External Mid-Term Review of the Project on Strengthening the Capacity of the Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA) and Recommendations to the United Nations in Vietnam for Programming to Strengthen Civil Society

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Introduction: The Mid-Term Review and this Report

By 2007, UNDP and other UN agencies in Vietnam recognized the growing role of the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA) and the emergence of various forms of social organizations, including some that identified themselves as harbingers for the beginnings of “civil society” in Vietnam. UNDP initiated support for a project to strengthen VUSTA’s capacity to effectively support and represent its member organisations in government policy-making processes, in turn contributing to the promotion of democratic governance, socio-economic development, and support for the emergence of civil society in Vietnam.

The Project’s three objectives (and components) have linked strengthening VUSTA as an organization and strengthening the broader role of social organizations in Vietnam. Those objectives are:

(1) Strengthening VUSTA’s capacity to represent its member organisations’ interests in contributing to the government’s policy-making processes. Strengthening VUSTA’s capacity to represent, promote and protect its member organisations’ legitimate rights and interests through providing inputs to and monitoring government policies, programmes and projects (Decision 650/QD-TTg and 22/2002/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister)

(2) Strengthening VUSTA internal governance structures and capacity to work as an effective umbrella organisation. Developing the structures, systems and capacity of VUSTA to become a well governed, managed and resourced umbrella organisation that can give better support to its member organisations.

(3) Strengthening VUSTA’s capacity to become an effective bridge for its member organisations. Enabling the Union to become a more effective bridge for its member organisations in their relationship with Government, international organisations and between themselves.¹

¹ Detailed Project Outline, p. 5.
At the same time, over the past several years and in some cases going back to the 1990s, UNDP and other UN agencies have worked with and to strengthen Vietnamese social organizations and their roles in other ways as well. UNDP also fielded a project to strengthen the Vietnam Lawyers Association (VLA), and other UN agencies have worked on programs, projects and in other ways with non-state service provider organizations, research groups, and others. Those developments are discussed further in the second part of this Report. All these developments led to the review process.

**UNDP’s Goals for this Review and Recommendations Process**

UNDP’s has two primary goals for the review process in which we have been engaged. First, UNDP sought a mid-term review of the accomplishments, problems, and prospects for its capacity building project with VUSTA, work aimed not only at institutional strengthening for VUSTA but also as an initial foray into programming to strengthen civil society more broadly in Vietnam. As UNDP explained in the Terms of Reference:

“To meet the need of coordinating and bringing together people with similar professional interests in science (and later on, development) and to meet with the demand of the coming reform process of the country, a few unions were established including VUSTA. VUSTA has the overall responsibility to contribute to the industrialisation and modernisation of the country, and has been traditionally realised by representing and coordinating Vietnamese scholars in the area of science and technology, as well as through knowledge dissemination.”

“After 25 years in operation, VUSTA has been expanding in both scope and roles, but not fully taken advantage of its potential. To this end, it is essential that VUSTA enhances its capacity at enabling, organizational and individual levels. The three and half year VUSTA-UNDP project aims to strengthen VUSTA’s capacity to effectively support and represent its member organisations in government policy-making processes, contributing to the promotion of democratic governance and socio-economic development in the country. Project key outputs include: (1) Strengthening VUSTA’s capacity to represent its member organisations’ interests in contributing to the government’s policy-making process; (2) Strengthening VUSTA’s internal governance structures and capacity to work as an effective umbrella organizations; (3) Strengthening VUSTA’s capacity to become an effective bridge for its member organisations.”

“In the first year of 2008, the project progress has been limited. To respond effectively and flexibly to priority and ad hoc needs, it was decided to limit the scope of project activities in 2009 to a number of selected key activities. To ensure value for money of implemented project activities, disbursement of funds was made on a half yearly basis. This mitigation strategy has helped the project to gain some momentum in 2009 and some activities are now progressing in the right direction. However, it is recognized by project stakeholders that developments have not unfolded as originally envisaged in the project document. Against this background, project donors have raised concerns as to how to define better project directions in a strategic and systematic manner. Further, it
was agreed that there is a need to conduct a mid-term review to assess project performance since its inception and, more importantly, to identify the focus areas for project intervention in the years to come, taking into account recent developments influencing civil society in Viet Nam.” (emphasis added)

But UNDP’s goals for this review process were in fact broader than the important task of providing a mid-term review of the capacity building project at VUSTA. As UNDP explained in the Terms of Reference:

“The non-state sector in Viet Nam has experienced rapid growth in recent years. This development has been prompted by the establishment of a broad legal framework that reflects the importance of grassroots democracy, people’s participation and contribution from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for socio-economic development and equitable growth. The participation of various types of organisations in the delivery of public and social services is also encouraged in the five-year socio-economic development plan (SEDP) of the Government of Viet Nam.”

UNDP thus sought, as a clear and crucially important element of this review process, the consultants’ recommendations on potential United Nations (UN) programming to strengthen and work with civil society in Vietnam, broadly and ambitiously gauged.

The Consultants

The International Consultant on for this Review and Recommendations process is Mark Sidel, Professor of Law, Faculty Scholar, and Lauridsen Family Fellow at the University of Iowa. Professor Sidel is also President of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR), the international academic organization supporting and encouraging research on civil society, the nonprofit sector, and philanthropy.

Professor Sidel has worked on formulating, developing and implementing programs to strengthen civil society and philanthropy in Vietnam, China, India, Bangladesh, Thailand and other countries and has consulted extensively in Vietnam on civil society issues and on legal and judicial reform, with UNDP and a number of other other donors.

The National Consultant for this Review and Recommendations process is Mr. Pham Quang Nam, a highly experienced consultant on civil society in Vietnam. Mr. Nam has a master’s in economics from the Technical University of Gdansk in Poland and a bachelor’s degree in theology from Baptist Theological Seminary in Warsaw.

Mr. Nam has worked on formulating, developing, implementing, reviewing and evaluating civil society, development and other programs with Nordic Assistance to Vietnam, Oxfam America, Oxfam Hong Kong, Oxfam Great Britain, Oxfam International, Oxfam Solidarity Belgium, CARE International, CARE Denmark, Helvetas, the Rural Development Services Center (Vietnam), and other groups. He earlier worked as Programme Development Advisor, Programme Coordinator and Programme Officer at Oxfam Great Britain (Vietnam).
The team was assisted by Ms. Ta Thi Thanh Thuy, Grant Officer for the project on Support to the Renovation of Education Management (SREM), implemented by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) with assistance from the European Commission.

Acknowledgements

The consultants are grateful for the assistance of many colleagues in Hanoi for their work on providing information and arranging for the consultants’ visits in May 2010. They include, from VUSTA, Professor Ho Uy Liem, Do Thi Van, Phan Anh Son, Le Sang, Nguyen Thi Bich Diep, Minna Hakkarainen, and others; and at UNDP, Christophe Bahuet, Patricia Barandun, Marc Schanck, Nguyen Thi Mai, Nguyen Thanh Van, and others. Many others met with the consultants and they are identified in Annex 1 – we are grateful to all of them as well.

Objectives of the Assignment and Scope of Work

As defined by the Terms of Reference for this assignment, the objectives of this assignment and the scope of work are as follows:

a) Assessment and documentation of project progress made so far against the expected results as defined in the project document and annual work plans

This part of the assignment should answer the following two guiding questions:

- Have the right things been done? (Were the project’s activities relevant, appropriate and strategic compared to national goals and UNDP’s mandate in civil society?)

- Have things been done right? (Were the actions to achieve the outputs and outcomes effective and efficient?)

b) Assessment of the relevance of the project and recommendations of project scope and activities for the remainder of project life cycle taking into account recent developments and likely future scenarios influencing civil society development in Viet Nam

The assessment of the project’s relevance, scope and recommended activities until the end of the project should take into account an analysis of i) Expected benefits of the project for VUSTA’s future orientation and development; and ii) Potential benefits of the project towards civil society development in Vietnam in general. This part of the assignment should answer the following questions:

- Are the results sustainable? (Will the outputs and outcomes lead to the benefits beyond the life of the existing project?)
• How might things be done better for the remainder of the project? What additional interventions may be undertaken to support civil society development in Vietnam? (Which findings may have relevance for future programming or for other similar initiatives?)”

The Terms of Reference also require that “The external mid-term review will be:

Outcome-oriented, meaning that the evaluation should go beyond the assessment of project activities and be geared as much as possible to project contributions to the desired changes of VUSTA and of civil society in general;

Forward-looking and suggest solutions to the issues identified;

Participatory exercise considering the views and suggestions of a wide range of stakeholders and beneficiaries within and outside the VUSTA.”

The Structure of this Report

The Terms of Reference for this assignment require a:

“Mission Report consisting of three parts as follows:

a) Assessment and documentation of project accomplishments to date against expected outputs as defined in the project document and reflected in annual/quarterly work plans. The assessment of project implementation should include an analysis of success factors as well as bottleneck encountered during project implementation;

b) Assessment of relevance, and recommendations regarding future scope and activities of the project;

c) Recommendations for future programming or for other similar initiatives for future programming [on civil society] [as well as]

Verbal debriefing with UNDP and the PMU on main findings and recommendations of the field mission.”

We have combined parts (a) and (b) above, since they deal directly with the VUSTA project. They constitute Part A below, providing an assessment and recommendations relating the VUSTA project. Part (c) above (recommendations for future programming or for similar initiatives on civil society) is in Part B below, focusing on recommendations for future UN programming and capacity on civil society in Vietnam.

Annex 1 lists the persons and organizations the consultants met while in Vietnam.
Annex 2 lists the primary materials reviewed by the consultants. We note that the Project staff has provided a very wide range of materials relating to the Project and we are grateful to them for doing so. Not every such document has been listed in Annex 2, but all such documents have been reviewed by the consultants.

Annex 3 lists the initial questions raised by the consultants during meetings in Vietnam during the field mission.

**Monitoring and Progress Controls under this Assignment**

The Terms of Reference provided that the International Consultant (Sidel) would report to UNDP through the focal point, who is the UNDP Programme Officer for the VUSTA project, and work that the mid-term review team would work closely with the Project Management Unit (PMU) and Project Office, which would handle logistics arrangements for the team (other than donor meetings).

The tasks undertaken by the review team complied with the tasks outlined in the Terms of Reference. They included:

1. Desk studies of all materials relevant to evaluate the project outputs and outcomes (see Annex 2)

2. Development of a working agenda, consultation and agreement with UNDP and VUSTA, and arrangement of meetings by the PMU

3. A briefing session with UNDP senior management, Governance Cluster Head and with the Programme Officer (PO) in charge of the project upon arrival of the team leader.

4. A similar briefing with VUSTA’s senior management and its Project Management Unit

5. Field visit and interviews of organizations/individuals within and outside VUSTA as agreed by UNDP and VUSTA.

6. Mid-way debriefing with the Cluster Head, PO, Project Manager (PM) etc.

7. Presentation of the team’s initial findings and recommendations at a stakeholder workshop at the end of the mission in Viet Nam.

**Reporting Requirements**

The Terms of Reference stipulated that the draft report should be delivered two weeks after the field mission, and that it should be written in both English and Vietnamese, 20-30 pages for the English version, not including annexes. This Report and Recommendations follow a report outline developed by the consultants and discussed with UNDP.
The Terms of Reference provided that the final report should be completed no later than one week after submission of comments from UNDP and the PMU.

**Documents and Materials Used**

The team was provided with a number of key documents and obtained others either before the field mission or during it. The documents reviewed include:

- Detailed Project Document for the Project
- Annual work plans and progress reports from 2008 and 2009
- Related reports and publications on the project
- Government documents and regulations on civil society and civil society organizations
- VUSTA documents on civil society and civil society organizations
- UNDP documents on civil society and civil society organizations (UNDP-wide and Vietnam-specific)

Annex 2 lists the primary materials reviewed by the consultants. We note that the Project staff has provided a very wide range of materials relating to the Project and we are grateful to them for doing so. Not every such document has been listed in Annex 2, but all have been reviewed by the consultants.
Mission Report

Part A

Assessment and documentation of project accomplishments to date against expected outputs as defined in the project document and reflected in annual/quarterly work plans, assessment of relevance, and recommendations regarding future scope and activities

Status of Project Implementation

According to the Detailed Project Outline (DPO), the Project was to be implemented in 3.5 years, from November 2007 to March 2011. On December 24, 2007, the Project was approved by the Prime Minister. One month later, on January 24, 2008, the official signing ceremony between VUSTA and UNDP for the project was organized. From this formal kick-start, eight months passed until the full project management structure (NPD, DNPD, STA, PM, Project Assistant and Project Accountant) was set up.

The first half of 2008 was devoted to preparatory work, such as dissemination of project information within VUSTA, writing Terms of Reference, and organizing initial workshops. Though this work was undoubtedly useful to VUSTA and its member organizations, what might be called the “real” implementation of activities indicated in the project plan happened in the second half of 2008.

This work undertaken in the second half of 2008 concentrated on:

1. Developing a strategy;
2. Learning international experiences of umbrella organizations through research and a study visit;
3. Initial policy dialogue with the National Assembly and the government in various forms;
4. Training VUSTA staff in various topics.

Given the wide range of activities originally envisioned for the Project and the relatively slow start in implementation, due to insufficient staff capacity within VUSTA, other activities were proposed to carry forward to 2009. At this point a management decision was made to “limit the scope of project activities in 2009 to a number of selected key activities.”

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2 http://www.vusta.vn/Temps/Home/template2/?nid=5131.
4 Project Progress Report, Quarter 2, 2008.
5 Terms of Reference for the Mid-term Review.
In 2009, work on the VUSTA development strategy accelerated with many consultation workshops that involved VUSTA staff and leadership, member organizations, state agencies, and national and international specialists. A visible outcome of this process was the VUSTA strategy document approved by the Sixth VUSTA Congress in April 2010.

In addition, a review of VUSTA internal governance was carried out. A report was produced, which spells out clear governance shortcomings and recommendations in three areas: (1) strategy development; (2) management systems, including various procedures, job descriptions and decision making processes; and (3) human resources management.

Together with capacity building activities (training of various kinds), the governance review and its process were central to Objective 2 related to improving governance and capacity of VUSTA to better support its member organizations. Follow-up activities after the review were planned and implemented until the mid-term review was conducted. Very little was done for Objective 3: Helping to build “VUSTA [into] an effective bridge for VUSTA’s member organizations to other stakeholders.”

Toward the end of 2009 the Project moved away from the “study” approach for each activity. Some activities, such as the Networking study were meant to facilitate moving towards Objective 3, but offered no basis for developing bridging any further. The International Knowledge Management Study” (2008) could have offered good examples of bridging to members with communication tools. However, the study was never disseminated properly and therefore, it had little effect on VUSTA. Also it was clear by that time, that VUSTA lacked technical tools such as a member database that are elementary requirements for working with members.

The following is a summary of the implementation status of activities as of December 2009:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives and outputs</th>
<th>Level of activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective 1: Strengthening VUSTA’s capacity to represent its member organisations’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interests in contributing to the government’s policy-making processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 VUSTA has a strategic vision and mission towards its role as an umbrella organisation</td>
<td>Relatively High: Most planned activities have been carried out, and a development strategy adopted with Project assistance, though future implementation remains a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 VUSTA has developed effective mechanisms for consultation with, and a strategy for representing member organisations</td>
<td>Low: Little to no activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Increased awareness of VUSTA, its role and potential in contributing to government policies, programmes and projects</td>
<td>Low to Medium: Increased policy advocacy with the National Assembly; three policy dialogue workshops on climate change, law on health insurance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and law on civil servants were organized, mostly organized through the International Cooperation Department

**Objective 2: VUSTA’s internal governance and capacity is improved to better support its member organisations, and to work as a facilitator for networking and information sharing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1 Governance of VUSTA improved to better support its member organisations</th>
<th><strong>Medium</strong>: Most planned activities have been carried out, though unclear how institutionalized governance changes have become</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2 VUSTA’s capacity developed to support its member organizations</td>
<td><strong>Medium</strong>: Training courses in various topics have been organized, though sustainability of this capacity remains unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 VUSTA has better systems in place for information sharing and knowledge management of/for its member organisations</td>
<td><strong>Low</strong>: Research was conducted, but not follow-up activities yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective 3: VUSTA is an effective bridge for VUSTA’s member organisations to other stakeholders**

| 3.1 The creation of effective networks and communities of practices among VUSTA member organisations | **Low**: Research on participatory networking models for VUSTA was conducted but little to no follow-up activities yet. |
| 3.2 VUSTA is an effective bridge between VUSTA member organisations and international organizations | **Low**: No activity yet in this area |
| 3.3 VUSTA is an effective bridge between its member organisations and the Government | **Medium to Low**: Some policy consultation activities with the National Assembly involving some member organizations, but not institutionalized or coordinated within VUSTA |

(Source: Project implementation reports)

As of May 2010, the disbursement of fund from UNDP is less than 50% of the total project budget of approximately $1.25 million USD.

**Progress Toward Achieving the Stated Objectives**

1. **The Project has supported VUSTA in developing its first ever development strategy for the next ten years**

Among the positive changes the Project has brought to VUSTA, the development strategy is usually mentioned first by VUSTA’s leaders and staff. For the first time in its more than 25 year history, VUSTA has developed a strategy that describes the organization’s guiding principles, vision, mission, overall goals, major objectives and main interventions for the next ten years.
The desire to develop a strategy was long present in VUSTA’s leadership circles, it appears, but the support of the Project has helped significantly to realize it. This is a significant success for the Project. Given the organization’s socio-political nature and the importance of strategy for organizational development, the leadership chose UNDP to assist in this process from among the sources of external support available to it, largely because of UNDP’s political neutrality and the trust it enjoys from the Government.

Assisting VUSTA with the development of institutional strategy was high on the Project’s agenda from its start. Several positive contributions brought by the Project to the process are as follows:

- The Project has broadened the perspectives of VUSTA’s leaders, staff, leaders of member associations and key government officials on such vital issues as the role of umbrella organizations, knowledge sharing and organizational learning, and civil society leadership through workshops, study visits, comparative analyses, training, and international expertise.

- With Project assistance, VUSTA’s leaders and staff are better informed about the real situation within the organization, the external environment, and internal governance issues through the analysis and discussions in respective areas supported by the Project.

- The Project helped significantly in making the strategy development process more participatory. A strategy task force was formed within VUSTA, with participation of staff from different departments. At least five workshops were organized for VUSTA members, including central associations, provincial unions and Decree 81 organisations, to set out the guiding principles of VUSTA development and comment on the draft strategy. Participation leads to a greater sense of ownership, which, in turn, will hopefully facilitate implementation.

Positive influences of the project on the strategy can be observed in the initial phase, when VUSTA leaders, leaders of member associations and Decree 81 organisations met and agreed on the basic requirements for the strategy, including:

- The strategy should have a clear vision and mission. VUSTA should not develop its strategy in the same way as issuing a resolution.

- The strategy needs to be written in an “international language” for it to be clear and easily understood. The process should not follow the way of developing Party documents.

- The strategy should set out clear long-term and short-term objectives.

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6 There are a few other international organizations supporting VUSTA in aspects of its work, including ICCO (Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation), Oxfam Great Britain, and CARE International in Vietnam.
• The strategy should have clear outputs and quantifiable indicators.

• The strategy should have main tasks robust enough to make VUSTA a strong socio-political organization.

• Strategy for developing human resources is the most important element of the overall strategy.

Finally, the strategy was approved by the Sixth Congress of VUSTA in May 2010 as the organisation’s official development strategy for the period 2010-2020. Although it is not a perfect document, as pointed out by people both inside and outside VUSTA, it has quality characteristics that can be clearly attributed Project support, including:

• The structure of the strategy is clear and coherent, and the strategy includes vision, mission, overall goals and concrete objectives, monitoring indicators, main tasks and organization of implementation.

• VUSTA’s representation role, which includes coordination, protection and support for the members, is emphasized in the mission, overall goal and concrete objectives.

• Advocating for a more enabling policy environment, improving VUSTA’s governance, developing support services for member organizations and expanding cooperation with domestic and international organizations are integrated into one strategy.

The strategy and its contents were directly used by VUSTA’s leadership to influence the content of Directive 42 of the Political Bureau of the Vietnamese Communist Party issued in April 2010 on the role and functions of VUSTA. There are clear similarities between the two documents. This is a powerful incentive for VUSTA and its leadership to implement the strategy, understanding that the highest Party leadership has approved the main directions set out in it. The Directive is also a basis for more enabling policies from the Government for VUSTA in the future.

Having a strategy approved is not the end in itself. Only implementing it well can bring long-term, effective changes to VUSTA and, through that, contribute to the development of civil society in Vietnam. VUSTA’s focus is now on the implementation plan for the next five years. In the Project’s remaining time, the Project should continue to support VUSTA in planning for the implementation of the strategy.
2. **The Project has contributed to some increasing cooperation and information sharing among VUSTA’s departments, though this is not yet either institutionalized or sustainable**

Another positive change that the Project has brought to VUSTA is some increased cooperation and information sharing between different departments, though this is not yet either institutionalized or sustainable. The internal governance analysis showed significant overlaps among the departments in some activities, and yet some other tasks that no department undertook. There is weak coordination and information exchange between these different “silos” (as one might accurately term the VUSTA departments). These issues cannot be resolved within the framework of this Project.

The Project introduced a new practice: it invited representatives from different departments to participate in a task force for governance review and strategy development. By working together in team, the participants realized the benefits of good coordination and collaboration. Besides those two tasks, the project also created space for information sharing, such as Young Leadership Training Program or sharing events. A good change was observed, but at the present it seems to be confined to Project activities rather than being institutionalized or sustainable within VUSTA more broadly. The challenge is how to institutionalize cooperation practices (through internal procedures and leadership orientation) and create a culture of teamwork (by changing staff attitudes) in the normal, regular, every day, mainstream functioning of VUSTA. So far, the mid-term review team has not yet noticed evidence of wider replication of information sharing and collaboration. One positive point in this aspect is that internal procedures on information sharing are now being developed.

3. **The Project has enhanced the capacity of younger staff and young potential leaders in VUSTA through the Young Leadership Training Program**

A third area of positive change is in the staff’s capacity, especially young staff participating in the Young Leadership Training Program. In total, four training courses have been run on the following topics: (1) the chief executive officer (CEO); (2) “Breaking through thinking”; (3) “Leadership and change management”; and (4) Presentation skills.

Through being exposed to good training and trainers, the younger staff indicated that they have broadened their knowledge, become more professional at work, and strengthened their confidence and presentation skills. These are preconditions for more effective participation in decision making (or at least influencing the decision making process) in VUSTA. A positive shift in organizational culture was also mentioned by several staff members, who have noted that VUSTA’s leaders pay more attention to listening to staff opinions before making decisions.

When looking the training programme as a whole, it is evident that the high appreciation of the new knowledge is based on attention given to the young staff rather than the learning outcomes of the training offered so far. The programme has no clearly defined
expected learning outcomes (general and individual), no well thought pedagogical approach to enhance learning and no strategy to address the needs for practical leadership skills or concrete outcomes that would facilitate and enhance VUSTA’s development and strategy implementation.

4. To some extent, the Project has enhanced the linkage between social organizations, the National Assembly and Government agencies. However, the scope of this work is quite limited and not proportionate to the need or potential

Our interviews with VUSTA personnel, the Institute of Legislative Studies in the National Assembly, and others indicate that the work of VUSTA on social consultation and policy feedback, as formally mandated in Decision 22/2002 of the Prime Minister, is gaining more attention in the National Assembly and Party circles. Contributing to policy making and providing independent review of key national projects are regarded as a high priority by VUSTA leadership.

The relationship with the National Assembly is relatively strong through both personal and official ties. That is also a weakness in these processes – VUSTA’s approach to policy advocacy and consultation is still largely dependent on individuals rather than institutionalization or of VUSTA leadership. VUSTA is actively involved in policy dialogues around many issues, such as the Law on Mineral Extraction, the Law on the Capital City, the bauxite projects in the Central Highlands, and the high-speed railroad connecting Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Recently, and for the first time, VUSTA has received funding of 300 million VND from the National Assembly to carry out its policy works. A cooperation mechanism has been signed between VUSTA and the National Assembly’s Institute for Legislative Studies. And the Center for Social Evaluation, headed by Professor and Deputy Secretary-General Pham Bich San, is also quite active in policy advocacy and evaluation with the government and the National Assembly, though cooperation between the Project and the Center for Social Evaluation has been virtually nonexistent, a troubling aspect of the policy advocacy work.

There is significant diversity among the member associations and the Decree 81 organisations in these policy advocacy activities. Some groups are strong in policy influence with good, independent ties to policy makers, such as the Construction Association or, a very different group, the Decree 81 organisation Centre for Policy, Law and Development (PLD). But many member groups and Decree 81 organisations strongly need VUSTA to be a bridge that connects them to policy makers. Besides the connection role, VUSTA needs to effectively play a role of coordination in order to mobilize expertise in different fields for policy works that span across many scientific disciplines, such as the Law on the Capital City. VUSTA has not yet played these roles effectively.

7 12 scientists and intellectuals belonging to VUSTA’s member associations are currently National Assembly deputies. VUSTA’s newly elected president is also the Chairman of the National Assembly Committee for Science and Technology.

14
So far the Project has supported three workshops with social organizations, National Assembly deputies and representatives from Government agencies on climate change, the Law on Health Insurance, and the Law on Civil Servants, in addition to more informal lobbying work and the social evaluation and policy advocacy activities carried out by the Center for Social Evaluation.

This level of activity is far too little for this important line of VUSTA’s work. The planned activities under Project output 1.2 that support the connection and coordination roles have not been carried out. The Project should support the development of the “rules of play” or “consultation mechanism” between VUSTA and its member associations and Decree 81 organisations. This will serve as a key foundation for the future expansion of policy advocacy through workshops, research, conferences, lobbying and other activities.

5. Other Project achievements

In addition, other achievements of the Project include:

- Awareness raising of VUSTA leadership and staff on the importance to shift towards a more member-centered oriented and independent organisation
- Assistance in undertaking strategy based and plan-based working methodology, and to start developing an M&E system
- Attempts to facilitate internal coordination and cooperation among VUSTA leadership – staff and VUSTA departments (in terms of governance, organizational development, human resources management, and future vision)
- Development of operational regulations and guidelines (expenditure guideline, international communications policy, job descriptions for key positions, etc. and assistance in piloting these documents.

Shortcomings and Difficulties in Achieving the Project Objectives

An examination of the status of the project implementation is more than sufficient to draw a conclusion that less than half of the planned activities have been implemented in the majority of the Project period that has now elapsed. This corresponds to the disbursement rate of less than 50%. This reality points to serious shortcomings and difficulties that were frequently discussed during the mid-term review. These are problems of both initial design and implementation.

1. The Project has far too many components and too little time for implementation given its current staffing level and limited amount of time VUSTA’s staff to devote to Project activities

The project, with its three objectives, nine outputs and thirty indicative activities, is human intensive, not capital intensive. Far too much was planned, a result of the serious “projectification” errors of UNDP and its partners. This was exacerbated in work with VUSTA, an organization with significantly limited capacity for work with international
donors and one whose previous experience in working with UNDP was limited to a brief, single activity involving the Law on Associations. Instead of a multi-year, multi-pronged Project that suits UNDP’s and the government’s project design mandates rather than the actual needs of the situation and of VUSTA, UNDP’s cooperation with VUSTA should have been allowed to grow more naturally, through a series of activities with gradually increasing layers of programming, cooperation and complexity. Those were very real program design mistakes. The Project could not succeed effectively in that framework. We need to fix them now.8

Each Project activity may involve several workshops, meetings and research that engage consultants, mostly national, but sometimes also international. Most of the work of coordination (inside or outside VUSTA), organizing, writing terms of reference, bidding and selection of consultants fall into the shoulders of a Project team that consisted of one Project Manager and one project assistant, with support at a distance from the Senior Technical Advisor. (That effective Project Manager has now left.)

Other responsibilities relating to administration, monitoring and report writing add to these over-designed and under-resourced burdens. Given the fact that coordination in Vietnam is often time consuming, and the pool of consultants in civil society and organizational development is still very limited, it is not surprising to see the terms “delay”, “postpone”, and “carry over (to later period)” show up with alarming frequency in the Project periodic reports. Many activities, for example those aiming at enhancing the connection and coordination role of VUSTA in policy advocacy, have not yet effectively started, despite the fact that only nine months remain in the Project.

Some research is left with no follow-up or little follow-up, like the research on participatory networking models for VUSTA or knowledge sharing and organizational learning. Some crucial recommendations of the governance review, such as internal procedures for expenditures, and procedures for information sharing and collaboration, have not been finalized almost a year after they were first proposed. If those procedures were in place, they would improve the transparency and accountability of VUSTA, as well as the organization’s effectiveness.

The project brings an additional amount of work to VUSTA staff on the top of their existing work. They have to work harder without additional allowances. Even though VUSTA as a whole and the staff as individuals do benefit from Project activities in one way or another, this arrangement does affect their motivation, further shrinking the human resources available for the project. The mid-term review team sometimes heard comparison on allowances of this project and other international projects that support VUSTA, of course to the favor of the other.

The Senior Technical Advisor position provides some helpful support in some activities, for example the strategy development and comparative analysis of umbrella organizations in other countries. Yet there are significant disadvantages to the long-distance and part-

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8 Outsourcing was possible for some activities, at a cost of capacity building for regular VUSTA staff. This was not attempted in the first phases of the Project.
time STA structure. They include the need for frequent update on the project progress and contextual changes, taking valuable time away from planning and implementation activities from the Project Manager and project assistant, and, because of distance, difficulties in accessing assistance at times when it is needed.

To solve the problem of limited human resources, the mid-term review team proposes the following options, in addition to limit the activities to be conducted in the final months of the Project:

- Increase the level of project staffing by adding one more project assistant.
- Contract a consultancy firm that has a pool of international and national consultants to provide technical assistance and consultancy services to the project in a timely manner. This would not be to solve problems for VUSTA, but to assist in concrete activities.

2. The structure of the Project management (National Project Director, Deputy National Project Director, Project Manager, and others) has not been conducive to introducing and sustaining improvement and reforms in VUSTA

Among the changes the Project aims to bring to VUSTA, some related directly to the functions of VUSTA as an organization. The VUSTA strategy is one of them. Another example is the culture of open communication and close cooperation between different “silos” within VUSTA. The governance review proposes a customer-oriented management style, in which the Party, National Assembly, Government and members, including units 81, are regarded as customers, whom VUSTA is to serve. This would be a radical shift in attitude, and if accepted, it would deeply affect the way VUSTA is doing its business. The issues of participation, transparency and accountability all belong to the sphere of organizational values and culture.

For those changes to be established, the active involvement of the highest leadership of VUSTA is a prerequisite. The current project management structure, however, does not facilitate direct leadership by VUSTA’s leaders over Project activities. The Deputy National Project Director is “de facto” leader who directs the project. As the director of the International Cooperation Department, he is equal to other department heads and not in a position to effectively manage or lead Project activities or to introduce system-wide changes.

The review team, therefore, propose the following changes to the structure. We believe that these changes are crucially important to the functioning of the remaining time of this Project and thus to the future relationship between UNDP and VUSTA, and we suggest that VUSTA and UNDP should ignore these recommendations at the potential peril to future work together:

- Maintain the NPD role in the hands of VUSTA’s leader (Vice President or above) and abolish the position of DNPD
• The Project Manager should relate directly and work directly with VUSTA’s departments, not mediated through a DNPD who is a VUSTA department director, and should report directly to the NPD.

• Organize meetings between senior leadership of UNDP and VUSTA in a considerably more frequent manner as a way to encourage more direct involvement of VUSTA’s leadership in the project and to strengthen UNDP’s understandings of VUSTA’s role and the issues it faces.

In general terms, we note that the central apparatus of VUSTA is weak, finds it difficult to mobilize and coordinate the resources of the Union, and to act as an umbrella organization. Governance, capacity, decision making processes and management are weak. There are no generally applicable operational rules and regulations. Functional departments work independently with little coordination or information sharing across the board. The flow of communication between the project office and VUSTA as whole organization has been weak. There is no clear role of coordinating assigned to the General Office. A human resource development plan is missing. No M&E system (except the Examining Committee) is in place. There is no clear or transparent financial reporting system. The Project cannot fix all of these problems, but can only help in some limited ways with a few of them. These are structural problems that can only be repaired over time, not through this Project.

**Recommendations**

The review team, convinced of the relevance of the Project and its achievements, and at the same time fully aware of the very significant difficulties that obstruct its progress, proposes that VUSTA and UNDP extend the Project period to December 2011 if progress on Project activities justify such an extension, to undertake a highly focused set of activities until the Project definitively ends in December 2011. The Project should not be extended past that point. Those activities are grouped into the following major areas:

1. **Strongly Focus on Strengthening Social Consultation and Policy Feedback**

   • Seek to develop a structured, institutionalized, coordinated “upward” consultation mechanism with the Party, National Assembly and Government that is not dependent on personal contacts and that is fully coordinated and increasingly institutionalized within VUSTA.

   • Develop a structured, institutionalized, coordinated “downward” consultation and coordination mechanism with the member associations and Decree 81 organizations in policy advocacy.

   • Develop a toolkit, handbook and/or guidelines to help the member groups, including the Decree 81 organisations, in social consultations and policy feedback.
2. **Strongly Focus on Improving VUSTA’s Governance and Capacity to Represent Member Groups, including Decree 81 Organisations**

- Work closely with VUSTA in developing an initial five year restructuring and implementation plan in connection with the newly adopted development strategy
- Finalize procedures on expenditures and internal communication/collaboration policy between different departments and work very hard on implementing those in the time remaining
- Continue and further develop the Young Leaders Training Programme (including placement component) to enhance change in the working culture within VUSTA and to increase professionalism within the organization.

3. **Strongly Focus on Rapidly Strengthening Support for Member Associations and Decree 81 Organisations**

- Develop and conduct an independent survey of members (including Decree 81 organisations) for long term usage and regular updating, to identify the needs and expectations of members (including member organizational demands on VUSTA, services to be provided, concrete support, roles in social consultation and lobbying, etc.), in order to develop a set of key member services according to their needs and demands
- Create a register of all members that is shared by all departments using proper software that can be used to contact the members, seek their input on VUSTA and policy work, and for other purposes
- Train local authorities (including provincial Party committees and People’s Committees) and provincial VUSTA unions in selected provinces in Decree 81 issues to facilitate the process of establishing and to strengthen support for Decree 81 organisations at sub-national levels

4. **Strongly Focus on Strengthening the Policy and Legal Environment for Civil Society**

- Conduct a comparative analysis of civil society in other countries and organize a workshop on that topic, focusing on key themes of interest to the Party, to feed directly into the current study on civil society being undertaken by the Party Commission for Propaganda and other Party groups
- Organize a high-level visit to Scandinavia by the member of the Political Bureau responsible for civil society issues, as well as the Director of the Party Propaganda Commission, to study civil society in contexts where states are open and supportive towards civil society organisations. This would not be a capacity building visit for VUSTA in any way, but a high level policy visit by Party personnel facilitated by the Project, to enable key Party officials to learn from Scandinavian experiences, increase their knowledge on the topic as well as to share their views on civil society in the Vietnamese context by observing the roles of civil society in Scandinavia. This activity would not take place unless the member of the Political Bureau and the Director of the Party Propaganda
Commission were directly participating in the visit; it is not a Project activity for lower level personnel without the involvement of these two key policymakers.

- Conduct a comparative workshop and publish a volume on key issues in the legal framework for civil society that are of particular interest to Vietnam, bringing in perspectives on those focused issues from China, the Philippines, and other countries.

5. **Strengthening Project Management**

- Contract a consultancy firm that has a pool of international and national consultants to provide technical assistance and consultancy services to the Project in a rapid, timely and effective manner. This would not be to solve problems for VUSTA, but to assist in concrete activities.

- Maintain the NPD role in the hands of a senior VUSTA leader (President or Vice President) and abolish the position of DNPD because there is no need for multiple levels of management and supervision that may not effectively facilitate the work of the Project.

- Have the Project Manager report directly to the NPD, with direct and unfettered access to the NPD, and relate to VUSTA departments and department heads on a direct basis.

- Organize regular monthly or bimonthly meetings between senior leadership of UNDP and VUSTA in a more frequent manner to encourage more direct involvement of VUSTA’s leadership in the Project. We envision meetings every two months between Professor Liem as NPD and Christophe Bahuet, and monthly meetings between relevant department heads and the Project Manager and Patricia Barandun and Marc Schanck.

- Increase the level of project staffing by adding an additional project assistant.
Part B

Recommendations for Future Programming to Strengthen and Work with Civil Society in Vietnam

The UN strategy for strengthening and working with civil society in Vietnam: Where should the UN’s focus and entry points be in strengthening and working with social organizations and civil society groups?

1. It is crucial to recognize and document the UN’s increasing activity in working with and strengthening civil society in Vietnam.

Our review and interviews in Hanoi found that the United Nations has become increasingly active in programming with civil society and working to strengthen civil society in Vietnam.

This work takes a number of forms, and information on all these forms of activity with and for civil society has not yet been gathered and publicized in such a way as to make clear the UN’s extensive and growing engagement with Vietnamese civil society. This is an important story that needs to be told now, and with data on projects and engagements continually added so that Vietnamese and other communities understand the UN’s growing and important engagement with Vietnamese civil society.

Those current and developing forms of engagement include:

- Projects to strengthen Vietnamese civil society through support of official umbrella organizations (such as the VUSTA and VLA projects)
- Direct project work with civil society partners (such as UNAIDS work with Vietnamese NGOs; work on public administration with the Hanoi-based research group CECODES; and many other forms of partnership with Vietnamese civil society groups of different kinds)
- Work to strengthen the policy climate and legal framework for civil society and civil society organizations in Vietnam (such as UNDP’s support for work on the Law on Associations)
- Work to strengthen the role of civil society groups, business associations and other non-state or “lesser” state actors in domestic policy dialogue
- Work to strengthen the role of civil society groups and other non-state or “lesser” state actors in policy dialogue involving the government and the donor community
- Work to strengthen research and understanding of the Vietnamese civil society sector (such as UNDP’s support for the CIVICUS Vietnam project
and many instances of extensive UNDP assistance to civil society research undertakings in Vietnam).

2. **The UN should rapidly become the key convenor and pivot point for donor support to and work with civil society in Vietnam.**

The UN is a crucial player in these activities, active across a number of fronts and trusted more to work on the still-sensitive questions of civil society than virtually any other donor. As donor attention turns to issues of civil society, participation, and democratic governance, the UN has already taken a lead in this programming – but it is not yet perceived to be playing a leading role, and it has not taken its rightful position as convenor of rapidly increasing donor activity and interest in this rapidly growing field.

The diversity and intensity of UN activity in this area, and that of other donors, and the increasing array of Vietnamese civil society groups (ranging from the less to the more official), demands that the UN play a stronger role in programming and convening donor activity and information sharing in this field. To that end, we propose the following steps:

**The UN should rapidly move to a position of convenor and pivot point for growing donor activities in this area, serving as the central point for information sharing, donor-relevant dialogues with government, direct programming of its own, and support for government understanding of the roles of civil society.**

- This will require an increase in UN capacity to work with and on civil society, through a Policy Advisor, or a Coordinator, based in the Resident Coordinator’s office or in one of the UN agencies, or some other mechanism. The current programming capacity at the individual UN agencies to work on this issue and to serve as convenor and pivot point at a time when donor work on civil society is growing rapidly is absolutely insufficient.

- This will require additional programming capacity in UNDP and other UN agencies, to work on the following crucially important topics in this field:

3. **UN agencies should continue to work at multiple levels with and to strengthen civil society, as they have been doing, but should intensify this work in seven major areas.** These seven areas are:

- **After the 2011 Party Congress, the UN should rapidly increase its work to assist the government and the civil society community in strengthening the policy climate and legal framework for social organizations and civil society groups in Vietnam.**

- **The UN should work actively on building the infrastructure for civil society in Vietnam.**
(3) The UN should lead a multi-donor effort to support rapid expansion of capacity building for the social organization sector in Vietnam through a social organization capacity building center.

(4) The UN should lead donor efforts to strengthen civil society policy dialogue with government and with the donor community.

(5) The UN and UN agencies should intensify work with the burgeoning social organization and civil society networks in sectoral fields of interest, and should serve as the focal point for information sharing among donors on the rapidly increasing role of these networks.

(6) The UN should continue working with national umbrella groups such as VUSTA on issues directly relevant to the strengthening of civil society organizations of various kinds.

(7) UN agencies should intensify their work with specific social organizations and civil society groups in their fields of interest on policy, project and other matters.

Details on these recommendations are below:

(1) The UN should rapidly increase its work to assist the government and the civil society community in strengthening the policy climate and legal framework for social organizations and civil society groups in Vietnam by undertaking the following:

- Direct work with the Party (through the Commission on Propaganda and other units, perhaps with the Party School (Nguyen Ai Quoc Academy) or VUSTA as an intermediary), on ongoing, crucially important Party studies on the role of civil society. This should begin immediately, not waiting until after the Party Congress, since the Party studies on civil society are already well underway.

- A comparative study, to be made available to senior Party and government policymakers and to be published in Vietnam, on the policy climate and legal framework for civil society-government relations in countries that are directly relevant to Vietnam, such as China, the Philippines, and others.

- Initiation, in the fourth quarter of 2010, of a flexible UN fund (perhaps based in UNDP or one of the other UN agencies) to work rapidly and flexibly with national groups that are working directly on key elements of the policy climate and legal framework. Such a fund would support bringing comparative policy and legal expertise to Vietnam on very short notice to assist Party, government, drafting and other groups; convening small groups for dialogue on pressing policy and legal issues; send small groups of direct policymakers to directly relevant...
countries for targeted, intensive discussions of key, pressing issues; and other needs

- New work on the legal framework for civil society in Vietnam, including a comparative legal study on key issues of particular concern to Vietnamese policymakers

(2) The UN should work actively on building the infrastructure for the civil society in Vietnam, through the following means:

- Strengthening and funding an indigenous research and policy advocacy community through the formation of civil society research centers. A number of such research centers now exist in China, and they have been important and powerful actors for research, policy formation, policy dialogue and official and public recognition of the role for civil society. At least two such centers should be supported in Hanoi, and one in Ho Chi Minh City, in recognized academic institutions, including support for training, programs, materials, and other needs.

- Supporting research studies that document the role of civil society in Vietnam and its importance in social innovation, including the role of social organizations at the local level in Vietnam. Over the short term (1-2 years), the UN should support research work on the following issues, among others:
  - The role and governance of the hundreds of Decree 81 organizations throughout Vietnam
  - Service and program delivery by social organizations at various levels in Vietnam
  - The process of localization of international NGOs and their work into domestic organizations in Vietnam
  - The role and governance of the hundreds of Decree 88/new Decree 45 organizations throughout Vietnam

- Collecting and publishing on the web, in one place all previous research in Vietnamese and foreign languages to serve as a resource for the expanding community working with social organizations in Vietnam (this may be part of the UN role, above).

- Where conditions permit, the UN should be a strong supporter of the development of think tanks in Vietnam that are, to the degree possible, independent in their analysis and discussion of policy. As a result of Decision 97 and related issues, this type of programming may need to wait for some time to carry out directly, but it should be firmly noted that many Decree 81 and other organizations are, in fact, carrying out a “think tank” role within their specific fields and should be supported in this policy research, analysis and participation role.
(3) The UN should lead a multi-donor effort to support rapid expansion of capacity building for the social organization sector in Vietnam through a social organization capacity building center.

- Such an organization needs to have real autonomy and focus on high quality, specialized capacity building for the Vietnamese sectors
- It should be hosted by an institution that can help to ensure the necessary autonomy and quality, perhaps the NGO Resource Center, or it may be a stand-alone institution

(4) The UN should lead donor efforts to strengthen civil society policy dialogue with government and with the donor community, through multiple means including:

- Direct government-social organization dialogue
- Support for social consultations and other forms of social organization participation in policy formation
- Support for social and civil society organizations to take part in dialogue with donors on Vietnamese development issues
- Support for social and civil society organizations to take part in government-donor dialogues

(5) The UN and UN agencies should intensify their work with the burgeoning social organization and civil society networks in sectoral fields of interest, and should serve as the focal point for information sharing among donors on the rapidly increasing role of these networks. This work should include:

- Direct support to these burgeoning sectoral networks, where feasible and where such support would not overwhelm the networks
- Facilitating policy dialogue between these networks and government, the networks and donors
- Facilitating the international and regional linkages of these networks, which are currently increasing networked in Vietnam but very little outside

(6) The UN should continue working with national umbrella groups such as VUSTA on issues directly relevant to the strengthening of civil society organizations of various kinds.

- In future, such projects should be focused on strengthening social organizations and civil society organizations that function under the umbrella of VUSTA and other such umbrellas, transitioning from capacity building projects for such organizations themselves
- Focal umbrella groups should be chosen very carefully and only those that actually serve as protective (as well as managerial) umbrellas for a wide range of social organizations and civil society groups
UN agencies should intensify their work with specific social organizations and civil society groups in their fields of interest on policy, project and other matters, finding innovative ways to work with a broad range of such groups, and documenting such work through a central coordination point (the mechanism discussed in (1) above) so that the entire Vietnamese and donor community can become aware of the extent of the UN’s work with these groups.

Steps and Sequencing

We understand that not all of these steps can be undertaken immediately, nor all undertaken at the same time. And we understand that in some of these areas, the UN will and should serve as a direct donor, while in others the UN should help facilitate the work of other donors who choose specific areas above for focus.

Over the next several years, we strongly recommend that the UN and UN agencies undertake the following priority tasks in this area:

1. Recognizing, documenting and publicizing the UN’s increasing activity in working with and strengthening civil society in Vietnam

2. Rapidly becoming the key convenor and pivot point for donor support to and work with civil society in Vietnam, including, crucially, through the expansion of UN staff capacity for work in this area – a clear necessity if any of these tasks and those below are to be accomplished in any way

3. Among the seven specific areas for work listed above, if choices need to be made among them, we believe that that UN and UN agencies are best positioned to work on the following issues:

   • Strengthening the policy climate and legal framework for social organizations and civil society groups in Vietnam.

   • Working actively on building the infrastructure for civil society in Vietnam, including civil society research centers

   • Rapidly expanding capacity building for the social organization sector in Vietnam through a high quality and relatively autonomous social organization capacity building center

   • Strengthening civil society policy dialogue with government and with the donor community

   • Strengthening the burgeoning social organization and civil society networks in sectoral fields of interest
• Some limited continuing support for VUSTA on issues directly relevant to the strengthening of civil society organizations of various kinds, but not support for VUSTA’s other priorities that do not relate directly to strengthening civil society organizations, and not expanding this work to other socio-political organizations unless they serve as a clear umbrella to a large number of social organizations and civil society groups

• As part of their regular sector programming, intensifying work with specific social organizations and civil society groups in their fields of interest on policy, project and other matters.

Conclusion

We have been honored by the assignment from UNDP and VUSTA to carry out the Mid-term Review of this important project and to provide recommendations to the UN on strengthening and deepening its programming with and for civil society in Vietnam. We very much appreciate the exceptional support provided to our team by both UNDP and VUSTA, and the many contributions to this Review and Recommendations made by interviewees and meeting participants from a number of UN agencies, VUSTA membership groups, and others. We stand ready to discuss this Review and these Recommendations further at any time.
Annex 1

Individuals and Organizations Interviewed during the Consultants’ Mission in Hanoi, May 2010

VUSTA

Professor Ho Uy Liem, Vice President and National Project Director (NPD)
Mr. Phan Anh Son, Director-General, International Cooperation Department, and Deputy National Project Director (DNPD)
Ms. Do Thi Van, Director-General, Personnel and Organization Department
Dr. Pham Van Tan, Secretary General
Professor Pham Bich San, Deputy Secretary General and Director, Office for Social Evaluation and Consultancy (OSEC)
Mr. Le Cong Luong, Chief of the General Office
Ms. Bui Kim Tuyen, Deputy Director-General, Personnel and Organization Department
Mr. Tran Xuan Viet, Department of Science and Technology and Economics
Ms. Duong Thi Nga, International Cooperation Department
Ms. Nguyen Hong Yen, General Office
Ms. Nguyen Thi Dung, Office of Inspection
Ms. Nguyen Thi Bich Diep, former Project Manager
Ms. Minna Hakkarainen, Senior Technical Advisor, VUSTA-UNDP Project
Mr. Le Anh Sang, Project Assistant
Ms. Dam Thi Thanh Nga, Project Accountant

UNDP

Mr. Christophe Bahuet, Deputy Country Director (Programme)
Ms. Patricia Barandun, Assistant Resident Representative, and Chief, Governance Cluster
Mr. Schanck, Programme Officer for Civil Society and Anti-Corruption

Others Met

Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Lam, Vice President, Vietnam Association of Crafts Villages (VICRAFTS) and former Director, NGO Department, Ministry of Civil Affairs

Professor Nguyen Quang A, former Director, Vietnam Institute for Development Studies (IDS)

Professor Dang Ngoc Dinh, Director, Centre for Development Studies and Community Support (CECODES)

Professor Nguyen Dang Dung, Hanoi University Faculty of Law

Mr. Pham Quoc Anh, President, Vietnam Lawyers Association (VLA)
Dr. (Ms.) Vuong Thi Hanh, Director, Center for Education Promotion and Empowerment of Women (CEPEW), and member, GENCOMNET

Mr. Tran Ngoc Hung, President, Vietnam Construction Association

Professor Hoang Ngoc Giao, Director, Center for Policy, Law and Development (PLD)

Dr. Tran Tuan, Director, Research and Training Centre for Community Development (a Decree 81 organization)

Ms. Dao Mai Hoa, Director, COHED (a Decree 81 organization)

Ms. Quynh Anh, Vice Director, C&D (a Decree 81 organization)

Dr. Dinh Xuan Thao, Director, Institute of Legislative Studies, National Assembly and member of the National Assembly

Mr. Bui Hai Thiem, Deputy Director, Department for General Affairs, Institute for Legislative Studies, National Assembly

Ms. Nguyen Quynh Chi, Senior Consultant, Organizational Capacity Development (OCD)

Mr. Nguyen Phuong Linh, Director, Center for Management and Sustainable Development (MSD)

Mr. Nguyen Manh Cuong, Dean, Faculty of International Studies, Hanoi University

Ms. Marcia Monge, Senior Technical Advisor (STA) for Parliamentary Development, UNDP Project 00049114 with the Office of the National Assembly (ONA) and the Committee on Financial and Budgetary Affairs (CFBA)

Mr. Lars Udsholt, Capacitate (Denmark)

Ms. Trine Glue Doan, Consultant and former Director, NGO Resource Centre, Hanoi

Mr. Marko Lovrekovic, Managing Co-Director, NGO Resource Centre (Hanoi)

At a roundtable at UNDP, the following donors were present: DFID, U.S. Embassy, AusAid, European Commission, World Health Organization, Embassy of Sweden and Swedish SIDA, ActionAid, and a number of others. They included:

Ho My Dung, Program Officer, Development Cooperation Section, Embassy of Sweden

Dominique Ponson, Directeur-Adjoint, Maison du Droit Vietnamo-Francaise, Hanoi Law University
Nishioka Takeshi, Chief Advisor, Prosecutor – Legal Expert for JICA, Legal and Judicial System Reform Project, JICA

Obata Yoko, Legal Expert, JICA Legal and Judicial System Reform Project

Eileen Skinnider, Associate, International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy (UBC, Vancouver)

Michael Orona, Political Officer, Embassy of the United States

Pascal Raess, Deputy Country Director and First Secretary – Development and Cooperation, Swiss Cooperation for the Mekong Region, Embassy of Switzerland

Elsa Hastad, First Secretary and Deputy Head of Development Cooperation Section (Democracy and Anti-Corruption), Embassy of Sweden

Than Thi Thien Huong, Social Development Advisor, DFID Vietnam, British Embassy

Le Thi Phuong Thao, Programme Coordinator, Embassy of Finland

Daniel Valenghi, Country Director, Helvetas (Swiss Association for International Cooperation)

A roundtable with UN colleagues was convened to discuss UN programming with and to strengthen civil society. Among those present were:

Christophe Bahuet, Patricia Barandun, and Marc Schanck, UNDP

Vu Ngoc Binh, National Coordinator, CEDAW South East Asia Program, UNIFEM Vietnam

Nilgun F. Tas, Representative, UNIDO

Eamonn Murphy, Country Director, UNAIDS Vietnam

Alex Warren-Rodriguez, Economic Policy Advisor, UNDP Vietnam
Annex 2

VUSTA-UNDP Project Documents, VUSTA Documents, UNDP Documents, and Other Materials Reviewed

Basic Project Documents


Project Progress and Assessment Documents

Original Project Work Plan and Budget (2007)
Original Project Activities Plan (2007)

Project Annual Work Plan and Budget 2008

Progress of the 2008 Workplan
Progress Report for Quarter II 2008
Project Annual Report 2008

Organizational Capacity Development (OCD), Consultancy Report (Summary), Facilitation and Recommendations on Further Human and Technical Capacity Planning for the Project Management Under the Framework of the Project Capacity Strengthening for VUSTA | Báo cáo tư vấn hỗ trợ tăng cường năng lực quản lý dự án trong khuôn khổ dự án Nâng cao năng lực cho Liên hiệp các Hội Khoa học và Kỹ thuật Việt Nam (November 2008)

Project Annual Work Plan and Budget 2009 (February 16, 2009)

Project Progress Report for Quarter I 2009
Project Progress Report for Quarter II 2009
Project Progress Report for Quarter III 2009
Project Progress Report for 2009

Project Reports and Substantive Documents

Catherine Borgman-Arboleda, Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning (Report) (2008)
Trip Report -- Study Tour to Relevant Umbrella Organisation in the United Kingdom (November 2008)

Report of the Workshop on Connecting Information and Dialogue Channel between Civil Society Organizations and the National Assembly and Government Agencies: Cope with Climate Change and the Role of Vietnam Civil Society Organizations (11 September 2008)

Dang Dinh Long, Special Report: Research, analyze and evaluate the real situation of VUSTA and its member organizations (April 2009) in English and Vietnamese

Minna Hakkairenen and Tiina Kontinen, A Comparative Analysis of NGO Umbrella Organizations in Other Countries (24.11.2008) in English and Vietnamese

Report of the Seminar on Connecting Information and Dialogue Channel between Civil Society Organizations and the National Assembly and Government: Comments to Draft Legislation on Health Insurance (1 October 2008)

Report of the Workshop on Connecting Information and Dialogue Channel between Civil Society Organizations and the National Assembly and Government: Comments to Draft Legislation for Civil Servants (7 October 2008)

To Ba Trong, Report Evaluating the Legal-Policy Environment that Affect the Development of Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations [Moi truong the che EN and VN] in English and Vietnamese

**VUSTA and Project Documents on the Strategic Planning Process in VUSTA**

VUSTA, VUSTA Development Strategy in the Period 2010-2020

Directive 42-CT/TW of the Politburo on Continuing Renovation, Improving Quality and Effectiveness of the Operation of VUSTA in the Era of Industrialization and Modernization of the Country

Workshop reports:

1. Preparation Workshop to Develop VUSTA Strategy on November 28, 2008
2. Forum on the Guiding Principles, Direction and Development Tasks of VUSTA in the Period 2010-2020 on April 27 and 28, 2009
4. Workshop on VUSTA strategy on July 10 and 11, 2009
5. Workshop in Dak Lak with Provincial Unions from Southern and Central Highlands Provinces on October 5 and 6, 2009
Nguyen Tung, Consultancy Report for the Support to Strategic Planning for Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations (August 2009)


**UNDP and Other Documents on Civil Society Programming**


*UNDP, Partnerships in Action: UNDP Engagement with Civil Society* (May 2008)


**Documents on Civil Society in Vietnam**


Irene Norlund (CIVICUS), *Filling the Gap: The Emerging Civil Society in Viet Nam* (January 2007)


Annex 3

Initial Questions During Meetings in the Field Mission in Vietnam

[Initial questions formulated by Mark Sidel and Pham Quang Nam. These were only initial questions, and the meetings and interviews became much more detailed.]

1. Has the Project been successful in strengthening VUSTA’s capacity to represent its member organisations’ interests in contributing to the government’s policy-making process?

   1(a) In what ways has it been successful, and why?

   2(b) In what ways has it not been successful in this goal, and why?

2. Has the Project been successful in strengthening VUSTA’s internal governance structures and capacity to work as an effective umbrella organizations?

   2(a) In what ways has it been successful, and why?

   2(b) In what ways has it not been successful in this goal, and why?

3. Has the Project been successful in strengthening VUSTA’s capacity to become an effective bridge for its member organizations?

   3(a) In what ways has it been successful, and why?

   3(b) In what ways has it not been successful in this goal, and why?

4. We understand that in the first year of the Project (2008), progress on the Project was limited in some ways. Is that correct?

5. If so, what do you think are the reasons for that limited progress in the first year, in the areas you are familiar with?

6. We understand that, partly as a result of the progress in the first year, it was decided to limit the scope of project activities in 2009 to a number of selected key activities. Was that a correct decision?

7. Were the activities decided upon and worked on the right activities? Has Project progress improved in 2009?

8. What should be the key priorities and activities for the Project going forward, next year and in future years? How can things be done better?

9. Should the Project be focused or emphasize all of the three current components, or focus on or emphasize one of those components?
10. Are the current Project results sustainable? Will the outputs and outcomes accomplished so far lead to the benefits beyond the life of the existing project?

11. Is the Project contributing to the development of civil society and its roles in Vietnam?

12. How could the Project better contribute to the development of civil society in Vietnam?

13. What activities that other donors are undertaking to strengthen the development of civil society in Vietnam have been useful or contributory?

14. What sort of activities should UNDP undertake to strengthen the development of civil society in Vietnam?

15. Should UNDP focus on any of the following areas in strengthening the development of civil society? Are any of these areas important, premature, or covered by other donors?

Strengthening governance and management in civil society organizations

Development of the legal structures for civil society

Strengthening the role of civil society in policy advocacy and policy development

Developing processes for government funding and contracting

Developing processes for private fundraising for civil society organizations

Other areas?