

**Mid Term Review of the**

**Public Service Provision Improvement in Agriculture  
and Rural Development Programme (PS-ARD)**

**Cao Bang and Hoa Binh Province**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 Introduction and Methodology .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Overview of the mid term review .....	9
1.2 Approach and Methodology .....	9
1.3 Mid Term Review report .....	11
<b>2 Review of Programme Outcomes .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Outcome 1: Management decentralisation and participatory Socio Economic Development Plans (SEDP), and transparent and effective financial management will strengthen the ownership and contribute to the local poverty reduction and economic development .....	13
Outcome 1a: Comprehensive and need-based Commune and District SEDP follows a province-wide standard and are binding for all local development activities.....	13
Outcome 1b: Commune Development Funds (CDF) provide resources for essential small-scale infrastructure and agricultural improvements and serve as learning ground for proficient commune-level project planning and implementation .....	20
Outcome 1c: Improved Commune Financial Management (CFM) capacities allow communes to become investment owners for the decentralised state budgets and National Target Programme funds .....	24
2.2.Outcome 2: High quality public services (need based) will promote and strengthen agricultural production and sustainability increase rural income. ....	27
Outcome 3: With Technical assistance from consultancy agency, and the collaboration from relevant leaders and agencies at provincial, district and commune levels, the Project Management Board (PMB) and Support Unit will effectively implement the project activities.....	30
<b>3 Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1 Conclusion.....	32
3.2 Recommendations .....	33
<b>Annex One: Agenda of Cao Bang Province visit .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Annex Two: Agenda of Hoa Binh Province Visit .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Annex Three: Terms of reference for the MTR of the PS-ARD.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Annex Four: Programme Documents.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Annex Five: Mid Tern Review Team, Outputs and Timetable of MTR.....</b>	<b>52</b>

## Abbreviations

ARD	Agriculture and Rural Development
CB	Cao Bang Province
CDF	Commune Development Fund
CEMA	Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DoF	Department of Finance
DoLISA	Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
DPI	Department of Planning and Investment
FFS	Farmers' Field School
HB	Hoa Binh Province
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
NTP	National Target Programme
NTP SPR	National Target Programme for Sustainable Poverty Reduction
PP	Plant Protection
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
PPMU	Provincial Project Management Unit
PPSG	Plant Protection Service Group
PPSP	Plant Protection Service Point
PSARD	Public Service Improvement in Agriculture and Rural Development
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainer
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VSP	Veterinary Service Point

## Executive Summary

The Public Service Provision Improvement Programme in Agriculture and Rural Development (PSARD) programme has been clearly successful in the implementation of the PSARD and its three main products, the participatory SEDP, the Commune Development Fund and the delivery of agricultural services through the Farmer Field School approach and the establishment of Veterinary Service Points and Plant Protection Service Points/ Groups in Hoa Binh and Cao Bang Provinces.

PSARD has brought its products to a high number of Communes, 87 in Hoa Binh and 62 in Cao Bang, as well as numerous Villages and Households over the last 2 years in both Cao Bang and Hoa Binh Province and is on track to meet its goals under the programme document.

In **Hoa Binh province** there is clear commitment from the Provincial authorities, especially for the integration of the participatory SEDP, which is now adopted across the province as well their contribution to the CDF. This gives a good basis for the Province to adopt the participatory SEDP and CDF approach fully as a provincially led approach after the PSARD finishes and programme support is no longer available.

In **Cao Bang province** there is also strong support for the approach and products of the PSARD, though the province is yet to fully adopt and integrate the participatory SEDP approach. Furthermore the province may not be able to further continue the CDF at current funding levels.

To give the participatory SEDP development approach some reality, funds need to be decentralised to the Commune level and linked to the participatory SEDP approach. If this does not occur, then support from Villagers for the participatory SEDP approach may be lost.

Unfortunately, the current design of other programmes may make the adoption of PSARD products difficult. This includes the use of the participatory SEDP approach, which may require some changes in other programmes and acceptance of the approach in programmes such as P135 and the NRD programme. However, these programmes would benefit from acceptance of the participatory approach and should avoid duplicating the planning approach and also offer fund sources for small-scale infrastructure projects managed by Communes.

**Outcome 1a:** *Comprehensive and need-based Commune and District SEDP follows a province-wide standard and are binding for all local development activities.*

The PSARD has greatly supported the expansion of the participatory SEDP approach in Hoa Binh and Cao Bang Province. The participatory process is clearly seen as beneficial and supportive of an improved SEDP development process making commune SEDPs more realistic and based on actual needs of villagers.

Experience in **Hoa Binh** has been greatly supported by past PSARD activities in phase one of the PSARD as well as support from other donor organisations such as JICA. The

participatory approach is being used across all communes in the province and is using a single set of guidelines for its implementation.

The use of the participatory SEDP in other development programmes such as P135, NTP SPR, NRD still has some way to go. At present it appears different or parallel approaches are being used within different programmes though all claim to use a participatory approach. Several activities under these programmes do appear in Commune SEDPs.

To give the participatory SEDP a continued purpose funds need to be assured for commune management, whether through the continuation of a CDF in some form or the greater decentralisation of some or all of the P135 funds.

In **Cao Bang** the adoption of the participatory SEDP approach is less advanced than in Hoa Binh. While, the province has issued official guidelines for the participatory SEDP approach these are only being used in the 62 PSARD communes and the 50 communes where IFAD works. The remaining 87 communes are not using the participatory approach.

Though the Provincial government is positive about the approach and is supportive of the larger role out of the participatory SEDP next steps are yet to be made to ensure this. There appears to be some confusion regarding the timing of adoption of the approach across the province as well as the financing approach for the participatory SEDP.

If the Province adopts the participatory guidelines and approaches officially across **Cao Bang Province**, we feel the PSARD should reconsider its expansion into Phuc Hoa District in 2014. While the expansion has been agreed in the PSARD programme Document and the province is ready to expand its contribution to support Phuc Hoa, we feel the expansion does not meet the goal of sustainability as the introduction of participatory process and the CDF implementation will be crammed into a small period and may suffer from issues in implementation and management especially as the District and the Communes are new to the process, which have no time for correction as the programme is ending.

In order to support adoption of the participatory process at the Provincial level we feel a better course of action would be seek support form the Province to assign the Provincial contribution for Phuc Hoa District to the roll out of the participatory SEDP process across all communes in all districts of the Province. At the same time, PSARD should focus its efforts on supporting the roll out of the participatory SEDP approach focusing its support on participatory SEDP training across the whole Province rather than focusing on just one District in the final year.

The Province should also ensure the adoption of a single participatory SEDP approach for all programmes, such as P135 III, Resolution 30a, NRD and the new NTP SPR and other new programmes.

The Provincial CEMA is very interested in the approach and at the wrap up meeting there was discussion and acceptance from the PPC that CEMA should have greater links to PSARD and that CEMA and also DOLISA could be included in the PSARD SC. The inclusion of CEMA in PSARD will greatly improve the PSARD chances of sustainability in Cao Bang province. CEMA also requested greater sharing of PSARD guidelines for all

areas (SEDP, CDF and FFS) and inclusion in PSARD training in these areas (they have attended some activities).

**Outcome 1b:** *Commune Development Funds (CDF) provide resources for essential small-scale infrastructure and agricultural improvements and serve as learning ground for proficient commune-level project planning and implementation*

**Outcome 1c:** *Improved Commune Financial Management (CFM) capacities allow communes to become investment owners for the decentralised state budgets and National Target Programme funds*

The participatory SEDP process backed by the Commune Development Fund (CDF) have understandably been welcomed by Villagers and Communes. As a result a large variety of small-scale infrastructure has been implemented across communes. Though initial implementation saw a variety of implementation and management experience, by the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the project activities and management have become easier and more systematic.

Small-scale activities are clearly demand and village driven and link closely with the participatory SEDP process. In the first year demand for investment activities were numerous and an unrealistic number of requests appeared on the Commune SEDP. However, in subsequent years villagers and communes have improved their ability to prioritise investments.

The link between the participatory SEDP process and the CDF is understandably strong and though Villagers and Communes in both provinces stated they would continue the participatory SEDP process without the ability to influence investments and have funds to invest there maybe a weakened SEDP process if CDF funding is reduced or removed in the future.

Both provinces would benefit from the adoption of the CDF approach either as a stand-alone channel for investment in Communes by provinces or by guiding other programmes to use the approach.

There are several benefits to the CDF small-scale investment approach i) the CDF is highly demand driven, much so than many other programmes ii) as the CDF is highly participatory and demand driven there is a high sense of ownership by Communes and Villages. As a result local contributions are very high reaching 30% and in some cases higher than 50%, finally iii) the investment costs of small scale infrastructure under the CDF appears to be much lower than other programmes as the process is simple and money is not lost on complicated and expensive design processes as consultant costs.

In both **Hoa Binh and Cao Bang** the Provincial government should consider working more closely with CEMA on providing more simplified guidelines for P135 using the CDF experience and guidelines as a base. If it is still felt that communes can not manage larger and more complicated activities then a facility should be built into P135 investment funds that allows for at least some funds to be managed by communes for small scale infrastructure programmes.

**Hoa Binh** has shown a strong commitment to the CDF process and a strong belief in the benefits of the CDF and the ability of Communes to fund the investment funds. We urge the province to continue to allocate funds for CDF activities from 2015 across all communes in the province, which should cost around VND42 billion for 210 Communes with a CDF of VND200 million per commune.

In **Cao Bang province** the CDF process remains driven by the PSARD with a welcome but small contribution from the Province itself. As in Hoa Binh, Communes in Cao Bang can clearly manage the funds but District remain reluctant to decentralise P135 funds to communes for their management. Over the remaining time we suggest that PSARD focuses on illustrating the ability of Communes to be investment owners and support the Province in developing a Provincially financed CDF, even with small funds, and also work with the province and CEMA to develop a system under P135 to transfer at least some funds for direct commune ownership for small scale infrastructure.

**Outcome 2:** *High quality public services (need based) will promote and strengthen agricultural production and sustainability increase rural income.*

### ***Farmer Field Schools***

The development of improved and demand driven public services through the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach has been well appreciated and has a high impact across communes. The FFS approach is being expanded across both provinces with the continued development FFS curriculum by the PSARD team and the extension services.

Training demands are now fully reflected in the communes SEDPs and the SEDPs are now being used by the extension services in their needs assessment for training and the development of training plans for villagers. The approach is seen by extension staff and trainees as more practical and an easier way to introduce new and alternative farming approaches.

### ***Veterinary Service Point/ Plant Protection Service Points and Groups***

The VSPs and PPSPs in both provinces have had a positive impact and have enabled important disease protection services to be delivered directly to farmers in a more timely manner. However, there remains some question on whether the VSP and PPSP approach can be sustainable, especially as a self-financing operation.

In **Hoa Binh** it is clear that the VSP and PPSGs are welcomed and are being used for disease and vaccination advice by many villagers. However, though they are used for the free advice many farmers prefer to purchase medicines directly from District centres, including Government and private sector agencies. Unlike, Cao Bang, distances from villages and communes to Districts are not a major hindrance, at the same time there is a vibrant private sector input supply sector for crops and husbandry inputs. As a result the VSPs and PPSGs (especially those close to District Centres) are finding it difficult to gain customers as farmers prefer to purchase these directly from nearby private sector sources.

In **Cao Bang** there is less of a private sector input sector and given distances between Villages, Communes and Districts, the Village/ Commune based service providers are being used for the purchase of medicines as well as advice.

There is a clear public good element to both the VSP and PPSG and provinces should consider integrating the VSP and PPSGs into the government system as they operate as a first line of defence for disease and pest control and are clearly working in this area.

## 1 Introduction and Methodology

### 1.1 Overview of the mid term review

The overall objective of the Mid-term review (MTR) of the PSARD is to identify the priorities of the project for the remaining implementation period to ensure maximum impacts and sustainability beyond 2015 and the way to achieve them. The mid-term review focused on i) the current project status, impact and adherence to the original design and project document ii) the remaining relevance of the PS-ARD and its outcomes ii) the sustainability of the PS-ARD products and activities beyond the life of the programme and finally gives iv) recommendations for the final years of the programme to ensure impact and sustainability.

1. Review of ***the project current status*** to provide a summary of the project key outputs/results up-to-date; the project implementation set-up, effectiveness and efficiency.
2. Review and assess the ***relevance*** of the PSARD outcomes and their implementation approach and mechanism, in the context of the two provinces HB and CB and the overall policy framework in Vietnam on planning, budgeting, public financial management and decentralisation.
3. Review and assess the ***sustainability*** of the PSARD outcomes and their implementation approach and mechanism, in the context of the two provinces HB and CB and their potentials for scaling-up to other Provinces after the project termination in 2015.
4. ***Recommendations:*** Given the last SDC intervention, provide clear recommendations for the remaining project duration with regards to the consolidation and roll out stages. The recommendations should include strategies to overcome challenges and mitigate risks in order to ensure the sustainability of the relevant “products” of PSARD.

### 1.2 Approach and Methodology

#### Desk review and client interviews

- **Desk review:** A detailed review of all PSARD related documents, programme documents, monthly/ quarterly progress reports, log-frames and programme guidelines (SEDP, CDF etc.)<sup>1</sup>. Review of other Donor projects in the Hoa Binh (HB) and Cao Bang (CB) including JICA, the World Bank, IFAD and NGO projects. Review of related government degrees and for the ARD sector including the i) MARD ARD strategy ii) Provincial ARD strategies for Hoa Binh and Cao Bang iii) the National Targeted Programme for New Rural development (NTP-NRD).
- **Meetings with Key Programme staff:** Meetings with key PSARD programme staff from Helvetas and SDC were held to identify progress and issues within the

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<sup>1</sup> Annex Four details the documents reviewed by the MTR team

programme and areas specific focus for the mid-term review.

- **Developing the final methodology and work plan:** The final methodology was developed following the desk review and start up meetings with SDC and Helvetas and following meetings with key staff. A detailed methodology was then presented and discussed with SDC and Helvetas at the start of September and agreed by all parties to ensure the goals of the MTR were met.
- **Provincial level meetings:** Key meetings were held with the Chairman of Provincial Steering Committees, DARD, DPI and also DoF in the province as members of the Steering Committee and main Provincial level stakeholders. DARD was met as the main government body for the ARD sector, DPI as the planning agency and DoF as the holder and often gate keeper of funds for the ARD sector. Meetings were also held with the Extension Centre of the Province along with the Plant Protection and Veterinary units of DARD. In Cao Bang the team also met with CEMA.

The Programme management Unit was also met with as a group and individually. The MTR team was also joined during the provincial visits by a number of programme staff.

#### Provincial field visits:

Level	Meeting
Provincial Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPC Vice Chairman</li> <li>• DARD Director</li> <li>• PS-ARD Provincial Management team</li> <li>• DoF coordinator and working group</li> <li>• DPI coordinator and working group</li> <li>• Extension leaders (extension centre, plant protection, Veterinary and irrigation)</li> </ul>
District Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vice Chairman of the District</li> <li>• District coordinators</li> <li>• District Implementing Unit</li> <li>• District Planning and Finance Department</li> <li>• District Agriculture and Extension/Plant protection/Veterinary staff</li> </ul>
Commune Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commune Chairman</li> <li>• Commune Extension workers</li> <li>• Accountant</li> <li>• Planning Staff</li> <li>• Cadastral Staff</li> <li>• VSP, PPSP and PPSG</li> </ul>
Village Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female villagers group</li> <li>• Male villagers group</li> </ul>

Provincial meetings focused on i) Department views of impact and status of the PSARD ii) Issues in implementing the PSARD iii) relevance of capacity building approaches under the PSARD, adoption outside of the programme and relevance in a

changing ARD sector iv) the impact of village commune development funds (CDF), linkage with broader planning at province, district and commune levels, links to the NTP for New Rural Development and government ARD plans and integration issues vii) Government contributions to the CDFs, issues and problems and future adoption of the approach and viii) future adoption and ultimate sustainability of the PSARD products.

- **District and commune meetings:** As with Provincial meetings District and Commune leaders were met with along with leaders of Divisions ARD and Planning and Finance and extension service providers. A major focus was changes in Commune planning and management as well as the willingness to include households in the planning process. Districts, as the overseers of Communes were asked to assess improvements in planning and financial management at the District level and were also asked the level of integration of the PSARD at the Commune and District levels through the PSARD.
- **Commune and Village meetings:** Meetings with Villagers were held to understand the process and level of inclusion of farmers in the planning process as a whole, focusing on their participation in Commune planning and especially CDF and extension training plans to ascertain whether needs are being met and farmers voices are being heard. This focused on i) improvements in planning and participatory planning adoption of local leaders ii) improvements and standardization of SEDPs and iii) improvements in financial management both for the PSARD and also in the ARD sector as a whole iv) provision of agricultural services based on demand of farmers, especially the FFS approach.

### Overview of Field Trips completed, 10<sup>th</sup> September to 20<sup>th</sup> September.

Province	District	Commune	Village
<b>Cao Bang</b>	Thach An	Minh Khai	Nam Tan
	Nguyen Binh	Phan Thanh	Siao Liang
	Bao Lam	Nam Quang	Pac Rom/Na Dim
<b>Hoa Binh</b>	Kim Boi	Kim Truy	Que Bo
	Yen Thuy	Phu Lai	Vuong
	Mai Chau	Na Meo	Na Meo
	Luong Son	Truong Son	Loc Mon

Though PSARD is active in 210 communes in Hoa Binh and 62 communes in Cao Bang (Total 272 communes) time constraints meant the MTR team was only able to visit 7 Districts and 7 Communes and more than 10 villages. However, the MTR team feels that through the numerous meetings at all level and the review of programme documents a good overview of the situation of the PSARD in the two provinces has been gathered.

### 1.3 Mid Term Review report

This MTR report will present its findings according to the current status, relevance and sustainability of each of the programmes outcomes and concludes with a number of recommendations by outcome to ensure further adoption of the programmes

approaches and the maximum level of sustainability of the PSARD once the programme has completed in 2015.

**The project has three outcomes:**

**Outcome 1:** Decentralised, participatory planning and transparent, efficient financial management to increase local ownership and to contribute to poverty reduction and economic development.

*Outcome 1a:* Comprehensive and need-based commune and district SEDPs are standard and binding for all local development activities.

*Outcome 1b:* The CDF provides resources for essential small-scale infrastructure and agricultural improvements and serves as a learning ground for proficient commune-level project planning and implementation.

*Outcome 1c:* Improved financial management capacities allow communes to become investment owners for decentralised state budgets and NTP funds.

**Outcome 2:** Needs and demand-based quality ARD services are provided, resulting in increased agricultural productivity.

**Outcome 3:** With Technical assistance from consultancy agency, and the collaboration from relevant leaders and agencies at provincial, district and commune levels, the Project Management Board (PMB) and Support Unit will effectively implement the project activities.

## 2 Review of Programme Outcomes

**Outcome 1: Management decentralisation and participatory Socio Economic Development Plans (SEDP), and transparent and effective financial management will strengthen the ownership and contribute to the local poverty reduction and economic development**

**Outcome 1a: Comprehensive and need-based Commune and District SEDP follows a province-wide standard and are binding for all local development activities**

### Current Status and relevance

#### **OUTCOME 1 and 1a: Programme Logframe Goals and achievements<sup>2</sup>**

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Hoa Binh Province Achievement 2012	Cao Bang Province Achievement 2012
<b>Outcome 1</b>	70% of households participate in the SEDP planning process, Including 50% women and poor.	80%	72%
	50% of proposed activities in the commune SEDPs funded from other (non-PS-ARD) budget sources.	52%	45%
	40% of HHs, including women and poor, informed on fund management (SEDP).	30% (though rising to 50% in 2013)	-
	Out of which, 90% agree with fund utilization (including CDF).	65%	-
	Local contribution to infrastructure projects funded by pro-poor CDF is at least 30%	90%	98%
		37%	27%
<b>Outcome 1a</b>	All 210 communes in HB and 62 in CB have their SEDPs with standard procedures, which reflects investment from all sources	100%	75%
	Their SEDPs are well integrated into district SEDPs	30% of needs integrated	-

### **Achievements**

The participatory Socio Economic Development Plan (SEDP) development at Village and Commune level has been clearly welcomed by all levels (Province, District, Commune and Village). It was greatly welcomed at the Village level in both provinces especially as the participatory SEDP was backed by the Commune Development Funds (CDF).

Across both Provinces, Districts confirmed that Commune SEDPs had improved compared to the old SEDP drafting format and compared to the first participatory

<sup>2</sup> The data in this and other similar tables in the report come from the Progress report of 2012 and also the August 2013 updated log frame.

SEDPs developed in 2011. Primarily the new participatory approach was felt to be more suitable as it enabled the views of citizens to be incorporated into the planning process making SEDPs and the process more realistic, reflective of peoples actual needs and more democratic as well as supporting the Government's own goal of improving grassroots development and democracy.

The old process was felt to be too top down and did not reflect truly the needs of the people, rather it reflected the goals of the District and Commune leaders and planners and was used simply to inform people of what would be done rather than including them in the process and seeking their views on Commune Development goals and their needs.

In **Hoa Binh Province** PSARD directly supported all 210 Communes with participatory SEDP Implementation and 87 with Commune Development Funds.

Implementation in Hoa Binh is clearly achieving the goals set out in the Log-frame of the programme and in many cases has exceeded the goals of the PSARD with one year to go. Of course the PSARD has been greatly helped by strong Provincial integration and support for the participatory SEDP process.

In **Cao Bang province** the project has supported 56 communes across 4 Districts in 2011 and 2012 and an additional 6 in 2013. 50 communes are being supported by IFAD in a similar fashion to PSARD, though the IFAD programme will close in 2014. As with Hoa Binh Province, many of the goals for Outcome1 and 1a have already been met and are clearly in line to be met in the remainder of 2013 and the final year of the PSARD, 2014.

### ***Constraints and Challenges***

Though the participatory SEDP development has been accepted and welcomed in Cao Bang by the Province, Districts and Communes, unlike Hoa Binh, the approach has not yet been fully adopted across the province.

The Province has issued official guidelines for the use of the participatory SEDP approach for all communes, however it is currently only being followed in the 62 PSARD communes and the 50 IFAD communes. The remaining 87 communes do not follow the participatory SEDP approach or follow the official guidelines. One reason for the remaining 87 not to be following the approach is a lack of budget for the process as well as the lack of compliance guidelines.

Adoption of the participatory SEDP approach in both provinces, though reaching its many log-frame goals and being seen as a positive approach and change at all levels has also faced a number of difficulties. The capacity of commune (and district staff) has been a constraint and constant training and reinforcement has been needed to ensure the participatory approach is followed and quality SEDPs produced.

Districts in both provinces reported that implementation ability does vary across PSARD communes as well as between Communes under other projects. Though quality has improved there are still weaknesses in plans and information in many Communes

plans while some Communes often submitted plans late to Districts causing issues for District planners who are integrating plans.

A further constraint is staff turnover with many Communes (and District) staff being moved between communes every 3-5 years or moved into new positions. As a result staff trained in the participatory SEDP planning process may move from the planning sections of Communes resulting in staff who have no experience in participatory planning taking responsibility for the SEDP process. As a result on going training and reinforcement of training is going to be needed over the remainder of the PSARD and in the future.

Finally, some Communes and Districts complained that at the start of the project Steering Committee meetings were held late in the planning process timetable, resulting in the late approval of training plans late. As a result training for Commune and District staff was implemented in the second quarter at a time when plans should have been developed rather than staff trained. This resulted in late participatory SEDP meetings and subsequently late submission of SEDPs to Districts.

Though assurances had been given by SDC and Helvetas to the two provinces that plans for training could be approved prior to the SC meeting there may have been a reluctance by the Province to start training before official approval had been given.

A further issue that impacts on the development of Commune SEDPs is the constantly changing planning requirements from the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI). As a result support and guidance from the Province and Districts to Communes will need to be constantly adjusted and updated in order to be relevant.

### ***Commune/ District Planning Process***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Early May</b>	Districts receive planning guidance and instructions from Province Communes receive planning guidance and instructions from Province
<b>May</b>	Village Participatory SEDP Meetings
<b>By end June</b>	Communes Draft the Frame of the Plan based on previous years budget and any income increases at the Commune level, and sent to District
<b>Early July</b>	Districts prepare the district plan frame based on the frames of district plan and send to provincial DPI and DOF
<b>20<sup>th</sup> October</b>	Provinces Inform Districts of Budget estimations for the following year Districts inform Communes of Budget estimations for the following year
<b>December</b>	Final Plans submitted

As mentioned both Province and Districts interviewed saw the participatory SEDP as relevant for the development of Communes and also for the future development of

SEDPs at the Commune level. The participatory SEDP approach clearly supports the Ordinance on Grassroots Democracy in communes/wards<sup>3</sup> issued in 2007.

In addition the improved quality of SEDPs from Communes and the more realistic nature, improved data collection and clear identification of prioritised investment projects (to use the CDF funds especially) has resulted in more easily integrated Commune SEDPs, lowering the time and work undertaken by District staff and Provincial staff.

Initially, in both Provinces a large amount of guidance and support was given to Communes by Districts to ensure guidelines were followed. As capacity improved less and less support was needed. Districts in both Provinces also informed the MTR that there has been an improved level of the quality of data used in the SEDP and an improved data flow from Districts to Communes. Cost estimations for investment projects had also seen an improvement and were now more realistic, supported by guidance from Districts.

The inclusion of agricultural training requests into the Commune SEDP based on Village meetings and training requests is also now used by the Extension services to identify training needs and areas for Communes and Villages. These are followed up on and checked via more detailed needs assessments.

The Commune SEDP is also now being used by Communes to manage Commune activities, such as extension training above, as well as to manage investment projects, especially under the CDF. However, it is clear that the Commune SEDPs do not include all activities implemented at the Commune level but only those activities that the commune directly manages as well as some District managed activities. Centrally or Provincially managed activities at Commune level are not necessarily included in Commune SEDPs. To avoid duplication these are often omitted by Communes and Districts as they appear in Provincial or Central level SEDPs and sector plans.

Clearly the new participatory approach and the identification of investment projects by Villagers and Communes is relevant to a wide range of Government and Donor programmes and should also be a guiding tool for these programmes, especially P135III<sup>4</sup>, the New Rural Development programme<sup>5</sup> (NRD or Tam Nong), Resolution 30a<sup>6</sup> and the National Target Programme for Sustainable Poverty Reduction (NTP SPR).

However, though the participatory SEDP process is highly relevant to the development of these programmes and the design of their implementation plans, it is clear that each

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<sup>3</sup> Ordinance 34/2007/PL-UBTVQH11 on Grassroots Democracy at commune/ward level

<sup>4</sup> P135 or the Programme 135 Phase II or Socio-economic Development for Communes Facing Extreme Difficulties in Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas Phase II ended in 2011 and was followed by 2 annual P135 programmes while P135 III was drafted and finalized. P135 III is due to start officially in 2014.

<sup>5</sup> The New Rural Development Programme started in 2008 and established 19 criteria (roads, infrastructure, schools, income levels, poverty levels) for Communes to aim for in their development. Most Communes have now drafted NRD zoning plans that have identified criteria that has already been met and investment plans to meet the remaining plans.

<sup>6</sup> Resolution 30a/2008/NQ-CP on Speedy and Sustainable Poverty Reduction Programme For the 61 Poor Districts in Vietnam

has its own criteria and processes built in, including participatory plan developments, which may be difficult to overcome, especially where the programmes are managed and designed at the National level. However, P135 does now give more management and implementation decision-making responsibility to Provinces, which may allow them to adopt the PSARD CDF and participatory planning approach within P135 III.

Despite the extensive experience of the participatory SEDP process by both provinces as well as in numerous other provinces (31 by our estimation), MOLISA with the support of UNDP are seeking to reinvent the wheel and are piloting a number of new participatory planning approaches in Cao Bang province, designed by an external Hanoi based consultant with little discussion with the Provinces or the PSARD under support to the newest phase of the National Target Programme for Sustainable Poverty Reduction (NTP SPR).

While PSARD has tried to engage with DoLISA in Cao Bang this might be further supported by SDC at the national level partnering with Irish Aid (the main UNDP donor) to influence the direction of the NTP SPR. SDC would then be able to introduce at the national level the so far successful participatory SEDP approach and also use the engagement to push for broader adoption of the participatory approach through the NTP SPR.

The participatory SEDP approach is greatly enhanced by the Commune Development Fund giving Villages and Communes funds to plan around, which makes the planning process more realistic and not dependent on funding decisions of the District and Province.

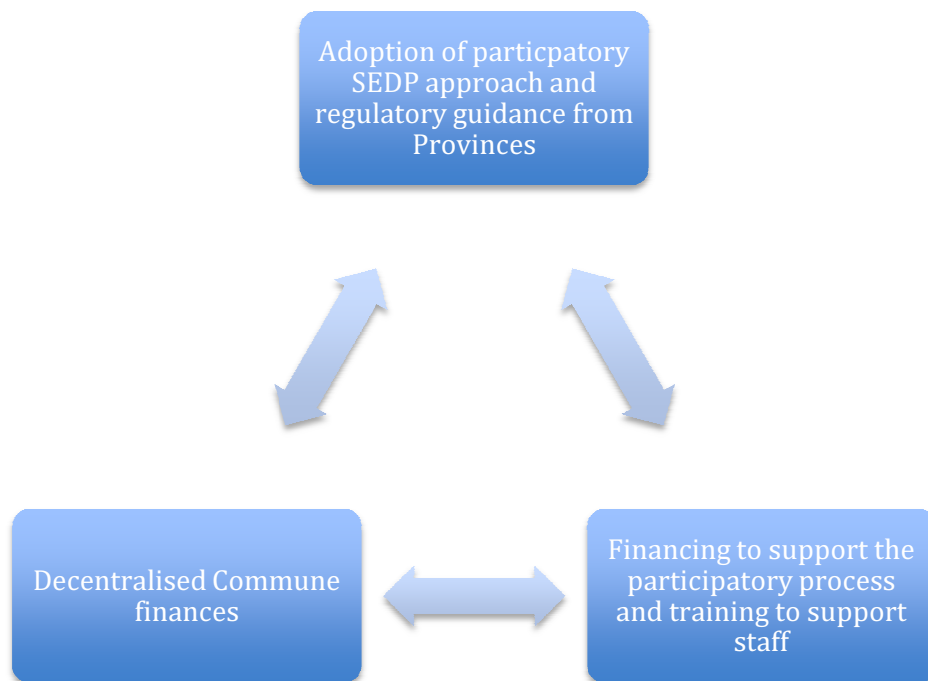
### **Sustainability and impact**

#### ***Achievements***

As mentioned impact levels are high across both provinces for the participatory SEDP development with both provinces being on track to reach their goals under the log-frames of the PSARD.

However, implementation levels of the participatory SEDP vary between Hoa Binh and Cao Bang, with Hoa Binh being somewhat ahead in its implementation of the approach (in all communes) and adoption of the process. However, Cao Bang Province is clearly happy with the process and has given assurances and indications that it will adopt the process for all Communes in the Province.

Three aspects need to be in place for the successful and sustainable implementation of the participatory process i) adoption of the approach and regulatory guidance from Provinces ii) Financing to support the participatory process and training to support staff and finally iii) decentralised finances available for communes to manage and to support the development of the communes SEDPs.



In **Hoa Binh Province** authorities have adopted the participatory SEDP approach across the province and have clear guiding provincial legislation for the participatory SEDP process in Decision 102/QD-UBND issued on the 17 January 2012 which gives instructions on participatory SEDP procedures, Official letter 04/LS/STC-SNN&PTNT dated 14 May 2012 which provides instructions for the provision of VND7 million per commune for SEDP planning and Decision 2071/QD-UBND issued 28 October 2011.

There is now a strong foundation and will at the Provincial level in **Hoa Binh** to continue the participatory approach. At the District and Commune levels, local authorities also expressed their support for the approach and all said they would continue the participatory SEDP approach after the PSARD ends in 2015.

While support is there the process does remain time consuming and costs are incurred in implementation. As a result it is essential that the guiding legislation in Hoa Binh detailed above and the provision of a budget (currently VND7 million per commune) is maintained after the PSARD project ends to ensure there is a budget to cover the cost of the participatory SEDP approach at commune level.

In addition on going and regular training is needed at the District and Commune level to ensure the participatory approach is implemented correctly and also to ensure the challenges previously felt are addressed, i.e. commune capacity to implement the participatory SEDP and staff turnover at the district/commune level.

In **Hoa Binh and Cao Bang province**, participatory SEDP training has been integrated into the Political training curriculum under the Political school of the province supported by PSARD staff.

***Challenges and constraints***

While two of the steps in supporting the participatory SEDP are currently in place in **Hoa Binh Province** it is also essential to support the planning process with some decentralised funding for Communes. Districts and Communes (and Provinces) complained that communication from higher levels on budget assignments always came late and planning budgets was therefore developed on estimations.

It is essential that a source of funding be identified to enable Communes to manage at least some resources, which they can link to the participatory SEDP approach. At the moment the CDF fills this gap and in Hoa Binh the province should consider continuing the CDF approach across the Province in all Communes.

The P135 programme provides an obvious source of funds to decentralise investment management to the Commune level and complete the three pillars of the participatory SEDP approach. However, a number of changes within P135 would have to be made to ensure this is done (reduced procedures, lower requirements for communes to be investment owners).

Lobbying will have to be done in both Provinces to try and encourage CEMA at the Provincial level to assign at least some of the P135 budget for small-scale infrastructure to be managed by the Commune. CEMA and PPCs are able to make these decisions at the Province level allowing a window for continued CDF small-scale infrastructure financing.

In **Cao Bang Province** while the province has issued guidelines for the implementation of the participatory SEDP these are only being used by PSARD and IFAD and not in all communes in the Province. Only one element of the participatory SEDP process is officially in place as of yet, and is not in force fully.. However, during the MTR visit DoF and DPI reiterated their support to the process and said they were both ready to draft official guidelines adopting the participatory SEDP approach. However, there was some confusion as to who should take the lead and when the process would begin officially and a request be submitted officially to the PPC.

Though it was recognised that there is a cost to the participatory SEDP development process it was suggested in meetings with DoF that though funding would be assigned to the participatory SEDP process this would possibly not be additional funding but would be drawn from existing funds at the District or Commune level. This effectively adds additional activities to Communes and reduces their overall budget. Clearly the process needs an additional budget line rather reducing budgets managed by Communes.

If the Province adopts the participatory guidelines and approaches officially across **Cao Bang Province**, we feel the PSARD should not expand into Phuc Hoa District in 2014. While the expansion has been agreed in the PSARD programme Document and the province is ready to expand its contribution to support Phuc Hoa, we feel the expansion does not meet the goal of sustainability as the introduction of participatory process and the CDF implementation will be crammed into a small period and may suffer from issues in implementation and management especially as the District and the Communes are new to the process, which have no time for correction as the programme is ending.

In order to better support sustainable adoption of the participatory process at the Provincial level we feel a better course of action would be seek support form the Province to assign the Provincial contribution for Phuc Hoa District to the roll out of the participatory SEDP process across the Province.

In turn PSARD should focus its efforts on supporting the roll out of the participatory SEDP approach focusing its support on participatory SEDP training across the Province rather than focusing on just one District in the final year.

The Province should also ensure the adoption of a single participatory SEDP approach for all programmes, such as P135 III, Resolution 30a, NRD and the new NTP SPR and other new programmes.

The Provincial CEMA is very interested in the approach and at the wrap up meeting there was discussion and acceptance from the PPC that CEMA and also DOLISA could be included in the PSARD SC. The inclusion of CEMA in PSARD will greatly improve the PSARD chances of sustainability in Cao Bang province. CEMA also requested greater sharing of PSARD guidelines for all areas (SEDP, CDF and FFS) and inclusion in PSARD training in these areas (they have attended some activities).

**Outcome 1b: Commune Development Funds (CDF) provide resources for essential small-scale infrastructure and agricultural improvements and serve as learning ground for proficient commune-level project planning and implementation**

**OUTCOME 1b: Programme Log frame Goals and achievements**

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Hoa Binh Province Achievement 2012	Cao Bang Province Achievement 2012
<b>Outcome 1b</b>	CDF guidelines give clear criteria for CDF use in difficult villages for infrastructure projects and to support poor households in agriculture production projects	Investment criteria in CDF guidelines remains adequate and relevant	
	HB: At least 80% of all households including 100% poor ones in the 87 selected communes directly benefited from projects funded by the pro-poor CDF.  CB: At least 80% of HH including 80% poor HH and ethnic minorities in 75 communes of 6 districts benefit from pro-poor CDF.	2011: 39,701 HHs (13,870 poor HHs) benefited from infrastructure projects. 282 HHs (138 poor HHS) benefited from agricultural production support activities  2012: 27,677 HHs (8,532 poor HHs) benefited from infrastructure projects and 5,470	According external evaluation: : <b>96%</b> interviewees are directly benefiting from CDF infrastructure projects . According self-assessment report of PPMU: 2012: 4746 HHs benefited from CDF 39% of benefited HHs is Poor HHs while poverty rate of 4 project district

		HHs (456 poor HHs) benefited from agricultural production support activities.	is 48%. ( ie. About <b>81% poor HHs benefited from CDF</b> ). EM households (Mông, Dao, Lô Lô) account for <b>29% of</b> total beneficiaries.
	In HB the poverty rate is reduced annually by 2%  In CB Poverty rate in selected districts reduced at least 1% annually	Reached 2%, for example: Tan Lac reduced by 3,6%; DA Bac by 10% from 38% to 28% in 2012	

### **Current Status and relevance**

#### ***Achievements***

Whilst the participatory SEDP is a welcome approach to the planning process, Villagers commitment to the process is clearly strengthened through the assignment of funds through the CDF. This gives a solid basis to the planning process, which would just be a theoretical exercise without the backing of funding.

Funds are clearly welcomed at the Commune and especially Village levels as were the numerous activities financed through the commune development fund. Villages have chosen a variety of activities that have social and financial impacts for Villages and Communes. Roads and irrigation are amongst the most popular choices followed by kindergartens and fresh water.

The SEDP process and the assurance of a fixed yearly budget for the CDF allows Communes and Villages to work closely to identify investment projects and then prioritise accordingly across the 3 years of the PSARD.

In the first year of the project investment lists were extensive, however, in 2012 and 2013 Communes and Districts reported that prioritised investment lists had become more realistic and were not as extensive as in other years.

In addition the CDF in many cases is the only real source of funds that is both controlled and managed at the Commune level and is invested based on village and commune demand. Though the funds and activities were welcomed Communes and Districts asked for higher funds in order to invest in larger projects.

Communes have very little management of funds beyond their recurrent budgets and in general have no investment budgets to manage; as a result the CDF proved an essential tool to introduce many communes to investment and project management approaches and enabled Commune to increase their capacity through implementation.

Few Communes in both Provinces were investment owners of other Government programmes, including P135 funds. Districts were clearly and openly very reluctant to release control of P135 investment funds to Communes and felt that Communes had

low levels of capacity, a lack of qualifications (as required under P135) and Communes could not follow the difficult procedures under P135. In many cases P135 guidelines themselves worked against Commune ownership, with Communes being required to have certain levels of education and qualifications in order to manage P135 funds.

Interestingly, despite capacity if Commune staff being a major constraint to investment ownership of P135 funds the new P135 does not assign any funds to capacity building of Communes.

The CDF process in both Provinces illustrates that Communes can be investment owners, though they may need some support from District levels. The CDF has been successful for several reasons. Firstly, unlike many programmes the CDF comes with clear and simplified procedures and guidelines that Communes are able to follow and abide by. Secondly, district and commune staff have received regular training as well as back up/ repeat training for weaker communes. Thirdly, this training and implementation of the CDF is backed up by support from PSARD staff and district staff. Finally, funding is guaranteed for the three years of the programme allowing communes to plan and ensure villages activities are prioritised and all villages benefit to some extent from the CDF.

At the same time the CDF process is entrenched in Commune SEDPs and is highly demand driven, much more so than many other programmes where it appears that Communes and Villagers are informed of their options rather than having an opportunity to influence investments with their actual needs.

### ***Constraints and challenges***

In most cases the CDF process and allocation of funds to villages was managed well by Communes and ensured villages benefitted equally. Villages also clearly understood the split of funds across villages and understood the reason and timing of CDF investment across villages.

However, in Phu Lai commune in Yen Thuy District, Hoa Binh, villagers did not believe the funding was assured and as a result wanted the CDF funds equally distributed across villages every year. This of course resulted in very very small activities being undertaken and a higher burden for the commune in managing all the activities.

This illustrates the need for clear communication and assurances to Communes and Villages of funds and an assured fixed investment period. It also illustrates the continued need to support Communes in the implementation of the participatory SEDP and the CDF through continued training and the availability of technical and administrative support and advice from Districts.

According to PSARD progress reports there are some remaining issues in CDF management. Checking and oversight of CDF activities by Districts and PSARD staff needs to be timelier in order for issues to be identified more quickly. In addition at this stage in the process Commune should be following CDF guidelines strictly. Some Communes have not followed the guidelines strictly due to staff changes as well as capacity weaknesses.

As with SEDP development a system of monitoring CDF implementation could identify weaker CDF implementation and Communes in order to target training and support. Stronger Communes could then receive higher fund levels while weaker Communes and those that continually fail to follow the CDF guidelines could receive reduced levels of funding.

### **Sustainability and impact**

#### ***Achievements***

Communes in both Provinces have shown they can manage and administer small-scale infrastructure projects across numerous Villages. As mentioned the act of learning by doing has greatly strengthened the ability of Communes to manage the process. While other programmes appear to be waiting for Communes to reach their requirements rather than adjusting according to the actual capacity levels and reality at the Commune level.

The management of CDF funds and the implementation of small-scale infrastructure has been greatly supported by the fact that the CDF uses clear and less complicated guidelines. At the same time training linked to CDF and SEDP procedures and guidelines has been delivered in a mostly timely manner and where weaknesses remain there has been continued follow up. The major pillar of success of the CDF has been the assured funding over 3 years, which allowed Communes and Villages to prepare their participatory plan accordingly.

Clearly the project has had a huge impact delivering highly demand driven small-scale infrastructure to Communes and Villages. The level of demand is illustrated by the high level of ownership felt by Villages illustrated by their contributions, which have averaged 30% and have in some cases reached over 50%.

The investment costs of small scale infrastructure under the CDF appears to be much lower than other programmes as the process is simple and money is not lost on complicated and expensive design processes as consultant costs. The CDF is also able to impact a larger number of beneficiaries than many other programmes.

Obviously sustainability of the CDF and the ability of Communes to implemented small-scale infrastructure will require a continuation of funding in some format to Communes for small scale infrastructure. The CDF has illustrated that Communes can manage investment funds.

In **Hoa Binh province** the Province may continue the CDF in some format and at some level of financing, though likely to be less than at present. In Cao Bang the province contribution to the PSARD and the CDF is lower and it may prove difficult for the Province to continue the funding of the CDF.

An obvious source of funds is P135 III, which has funds and a mandate for Commune management of funds and investment projects. However, if P135 III follows a similar format to P135 II then it is likely that procedures for investment ownership will be high and qualification requirements for Communes to manage P135 investment funds will be restrictive and result in Districts continuing to manage P135 investment projects.

Provinces should try to persuade CEMA at the Provincial level to allow some P135 funds to be managed by Communes for small-scale investment projects following a similar format to the CDF.

### **Operation and Maintenance of CDF small-scale infrastructure**

Small-scale infrastructure projects in both provinces have been developed recently developed, 2011 and 2012 and O&M is not yet a real concern.

Discussions with Villages and Communes illustrated that some models for O&M management were being considered but were not yet formalised. Given the high level of investment ownership by Communes and Villagers as well as the high level of local contribution it is likely that systems will be put in place to ensure projects are maintained.

However, Communes and Villages will benefit from the introduction of different options for O&M. PSARD over the remaining time of the programme could collect and deliver to both Provinces and PSARD Communes and Districts a range of different O&M financing and management options.

At the same time PSARD should support Communes to identify official O&M resources, which are available from Districts and Provinces and try to ensure that CDF funded projects are eligible for these funds.

### **Outcome 1c: Improved Commune Financial Management (CFM) capacities allow communes to become investment owners for the decentralised state budgets and National Target Programme funds**

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Hoa Binh Province Achievement 2012	Cao Bang Province Achievement 2012
<b>Outcome 1.c.</b>	<p>HB 40% provincial investment budget decentralised to commune level.</p> <p>NOTE this will basically be impossible – should concentrate more on the district figures</p> <p>CB 30% provincial investment budget decentralised to commune level.</p> <p>NOTE: district is more realistic</p>	<p>Not yet specific information for whole province.</p> <p>Some districts such as Da Bac : 6,5%; Tan Lac: 15% as reported.</p>	-

### **Current Status and relevance**

#### ***Achievements***

Communes and Districts reported that they felt that Communes financial management abilities had improved and commune accountants were now able to manage and follow CDF guidelines and requirements.

Illustrating Communes ability to manage their own investments is clearly relevant in both Provinces and enables the participatory SEDP approach to be more real and based in some reality. Without funds managed at the Commune level and linked to the SEDP it is clear that the participatory SEDP process will lose its attractiveness, as it becomes a theoretical practice.

Some Communes claimed they were already investment owners for some investment projects funded from Provincial and National levels. These funds often reached 3-4 billion. Communes were responsible for hiring contractors to develop projects and also for all payments. Districts often supported Communes though Communes remained owners of the projects.

### ***Constraints and challenges***

As mentioned there seems a continued reluctance by Districts to decentralise project ownership and P135 funds to Communes levels. Districts continue to feel that Communes had low levels of capacity and were not qualified to manage P135 activities. P135 guidelines themselves worked against Commune ownership, with Communes being required to have certain levels of education and qualifications in order to manage P135 funds.

The new stage of P135 retains a goal of pursuing Commune ownership. In order to aid this more control over P135 III has been given to CEMA and PPCs at the Provincial level. However, the interim P135 programme in 2012 and 2013 has seen ownership in many cases brought back to the District. Discussions with Districts also continued to suggest that Districts did not feel Communes had capacity to management P135 II funds and investment activities. The lack of funds for capacity building makes it less likely Communes will be supported and trained to be investment owners.

### **Sustainability and impact**

#### ***Achievements***

**Hoa Binh province** holds the most opportunity for the continuation of fund decentralisation to Communes as there is a strong will and belief at the Provincial level in pursuing at least some fund decentralisation.

In discussions with DPI and also in the wrap up meeting it was reiterated that the province could support the CDF approach with the decentralisation of VND200 million to all Communes costing less than VND42 billion or equivalent to the costs of 600metres of highway or 0.11 per cent of the Provinces annual budget of vnd3,800 million according to representatives of the Department of Finance.

However, this is still dependent on PPC approval and of course the availability of budget not just for one year but for 3 to 5 years to ensure clear planning by Communes and Villages for the funds.

If **Hoa Binh Province** can not find funds to support decentralisation to all Communes we recommend that at least some Commune receive some funds. Firstly, the Province could consider CDF funding across the province for all communes for vnd200 million. Secondly, the Province continues the CDF approach in the 87 PSARD communes at the current level of vnd250 million per year, alternatively the Province continues the current provincial contribution to 87 PSARD Communes, divided equally this would give each commune VND100 million per year.

### ***Constraints and Challenges***

In Cao Bang there are greater budget pressures and it is unlikely that the decentralisation of funds continues even at the currently low level of Provincial contribution to the PSARD and the CDF.

In Cao Bang province the greatest opportunity for sustainability, adoption and continuation lies in P135 III. CEMA in the Province have already shown great interest in the CDF guidelines and processes as well as the participatory SEDP approach and cooperation between the PSARD and CEMA should be strengthened and developed over the next year.

The Province should work with CEMA to try to assign some of the P135 funds for decentralised Commune management of small-scale infrastructure programmes.

As discussed the obvious source of decentralised funds for small-scale infrastructure are other NTPs and Government programmes such as P135, the NRD or the NTP SPR. However, this could prove difficult as each programme clearly has its own approach and guidelines designed centrally often with little room to for change especially in budget matters.

The new P135III assigns ownership of VND200 million to communes for agriculture production investment while the management of the larger vnd800 to 1billion investment budget is yet to be decided though is likely to be retained by most districts. Even where Communes had been investment owners under the previous P135, Communes informed us that they actually had little control over investments and were owners in name only. Districts made all investment decisions and also introduced contractors to implement investment activities.

The New Rural Development programme is an umbrella programme with no current financing other than funds to finance Commune Zoning plans, done mostly by consultants in collaboration with Commune leaders and with some discussion with villagers. Though the NRD could use the participatory SEDP approach to guide and prioritise activities at present it does not have any specific funds of its own which could be used in the same form as PSARD's CDF and decentralised to Communes.

Clearly the adoption of greater small-scale investment management by Communes would benefit other programmes and support the reaching of their own goals as well as ensuring Villages directly benefit from activities. As we have discussed the CDF small-scale investment approach brings several benefits including being highly demand

driven, being highly participatory in investment choices and having a high levels of local contributions and finally CDF activities appear to be more cost effective.

However, without an acceptance of this approach within other programmes and/ or a continuation in Hoa Binh and Cao Bang of some form of fund decentralisation to Communes for small-scale infrastructure investment it is unlikely that Communes will continue to be investment managers.

Cao Bang and Hoa Binh need to continue to assign decentralised budgets for small-scale infrastructure and/ or other programmes need to assign part of their budgets and ensure that they are decentralised and managed at the Commune levels.

In order to illustrate the ability of Communes to manage investment budgets and small-scale infrastructure we suggest that the CDF budgets in **Cao Bang province** are increased further using unallocated budgets and additional budgets which we understand are available for 2013 and 2014. We also recommend that better performing Communes are given budgets close to those under P135 to manage, VND800 to 1 billion. This would provide further and broader impact of PSARD and would also act as an illustration to the Province and other programmes, such as P135, that Communes do have the capacity to manage large funds effectively.

In **Hoa Binh Province** we recommend the Province gives assurances that the CDF approach in some form will continue and will be financed for between 3 to 5 years after the PSARD has closed.

To further strengthen and support the argument for decentralised fund management PSARD should evaluate in detail several investment projects across the two Provinces to show the cost benefit of activities and illustrate the benefit of the approach over other investment approaches.

**2.2.Outcome 2: High quality public services (need based) will promote and strengthen agricultural production and sustainability increase rural income.**

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Hoa Binh Province Achievement 2012	Cao Bang Province Achievement 2012
<b>Outcome 2</b>	80% of local people, including women and poor, confirmed accessibility of their demanding extension, vet, plant protection services.	36,115 farmers provided with FFS training.  59% of local people accessed the plant protection services.  59% of local people accessed the veterinary services	Number of HHs/ people attended FFS training in 2012 is 4684 ( about 13% of total HHs in 4 project districts). According to external evaluation, 35% visited sites have PPSP/ VSP. and 15% of population benefited from PPSP/VSP
	At least 50% of the farmers reported that the ARD services did increase their agricultural and livestock productivity leading to their livelihood improvement.	79% of farmers reported that the ARD services did increase their agricultural and livestock productivity	78% of beneficiaries reported their income increased 33% due to apply new technology and new varieties.

## *Current Status and relevance*

### *Achievements*

The move from a traditional classroom based approach to the delivery extension training to a more practical **Farmer Field School** approach, in this model a mixture of classroom based theory and field bases practical experience, was clearly welcomed by extension staff and trainees and according to the June 2013 has had led to increased incomes for farmers.

The recent mid-phase monitoring report supports the achievements of the FFS, which has now clearly met its log-frame outcome objectives.

In both Provinces there was a strong link between the delivery of FFS extension services and the participatory SEDP. During participatory SEDP meetings, villages request the broad areas where they would like to receive extension support and a prioritised list is then included in the final SEDP plan.

The extension centres in both provinces stated that they then refer to this broad list of requests and then undertake a more detailed needs assessment. In Cao Bang 5 curricula are now available for FFS with 2 more being developed, while in Hoa Binh there are currently 7 curricula, which may rise to 12 over the remainder of the PSARD.

There is a clear momentum to incorporate more curricula into the FFS training schedule and Commune Extension staff are increasingly comfortable with the approach and feel their capacity has improved to deliver extension in general and FFs in particular. In many Communes extension staff are now delivering only FFS training.

### *Constraints and challenges*

However, in **Hoa Binh province** it seems that some Communes are given some orientation on what training should be given prior to the participatory SEDP process suggesting that the final training request list may not be fully demand driven but may also be directed towards District and Commune agricultural goals.

This is also the case in Cao Bang where the 5 FFS curriculum (maize. Rice. Peanut, soybean and chicken) have been developed by the Province and District and may follow the availability of existing training material and the goals of the Districts. At the same time the 5 FFS curriculum may not meet the demands of farmers or the conditions they farm in. In Bao Lam District, Cao Bang the focus of farmers and the District is cattle yet there is no FFS support available for this, though a FFS curricula is being developed for 2014.

Given the distances between Communes/ Districts and Villages there a number of issues with the delivery in **Cao Bang province**. Due to these distances the cost of the FFS approach , already higher than normal extension approaches, is even higher in Cao Bang. Travel time is also a major issue and it is more difficult for Communes to reach a broad number of farmers.

The ***Veterinary Service Point and Plant Protection Service Points and Groups*** in both provinces have had a positive impact and could become a central service for Communes in the prevention and fight against animal and plant disease.

Clearly in these remote areas, especially in Cao Bang, where crop production is low and animal husbandry makes up a large proportion of household wealth it is clearly needed to address disease at the local level. However, there remains some question on whether the VSP and PPSP approach can be sustainable, especially as self-financing operation.

Capacity of commune agriculture extension/ veterinary staff is a constrained in both Provinces. Currently, Commune extension/veterinary staff are working as collaborator and receive monthly allowances rather than fixed wages, as a result there is high trend of staff turnover either moving into new positions or changing Communes. As a result trained staff in FFS , VSP, PPSP may move into other position and newcomers will carry out FFS without training and less experience in FFS. Therefore on going training should be undertaken in the remaining period of the project as well as following the project when the approach is fully adopted by the Provincial Extension centres.

In Hoa Binh, the group leader of PPSG may be the head of a village or head of agricultural cooperative with less knowledge of plant protection and crop disease and who has received only 2 days training on plant protection while other team members did not. As a result, low capacity and less specializing is a barrier for the operation/ performance of PPSGs. It is recommended that in the remaining time the project should focus on training in order to increase capacity of PPSP.

### **Sustainability and impact**

#### ***Achievements***

Though FFS is now heavily adopted across PSARD Communes for many extension activities (with some extension workers only taking this approach) the adoption of the approach and its continuation of FFS in both Provinces is not assured. Adoption of the FFS approach in other programmes may be problematic as many programmes already have guidelines and cost norms for extension services that will hinder its adoption of FFS approaches.

#### ***Constraints and challenges***

Some Communes have tried to use the approach under other programmes however the higher costs compared to normal extension services means that it has not been possible. In Cao Bang Province the added distances between communes and villages mean costs for implementing the FFS are high.

At the Provincial level the PPC, DARD and the Extension services should engage with other programmes and develop FFS norms and push for their inclusion in P135 and other programmes that have an extension training element.

PSARD can support the province in developing appropriate cost norms for the FFS approach in the two provinces. Given the very different natures of the two provinces

two sets of FFS guidelines and norms should developed for training activities in the two Provinces.

In order to further support adoption and sustainability PSARD should consider undertaking evaluations of the adoption of FFS training by farmers. Though the Outcome Monitoring Report details farmers feel their incomes have risen it would aid full adoption and communication of the benefits of the FFS by undertaking a more detailed income and production evolution of the approach to quantify the benefits.

In **Hoa Binh** it is clear that the ***Plant Protection Service Groups*** are welcomed and are being used for disease and vaccination advice by many villagers. However, though they are used for the free advice many farmers prefer to purchase medicines directly from Districts. Unlike, Cao Bang, distances from villages and communes to Districts are not a major hindrance, at the same time there is a vibrant private sector input supply sector for crops and husbandry. As a result the PPSGs are finding difficult to gain peoples trust for the purchase of medicines and farmers prefer to purchase these directly from traditional private sector sources.

The Veterinary Service Point have not suffered from these constraints and are operating profitably.

In **Cao Bang** there is less of private sector input sector and given distances between villages and communes and districts the village/ commune based service providers are being used for the purchase of medicines as well as advice.

There is a clear public good element to both the VSP and PPSG and provinces should consider integrating the VSP and PPSGs into the government system as they operate as a first line of defence for disease and pest control and are clearly working in this area.

**Outcome 3: With Technical assistance from consultancy agency, and the collaboration from relevant leaders and agencies at provincial, district and commune levels, the Project Management Board (PMB) and Support Unit will effectively implement the project activities.**

Helvetas has clearly built a strong team in the provinces with good leadership and commitment from Programme officers and staff.

This is illustrated by the high number of activities across the provinces with 210 communes supported in Hoa Binh for participatory SEDP implementation and 87 with CDF activities. While in Cao Bang 62 communes have been supported in both participatory SEDp development and CDF implementation.

Farmer Field School activities have also reach over 36,115 famers so far and 139 VSPs and 159 PPSPs are now in place.

The PSARD is on track towards reaching its logical framework goals and has been able to overcome many initial issues in the implementation of the programme especially in relation to capacity weaknesses and training needs at the commune and district levels.

At the same time many activities have been formally integrated into local government, such as the participatory SEDP approach and Provincial, District and commune leaders all see the benefit of the different PSARD products. Clearly many local officials especially at the District and Commune levels have had their capacities improved enabling them to implement participatory SEDPs and manage CDFs.

This has strengthened the possibility of adoption of products by provinces and the possibility that activities will be sustainable after the PSARD ends. However, training in many areas will need to be continued in order to ensure local officials are able to adequately and effectively implement participatory SEDPs and manage investment funds at the commune level.

### 3 Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 3.1 Conclusion

In both Cao Bang and Hoa Binh Province the PSARD is on track to meet its goals under the programme document for all aspects including participatory SEDP development, CDF implementation and Agricultural service delivery (FSS, VSP, PPSP).

In **Hoa Binh province** there is clear commitment from the Provincial authorities, especially for the integration of the participatory SEDP, which is now adopted across the province as well as a high contribution to the CDF. This gives a good basis for the Province to adopt the approach fully as a Provincially led approach after the PSARD finishes and programme support is no longer available.

In **Cao Bang province** there is also strong support for the approach and products of the PSARD, though the province has adopted some supporting legislation for the participatory SEDP process it is yet to fully adopt and integrate the participatory SEDP approach across the province or assign a provincial budget for the SEDP process itself. Further more the province may struggle to finance a future CDF through Provincial funds, though P135 funding is an option.

While the participatory SEDP is considered by all levels of Government in both provinces as a positive move with improvements seen the quality of commune SEDPs both Provinces will need to ensure that staff receive on going training to overcome and address capacity issues. Both provinces should also ensure that funds are made available for the participatory approach.

In addition to give the participatory SEDP development approach some reality funds need to be decentralised to the Commune level and linked to the participatory SEDP approach.

Unfortunately, the design of other programmes may make the use of the participatory SEDP approach difficult and some changes will need to be made in the design and acceptance of the approach in programmes such as P135 and the NRD programme. However the new design of the P135 does allow for greater implementation decision making at the Provincial level.

The next section details the main recommendations of the mid term review team. However to summarise we feel the PSARD and Provinces should focus on the following key recommendations over the remaining period of the programme in order to ensure greater integration at the provincial level.

- **PSARD** should reconsider supporting Phuc Hoa District and should focus its remaining efforts in supporting **Cao Bang province** in the adoption of the participatory SEDP approach across all communes in the province.

- **PSARD and both Provinces** should work closely with P135 and CEMA at the province level to develop a source of funds for small-scale infrastructure chosen through the participatory SEDP and managed by communes.
- **PSARD should capture implementation impact** of CDF and FFS models through a comprehensive model evaluation of both, which illustrates the overall benefits and impact of the PSARD. This should be done in close collaboration with provincial partners.
- **SDC** should consider supporting Irish Aid and UNDP's support to the NTP SPR introducing the PSARD participatory planning approach and encouraging its adoption and role out through the NTP SPR giving the approach a wider national impact.

### 3.2 Recommendations

**Outcome 1:** *Management decentralisation and participatory Socio Economic Development Plans (SEDP), and transparent and effective financial management will strengthen the ownership and contribute to the local poverty reduction and economic development.*

**Outcome 1a:** *Comprehensive and need-based Commune and District SEDP follows a province-wide standard and are binding for all local development activities.*

The PSARD has greatly supported the expansion of the participatory SEDP approach in the two provinces. The participatory process is clearly seen as beneficial and supportive of an improved SEDP development process making commune SEDPs more realistic and based on actual needs of villagers.

#### Recommendations for Hoa Binh Province

- In order to meet this outcome goal Hoa Binh province will need to take the lead in pushing for a single approach to participatory planning and the use of a single commune plan for all programmes (P135, NRD etc).
- The funding for the participatory process (VND7 million per commune) needs to continue to be assured in order to provide adequate funds to ensure the process continues and to avoid adding a further financial burden to communes.
- To give the participatory SEDP a continued purpose Hoa Binh province needs to ensure funds are available for communes to manage, whether through the continuation of a CDF in some form or the greater decentralisation of some or all of the P135 funds to communes.

#### Recommendations for Cao Bang Province

We feel the expansion of the project into Phuc Hoa District, detailed and agreed in the programme document may not be the best course of action for the remaining time of the project.

- In order to ensure a greater adoption of the participatory SEDP approach across all communes in the province it would be better to focus the remaining time of the **PSARD on supporting the Cao Bang** province in rolling out the full adoption of the participatory SEDP approach.
- Rather than expanding into Phuc Hoa it the governments financial contribution to the PSARD should be assigned to fund a Province wide adoption of the participatory SEDP. In this way the government's financial contribution is still assured and the sustainability of the approach may be strengthened. The Province would also then fully adopt the SEDP guidelines.
- **PSARD** can support the full adoption by providing participatory SEDP training and support to all new districts and communes rather than focusing on only one district in its final year.
- **The Province should** strongly consider requiring all programmes to use the participatory SEDP guidelines in their work and use commune SEDPs as a basis for activities rather than undertaking additional assessments. This could be used for P135, Resolution 30a, NRD and the new NTP SPR and other new programmes.

For both programme 135 III and the National Target Programme for Sustainable Poverty Reduction few donors are now engaged with the programmes as donor funding has reduced. However, SDC and others offer valuable provincial level insights into the development process for both programmes and examples of successful approaches.

- We recommend that **SDC considers** supporting Irish Aid and UNDP's support to the NTP SPR introducing the PSARD participatory planning approach and encouraging its adoption and role out through the NTP SPR.

**Outcome 1b:** *Commune Development Funds (CDF) provide resources for essential small-scale infrastructure and agricultural improvements and serve as learning ground for proficient commune-level project planning and implementation*

The participatory SEDP process backed by the Commune Development Fund have understandably been welcomed by villagers and communes. A large variety of small scale infrastructure have been implemented across communes. Though initial implementation saw a variety of implementation and management experience, by the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the project activities and management had become easier and more systematic.

- **PSARD should capture the CDF and small-scale infrastructure experience** and the cost saving process for CDF investment activities in order to provide Provinces with evidence to influence P135 and other government targeted programmes and illustrate the CDF approach benefits.

- As many CDF investments are still new few established O&M structures had been developed in both provinces. **PSARD should support** communes and villages in both provinces by introducing a variety of approaches for O&M in irrigation and other infrastructure investments, supporting villages to identify the most appropriate approach for their circumstances.
- Provincial and District funds are available for O&M as well as in different sectors (such as irrigation). In order to be eligible for these funds Provinces, districts and communes will need to officially recognise infrastructure investments in order to ensure they are officially able to access O&M funds.

**Outcome 1c:** *Improved Commune Financial Management (CFM) capacities allow communes to become investment owners for the decentralised state budgets and National Target Programme funds*

Clearly in most Communes visited the financial and administrative process was being managed well for CDF activities and Communes could manage a variety of fund sizes and several numbers of small-scale activities.

- In both **Hoa Binh and Cao Bang** the Provincial government should work more closely with CEMA to provide more simplified guidelines for P135.
- The Provincial Governments in Hoa Binh and Cao Bang should also work closely with Provincial CEMAs to build a small-scale infrastructure funding facility and also lobby Provincial level CEMAs to ensure some funds are available for commune management.

### ***Recommendations for Hoa Binh Province***

**Hoa Binh** has shown a strong commitment to the CDF process and a strong belief in the benefits of the CDF and the ability of Communes to fund the investment funds.

- We urge the Provincial leaders to continue to allocate funds for CDF activities from 2015 across the province, which should cost around VND40 billion for 199 provinces with a CDF of VND200 million.
- As the project phases out the Province might consider the following options:-
  - CDF funding across the province for all communes for vnd200 million
  - CDF funding of the 87 PSARD communes of vnd200 million/commune;
  - Continue the current provincial contribution to 87 PSARD communes. Divided equally this would give them VND100 million per commune.
- To ensure smooth management at the commune level stability of funding will be needed and we suggest a CDF commitment over at least 3-5 years and this is clearly communicated to districts and communes.
- We also urge that the provinces ensure the management of the funds are at the Commune level and no opportunity is given for Districts to capture ownership.

## ***Recommendations for Cao Bang Province***

In **Cao Bang province** the CDF process remains driven by the PSARD with a welcome but small contribution from the Province itself. As in Hoa Binh, communes in Cao Bang can clearly manage the funds but District remain reluctant to decentralise P135 funds to communes for their management.

- Over the remaining time we suggest that **PSARD focuses on illustrating** the ability of communes to be investment owners and support the Province in developing a Provincially financed CDF, even with small funds, and also work with the province and CEMA to develop a system under P135 to transfer at least some funds for direct commune ownership for small scale infrastructure.
- We suggest **PSARD increases the funding of the CDF** across the PSARD provinces in 2014, if there are funds available. Communes should be informed as soon as possible so they can adjust their plans for 2014 and identify additional activities.
- In order to show Provincial and National agencies that communes can manage higher fund levels, close to the levels in P135, we recommend that more **efficient communes be given budgets between vnd800 million to vnd1 billion** in 2014 to illustrate that communes can manage higher budget levels.
- Cao Bang Province and PSARD should work with other programmes, such as P135, NRD and Resolution 30a to encourage them to allow part of their funds to be used for small-scale infrastructure programmes managed at the commune level.

**Outcome 2:** *High quality public services (need based) will promote and strengthen agricultural production and sustainability increase rural income.*

## ***Farmer Field Schools***

The development of improved and demand driven public services through the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach has been well appreciated and has a high impact across communes. The FFS approach is being expanded across both provinces with the continued development FFS curriculum by the PSARD team and the extension services.

- PSARD should work with both provinces to develop **guidelines and norms** for the FFS approach that can be adopted and incorporated by the Provincial Extension services and other programmes at the provincial level.
- The approach can be developed across both provinces, though the FFS costs and norms will vary between the two provinces given the larger distances and more difficult terrain in Cao Bang compared to Hoa Binh.
- PSARD should undertake a **detailed and systematic capture of data to illustrate the production and income benefits** of the FFS approach. While this

may be difficult we feel a more systematic cost benefit analysis of the FFS approach, especially given the higher costs and lower attendance levels involved, would strengthen the PSARD and Provinces attempt to have the FFS approach adopt across the province as well as within other programmes.

### ***Veterinary Service Point/ Plant Protection Service Points and Groups***

The VSPs and PPSPs in both provinces have had a positive impact and have enabled important disease protection services to be delivered directly to farmers in a more timely manner.

However, there remains some question on whether the VSP and PPSP approach can be sustainable, especially as an income raising operations.

In **Hoa Binh** it is clear that PPSGs are welcomed and are being used for disease and vaccination advice by many villagers. However, though they are used for the free advice many farmers prefer to purchase medicines directly from Districts. Unlike, Cao Bang, distances from villages and communes to Districts are not a major hindrance, at the same time there is a vibrant private sector input supply sector for crops and husbandry. As a result PPSGs are finding difficult to gain peoples trust for the purchase of medicines and farmers prefer to purchase these directly from traditional private sector sources.

In **Cao Bang** there is less of private sector input sector and given distances between villages and communes and districts the village/ commune based service providers are being used for the purchase of medicines as well as advice.

There is a clear public good element to both the VSP and PPSG and provinces should consider integrating the VSP and PPSGs into the government system as they operate as a first line of defence for disease and pest control and are clearly working in this area.

### Annex One: Agenda of Cao Bang Province visit

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>MTR MEMBER</b>	<b>PMU SUPPORT</b>	<b>Venue</b>
9-Sep	8h00 - 9h00	Meeting with Mr Hau, PPC Vice-chairman	All team	Mr Hoat, Ms Trinh	Mr Hau's office
	9h10 - 10h10	Meeting with Mr Thai, DARD Director	All team	Mr Hoat	Mr Thai's office
	10h15 - 12h00	Meeting with PSARD CB management team	All team		PMU office
	13h30 - 14h30	Meeting with DoF leadership/coordinator/working group	Hanh and Richard	Ms Loan/ Mr Cuong	DoF
	14h35 - 15h30	Meeting with DPI leadership/coordinator/working group	Hanh and Richard	Ms Loan/ Mr Cuong	DPI
	14h00 - 15h30	Meeting with Extension leaders	Tram Anh	Mr Hoat/Mr Ky	Extension office
	15h40 - 17h00	Joint meeting (extension, PP, Vet, Irrigation)	Tram Anh, Richard and Hanh	Mr. Hoat/Mr Ky	Extension office
10-Sep	7h00-8h00	Travel from Cao Bang city to Thach An district	All team		
	8h00 - 9h00	Meeting with Vice chairman, district coordinator and district implementing Unit	All team	Mr Hoat, Ms Loan, Mr Cuong and Mr Ky	Dis PC meeting room
	9h10 - 11h30	Meeting with Head/Deputy head of Planning and Finance Dept and key staff	Richard and Hanh		Dis P&F office
	9h10 - 11h30	Meeting with Key staff of Dis Agriculture and Extension Office	Tram Anh		Dis Agr office
	13h30 - 14h00	Meeting with the Chairman/Vice Chairman of commune	All team		
	14h00 - 15h00	Meeting with the commune accountant and staff responsible for planning	Richard and Hanh		Commune office
	14h00 - 15h00	Meeting with commune extension, PP, vet and irrigation	Tram Anh		Commune office
	15h15 - 16h45	Meeting with the villagers (two groups, male and female)	All team		
	16h45 - 18h00	Travel back from district to Cao Bang city	All team		
11-Sep	7h00-8h00	Travel from Cao Bang city to Nguyen Binh district	All team		
	8h00 - 9h00	Meeting with Vice chairman, district coordinator and district implementing Unit	All team	Mr Hoat, Ms Loan, Mr Cuong and Mr Ky	Dis meeting room
	9h10 - 11h30	Meeting with Head/Deputy head of Planning and Finance Dept and key staff	Richard and Hanh		Dis P&F office
	9h10 - 11h30	Meeting with Key staff of Dis Agriculture /Extension Office	Tram Anh		Dis Agr office

	13h30 - 14h00	Meeting with the Chairman/Vice Chairman of commune	All team		Commune office
	14h00-15h00	Meeting with the commune accountant and staff responsible for planning	Richard and Hanh		Commune office
	14h00-15h00	Meeting with commune extension, PP, vet and irrigation	Tram Anh		Commune office
	15h15-16h45	Meeting with the villagers (two groups, male and female)	All team		At village
12-Sep	7h00-12h00	Travel from Nguyen Binh to Bao Lam district	All team	Mr Tuan, Mr Hoa and Mr Hoat	
	13h30-14h30	Meeting with Vice chairman, district coordinator and district implementing Unit	All team		Dis meeting room
	14h35-16h30	Meeting with Head/Deputy head of Planning and Finance Dept and key staff	Richard and Hanh		Dis P&F office
	14h35-16h30	Meeting with Key staff of Dis Agriculture /extension Office	Tram Anh		Dis Agr office
					Commune office
13-Sep	8h00 - 8h30	Meeting with the Chairman/Vice Chairman of commune	All team		Commune office
	8h30-9h30	Meeting with the commune accountant and staff responsible for planning	Richard and Hanh		Commune office
	8h30-9h30	Meeting with commune extension, PP, vet and irrigation	Tram Anh		Commune office
	9h45-11h15	Meeting with the villagers (two groups, male and female)	All team		At village
	Afternoon	Travel back from Bao Lam to Cao Bang city	All team		
14-Sep	8h00-11h30	Wrap up meeting with province	All team		
	Afternoon	Travel from Cao Bang to Ha Noi	All team		

**Annex Two: Agenda of Hoa Binh Province Visit**

<b>NGÀY</b>	<b>GIỜ</b>	<b>HOẠT ĐỘNG</b>	<b>THÀNH PHẦN ĐOÀN ĐG</b>	<b>CÁN BỘ HỖ TRỢ BQL</b>	<b>ĐỊA ĐIỂM</b>
16.9.	8h00 - 09h00	Họp làm việc với ông Dũng, PCT UBND	Cả đoàn	Minh	Văn phòng ông Dũng
	9h10 - 10h10	Họp làm việc với ông Tứ, giám đốc sở NN&PTNT	Cả đoàn	Minh	Văn phòng ông Tứ
	10h15 - 12h00	Họp làm việc với BQL PSARD CB	Cả đoàn		Văn phòng BQL
	13h30 - 14h30	Họp với sở TC (Lãnh đạo/điều phối/nhóm hỗ trợ)	Hạnh và Richard	Phong, Huyền	Sở Tài chính
	14h35- 15h30	Họp với sở KHĐT (Lãnh đạo/Điều phối/nhóm hỗ trợ)	Hạnh và Richard	Hảo	Sở KHĐT
	14h00- 15h30	Họp với lãnh đạo trung tâm KNKL	Trâm Anh	Minh, Mạnh	Văn phòng Trung tâm KNKN
	15h40- 17h00	Họp phối hợp giữa Trung tâm KNKN, chi cục thú y, chi cục BVTV	Tram Anh, Richard và Hạnh	Minh, Mạnh, Liên	Văn phòng Trung tâm KNKN
17.9.	7h00- 8h00	Khởi hành từ TP Hòa Bình đi huyện Kim Bôi	Cả đoàn		
	8h00 - 9h00	Họp với PCT, ĐPV huyện và các đơn vị thực hiện tại huyện	Cả đoàn	Minh, Hảo,	Phòng họp UBND huyện
	9h10 - 11h30	Họp với Trưởng phòng/phó phòng TCKH và các cán bộ chủ chốt	Richard và Hạnh	Phong, Mạnh, Liên	Phòng TCKH huyện
	9h10 - 11h30	Họp với các bộ chủ chốt của Trạm khuyến nông huyện	Trâm Anh		Văn phòng trạm KNKL huyện
	13h30 - 14h00	Họp với Chủ tịch/phó chủ tịch xã	Cả đoàn		UBND xã
	14h00- 15h00	Họp với kế toán xã và cán bộ phụ trách kế hoạch	Richard và Hạnh		UBND xã
	14h00- 15h00	Họp với cán bộ khuyến nông xã, thú y xã, Tổ trưởng tổ BVTV	Trâm Anh		UBND xã
	15h15- 16h45	Phỏng vấn hộ dân (2 nhóm, Nam và Nữ)	Cả đoàn		
	16h45- 18h00	Trở về TP Hòa Bình	Cả đoàn		
18.9	6h00- 8h00	Di chuyển từ TP Hòa Bình đi huyện Yên Thủy	Cả đoàn		
	8h00 - 9h00	Họp với PCT, ĐPV huyện và các đơn vị thực hiện tại huyện	Cả đoàn	Minh, Hảo,	Phòng họp UBND huyện
	9h10 - 11h30	Họp với Trưởng phòng/phó phòng TCKH và các cán bộ chủ chốt	Richard và Hạnh	Phong, Mạnh, Liên	Phòng TCKH huyện
	9h10 - 11h30	Họp với các bộ chủ chốt của Trạm khuyến nông huyện	Trâm Anh		Trạm KNKL huyện

	13h30 - 14h00	Họp với Chủ tịch/phó chủ tịch xã	Cả đoàn		UBND xã
	14h00-15h00	Họp với kế toán xã và cán bộ phụ trách kế hoạch	Richard và Hạnh		UBND xã
	14h00-15h00	Họp với cán bộ khuyến nông xã, thú y xã, Tổ trưởng tổ BVTV	Trâm Anh		UBND xã
	15h15-16h45	Phỏng vấn hộ dân (2 nhóm, Nam và Nữ)	Cả đoàn		At village
	16h45-18h45	Trở về TP Hòa Bình	Cả đoàn		
19.9	6h00-8h00	Di chuyển từ TP Hòa Bình đi huyện Mai Châu	Cả đoàn		
	8h00 - 9h00	Họp với PCT, ĐPV huyện và các đơn vị thực hiện tại huyện	Cả đoàn	Minh, Hảo, Phong, Mạnh, Liên	Phòng họp UBND huyện
	9h10 - 11h30	Họp với Trưởng phòng/phó phòng TCKH và các cán bộ chủ chốt	Richard và Hạnh		Phòng TCKH huyện
	9h10 - 11h30	Họp với các bộ chủ chốt của Trạm khuyến nông huyện	Trâm Anh		Trạm KNKL huyện
	13h30 - 14h00	Họp với Chủ tịch/phó chủ tịch xã	Cả đoàn		UBND xã
	14h00-15h00	Họp với kế toán xã và cán bộ phụ trách kế hoạch	Richard và Hạnh		UBND xã
	14h00-15h00	Họp với cán bộ khuyến nông xã, thú y xã, Tổ trưởng tổ BVTV	Trâm Anh		UBND xã
	15h15-16h45	Phỏng vấn hộ dân (2 nhóm, Nam và Nữ)	Cả đoàn		At village
	16h45-18h45	Trở về TP Hòa Bình	Cả đoàn		
20.9	7h00-8h00	Di chuyển từ TP Hòa Bình đi huyện Lương Sơn	Cả đoàn		
	8h00 - 9h00	Họp với PCT, ĐPV huyện và các đơn vị thực hiện tại huyện	Cả đoàn	Minh, Hảo, Phong, Mạnh, Liên	Phòng họp UBND huyện
	9h10 - 11h30	Họp với Trưởng phòng/phó phòng TCKH và các cán bộ chủ chốt	Richard và Hạnh		Phòng TCKH huyện
	9h10 - 11h30	Họp với các bộ chủ chốt của Trạm khuyến nông huyện	Trâm Anh		Trạm KNKL huyện
	13h30 - 14h00	Họp với Chủ tịch/phó chủ tịch xã	Cả đoàn		UBND xã
	14h00-15h00	Họp với kế toán xã và cán bộ phụ trách kế hoạch	Richard và Hạnh		UBND xã
	14h00-15h00	Họp với cán bộ khuyến nông xã, thú y xã, Tổ trưởng tổ BVTV	Trâm Anh		UBND xã
	15h15-16h45	Phỏng vấn hộ dân (2 nhóm, Nam và Nữ)	Cả đoàn		At village
	16h45-17h45	Trở về TP Hòa Bình	Cả đoàn		
21.9	8h00-11h30	Họp tổng kết với Tỉnh	Cả đoàn		

	Chiều	Di chuyển từ Hòa Bình về Hà Nội	All team	

## Annex Three: Terms of reference for the MTR of the PS-ARD

Annex

### Terms of references

Contract no. 81017889 (Local Mandate)

Mid-term Review for Public Service Provision Improvement Programme in Agriculture and Rural Development (PS-ARD)

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### 1. Background

In 1994, SDC started its support in Hoa Binh for the Social Forestry Support Project for two phases (SFSP I and II, 1994-2002), followed by the Extension and Training Support for Forestry and Agriculture in the Uplands (ETSP, 2003-2007). Since 2008, SDC has shifted to a more programme-based approach through Public Services Provision Improvement in Agriculture and Rural Development (PSARD), which addresses both the demand and supply sides of services in a very comprehensive manner. It is built on two key pillars: (i) *strengthening the commune level* in planning and financial management; and (ii) *developing the capacity of the public service delivery system* to become more effective and responsive to the requirements of farmers. It also includes two institutional aspects: (i) *organisational reform* in the ARD sector and (ii) *a provincial capacity building system* for long-term human resource development. PSARD was implemented in two provinces Hoa Binh (HB) and Cao Bang (CB). After three years of implementation, the programme has achieved tangible results, (hereafter called 'products') including:

- A participatory process of the commune SEDP was piloted. This increased the effective participation of both men and women from less than 10% to more than 50% in the planning process. A transparent and accountable financial management mechanism at the commune level was developed and resulted in the effective use of the Commune Development Fund (CDF). Decentralising the budget to the commune through the CDF has directly benefited about 77'000 households in 5 districts in HB and CB through approximately 3'400 small projects in communes and villages. Of these projects, around 1'400 were small scale infrastructure projects and 2'000 agriculture production improvement projects. Stronger local ownership of commune development resulted in 40% local contribution to infrastructure projects through household voluntary contribution, both monetary and labour work. This contributed to improving people's livelihoods in the project target areas and reducing poverty in the 5 project districts in HB and CB from 33% in 2007 to 25% in 2009<sup>7</sup>. Both provinces are committed to expanding the new participatory SEDP process and the new Commune Financial Management (CFM) model to all remaining communes in their province.
- A method for effective and decentralised public service delivery systems in agriculture and rural development (ARD) has been set up in 103 communes in 5

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<sup>7</sup> There are other poverty targeted programs in selected communes of the 5 districts such as P135, the WB project.

districts, tripling the level of farmer satisfaction of public services, partially thanks to the restructuring and increased decentralisation of all 24 provincial DARD<sup>8</sup> agencies with clear roles and responsibilities. Government cadres have been trained in the use of best practices, such as farmer field schools (FFS), participatory technology development (PTD) and marketing extension. Successful refining and application of these tools and methodologies have resulted in approval for their wide application in both provinces by the Provincial People's Committee (PPC).

- The provincial capacity building system has been strengthened through an improved curriculum<sup>9</sup>, modern teaching materials, methodologies and teachers' capacities in economic and technical high schools and the provincial political schools<sup>10</sup> in both provinces. Eighty percent of teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to train government cadres at all levels for the provinces on all tools and methodologies developed in phase I.

To build on the successes of Phase I, a second phase of PSARD (phase II) was approved for a duration of 4 years (2011-2015). The project's **overall goal** is to contribute to province and district-wide mainstreaming of participatory local planning, financial decentralisation and improved public service delivery in agriculture, in order to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods in disadvantaged areas of HB and CB provinces.

### **The project has two outcomes:**

**Outcome 1:** Decentralised, participatory planning and transparent, efficient financial management to increase local ownership and to contribute to poverty reduction and economic development.

*Outcome 1a:* Comprehensive and need-based commune and district SEDPs are standard and binding for all local development activities.

*Outcome 1b:* The CDF provides resources for essential small-scale infrastructure and agricultural improvements and serves as a learning ground for proficient commune-level project planning and implementation.

*Outcome 1c:* Improved financial management capacities allow communes to become investment owners for decentralised state budgets and NTP funds.

**Outcome 2:** Needs and demand-based quality ARD services are provided, resulting in increased agricultural productivity.

**The project strategy** is rather simple and straightforward: to *mainstream* and *scale up* successfully piloted 'products,' - i.e. those mechanisms and methods that have proved to work and have received the approval of the provincial government during PSARD I – in order to make them province-wide standards that are actually applied. It is therefore based on the following intervention strategies:

- **Integration into government systems and working through government partners:** All project activities are implemented by government partners on

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<sup>8</sup> Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Province)

<sup>9</sup> Leadership, management, participatory agriculture extension, marketing extension, participatory commune development plan, commune financial management, learner centre teaching method (LCTM), communication skills, gender issues.

<sup>10</sup> Political schools provide training on public management skills to the public servants

commune, district and provincial levels. All guidelines, methodologies, tools, mechanisms and procedures are approved by provincial authorities for broad application in the provinces, not only for PSARD but also for other major ongoing projects in the provinces funded by IFAD, JICA and the WB. The project will support communes and districts in developing comprehensive SEDPs, into which all investment from the government's budget and ongoing projects will be integrated. Lower level SEDPs will be integrated into higher level SEDPs to ensure that the government can allocate budgets adequately.

- **Provincial coverage with increasing partners' contributions:** Due to the difference in development of the two provinces, the project is designed slightly differently for HB and CB in terms of geographical coverage and provincial financial contribution. Regarding financial autonomy of the two provinces, HB covers 35% of its own budget whereas CB covers only 10% (and therefore 90% of the budget of CB comes from the central government). Therefore, CB provincial government decided to prioritize its PSARD II investment to the 4 poorest districts in the province, unlike the full district coverage in HB. HB will contribute an average 31% of the project's costs, increasing from 23% to 37% over the years. In CB, the average contribution by the province will be 10%, increasing from 4% to 17% over the same period.

The total project budget is CHF 16'660'000. SDC contributes CHF 13'430'000 while HB and CB contribute CHF 2'690'000 and CHF 540'000 respectively.

## 2. Objectives of the review

As foreseen in the project document, a Mid Term Review (MTR) will take place in 2013. **The overall goal of the MTR is to identify the priorities of the project for the remaining time to ensure maximum impacts and sustainability beyond 2015 and the way to achieve them.**

The MTR will focus on **the project current status, relevance, sustainability, and recommendations.**

The MTR has the following objectives:

- Review of ***the project current status*** to provide a summary of the project key outputs/results up-to-date; the project implementation set-up, effectiveness and efficiency.
- Review and assess the ***relevance*** of the PSARD outcomes and their implementation approach and mechanism, in the context of the two provinces HB and CB and the overall policy framework in Vietnam on planning, budgeting, public financial management and decentralisation.
- Review and assess the ***sustainability*** of the PSARD outcomes and their implementation approach and mechanism, in the context of the two provinces HB and CB and their potentials for scaling-up to other Provinces after the project termination in 2015.

- **Recommendations:** Given the last SDC intervention, provide clear recommendations for the remaining project duration with regards to the consolidation and roll out stages. The recommendations should include strategies to overcome challenges and mitigate risks in order to ensure the sustainability of the relevant “products” of PSARD.

### 3. Scope and Methodology

#### 3.1. Scope

The review team will look at the achievements of the project up to date, the implementation mechanisms, assess current and future challenges, and propose strategies for implementation covering the remaining period of the project. The following key questions need to be answered directly include:

#### 1. **The project current status:**

- What are the project key outputs/results up-to date? How are they related to the project logframe?
- What is the project implementation set-up? Is it workable?
- Is the project implementation effective and efficient?
- What are key gaps between the project current status and the project designed outcomes?

#### 2. **Relevance:**

- Are the PSARD supporting products – participatory commune SEDP, CDF and need-based public services (FFS, veterinary, plant protection services...) relevant to the development of HB and CB?
- If the products are relevant, are the concepts, approaches and implementation mechanisms adequate to deliver the products and achieve the outcomes?
- Are the project objectives and strategic approach practical and realistic?
- Did integration into government systems and working through government partners really work?
- Are guidelines, methodologies, tools, mechanisms and procedures developed by PSARD approved by provincial authorities for broad application in the provinces?
- Are all financial resources at the commune level integrated in the commune SEDP? Does commune has it financial autonomy?

#### 3. **Sustainability and impact:**

- Can the processes and approaches developed by the project in order to deliver the PSARD products be sustainably continued and further developed by the local partners in HB and CB after project termination?
- Is the commune SEDP process developed by PSARD really participatory? Are there the collaboration among various departments at the provincial level and among various bureaus to facilitate the commune SEDP process?

- What is the real decision making procedure of the CDF allocation? Is this procedure to ensure equal opportunity for the disadvantage groups in the commune?
- Are the public services delivered by PSARD really need-based?
- Can the PSARD products contribute sustainably to poverty reduction in localities?
- Can those products and their processes and approaches be socially inclusive (men and women; majority and minority groups equally benefitting)?
- What is the potential of replication of those products in other places in Vietnam?

4. **Recommendations:** the commendations should aim at **maximizing the impacts and sustainability of the project beyond 2015.**

- Which expected outcomes and results set out in the project document are achievable, given the current institutional environment and capacity level in HB and CB and the remaining time of the project? Which adjustments to the project logframes for HB and CB are necessary?
- What are the priorities of the project in order to deliver those outcomes and results?
- What would be the best strategy (or roadmap) to address those priorities? Which adjustments are necessary in the project implementation arrangement in HB and CB?
- Which best practices from other provinces or other projects can be applied in HB and CB?
- Which products of the PSARD can be disseminated and how?

4.2. Review Methodology and Process

The review team will work in close collaboration with SDC, Helvetas and the Provinces of HB and CB. The team will use literature review, discussions, interviews with related stakeholders – Helvetas, local partners in HB and CB, beneficiaries, relevant donors/NGOs, etc. The detailed methodology and process will be developed by the review mission, but with consideration of the following guidance:

1. The methodology will be developed based on the review of all important documents and literature sent to the MTR members by SDC and the project TA team from Helvetas in advance.
2. The methodology to be applied will be presented to SDC and Helvetas in a kick-off meeting to ensure that the methodology is sensitive to the potential concerns of beneficiaries participating in this review
3. Ensure that all analysis and recommendations are based on available records, evidence and interviews.
4. Helvetas, Provincial PMUs in HB and CB, and SDC will support in organizing all meetings with related stakeholders.

**5. Team and qualifications**

The team will comprise one international consultant (team leader) and two national consultants.

The main responsibilities of the team leader are:

- Develop the review methodology based on evidence-based principle, fine-tuning of the key questions
- Organise the MTR process
- Allocate tasks to the team members
- Supervise and guide the team members in task implementing
- Coordinate with SDC; Helvetas, and Provinces
- Write the MTR final report

The team leader should be:

- Specialists on development programme evaluation; result-based evaluation; governance for agriculture and rural development; participatory development planning and budgeting; public services for agriculture and rural development
- Experience and knowledge on Vietnam
- Experienced on project management and implementation
- Very good communication and redaction skills
- Capable to work in a multi-cultural environment, especially with ethnic minority groups
- Fluent in English (writing, speaking), Vietnamese an advantage

The main responsibilities of the national consultants are:

- Fulfil tasks defined by and work under the supervision of the team leader
- Conduct interviews at field level
- Liaise between MTR team and Provincial authorities, facilitate work of MTR team at field level
- Help the team leader in understanding the Vietnamese situation and context
- Interpret for the team leader in discussion with the Vietnamese partners
- Translate the evaluation report from English into Vietnamese

The national consultants should be:

- A specialist on development programme evaluation; result-based evaluation; governance for agriculture and rural development; participatory development planning and budgeting; public services for agriculture and rural development in Vietnam
- Experience and deep knowledge on Agriculture and Governance in Vietnam
- Experienced on project management and implementation
- Fluent in English and Vietnamese (writing, speaking)
- Very good communication and redaction skills

The consultants will have a contract with SDC.

## **5. Tentative schedule**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Number of days</b>
Last week of Aug.	Review of key documents and development of the detailed review methodology	3
03/9 9.00 – 12.00 13.00 – 17.00	Kick-off briefing meeting with SDC Finalisation of the review methodology	1
04/9 9.00 - 12.00 13.00 – 17.00	Presenting review methodology to SDC and Helvetas Meeting with Helvetas on field visit	1
05-19/9	Working in HB and CB (including travelling) <sup>11</sup>	15
20/9 8.00 -12.00 13.30 – 17.00	Preparing a presentation of MTR findings and recommendations Presenting MTR findings and recommendations to SDC, Helvetas	1
21-23/9	Writing report and submitting a draft report (Eng and Vn) to SDC	3.0
24 - 30/9	Comment the draft report by SDC, Helvetas and local partners	
1-4/10	Revising final report (Eng and Vn)	1
5/10	Submitting final report (Eng and Vn) to SDC	
	<b>Total working days</b>	<b>25</b>

Note: for an international consultant who is not based in Vietnam travelling days will be added.

## 6. Expected products

- Presentation of MTR findings and recommendations (20/9/2013)
- A draft report in English and Vietnamese submitted to SDC (23/9/2013)
- A final report in English and Vietnamese (max. 25 pages, excluding annexes) including executive summary (max 3 pages) with critical and analytical views and clear recommendations submitted to SDC (5/10/2013).
- ***The MTR report should be concise and self-explanatory.*** The report structure should be agreed at the meeting on 20/9/2013.

**7. Duty Station:** Ha Noi, Hoa Binh and Cao Bang.

## 8. Reference Documents:

1. Project Document for phase 2
2. Project Document for phase 1

<sup>11</sup> A detailed workplan will be developed by PMU in HB, CB and Helvetas TA team

3. Project End-phase report of phase 1
4. Project annual plans and progress reports
5. Relevant Government decisions, decrees and policies on socio-economic development planning, agriculture and rural development
6. Project Outcome Monitoring Report

Date: .....

Signature: .....

Date: ..... Signature: .....

## **Annex Four: Programme Documents**

- PS-ARD Phase 1 2007 to 2010, Final Report and logframes
- PS-ARD phase 2 Programme Documents, Hoa Binh and Cao Bang
- PS-ARD phase 2, quarterly, mid year and annual work plans, progress and activity reports
- PS-ARD phase 2 reports, PSARD Mid phase Outcome monitoring report
- Provincial indicators and achievements log frames
- PSARD Provincial guidelines
  - CDF implementation
  - Participatory SEDP development
  - PIM
- Commune and District documents
  - SEDP
  - CDF lists
  - Extension training

## Annex Five: Mid Tern Review Team, Outputs and Timetable of MTR

MTR Team

Name	Task Assignment
Richard Jones <b>Master of Development Economics</b>	<p>Team Leader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory planning for the SEDP/ CDF and extension training and support</li> <li>• SEDP development and integration in to the government system</li> <li>• Sustainability and adoption of the PS-ARD</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>
Ms. Tran Thi Hanh <b>PhD in Economics</b>	<p>Team member</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory SEDP development and integration</li> <li>• Financial management, provincial commitment and sustainability.</li> <li>• CDF development</li> </ul>
Ms Tran Thi Tram Anh <b>Master of Commerce in Economics and Economic Development</b>	<p>Team member</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory planning and CDF/ extension linkages</li> <li>• Demand based extension support</li> </ul>

Deliverables and timetable of assignment of the National TA Team

### Timetable of assignment

The original ToR for the assignment assigned 25 days for completion. However, field work in Cao Bang and Hoa Binh took longer than had been originally planned due to extra travel time between Districts and the Provincial centre, as a result the assignment was extended to 29days to ensure adequate time for travel and completion of the final report.

Date	Activities	Tor assigned dates	Actual Working days
Last week of Aug.	Review of key documents and development of the detailed review methodology	3	3
07/08	Helvetas briefing meeting	0	0.5
08/08	SDC briefing meeting	0.5	0.5
29/08	Finalisation of the review methodology	0.5	1
26/8 - 30/8	Field trip organisation with Helvetas	0.5	0.5
03/9	Kick off meeting with SDC and Helvetas	0.5	0.5
08-21/9	Working in HB and CB (including travelling) <sup>12</sup>	15	18.5

Annex one and two details the Cao Bang and Hoa Binh Province agendas

3/10	Preparing a presentation of MTR findings and recommendations	0.5	0.5
4/10 8.00 -12.00	Presenting MTR findings and recommendations to SDC and Helvetas	0.5	0.5
21-30/9	Writing report and submitting a draft report (Eng and Vn) to SDC	3.0	3.0
30/9 - 4/10	Comment the draft report by SDC, Helvetas and local partners		
4-9/10	Revising final report (Eng and Vn)	1	1
9/10	Submitting final report (Eng and Vn) to SDC		
	<b>Total working days</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>

## Agreed Deliverables

### 1 Discussion of methodology, approach and work plan

- Kick off meetings and presentation and agreement of methodology, (03/09/2013)
- Presentation of findings and report outline, (04/10/2013)

### 2 Provincial Field Trips

- Provincial visit Cao Bang Province, (9/9/13 to 14/9/13)
- Provincial visit Hoa Binh Province, (16/9/13 to 21/9/13)

### 3 Draft and final MTR report for the PS-ARD:

- Draft report in English and Vietnamese, (30/9/2013)
- Final report (max 35 pages) and executive summary (max 3 pages), submitted (9/10/13)

