



Socialist Republic of Viet Nam



United Nations Development Programme

Outcome evaluation of UNDP Capacity Building for Disaster Reduction in Vietnam

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Executive Summary

This evaluation assesses the outcomes of UNDP's support to capacity building for disaster reduction in Vietnam. It considers how a wide variety of initiatives, ranging from specialised technical assistance to the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships, have contributed to enhancing capacities for disaster mitigation, preparedness, early warning, response and recovery. It also analyses how the 'disaster reduction community' in Vietnam is managing a shift from a narrow focus on flood and storm control to addressing a far wider range of risks and is considering how disaster reduction relates to the poverty alleviation agenda. Given the numerous components under review, it is not feasible to present verifiable conclusions regarding the outputs of the specific components during this short evaluation. The evaluation team is confident, however, that its findings reflect verifiable overall trends in the relationship between component outputs and wider strategic outcomes.

There are many countries that are poor and disaster prone, but Vietnam is one of the few that has made significant commitments to addressing disaster risk as part of poverty alleviation. Disaster risk is given significantly greater attention in Vietnam's Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy than in the majority of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers around the world. It also features in Vietnam's Social and Economic Development Strategy 2001-2010. Insufficient integration of disaster reduction (DR) efforts with a broader understanding of poverty and vulnerability is widely recognised as the key challenges for the future. This places an onus on the 'DR community'. Support is needed to better analyse exactly how disasters lead to poverty and poverty leads to disasters in order to formulate concrete, cost-effective, implementable and widely acceptable policies and programming. UNDP has a great opportunity and responsibility to coordinate efforts to move from words to action in linking DR and poverty reduction.

Support to the government in developing its DR capacity can be seen as a concrete expression of a rights-based approach to development. Citizens perceive that they have a right to protection from natural hazards and the government firmly accepts its responsibilities to provide a safe environment. The 'social contract' between the state and its citizens in protection from natural disasters is strongest at local levels. It is at the local level that awareness of current and historical risks due to poorly maintained dykes, insufficient early warning and weakened coping strategies are visible and pressing. It is the local authorities that bear the wrath of the public when preventable disasters occur. It is also at provincial levels that a rapidly growing proportion of the decisions about investment priorities, coordination and response are soon going to be made. Vietnam has begun a far-reaching and radical process of decentralisation that will completely change how disasters are managed in the coming decade. This represents a massive challenge to the 'DR community', given the extremely weak capacities in many provinces, districts and communes, but it also provides opportunities for a fundamentally more sustainable system of DR in the future, as it will be anchored in the concerns of disaster affected people and the frontline bureaucracy.

The development of the capacity of individual institutions involved in DR appears to have made significant strides in the past decade. In the past, there was little awareness

of the need to relate DR interventions to an analysis of vulnerability and poverty, nor of the importance of non-structural interventions in risk reduction. The need for a shift in DR perspectives is now widely accepted and agencies are eager to find ways to adapt their work accordingly. They know in principle *what* they are expected to do to take on a 'new' more comprehensive DR agenda, but most admit that they remain uncertain about *how* to do it.

In addition to individual institutional capacities, capacity development has been promoted among the 'DR community' as a whole. In disaster management, the sum of actions in mitigating and responding to a disaster should be greater than the specific actions of individual actors. Failures in, for example, early warning or understanding of vulnerabilities at local level, can lead to dysfunction and waste in the entire system. While chains of command and early warning structures are improving, articulation in the system remains problematic in many respects. A notably weak aspect of the 'DR community' is currently that of information flow and joint learning. This is of particular concern since efforts are increasingly being built on provincial level pilot projects, which will only prove valuable as 'pilots' if they subsequently provide a basis for learning from practice at both central and operational levels.

One overall finding of the evaluation is that many partners and subcontractors have primarily stressed their achievement of outputs rather than outcomes. The shift to results-based management has made little headway in either UNDP programmes or other DR activities. Capacity building for DR is not only a matter of transferring knowledge or the preparation of plans and policies. The outcomes of UNDP's capacity building for DR can be seen as consisting of three steps. First, efforts are being made to build a consensus about which capacities should be built. This involves defining what a 'disaster' is in Vietnam and what this means in terms of the 'new' DR agenda. In this regard, UNDP has made significant progress, even if the cornerstone of these efforts -the approval of a new strategy and action plan for disaster mitigation- has not yet been formally approved. Second, there is a process of designing and strengthening the new institutional configurations that are required to reduce disasters. This has involved initiatives varying from very modest changes to existing institutions, to playing the leading role in creating a National Disaster Mitigation Partnership. UNDP support has been effective in most components, but significant problems remain in finding interagency synergies and in promoting more interdisciplinary capacities for analysis and response. The third area of focus is the transfer of information and technologies and the exchange of ideas. Technical skills have been effectively transferred in many cases, but exchange of ideas has remained weak.

During the next phase of support, the focus of UNDP's capacity development efforts in DR will undoubtedly shift from technology transfer to the development of capacities for coordination, policy analysis and exchange of information and learning. This shift bears with it a move from relatively clearly definable targets and tasks, to becoming part of an institutional process with uncertain outcomes. The need for results-based management will be even greater, as will the challenges. The major overarching recommendation of this evaluation is that this broad and unpredictable process be managed through a focus on more modest outputs and outcomes based more on what is possible, rather than what is desirable.

UNDP should build on what is already a two-track approach by contributing to both the capacities of individual partners and also among the ‘DR community’ in general. It also needs to reconsider its relationship to the ‘DR community’ outside of Hanoi. UNDP’s credibility as an active partner in DR in the future will become increasingly dependent on developing a stronger capacity for provincial level interventions, and UNDP will need to restructure its support to meet this challenge.

In order to use UNDP’s unique potential leverage in promoting the ‘new’ DR agenda, it will be important to retain greater independence and flexibility to promote strategic initiatives and to use its limited resources in a catalytic manner. This may mean exploring new forms of partnership. Specifically, partnership efforts should emphasise the following:

- Specialised technical assistance should be provided in the development of networks and ‘communities of practice’ to provide platforms for joint policy analysis and more participatory and multi-sectoral DR strategies.
- Systems should be designed that combine wider awareness of the wealth of experience being developed in Vietnam and abroad with improved access to information, reports and exchange of experience, particularly in non-structural areas where joint learning is currently very weak.
- Support for provincial level pilot projects should contribute to capacity development through (a) ‘learning in’, promoting awareness of relevant international experience, (b) ‘learning out’, ensuring that the experience of these pilots feeds into policies and planning, and (c) ‘learning across’ through exchange of experience between pilots and among other agencies, especially NGOs engaged in similar activities.

The most important area for strengthening partnership efforts is to develop a widely shared understanding of what the poverty reduction – disaster reduction link means for concrete programming priorities and decisions. Efforts have been made in this regard during the current phase, but should be redoubled in the future with primary attention on areas where a ‘continuum’ already exists between DR efforts and other mainstream development programming. Further research into how disasters impact on poverty and how poverty affects vulnerability to disasters is necessary in order to formulate evidence-based policies and convince key stakeholders of the importance of DR.

The concerns raised in this evaluation and the challenges outlined in the recommendations closely relate to UNDP’s fundamental aims of reducing poverty through improved governance and democratisation. The difficulties that the UNDP country office has had in realigning its long experience of technical support to disaster reduction within UNDP’s overarching commitments in the new millennium mirrors the basic challenges facing the ‘DR community’ throughout the world. The fact that the UNDP country office has not found the ‘solution’ for merging these two agendas in Vietnam should be considered in the perspective of similar conundrums throughout the world. UNDP has played a central role in kicking off a critical discussion of these issues, and now needs to back this up by additional capacity building in the form of policy analysis, consultative methods and networking in order to help stakeholders in Vietnam to find their own answers about how to link disaster reduction and poverty reduction.

List of abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| ADR | Assessment of Development Results |
| CBDM | community based disaster mitigation |
| CCFSC | Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control |
| CFSC | committee for flood and storm control |
| CPRGS | Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy |
| DDMFSC | Department of Dyke Management, Flood and Storm Control |
| DMU | Disaster Management Unit |
| DR | disaster reduction |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations |
| GoSRV | Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam |
| HMS | Hydro-Meteorological Service |
| IFRC | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| IBST | Institute of Building Science and Technology |
| INGO | international non-governmental organisation |
| MARD | Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development |
| MoNRE | Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment |
| NDM-P | Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership |
| PAR | Public Administration Reform |
| S & AP | Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Mitigation and Management |
| SEDS | Social and Economic Development Strategy 2001-2010 |
| SIWRP | Sub-Institute for Water Resource Planning |
| SOSG | Strategic Orientation for Sustainable Development |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| VNRC | Vietnam Red Cross |
| VTV | Vietnam Television |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation, as stated in the terms of reference, is to assess the following:

- *outcome analysis* - what and how much progress has been made towards the achievement of the outcome (including contributing factors and constraints);
- *output analysis* - the relevance of and progress made in terms of the UNDP outputs (including an analysis of both project activities and soft-assistance activities);
- *output-outcome link* - what contribution UNDP has made/is making to the progress towards the achievement of the outcome;
- partnership strategies in relation to the outcomes; and,
- progress achieved in building synergy/linkage between the disaster management/preparedness/reduction outcome and the other outcomes of the UNDP Viet Nam Sustainable Development Cluster for a coherent strategy and program.

The results are to be used for re-focusing interventions during the current Country Cooperation Framework (if necessary) and guiding future programming of a similar nature. Outcome, partnership and coherence objectives are emphasised.

1.2. Development context

The terms of reference go on to state the following reasons for choosing the outcome of capacity building for disaster reduction as one of the very first to be evaluated within UNDP Vietnam:

- Vietnam suffers from high vulnerability to various types of natural disasters, particularly water-induced disasters such as floods and storms. Over the past 15 years, UNDP has been among the very first and most active donors in supporting Vietnam to build institutional and national capacity to address natural disasters in a long term and preventive manner, complementing its well-recognized good response capacity. Many experiences have been generated, but there has not been any evaluation to document the lessons learned from these experiences, except that disaster reduction was included in the local case study on environmental management as part of the Assessment of Development Results (ADR) in 2003.
- The context of disasters and disaster reduction has changed significantly in Vietnam over the last decade. There is an increasing awareness of the need to address the causes of natural disasters, with resources for this work coming from both the Government and the international community. This is due to major initiatives at global and regional levels such as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction throughout the 1990s, the adoption and commitment by states to the Yokohama Strategy for Disaster Reduction (1994), as well as the widely held perception that disasters are becoming more

frequent and more severe. In this evolving context, it is important to see if the chosen focus of UNDP for its support remains appropriate and strategic and if there are other ways that UNDP could maintain and deepen its leading position in this field.

- With an overarching goal to build national capacity for integration of disaster reduction in poverty reduction and the development process, this outcome closely links with a broader outcome under the UNDP Vietnam SRF: “Comprehensive policy frameworks and measures to promote environmentally sustainable development and address global environmental issues integrated into national development process and linked to poverty reduction, based on participatory approach”. Organisationally within the UNDP Country Office, the implementation of this outcome should complement and support the above broader outcome for environmentally sustainable development. This evaluation should help to assess how synergy has been built between the two outcomes and what changes in the design of UNDP outputs under disaster reduction should be made to foster this linkage and coherence.

1.3. The team’s interpretation of the terms of reference

The team have interpreted the terms of reference as calling for a primary focus on outcomes. Given the numerous components and open-ended time frame under review, the team also has concluded that it is not feasible to present verifiable conclusions regarding the outputs of the specific components during this short evaluation. The team is confident that its findings reflect verifiable overall trends in the relationship between component outputs and wider strategic outcomes, but is hesitant to attribute specific output-outcome relations within the individual components. The team has noted the outcome indicators in the original programme documents were highly ambitious and reflect desirable long-term trends, rather than clearly measurable goals.¹ It therefore seems inappropriate to assess such a programme based on strict and formal analysis of what was obviously implicitly intended, at the outset, as a ‘process approach’ to programme development. Therefore, this report synthesises the progress that is being made in different aspects of disaster reduction (DR), both within the areas covered by UNDP support, and in what the team refers to as the ‘DR community’.²

Furthermore, the team has taken the liberty to “deconstruct the outcomes”³ and based on this to structure its findings based on what it perceives as being the key strategic themes being addressed in UNDP support. The resulting arrangement of findings does not follow the exact structure of original programme documents, since the team has felt it was essential to take a more strategic perspective in order to avoid undue emphasis on outputs and outcomes that do not necessarily reflect current thinking and priorities within UNDP and the ‘DR community’.

¹ See, for example, the SRF objective cited above regarding “comprehensive policy frameworks and measures...”

² The ‘DR community’ refers to the national and international actors, which are directly or indirectly engaged in DR in Vietnam. This term is presented in inverted commas since it is acknowledged that the disparate actors in this ‘community’ are in many cases not closely linked or coordinated.

³ A procedure that is explicitly recommended in UNDP’s Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators.

1.4. Methods

This evaluation is based on extensive interviews with various actors in the ‘DR community’, in Hanoi, Hue, Ho Chi Minh City, Long An and An Giang. Those interviewed were primarily, but not entirely, agencies that were currently or had in the past received support from UNDP, or were donors that had supported or were considering support to the UNDP DR programme. The selection of actors to be interviewed is thus biased toward those who have funded or been funded by UNDP. The team did not engage significantly with the international NGO community. Most notably, the team did not have an opportunity to interview members of the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC). This represents a weakness in this study, as the team was unable to gain a full perspective on how coordination functions at higher levels of government. The dynamics of the relationship between the CCFSC and key operational actors has not been explored. It may be advisable that UNDP look closer at these aspects in a separate study.

Some respondents were interviewed individually, others in groups. Some agencies made formal presentations of their work. The interviews gathered data regarding the overall activities of the organisations, their views on the support they had received from UNDP, their perspectives on the primary challenges of reducing disasters in their area of responsibility, the changes that have occurred in their organisations over time, their collaboration with other actors in the ‘DR community’ and their perspectives on the integration of DR into poverty reduction strategies. In addition to interviews, the team visited some programme financed activities in Hue, and two residential clusters in the Mekong Delta.

The main issues taken up in the interviews included:

- Scope and progress of the organisation’s work related to DR;
- Interactions/collaboration with UNDP on DR;
- Views on this relationship;
- Relations with (and accountabilities to) other key stakeholders on DR;
- How these relationships and how the organisation itself has changed over the past 5-10 years;
- Perceived responsibilities/commitments for DR and obstacles in responding;
- Strategies (perhaps informal) to overcome these challenges;
- UNDP’s contribution to these processes (past/current/suggested);
- Other actors’ contributions;
- Interpretations of the term ‘partnership’;
- Whether momentum in DR activities be maintained in the future, why/why not;
- Awareness and actions regarding overarching and cross-cutting objectives;
- Examples of how different types of disasters have been addressed;
- What is possible to expect for the future/priorities; and
- Ideas regarding UNDP’s specific role in the future DR agenda.

The findings in this evaluation regarding improvements in capacity refer primarily to how those interviewed described changes in their organisations’ capacities and in the ‘DR community’ as a whole. These statements have been taken at face value, and it must be noted that this may result in some errors in the findings. The team had very

limited opportunity to verify the full extent of capacities built or to verify the quality of the community initiatives that were described by the agencies involved. Many of these capacities could only be truly verified in seeing how they are applied in the event of a major flood or other disaster. The original baseline indicators for the programmes were broad and qualitative. Therefore quantitative analysis of improvements has not been possible. Furthermore, outcome monitoring has been very insufficient in the past, which has given the evaluators very limited data by which to follow specific changes in activities over the years.

The short time frame of this evaluation meant that there was virtually no opportunity for significant consultation with disaster affected people. Direct verification of the relevance of the outcomes of DR support for those who are intended to benefit from this support was therefore not possible. The inferences in this evaluation to relevance are based on the interviews with representatives of the organisations contacted, review of secondary literature and the past experience of the evaluation team in studying local perspectives. For similar reasons, the team only had a very limited opportunity to verify if village level activities had been effectively implemented and whether the communities perceived these activities to be beneficial. This is the primary constraint on the rigour of these evaluation findings, and suggests the need to address the need to better monitor and learn from disaster affected population in the future.

The structure of this report is based on the UNDP Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators⁴. The emphasis is on placing the outcomes of UNDP's efforts in a broader context, combined with a significant acknowledgement of the difficulty in attributing changes in the ability of Vietnam to mitigate, prepare for and respond to disasters specifically to the interventions of UNDP in particular. The guidelines specify that 'ratings' should be assigned to interventions. Given these attribution difficulties the extremely brief ratings in this report should be interpreted as primarily summarising overall trajectories and not be seen as a sufficient guide for decision-making. The three rating categories, change, sustainability and relevance, also derive from the guidelines. Relevance is perhaps the most important of the three categories, since change and sustainability will need to be assessed in a longer timeframe. Relevance refers to how well a given intervention relates to (a) UNDP objectives, in particular poverty alleviation, (b) the nature of disaster hazards, and (c) the potential of actors in the 'DR community' to take on and assume ownership of new and more appropriate tasks (this last factor overlaps with sustainability).

⁴ UNDP Evaluation Office 2002

2. Findings and Conclusions

2.1. Status of the outcome

The *development of the capacity of individual institutions* involved in DR appears to have made significant strides in the past decade. In the past, there was little awareness of the need to relate DR interventions to an analysis of vulnerability and poverty, nor of the importance of non-structural factors in risk reduction. The agencies interviewed in this evaluation were generally aware of the need for a shift in DR perspectives and were eager to find ways to adapt their work accordingly. They know in principle what they are expected to do to take on a ‘new’ more comprehensive DR agenda, but most of those interviewed acknowledged that they remain uncertain about how to do it. One interviewee pointed out that, although the goal was accepted, people still do not know exactly how disaster reduction can secure development gains. Until they do, it is unlikely that they will integrate DR into their various programmes. Limited progress has thus far been made in developing a capacity to actually operationalise an integrated perspective relating disaster and poverty reduction. Human resources have been strengthened, and technological capacity has been improved. However, this has primarily been within the original areas of technical specialisation. In order to actually apply newer perspectives of DR the focus of human resource development will need to be wider, and greater collaboration among agencies with different disciplinary backgrounds and operational experience will be required.

Rating: positive change

On the whole, networking and interagency coordination remain weak, both horizontally in Hanoi and within the Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership (NDM-P) in the central provinces, and also vertically between central and provincial levels.⁵ This has led to significant gaps in the capability of individual agencies to take on the ‘new’ DR agenda. This suggests that in addition to individual institutions increasing their capacity, there is a need to enhance *capacity development among the ‘DR community’ as a whole*. In disaster management, the sum of actions in mitigating and responding to a disaster should be greater than the specific actions of individual actors. Failures in, for example, early warning or understanding of vulnerabilities at local level, can lead to dysfunction and waste in the entire system.

Rating: limited positive change

A notably weak aspect of the ‘DR community’ is currently that of *information flow and joint learning*. The Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC) and provincial committees for flood and storm control (CFSCs) are able to mobilise the governmental ‘DR community’ for response and for collection of data, but have not proven effective in forming an open dialogue on cross-cutting issues such as the implications of the link between poverty and disaster risk. Considerable data collection capacity exists, but data is insufficiently disaggregated for gender and poverty indicators and the link between data collection and consideration of the

⁵ A notable exception to this is several specific forms of networking, for example the improved communication between HMS and VTV.

implications of available data for more appropriate humanitarian and development response is weak.⁶ The NDM-P is not yet a fully fledged ‘partnership’ in terms of sharing experience between its members and others, either in Hanoi or in the provinces. This is particularly important since the NDM-P is partially built on provincial level pilot projects, which will only prove valuable as ‘pilots’ if they subsequently provide a basis for learning from practice at both central and operational levels. It is too early to observe if they will be used for such learning, but one observer felt that the prospects for this were poor. He felt that pilots were important for bilateral agencies to demonstrate their commitment to DR, but current structures are insufficient for drawing and replicating the lessons that emerge.

Rating: limited positive change, some key aspects too early to judge

The primary focus of disaster management in Vietnam is in enhancing **mitigation and prevention capacities**. Within the overall system considerable advances are being made, even though these initiatives are still patchy on the ground if put in the perspectives of the scale of hazards and weak capacities throughout the country. The institutional infrastructure at central level, consisting of the Department of Dykes Management, Flood and Storm Control (DDMFSC), Disaster Management Unit (DMU) and Hydro-meteorological Service (HMS) appears to be significantly strengthened. Capacities to mitigate the effects of disaster through early warning via improved television and radio broadcasts is also greater, although some studies question whether these media are sufficient for actually reaching target populations.⁷

Rating: positive change

Three capacity building strategies predominate in efforts to implement the calls for integrating DR in wider government policy objectives (such as the Strategic Orientation for Sustainable Development (SOSG), the Social and Economic Development Strategy 2001-2010 (SEDS), and the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS)). First is the **strengthening of the organisations that have traditionally dealt with DR**, particularly those concerned with flood and storm damage. At the central level the CCFSC and its standing agency, the DDMFSC have primary responsibilities, with support from the DDMFSC, other governmental institutions and the Vietnam Red Cross (VNRC). These agencies have been urged to relate their efforts to poverty reduction, but as noted above, there is widespread uncertainty about how. Directives have preceded capacity building in how to internalise new concepts and to implement fundamentally different objectives. The magnitude of this reorientation should not be underestimated.

At provincial and other more operational levels the various agencies coordinated by the CFSC tend to be heavily focused on infrastructural interventions. In interviews with donors and NGOs concerns were frequently expressed regarding a perceived governmental bias toward investing resources in tangible, physical structures, particularly in programmes that are loan financed. All of this works against stronger linkages with poverty alleviation policies, since infrastructure investment tends to be

⁶ Neefjes 2004.

⁷ Neefjes 2002.

made without significant analysis of the disaggregation of outcomes and impacts on poverty and other socio-economic factors contributing to vulnerability.

Rating: limited positive change

There is a second emerging tendency in DR, that of promoting local capacity building through **community based disaster mitigation and preparedness initiatives**. These initiatives, primarily supported by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and bilateral agencies, address a wider variety of hazards based on analyses of the vulnerabilities and (sometimes) the priorities of the communities with which they work. There is somewhat of a continuum of foci in these initiatives. Those agencies with capacities and priorities related to development are engaged in disaster mitigation efforts related to climate change and other long-term factors. These forms of programming are in many ways similar to community/ rural development efforts in general. A few of those interviewed felt that adaptation to climate change can be expected to become the driving force behind DR prioritisation in the future. Those agencies with a humanitarian mandate or pure disaster focus (primarily the VNRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC] and the DMU) stress community based disaster preparedness primarily emphasising awareness raising and planning for disaster response. There is a certain tension in negotiations at all levels between aid agencies and the government in finding a mutually acceptable balance between these initiatives (together with capacity building) and infrastructural investment.

Rating: positive change

The third primary approach to capacity building is through **wider stakeholder engagement in defining strategies, action plans and policies**. UNDP is seen as having a major role in convening and supporting stakeholder forums. Some of those interviewed pointed out that UNDP's long relationship with the government and support to capacity building have created the conditions for current constructive negotiations over large DR projects. The INGOs see UNDP has an essential channel to link with government, especially to raise issues where ownership is difficult to establish, such as gender awareness and the need to focus on humanitarian needs in disaster response. Progress has been more limited in these latter areas.

The community efforts mentioned above often claim to introduce village perspectives in higher level planning, but the evaluation team only encountered very limited anecdotal evidence that this may have occurred. The team noted that the large majority of those interviewed failed to mention any attempts to solicit the views of disaster affected people, despite formal commitments to applying the governmentally decreed Grassroots Democracy Initiative in DR efforts. 'Participatory' methods are primarily seen as a way to raise awareness, gather data and mobilise community inputs, but are rarely employed to let disaster affected people decide about disaster reduction priorities.

In addition to democratisation objectives, wider stakeholder engagement can also be seen as a capacity building process in the sense that any genuine effort in linking DR to poverty alleviation policies must be anchored in an understanding of the local factors that create/alleviate poverty. Here again, there is an awareness that this

objective presents new and formidable intellectual challenges, but these normative directives have not been matched by necessary capacity building.

Rating: limited positive change

What is a disaster in Vietnam?

There is a tendency in the 'DR community' to apply the 'disaster' label to phenomena that are related to increasingly acute seasonal stress. For many poor people, 'living with floods' is becoming more difficult each year as their access to livelihoods during periods of stress decreases, and as they have fewer options for mitigating their risks.

Some tendencies were observed to even label other chronic factors influencing poverty as 'disasters' that can in no way be associated with acute need (e.g., the problem of acid sulphate soils in the Mekong Delta). This suggests a need not only to discuss links with poverty, but also the differences between the concepts and methods for dealing with disasters and those that address poverty. If the DR agenda becomes overloaded with poverty alleviation objectives that do not relate to core DR responsibilities its credibility will be damaged and resource prioritisation will become diluted.

Since there was no major disaster response operation underway during the mission and there has not been a major disaster in recent years it is not possible to judge the outcomes of strengthening *preparedness and response capacities*, in a verifiable manner. The following observations are therefore somewhat speculative. Perhaps because of the significant period of time that has passed since the last major disaster, interviews indicated a shift away from a focus on response. The VNRC, with which the team leader had some collaboration during the 1990's, seems to have made a notable shift away from perceiving their role as primarily one of distributing relief, to instead focusing on community awareness and community based disaster mitigation (CBDM).

It appears that the capacities of the DDMFSC, as the standing agency of the CCFSC, to play a major role

in response to storm and flood disasters is considerable and is being further consolidated. The DDMFSC has the leading role in disseminating data about ongoing disasters and in that way provides a basis for coordination among national agencies (though some of those interviewed expressed concerns about being left 'out of the loop'). Interviews with international actors, however, showed that they rely very heavily on the DMU to maintain coordination with the government. It is difficult to judge how well the DDMFSC will be able to take over these responsibilities in the future. The DMU will presumably be integrated into the DDMFSC, but probably with a diminished capacity as the DMU's activities will first need to be downsized so that the DDMFSC can cover recurrent costs. Some of the international actors interviewed expressed grave worries about the phasing out of the DMU.

Local level response capacities are primarily based with provincial government and the VNRC. Interviews showed what appeared to be a very well organised structure for response, with clear chains of command and procedures. Here again, the evaluators were not able to confirm the quality of this response capacity without reference to a recent large-scale operation.

Response capacity for flash floods in the highlands, forest fires, landslides, drought and urban disasters has not been developed. Even the VNRC sees these forms of disasters as beyond their capacity and to some extent, even outside their mandate. Recent fatalities as the result of landslides and flash floods have alerted the government to the importance of this area, but capacities are still limited. The government has created a Steering Committee for Forest Fire Prevention and Control to address some of these issues.

Rating: cannot be verifiably determined, indications of positive change but with sustainability concerns

The draft Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Mitigation and Management (S & AP) notes⁸ the need to **invest more efforts in rehabilitation and recovery after disasters**. Particularly at provincial level there is an interest in promoting recovery strategies, and in the Mekong Delta, in finding livelihood opportunities to reduce the economic stress during the flooding season. The latter is particularly important given the fact that those most vulnerable to floods are also usually landless or effectively landless. There have been some successful efforts to adapt livelihood options in the Mekong Delta, notably in An Giang where the positive aspects of floods have been highlighted as part of the policy of ‘living with the floods’. There is, however, an openly acknowledged lack of capacities within the DR community for supporting livelihood resilience. For example, the primary area of investment in disaster mitigation in the Mekong Delta is the residential clusters programmes, which have failed to attract expected interest from vulnerable populations due partially to a failure to take into account the current (and potential alternative) livelihoods of the intended residents (Adam Fforde & Associates Pty Ltd, 2003). Government officials interviewed were surprisingly frank about the grave inherent flaws in programmes for residential clusters if alternative livelihoods cannot be supported for those who are resettling. Those staff with DR responsibilities admitted that they had little capacity to assess how such livelihood opportunities might be stimulated or created.

Rating: no change

2.2. Factors affecting the outcome

There are many countries that are poor and disaster prone, but **Vietnam is one of the few that has made significant commitments to addressing disaster risk as part of poverty alleviation**. The preparation of the CPRGS coincided with the major disasters in the central provinces and the Mekong Delta in the years 1999-2001. Partially for this reason, disaster risk is given significantly greater attention in the CPRGS than in the majority of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers around the world. Government policies, such as the Strategic Orientation for Sustainable Development in Vietnam and the Social Economic Development Strategy 2001-2010 emphasise DR issues as well. In the S & AP, weaknesses in relating DR efforts to a broader understanding of poverty and vulnerability are identified as the key challenges for the future.⁹ This places an onus on the ‘DR community’. Vietnam needs support to translate the

⁸ See also, Lempert, et al. 2004.

⁹ Other strategy documents such as Sida’s study entitled “Strategic Environment and Sustainability Analysis of Vietnam” also stress this link (Leisher 2002).

realisation that disasters lead to poverty and that poverty leads to disasters into concrete, cost-effective, implementable and widely acceptable policies and programming. UNDP has a great opportunity and responsibility to coordinate efforts to move from words to action in linking DR and poverty reduction.

It should also be stressed that the concern for DR in Vietnam is not just a response to individual disasters in 1999 and 2000. One interviewee stated that “there has always been a culture of disaster management in Vietnam”. If DR was just a passing interest, the strength of this commitment would be expected to wane as memory of the events of 1999 and 2000 fades in the face of immediate pressures for alternative investment priorities. The Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (GoSRV) has an exceptionally strong and long-standing sense of responsibility to protect the lives and safety of its citizens (albeit with some contradictory legal and regulatory frameworks to formalise its accountability for this responsibility, see Lempert et al. 2004). This has recently been evidenced by edicts instructing relevant authorities to redouble efforts to mitigate and respond to flash floods and landslides, which have claimed more lives in recent years than major floods and storms. Several of those interviewed in this evaluation reported that increasing quality, speed and accessibility of television reporting on such disasters is making these commitments even stronger. Support to the GoSRV in developing its DR capacity can therefore be seen as a concrete expression of a rights-based approach to development. Citizens perceive that they have a right to protection from natural hazards and the GoSRV firmly accepts its responsibilities to provide a safe environment. The task of UNDP and others in the ‘DR community’ is to help ensure that the GoSRV can undertake these responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner based on a solid analysis of the links between poverty and vulnerability to disasters. Reviews of UNDP activities in Vietnam have given rather rudimentary attention to the implications of rights-based approaches.¹⁰ By exploring the meaning of this concept in DR, lessons may even emerge that could prove relevant for aligning other UNDP programmes with respect to this cross-cutting objective.

The ‘social contract’ between the state and its citizens in protection from natural disasters is strongest at local levels. This is a point raised in several of the interviews. It is at local level that awareness of current and historical risks due to poorly maintained dykes, insufficient early warning and weakened coping strategies are visible and pressing. It is the local authorities that bear the wrath of the public when preventable disasters occur. It is here that disaster reduction is most clearly seen as a cornerstone of good governance. It is also at provincial levels that a rapidly growing proportion of the decisions about investment priorities, coordination and response are soon going to be made. Vietnam has begun a far-reaching and radical process of decentralisation that will completely change how disasters are managed in the coming decade. This represents a massive challenge to the ‘DR community’, given the extremely weak capacities in many provinces, districts and communes, but it also provides opportunities for a fundamentally more sustainable system of DR in the future, as it will be anchored in the concerns of disaster affected people and the frontline bureaucracy.

¹⁰ GoSRV 2004; UNDP Evaluation Office 2003

The analyses of vulnerability coming out of community initiatives, based on the voices of disaster affected communities, differ significantly from the perspectives reflected in tradition DR programming.¹¹ Some of the ‘disasters’ that are mentioned in available empirical material relate to vulnerability to severe seasonal stress, rather than extraordinary weather phenomena. Growing population densities, climate change, overexploitation of the common property resources and other factors are resulting in acute human suffering related to these seasonal stress factors. Relatively minor worsening of recurrent floods and dry spells have a much greater impact on livelihoods, health and shelter than in the past, thus in many respects justifying the ‘disaster’ label. For example, in the Mekong Delta in the past floods were very rarely seen to be a ‘disaster’. Increasing landlessness and environmental degradation have resulted in heavier competition for the limited livelihood opportunities available during the flooding season, such as fishing, collecting firewood and wild foods. Some of those interviewed expressed the view that once manageable stress levels have become acute for a significant proportion of the population. Since members of a community seem to see these factors as more threatening to their life and wellbeing than unusual catastrophic events, this can be seen to justify interventions in the grey area between disaster management and social protection. It also suggests that there is a need to better understand the strengths and weakness of formal social protection and informal societal mechanisms for addressing such stress and relating this to disaster management discussions.

Most of the national agencies with which UNDP collaborates are wary of entering this grey area of addressing acute livelihood stress and disasters other than catastrophic floods. There are strong justifications for their hesitance at applying an expanded perspective on disasters. They perceive their organisations (e.g., the DDMFSC, VNRC, etc.) as lacking capacity to make a significant contribution, and do not want to be seen as assuming responsibility for the wider disaster agenda. They are even cautious about entering into the realm of supporting resilience, rehabilitation and recovery for fear of a similar ‘mission creep’. Furthermore, some agencies have invested heavily (often with UNDP support) in building their human resource and material capacities to address certain technical areas. They therefore have a vested interest in utilising these capacities rather than shifting course and taking on responsibilities that would require an entirely different investment strategy. Similarly, they need to actively apply their technical capacities in order to ensure that their capabilities are recognised and appreciated and therefore attract funding for maintaining equipment and retaining their human resources in the face of increasing competition with the private sector for skilled staff. A paradox in UNDP’s support to these institutions is the fact that although concerted effort has been made to expand their perspectives, material assistance and training may have inadvertently contributed to internal pressures in these institutions to maintain their original core focus.

The second draft Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Mitigation and Management acknowledges that ***there has been a failure to coherently and consistently support rehabilitation and recovery in current and past DR efforts.*** The INGOs engaged in community initiatives may be able to accept these wider responsibilities since they are able to limit their accountabilities to a limited population and time period. Interviews

¹¹ See reports prepared by CARE International in Vietnam (Esposito, et al., 2002), IFRC/VNRC (Neefjes 2002) and CECI 2002.

left a clear impression that there is a strong desire with governmental agencies to avoid taking on responsibilities that cannot be managed effectively since they need to maintain a manageable ‘social contract’ with their constituents.

One notable exception regarding both the wariness mentioned above and the need to integrate strategies for rehabilitation and recovery is the support currently being provided by UNDP to the Academy of Finance. Although the team has some concerns regarding the structure of this support (see below), this study could provide a basis for discussing how to realistically engage with these issues.

There are other major factors in Vietnam’s current development process that are changing the nature of hazards, risk and vulnerability. ***Migration and resettlement*** are a consequence of disasters (when housing is lost), a way to mitigate disasters (as in the establishment of residential cluster settlements in the Mekong Delta) and a coping strategy (through accessing remittances from relatives to survive and rebuild and through access to non-agricultural livelihoods). Migration is thus a central factor in how development trajectories impact on disaster risk. In Vietnam migration is addressed through a system of contradictory policies.¹² Many of these policies restrict migrants’ access to formal social protection. Migrants also have more difficulty obtaining credit and housing, which may force them to live in risk-prone locations. Since migrants are also residing far from the communities in which they would have access to informal social support structures, they can be assumed to be highly vulnerable in times of disaster. On the other hand, in some instances migration is heavily subsidised in order to mitigate disaster risk, as in the residential cluster programmes in the Mekong Delta. Studies of the views of the residents of these clusters show that they are greatly concerned over the weakening of social capital that they experience in these new settlements ((Neefjes, 2002; Adam Fforde & Associates Pty Ltd, 2003). Flash floods in highland areas have drawn attention to the need for resettlement of some primarily ethnic minority communities, but strategies are not in place for promoting this.

Urbanisation may also lead to the rapid increase of new types of disaster hazards (e.g., industrial accidents, pollution, etc.). Threats from avian flu (and perhaps even from SARS) are clear examples of this. Apart from some attention to urban flooding, urban hazards are not a current area of DR focus in Vietnam.¹³ The Ministry of Health plays a leading role in addressing some of these hazards, but there is currently no dialogue between the different DR structures. This may need to change if the vulnerability profile of Vietnam follows international trends. GoSRV envisages that only 10% of the population will be engaged in agriculture by 2020. Current DR priorities do not take this into account, suggesting that a reorientation of disaster management thinking may become urgently needed in the coming years. Urbanisation and migration may generally reduce vulnerabilities as households spatially diversify their collective livelihood strategies. Disaster affected households may draw upon remittances for survival or may migrate as a way to re-accumulate assets for production and to replace lost housing. While enhancing some household coping strategies, urbanisation may however also reduce social capital in communities where households are far less reliant one another (a point noted in Adam Fforde &

¹² ILO, et al. 2004.

¹³ The draft S & AP draws attention to this weakness in current efforts.

Associates Pty Ltd, 2003). Finally, it should be noted that urban development has already led to increased risk in rural areas. Some informants reported that uncontrolled extraction of sand from riverbeds for urban construction has weakened dykes in many areas.

This brief sketch of disaster risk, poverty and the institutional arena for DR points to a system that has made strong commitments to address a moving target. It also shows a complex mix of factors increasing and decreasing disaster risk and vulnerability. The balance of these changes, now and in the future, is unknown. The crux of the developmental challenges consists of rethinking structures to better address these emerging complexities. The following table summarises these challenges.

| | Past DR | Current DR | Future DR? |
|--|--|--|--|
| Linking DR and Poverty Reduction | Tacit awareness but not used as a basis for policies and planning | Formal awareness but insufficient hard evidence of how the two are linked and uncertainty regarding methods and implications | Wider focus on disasters, including e.g., urban hazards and drought, and strengthened capacities for policy analysis, anchored in a concerted effort to see where the DR and poverty reduction agendas meet |
| Balancing Infrastructure, Community Initiatives and Capacity Development | Primary focus on infrastructure and capacity development directly related to technology transfer | Two-track approach to infrastructure and community initiatives, but weak integration between the two | Continued two-track approach but with better integration and greatly expanded collaboration with actors with different technical skills, also much greater attention to locally defined needs and priorities |
| Addressing Changing Vulnerabilities | Very little vulnerability analysis | Strong improvements in flood mapping and related issues | Increased attention to different kinds of disaster vulnerabilities as a reaction to increasing occurrence of, e.g., urban disasters, landslides, etc. |

2.3. UNDP contributions to the outcome

2.3.1. Deconstructing UNDP's outcome commitments

As mentioned in the introduction, in focusing on outcomes this evaluation will not dwell on the considerable 'deliverables' that UNDP support has produced, but will instead stress the outcomes to which these outputs appear to contribute. Programme documentation is often not clear or consistent regarding the categories of output, outcome and impact in the various components, so this report stresses what the evaluators have interpreted to be the intended outcomes. One overall finding of the evaluation is that many partners and subcontractors have primarily stressed their achievement of outputs rather than outcomes. UNDP's shift to results-based management has made little headway with partner organisations.¹⁴ This is not entirely due to lack of guidance from UNDP. Incentive structures in the GoSRV bureaucracy tend to reward production of outputs. When dealing with disasters, there is a genuine concern with outcomes and impacts in terms of lives saved in floods, but apart from

¹⁴ A priority noted in UNDP/GoSRV 2004

disaster response, the emphasis has tended to remain on achievement of planned output targets.

As can be seen from the comments above, capacity building for DR is not only a matter of transferring knowledge or the preparation of plans and policies. The outcomes of UNDP's capacity building for DR can be seen as consisting of three steps. First, efforts are being made to build a consensus about which capacities should be built. This involves defining what a 'disaster' is in Vietnam and what this means in terms of reduction and response, as well as the implications of the 'new' DR agenda for a growing range of programmes. Second, there is a process of designing and strengthening the new institutional configurations that are required to reduce disasters. This may involve anything from very modest changes to existing institutions, to creation of altogether new structures. Naturally, the time and effort that must be devoted to the preceding process of building consensus will vary considerably depending on extent to which major changes are needed. The third is the transfer of information and technologies and the exchange of ideas. These three steps are not sequential. Progress is being made and obstacles are being encountered in all three. The link between project outputs and outcomes in UNDP's work can be considered according to these three steps.

2.3.2. Building a consensus on the DR agenda

Much of UNDP's work, particularly the support to the NDM-P, is intended to **build a consensus** on where the DR agenda is going so that priorities for capacity development can be made. A major part of this effort is in encouraging the preparation and approval of the national Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Mitigation and Management. The S & AP, developed with significant support from the DMU, can be seen as the formal acknowledgement that the 'old' agenda that defined disasters as consisting of floods and storms, has been replaced by a 'new' agenda that defines disasters in a broader sense and explicitly calls for an integration of disaster reduction with poverty reduction. Although many official statements have been made endorsing the 'new' agenda, official approval the underlying statement of principles, in the form of the S & AP has been repeatedly delayed. Some of those interviewed (e.g., DDMFSC) stated that they are still adhering to the current S & AP for Water Disaster Mitigation in Vietnam, while others have clearly taken on the 'new' agenda despite the fact that it has not yet been formally approved. UNDP can be credited with shepherding the process of gaining approval for the second S & AP forward, even if it is still incomplete.

It should be stressed that approval of the S & AP in itself cannot be considered to be an outcome. It is an output that will show its 'outcome value' in the level of ownership and readiness to implement the plan that is shown by key actors. Even though the revised S & AP has not been approved, UNDP's coordinating role can be credited with keeping the need for this revision on the agenda and bringing together the donors and the GoSRV for this consensus building process. It is unfortunate that it has taken so long to have the document approved, but in a more positive light, this delay is an indication that the GoSRV takes very seriously its responsibility to live up to the goals and actions outlined in the S & AP when they do eventually approve it. With a consensus among stakeholders built during the formulation of the S&AP, it is likely that the S& AP will be more effectively implemented once it has been

approved. The current draft takes a clear stance on the need to adopt a far more comprehensive perspective on disasters in the future. The period required for building a consensus on this should not be seen as being excessive considering the multi-stakeholder commitment and the departure from entrenched vested interests that will eventually be required to implement its provisions.

This consensus building process needs to be developed outside of Hanoi as well. UNDP support has made limited impact on a new consensus in the provinces. Initial efforts have been made to develop such a consensus in the Mekong Delta and the central provinces. The Mekong Delta is a region that would potentially benefit greatly from a more coordinated approach to DR. This is recognised in UNDP and government plans that call for application of a “whole river basin approach”. This has been applied with respect to flood monitoring, with good communication of monitoring data between the provinces, central authorities and the Mekong River Commission. Less progress has been made in the establishment of regional approaches to other aspects of DR. Efforts in the Mekong Delta could, therefore, benefit from being integrated into the NDM-P in the future. The difficulties of managing such a process from the secretariat in Hanoi, and the need for strong ownership in the Mekong Delta suggest that a decentralised structure would be essential.

UNDP is supporting a process in the Mekong Delta of developing provincial S & APs, which will eventually lead to a regional S & AP. The team was left with the impression that thus far insufficient efforts have been made to develop ownership for this process. When interviewed, the Long An provincial CFSC reported, for example, that they were unaware that the UNDP subcontractor, the Sub-Institute for Water Resource Planning (SIWRP), was preparing to develop a pilot provincial S & AP on their behalf. This indicates a significant lack of awareness of methods for consultative planning. As decentralisation proceeds in the future, the role of initiatives such as those currently implemented by the SIWRP will need to be chosen by provincial authorities and designed so as to reflect their own explicit perceived needs. If the ‘deliverables’ are seen to be something that is primarily intended for delivery to Hanoi, the products will have little impact on the main decision-makers at provincial and sub-provincial levels.

Finally, it should also be noted that the difficult process of developing ownership and capacity to implement the ‘new’ DR agenda mirrors the overarching challenges that Vietnam faces in living up to policy goals of anchoring DR in an understanding of vulnerability (GoSRV 2004). There is widespread uncertainty about what these policy objectives mean with regard to individual and ongoing responsibilities, programmes, projects and procedures. The challenges in the DR agenda are not unique within the overall poverty reduction process, but one interviewee noted that the process of integrating cross-cutting poverty reduction themes has gone further in other sectors, such as with environmental issues.¹⁵

Rating:

- *Positive change at national level, less at local level*
- *Sustainability- at national level but not yet at local level*

¹⁵ See also GoSRV 2004.

- *Relevance- somewhat but with significant concerns about certain aspects*

2.3.3. Organisational and institutional contributions

Although this evaluation does not aim to evaluate specific projects and components in UNDP's DR work, the following examples of these processes are presented to illustrate UNDP's contributions to ***designing and strengthening new institutional configurations*** in different partner organisations.

Apart from assistance to the NDM-P, the largest single focus of UNDP attention in institutional capacity development over the past ten years has been to strengthen the DDMFSC, largely via support from the DMU. The results have been considerable in three respects.

- The DDMFSC has been equipped and trained to perform its core responsibilities in a more effective manner,
- the DDMFSC has been encouraged and supported to broaden its perspective on disaster management beyond its historical focus on dykes, and
- the DDMFSC has received ongoing technical and operational back-up from the DMU.

The technical capacity of the DDMFSC has undoubtedly been much improved. Respect for their skills has in turn contributed to their enhanced coordination capacities as well. Questions remain, however, about whether the DDMFSC can develop collaboration and respect beyond those actors directly involved in their traditional areas of responsibility. Interviews with other stakeholders clearly show that the DDMFSC does not have functioning communication channels with a number of key actors, both within and beyond the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development (MARD).¹⁶ There is, to cite a mundane example, no link between the DMU and the MARD websites. MARD's Forestry Development Department has specifically included disaster reduction as an objective of their reforestation programme,¹⁷ but they have not been invited to join the NDM-P or other platforms for DR discussions. When asked, the DDMFSC acknowledged that the creation of the NDM-P had not resulted in any significant changes in their way of working. Given the long period that the DDMFSC has received support from UNDP, the evaluators conclude that additional efforts to promote wider networking via the DDMFSC are unlikely to contribute significantly to a broadening of the current platform for DR discussions. This is not necessarily due to problems within the DDMFSC itself, but rather the internal tensions between the DDMFSC's own specific technical-operational role and its responsibilities as the standing agency for the CCFSC. Solutions would seem to lie at a higher level within MARD or even higher. As mentioned above, the evaluation did not have an opportunity to conduct interviews at these higher levels, so no specific recommendations are presented here for UNDP strategies regarding engagement in these higher levels of disaster management.

It is difficult at this time to verify the extent of 'stand alone' capacity that has been developed within the DDMFSC due to the very strong support it continues to receive

¹⁶ It should be noted that since the creation of the MARD, the process of integrating the departments that had previously been under independent ministries (e.g., the DDMFSC was under the Ministry of Water Resource Management until 1995) has been very slow.

¹⁷ Nguyen Ngoc Binh 2004

from the DMU.¹⁸ Various stakeholders reported their appreciation and reliance on information and support from the DMU, but not necessarily the DDMFSC. This is an indirect indicator that the DMU (and perhaps UNDP) have taken on a major ‘gap filling’ role that may have detrimental effects on sustainability and confidence in the DDMFSC. The UNDP managed and financed DMU has developed a range of services and functions that may be beyond the human resource and financial capacity of the DDMFSC to absorb. The DDMFSC has been invited and encouraged to send counterparts to the DMU for on-the-job training, but the regular workload of the DDMFSC is such that this has not provided a viable exit strategy. When current DMU funding runs out at the end of 2005 it is unclear who, if anyone, will take over many of their tasks. This is an area of major concern since the DMU plays a central role in Vietnamese disaster management. Not only does it support the DDMFSC, but it provides very high quality information for the ‘DR community’ in general.

Other institutional partners have had a more modest connection to UNDP, and have been supported in programmes that appear to be more sustainable. Vietnam Television (VTV) has received assistance to improve their links with the DDMFSC so as to enhance the accuracy, timeliness and intelligibility of its storm and flood weather information. The evaluation team was not able to assess how well vulnerable people were able to receive and utilise this information, but impressions were that VTV has made significant and sustainable progress. They recognise that they have a major responsibility and role in advocacy for developing public awareness and mobilising political commitment to mitigate and respond to other types of disasters as well. As such, VTV could be an important channel for encouraging broad commitment to implementing the concepts in the second S & AP.

The Hydro-Meteorological Service (HMS) has received support from UNDP to improve the quality and timeliness of its storm and flood forecasting and to enhance communication with the provincial CFSCs and VTV. There has also been investment in flood river gauges in the central provinces managed by the HMS. UNDP support has been modest, but sufficient to ‘grease the wheels’ in what appears to be otherwise a relatively well functioning organisation. The effectiveness of UNDP support to the HMS can probably be attributed to the high technical management skills of the HMS.

Another largely positive example of UNDP capacity development has been its support to the Institute of Building Science and Technology (IBST) to develop disaster resistant building codes and standards. The evaluation team lacks the technical capacity to assess the quality of their work, but notes the apparent strong dedication and commitment mobilised for this effort by the IBST. The only areas of significant concern were regarding issues that were outside the capacity of the IBST and its partners to address, especially the implications of the proposed codes in light of the need to (a) integrate local socio-cultural factors in their application, and (b) to reassess the capacity and incentives that will be needed for enforcement of the codes at local levels. These are areas where UNDP’s wider expertise in governance reform could

¹⁸ There was a large degree of confusion among those interviewed regarding what activities and interventions had been managed by UNDP and what had been managed by the DMU. Many references to ‘DMU support’ by interviewees actually appear to have been referring to activities that were managed by the UNDP technical consultant. The evaluation team therefore has had difficulty in clearly defining the exact level of engagement by the DMU. The comments here should therefore be interpreted as having a significant margin of error in this respect.

anchor a good technical investment in sustainable and participatory implementation processes.

A minor part of this component is for designing codes and standards for rural roads. It may be that this is an area that has the potential for greatest impact on DR. The team has received anecdotal but credible reports that poor quality overseas development assistance financed rural road construction (combined with insufficient provision for maintenance) is a major cause of landslides in the northern highlands. Loss of life from these disasters may be greater than that caused by faulty buildings. This is therefore an area deserving greater attention in the future.

UNDP support to the SIWRP (mentioned above) illustrates the challenges that are faced where concerted efforts are made to take on a more integrated approach. The SIWRP is struggling to manage a set of tasks related to policy and institutional analysis that are, by their own admission, beyond their current capacities. The ability of UNDP to directly assist them in building these capacities through occasional technical advice as the SIWRP 'learn by doing' is insufficient. This is an area where efforts to pair different institutes with complementary capacities in joint efforts would seem more appropriate. At a minimum, the SIWRP clearly needs major training inputs to develop their capability to manage the tasks they have been allotted.

UNDP has contracted the Academy of Finance to prepare an ambitious background study for the eventual creation of a fund that may be used for livelihood stabilisation, relief, rehabilitation and other forms of disaster response. A broad variety of mechanisms, including insurance, credit, public-private partnerships, government social security measures and coordination of donor funding are being considered. In interviews with different stakeholders it is apparent that there are very high, but unclear and contradictory expectations regarding what kind of fund should be developed in the future. The team felt that the study covers a very large number of important issues. It is concerned, however, that the study (and the eventual fund mechanism) has far too many objectives. It seems that pressures to achieve overambitious range of programme objectives may result in a product that fails to provide clear guidance on how a viable and transparent fund could be created. The very serious gaps in existing safety nets¹⁹ and the tendency of the government to address losses rather than needs²⁰ after a disaster mean that it will be important to develop further upon the issues addressed in this study, irregardless of the implementability of its recommendations.

The provincial CFSC in Hue has received special attention from UNDP as part of the NDM-P. UNDP is seen to be the most important donor in DR in the central provinces. The CFSC reports some concerns about their own capacity to sustain efforts given existing staffing. The centrepiece in UNDP's assistance to the CFSC in Hue has been the preparation of detailed flood mapping. In some ways this process has improved integration with community level response, since communities have been assisted to develop improved disaster preparedness plans. In other respects, UNDP support has not fully lived up to its aims. The community that the team visited did not have access to the flood maps developed by the DMU or even a copy of the participatory map that

¹⁹ ILO 1999.

²⁰ Neefjes 2004.

they had produced and sent to Hanoi. The evaluation team was informed in Hanoi that these would be sent to them by the DMU when the final maps were completed. This process of extracting data and then delivering a final product suggests that more attention should be paid to consultative methods if a 'partnership' is to emerge with local organisations. Other deficiencies were noted regarding contacts with NGOs active in the province. There were little apparent efforts to establish cross-learning with the climate change and CBDM efforts of the Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI), that was unaware that DMU flood maps were available for the communities in which they were working.

The provincial CFSCs in Long An and An Giang had received computers and other equipment twice in the past decade. These inputs were appreciated, and presumably had a modest but positive impact. Current relations between UNDP and provincial actors in the Mekong Delta cannot at this point be seen to be a 'partnership'. It is notable that the CFSCs had received very little overseas development assistance from other sources, so in the future UNDP could probably build upon the good will from these small interventions if a partnership was to be developed.

The VNRC has received UNDP support for CBDM training. A separate evaluation is available²¹ so the (high) quality of this effort needs little mention here. It is important to point out that UNDP was one of the earlier donors to this programme, which has grown considerably after this support was provided. As such UNDP assistance can be seen to have played a catalytic role in developing what has become an impressive network of trainers in a number of provinces.

In sum, UNDP has generally chosen partners and support mechanisms well. The weaknesses that can be noted are:

- Some partners have been contracted to undertake activities that are beyond their current capacity;
- some key areas would be much improved if arrangements had been made for more multidisciplinary engagement;
- methodological guidance has been lacking; and
- the link between support to individual agencies and wider partnership efforts needs strengthening.

Rating:

- *Positive change*
- *Sustainability- good with some partners, less so with others and major uncertainties about the exit strategy for the DMU*
- *Relevance- generally good, but with significant concerns about certain aspects*

2.3.4. Transfer of information and technologies and exchange of ideas

With respect to ***transfer of information and technologies and exchange of ideas***, UNDP has made a major contribution to this among individual actors, but has had less success in supporting the NDM-P to become a forum for interagency exchange. Technical inputs into this process have been of high quality, such as provision of

²¹ Duong Ngoc Thi, Tran Van Cong et al., 2003

access to flood maps on the DMU website. But some key actors interviewed were unaware of the information on the website that was relevant for their work. The attitude toward networking has been one of providing information for those that find that information useful, but without significant effort to solicit feedback from users or to contact key actors in disaster management who do not find DMU's website to be useful to see if other kinds of services would be more appropriate. In sum, technology transfer has been heavily supply-driven, with little attention given to analysing and responding to latent demand.

Individual events for information exchange have been organised (e.g., the Natural Disaster Mitigation Conference), but a genuine network has not emerged. Even among UNDP partners, there is a poor flow of information. The SIWRP is engaged in activities that are directly related to the issues analysed in the UNDP commissioned report on institutions in DR (Lempert, et al., 2004), but they had not received a copy of the report and were unaware of its existence. As in any 'community of practice', the strength of the network is as dependent on a convergence of interest of the members as it is on the actions of the coordinator, so the responsibility for these weaknesses is not UNDP's alone. Nonetheless, UNDP has not contributed the type of institutional expertise (directly or through subcontracted technical assistance) that is needed to explore how a stronger and broader network could become viable.

As mentioned above, some UNDP subcontractors expressed concern that they *lacked sufficient policy analysis capacity* to undertake many of the tasks they have been assigned. They, and many of the government agencies with which they collaborate, have been allocated (or urged to assume) responsibilities without concurrent capacity building to support them to undertake these tasks. 'Learning by doing' is important, but it is an inadequate strategy in lieu of close ongoing support. This lack of knowledge, paired with the technical background of the institutions being supported has meant that they have sometime proceeded in a technocratic and non-participatory manner, as the example of the SIWRP illustrates.

Residential clusters: a textbook example of the need for beneficiary consultation

In the Mekong Delta the government promoted residential cluster programme is a clear example of the dangers of top-down planning. A myriad of serious health, sanitation, social and economic problems have emerged in the process of constructing these settlements, many of which could have been avoided if the potential settlers had been engaged at an earlier phase. Many of these schemes remain virtually empty as a result, and many of those who have moved to the clusters have suffered from health problems, shoddy construction and a dearth of livelihood opportunities. While UNDP does not have any direct responsibility for promoting this programme, given that it is in many respects the centrepiece of the disaster mitigation strategy for the Mekong Delta, it is an area where UNDP could perhaps have used its close relationship with the government to provide technical assistance in consultative methods and community feedback mechanisms in order to avoid some of the massive problems encountered in these schemes. The relationship between central government decrees and provincial implementation in the Mekong Delta is admittedly a highly sensitive area, so there may be strong reasons for UNDP's lack of involvement in this topic.

With respect to *promoting participation by disaster affected people in defining priorities and strategies*, with the exception of the study being started by the Academy of Finance, the team found little evidence of significant outcomes. Almost none of the government agencies involved in DR programmes made any references to consultation processes in general, or to efforts to consult with the people affected by disasters in preparing their plans and strategies. This failure cannot be attributed entirely to UNDP, but there appears to be insufficient technical assistance for methodological guidance in this regard in efforts initiated and funded by UNDP. Enhanced support to networking between the government and INGOs and the VNRC may provide a partial solution, but for this to work, government partners must first recognise the utility of beneficiary consultation in their own work. One INGO interviewed stressed the importance of UNDP support for such a process, since they acknowledged that the limited scale of their participatory projects meant that effectiveness would only be found in their impacts as demonstrations to inspire replication by the government.

Rating:

- *Limited positive change*
- *Sustainability- at national level but not yet at local level*
- *Relevance- somewhat but with significant concerns about certain aspects*

CBDM: Is it a solution or just a diversion?

UNDP has played a major role in introducing, promoting and financing CBDM. Its initial grants have been followed-up by additional assistance from other donors. The impact of CBDM is almost certainly largely positive, not the least as it provides one of the few areas where gender issues have been addressed in DR. CBDM is, however, now sufficiently established to start asking tough questions about outcomes and sustainability. The evaluation found that CBDM in Vietnam is thus far very much seen as an area for donor-grant funded intervention intended primarily as a way to increase community awareness about disasters. There was little indication that government institutions or UNDP's partners in policy analysis perceive CBDM as a way to learn from local people about disasters, their effects, and local coping strategies and recovery priorities. CBDM efforts suffer from two weaknesses, (a) a lack of ownership, which raises considerable concerns regarding the sustainability of these efforts, and (b) a tendency to see CBDM as a channel to inform communities about plans rather than to inform planners about the views of communities.

VNRC is said to have a very strong trainers' network for CBDM. Given the large level of UNDP investment in studying disasters in Vietnam, it is unfortunate that CBDM, and other methods, have not been used to inject the voices of disaster affected people into these studies. The only exception to this that the team noted is the recent participatory flood mapping exercises. These were initiated in response to provincial level complaints that other DMU flood maps contained a number of factual errors. Stronger proactive efforts are needed in integrating CBDM into consultation and learning efforts in mainstream DR strategic planning.

2.4. UNDP partnership strategy

UNDP has historically had what could be seen as a close de facto ‘partnership strategy’ in its relationship with the GoSRV in DR. Interviews in this evaluation revealed a universal acknowledgement and appreciation of the unique and long-term nature of UNDP’s commitment to building Vietnamese DR capacity. In this respect, the current NDM-P should be seen as an evolution of this commitment rather than an entirely new initiative. The emphasis of UNDP’s efforts in capacity building through partnership is gradually shifting from a relatively narrow partnership, i.e., primarily strengthening the DDMFSC via the DMU, to a focus on the broader ‘DR community’ more generally via the NDM-P.

Founded in June 2001, the **NDM-P has highly ambitious and far-reaching objectives.** In practice, these objectives have been difficult to achieve for two reasons. First, the NDM-P secretariat is managed by the DDMFSC. As such it suffers from the same difficulties as other initiatives managed by the DDMFSC to develop coordination and networking among stakeholders in the ‘DR community’ as a whole, especially those who are not involved in dyke management and other areas directly connected with the core responsibilities of the DDMFSC. Second, the secretariat has insufficient capacity for managing its own tasks,²² much less leading capacity development elsewhere in the system. The result has been that the NDM-P has not yet developed into a true ‘partnership’, but has instead primarily struggled to establish a secretariat capable of producing immediate ‘deliverables’. In the course of this evaluation interviews revealed a variety of interpretations regarding the extent to which the NDM-P is intended to produce ‘deliverables’ at all. Some perceive it as purely a discussion forum, with all operational roles being managed bilaterally outside the partnership itself. Others seem to hope that it will evolve into a structure with the capacity to channel funds and manage joint projects, similar to other partnerships in Vietnam.

Even without assuming direct responsibilities for project management, the secretariat seems overburdened. UNDP has probably not had an opportunity to solve the problem of the current imbalance between the responsibilities and capacities of the secretariat. UNDP’s Capacity Assessment²³ raised attention to these dangers, but the desires of various stakeholders to retain a modest structure while also implementing a quite sizeable agenda have meant that the responsibilities of the secretariat have remained far out of proportion to its capacities. UNDP has struggled, with some difficulty, to communicate its concerns about the need to take into account the inevitably slow process of developing the capacities of the secretariat, particularly given the fact that this development is not just reliant on internal human resources and organisational strengthening, but also on a firmer consensus among GoSRV agencies that this wider mandate is desirable. The evaluation team has drawn the conclusion that there is an awareness that the secretariat is overburdened, but when looking for ways to reduce its mandate nobody wants to accept that ‘their’ priorities are removed.

²² Birch 2003

²³ Birch 2003

Building the capacity of a coordination unit such as the secretariat is not just a technical process. It is highly political as well, as it involves building a consensus in a sensitive area where many institutions have historical vested interests. The original plans for the NDM-P and the aspirations of many stakeholders have not taken the complex nature of this political process into account. UNDP's 'soft assistance' has helped donors to develop an understanding of this during the preparatory phase. One result of this are current pressures from the donor community to move the secretariat out of the DDMFSC and into MARD's International Cooperation Department, and to ensure access to technical assistance specialised in managing networking, inter-agency learning and related organisational processes in the next phase. It can be said that the process of developing the NDM-P structure and secretariat is an example of UNDP's complex challenges in various sectors of promoting new forms of governance.

As the NDM-P takes on a national mandate with responsibility for ensuring that pilot projects become a core aspect of learning in the sector, an ever-greater proportion of secretariat capacities will need to be applied to engaging at provincial and sub-provincial levels. It has been suggested that this project support function can be a means to assist in capacity development.²⁴ This may only be achieved if the NDM-P has tightly and clearly defined objectives and a critical mass of administrative and outreach/advocacy capacity so as to ensure that project management functions are a means by which to advocate learning within the 'DR community'. If not, the NDM-P runs the risk of remaining more of a unit that raises funds for small projects, than a partnership. The pilots also run the danger of becoming mere 'islands of success' (in 'seas of failure') if greater attention is not given to seeing these efforts as a means for learning, rather than as ends in themselves. Some of those interviewed were notably sceptical about whether the pilots would eventually provide a platform for broader learning as intended. The ADR noted that piloting can be a way to "take the edge off" controversial or risky initiatives.²⁵ While valid, a balance needs to be found between creating enough distance from normal programming to allow for innovation and integration to ensure that lessons from the pilots are used for future policy-making and programming.

UNDP has not, in recent years, had significant ability to promote capacity development at provincial, district and commune levels. With the inflow of resources in the NDM-P, there may be opportunities to build on these efforts for other UNDP engagements in the central provinces. If more appropriate methods and structures can be found, the NDM-P has the future potential to provide platforms for multi-stakeholder platforms where different forms of locally adapted and relevant partnerships could emerge. This is important, since partnerships that are formed at these operational levels may transcend the marginalisation of DR efforts as a narrow, technical concern that limits integrated risk reduction programming in Vietnam (and throughout the world). If successful, the NDM-P could provide an illustration of how UNDP's DR efforts can be an example of decentralised governance.

Given current problems with centralised and technocratic programming, this will not be easy. Thus far the partnership remains a very vague concept in Hue. 'Partnership'

²⁴ Birch 2003

²⁵ UNDP Evaluation Office 2003.

at this level will require more than provision of material and technical assistance (as has been the emphasis thus far). It will require an understanding of the increasing power of the provinces to identify their own needs and determine their own actions. Advocacy will be required at central levels to promote a shift from seeing provincial CFSCs as conduits for information and implementing partners, to instead seeing them as the primary decision-makers which will increasingly need to draw on the services of central and regionally based institutions to address locally determined needs and problems. This implies a fundamental reversal of current roles. UNDP has thus far not been active in advocating for such a rethink in DR, and in some actions may have unintentionally reinforced existing structures.

Another significant aspect of UNDP's partnership role is its responsibilities as a convener of UN agencies and coordinator of emergency response. In current programming these roles are subsumed as part of the 'soft assistance' that UNDP provides. Within the UNDP country office there is a strong sense that this role and capacity should be maintained, particularly since the government has shown its preference to focus on domestic mobilisation for disaster response, leaving much of the coordination of international response to UNDP. In addition to mobilising international resources, collaboration with all the UN agencies (especially Unicef) and INGOs is especially important as the international community can also raise attention to gender issues in disaster management, an area where very little progress has been made in UNDP's regular channels of support to national institutions. Participation in the Disaster Management Working Group, and collaboration with Unicef, have been important channels for UNDP to press for greater attention to meeting acute needs in disaster response. This is also essential to counterbalance a tendency by the government to concentrate on disaster losses. As such, UNDP has an important role, together with other international agencies, to promote humanitarian principles.

Rating:

- *Positive change*
- *Sustainability- significant concerns*
- *Relevance- the general direction is positive but with significant concerns about certain aspects*

2.5. DR within the UNDP country programme

The team has made efforts to assess ***how well UNDP's DR programming has been coherently focused within overall UNDP country strategies, priorities and programming and how well these strategies, priorities and programming have been informed by an awareness of the importance of addressing disasters as part of efforts to reduce poverty and vulnerability.*** There are two aspects to the search for how to align DR within overall country operations and to find potential synergies. First is the question of whether other programmes are aware of the importance of integrating DR in their strategies and have considered how this can be achieved. Second is whether DR programming has sufficiently taken on board the priorities and lessons being learnt in other aspects of UNDP programming.

With regard to the first aspect, the team has not had time for extensive review of overall UNDP programming, but it has noted that some key documents that would be expected to contribute to integrating DR into wider thinking on poverty reduction fail

to mention DR or reflect a very shallow awareness of the concept. The upcoming National Human Development Report will not address significant attention to the issue due to a lack of appropriate data. Some programme reviews largely fail to mention DR outside of discussions of the DR programme itself.²⁶ It could even be stated that the fact that DR is considered a programme area, rather than a cross-cutting issue, is an obstacle to integration. Discussions with country office staff and senior technical advisors indicated a sometimes strong, but uneven level of awareness of and commitment to integrating DR. In sum, UNDP has failed to set an example for its partners in the GoSRV in integrating DR and poverty reduction thinking.

With regard to the second aspect, the challenge of situating DR within processes of public administration reform and promotion of democratic governance has been extremely difficult to achieve anywhere in the world by either UNDP or others. The ‘DR community’ throughout the world has generally shied away from realistic, sustainable and pragmatic assessment of how to:

- work within existing incentives within public administration;
- recognise where effective decision-making power is located within the political and bureaucratic structures;
- find ways to engage with the private sector and civil society;
- contribute to grassroots democratic governance;
- relate to changing trajectories in poverty reduction and growth; and
- accept that decentralisation may turn traditional chains of command and other structures upside-down.

The reasons for this are many. DR is still considered by many to be a matter of ‘hard’ investments in infrastructure, strict (sometimes paramilitary) chains of command and regulatory reform and enforcement. The ‘softer’ approaches of CBDM and similar activities have, despite the best of intentions, tended to remain as add-on components to the ‘hard’ agenda. The skills and capacities of those working in the DR field are usually highly technical and therefore ill-suited to confronting the political and consultative nature of implementing a sustainable DR agenda. The evaluation team has judged that there is a considerable openness and interest within the UNDP country office in better anchoring programming in the overarching country focus on governance reform, but so far attention has primarily been focused on ‘reaching out’ to integrate DR in poverty reduction. Insufficient attention has been paid to finding ways to invite others promoting grassroots democracy, decentralisation and gender equity to ‘look into’ DR programming to suggest how greater coherence can be achieved.

The isolation of DR is exemplified by the lack of integration of UNDP’s own cross-cutting issues of gender, HIV/AIDS and rights-based approaches in DR programming. This is not entirely UNDP’s internal failure, but also an indirect impact of the difficulties that have been experienced in moving efforts beyond a focus on dykes, hydro-meteorological forecasts and other issues that are difficult to assess in a manner that disaggregates their expected impacts on different sectors of the population and different forms of vulnerability. If efforts through the NDM-P and other channels come to focus more on community level initiatives there should be more obvious opportunities to address these ‘blind spots’ in DR programming. It will be important

²⁶ GoSRV and UNDP, 2004; UNDP, 2004; UNDP & AusAID? 2004.

though, to identify where capacity building in gender awareness, for example, is mostly likely to have significant impact rather than pushing training on uninterested engineers. Some NGOs may have valuable experience with what works and what doesn't in this regard that they could share with UNDP.²⁷

Rating:

- *Limited positive change*
- *Sustainability- significant concerns*
- *Relevance- need for reassessment and realignment*

²⁷ Oxfam GB has been implementing a project entitled " Participatory Disaster Management in Dong Thap and Tien Giang provinces" together with the Provincial PPC of Dong Thap and Tien Giang through VNRC.(Oxfam GB 2004).

3. Recommendations

3.1. General recommendations

During the next phase of support, the objectives of UNDP's capacity development efforts in DR will probably complete the shift from technology transfer to the development of capacities for coordination, policy analysis and exchange of information and learning. This shift bears with it a move from relatively clearly definable targets and tasks, to becoming part of an institutional process with uncertain outcomes. ***The major overarching recommendation of this evaluation is that this broad and unpredictable process be managed through a focus on more modest outputs and outcomes based more on what is possible, rather than what is desirable.*** Some current plans (most notably the proposal for the next phase of the NDM-P) exhibit a disturbing tendency to further widen the current gap between what is desired and what is feasible to achieve.

UNDP should build on what is already a two-track approach by contributing to both the capacities of individual partners and also among the 'DR community' in general. The latter should include, but not be exclusively focused on the NDM-P. Full channelling of UNDP support through the NDM-P is not recommended because it appears that the NDM-P will have an enormous workload in the coming years, which may overstretch its management capacity. In order to flexibly respond to emerging needs (especially disaster response), it is important that all UNDP capacities are not tied to one overburdened secretariat. It is also important to engage with other actors in DR that may not be members of the NDM-P (even if they should be).

UNDP's credibility as an active partner in DR in the future will become increasingly dependent on developing a stronger capacity for provincial level interventions, and UNDP will need to restructure its support to meet this challenge. There are different options for this. A major channel may be to strengthen the capacity of cooperating partners at regional levels. It will be important not to see these partners as mere subcontractors, but also as organisations that need strengthening themselves.

UNDP's extensive experience in DR in Vietnam means that it carries considerable weight despite the modest financial scale of its actual programme. ***In order to use UNDP's unique potential leverage in promoting the 'new' DR agenda in the future it will be important to retain greater independence and flexibility to promote strategic initiatives and to use its limited resources in a catalytic manner.*** This may mean reassigning resources, and in so doing reducing support to past partners and taking less of a leading role in the NDM-P.

The credibility of UNDP's promotion of the 'new' DR agenda will depend on establishing more solid evidence that there is indeed a two-way link between poverty and vulnerability to disasters. ***Research is needed to verify the poverty alleviation – disaster reduction linkage. Such research needs to be designed in such a way as to contribute directly to evidence-based policy formation processes.*** International experience can contribute significantly in developing such a programme.

3.2. Finding and enhancing synergy within UNDP country programming

UNDP should take active measures to better mainstream an awareness of the links between DR and poverty reduction within country programming. This may include (a) commissioning research that synthesises international studies of these linkages and considers the relevance of these findings in Vietnam, (b) ensuring that UNDP poverty monitoring and analysis efforts disaggregate vulnerability analyses to highlight disaster related factors and seasonal stress on different vulnerable groups (thereby linking DR to UNDP's other cross-cutting objectives), and (c) raising attention to how climate change and disaster risk may profoundly affect priorities in the coming years. Research in this latter area may suggest re-prioritisation of programme support.

UNDP should investigate further opportunities for learning and perhaps even synergy with public administration reform (PAR) efforts to promote decentralised governance. There is an apparent danger that the organisational structures being developed (especially the NDM-P secretariat) are not congruent with the new structures of roles and responsibilities that are beginning to be put into place through the PAR. It is specifically recommended that the technical advisors supporting the PAR be asked to review and comment on the NDM-P plans, and if necessary also arrange a workshop with the members of the partnership to discuss better structural alignment between DR and governance reform.

It would be advisable to **also investigate whether there are further opportunities for building decentralised disaster management structures through 'new public management' structures that create incentives for the emergence of local ownership and leadership.** For example, UNDP (or the NDM-P) could investigate means by which resources for studies and planning could be put at the disposal of provincial CFSCs or other key actors at provincial level to allow them to choose interventions that address their needs. As another example, there may be opportunities to pilot the training and equipping of existing 'one stop shops' for public service provision to act as provincial humanitarian information centres in time of disaster, and to provide other support as well.²⁸ There may be other opportunities, such as the intention of MARD to establish pilot provincial 'dialogue platforms'.

3.3. Regarding the NDM-P and other partnership efforts

Despite its slow start, the NDM-P shows potential for becoming an effective platform for building DR capacity in the future. For it to achieve this potential role it will require greater investment in several key areas. As described above, there is a danger in overburdening the NDM-P secretariat with 'too much capacity building', so the following recommendations are for priorities for UNDP input into either partnerships in general, or in the NDM-P. The ultimate choice of channels needs to be made through pragmatic negotiations with other stakeholders within and outside of the NDM-P:

- **Specialised technical assistance should be provided in the development of networks and 'communities of practice' to provide a platform for joint policy analysis and a more participatory and multi-sectoral approach to**

²⁸ Neeffjes (2002) suggests establishing provincial information centres in times of disaster.

UNDP/GoSRV (2004) also notes that 'one stop shops' provide a potentially important innovation in the provision of decentralised governmental services.

development of DR strategies. It is important, however, to avoid undue faith in information technology as a quick technical solution for promoting learning within the DR community.

- ***Systems should be designed that combine wider awareness of the wealth of experience being developed in Vietnam and abroad with improved access to information, reports and exchange of experience, particularly in non-structural areas where joint learning is currently very weak.***²⁹
- ***Support for provincial level pilot projects should contribute to capacity development through (a) ‘learning in’, promoting awareness of international experience of relevance to these projects, (b) ‘learning out’, ensuring that the experience of these pilots feeds into policies and planning (particularly at provincial level), and (c) ‘learning across’ through exchange of experience between pilots and among other agencies, especially NGOs engaged in similar activities.*** A large proportion of the implementation of these tasks should be contracted out to organisations with expertise in learning and information exchange. This should not be managed through additional performance contracts with current partners.
- ***In all of these areas efforts would be more effective if additional funds were made available for translation.*** Currently, many highly trained technical staff spend a significant proportion of their time doing translations that they are not qualified to do.
- The difficulties experienced in establishing awareness and ownership of the NDM-P process in the central provinces will be even greater if the NDM-P is expanded to include the Mekong Delta. For practical management and to ensure ownership within the region, ***it is recommended that a satellite office of the secretariat be established in either Ho Chi Minh City or in a province in the centre of the Mekong Delta.*** The special need for applying a whole river basin approach in the Mekong Delta would strongly justify this additional investment.

The most important area for strengthening the partnership efforts is to ***develop a widely shared understanding of what the poverty reduction – disaster reduction link means for concrete programming priorities and decisions.*** Efforts have been made in this regard during the current phase, but should be redoubled in the future with primary attention on areas where a ‘continuum’ already exists between DR efforts and other mainstream development programming. Examples of strategic areas where these policy links may be found are:

- ***The continuum between social protection and mechanisms for disaster response and recovery among the chronically poor need further analyses,*** e.g., (a) identifying what should constitute a ‘trigger’ for disaster response and where enhanced social protection measures would be more appropriate, and (b) engaging in participatory research with communities that differentiates between who is vulnerable to disaster hazards and who is chronically poor.³⁰

²⁹ This recommendation concurs closely with similar emphasis on the need for strengthened contacts with international research noted in UNDP/GoSRV 2004.

³⁰ There is a tendency in some areas for local authorities to simply target disaster relief toward the chronically poor. They may, of course, also be those most vulnerable to disasters, but this is not necessarily the case.

- ***Programming implications of the continuum between development oriented environmental protection and climate change initiatives, and those addressing the acute hazards of related disaster risks need to be considered*** through, e.g., (a) using the pilot projects to chart where interventions are being made that relate to increased seasonal stress and where preparedness for increased frequency/severity of flooding is the primary objective, and (b) investing in research and awareness raising regarding trends in some of the main slow-onset disasters that directly relate to climate change, especially drought and increasing salinity in coastal areas.
- ***The priority areas in which rehabilitation and recovery can be supported in the future need to be agreed upon***, e.g., by building upon the research being conducted by the Academy of Finance to see where strategic gaps exist in current mechanisms at local levels and by being prepared to use UNDP's convening role to promote pilot targeted rehabilitation initiatives after the next major disaster.
- ***The potential impact of integrated river-basin planning and management on natural disaster risk reduction should be explored***, e.g., by engaging in a dialogue with large-scale integrated river-basin planning efforts (such as the ADB supported programme in the Red River basin) to see where modest UNDP inputs could provide a stronger risk reduction focus. From the GoSRV side, the Department of Water Resources Management under the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MoNRE) and the National Council of Water Resources may need to become key counterparts in the next phase of DR support.
- ***Exploration is needed of new emerging disaster hazards as they relate to the urban poor***, e.g., by gathering UNDP's current partners together with the Ministry of Health, World Health Organisation (WHO), Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and other agencies that are involved with urban disaster hazards to discuss if/how the intentions of the S & AP can be achieved through greater awareness of the spectrum of disaster risks and interagency coordination.
- ***Targeting a package of interventions and studies on a small number of provinces that can be statistically shown to have both high levels of disaster risk and high levels of chronic poverty could provide a credible base for policy analyses***. This could also yield data sets that could be used to better mainstream DR analyses in UNDP's other research into poverty in Vietnam.
- ***UNDP should review where DR can be part of new procedures being developed to mainstream environmental impact assessment and gender awareness into poverty reduction project approval structures***. It may be possible to apply similar methods for risk assessment or even to 'piggyback' some risks assessment procedures onto other assessment and review structures that will soon be implemented.

In both the NDM-P and among other UNDP partners there are in some cases insufficient capacities in understanding (a) basic overarching definitions and concepts of disaster and risk reduction, (b) basic concepts and methods for policy analysis, and (c) methods for participatory formulation of strategies and action plans. As a result some programme components have effectively allocated responsibilities to implementing partners before appropriate capacities have been developed. ***These knowledge gaps constitute a major shortcoming in sequencing in current***

programming and should be addressed through the provision of appropriate technical assistance and formal training at an earlier stage for key staff of partner agencies.

3.4. Regarding continued support to the DDMFSC and DMU

The DMU will need to enter a phase of downsizing in the near future to better match its structures to what the DDMFSC will be able to absorb. Specific recommendations regarding the DDMFSC and DMU are:

- ***Support to the DDMFSC, and through that the CCFSC, should be continued with a primary focus on consolidation of existing capacities and integration of the DMU.***
- ***An independent and pragmatic analysis should be conducted of what functions of the DMU can be expected to be integrated into the DDMFSC, which (if any) could or should be based within the NDM-P secretariat, and which should be phased out.***
- ***Any additional support to the DDMFSC should be targeted to activities that provide entry points for gradually expanding the vision and capacities of the DDMFSC, e.g., DR aspects of integrated river basin planning and management. Caution should be given, however, to ensure that any new initiatives do not compete with the above mentioned priorities of consolidation and integration of the activities of the DMU.***

3.5. Regarding support to other ongoing DR components and new partners

In order to advocate and support the implementation of the S & AP, UNDP will need to continue to engage with other partners. Some of this engagement will be via the NDM-P secretariat, but in order to ensure that flexibility is retained and to avoid temptations to further overburden the secretariat with additional tasks, other options should continue to be considered. The following recommendations are indicative of the approach to be taken, but the team has not had an opportunity to investigate options in sufficient detail to provide firm recommendations.

- ***Exploratory engagement should be made with new partners with responsibilities of major relevance for DR, but which are not presently involved, especially other agencies within MARD engaged in mitigating other common disasters that have not received sufficient attention, such as droughts, landslides, forest fires and flash flooding.***
- ***VTV has a potential role in building a wider awareness and consensus on disaster related needs and priorities.*** It could, for example, be supported to develop links with the Forestry Department to increase both early warning and awareness of forest fires. It could also help to mobilise greater public attention to slow-onset disasters, such as droughts, and to disasters that will require steadfast political commitment to address, such as landslides in the highlands and enforcement of construction codes. It could also highlight the increased risks of landslides resulting from shoddy rural road construction and maintenance. Despite some concerns about an inherent elite bias in its audience, VTV can be seen as an important channel to promote good governance through public awareness and mobilisation. It has probably played

a major role in ensuring that the DR agenda has remained so strong in Vietnam in the years since the major floods of 1999 and 2000.

- ***UNDP should explore partners with specific methodological skills that relate to the current shortcomings noted in this evaluation.*** This may include, for example, decentralised and participatory planning, the creation and management of ‘new public management’ approaches that place resources and responsibilities in the hands of local authorities, or expertise in assessing urban disaster hazards and vulnerabilities.
- ***When new partners are selected, attention should be given to instilling a strong awareness of the need to not only provide information on the lessons being learnt in UNDP supported initiatives, but also to proactively solicit feedback from those who should be reading their reports, accessing their websites and participating in their workshops to ensure that their work actually addresses the needs and priorities of the wider ‘DR community’.***

4. Lessons Learnt

4.1. *Regarding capacity building for DR support in general*

The commitment and long history of engagement between UNDP and the GoSRV have proven to be major strengths that should continue to be capitalised upon in the future. This history may, however, also constitute an obstacle to developing more appropriate cooperation for several reasons:

- The routine nature of UNDP support has made it difficult to take a step away from the immediate production of outputs/deliverables and redirect attention on fundamental questions about overall priorities in order to achieve intended outcomes. It has been difficult to maintain a cutting edge focus.
- The strong relationships with technical collaborating partners create major challenges to rethinking efforts to reflect current understandings of the role of disaster management in poverty and vulnerability reduction.
- There is a tendency to contract the production of outputs before appropriate capacities have been developed. This is particularly true where the new outputs require understanding of methods for policy analysis and socio-economic processes, but where collaborating partners have a highly technical and natural science orientation. ‘Learning by doing’ will inevitably be part of this process, but is insufficient as a stand-alone method.

Despite these challenges, over the years UNDP has shown that it can shift from technology transfer to a focus on its core role in capacity building. Despite the entrance of larger and better funded agencies working with DR, UNDP remains recognised by the GoSRV as the main agency supporting capacity building. Patience has been required, but results are considerable.

4.2. *Regarding capacity building for DR within UNDP country programmes*

The concerns raised in this evaluation and the challenges outlined in the recommendations closely relate to UNDP’s fundamental aims of reducing poverty through improved governance and democratisation. The UNDP country office has had difficulty in re-anchoring its long experience of technical support to disaster reduction to reflect UNDP’s overarching commitments in the new millennium. This is the primary challenge facing the ‘DR community’ internationally. The fact that the UNDP country office has not found the ‘solution’ for merging these two agendas in Vietnam should be considered in the perspective of similar conundrums throughout the world.

UNDP capacity building has initiated a process of critical reflection that is beginning to point toward how these two agendas can be merged in a manner relevant for partners in Vietnam. UNDP has started the ball rolling, and now needs to back this up by additional capacity building in the form of policy analysis, consultative methods and networking in order to help stakeholders in Vietnam to find their own answers about how to link disaster reduction and poverty reduction.

UNDP's combined role of engaging in both capacity building for DR and assuming an active direct coordination and networking role (even in disaster response) may seem to be inappropriate 'gap filling' for the government from a strict institutional perspective. Nonetheless, this mix of normative, advisory and semi-operational roles reflects the task environments of its partners, and is a major contributing factor to UNDP's credibility in DR. When a disaster strikes, talking is not enough. Furthermore, the GoSRV has indicated that it prefers to concentrate on managing its own response mechanisms in times of disaster, and thus appreciates UNDP's coordinating role vis-à-vis the international community. It is therefore essential that UNDP capacity be maintained to shoulder its onerous range of responsibilities.

Annexes

A. Persons interviewed

1. Dang Ngoc Tinh, Director General, DDMFSC
2. Nuoi, Deputy-Director,
3. Pham Van Tham, Director of Project VIE 01/014
4. Hien, Deputy-Director of Project VIE 01/014
5. Kien, Manager of the Project VIE 01/014
6. Phuong, Account of Project VIE 01/014
7. Bui quang Huy, Manager of the Project VIE 97/002
8. Marshall Silver, STA, Project VIE 01/014
9. Luong Anh Tuan, GIS Engineer, Project VIE 97/002
10. Nguyen Thi Le Quyen, Communication Engineer, Project VIE 97/002
11. Nguyen Thu Que, Training Coordinator, Project VIE 97/002
12. Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, Translator and Web Operator, Project VIE 97/002
13. Ngo Quang Minh, Interpreter, Project Assistant, Project VIE 97/002
14. Luu Dieu Trang, Project Administrator, Project VIE 97/002
15. Duong Tat Toan, IT Engineer, Project VIE 97/002
16. Leo Faber, Counselor, Embassy of Luxembourg
17. Tran Binh Minh, Vice-president, VTV
18. Thanh Thu, Expert on Information and Disaster Warning, VTV
19. Nguyen Manh Tuan, Report, Editor, News and Current Affair Dept, VTV
20. Le Dinh Dao, Deputy-Director, The Voice of Vietnam (Radio)
21. Vinh Tra, Director Editorial Board
22. Ngoc Anh, Official, Department of International Cooperation
23. Nguyen Hai Duong, Vice-President, VNRC
24. Luu Quang Khanh, Deputy-director, Foreign Economic Relations Department (FIRD), MPI
25. Tran Van Sap, Deputy-Director, National Centre for Meteorology and Hydrology (NCMH), MoNRE
26. Nguyen Dai Khanh, Head, Office of S&T and International Cooperation, NCMH
27. Duong Van Khanh, Deputy-Head, Office of S&T and International Cooperation, NCMH.
28. Nguyen Xuan Chinh, Deputy General Director Institute of Building Science and Technology (IBST), Ministry of Construction
29. Nguyen Minh Dai, Deputy-Director, Centre for Design and Consultancy, IBST
30. Nguyen Xuan Thuy, IBST
31. Nguyen Tuan Anh, IBST
32. Pham Thi Chien, Institute of Irrigation Planning
33. Nguyen Ngoc Minh, Institute of Irrigation Planning
34. Duong Hong Thuy, Institute of Urban and Rural Planning (IURP)
35. Luu Kim Nga, IURP
36. Bui Bich Diep, IURP
37. Nguyen Thi Minh Hoa, Deputy-Director, International Cooperation Department (ICD), MARD
38. Subinay Nandy, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP
39. Nguyen Tien Phong, Head of Cluster of Poverty Reduction and Social Development, UNDP

40. Nguyen Ngoc Ly, Head of SD Cluster, UNDP
41. Pham Thanh Hang, PO, SD Cluster, UNDP
42. Koos Neefjes, Senior Advisor, Environment and Poverty Project, UNDP
43. Vu Quoc Ngu, Economist, Strategic Policy Group, UNDP
44. Rob McGregor, 1st Secretary, AUSAID
45. Laurent Msellati, Rural Sector Coordinator, World Bank
46. Ngo Tien Loi, Program Officer, USAID
47. Phan Thanh Hung, Director of Provincial DDMFSC, Chairman of the Office of the Hue Provincial CCFSC
48. Dang Van Hoa, Official, Office of the Hue Provincial CCFSC
49. Nguyen Thanh Tra, Chairman of the People Committee of the Phu Hau Ward Hue City
50. Mai Chi Minh, Chairman of the People Council of the Phu Hau Ward
51. Phan Van Hoa, Vice-chairman of the Phu Hau Ward
52. Nguyen Duy Nam, Head of the Flood and Storm Control Team of the Ward
53. Tran Quang Chu, Vice-director of the Mid Central Vietnam Regional Hydro-Meteorological Services (Regional Centre)
54. Le Viet Xe, Head of the Technical Division of the Regional Centre
55. Nguyen Viet, Director of Hydro-Meteorological Services of Thu Thien – Hue Province.
56. Stefanie Neuman, Document Officer, Capacity Building for Adaptation to Climate Change (CACC) Project – CECI
57. Dang Ngoc Dien, Program Coordinator (Planning and Monitoring), CECI
58. To Van Truong, Director of Sub-institute of Water Resources Planning (SIWRP)– Co-implementing agency of the Project VIE/01/014
59. Nguyen Ngoc Anh, Deputy-Director, SIWRP
60. Dang Thanh Lam, Project Manager, SIWRP
61. PhamVan Manh, Research Fellow, SIWRP
62. To Ha Thang, Research Fellow, SIWRP
63. Robert Mason, Visiting researcher, SIWRP
64. Tran Kim Phuong, VNRC Long An
65. Phan Hung Cuong, Head of the DARD Bureau Long An PCFSC
66. Huynh Cong Binh, Official, Planning Division, DARD
67. Nguyen Khac Man, Official, Planning Division, DARD
68. Pham Van Le, Director, An Giang PCFSC
69. Do Thoai Son, Deputy-Director, An Giang PCFSC
70. Nguyen Bao Yen, Head of Social Support Division, DOLISA, An Giang Province
71. Nguyen Van Hue, Senior Programme Manager, AusAid, Ho Chi Minh City
72. Provash Mondal, Humanitarian Program Coordinator, Oxfam GB and HK
73. Mel Blunt, STA, Public Administration Reform (PAR) Program at Ministry of Home Affairs.
74. Pieter Smidt, Principal Water Specialist, ADB
75. Anders Hjort af Ornäs, Consultant, ADB
76. Eva Lindskog, Stockholm Environmental Institute
77. Bui Duong Nghieu, Chief of Public Finance Division, Academy of Finance, MOF.
78. Nico Bakker, First Secretary, Water Management, Netherland Embassy.
79. Nguyen Van Tai, Deputy-Director General, Department of Environment, MoNRE.

80. Chander Badloe, Head of Water and Sanitation Section, UNICEF
81. Nguyen Ngoc Binh, Director General, Department of Forestry, MARD
82. Tran The Lien, Senior Official, Department of Forest Protection
83. Le Hong Hai, Official, Department of Irrigation and Hydraulic Work
84. La Van Ly, NPD, Director, Ministry Office, PAR Project, MARD
85. Nguyen Duc Son, NPM, PAR Project, MARD
86. Doan Thi Thu Hien, AA, PAR Project, MARD
87. Vu Thi Phuong Chi, Interpreter, PAR Project, MARD
88. Richard May, Federation Representative, IFRC

B. Programme

| Date | Activity |
|------------------------|---|
| Sunday, 3 October 2004 | Team leader's arrival Hanoi |
| Monday, 4 October | |
| 8.00 am | Briefing with UNDP PO |
| 9.00 am | Meeting with DDMFSC/MARD |
| 10.30 am | Discussion with staff and visit DMU project |
| 4.30 pm | Meeting with Luxembourg Embassy |
| Tuesday, 5 October | |
| 8.30 am | Meeting with Viet Nam Television |
| 10.30 am | Meeting with Ministry of Fisheries |
| 1.30 pm | Meeting with Viet Nam Radio |
| 3.00 pm | Meeting with VN Red Cross |
| Wednesday, 6 October | |
| 8.30 am | Meeting with Foreign Economic Relations Dept, MPI |
| 10.30 am | Meeting with Hydromet Services |
| 1.30 pm | Meeting with IBST, Ministry of Construction |
| 3.00 pm | Meeting with International Relations Department, MARD reduction |
| 4.30 pm | Meeting with UNDP Sr. Management |
| Thursday, 7 October | |
| 9.00 am | Meeting with AUSAID |
| 10:00 am | Meeting with World Bank |
| 11:00 am | Meeting with USAID |
| 4.40 pm | Fly to Hue |
| Friday, 8 October | |
| 8.30 am | Meeting with Provincial CFSC |
| 10.30 am | Discussion in depth with staff involved in flood mapping and flood monuments |
| 1.30 pm | Visit to communes participating in flood mapping training |
| Saturday, 9 October | |
| 8.30 am | Meeting with Central HMS |
| Afternoon | Visit to Huong river sites |
| Sunday, 10 October | Travel to Ho Chi Minh City |
| Monday, 11 October | |
| 8..30 am | Meeting with Sub-institute of water resources planning – co-implimenting agency of VIE/01/014 |
| 9.00 am | Travel to Long An Province |
| 2.30 pm | Working with Provincial CFSC |
| Tuesday, 12 October | |
| Morning | Meeting with Provincial Red Cross Chapter |
| Afternoon | Visit school and a residential cluster |
| Wednesday, 13 October | |
| Morning | Travel to An Giang |
| 1.30 pm | Meeting with Provincial CFSC, An Giang Province |
| 3.30 pm | Meeting with DOLISA |
| | Travel to HCMC |
| Thursday, 14 October | |

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| 9.00 am | Meeting AUSAID HCMC on Mekong Poverty assessment |
| 11..30 | Fly to Hanoi |
| 2.30 pm | Meeting with CARE |
| Friday, 15 October | |
| 8.30 am | Meeting with Oxfam GB & HK |
| 11.00 am | Meeting with STA of Public Adminsitration Reform Program |
| 1.30 pm | Meeting with General Economic Dept of MPI |
| Saturday, 16 October | Visit storm warning station in Quang Ninh |
| Sunday, 17 October | Report writing |
| Monday, 18 October | |
| 8.30 am | Meeting with Nat Institute of Social science and Human Studies and UNDP Economist |
| 11.00 am | Meeting with ADB |
| 2:00 pm | Meeting with Academy of Finance, MOF |
| 4.00 pm | Meeting with the Netherlands Embassy |
| Tuesday, 19 October | |
| 8.30 am | Meeting with MONRE, Env Dept |
| 11.00 am | Meeting with UNICEF |
| 1.30 pm | Joint meeting with Dept of Forestry, Dept of Water resources & Dept of Forest protection, MARD |
| 3:30 pm | Meeting with NPD of PAR in MARD project |
| 4.00 pm | Debriefing with DDMFSC |
| Wednesday, 20 October | |
| 8:15 am | Debriefing with UNDP Sr. Management @ CR B |
| 10:00 am | Meeting with IFRC |
| Afternoon | Follow-up actions and time frame |
| Evening | Departure of Team leader |

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