

FINAL EVALUATION

VIE/033

Climate Adapted Local Development
and Innovation Project

PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Country	Vietnam
Long project title	Climate Adapted Local Development and Innovation Project
Short project title	Climate Adapted Local Development and Innovation Project
LuxDev Code	VIE/033
Version of the Report	May 2018

RATING OF THE PROJECT BY THE EVALUATION MISSION

Global rating (Effectiveness)	1.9 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: 1.4 Efficiency: 1.9 Sustainability: 1.8

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The End of Term evaluation for VIE/033 Climate Adapted Local Development and Innovation Project was carried out by Mekong Economics Ltd at the end of 2017. The final evaluation was undertaken to evaluate whether the project had reached the results and objectives set. The evaluation also analysed the project's capacity building, management and monitoring as well as other achievements using the evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact) and cross-cutting aspects (governance for development, gender equality, environment and climate change). Answers to specific questions on various topics, lessons learnt, and recommendations for future projects in the same sector were also covered as part of this evaluation. It can be concluded that this project significantly and sustainably improved the livelihoods of the target beneficiaries, confirmed by a Randomised Control Trial study.

The project was carried out in 29 poor and vulnerable communes in three districts of Thua Thien – Hue province: Phu Loc, Phu Vang, and Quang Dien. The project beneficiaries included approximately 400,000 people which were targeted by hundreds of different hardware and software interventions that arose from a highly participatory approach. The beneficiaries included both individual households dependent on agriculture (livestock, crop, aquaculture), as well as community organisations and small enterprises. The 250,000 project beneficiaries classed as “poor” and “near poor” were made up of 70% women, and 30% were former boat people on resettled land. The project aimed to strengthen the capacity and livelihoods of these people in response to climate shocks and stresses, including more frequent typhoons, more severe floods, more droughts, and loss of land to the ocean.

The project enabled local residents to become more resilient to climate change effects and improved their livelihoods through a number of interventions. By the end of 2017, 24/28 project indicators (excluding one indicator cancelled) were achieved or exceeded the end-of-project targets. Overall, the project contributed to the sustainable, equitable, and efficient trends of poverty reduction and adaptation to environmental and climate change: 2,225 households were alleviated from poverty; Resettled households with average monthly income of less than 2 million Vietnam Dong reduced from 37.9% to 14.5%; The number of poor households suffering from significant damage and loss caused by disasters seemed to reduce by more than 30%, while the number of non-poor households suffering from significant damage and loss caused by disasters seemed to reduce by 11% only; 76.1% of women improved access to economic opportunities; Gender-based violence reported fell from 86 in 2014 to 7 in 2017; 29,155 households directly benefited from the project-supported Infrastructure sub-projects; 64.7% of households in resettlement areas substantially improved their living conditions; 66.7% of lagoon surface water quality complied with stringent government regulations vs. 22.2% in 2014; Earmarked Fisheries Conservation Zones increased from 316 to 567 ha; 88% of previously unemployed labourers who received project-supported vocational training are now full time employed and earn at least the government minimum wage; and countless more successes could be mentioned.

The successes of the project are expected to be highly sustainable due to the focus on capacity building. The skill set of the population has been expanded through a plethora of gender equality, cultivation, livestock rearing, adaptation, and mitigation training sessions. The focus on capacity building enhanced the project due to the heightened ability of project beneficiaries to train the wider community.

Our consultation with various stakeholders and beneficiaries of about 155 interventions demonstrated that the project has been highly appreciated and effective. The project gained high scores on five evaluation criteria (ranging from 1.4 to 1.9) and cross-cutting aspects (ranging from 1.7 to 1.9). The importance of these scores is to be highlighted as a significant achievement of the project.

An Randomised Control Trial study additionally confirmed the successes of the project by evaluating whether the successes were natural or induced. This was done through extending the baseline and endline surveys to non-beneficiaries in a similar social and economic setting for counterfactual analysis, the 'comparison group'. The evidence of this analysis, which was all statistically significant, is remarkable and attributes the project for many important successes. Comparing changes in poverty over this period was somewhat limited due to changes in government classification, as well as various major man-made and natural incidences which affected the livelihoods of many beneficiaries; however, recorded wide-spread increases in average monthly income clearly reflects significant poverty reduction and improved standards of living for these project beneficiaries. The average monthly income of the comparison group increased by 25.8% over the project period, whereas the treatment group income raised by 112%, attributing a 86.2 percentage point increase in income to the project. The number of households with average monthly income under or equal to 2 million Vietnam Dong decreased by 28.2 percentage points for the treatment group and only 14.4 for the comparison group; resettled households with average monthly income under or equal to 2 million Vietnam Dong decreased by 18.8 percentage points for the comparison group, whereas the treatment group reduced by 23.4 percentage points. Finally, the Randomised Control Trial reflected that the proportion of households experiencing significant damage or loss from natural calamities declined by 25 percentage point for the treatment group and 8.9 percentage point for the comparison group (source: Randomised Control Trial Report). These successes are a remarkable achievement for the project and provide substantial evidence for the direct implication that the project has had.

The success of the project can be attributed to three levels of project management: participatory planning at various levels, the implementation stage, and the monitoring and reporting stage which made the project highly relevant to the particular barriers that the beneficiaries were facing. It further enabled a running dialogue of successes and improvements that have contributed to the efficiency of interventions.

The project planning process started off with the development of an overall Logframe Action Plan 2014-2017, a multi-year framework plan developed with participation of relevant stakeholders at various levels, to state the overall aims and center the objectives, enabling the frame to be directive to stakeholders in annual project planning. Specific activities were prioritized by a bottom-up planning process (Local Participatory Planning Process) and commune vulnerability assessments to increase the involvement of stakeholders and ensure the interventions were relevant to the beneficiaries. The proposals for sub-projects formulated in annual plans thus came forward from the Logframe Action Plan for overall direction, and community-based plans and Commune Vulnerability Capacity Assessment analytical reports reflecting local needs and priorities, which combined were a highly successful factor in ensuring the increase in livelihoods of these people.

The participation of stakeholders and integration of government agencies and various staff of all levels was further enhanced through the implementation stage through the institutional mechanism, designed by LuxDev. The 2-day annual planning workshops with a plethora of stakeholders and communities, the data-based selection of Infrastructure investment projects and cash contributions of communities to these projects, and advanced level of delegation to the partner agencies all contributed to enhancing the success of project implementation. Whilst the delegation procedures at times ran into barriers, overall, this can be regarded as successful due to the registered results and alternate successes, for instance capacity building in Government Departments.

The project had an outstanding Monitoring and Evaluation system in place that was thoroughly carried out. The Monitoring and Evaluation system can be regarded to be as successful due to the regular data collection by the full-time Monitoring and Evaluation specialist and trained Government staff at the local level. The Monitoring and Evaluation data could then be used to provide quarterly and annual results-based reports, enhancing the evaluation and efficiency of the project. This Monitoring and Evaluation system in particular stands out amongst other projects in the Viet Nam, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Myanmar region as the only LuxDev project to be able to deliver these highly informative results.

It is due to this planning and implementation system, designed by LuxDev, that the monitoring and reporting of this project has been of a high calibre, successfully enforced by staff throughout LuxDev, project offices, and related departments at provincial, district, and commune level.

In terms of Knowledge Management and Sharing, assess the project's achievements in identifying, documenting and sharing/replicating good practice and/or innovative approaches.

The Monitoring and Evaluation of VIE/033 was exceptionally detailed and of high quality. Supporting regular indicator data were numerous studies, workshops and other documents that explained the complex stories of interventions. The project developed a compendium of its interventions and results to share with related stakeholders, which was highly useful for analysis. The recent reports on the chicken model and tree planting, for example, gave a precise understanding of the results in these areas. It is important that such studies are uploaded on various websites (e.g. ELDIS) to enable a wider audience to learn from the specific successes and potential limitations of this project.

Over 40 different agreements with numerous amendments (without those relating to Infrastructure sub-projects) have been signed with various public partners for a total amount of around 4.5 million EUR. Using this very participatory approach, whereby partners are directly "contracted" and implement activities instead of the project team or using a higher level financial flow (through province authorities) that would re-distribute the funds to the various partners, what are lessons learned about this type of delegation approaches.

VIE/033 was already implementing a similar system to Delegation Agreements, yet nevertheless the transition from the old model (Financing Agreements, initially designed specifically for infrastructure under VIE/033) to the new Delegation Agreements caused some delays. The essential difference, of course, is that the Delegation Agreements thrust implementation authority and responsibility upon the contracted implementing partners (shifting some responsibilities away from the Technical Assistance Office).

When one delegates, however, it can be assumed that some institutions may have a lower capacity than others. Some implementing partners proved weaker than others. Under Delegation Agreements, these weaker implementing partners unfortunately slowed the project progress. This was evident when we contrast the performance of the Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARDs) contracted through Delegation Agreements under VIE/033: one was more limited than the other (a number of proposed activities were delayed and/or cancelled during 2014-2017). The lesson is to be flexible: Learn quickly and move activities (and funds) annually from one IP to another as justified.

Further to this, the project may have been enhanced further if certain activities were to remain under Technical Assistance Office management. Often this is because of peculiarities in counterpart processes and regulations. Vietnamese Government cost norms, for example, fix low rates for national trainers and consultants, and consequently these were recruited directly by the Technical Assistance Office. It is suggested that LuxDev therefore should identify such issues in design phases to understand the degree and where they can delegate, and what to keep outside of Government systems. This will differ from country-to-country.

Hardware interventions

One lesson learnt about small-scale infrastructure investments of the project is the selection of the portfolio. The infrastructure subprojects (Infrastructure sub-projects) were proposed from the bottom up in a participatory process (Local Participatory Planning Process). The Infrastructure sub-projects evaluation and selection followed a set of detailed criteria that was developed based on socio-economic standards in the project area. The proper selection of Infrastructure sub-projects reflected the need of local beneficiaries, effectiveness, and efficiency of the works when putting into use, as well as meeting the project objective.

The proper monitoring and supervision in the entire process of investment (work selection, design, contractor selection, construction, acceptance, handover) helped to ensure the transparency and avoid negative risks. The close management of the project by the Technical Assistance Office contributed to the success of the project.

If the project requires Operation and Maintenance for infrastructure works, it must be linked to specific policies and resources, preferably allocating a budget for the Operation and Maintenance. The Operation and Maintenance should not be "delegated" completely to partners following current regulations that may result in inadequate compliance when there is a lack of attention of the authorities and beneficiaries.

98.6% of completed Infrastructure sub-projects had sufficient Operation and Maintenance measures in place. It is necessary to ensure the necessary funding for the project infrastructure works for at least 5 years after the project ends with the commitment of resources of the District People's Committees of the project districts. The experience of the VIE/023 project which allocated an Operation and Maintenance budget for the project works in 10 years should be considered to be replicated. The project prepared for implementing partners to use Infrastructure contingency funds for Operation and Maintenance in coming years, and plenty of other Operation and Maintenance measures were in place, which are regarded to be highly important steps in ensuring sustainability.

Fishery Associations

Activities regarding the Fishery Associations can be concluded to be highly effective and advantageous to the region. Under the project, a plethora of Associations were created and supported, with the fishers trained to understand the importance of sustainable fishing and water quality. Subsequently, the vast majority of fishermen have worked together to combat illegal fishing that threatens fish stock levels. The water quality of the lagoon has also significantly increased over the project period and fishermen can now use technology to gather precise data. The capacity building of the members of these Associations, and the division of land rights, contribute to the sustainability of these activities.

Whilst these activities can be held in high regard to the mentioned advantages experienced, further improvements to these activities are found in enhancing community contributions and gender participation, as will be mentioned in Recommendations. Action taken upon these recommendations would enhance the already highly successful activities regarding Fishery Associations.

Rural Economy and Production Organization & Development

Interventions regarding the rural economy and production organisation & development have also been highly successful due to the level of sustainable capacity building. Multiple interventions have already been replicated voluntarily outside the project area and have gathered a large amount of interest from external communities. The interest has widely come from seeing successful instances of sustainable income generation. Subsequently, the productivity of agriculture has increased, the level of disease of livestock has decreased, farmers are better equipped with more suitable seeds and techniques, and more households have applicable skills to homestay and tourism activities.

Further recommendations concern additional training in specific areas and the potential of future models specifically incorporating unemployed labours in this area. With these additions, the widely experienced benefits from this project can be replicated further afield.

Climate Change Adaptation and Emergency Preparedness

Climate change adaptation and emergency preparedness has been prominent throughout the vast majority of activities, from educating children to reforestation. Farmers have been equipped with seed varieties that are more resilient to the current and expected climate, the environment has seen a significant visible improvement, and the quality of water has been recorded to be at a much healthier level than when the project started. Communities have been recorded to not only understand the importance of the local environment, but to be working together in order to educate non-project beneficiaries. This is especially true when regarding the disposal of waste water. The activities in this project has not only resulted in a visible improvement in the environment, but has led to sustainable actions and awareness regarding the vulnerabilities of the environment to climate change and the adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction methods that can be implemented.

The project has implemented a multitude of interventions from agriculture, tourism, education, women's rights and many more. The diversity of interventions implemented can be attributed to the participatory planning process. With a vast array of interventions having different implementing partners, activities, objectives, and sectors, it is understandable that some interventions may not have achieved the expected results. Whilst for VIE/033 this has been minimal, when this has occurred, it has been met with a high level of transparency and focus on the lessons to be learned, which is to be celebrated. This approach has been highly advantageous to the efficiency and evaluation of this project.