

**FINAL
EVALUATION REPORT**

VIE/028

Western Nghe An Rural Development
Project – Phase III

PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Country	Vietnam
Long project title	Western Nghe An Rural Development Project – Phase III
Short project title	WENARUDEP
LuxDev Code	VIE/028
Version of the Report	May 2015

RATING OF THE PROJECT BY THE EVALUATION MISSION

Global rating (Effectiveness)	2.2 On a scale of 1 (excellent results, significantly better than expected) to 6 (the project was unsuccessful, or the situation has deteriorated on balance)
Rating using other evaluation criteria	Relevance: 1.7 Efficiency: 1.9 Sustainability: 2.4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2015, VIE/028 was subject to a final evaluation by a team of one international expert and two national experts. The team consisted of Mr. Bernd Unger (Team Leader), Mrs Nguyen Thinh Tam (Institutional and rural development) and Mr. Nguyen Van Toan (Civil Engineer). Mrs. Oanh Luong Nhu who assisted as interpreter and as logistic officer accompanied the team.

VIE/028 is the fifth joint rural development project of the Government of Luxembourg and the Government of Vietnam in the Nghe An province, implemented from 2009 until June 2015. All these projects aimed for enhancing the living condition of the rural population remain. Accordingly

The projects development objective is to alleviate poverty in three mountainous districts of Western Nghe An province

The three project results of VIE/028 are:

Result 1	Capacity	Local capacity to deliver appropriate sustainable agricultural development services is strengthened
Result 2	Production	Rural households benefit from adoption of appropriate and diversified sustainable agricultural practices
Result 3	Infrastructure	Rural communities' access to goods and services is improved

VIE/028 operated in the 33 communes with the highest percentage of poor households out of 52 communes of the Con Cuong, Tuong Duong and Ky Son districts in Western Nge An Province; the total population of the three districts is more than 200 000.

For capacity building (Result 1) 279 extension workers and 287 para-vets were trained as well as staff from departments, farmers' unions and women unions in technical topics, participatory planning, and cross-cutting issues as direct project beneficiaries. VIE/028 also provided office and field equipment to them. These improved capacities were used for planning and implementing production and infrastructure measures.

For production promotion (Result 2) the extension services implemented 522 agricultural model demonstrations for crops, livestock and forestry in which 8 961 farmers participated. In addition they trained over 18 000 farmers. They also implemented 93 income generating activity and 54 non-timber forest products models, which increased household incomes by 300 000 VND¹ (12.7 EUR) to 800 000 VND² (33.90 EUR) per month and group member.

Under Result 3 VIE/028 implemented 77 small scale agricultural development projects and 14 medium scale agricultural infrastructure projects, such as roads, concrete drifts, water supply, irrigation, community houses, dormitories for vocational training schools etc., benefitting more than 38 000 people.

The final evaluation in April 2015 assessed the project achievements of VIE/028, but also some (infrastructure) works from the predecessor project VIE/014.

The indicator for the overall project objective is a reduction in poverty levels. Based on the new poverty line criteria from 2011³ the levels in 2007 were 90%, 85% and 65% for Ky Son, Tuong Duong and Con Cuong districts respectively. The indicator target is a reduction to respectively 68%, 55% and 41% in 2014. According to district statistics, the poverty levels in 2014 were 52.79% in Ky Son, 45.38% in Tuong Duong and 32.20% in Con Cuong according to district statistics. This means that the indicator has been achieved. However, because there are also several other Government of Vietnam programmes and non government organisation projects in the target districts, the poverty reduction cannot be solely attributed to VIE/028.

¹ Brocade weaving.

² Silk production sold to Lao.

³ In 2011 Vietnam's official poverty line criteria increased, from 200 000 VND per capita per month income to 400 000 VND (roughly 19 USD/ per month) and for rural households, and for urban households from 250 000 to 500 000 VND per capita per month (roughly 24 USD/month); with the old poverty lines the poverty levels were respectively 64%, 59% and 37% in 2007.

VIE/028 cooperated with these programmes and projects and also was the main programme supporting the extension services and government departments that reached large numbers of households with its project measures for production and infrastructure. Therefore, it is concluded that VIE/028 contributed substantially to the achievement of the poverty reduction indicator.

The evaluation team assessed 61 interventions through individual interviews, focus group discussions and site visits in 29 of the 33 project communities. The team interviewed extension officers as well as representatives from farmers and women unions and district engineers. The results of the interviews were, wherever possible, verified through secondary data. The evaluation also assessed 33 infrastructure measures from VIE/028 and seven from VIE/014. In all 96 observations for VIE/028 measures were assessed and received scores (1 = excellent, 6 = insufficient) for the five OECD evaluation criteria⁴, while the development assistance committee markers for governance, gender and environment were judged according to the project achievements.

The overall score for **Relevance** is **1.7**, practically all activities were relevant as the project followed a participatory bottom-up planning and applied criteria for selecting poor households as main beneficiaries, resulting in an above average score, whereby especially income generating activities models scored very well.

The score for **Effectiveness** is **2.2**, which is above average; the effectiveness was slightly affected by the high rotation rate of civil servant staff, affecting the effectiveness of the capacity building measures and secondly, beneficiaries indicated that they still needed external support for continuing the models, otherwise the efficiency score would have been even better.

Despite some delays at the beginning of the project the score for **Efficiency** is **1.9** because most results were achieved with relatively small input of time, manpower and budget.

The score for **Sustainability** is **2.4**, especially income generating activities models scored very well. Agricultural models with hybrid seeds and fertiliser as external inputs and infrastructure with risks for natural disasters scored less well, but overall this is somewhat above average and expectation.

VIE/028 achieved the development assistance committee markers for Governance, Gender and Environment, whereby gender has rather been overachieved. The project carefully selected its project activities as well as its project participants, whereby selection of women and poor for demonstration models contributed to the good achievement, whereby the participating villagers are considered indirect beneficiaries of VIE/028.

The most significant lessons learned from VIE/028 are:

- VIE/028 aligned the project activities to the annual and five-years socio economic development plans. The integration of project activities in the development plans was essential, because the partner's contribution depend on the budget, which is defined in the socio-economic development plans;
- VIE/028 initiated annual Planning Workshops for all three districts jointly. This enhanced transparency and accountability. Furthermore, it avoided envy among the partner districts and it motivated the districts to learn from each other. The latter also contributed to the replication of introduced pilot models;
- VIE/028 continued the bottom-up participative planning approach, which was originally introduced by VIE/014. Government representatives highlighted that they adopted the participative approach for two main reasons:
 - Activities reflect the actual needs of the beneficiaries (needs assessment),
 - Participative planning awakes ownership by the beneficiaries, which positively impacts sustainability;
- VIE/028 initiated local Fair Trades to promote the region and the local products. The beneficiaries and service providers embraced these fair trades. In most cases, the demand on local products exceeded supply;
- VIE/028 introduced 687 demonstration models. Most of these models have a significant positive impact on the income of the participants. Service providers should continue to train more beneficiaries or trained participants should share their knowledge in their villages for further dissemination. Both are already often done, but it is not always the case;

⁴ Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability; the scores use a scale of one (for excellent) to six (for insufficient).

- VIE/028 introduced several different types of demonstration models. Models, which yielded quick returns and/or had a direct positive impact on food security, are more sustainable;
- VIE/028 involved the beneficiaries in as many steps as possible of the implementation process of infrastructure and also planned for the maintenance. Therefore, the project anchored ownership on user's level, which results in enhanced sustainability of the infrastructure.

The most significant recommendations for the project counterparts and for future projects are:

- The Government of Vietnam is advised to include the successful models in the five-years district socio-economic development plans to ensure the continuation and further replication. In 2015, each district will develop its socio-economic development plan for the years 2016-2020. In this context, it would be ideal, if VIE/028 could accompany and support the development of these new five-year socio-economic development plans, and take the opportunity to integrate the successful models into the district socio-economic development plan;
- Vietnam will face significant effects from climate change over the coming decades. For the agricultural and rural development sector, the Ministry of agriculture and rural development developed its national framework in 2009, and in 2012 the action programme in response to climate change of the agriculture and rural development sector was approved for the period 2011-2015 as well as the Vision to 2050. It is recommended to integrate response to climate change of the agriculture and rural development actions in the five-year socio-economic development plan.
- For future projects, it is recommended to develop practical indicators from the very beginning (project document) or, if this is impossible, to ensure that such indicators are developed during the inception phase, when also a baseline study should be conducted. The combination of practical indicators and baseline data, enables the project to establish a proper monitoring and evaluation system to assess not only inputs and results, but also outcome and impact;
- The limited market opportunities for the beneficiaries will remain a challenge in the future. During the debriefing in Vinh, the districts expressed their commitment to continue organising regular Fair Trades/markets. Nevertheless is recommended that, the Government of Vietnam will establish further (marketing) support to the beneficiaries; this can for instance be in the form of founding of cooperatives, the cooperation with private traders, the branding of products etc;
- VIE/028 has an impressive collection of various project documentations (e.g. reports, manuals, models, monitoring data, movies etc.). This can be further used by the partners, not only for refresher training to farmers but also for internal capacity building. Hence, the project is requested to prepare a DVD with all key-documents. This DVD shall then be handed-over to all partners, but also to other Lux-Development projects in Vietnam and abroad.

In general, the project achieved very good results for the direct and indirect beneficiaries. However, it would have been desirable, if the Vietnamese project management union would have played a more significant role in the implementation, whereas now the project support team played a large role in the trainings, the demonstration models and the infrastructure implementation. To this end the role and the capacity of the project management unit should receive more attention from the provincial people's committee, department of agriculture and rural development and the district people's committees with low budgets and often-poor quality, while also "crowding out" private operators.