

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

MID-TERM EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capacity Building for Alternative Development Project to Replace Opium Poppy Cultivation, Ky Son Phase 2, AD/VIE/01/F21

Thematic area:	Elimination of illicit crops
Region:	Southeast Asia, Vietnam
Project budget:	US\$ 1,738,550
Project duration:	2 years (2002-2003)
Executing agency:	UNODC/NEX(Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development)
Associated agency:	Nghe An Province People's Committee
Type of evaluation:	Mid-term Evaluation
Date of evaluation:	March 2003

I Project description

The project is supporting the government of Vietnam in strengthening its capacity in planning for and introducing development programs leading to a sustainable elimination of opium poppy cultivation and a reduction of drug abuse in the targeted district which used to be one of the main opium producing districts in the country. The general strategy to be adopted under the project is to focus on strengthening local capacity by following a 4-stage approach in each area of activity: **Exposure** to new activities, techniques, approaches and concepts; **Dialogue** to thoroughly assess the situation and prospects of specific village(s) and to plan project initiatives using participatory planning approaches; **Application**/implementation of plans/activities agreed upon; **Responsive monitoring** where participants will meet periodically to discuss progress and resolve any unclear issues in terms of inputs agreed upon. The project consist of three main components each with detailed outputs and activities: 1) Community Development; 2) Alternative Land and Water based Income Generation and; 3) Infrastructure.

II Findings and conclusions of the evaluation team

1. Concept and design

- ❖ The design of the project assumes that most drug abuse problems will automatically be addressed by the overall project approach and thereby underestimate and under budget this output.
- ❖ With current budget and possible coverage (number of activities that can be effectively implemented within a two year period), the achievement indicators are somewhat unrealistic.
- ❖ Due to unanticipated problems before the revision of the project document, the project met with certain difficulties to get started, fully staffed and ready to be implemented.
- ❖ Project activities progress slowly with a tendency to step back or repeating activities (mainly in the beginning of implementation) carried out in the project's first phase (1996-2000).
- ❖ Due to the limited capacity of initial staff and their understanding/interpretation of their respective jobs, the resulting negative impact on the project can still be observed.
- ❖ Initial poor Quarterly Workplans created confusion in the implementation of project activities. This was later addressed to more clearly display relevant activities.
- ❖ The understanding and application of concepts like participatory planning, capacity building and the use of a holistic framework need to improve for more effective implementation.
- ❖ The unclear number and identity of target communes in the Project Document is a minor issue but creates confusion in implementation.

2. Project Implementation and Management

- ❖ Efficiency and effectiveness of activities remain inadequately addressed:
 1. Disbursement was a problem in the past but it is now more or less resolved. Certain minor issues are still however regarded by project specialist as cumbersome.
 2. The lack of active participatory development and holistic approach to the project conceptual framework has led to activities implemented more reflecting a thinking on behalf of the beneficiaries rather than properly integrating the target groups thoughts.
- ❖ Effectiveness of project management remains inadequate.
 1. Limited management skills of the Project Manager.
 2. Quality of activity reports has to improve and need to focus on project objectives and outputs.
 3. Monitoring of project activities need to increase/intensify.
 4. A minimum of efforts is spent on Team Work among project staff and the exchange of ideas and information and cross-sector activities in the project.

3. Project Results

- ❖ The project outputs in the second phase have yet to be measured. Data will have to be collected in field monitoring exercises. There are formats for activity reporting with annotated text to guide project staff but the management and project staff have yet to follow these formats.
- ❖ There are some evidences relating to positive outcomes of the project. The Mission Team observed the expansion process of Model Plots or Small Production Groups from the first phase that had expanded to a significant scale of production in the second phase.
- ❖ At provincial level, the Mission Team was informed that experiences from the project in phase 1 had facilitated a more efficient implementation of the Government's Program 135 in Ky Son district, in comparison with other districts in the province.

III Recommendations and lessons learned

1. Actions to be taken to improve/rectify undesirable outcomes

- ❖ Project implementation need to enhance integrated planning and joint effective management in order to ensure effective collaboration between the project and local counterparts and other partners. Coordination and joint planning efforts are also needed from province down to village level.
- ❖ The application of a holistic approach, participatory development strategy and completion of the project cycle should be reinforced in order to achieve outputs and project objectives,
- ❖ Project specialists need to focus on capacity building and achievement indicators. Guidance should be provided by the Project Management Unit to steer the project in that direction.
- ❖ The project should make a decision regarding the target communes as soon as possible in order to facilitate efficient future planning among project stakeholders and partner institutions.

2. Implementation and management of project

- ❖ The NPM need to recognize and build on professional motivation when providing guidance for project staff and specialists, enabling them to see good project performance also as a personal gain.
- ❖ The project management need to guide staff in effectively preparing and planning for project activities and that they clearly relate activities to overall goals, objectives and achievement indicators within the project framework.
- ❖ Specialist duties and responsibilities that are found to be inappropriate should be reconsidered and abandoned, if relevant, in order to make space for more appropriate duties.
- ❖ A redistribution of workload on an equal basis should be undertaken in order to promote full responsibility of the specialists for their specific duties.

- ❖ Capacity building as described in the strategic approach should receive maximum attention in all project activities. Capacity building include active participation and empowerment at community level and enhancement of capacity in carrying out drug control development measures at government level.
- ❖ In order to address recommendations the management need to arrange regular internal review meetings that will incorporate discussions on all of the project outputs and activities. External consultants should be considered in order to facilitate these meeting from time to time.
- ❖ A community-based approach should be adopted in order to ensure active participation of project counterparts, relevant partners and stakeholders, especially at the grass-root level.

The Mission Team arrives at the following overall recommendation to UNODC and the Government: **The project in the second phase should be extended until December 2004 to allow for an adequate timeframe in order to finalize the project and achieve complete and obtainable outputs on a sustainable basis.** However, considering the difficulties and limitations faced by the project in phase 2 and through consultations with the executing agencies, the mission team **recommends that the project scale down activities in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness of management and implementation of project activities,** to facilitate “*real*” results, i.e., outputs, outcomes and impact on sustainable basis. Certain criteria will be needed in order to prioritize project activities, to select project targets and so on. One of the most important criteria is the assurance of project sustainability.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

- ❖ Capacity building for alternative development is a process of long-term nature. The extension of the project is crucial in order to consolidate the diversity of alternative development models for food security and income generation previously developed, and to expand successful results.
- ❖ A project that aims at scaling up activities need to make use of the momentum gained and avoid any gaps to occur between the different phases. Delays and indecision for various reasons risk increase such time gaps between phases and may in effect cause much harm to the project by slowing it down or even reverting progress to earlier stages in its implementation.
- ❖ It is important that the national counterpart recipient of AD project support ensure that proper capacity to execute exists prior to taking on project responsibility through national execution and implementation of such a project.
- ❖ Increased contribution from the Government to AD approaches is key to sustaining opium poppy eradication and promoting sustainable livelihoods for former opium poppy cultivating communities with cost effective alternatives. In Vietnam, the Government contribution to AD is indirect however, through other development efforts, e.g., infrastructure, socio-economic and agricultural development.
- ❖ Absence or lack of the above conditions and commitments may, in the long run, have a negative impact on the project leading to undesirable developments. Examples from other countries in the region include severe problem with drug addiction and HIV/AIDS among minorities in Northern Thailand even after more than 30 years of implementation of the AD approach.
- ❖ With national execution and implementation of an Alternative Development project, investment in AD specific expertise and promotion for future career opportunities is another dimension of an AD project in terms of future challenges.

IV Follow-up (as of July 2003)

In the quarter following the mid-term evaluation some of the recommendations have been looked into:

- 1) Project staffing has been looked into by the management and project specialist positions have been re-organised.
- 2) An extension of the project will be discussed in the Tri-Partite Review meeting that is scheduled to take place in September 2003.

- 3) Training and plans for follow-up training on participatory approaches as well as on gender issues has been undertaken and is being planned for the project and counterpart staff.
- 4) The Technical Advisor who is based in Hanoi has been requested to increase the amount of time spent at the project site to coach the local staff and the Project Manager to the extent possible.