to heavily rely on the support from the central government. These provinces are located in the North Central Coast region where the poverty rate is much higher than that of the whole country, with 36.4% of the rural population living below the poverty line compared with 25% of the rural population of the whole country in 2004 (GSO, 2006a). Around 85% of the population of these provinces lives in the rural areas and nearly 75% of total expenditures of local state budget of three provinces is funded by the central state budget (see Table 4)

Table 4: General socio-economic data in Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tri, 2005

Description	Ha Tinh	Quang Binh	Quang Tri
Area (sq. km)	6055.6	8051.8	4745.7
Population (thousand person)	1300.9	842.2	621.7
Percentage of rural population (%)	88.9	86.0	75.5
Population density (person/sq. km)	215	105	131
Share of allocation from central state budget to local state budget (as a percentage of local state budget expenditure)	75.9	69.0	78.6
Industrial growth rate over the period 2001-2005 (%)	16.2	17.7	18.3
Formally registered and operated enterprises by 31/12/04:			
Number of enterprises (enterprise)	549	750	481
Employment of enterprises (person)	22215	30149	18535
Capital of enterprises (billion of dong)	2883	4478	3329

Source: GSO 2005 and GSO 2006b

In terms of private sector dynamism and growth as measured by the Provincial Competitiveness Index (PCI)³, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tri Provinces score low to average, ranking respectively 59, 48 and 34 out of 64 provinces and cities in 2006 (VNCI, 2006). These provinces only account for nearly 0.5% of total industrial gross output and 1.9% of total number of formal registered and operated enterprises of the whole country. The non-farm sector in the North Central Coast region is slightly below the national average, with 35.6% of households in the region involved in non-farm household enterprises in comparison with 38.4% of the whole country in 2004 (GSO, 2006a).

³ The PCI was developed by the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) and the Viet Nam Competitiveness Initiative - VNCI (resulting in surveys in 2005 and 2006) to assess and rank provincial governments by their regulatory environments for private sector development. In 2006, the PCI is composed of ten sub-indices that capture key dimensions of the local business environment that can be directly influenced by the actions and attitudes of provincial officials. VNCI is an economic growth project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to improve the competitiveness of SMEs in Viet Nam

3

Project identification and formulation

Regarding the design stage of this Phase II project, the key questions are to which extent:

- (i) a participatory project identification process was instrumental in selecting problem areas and counterparts requiring technical cooperation support;
- (ii) the project had a clear thematically focused development objective, the attainment of which can be determined by a set of verifiable indicators;
- (iii) the project was formulated based on the logical framework approach and included appropriate output and outcome indicators.

3.1 Assessment of the identification and formulation process

As explained in Section 2.1, the project under review (entitled Phase II) followed a similar approach as the first project in Central Viet Nam (Phase I), the support in this region being in turn a successor effort of a pilot experience in Northern Viet Nam.

The project identification and formulation as a process was not sufficiently participatory, with no participatory workshops foreseen as part of the project formulation. There were preparatory consultations, but as there was a large time span between these initial consultations and the final approval of the project document, there was a need for renewed discussions on the basis of a (by then approved) project document. During the time that lapsed, there were also some staff changes, implying that part of the institutional memory was lost. In this respect, PWU in one of the Provinces said that they reviewed the original document but did not fully understand the implications. It also led to some initial resistance towards agency execution. Thereafter thorough discussions were held during the Inception Phase and discrepancies were clarified. This required an extra effort and time from the PCU at the early stages of the project. Agency execution was not found to have been an issue of discussion during the rest of the project life

The justification of the project refers only to the potential for replication from Phase I to Phase II. Accordingly, the project document for Phase II includes the same elements as Phase I and was taken as given. Had the project been expanded in the same geographical area as Phase I, this formulation process would have been possibly sufficient. However, when expanding to a completely new geographical area (new Provinces) with new implementing partners, the formulation process should have been as if the project had been a new project with sufficient time for dialogue and situation analysis with the partners.

Since Phases I and II ran parallel in the beginning of the project and as the documents were drafted in the same period (2000), the lessons learned from the Phase I were not explicitly included in the project document of Phase II. The project document also refers to the lessons learned during the pilot phase. Although there was no separate final evaluation for the Phase I project, the project was reviewed within the context of the evaluation of the UNIDO Integrated Programme (March 2005).

During the Inception Phase thorough consultations were made on the contents of the project. For example, the NPM of Phase I discussed with PWUs their experiences and lessons learned. The baseline survey and TNA were participatory processes. Some adjustments were made during the Inception Phase, but not formalized as a revised project document to reflect more explicitly the lessons learned from the Phase I and the Inception Phase.

3.2 Assessment of the project design

3.2.1 General observations

In general, the stated objectives addressed the problems identified and real needs of the target beneficiaries. The problem analysis (addressing regional imbalance; poverty; unemployment of women etc.) and project purpose (women's enterprise development through food processing) can be considered highly relevant. It reflected the Government's priorities (e.g. poverty reduction; MDGs; sectoral plans) and supported the implementation of the socio-economic development plans and plan of action for women and gender equality at national and local levels. The design also reflected the real needs of female entrepreneurs as a target group (enterprise related constraints; women's heavy workload; lack of trainers; limited training opportunities for women; low salaries of women; women's limited access to land use). Selecting food processing is justified and responds to the real needs of target beneficiaries because of the potential for high added value for products and women being traditionally involved in food processing. Description of project rationale, context and justification, contributed to the overall quality of the logical framework, as the general background information was complemented by detailed information, justifying the approach adopted.

The project design was based on continuity, taking advantage of the previous phase as source of expertise, training methodology, materials and learning opportunities. Explicit planning of the baseline survey and of the training needs assessment was appropriate in order to base project activities on real needs and priorities. A monitoring system was envisaged to measure results only at the enterprise level and was able to produce thorough information on the progress of the enterprises in quantitative and monetary terms. However, the system did not systematically monitor e.g. the changes in the capacity of the counterparts, even though capacity building was one of the main elements of the project. Gathering of baseline data (organizational assessment; management capacity) was not foreseen against which the progress could have been measured. Monitoring in the field, apart from enterprise level data collection, was based on ad hoc visits by the project personnel (even though very regular) as part of their constant support. It provided information flow in between the field and the project office, but was not systematized.

The monitoring system was based on quantitative indicators and approximate targets were set already in the project document (logical framework). During implementation the project went far beyond the estimated target, particularly after the change in the approach when the decisions were made by the PWUs. This had both positive and negative

implications which will be explained further below. It seems that the enthusiasm of the PWUs to take control of the project led to rapid expansion, and that the alternatives available within the project framework (e.g. to concentrate on assisting further the enterprises which were already within the project support) were not thoroughly discussed and implications analyzed.

The selection of a key partner organization with large membership and strong outreach (provincial, district, commune levels) contributed to impact, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The targeted location of the PCU in WU premises was appropriate to increase sustainability and for building the capacity of the WU as an organization. The WU is a political organization but has also a broad development mandate. Its membership in the rural areas of the project is estimated to be around 70%.

Cooperation and collaboration with relevant organizations and other donor supported projects was also appropriately envisaged. However, no explicit linkage was envisaged in the project document with other components/projects within the context of the UNIDO IP. In addition, no activity was envisaged in the design to discuss scope for replication in the current Provinces and possibly to other provinces (post project strategy), and no explicit role was foreseen for national level Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) regarding replication.

3.2.2 Logical framework

The project design has a clearly and thematically focused development objective. However, there are some weaknesses in the logical framework. The formulation and linkage between the development objective, immediate objective/purpose and outputs is not fully coherent. The development objective, immediate objective and its indicators as well as output 1 place too much emphasis on the increased income (all income-oriented). The purpose of the project is more than just to ensure increased income, but this is not reflected at the objective levels.

In a way, the project is first and foremost a capacity and institution building project. The purpose evidently is that, at the end of the project, the assisted enterprises are viable, and that there is a support mechanism to continue giving required assistance both to the assisted enterprises and to expand to new areas (i.e., that the initiated activities are sustainable). This requires capacity building of both the enterprises and the support mechanisms. These elements are not reflected at the level of the immediate objective and its indicators. The immediate objective should have addressed both the viability of the small-scale food processing enterprises and availability of sustainable support mechanisms through capacity building. Alternatively, the intended outcome could have been described under more than one immediate objective.

The development objective clearly refers to socio-economic development and poverty reduction which cannot be measured only with quantitative indicators. Indicators could have included references to socio-economic-development plans, Government budget allocations for women's small-scale business development, and changes in Government contribution to the project at the level of the Provinces.

The immediate objective cannot be measured by increased income only but also by reflecting the changes in the capacity. In addition, there are no indicators measuring sustainability of either the enterprises or the support mechanisms. Changes in the income are one indicator of increased capacity of enterprises, but viability needs to be measured also with qualitative indicators. A project of this nature should not be seen solely as a

business development project, but as a project having wider development objectives (as in fact illustrated by the impact this project has generated beyond the business. These elements could have been explicitly reflected in the logical framework.

Output 1 is quite similar to the immediate objective with similar indicators. In addition to efficiency, viability and rate of expansion, Output 1 could have reflected more the expected changes in the capacity of enterprises and other qualitative changes, and measured accordingly.

As few marketing and technical support services exist in the Provinces covered by the project -- essential for business development, growth and survival -- WU became a service provider and/or link between WEs and services created by the project (cf. Output 2). The weakest link in the design is that no organizational assessment of the WU as the key implementer/service provider and other Government institutions as service providers was foreseen in the project document, or foreseen during implementation. Strong emphasis regarding needs assessment was at enterprise level. This even though the project document states that institutional capacity of the WU needs considerable strengthening. Capacity building needs of other Government institutions expected to be involved in service delivery were not mentioned in the document. Emphasis was thereby mainly on capacity building of WU. Also, it is to be noted that capacity changes cannot be measured only by the number of persons trained but what they are able to do as a result of the training and how they will utilize the acquired knowledge in practice.

The feasibility of the RRC (Output 3) was not examined in the design, but was taken as given. The RRC was to function as a resource centre and to provide technical food processing skills for entrepreneurs on a cost-recovery basis. No feasibility study regarding cost-recovery was foreseen in the project design. As defined in the logical framework, RRC is a tool and mechanism for capacity building, and should not have been a separate output but a part of Output 2. Its success indicator was defined as a number of trainings organized but did not cover the sustainability of the RRC (e.g. cost recovery).

The geographical coverage (three Provinces; number of target beneficiaries in distant locations from each other) -taking into consideration the limitations in terms of time and resources- is considered too ambitious and indicated a possible risk of quantity over quality in implementation. Selection of the number of Provinces was taken as given. Ha Tinh was selected as a PCU by joint decision of the key partners because it had the best services available at that time.

4

Project funding and expenditures

Following signature of the Trust Fund Agreement, the donor (Finland) made the first installment payment including agency support costs (Euro 500,000) in September 2003; the second one (Euro 550 000), planned for April 2005, was received in September 2005.

Table 5 below gives an overview of the expenditures to date, the implementation rate and the balance as end December 2006, consolidated for the two project allotment holders in respectively UNIDO's Private Sector Development Branch (TE/VIE/04/002) and Agro-industries Branch (TE/VIE/04/A02).

Table 5: Overall budget situation

(as at 21 December 2006; in Euros)

TE/VIE/04/002	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
allocation	182,555.47	251,712.33	308,018.49	117,304.00	859,590.29
expenditure	182,555.47	251,712.81	271,989.28	67,671.91	773,929.47
outstanding obligations (as at 21 Dec 06)				22,014.00	22,014.00
total exp	182,555.47	251,712.81	271,989.28	89,685.91	795,943.47
balance					63,647.82
% spent					92.6%
TE/VIE/04/A02	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
allocation	4,010.20	52,451.69	12,952.11	--	69,414.00
expenditure	4,010.20	52,451.69	12,207.24	--	68,669.13
outstanding obligations (as at 21 Dec 06)				--	--
total exp	4,010.20	52,451.69	12,207.24	--	68,669.13
balance					744.87
% spent					98.9%
GRAND TOTAL					
allocation					929,004.29
expenditure					864,612.60
balance ⁴					64,392.69
% spent					93.1%

A total of 11 budget revisions were done over the period 2004, 2005 up to December 2006 for the main project (TE/VIE/04/002), which covered the vast majority of inputs and activities.

Table 6 next page gives an overview of these budget revisions to date. The total amounts have remained the same, with the exception of an upward revision by Euro 38,346 in

⁴ not taking into account project activities planned for period Jan-March 2007

January 2005 when, based on an instruction of UNIDO's Funds Mobilization Branch as of 5/01/2005, the increase was reflected in a budget revision done to reflect US\$/Euro exchange rate differences.

Table 6: Budget revisions and their frequency

Number/date of revision	TF/VIE/04/002 (Euro)	TF/VIE/04/A02 (Euro)	Comments
Revision A –27/02/04	403, 932	--	Initial budget
Revision B – 16/06/04	334, 518	69,414	Creation of sub-allotment project TF/VIE/04/A02 No further details collected by the evaluation team on the subsequent revisions under TF/VIE/04/A02 given its small size (total has not changed over time)
Revision C – 28/07/04	334, 518		
Revision D – 19/01/05	372,864		Upward revision by Euro38,345 (\$/Euro exchanges rate differences as per instruction from Funds Mobilization Branch
Revision E – 17/05/05	372,864		
Revision F – 23/08/05	372,864		
Revision G – 22/09/05	387,864		Advance from Installment II (received in 09/05) to enable participation of CTA in Steering Committee Meeting of 29.09.05
Revision H – 04/10/05	859,590		Revision reflecting installment II
Revision I – 22/11/05	859,590		
Revision J – 13/04/06	859,590		
Revision K – 04/09/06	859,590		
Revision L – 08/12/06	859,590		

As regards overall project funding, whereas the total allocation has been adequate given the planned outcomes, the delay of some six months in the payment of the second installment required some “acrobatics” in project management to ensure continuity in project operations. When postponing installment payments, the implication of such delays on project activities needs to be taking into consideration (such as the risk of losing project staff if funding for planned contract extensions is not available).

Concerning expenditures, reference is made to the assessment based on the efficiency criterion (see Section 5.2).

5

Implementation

5.1 Achievements by output

This section describes the achievements under each of the three outputs compared to the planned activities, based on data consolidated by the PCU (summary as of 10 January 2007) as well as using the most recent business review report (report dated 15.01.2007) made available to the evaluation team. These reports provide facts and figures of relevance for the measurement of output and outcome indicators.

Output 1

Enterprises have been expanded, are more efficient and viable

Planned/realized

Baseline situation: available studies confirmed that, in general, women run businesses (particularly those operating in rural settings such as the selected Provinces in Central Viet Nam) have limited access to business training, appropriate technology, credit etc.; they work significantly more hours than men, earn/are paid less and face discrimination in the business environment (such as difficulties in the implementation of land use certificates). Existing training programmes in Central Viet Nam were found to be mainly of general nature, with no or inadequate attention to food technologies, product development, quality and hygienic aspects of production, typically characterized by informal, household operations.

Planned activities:

- 1.1 gather good practices in enterprise development from other projects, analyse and assess them, and incorporate suitable initiatives into the project operations
- 1.2 carry out training needs assessment and prepare baseline
- 1.3 prepare training manual
- 1.4 select trainers and trainees
- 1.5 train trainers
- 1.6 train enterprise owners
- 1.7 set up/strengthen existing self-help groups, provide services to them
- 1.8 facilitate trainees' access to credit through training and establishing partnerships with credit institutions/projects
- 1.9 design follow-up service mechanisms and provide services to entrepreneurs

Realized activities:

Inception analysis/report; baseline survey (covering 3896 women entrepreneurs/WE in the three Provinces); 13 training needs assessment workshops with participation of total of 1,141 WE; outreach of project over 15 Districts (60 Communes, towns, townships); 60 promotional workshops focused on SHG formation attended by 3907 WE; 80 SHG

organized (28 in Ha Tinh, 39 in Quang Binh and 13 in Quang Tri) with total of 1886 WE members (average of about 23 members per SHG); most SHG formed in areas of fish sauce product group (34) followed by rice paper (13 SHGs) and rice noodle making (12); review and adaptation of available training manuals/preparation of additional "How to" guides adapted to product groups; group leadership training for 160 group leaders of the 80 SHGs; all 1886 WE benefited from field-based entrepreneurial and technical training (221 training modules conducted of which marketing (79), technology (65) and Finance (77); 206 WE assisted in preparing and implementing GHP plans; 844 WE received one-to-one technology assistance (fish sauce) improving quality (colour, smell and shelf-life) – confirmed by microbiological and chemical analysis carried out by FIRI (before and after) – as well as resulting in gain in production time (from 11-12 months to 7-8 months); and 20 trained on sour shrimp making ; 237 WE benefited from marketing, labelling, packaging assistance (particularly SHGs engaged in fish sauce, rice paper, Cu Do) resulting in new packaging, new labels; common labeling; field exposure trips for SHGs and selected enterprises; 451 WE trained under outreach training of RRCs; total of 41 WE (20 in Ha Tinh, 7 in Quang Binh and 14 in Quang Tri) engaged in lease-purchase scheme covering total amount of 93, 415,000 VND disbursed as of end 2006 (average arrears rate as at end 2006: average repayment rate 91.6% (end 2006); 2 food safety awareness/HACCP principles training in each Province conducted by FIRI for 342 restaurant owners/food processors and a similar workshop for 110 Cu Do producers in Ha Tinh; review of GHP (HACCP) for all 80 SGH. Total of 300 participants (of which 156 WE) in Women Entrepreneurship Forum organized by each of the three WUs in 2006; technology demonstrations (two-steamer stoves for rice paper making, 22 WE; "Less-smoke" stoves for rice noodle producers, 4 WE, and mechanization of rice noodle production; 5 WE).; total of 26 demonstration stoves set up of which 15 in Ha Tinh, 9 in Quang Binh and 2 in Quang Tri; additional 76 set up their own stove (demonstration effect) of which 38 in Ha Tinh, 18 in Quang Binh and 20 in Quang Tri.

Work in expansion areas as of August 2006 covered 5 new districts (19 communes) in which 12 promotional workshops were organized attended by 910 WE; 24 SHGs organized covering total of 624 WE; up to January 2007, 149 WE benefited from entrepreneurial and technological field-based training and 120 from marketing, labelling and packaging assistance; 2 took part in technology demonstrations.

Period business reviews of 1763 clients (using the MIS put in place at the start of the project) provide an indication of the evolution in business performance. Recognizing that changes (positive or negative) can certainly not be solely attributed to project support (or lack thereof, in case of negative changes), the data nevertheless provide some interesting information changes in the business over time. As per the last business review (report as at 15.01.07), the *aggregate monthly average sale changes* indicated an average increase of 50.35% compared to baseline measurement. These data -broken down by product group- indicate that it is indeed around this average that the product groups in which the project had the most clients (fish sauce; rice noodle; rice paper) score. As regards *net worth change*, the overall average was a change (increase) of 39.37%. The figures concerning *labour* indicate a slight decrease (overall average of minus 8.07%), showing some reductions in both family and non-family members' employment. As regards fish sauce (the largest client group), the loss (minus 4.34%) is somewhat below the aggregate average; for other larger groups of clients such as rice noodle, rice paper, rice wine and Cu Do, the reported loss is labour is above average (respectively minus 12.36%, 50.32%; 44.14%; 43.79%). Tofu producers reported on the other hand a labour increase of 19.51%. In general, caution is called for to link the labour changes to investments in improved production processes/mechanization. Based on the responses of 28 fish sauce producers, the impact of the *lease-purchase scheme* was valued by them in terms of being able to produce cleaner and safer products, reduce production costs and save in

production time. Increased diversification of products was reported by only a few. The 122 respondents in the rice noodle business valued the scheme (use of leased machine) along the same lines.

Performance indicators

- Profit/net revenue of enterprises on average increased
- Production output of enterprises on average increased
- Enterprises have invested at a rate of approximately 20% in equipment and production processes
- Enterprises wishing to expand and grow have obtained credit

Output 2

Capacities of counterparts (three WUs) have been strengthened in providing enterprise development services in (small-scale) food processing sector

Planned/realized

Baseline situation: in addition to enterprise level constraints (as described under Output 1 above), there was an inadequate number of trained trainers with adequate tools/methodologies and experience in providing practical training to micro-enterprises in the small-scale food processing sector with a view to helping them to upgrade both in terms of business management practices (finance; marketing) as well as technologically (process/product upgrading; quality improvement; compliance with food safety standards). The WUs at the provincial, district and commune levels have a mandate to support women entrepreneurs, but lacked in-house capacity to design and orchestrate support, providing selected services themselves and facilitating the delivery of specialized services offered by other support providers in the vicinity of the target groups.

Planned activities:

- 2.1 involve WU staff/leaders in daily project implementation
- 2.2 provide on-the-job training/mentoring to WU staff/leaders
- 2.3 introduce UNIDO procedures, rules and regulations
- 2.4 prepare a work plan
- 2.5 sign memorandum of understanding with partner organizations/projects
- 2.6 organize staff and other meetings as per project document
- 2.7 prepare a monitoring system, monitor activities
- 2.8 maintain collaboration with authorities and partner organizations
- 2.9 prepare progress and other reports

Realized activities:

90 trainers trained in entrepreneurial and technological training, using training manual of which 36 from WU, 45 from other institutions and 10 project staff; of these 90 trainers 46% are management trainers (90% female); 54% are technology trainers (45% female). 244 WU staff trained to organize SHG of which 92 from original 15 Districts complemented by 154 staff from WU in new districts/communes (including 2 from other institutions); 21 WU staff trained to conduct Group Leadership Training for SHGs including 7 in Ha Tinh, 9 in Quang Binh and 5 in Quang Tri; 80 WU staff familiar with and capable of running Lease Purchase scheme operation; 23 technology trainers capable of assisting WE with GHP and HACCP introduction (training conducted by FIRI) of which 7 trainers additional training and guidance, and are capable to provide one-to-one consultancies, particularly regarding GHP; total of 37 trainers able to provide 'how to' training course in the fields of bakery; peanut candy; Cu Do; sour shrimp); 18 WU staff capable to conduct restaurant management training; field visit of WU officials to Hue,

Danang and HCMC stimulating exposure to course offerings and opportunities for dynamizing the RCC (see output 3); WU officials also accompanied group of 9 entrepreneurs during field trips (cf. output 1).

Performance indicators

- 10-15 WU employees/leaders have been trained
- 40-50 trainers have been trained disaggregated by sex

Output 3

RRC and mobile technology are operational

Planned/realized

Baseline situation: absence of adequate training infrastructure for food processing related training (also serving as model for appropriate set-up of food processing activities, in line with good practice to ensure quality and food safety (GHP and HACCP); food processing training not included in curricula of all vocation training centres in the three Provinces; no organized/centralized services, facilitating easy access of small enterprises in each of the Provinces to business, technical and technological information (including manuals, guides, handbooks) training and advice; interest of WU's to provide comprehensive service offering, targeting women entrepreneurs located in their respective premises.

Planned activities:

- 3.1 establish RRC/PCU
- 3.2 procure equipment
- 3.3 train RRC staff to operate centre
- 3.4 prepare guidelines to operate RRC

Realized activities:

RRC Ha Tinh refurbished in conformity with GHP principles and equipped with training guides, list of trained trainers and relevant machinery for conducting "How to" technology training programmes (in the fields of baking, fish sauce, rice wine, processed meat, tofu, rice noodle, rice paper and Cu Do); 13 training courses organized at the RRC premises/Ha Tinh (of which 10 for ToT and 1 course targeting entrepreneurs); display of RRC equipment at trade fair organized by Ha Tinh WU (March 2006), also to publicize training service offering. Within context of RRC Outreach programme, 2 fish sauce technology trainings were organized (60 WE trained), as well as 13 training sessions on restaurant management (attended by total of 391 WE); mobilization of contribution of 5 m. VND from the District People Committees where the restaurant training was conducted; RRC Quang Tri: contribution mobilized from PPC to convert two existing rooms within WU office premises into an RRC; support of project to purchase machines/equipment – focused on baking, tofu making and meat processing (in part received at time of evaluation); project support for re-tiling and other parts of installation to ensure conformity to GHP principles awaited at the time of the evaluation.

RRC Quang Binh: New WU office building under construction (initially not planned to locate RRC within the new premises, as WU requested a donor – Japan – to support the establishment of Vocational Training Centre for Women); support of project to purchase machines/equipment – focused on baking, tofu making and meat processing (location not decided at the time of the evaluation, depending on the outcome of the request made to Japan - yes/no funding -; in the absence of funding of a dedicated Vocational Training for

Women (in which the RRC was to be integrated), two rooms in the new office building would be allocated to the planned RRC.

In addition to the equipment (fixed/mobile), the WU in the three Provinces have a vast range of materials (training guides and slides) used in the trainings listed under the above-mentioned achievements under the three outputs.

Performance indicators

30-35 courses conducted in RRC or at other facilities using mobile project equipment

5.2 Assessment based on evaluation criteria

5.2.1 Relevance

Did the project correctly address the identified problems and real needs?

The project design, objectives and activities were highly relevant, in line with the strategies, plans, policies and priorities of both the policy makers at all national and provincial levels as regards poverty alleviation and the entrepreneurship development of women in rural areas, the partner organizations and the target beneficiaries (cf. Box 2 and Box 3). It was also fully in line with UNIDO's corporate vision, particularly as regards the Organization's mandate and contributions pertaining to poverty reduction efforts.

The training was based on thorough preparatory work (needs assessment workshops) and filled a gap for the target beneficiaries, who often cited that it was the first time that they received such hands-on training. The packaging of the training content around three modules (Technology, Finance and Marketing) was appropriate, corresponding to the needs of the beneficiaries. Involving local expertise (particularly product specific expertise) in post-training follow-up activities was very important and met the real needs of the target beneficiaries to upgrade their production process and improve their product quality.

Organization of activities through Self Help Groups (SHG), the creation of which was encouraged by the project, was essential for reaching out to a large number of women enterprises across the selected districts. Also, the promotion of collective activities (cooperation among enterprises) through the SHG was essential for such household enterprises to develop and move from informal to formal enterprises.

Whereas in the design of the project some emphasis was placed on linking beneficiaries with credit schemes, access of micro enterprises to credit did not appear to be a major gap to be addressed. Enterprises found financial services in their vicinity (such as using micro-finance schemes managed through the WU) and developed later on also their own self-help group funds. The small lease-purchase scheme introduced by the project has generated some interest, but is not fully used. Training and technical/marketing related post-training advice seems to be most valued by the beneficiaries.

Box 2: National strategies, plans, priorities and policies on poverty reduction, rural industry development and gender equity

- The goals of the Strategy for Socio-Economic Development 2001 – 2010 approved by the IXth National Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam in 2001 are:
 - To increase visibly the efficiency and competitiveness of products, enterprises and the economy;
 - To eliminate the category of hungry households, and reduce quickly the number of poor households.
- The major tasks and development directions of the Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plans 2001 - 2005 and 2006 - 2010 approved by National Assembly of Viet Nam in 2001 and 2006 respectively are:
 - To improve the quality of human resources with appropriate structures;
 - To effectively address pressing social problems by creating more jobs, reducing unemployment in urban areas as well as underemployment in rural areas, alleviating hunger and reducing poverty;
 - To implement social progress and equity and promote gender equity in education, employment, health and leadership.
- The Millennium Development Goals in Viet Nam, the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy and Viet Nam Agenda 21 approved by the Prime Minister in 2002 include:
 - Poverty reduction: From 2000 to 2010, reduce the incidence of poverty by two fifths according to international standards and by three fifths according to national standards and reduce the international standard-based food poverty incidence by three fourths.
 - Reduction of vulnerability: By 2005, increase the average income of the lowest expenditure quintile equal 140% of that in 2000 and up to 190% by 2010.
 - Job creation: Raise the share of female workers to 50% of total new jobholders by 2010. Increase the share of trained workers in the total workforce to 30% in 2005 and 40% in 2010. Increase the ratio of rural working time utilization of people of working age to about 80% by 2005 and 85% by 2010.
 - Sustainable development: Promote the sustainable agricultural and rural development.
 - Gender equality and advancement of women: Increase the participation of women in agencies and sectors at all levels by an additional 3-5% in the next 10 years
- Rural industry development
 - Prime Minister Decision No. 132/2000/QD-TTg on 24 November 2000 on a number of policies to encourage the development of rural trades.
 - Prime Minister Decision No. 68/2002/QD-TTg on 4 June 2002 defining the Government's programme of action for implementation of the resolution of the Fifth Plenum of the Party Central Committee, IXth Congress on speeding up agricultural and rural industrialization and modernization in the 2001-2010 period.

Introduction of Good Hygiene Principles (GHP) and its follow-up was a relevant feature of the training. It was adapted to the nature of the operations of the household enterprises. Based on the understanding that GHP is part of the more comprehensive HACCP system (that will become mandatory in Viet Nam in 2008) and considering the type of enterprises covered by this project, emphasis was placed on starting with GHP. For a number of more organized enterprises among the target beneficiaries, introducing HACCP was of more immediate importance, with a view to developing some 'model cases'. HACCP related

training of trainers, as done by the project through FIRI, is also considered of relevance for future efforts in Viet Nam to implement its forthcoming food safety legislation.

It is a fact that micro or household enterprises are increasingly facing competition of modern industry and need to adapt to changing consumer habits. If there is little or no attention to building up entrepreneurship skills, upgrading the production process and improving the product quality, these micro or household enterprises may not survive competition. Therefore, training and technical assistance services provided and the collective activities among enterprises complemented with the small lease-purchase scheme through SHG initiated by the project together with the access to credit facilitated by WU, are highly relevant to support women entrepreneurs in overcoming their current problems and facing their future challenges.

Capacity building focus on WU in each of the three Provinces was highly relevant, although it was not based on a detailed description or assessment of the implementation and organizational capacities (including training needs) of the key partners as an organization in the project document itself as well as in project implementation. The enhancement of training capacities by involving both trainers from the WU and trainers from other organizations within the province was an appropriate approach and very important for the sustainability of efforts (cf. Box 3).

Box 3: Involving trainers from different institutions in Quang Binh

Trainers in Quang Binh came from different institutions within the province such as WU, Disease Preventive Center, Agricultural Extension Center, District Agricultural Department; Department of Science, Technology and Environment; Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Firstly they knew about the project through their friends, direct contact with WU Quang Binh or their institutions. Then they were asked to fill in the form to apply for trainer position of the project and sent it to WU Quang Binh. After review and selection, the project officially admitted them as trainers. Nearly half of trainers in Quang Binh came from other institutions rather than WU and PCU.

All trainers participated the 2 ToT courses covering two weeks each and conducted in Ha Tinh, covering 3 modules (Technology, Finance and Marketing). The first set (for two batches of trainers) was conducted in the last quarter of 2004 and the second one was conducted in 2005. In their discussion with the evaluation team, trainers claimed that ToT courses were well organized and very useful, providing them with advanced skills and knowledge. Some trainers indicated that they already participated in ToT courses of other projects; others also mobilized to deliver similar training courses in the other projects/programmes from their institutions or others as well (which could be an indication of possible complementarity as well as sustainability, as trained trainers are used).

Trainers recommend their involvement in the post training follow-up activities, enabling them to assist, monitor and evaluate the application of skills and knowledge gained by women entrepreneurs in the training courses as well as, in turn, better adapt the training modules/methodology/materials for more appropriate with trainees' skills and knowledge.

Rather than showing pictures or organizing visits to/borrowing equipment from enterprises (as was the case in some of the technology training activities), it was considered more useful and effective to give trainees a chance to operate the equipment by themselves during the technology training.

The relevance of RRCs as an instrument for the WUs in supporting micro enterprise development is not really proven (beyond its use in the project's ToT). The mobile equipment proved to be useful in field-based training activities. The choice appeared adapted to the level of technology the target beneficiaries could afford and could purchase in the Province/in nearby Provinces.

5.2.2 Effectiveness

To what extent were the project results used? What difference did the project results make in practice to the clients and beneficiaries?

Women entrepreneurs reported that participating in the project brought about many positive changes for their enterprises, such as related to the work load, use of energy, production time, hygienic practices (as in case of rice paper, rice noodles, tofu), quality of end product (confirmed by lab test results of FIRI in case of fish sauce, shrimp paste, rice wine), overall workshop organization and working environment in almost products. Also, as members of SHG, they indicated that they gained self-confidence and not only engaged in joint activities related to their businesses (common purchase of inputs; equipment sharing through lease-purchase equipment scheme; joint labeling/packaging; revolving loan fund, common marketing, creation of group household enterprise/cooperative through establishing common production workshop, common marketing facility, common machineries), but also common efforts with social purposes (group fund for social and family assistance purposes among members of SHG) and sharing cheerful life.

Post-training activities started with technical/quality improvements. Marketing support followed later, with focus on packaging and labeling. It is felt that more intensive and wider ranging marketing and market linkage efforts are needed to truly affect demand for products (also to ensure that investments in better packaging and labeling etc. are rewarded by finding new clients ready to pay for improved and better packed products beyond the traditional market outlets as illustrated in Box 4).

Starting with the baseline survey in the 3 provinces (3,896 respondents) and the training needs assessment workshops (13 involving 1,141 women), the number of people covered is considered ambitious, keeping in mind that the survey and workshops were mainly as means to specify the project strategy and to plan the ToT content. The question can be raised if it was essential for the baseline survey to reach out to that many women entrepreneurs spread over the selected districts, with the risk of creating expectations that probably not all could be met. It is to be noted that the evaluation team has not met women that participated in the baseline survey yet were not part of the actual project activities. There is no indication if/how the entrepreneurs included in the baseline work but not in its follow-up were used in the outcome analysis for benchmarking purpose.

Focus on quantitative results may have also generated some unnecessary 'competition' among WU in the 3 Provinces (as if a higher number were automatically a sign of better performance than a lower number). Particularly in a project focused on capacity building, the quality of inputs and of results merit more emphasis than quantitative results (such as number of participants in events, number of SHG, number of training sessions etc.).

Box 4: Rice wine in Vo Xa - comprehensive assistance makes a difference

Rice wine is very popular in Viet Nam and mainly consumed by men. Its demand is very high, especially in the rural areas where rice wine production is mainly managed and operated by women. Wine dregs are used for pig raising.

Mrs. Le Thi Hoa had been individually producing rice wine in a traditional way on a household basis for many years. Following three training courses on marketing, financial management and rice wine processing techniques offered by the project in March 2005, Mrs. Hoa, together with 10 other women entrepreneurs united in a SHG, established a Vo Xa rice wine group household enterprise in August 2005. They thereafter created a Vo Xa rice wine cooperative with a total of 15 members in November 2006. Common business activities cover joint purchasing of rice, alcohol yeast, pots and cans, using a common label and common purchase of a wine-filtering machine.

Currently Mrs. Hoa is the chairperson of the cooperative which has a total owned capital of 120 million dong and invested in upgrading the rice wine processing workshop and production line located at her house.

The project assisted the business with new packaging and labeling (now registered) and the wine-filtering machine through the lease-purchase scheme. The project's marketing consultant helped the Vo Xa rice wine producers to establish 50 outlets in 5 provinces – Danang, Hue, Quang Tri, Quang Binh and Ha Tinh. The product - carrying the new brand image of the cooperative – has currently reached a wider market with a total output of some 1,000 liters per month. As members of the cooperative, women entrepreneurs have doubled their sales. Furthermore, the cooperative also engaged in filtering rice wine for other producers within the commune, so that the overall quality of rice wine of Vo Xa producers in general has improved.

The cooperative is planning ahead: already a business proposal has been submitted to Commune People's Committee, requesting for land to build a new rice wine processing workshop.

The WU in each of the Provinces is taking the lead in organizing the training activities since August 2005 and, although quite recently (August 2006), now also has initiated promotional efforts in expansion areas. They (and not the project staff) now have a direct link with the trainers from the different institutions (formalized through an *aide memoire* with the institutions). The idea to sustain such linkages among different organizations is also supported by the People's Committees at the different levels.

On-the-job training and the availability of detailed guidelines prepared by the project team (step-by-step description of processes/formats etc.) enables the WUs to pursue the promotional activities at the level of micro enterprises, equipped with tools in guiding and coordinating support interventions.

The RRC was little used in Ha Tinh beyond the ToT and it is not possible to assess its use in other provinces (as not yet installed/not yet operational), because facilities in Quang Binh and Quang Tri are respectively under construction/under renovation. The selection of the equipment for the RRC (bread making; meat processing) versus the critical mass of activities in which the targeted enterprises are involved across the districts is not fully justified. The choice of similar equipment for the RRCs under phase II compared to what was purchased for the one established under phase I somewhat affected the effectiveness and usefulness of RRC. This may explain low demand for use of the RRC by enterprises in Phase II, because the equipment is rather for urban enterprises while the majority of the target enterprises were rural ones.

Also, it was observed that the mobile equipment was not used in all field-based trainings (mainly used in Ha Tinh Province). Showing pictures in the other two Provinces or organizing visits to/borrowing equipment from enterprises has reduced the chances for the trainees to try out the demonstration equipment by themselves during the training.

Focus on HACCP standards in setting up the RRC premises seems to have generated delays in their completion. This was however pursued, to be able to demonstrate its implications, also taking into consideration forthcoming food safety legislation and HACCP becoming mandatory in Viet Nam. Whereas the introduction of a comprehensive HACCP system would not be feasible given the current stage of development of many enterprises covered by the project (with the exception of some more organized ones), it was decided to start with GHP in such non-farm household businesses.

5.2.3 Efficiency

How well were the resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) transformed into the intended result in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness? Where things done right?

The project has been well governed, characterized by good quality of the overall and of day-to-day management and by transparency in decision-making. There was good cooperation between the PCU and counterparts at all levels. Having project operations at a considerable distance from UNIDO Office in Hanoi does not seem to have affected project management. The MIS set up in each of the 3 Provinces facilitated monitoring and reporting. Project reporting has been extensive, with even a danger of over-reporting to meet the different requirements (self-evaluation report for TPR; progress report for donor; mission reports of experts).

The structure of expenditures (summarized in Table 7 below) illustrates how, compared to the initial project design, the envisaged expenditures for international expertise have considerably decreased (about half from what as planned), with corresponding increase in the use of national expertise (doubled). The expenditures for local training even tripled compared to the initial project plan.

Table 7: Structure of expenditures

Expenditures by budget line/type of input	Total as at 21.12.06 in Euro	% of actual expenditures	% as per project document
11 International experts	214,754.91	24.8	50.7
13 Administrative support	24,236.79	2.8	3.1
15 Local travel/project staff	17,612.43	2.0	2.9
16 Mission costs/HQ staff	19,052.11	2.2	4.1
17 National experts	152,372.75	17.6	8.9
21 Subcontracts	28,015.73	3.2	--
32 Study tours	3,065.28	0.4	--
33 Local training	261,690.97	30.3	11.7
45 Equipment	92,279.93	10.7	9.3
51 Sundries	51,531.70	6.0	9.3
TOTAL	864,612.60	100	100

The counterpart contribution corresponded to the planned inputs in terms of staff assigned and office space in three Provinces. The ability to use the WU network (large membership and outreach at different levels from Provinces up to Communes) and the intensive support from local governments, especially at commune level increased the speed of start-up operations and facilitated the development from household enterprises to formal enterprises, i.e., group household enterprises or cooperatives.

Costs-savings were generated by using the trainers from Phase I as facilitators in the ToT, as well as available training materials that needed only marginal adjustment in Phase II. Flexibility was shown by adding technical manuals on products not covered in the Pilot Phase/ Phase I, yet relevant in the Provinces covered in Phase II.

Procurement of equipment for RRC's planned to be set up in Quang Binh and Quang Tri only at the very end of the project should have been avoided. One can understand the desire of the WU in these two Provinces to also obtain support to the establishment of their own RRC (as in the case of Ha Tinh) and to acquire equipment to that end. However, the performance of the Ha Tinh RRC in terms of its actual use and its challenges towards reaching the objective of financial sustainability could have been reviewed more rigorously at the level of the TPRs before deciding on the allocation of resources for the two additional RRCs. There seems to have been little discussion on the appropriateness of other investments rather than in RRCs (e.g., adopt mobile rather than fixed equipment approach; improve transport logistics to ensure active outreach and post-training follow-up).

There were strong linkages between target beneficiaries of the project with credit schemes/programmes managed through or operated by the Women Union for different institutions namely: Poverty Reduction Programme, Job Creation Programme, Viet Nam/Belgium Credit Programme, Bank for Social Policies, Agribank, WU Credit Fund, World Vision, SNV. A total of 1.7 billion dong was mobilized by the Women Unions of Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tri supporting a total of 371 women entrepreneurs in the expansion of their enterprises. Good cooperation was established with Quang Tri's Industrial Extension Centre (under the Industrial Extension Programme initiated and implemented by Quang Tri People's Committee) through the demonstration to rice noodle producers of a water extractor and an improved rice noodle extruder.

Whereas relations were established with other international organizations and donor-supported programmes and projects, both at the central level and in the three Provinces, some of these could have been more regular, leading to joint activities and more sharing of experiences, tools, trained experts etc. Whereas UNIDO is part of the SME donor cooperation mechanism at the central level in Viet Nam, there is no indication that the project was active part of such initiatives at the provincial level. Both the project team and the partner organizations have a role in this respect, even if taking into consideration that cooperation is a "two-way street".

The most obvious cooperation was the linkage with a JICA project (support to the Food Industries Research Institute, FIRI) through a subcontract with FIRI (use of staff trained and of testing facilities put in place by JICA). However, the direct synergy/cooperation between the project and other ongoing projects with similar objectives and target beneficiaries in the Provinces has remained limited (as in case of Oxfam-Belgium in Ha Tinh; SNV in Quang Binh; the Rural Development Programme funded by Finland in Quang Tri).

There is no indication of direct linkages with other activities in the IP such as regarding energy efficiency, product quality and standard activities; cooperation with the SME policy project covered mainly exchange of information.

5.2.4 Ownership

To what extent are the local stakeholders the owners of the outputs and of the achievements? To which extent was the project formulated with participation of the national counterpart(s) and/or target beneficiaries? Has (have) the counterpart(s) been appropriately involved, were they participating in the identification of the critical problem areas and in the development of technical cooperation strategies? Are they actively supporting the implementation of the project approach?

Ownership by key partners during the life of the project was overall high. As stated above, the design and formulation phase was not fully participatory and affected the ownership to a certain extent in the beginning of the project (Quang Binh; Quang Tri). Yet at present the local governance structures, at the level of the Provincial, District and Communal Peoples' Committees, were well aware of the project's activities and closely cooperated with the WU and other local government organizations. To a certain extent, they even engaged in identifying local resources to support project activities and their outreach. Some even were reported to have assisted in finding markets for products from the SHGs.

The WU in the 3 Provinces were actively involved throughout the duration of the project. Promoting micro-enterprise development/strengthening was and is a priority on their agenda. As part of the project's exit strategy, the WU took since August 2005 the lead in organizing training sessions for SHG's and engaged as of August 2006 in work in expansion areas, i.e., beyond the districts covered by the project. The mission observed that prior to the shift in the strategy (and to a certain extent even at present), the PCU had a tendency to implement activities on behalf of the key partners (WU), which has affected ownership and particularly sustainability.

The strongest ownership is found at the level of the women entrepreneurs. The SHGs created at the start still exist, periodically meet and have engaged in common activities of both business and social nature. Some enterprises have expanded their business, with examples of sub-groups within the SHG having jointly created group household enterprises. Some of these are evolving into cooperatives, based on the recognition that formalization enables enterprises to benefit from certain incentives or is a precondition for common trademark etc.

It is evident that there are variations in terms of the degree in which enterprise performance has been affected by the support ("champions" were found particularly among the fish sauce and rice wine producers). However, overall the target group has 'internalized' the SHG and also sub-group linkages within the SHG are seen as an effort that is their own and not necessarily as an approach brought and sustained by outside actors.

5.2.5. Impact

Was there a wider effect on a larger number of beneficiaries? Were there longer-term effects, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? What developmental changes (economic, environmental, and social) at the target beneficiary level have occurred or are likely to occur and in how far are they sustainable?

The project has involved not only the SHGs, but also the local community in the project activities through awareness raising. Communities have accepted the products with slightly increased prices and with different taste (e.g. fish sauce) caused by improved food safety. It has proven that joint efforts and community spirit lead to achieve tangible results.

Targeting micro-scale women entrepreneurs in rural areas has had a clear development and poverty reduction impact. It has also contributed to transfer of production knowledge and technology to a next generation. However, targeting individual businesswomen with potential to grow as businesspersons might have had even larger economic impact. However, this would have implied more business focus with emphasis on urban areas. These enterprises would have bigger potential to become larger businesses compared to the smaller scale producers who, in most cases, ensure employment of themselves – and constitute not even the only source of employment for the family (apart from some enterprises with products with high market/expansion potential). In other words, the approach taken was an effective one in terms of aiming at poverty reduction but would not necessarily have direct impact on the local economy. This is why a project like this one has wider impacts beyond just money – which a project aimed at supporting individual enterprises, might not have.

The project exceeded expectations as regards its quantitative indicators, apart from output 3. It had tangible benefits as a result of the work done in terms of revenue, work environment etc. It made a difference for the household businesses included in the project activities, especially those for whom the business activity is their only source of revenue (such as single headed households) and in up-scaling some of the most successful businesses from micro-enterprises to co-operatives. The data emanating from the last business review has clearly substantiated the project's outcome.

Both the financial and social benefits are considered important for women in a rural context. The benefits had a wider overall effect on them beyond the business (building confidence; providing for safety net for social emergencies through a group fund; improving the quality of their lives; reducing support needed from children to fetch wood etc.). The results also generated the interest of other women entrepreneurs in their vicinity (outside the existing SHGs). There was no explicit plan how to deal with new interest beyond the created SHGs in the selected districts.

Technology improvements had a demonstration effect and generated business initiatives beyond the level of the immediate users (such as the smokeless stove' construction becoming a new business activity in some districts). Also, several training materials have been developed within the project. Government departments indicated that financial and marketing manuals have been utilized in training in other sectors.

The project's indicators being quantitative (measured in business reviews), the above assessment of qualitative and wider impact on the businesses and their immediate environment is mainly based on the analysis of a few individual cases.

The WU in the three Provinces are now taking initiatives to expand outreach to generate wider impact. Expansion plans focus for now more on covering new districts rather than supporting additional women entrepreneurs in the already selected districts outside the SHGs. The pool of trainers and the training materials are available for the expansion work and can also be used in other programmes. PPC/DPC's are keen to help secure additional funding to enhance the benefits beyond the project's achievements. As part of expansion, the PWUs will also target minority areas the project having started out with an "easier

environment” in terms of human resources available, capacity of the beneficiaries and mobility.

5.2.6. Sustainability

Will the outcomes of the project outputs likely continue after the ending of external funding? What is the probability of continued longer-term benefits? Which developmental changes (economic, environmental, and social) at the target beneficiary level have occurred or are likely to occur and in how far are they sustainable?

Potential to become sustainable

The project has the potential to become sustainable. Sustainability is linked to relevance and depends on the development priorities of the Government, and how the supported activities will be incorporated in the regional development plans of the Government. Economic development is high on the agenda of the PPCs, and particularly through support to medium and large-scale enterprises. Also the importance of micro-level enterprises and their scaling-up is recognized as an important way to reduce poverty. Development of small- and medium enterprises is a priority in the project Provinces, and it forms an essential part of provincial SEDP. PPCs indicated interest in up-scaling the support to slightly larger than just micro-scale businesses.

Even though ownership by PPCs and lower level governance structures is satisfactory at the moment, there was no indication of direct funding by the Government for the project-initiated activities, which would go beyond existing human resources. PPCs rather tend to rely on additional external funding for continuation. However, all PPCs had made efforts to look for additional funding from other donors. Promotion of women’s economic activities is also an integral part of the plans of all PWUs. However, PWUs are restricted by the limited budget to cover operational costs. All in all, the project has created an applicable model that will sustain, and can be replicated based on the available financial resources (see Box 5).

Box 5: Government’s direct support enhances sustainability: PPCs and DPCs

Ha Tinh PPC has issued a resolution to boost the development of small-scale enterprises based on the successful model of the project. It has requested all relevant departments and institutions to pay more attention to the project and considers it as a common duty of all relevant departments.

Quang Binh PPC has requested PWU to continue activities and expand the model.

Quang Tri PPC appreciated the focus non-enterprise development and gender. Even though not a large-scale project, they considered it remarkable and plan to apply the model in other sectors.

Even though the project did not explicitly address the need to include the project supported activities in the Socio-Economic Development Plans (SEDP) -- that play a key role for provincial development and thus would be important as regards sustainability --, PPC’s confirmed that the project activities are now part of SEDPs at the general level and are trying to attract funds.

The implementation modality (return missions of CTA rather than full-time presence) was appropriate: it encouraged sharing of project responsibilities during the life of the project and also generated savings on international expertise (that were proportionally high in the initial project document). Active and increased involvement of national expertise also enhanced local capacities. It is to be noted that the local training budget (that tripled compared to the initial project budget) includes also the fees for the trainers involved in the training of the SHG. As part of the start of the exit strategy, these fees have been reduced by some WU. There remains some concern to what extent the training courses will be affected in the absence of a project budget (in terms of availability of trainers, logistics to conduct the training in the districts, post-training follow-up activities and technical assistance).

The project did not have an explicit strategy to utilize the potential of the national level VWU and MPI to attract additional funds for replication. Efforts have been made by UNIDO to discuss with the VWU the possibility of replication, based on which a proposal was prepared and submitted to a donor with unsuccessful results. While this is a positive effort, it is the responsibility of the Government to take a leading role in fund mobilization in discussions with the donor. They can influence to a certain extent the priorities of the donors. Incorporation of similar activities as now planned at the end of the project at the national and provincial levels to promote the lessons learned, as part of the sustainability plans, already at earlier stages of the project, might have led to more systematic approach with the donor community.

The project objectives and activities remain highly suitable for replication. VWU as well as WU branches in Provinces are encouraged to propose and implement similar rural industrial development programmes/projects for women entrepreneurs as endorsed by Decrees No. 90/2001/ND-CP of 23 November 2001, No. 134/2004/ND-CP of 09 June 2004 and No. 66/2006/ND-CP of 07 July 2006. Therefore, if a countrywide replication programme would be developed and implemented, it would increase the use of developed capacities and thus increase the impact of the project.

Exit strategy

Probably because of the short duration of the project and pressure to perform, the PCU had a tendency to implement on behalf of the implementer rather than assist in implementation and emphasis was more on implementation than on post assistance scenarios. Also quite detailed agendas, manuals, guidelines, formats etc. have been prepared by the PCU.

A positive step towards sustainability was taken through the development of an exit strategy. It was based on the proposal of the donor after a monitoring field visit in March 2005. According to the initial system, the project staff assigned the trainers a given topic to conduct within the training plan and gave the list to the PWU for their information. The project staff also monitored the training programmes and had the sole responsibility of paying the trainers. The PWU's role was very passive and provided little opportunity for WU to get to know the trainers better, and strengthen the relationship between the trainers and Women Union. SHGs also required technical assistance in planning their group projects and implementing what they had learned in the training programmes. The new system was approved in August 2005, but fully operationalized only in August 2006 with start-up of the work in expansion areas. According to the new practice, WU organized the field based training programmes including assignment of trainers,

monitoring of the training programmes and ensuring all administrative and logistical arrangements with the project staff support. POs involvement in training was thus scaled down to overall monitoring and the intensive administrative work was done within the organizational structure of WU.

The exit strategy put the WU in the 'driver's seat', but it is rather early to assess the achievements in the project expansion areas. There is no doubt about WU's ability to mobilize entrepreneurs and foster the creation of SHGs. There is however a risk that the duration of the training programmes is reduced to less number of days (also depending on the continued availability of trainers and their willingness to offer services at reduced or no fees), thus possibly also affecting the quality and effectiveness of the training. Availability of adequate WU's operational budget to carry out the field work targeted at promoting micro enterprise development and expansion is also a condition affecting continued longer-term benefits. Vast geographical coverage increases the resources needed for pursuing active follow-up at the commune level.

PWUs have to a certain extent internalized the project methodology and have now gained implementation capacity, even though still supported by the project. They have a working arrangement with trainers from different institutions trained by the project which enables them to continue with the expansion work. The question of payment of fees at lower level/without fees to the trainers was discussed during the mission. This has direct implications for sustainability. Trainers come from within the Government, and it could be argued that they should be paid for the travel etc. costs during expansion.

An issue for consideration in the future relates to the alignment of trainer payment practices. In the project area there were different practices among donors. Some were not paying extra fees for trainers (SNV/Quang Binh), and considered payment by another donor as harmful for their attempts to gain sustainable results.

Sustainability plans

With a view to helping the WU partners prepare for taking over the flow of activities technically, financially and managerially, the first steps towards implementing the exit strategy were taken in August 2005. In addition, the "way forward" workshops planned to be organized in January 2007 in each of the 3 Provinces are a good initiative, expected to result in plans focused on the financial and economic sustainability aspects. As the result of the workshop it is expected that 2-year Sustainability Action Plans will be developed for utilizing the capacities and resources built by the project and identifying supporting external financial resources. Plans of Actions are to be presented to the Government (PPC; DPI; DoI; DST; DOLISA), potential donors and NGOs operating in the area. This is a positive step forward, particularly in view of identifying the existing human and financial resources. It is regrettable that these workshops are held rather late in the project life.

It is understandable that the short duration of the project contributed to having emphasis on the present time rather than on the future. At present, after implementing the project as per the exit strategy for some time, the PWUs have a clearer picture of their own capacities created by the project, their own plans and commitment of the local institutions. However, organizational assessment of PWUs as main implementer of the project, and of other local institutions as service providers, building their capacity accordingly and inclusion of the role of the local institutions (as service providers) already in the project document would have undoubtedly raised the sustainability issues already at the earlier stage.

Marketing and technical advice

Technical and marketing advice at the plant level (post-training support) facilitated by the project was appreciated by the target group. There is a concern how to continue such assistance, without external resources (the ability of micro enterprises, even as a group, to pay for such support can be questioned, even if they should share in the cost for such hands-on advice). Such productivity improvement and market development will need to continue to be addressed jointly.

More emphasis could have been placed on marketing aspects and a wider approach applied related to marketing infrastructure development. The project assisted the women entrepreneurs in marketing but only at the later stages promoted creating direct linkages between buyers and producers. Emphasis was on improving the quality of the products rather than establishing the linkages. The women had high hopes for the marketing expert to link them to the markets. Establishing these linkages for them does not increase the capacity of the entrepreneurs; however, maybe more creative ways for establishing these linkages could have been found. Positive examples are the two trade fairs that took place in Ha Tinh. Producers were able to present the improved quality products and were in direct link with the buyers. It is understandable that improving the quality of the products had to be done first. However, more emphasis could have been on organizing e.g. trade fairs to promote the products or facilitating the participation of the project beneficiaries in fairs targeting small enterprises. This has direct implications for the sustainability of the businesses. Good quality products with improved packaging without markets beyond local markets will not result in scaling up the businesses.

There is scope for deepening market development support to ensure that better/new/more products are sold, and to link products with markets. Longer-term prospects for products now emanating from micro-enterprises need to be considered, as competition from domestic and imported industrially produced goods will likely become fiercer over time. At this stage, being able to sell at local markets will enable sustainability of most assisted enterprises, but not scaling-up of their status as an enterprise.

Those enterprises receiving highest benefits and with strongest organization (fish sauce; rice wine) are expected to remain sustainable and able to continue their operations at some level – at least as long as the products can also be sold at local markets. When selling, price setting also seems to need improvement. At local markets products are sold without developed packaging and at lower prices. When selling outside the local markets, one of the marketing strategies e.g. for fish sauce was to continue selling at quite low price even though the product is of better quality and in an improved package. This was expected to lead to increased demand and longer-term linkages between the certain buyer and producer. This might indeed lead to positive results, but such progress needs to be followed up and assistance provided with pricing adapted to fluctuating markets.

The establishment of stronger linkages of SHGs with other support schemes related to income creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and women empowerment (local/donor support) is expected to contribute to sustaining the positive outcomes of the project. Out of original membership of SHGs only few members have left. These initiatives will be able to use the SHGs as platform for their respective activities, complementary to the support provided by the project. A group approach as such was not new in the Provinces, but a group production approach was a new initiative. SHGs tend to be more successful and sustainable in rural settings in Viet Nam where cooperative spirits (community) among people are high.

There is concern also regarding the linkages between the PWU, DWU and CWU and how the information on required assistance will filter from the entrepreneurs up to PWU. In some cases entrepreneurs had put forward proposals to DWU to be taken up with PWU regarding additional assistance. The response was quite alarming, indicating, “It was not in their plans”. This might be an indication of information flow between the different levels of WU structure. The project facilitated to a certain extent the information flow between different levels. The contacts between the WU structure seem to be more on ad hoc basis rather than systematic, apart from regular WU monthly meetings which serve a different purpose. WUs at different levels are facilitators, service providers and are expected to provide a link and access to technical support.

There is also concern regarding the assistance for the enterprises that are in a process of up-scaling their businesses as co-operatives. According to the discussions held, the women entrepreneurs are not fully aware of the laws, policies and standards applying to such change in legal status. This requires expert advice and training.

The RRCs

Finally, it is unlikely that full cost-recovery of the RRC operation can be achieved, also considering current indications of demand for the only RRC in place so far. There seems potential for intensifying the use of the existing premises in Ha Tinh and for ensuring active use of the ones under preparation in the two other Provinces by offering courses that respond to existing needs in the respective regions (such as restaurant management), which will require adequate resources for this purpose.

One step towards sustainability was a change in the attitudes of the PWU to consider charging cost-covering fees for the services provided by RRC. Willingness and ability to pay for the services are still a concern. The only example of services provided by RRC with fees that covered costs was a bakery-training course, where one interested person paid on behalf of 10 participants just to be able to have the course for his own business. It was stated that participants are expected to cover 100%, but have ability for some 10%.

If RRC as an infrastructure is paid by the Government, it is sustainable – space is part of the PWU structure. It is also to function as a place which women entrepreneurs can come for advice. In this respect, the RRCs can only serve those living in near-by areas. Within the project period, the main benefit of the RRC as an infrastructure was its function as a place for training. Based on the experiences of the Phase I (Da Nang, Hue, Quang Nam), RRCs might have some potential for becoming an active service delivery unit. This requires more systematic marketing of RRCs to create demand for its operations. More systematic linkages of the RRC with the Vocational Training Centres, when existing, could also be considered.

6

Conclusions

A review of the implementation of the project in general leads to the following main observations, reflected in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Overall assessment of the project implementation

Strong points	Weak points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of the interventions (pertaining to rural development in disadvantaged provinces; income and employment generation, women empowerment) • Ownership and interest by key partners in project activities • Availability of counterpart inputs (counterpart staff, office space, RRC premises) • Continuity in the approach (use of expertise, materials from previous projects) • Adjustments compared to Phase I (Good Hygienic Practices/GHP; transfer of responsibilities to counterpart regarding training) • Effective use of SHG approach to support women entrepreneurs • Consideration for socio-cultural aspects such as through series of awareness building events and involvement of husbands in introduction of changes in the business; however, only expansion areas include ethnic minorities as a target group • Involvement of other governmental departments and organizations leading to multi-sectoral pool of expertise at the provincial level • Intensity of cooperation between the project and counterparts at the provincial, district and commune levels • Use of Management Information System and frequency/quality of reporting (transparency in project management) • Quantitative indicators exceeding expectations (output 1 and output 2). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results spread somewhat thinly over vast area (3 Provinces, with concentration in coastal areas) as result of ambitious geographic coverage in only 3 years • Tendency for more emphasis on quantity and outputs (number of SHGs, number of training programmes etc.) than on measuring qualitative results and outcomes. • Expansion areas selected by WU cover new products/new districts (also outside coastal area), with at this stage no expansion envisaged to widen coverage within initial districts • Potential for cooperation with other projects -particularly those in the three provinces- explored but resulting in few cases of effective cooperation • No involvement of Central VWU/MPI/other central level ministries in discussion on continuation/replicability despite earlier recommendations (IP evaluation/TPRs) and despite attempts by the project management team • Critical review of weaknesses regarding output 3 missing in SC/TPRs • Long incubation time needed for exit strategy in Phase II project, considering lessons learned from previous experiences.

The overall schematic assessment of the project's performance for each of the evaluation criteria is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Performance rating ⁵

Criteria/Phase	Design	Implementation
<i>Relevance</i>	HS	HS
<i>Effectiveness</i>	S	S
<i>Efficiency</i>	S	HS
<i>Impact</i>	S	S
<i>Ownership</i>	LS	S
<i>Sustainability</i>	LS	LS

⁵Based on the following scale:

**Highly satisfactory (HS)*: fully according to plan or better

**Satisfactory (S)*: on balance according to plan, positive aspects outweighing negative aspects

**Less than satisfactory (LS)*: not sufficiently according to plan, taking into account the evolving context; a few positive aspects, but outweighed by negative aspects

**Highly unsatisfactory (HU)*: seriously deficient, very few or no positive aspects

**Premature to assess (P)*

Annex I

Terms of Reference (Summary)

Independent Evaluation of UNIDO project – Entrepreneurship development programme for women in food processing in Central Viet Nam -Phase II- , TE/VIE/04/002 and TE/VIE/04/A02

Background

The present evaluation follows a decision of the participants in the second Tripartite Review (TPR) meeting that took place on 27 April 2006, in the Sun Spa Resort, Dong Hoi, Quang Binh, Viet Nam. The objective of the project was to develop more efficient and viable small-scale enterprises in the food-processing sector and to increased income, employment and poverty reduction, in particular, for women. This involved building capacities of the counterpart organizations, i.e., the Women Union (WU) branches in Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tri Provinces and trainers from these three provinces in Central Viet Nam. Under the auspices of WU, the project envisaged the establishment of a Rural Resource Center (RRC) in the Ha Tinh Province as part of this capacity building to respond in a sustainable manner to the training demands of women in food processing. Training courses in enterprise management, appropriate food processing and gender equality for 40 to 50 trainers who were to train 650 entrepreneurs – followed by post-training services, were envisaged.

The project foresaw collaboration with several institutions/projects to achieve maximum impact and to enhance sustainability. It was to be implemented in close cooperation with the UNIDO project – *Entrepreneurship development project for women in food processing in Central Viet Nam, Phase I* making use of local capacities created by that project (the project under review being Phase II) as well as the training manuals revised within the context of Central Viet Nam.

The project was implemented by the UNIDO, Private Sector Development Branch, Rural and Women Entrepreneurship and Human Security Unit in collaboration with the Agro-Industries and Sectoral Support Branch, Food Processing Unit to provide input in the technological aspects of food processing, quality and HACCP.

Budget Information

The budget information presented below is based on information received from the UNIDO backstopping officer of the project under review.

Table 1 – Detailed breakdown of financial data for each allotment

Project		Budget planned (as per original project document, excluding project support cost	Budget allotted/ funded (excluding project support cost) as of [insert date]	Expenditures (excluding project support cost) as of [insert date]	Funding level	Expenditures [insert date]
		(in euro)			(in percent)	
1	TE/VIE/04/002	US\$858,000 ⁶	859,590	653,145 (18.8.06)	s. below	76%
2	TE/VIE/04/A02		69,414	68,664 (18.8.06)	s. below	99%
Total			929,004⁸	721,809		78%

Purpose

The purpose of the independent evaluation of the project is to enable the Government, UNIDO and the donor to:

- (a) Assess the efficiency of implementation: quantity, quality, cost and timeliness of UNIDO and counterpart inputs and activities.
- (b) Assess the outputs produced and outcomes achieved as compared to those planned, and to verify prospects for development impact.
- (c) If applicable, provide an analytical basis and recommendations for a possible continuation of the project and/or replication in other regions in Viet Nam.
- (d) Draw lessons of wider application for the possible replication of the pilot experience in other countries.

Methodology

The evaluation is conducted in compliance with UNIDO evaluation policy as an Independent Evaluation.

Independent evaluation is an activity carried out during and/or at the end of the cycle, which attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, achievements (outputs, outcomes and impact) and sustainability of the programme. The evaluation assesses the achievements of the project against its key objectives, as set in the project document, including re-examination of the relevance of the objectives and of the design. It also identifies factors that have facilitated or impeded the achievement of the objectives.

The evaluation will be carried out through analyses of various sources of information including desk analysis, survey data, interviews with counterparts, beneficiaries, partner agencies, donor representatives, programme managers and through the cross-validation of data. Due consideration will be given to the TPR and project and self-evaluation reports and the independent evaluation of the UNIDO Integrated Programme of Cooperation between the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and UNIDO, 2003-2005 – Industrialization and

⁶ Source: Budget table prepared by Funds Mobilization

⁷ It is extremely difficult to calculate the exact percentage: The project was denominated in US dollar at the start and budget was paid in two instalments, exchange rates oscillated since the payment of the first instalments, later with transfer into Euro denomination, with creation of additional Euro 38,000. It is also not easy to divide US dollar with euros without calculating for the different exchange rates at different times. However, it can be said that the project was funded 100 percent

⁸ Source: UNIDO Agresso data base

modernization along the Socio-Economic Development Strategy: Towards sustainable growth in the SME sector, which took place in February 2005.

While maintaining independence, the evaluation will be carried out based on a participatory approach, which seeks the views and assessments of all parties.

Evaluation will address the following issues:

Ownership and relevance

The extent to which:

- (i) The project was formulated with participation of the national counterpart and/or target beneficiaries;
- (ii) The counterpart(s) has (have) been appropriately involved and were participating in the identification of their critical problem areas and in the development of technical cooperation strategies and are actively supporting the implementation of the project approach;
- (iii) A logically valid means-end relationship has been established between the project objective(s) and the higher-level programme-wide or country level objectives;

Efficiency of implementation

The extent to which:

- (i) UNIDO and Government/counterpart inputs have been provided as planned and were adequate to meet requirements;
- (ii) The quality of UNIDO services (expertise, training, equipment, methodologies, etc.) were as planned and led to the production of outputs.
- (iii) The project was properly monitored and evaluated according to the original M & E plan.

Effectiveness

Assessment of:

- (i) The relevance of the outputs produced and how outputs are used by the target beneficiaries;
- (ii) The outcomes, which have been or are likely to be realized through utilization of outputs.

Impact and sustainability

- (i) Identify what developmental changes (economic, environmental, social) at the target beneficiary level have occurred or are likely to occur and in how far they are sustainable.

Funds mobilization (if applicable):

The extent to which:

- (i) The national management and counterparts were able and willing, to contribute (in kind and/or cash) to project implementation and in taking an active part in funds mobilization.
- (ii) UNIDO HQs and the Field representation paid adequate attention to and was effective in funds mobilization.

Project coordination and management

The extent to which:

- (i) The national management and overall field coordination mechanisms of the Programme have been efficient and effective;
- (ii) The UNIDO HQ based management, coordination, monitoring of its services have been efficient and effective;
- (iii) Changes in plan documents during implementation have been approved and documented;
- (iv) Coordination envisaged with any other development cooperation programmes in the country has been realized and benefits achieved.
- (v) Synergy benefits can be found between the activities of the two UNIDO implementing units of the project, the Private Sector Development Branch, Rural and Women Entrepreneurship and Human Security Unit and the Agro-Industries and Sectoral Support Branch, Food Processing Unit;
- (vi) Synergy benefits can be found in relation to the UNIDO Integrated Programme in Viet Nam.

Project identification and formulation

The extent to which:

- (i) A participatory project identification process was instrumental in selecting problem areas and counterparts requiring technical cooperation support;
- (ii) The project had a clear thematically focused development objective, the attainment of which can be determined by a set of verifiable indicators;
- (iii) The project/programme was formulated based on the logical framework approach and included appropriate output and outcome indicators;

Evaluation Team

The evaluation team will be composed of two international consultants, one representing UNIDO and one the Donor, and one national evaluation consultant. All consultants will be contracted by UNIDO (alternatively, the Donor will recruit the consultant representing the Donor directly). The tasks of each team member are specified in the job descriptions attached to these terms of reference.

Members of the evaluation team must not have been directly involved in the design and/or implementation of the programme/projects.

UNIDO Field Office will support the evaluation team.

Timing

The evaluation is scheduled for the period October – December 2006.

Immediately after the field mission the team will come to Vienna for debriefing. The final version of the evaluation report will be submitted 6-8 weeks after the debriefing at the latest.

Reporting

Review of the draft report

Draft reports submitted to UNIDO Evaluation Group are shared with the corresponding Programme or Project Officer for initial review and consultation. They may provide

feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions. The evaluators will take the comments into consideration in preparing the final version of the report.

Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

All UNIDO outsourced evaluations are subject to quality assessments by UNIDO Evaluation Group. These apply evaluation quality assessment criteria and are used as a tool for providing structured feedback. The quality of the evaluation report will be assessed and rated against the criteria set forth in the Checklist on evaluation report quality.

Annex II

Mission programme and List of Organizations and Persons met

Date/Time		Organizations/Persons
UNIDO HQ		
20 Dec Wed		Mrs. T. Ulusay de Groot, Project Manager (main allotment holder), PSD Branch Mr. K. Schebesta, Agro-Industries and Sectoral Support Branch (sub-allotment holder) Mr. Chin Pen Chua, Regional Programmes and Field Coordination Branch Mr. J. Dobinger, EVAL Group Mr. P. Loewe, EVAL Group
21 Dec Thurs		
VIETNAM		
Jan 2 Tuesday		Arrival in Hanoi
Jan 3 Wednesday		
0800	0830	UNIDO Office in Hanoi: Mr. Junichi Mori (JPO) and Ms. Van, UNIDO Secretary
0845	1100	Food Industry Research Institute – FIRI: Mr. Le Duc Mang, Director/Head of Department of Industrial Biochemistry and Environment; Mrs. Nguyen Thi Viet Anh, Head, Fermentation Technology Department; Mrs. Tran Thi Chau, Former Head, International Relations Department (currently Business Development Manager, Food safety and technology, Hanoi Business Incubator (EU-Viet Nam Private Sector Support Programme); Mr. Kimihiro Konno, JICA Project Coordinator
1130	1900	Travel from Hanoi to Ha Tinh (project car)
Jan 4 Thursday		
0800	1200	Project Coordinating Unit, PCU: Mrs. Jovita Culatin Viray, Chief Technical Adviser (CTA); Mr. Gao Duc Chinh, National Project Manager (NPM); Mr. Nguyen Thai Minh, Training Manager (TM); Mrs. Nguyen Thi Nga, Finance and Administrative Officer (FAO)
1400	1600	Women Union (WU), Ha Tinh: Mrs. Dau Thi Kim Lien, Chairperson; Mrs. Ngo Thi Ngoc Nu, National Project Director; Mrs. Tran Thi Hong, Vice Chairperson/assigned to project
1615	1700	Provincial People’s Committee of Ha Tinh: Mr. Tran Minh Ky, Vice-Chairperson; Mr. Pham Van Hanh, Director of Department of Planning and Investment (DPI); Mr. Phuong, Secretary - PPC Office
Jan 5 Friday		
0800	0900	Ha Tinh Town to Duc Tho (expansion area)
0900	1200	Commune People Committee of Duc Thanh - Duc Tho and SHGs producing rice wine in Duc Thanh : Mr. Nguyen Trong Thieu, Vice-Chairperson; Mrs. Tran Thi Chau, Vice-Chairperson of People Council; Mrs. Tran Thi Hoa, WU of Duc Thanh commune; Mrs. Nguyen Thi Nghe, WU of Duc Tho District

Date/Time		Organizations/Persons
1330	1530	Cu Do Producers in Ha Huy Tap - Ha Tinh Town - Ha Tinh: Ms. Bien Thi Chuong - Cu Do producer Dai Nai SHG, Ha Tinh Town (Group of small producers of Cu Do) Phuong Nga Cu Do producer - Ha Tinh Town: Mr. Nguyen Van Phong and Ms. Nguyen Thi Nga (Larger scale Cu Do producer also assisted by project)
1530	1600	Ha Tinh Town to Cam Hoa commune, Cam Xuyen
1600	1700	Rice Paper Group in Cam Hoa: Ms. Duong Thi Phuong
Jan 6 Saturday		
0830	1000	SHGs producing rice noodles in Ky Bac - Ky Anh: Ms. Le Thi Hang
1330	1430	Fish sauce SHG in Quang Xuan - Quang Binh Mrs. Le Thi Thoan; Mrs. Hoang Thi Quyet; Mrs. Hoang Thi Thieu
1500	1600	Rice Paper Group in Quang Thanh - Quang Binh: Mrs. Le Thi Ninh, Chairperson of WU of Quang Thanh; Mrs. Phan Thi Tu
Jan 7 Sunday		
Work within team on findings so far (Dong Hoi)		
Jan 8 Monday		
0800	1000	Women Union Quang Binh: Mrs. Hoang Thi Lien Huong, Vice-Chairperson Mrs. Nguyen Thi Hong, Vice-Chairperson; Mrs. Cai Thi Xuan Hong, assigned to project
1000	1200	Roundtable discussion with trainers from different institutions: Mrs. Tran Thi Ngoc Yen, Mrs. Tran Thi Mai; Mrs. Nguyen Thi Minh, Mrs. Pham Thi Kim En, Mrs. Hoang Thi Ngan Huong, Mrs. Cai Thi Xuan Hong (WU Quang Binh); Mrs. Nguyen Thi Hai Hoa, Mrs. Phan Thi Thuy, Mr. Le Cong Luong (Health Care Centre); Mrs. Ngo Thi Hong Hoi (Industrial Extension Centre)
1330	1430	PPC Quang Binh: Mrs. Pham Thi Bich Lua, Vice-Chairperson; Mr. Nguyen Thanh Diep, PPC Office; Mrs. Khuyen, PPC Office
1445	1545	Dept. of Planning and Investment Quang Binh: Mr. Tran Viet Dan, Vice-Director; Mrs. Bui Thi Thu, Director of Economic Division; Mr. Vo Thanh Duc, Economic Relations Division
1600	1700	SNV (Netherlands Development Organization): Mr. Robert van den Heuvel, Adviser/Market Access for the Poor; Mrs. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Anh, Advisor
Jan 9 Tuesday		
0815	0915	Rice Wine in VoXa - Vo Ninh - Quang Binh: Mrs. Le Thi Hoa
0945	1045	Sweet Potato Group in Ha Ninh - Quang Binh: Mrs. Hoang Thi Lieu
1330	1430	Le Thuy District People's Committee - Quang Binh: Mr. Vo Khac Hoa, Chairperson; Mr. Vo Xuan Binh, Chairperson of PC Office; Mr. Tran Quoc Toan, Director of Division of Industry; Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thu, PC Office
1530	1630	Fish sauce group in Ngu Thuy Nam - Le Thuy - Quang Binh: Mrs. Ngo Thi Thuy Phuong
Jan 10 Wednesday		
0800	1000	Women Union Quang Tri (Dong Ha): Mrs. Nguyen Thi Chau, Vice-Chairperson; Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thu Thanh, assigned to project
1015	1115	PPC Quang Tri: Mr. Le Huu Thang, Vice-Chairperson; Mr. Thai Xuan Lam, Director of DPI; Mr. Nguyen Phuc Vuong, Vice - Director of Foreign Affairs Department; Mrs. Chau, PPC Office
1330	1430	Industrial Extension Center of the Dept. of Industry, Quang Tri: Mr. Quoc Ho Hiep Nghia, Director; Mr. Truong The Sanh, Vice - Director; Mr. Le Tien Dung, Director of Production Division of Dept. of Industry
1445	1545	Quang Tri Rural Development Programme (Finland): Mr. Rudy Corsel, CTA; Mrs. Gladys Savolainen, Institutional and Planning Adviser; Mr. Le Duc Hoang, Chief Administration Office
1600	1700	Tofu SHG in Dong Ha Town: Mrs. Tran Thi Huong
1700	1830	Dong Ha – Hue – flight to Hanoi

Date/Time		Organizations/Persons
Jan 11 Thursday		
0900	1030	Oxfam Belgium: Mr. Christophe Héraudeau, Regional Programme Adviser; Mrs. Van Thi Thu Ha, Programme Officer
1030	-	Work on debriefing
Jan 12 Friday		
0800	1000	Debriefing with Women Union of 3 Provinces, NPD, NPM, CTA, FAO, UNIDO Viet Nam (see list below)
<i>Organization</i>		<i>Name</i>
WU Ha Tinh		Mrs. Dan Chi Kim Lan, Chairwoman Mrs. Tran Chi Hong, staff in charge of UNIDO activities
WU Quang Binh		Mrs. Phi Thi Minh Chau, Chairwoman Mrs. Cai Thi Xuan Hong, staff in charge of UNIDO activities
WU Quang Tri		Mrs. Le Chi Sam, Chairwoman Mrs. Nguyen Chi Chau, staff in charge of UNIDO activities
Project/PCU		Mrs. Ngo Chi Nu, NPD Mrs. Jovita Culaton Viray, CTA Mr. Cao Duc Chinh, NPM Mr. Nguyen Thai Ninh, TM Ms. Nguyen Thi Nga, FAO
UNIDO Hanoi		Mr. Junichi Mori, JPO Ms. Tran Tuyet Van, Administrative Officer
1030	1200	Debriefing with Finnish Embassy: Mr. Pekka Seppälä, Counsellor; Mr. Le Dai Nghia, Programme Officer
1230	1330	Wrap up meeting of team (planning of interim report/main report writing)

Annex III

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