

**Evaluation of the Irish Aid Country Strategy:  
Vietnam**

**Final Report**

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

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ADB	Asian Development Bank
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CBFSAI	Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland
CBI	Central Bank of Ireland
CCI	Cross-Cutting Issue
CEM	Committee for Ethnic Minorities
COHED	Center for Community Health and Development
CP	Country Plan
CS	Country Strategy
CSF	Civil Society Facility
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DCU	Dublin City University
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DoL	Division of Labour
DP	Development Partner
DSB	Diplomatic Service Bureau
DSC	Development Studies Centre
EC	European Commission
EI	Enterprise Ireland
EM	Ethnic Minority
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDD	Grassroots Democracy Decree
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoI	Government of Ireland
GoV	Government of Vietnam
HoM	Head of Mission
HR	Human Resources
HoMF	Head of Mission Fund
HQ	Headquarters
IA	Irish Aid
IDEAS	Irish Development Experience and Sharing
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPSARD	Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development, MARD
IT	Information Technology

IVVI	Ireland-Vietnam Blood-Borne Virus Initiative
LMDG	Like-Minded Donor Group
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MBA	Master in Business Administration
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MfDR	Management for Development Results
MIC	Middle Income Country
MPDF	Mekong Private Sector Development Facility
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NCSEIF	National Centre for Social and Economic Information and Forecasting
NFSC	National Financial Supervisory Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIHE	National Institute of Health and Epidemiology
NTF	National Tripartite Taskforce
NTP	National Targeted Programme
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
P135	Programme 135 (for ethnic minority and mountainous areas)
PC	Programme Countries
PD	Paris Declaration
PDR	People’s Democratic Republic
PI	Prosperity Initiative
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
PM	Prime Minister
PMU	Project Management Unit
PRSC	Poverty Reduction Support Credit
PwD	People Living with Disabilities
SBV	State Bank of Vietnam
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SEA	South East Asia
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
TI	Transparency International
UCD	University College Dublin
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VDG	Vietnam Development Goals
VOICE	Village Ownership, Investment and Community Empowerment (Bac Kan province)
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## Executive Summary

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### Objectives of the evaluation

This report documents findings and conclusions of the independent evaluation of Irish Aid's first Country Strategy in Vietnam (2007-2010). This evaluation took place towards the end of the Country Strategy, between April and June 2010, and was commissioned to provide Irish Aid and its partners with:

- An independent assessment of the logic, coherence and strategic direction of the CSP, and
- A record of lessons learnt under the programme as an input into the design of the next CSP.

### Methodology

The evaluation took place in three phases:

*Phase 1 – Inception:* This included a review of documentary sources and initial interviews with IA staff and resulted in an Inception Report outlining the detailed methodology and evaluation framework.

*Phase 2 – Country Visit:* A two-week visit to Vietnam in April-May 2010 for further data collection and interviews with the Government of Vietnam, development partners, representatives of civil society, independent experts, and communities and beneficiaries. Three field visits took place and a Country Visit Note with initial findings and conclusions was circulated to all stakeholders for their comments.

*Phase 3 – Follow-up Work and Reporting:* This involved further interviews, detailed data analysis, triangulation of findings, a debriefing in Limerick, and circulation of the draft report for comments.

### Country context

Vietnam has seen impressive changes since it embarked on a successful process of structural reform and socio-economic development in the 1980s. Today the country, with a population of over 86 million, has a flourishing market-based economy and GDP growth has averaged 7.5% annually over the past 10 years. Vietnam has become a significant exporter and an attractive foreign investment destination.

Growth has contributed to a rapid decline in overall poverty from 58% in 1993 to a projected 10% by 2010<sup>1</sup>, resulting in 34 million people being lifted out of poverty. The country is well positioned to achieve most of its Millennium Development Goals. There remain, however, governance challenges, relating, for example, to transparency and corruption, and equity challenges in distributing the benefits of economic growth, with minority populations showing far less progress on key economic and social indicators. Inequality has been growing, and there are indications that further progress against poverty is increasingly at risk and will be more difficult to achieve after early 'easier' gains.

Total overseas aid – which was equivalent to 1.6 billion USD in 2008 - represents about 3% of Vietnam's Gross Domestic Product, and the country is the main recipient of aid in East Asia. In absolute terms aid levels have remained stable since 2007. Over 50 donors provide support to the country, with four donors (Japan, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the combined European Union banks) accounting for over 80% of aid. Vietnam is a pilot country for aid effectiveness and for United Nations reform. Steady progress has been made on both counts in Vietnam, and most of the major donors have aligned behind the Government of Vietnam policies and have adopted government systems.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the national definition of the poverty line, which is somewhat different from the international standard.

## Irish Aid support to Vietnam

Ireland established diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1996 and opened its Embassy in Hanoi in 2005. The Irish Country Strategy Paper (2007-2010) was launched in 2007 after a two-year preparation period and some initial financing to key selected initiatives. It supports three of the four priorities<sup>2</sup> in Vietnam's Social and Economic Development Plan (SEDP) for 2006-2010 and covers nine components which together address poverty, economic development, and governance priorities. IA-supported programmes are implemented through a variety of aid modalities, and combine a focus on national dialogue with experimentation/learning at local level. In total, €53.4 million had been disbursed by IA in Vietnam by the end of 2009, against a CSP budget of €87 million. Irish Aid is a small donor in Vietnam. Its spending in 2007 accounted for only around 1 of every 100 euro spent in Official Development Assistance<sup>3</sup>.

## Overall assessment

To respond to the evaluation questions, the evaluation examined the design and implementation of the programme. In terms of design particular areas of focus were relevance, coherence and logic, whereas implementation focused on reviewing CSP effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

### DESIGN

***The CSP design process required careful balancing of different interests***, including IA policies, the logic of support by other donors, the challenges of a new programme in a new setting, and preferences of the Government of Vietnam which wanted a strong focus on capacity development and experience exchange. The evaluation found that the resulting portfolio of initiatives and choices in the CSP reflected a balance that addressed each of these interests and concerns very well.

***The Country Strategy Paper that resulted from the design process has a clear relevance to the priorities of both the Vietnamese and Irish Governments.*** The CSP was explicitly aligned with Vietnam's SEDP and with the priorities of the Irish White Paper on aid (2005). Addressing deep-seated poverty is a strong and justified focus of the CSP given the persistent issues around minority groups and was complemented by a number of initiatives focusing on key aspects of economic development. Discussions with the GoV and with IA beneficiaries underscored the relevance of the IA focus and activities for their own priorities.

***A clear rationale existed behind the selection of the nine components of the CSP. However, taken together, some parts of the programme were found to be less 'coherent' than others.*** Thus a number of components (such as the Ireland-Vietnam Blood-Borne Virus Initiative and the Mekong Private Sector Development Facility), while justifiably important, were inherited from the pre-CSP period and did not 'fit' as coherently. In addition, the twin focus on economic development and poverty reduction produced two streams of work which have been linked to only a limited extent. As a result, synergies – such as those that have been evident between the national P135 programme and the Village Ownership, Investment and Community Empowerment (VOICE) programme at local level - have only emerged between certain clusters of activities.

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<sup>2</sup> The priorities of the SEDP are to: accelerate sustainable economic growth and development; significantly improve people's material, cultural, and spiritual life; to create the foundations to boost industrialisation and modernisation and to gradually develop a knowledge-based economy; and to improve Vietnam's status in the region and in the world.

<sup>3</sup> Irish Aid budget was € 18 million out of nearly USD 2,500 million (€1,667m) of total ODA (see Table 1 below).



## IMPLEMENTATION

***CSP implementation has provided important support to the twin poverty reduction and economic development agendas.*** On the one hand, the CSP has included activities which support Vietnam's focus on economic growth and industrialisation - through the IDEAS programme which focuses on sharing of Irish economic experience, the Mekong Private Sector Development Facility for sustainable private sector development, and Prosperity Initiative which strengthens the bamboo industry. On the other hand, the programme has focused strongly on alleviating pockets of chronic poverty. This has been done by supporting National Multi-Donor programmes targeting the poor, such as the Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) – which has also included attention to economic issues - and the Ethnic Minority Programme P135-II, as well as through IA-initiated activities such as the aforementioned VOICE programme in Bac Kan province which has targeted local decision making and management of basic service provision, and the Civil Society Facility which has provided grants to civil society. Support to a more effective and targeted United Nations through the One UN process is an important element of the poverty focus and seeks to enhance the effectiveness of the UN in addressing poverty issues.

***In practice the poverty-related elements of the programme have received most (over three quarters) of the funding and of the time and energy of IA staff.*** This reflects the fact that IA has a strong poverty agenda and good technical expertise in this field, and thus has a clear comparative advantage in this area.

***In terms of effectiveness the evaluation finds that the IA programme has performed well,*** and beyond what might have been expected given that IA was a new donor with a relatively small budget. However, it is also the view of ***the evaluation that the IA programme could have been more effective if it had been more focused.*** The broad focus of the programme was considered important in the start-up phase to allow for a deliberate process of lesson learning and cross-fertilisation between components, with the understanding that adjustments would be made over the implementation period as lessons became clear. However, in practice, the ambitious and time-consuming nature of the programme has meant that IA has focused too little on measuring progress and drawing out lessons, and on allowing this to inform decision making about interventions.

***IA has clearly made contributions in a number of important areas.*** Examples of areas of contribution are discussed in detail in the report and include:

- Generating experience and recognition of the feasibility and mechanisms of involving communes and communities in planning and budget allocation at local level. The experience, approaches and tools developed have been adopted at national level and by other partners.
- Strengthening civil society through the IA-managed Civil Society Facility. Civil society organisations underscore how the support has contributed to more strategic approaches, better priority setting, and to improved service delivery.
- Enhancing awareness and commitment to a coherent approach to disabilities, and to livelihoods in supporting People with Disabilities (PwD) and People Living with HIV (PLHIV), through specific areas of work, dissemination of experience, and advocacy at national level.
- Developing Vietnamese capacity for example by promoting experience exchange in economic forecasting and management of Vietnamese officials through the IDEAS initiative, by providing scholarships, and through support to civil society organisations.
- Providing strong support and technical and financial inputs to the One UN process, encouraging other partners to come on board and contributing to better focusing of UN priorities and to the establishment of One Plan and One Budget for implementation.

**A number of elements of the IA programme have been innovative** and are appreciated by the GoV and stakeholders. This includes the IDEAS programme, which has generated valuable opportunities for learning and sharing between Ireland and Vietnam. The direct management by IA of this programme, and the status it has, is seen as exceptional by other development partners.

**The evaluation finds that, for a small donor, IA has punched above its weight.** The quality and commitment of local and expatriate staff, as well as the close work, interaction and synergies between diplomatic and development sections of the Embassy, have contributed to this strong performance. As a result Ireland and IA have **gained considerable visibility** in Vietnam. The IA programme is seen as credible, and IA is perceived as a strong partner. IA has deliberately sought to follow principles of aid effectiveness, and is recognised as an effective donor by other partners, scoring highly on such important Paris agenda commitments as transaction costs, use of country systems and untied aid.

The CSP included a number of explicit strategies around influencing, experimentation, lesson sharing and mainstreaming. With respect to these the evaluation finds that:

- **IA influencing at national level has seen a mixed level of success.** Influencing has been more successful in the national ethnic minority programme P135 and in the discussions around One UN, where IA has been able to build on its work in Bac Kan province rather than in its support to the Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC), which IA exited in 2009 because of insufficient evidence of impact.
- **IA has managed to raise priority agendas that it is concerned about at national level,** including with respect to poverty, disability and HIV/AIDS, and has brought informed and different perspectives on these issues which are acknowledged by partners.
- **IA has linked experimentation and local lesson learning to wider processes of dialogue and this has had some impact on policy dialogue and action.** The provincial programme, **VOICE**, has in this context provided an important learning experience for IA and key elements – for example around the decision making and priority setting at commune level – have been shared with other partners, including with the GoV, in national dialogue.
- **IA has been less effective in mainstreaming.** While disability and HIV/AIDS have been prominent they are not mainstreamed across the programme. Gender has received attention through specific programmes, but not as a cross-cutting issue. Examples of governance mainstreaming exist but it could be carried out more systematically. Environment was not mainstreamed in the CSP and has not been prominent.
- **The programme has not been very successful in effectively learning lessons and documenting experience,** making it difficult to draw out lessons and conclusions about which areas have been most effective and raising some questions about the analysis behind choices on discontinuing certain elements of the programme, although there may be valid managerial reasons for doing so.

**Efficiency has been achieved through a mix of aid modalities,** with budget support mechanisms and national programmes being used to deliver substantial volumes of money through government-led modalities that align with agreed policy frameworks. In terms of staffing IA has efficiently used the input of both political and development staff to further its agenda. However, staff time has not been used equally over different programmes, with the smaller components requiring larger investments of time. IA engagement with multiple areas and multiple partners has meant that the number of partners it engages with has increased steadily over time. There are concerns about the extent to which this labour-intensive approach will be sustainable in the future.

The evaluation concludes that **sustainability is receiving attention by IA in its approach to most initiatives, although in many cases it is too early to make a clear judgment.** A visit to one of the IA-

supported civil society activities – a garment factory for People Living with HIV – highlighted some of the challenges to sustainability. Other activities have been more immediately successful from this perspective, including the Ireland-Vietnam Blood-Borne Virus Initiative (IVVI), which has mobilised funding on an equal basis from Atlantic Philanthropies to build capacity in clinical and diagnostic virology. IA support to IVVI has been completed and the initiative will now be fully supported and run by government.

IA has made an early exit from two of its initiatives, PRSC and VOICE (both in 2009). While the rationale for these exits appears clear (heavy burden on staff time, in the case of VOICE, and a perceived limited impact on dialogue, in the case of PRSC) **insufficient attention has been paid to lesson learning and to handling the disengagement.**

## Recommendations

**Ireland should develop a clear vision on the likely focus and mechanisms for engagement in the region in the medium term (15-20 years).** This vision would guide thinking on the role of IA and provide a framework for decisions around the next CSP. An **exit strategy** would need to be developed for the IA part of the engagement, as the political/trade/investment relationship will become more important, and the aid relationship will decrease. This would argue for a focus on consolidation and sustainability in the coming CSP period.

**Irish Aid and Ireland generally have gained visibility. The next CSP should be more focused:**

- Incorporating lessons from its areas of focus in the first phase (e.g. working with and supporting community organisations, building capacity at local level, raising the profile of PwD and PLHIV)
- Emphasising areas where IA has and can continue to make a difference, for example with respect to marginalised groups, and where it has a comparative advantage or specific opportunities
- Including a stronger thematic focus, for example around poverty and governance or marginalised/disadvantaged groups
- Limiting the number of partners with which IA engages directly so as to ensure that the programme continues to be manageable and that other areas such as lesson learning can get adequate attention. IA should identify priority partners for each area of work and prioritise these.

Within the more focused scope of the next **CSP flexibility should continue to be a key characteristic.** This will allow IA to continue to play into emerging opportunities, while guided by a clear agenda of action.

**The next CSP should continue to have a very strong poverty focus, targeting marginalised and disadvantaged groups.** This is an area where IA has a solid track record, where it has successfully mobilised political will around key target groups and also generated capacity, and where it has a solid comparative advantage. A continued focus on this area is justified, as the remaining ‘pockets’ of poverty – centred largely on ethnic minorities and mountainous regions – still leave 8-10 million people below the poverty line.

**Continuing to contribute to a more effective UN would be an important part of the poverty focus.** Continued support to a more effective UN is a priority for the GoV and makes strong sense in the context of a dynamic and changing aid environment where the UN will continue to play a role once support by other aid agencies has been reduced or phased out. The focus in the coming period would, in the opinion of the evaluation team, need to include continued high-level technical input and support to the reform process itself as well as a stronger focus on monitoring the outcomes of a reformed UN in terms of social and economic progress.

**Further provincial engagement would need very careful consideration in the context where bilateral aid is likely to have a very limited time horizon.** While further engagement at this level would allow IA to consolidate its understanding of the context, it is clear that this would be a time-consuming engagement which would likely have to be scaled down with the time frame of the next CSP. This would need to be taken into account in the design of the intervention. However, should IA decide to move forward with a provincial engagement then the option of providing direct budget support could be considered to allow for an integrated approach to key areas of priority (the CSF, IDEAS, etc.).

**IDEAS should continue to be a key part of the next CSP. It has been a successful and valued 'brand' for Ireland in Vietnam, has effectively promoted sharing of experience, and is also an area where the GoV has a strong interest.** However, Vietnamese institutions will need to be able to articulate the 'value added' of Ireland's support more clearly to their Irish partners if IDEAS is to deepen into a sustainable programme.

**The 'twinning' between Irish and Vietnamese institutions should be extended to the area of social policy and development:** for example, it might be worth considering an IDEAS+ approach whereby the scope is extended to cover areas such as social work and social policy (including social protection), the empowerment of ethnic minorities, planning, and so on.

**The CSP scholarship component should be expanded but the processes should be rationalised.** In this context the evaluation **recommends that the scholarship application and management process should be streamlined**, by recruiting and short listing all scholarships in one process. Furthermore, the focus of the scholarships should be brought more in line with the focus of the CSP, possibly through a greater pro-poor bias in scholarships (e.g. encouraging applications from ethnic minorities).

**Private sector development will be an important facet to Ireland's involvement with Vietnam in the future.** However, it is not an area in which Irish Aid has demonstrated comparative advantage. The direction, shape and level of engagement should be carefully re-examined in this light, and given the important need for further focusing the programme.

**Lesson learning should be given a higher profile in the next CSP, with a clear, implementable M&E framework and focused deliverables.** Lesson learning should also be a feature of the concluding phase of the present CSP by carefully analysing and documenting the areas in which IA is believed to have made a contribution, e.g. with respect to VOICE, the CSF, and IDEAS. This type of exercise could take place prior to the CSP drafting exercise as a key input into decisions on the future.

The next CSP should **develop a process of good practices around disengagement** which ensures that valuable lessons from the relevant initiative or programme component are captured and that disengagement is handled in a way that ensures that ongoing processes are completed and that partners on both sides can make necessary adjustments.

**The experience of working in Vietnam should feed into learning processes at the level of IA, and will be of particular relevance for countries that are approaching MIC status.** This experience could be valuable for the work with South Africa, as well as in drawing out some lessons regarding trajectories of less developed countries and the issues that are likely to be met in the future.

**There is a need for a stronger focus on mainstreaming in the next CSP.** IA should carefully analyse what strengths and weaknesses have been present in the approach to mainstreaming and coordinate closely with other partners to identify within this where IA can add particular value.

Finally, the evaluation suggests **a careful review of management arrangements of IA programmes supported by IA** be conducted to ensure that the benefits of time- and staff-intensive arrangements

correspond with the gains, and that such relationships continue to be manageable over time. The nature of the engagement in Vietnam and the challenging context would argue for the importance of ensuring that the current staff level is maintained and complemented by short-term technical input where and as necessary.

## Evaluation of the Irish Aid Country Programme

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### 1. Introduction

This report presents the findings and conclusions of an independent evaluation of the Irish Aid (IA) Country Strategy (CS) in Vietnam. This evaluation took place towards the end of the first IA Vietnam Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2007-2010. The evaluation was commissioned to provide IA and its partners with an independent assessment of the logic, coherence and strategic direction of the CSP and a record of lessons learnt under the programme (for full terms of reference see Annex 1). The findings of this evaluation are to inform future strategic decision making around the next CSP covering the period 2011-2016.

Specifically, the evaluation was asked to examine six key areas:

1. The extent to which the CSP has addressed the developmental challenges and priorities of Vietnam and the needs of poor households and vulnerable groups
2. The extent to which the CSP focused on issues of poverty reduction in a substantive manner at national and local levels
3. The manner in which the CSP responded to Vietnam's twin-track development of rapid economic growth and industrialisation on the one hand and continuing pockets of chronic poverty on the other
4. The appropriateness of the choice of partners given the political and development contexts within which the CSP was implemented, and other donor activities
5. The balance between support for government institutions and civil society, and between the different aid modalities
6. The design of the programme with national and local authorities and other stakeholders and the extent to which it has been inclusive, aligned with Government of Vietnam and IA policies, and harmonised with other development partners

This report consists of eight chapters. Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the evaluation approach and methodology. Chapter 3 provides a summary background on Vietnam, touching on its recent history, its development and economic progress, aid levels, and progress on harmonisation and alignment. This is followed by an overview of IA support to Vietnam (Chapter 4), including main programme components and disbursements. Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the evaluation with respect to two main areas of focus, namely a) the design of the CSP (covering relevance, logic and coherence) and b) the implementation of the CSP (examining in particular issues related to effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme). The main conclusions of the evaluation with respect to these criteria, and with respect to the key evaluation questions, are brought together in Chapter 6, while Chapter 7 summarises the main lessons learnt from the CSP design and implementation. The final section of the report (Chapter 8) outlines recommendations of this evaluation for the preparation of the next IA CSP. The report is supplemented by several Annexes which provide details on the background and on the evaluation itself.

This evaluation was carried out by Dr. Muriel Visser-Valfrey (Mokoro), Mr. Mark Minford (Mokoro) and Mr. Donal Cronin (IA). The views expressed in this report are those of the consultants, and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or conclusions of IA.

## 2. Evaluation Process and Methodology

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the current Irish Aid programme and produce recommendations to inform future strategic planning. In order to answer the questions listed above the evaluation systematically reviewed the relevance, logic and coherence of the CSP against the context in which it was implemented and against the overall goals of IA. The evaluation also reviewed the implementation of the CSP, in particular with respect to the efficiency and effectiveness of the programmatic interventions, and drew some preliminary conclusions about the sustainability of the interventions supported by IA.

In terms of data collection, the evaluation combined a review of relevant literature with a programme of primary research in Vietnam. The data collection was guided by an evaluation framework (Annex 5) which systematically linked the evaluation objectives to areas of enquiry and detailed evaluation questions, and identified for each area the manner in which data would be collected. The framework was used as a guide to recording and triangulating the team's findings, and to ensuring that all areas of the evaluation were fully addressed.

The evaluation process itself was divided into three phases, with a number of steps and products at each phase:

**Phase 1 – Inception:** This covered a review of key documentary sources, interviews with IA programme staff, and further interviews and a review of secondary resources. A key output of this phase was an Inception Report outlining the methodology for the evaluation, as well as an evaluation framework. This report was shared with IA and guided the data collection during the evaluation process.

**Phase 2 – Country Visit:** The country visit took place in Vietnam over a two-week period from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April through to the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 2010. During this period the team met a range of stakeholders from government, development partner agencies, civil society, and communities/beneficiaries (see Box 1). The team also consulted with independent experts relevant to the areas supported by IA. Three field visits were conducted. These covered:

- a) A bamboo project supported by Prosperity Initiative (PI) in Hoa Binh Province
- b) A garment workshop in Thái Binh province supported by a local NGO (COHED)
- c) Action for the City Initiative in Hanoi.

**Box 1: Categories of stakeholders consulted:**

- IA staff (former and current) at headquarters (HQ)
- IA staff (former and current) in Vietnam
- Key Government of Vietnam officials at central levels
- Development partners
- Programme implementers (NGOs and others)
- Programme beneficiaries
- External informants such as researchers, think-tanks, independent persons

The visits included in-depth interviews with stakeholders involved in these initiatives (government, civil society, community representatives and beneficiaries). The team's country visit programme, including a list of persons met, can be found in Annex 3. A final debriefing with IA took place on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010, and a stakeholder meeting with the same purpose was organised for May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Preliminary findings of the evaluation were recorded in a Country Visit Note (available on request) which was circulated to all stakeholders for comment one week after the field work.

**Phase 3 – Follow-up Work and Reporting:** Follow-up work consisted of further interviews by telephone to deepen/broaden the data collection, data analysis and further triangulation, and the production of a draft and final report.

The methodology thus focused on standard OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact, with some sub-division to assist the analysis. Throughout the evaluation, the focus has been on ensuring a participatory process that allowed stakeholders at various levels to input into various phases of the evaluation. The production of an inception report, the initial briefing of stakeholders in-country, a subsequent debriefing for all interviewees at country level, the production of the country visit note for comment by all parties consulted, and the circulation of a draft report for comment sought to ensure full participation of stakeholders in the various phases of the evaluation.

### **3. Context**

#### **3.1 Overall**

Over the past 20 years, Vietnam – which continues to be run by a one-party government – has seen some impressive and dramatic change. The country has transitioned from a centrally planned economy to a ‘socialist-oriented’ market economy. Today, Vietnam – with a population of over 86 million – has a flourishing market-based economy and is undergoing a rapid integration into the world economy. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are growing rapidly and Vietnam is now a significant agricultural exporter and an attractive foreign investment destination in East and South East Asia. In 2010, the main economic activities are: petroleum, coal and other mining; processing and manufacturing of cigarettes and tobacco, textiles, chemicals, and electrical goods; tourism and financial services; and coffee, rice, and fishery products.

#### **3.2 Progress on Economic and Social Development**

As a result of international isolation, and the after effects of a bitter conflict, Vietnam experienced chronic poverty and hunger throughout much of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. However, since it embarked on the successful process of structural reform and socio-economic development (the ‘doi moi’, or ‘renovation’) in 1986, Vietnam has experienced rapid economic growth and poverty reduction. GDP growth has averaged over 7.5% over the past 10 years and in 2009, GDP reached \$92.4 billion, equal to \$1,060 per head (IMF, 2010). Vietnam achieved World Trade Organization (WTO) membership in 2007. Vietnam is widely forecast to continue growing and consolidate its Middle Income Country (MIC) status by 2025.

As a result of rapid economic growth, the overall poverty rate has declined from 58% in 1993 to 20% in 2005<sup>4</sup>, and is projected to drop to under 10% by 2010, resulting in 34 million people being lifted out of poverty. Other indicators of welfare such as access to basic services and infrastructure have also shown positive trends:

- In the countryside, the reforms improved the security of individual land tenure and facilitated the provision of agricultural extension services and freer trade in agricultural products, resulting in a dramatic increase in farm production and a reduction in rural poverty;
- In urban areas, rapid economic development and infrastructure construction, along with improved social services, has facilitated growth in employment and incomes.

On the positive side, although the Vietnamese economy was placed under strain by the 2008/09 financial crisis – with levels of underemployment believed to have increased as a result of the economic crisis – the country is still well positioned to achieve most of its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as Vietnam’s Development Goals (VDGs), which are the country’s version of the MDGs. Vietnam has made marked progress on key indicators such as reducing the levels of child

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<sup>4</sup> Latest available census data.



malnourishment, under-five infant mortality rates, and maternal mortality rates. On a number of MDGs the established targets have been exceeded (levels of overall employment and unemployment in urban areas). Challenges to MDG completion persist on a few important areas, in particular related to HIV/AIDS (decreasing the number of pregnant HIV carriers), to increasing waste collection and dealing with environmental degradation in urban areas, and reducing the number of people living in temporary housing.

On the down side, fast economic growth has come at a price, with Vietnam's trade-oriented growth strategy leaving it highly vulnerable to global shocks. Due to its dependence on exports to overseas markets (especially the US), as well as Foreign Direct Investment and remittances, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) now lists Vietnam as one of the most vulnerable countries to changes in the global economy. The economic crisis has had an impact on Vietnam – exports have declined, a number of large firms have left or scaled back, and some ambitious urban projects have had to be abandoned.

In terms of social development, the country's economic growth has not been shared equally. Vietnam's impressive achievements in reducing overall poverty sit alongside much slower recorded progress in poverty reduction for ethnic minority and mountain/remote-dwelling populations<sup>5</sup>. While poverty has dropped for both groups, the improvements have been much more rapid for the Kinh and Chinese populations than for the ethnic minorities, and this is illustrated by the fact that in 2005 ethnic minorities constituted 39% of all poor people, despite representing only 14% of the total population of Vietnam. There remains a stubborn absolute gap in life opportunities and incomes between ethnic/remote-dwelling populations and their more integrated urban and rural counterparts. Inequality has been growing, and although data are not entirely reliable, there are indications that further progress against poverty is increasingly at risk. It is also evident that, as further progress is made, the nature of the problems to be addressed is more complex, making it difficult to make real progress on the remaining poverty indicators.

Vietnam's development has therefore been characterised, to some extent, by a dual economy:

- On the one side, an industrialised economy with an increasingly formal business and financial sector, sophisticated infrastructure, and a growing middle class; and
- On the other side, a 'developing', largely subsistence economy, with poor economic infrastructure, and a significant number of households with few commercially relevant skills or opportunities, living in persistent poverty.

Although only a small minority of Vietnamese households now find themselves in the latter group, linkages between the two 'worlds' are still limited. Most of the economic growth is occurring in the urban economy, leaving households in rural and remote areas further behind. In spite of improved access to basic services in many parts of the country, Vietnam is therefore seeing a growing ethnic and urban/rural divide.

### **3.3 Aid levels, harmonisation and alignment**

Aid represents about 3% of Vietnam's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)<sup>6</sup> – grants and concessional loans – and the country is the main recipient of aid in East Asia in absolute terms. Over 50 donors provide support to the country, of whom 28 are bilateral partners; IA is a small donor in this context. Four major donors account for over 80% of aid to Vietnam: Japan, the World Bank (WB), the Asian

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<sup>5</sup> Vietnam has 54 ethnic groups of which the Kinh account for approximately 86%. The other 53 are considered ethnic minorities.

<sup>6</sup> In Mozambique, a highly aid dependent country, which is also supported by IA, ODA represents more than 50% of GDP.

Development Bank (ADB), and the combined European Union (EU) banks, and the vast majority of ODA pledges have been loans.

Table 1 on the next page represents total net Official Development Assistance (ODA) disbursements by all donors to Vietnam for the period 2001 – 2007 (current prices, USD million).

**Table 1 - ODA to Vietnam 2001 -2007**

Source/Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>All donors</b>	1,431.2	1,274.5	1,765.2	1,832.4	1,905	1,845.5	2,496.8
Of which:							
<b>DAC countries/members</b>	819.5	746.0	967.7	1,184.8	1,252.8	1,306.3	1,488.4
Of which:							
<b>EU DAC countries/members</b>	282.5	280.0	361.8	429.5	505.8	579.3	658.8
<b>Multilateral</b>	574.9	508.6	785.5	615.1	632.5	526.5	979.2
<b>EC</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>42.4</b>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>67.7</b>
EC Share of total ODA	1.5%	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%	2.2%	2.3%	2.7%
EC Share of EU DAC	7.5%	6.4%	8.3%	6.5%	8.4%	7.2%	10.3%

\*There are 51 donors operating on a regular basis in Vietnam (26 bilateral, 23 multilateral or supranational). In 2008 IA ODA to Vietnam represented less than 2% of overall ODA to the country.

Source: Evaluation of the European Commission's Cooperation with Vietnam, Final Report, October 2009, Page ii

Under the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, Vietnam is a pilot country for aid effectiveness. Steady progress has been made on this count in Vietnam, and most of the major donors have aligned behind Government of Vietnam (GoV) policies and have adopted government systems. The Hanoi Core Statement, which partners agreed to in 2005, includes a road map for the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, as well as indicators to monitor compliance. Progress against these indicators is monitored periodically by the OECD-DAC.

Vietnam is also one of the pilot countries for United Nations (UN) reform. The fragmentation of the UN at country level, and the imperative need to address this, was highlighted in a local report which predated the UN recommendations on reform by more than a year. The GoV has taken a strong lead in the UN reform process. A National Tripartite Task Force (NTF), with representation from the development community, GoV and UN agencies, was established in 2006 and until 2009 oversaw the process of UN reform. Currently 14 UN agencies have subscribed to the One Plan process, which will ensure that the UN 'does things differently', mainly by carrying out a normative role of offering international best practice in a non-partisan manner. Other important elements of the UN reform include having one leader, one budget, one management process and one UN building. Progress is being made to varying degrees in Vietnam on all these counts. To date:

- The UN process in Vietnam falls under one leader;
- Donors have been providing funding through a unified budget which covers all UN Country Team activities;
- 25% of the One Plan is currently financed through a country level One Fund which can be allocated by the UN Country Team in line with national priorities;
- Progress has been made in administrative/management reform;
- 2011 will see the first fully integrated UN Country Plan for Vietnam; and

- Plans for a single UN ‘green’ building are progressing.

In spite of impressive progress on both aid effectiveness and the One UN, various challenges remain. These will be discussed later in the report.

#### **Box 2 - Summary of the Hanoi Core Statement**

The Hanoi Core Statement (2005) builds on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and commits the Government of Vietnam (GoV) and development partners (DPs) to improving aid effectiveness. It sets out measurable actions (including indicators and targets) for greater accountability on Official Development Assistance (ODA). These measures include:

1. **Ownership:** The Government of Vietnam will lead on development aid. Operational development policies of the country are defined in the five-year Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP), reviewed periodically through a participatory process. The SEDP will integrate all ODA into mainstream planning.
2. **Alignment:** Development Partners will adopt transparent decision making and multi-year financial commitments and use country systems and procedures. Vietnam’s public financial management and procurement systems to be strengthened and increasingly used by development partners. Long-term capacity development to be integrated into the SEDP. GoV to conduct the necessary legal, organisational and administrative reforms.
3. **Harmonisation and Simplification:** GoV and DPs commit to carrying out joint reviews. Donors also to rationalise systems and procedures by implementing common arrangements across a number of areas. Both parties to focus more on programme-based approaches. Donors endeavour to maximise decentralisation and delegation of authority at country level.
4. **Managing for results:** GoV and DPs will use results-oriented performance assessment frameworks to maximise aid effectiveness and towards implementing SEDP and related national, regional, provincial and sectoral plans. Donors will also link country programmes/resources to results of GoV performance assessment frameworks.
5. **Mutual accountability:** GoV and DPs jointly assess and carry out annual independent reviews on progress towards commitments made on aid effectiveness. Donors also to provide relevant information on aid flows and programme objectives to GoV to allow for better budget preparation and overall coordination of aid.

## **4. Irish Aid in Vietnam**

### **4.1 Historical context**

Ireland established diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1996. An Embassy was opened in Hanoi in 2005, following Vietnam’s designation by Irish Aid as a Programme Country. The CSP design process itself took almost two years. Funding of a number of initiatives was initiated prior to the drafting of the CSP 2007-10, and various missions and moments of reflection took place to feed into the design. Further details on both issues are found in Chapter 5 and a timeline of key events is included in Annex 4 to provide insights into the way in which the programme has developed and the context in which it has operated.

#### **Box 3 - Ireland in Vietnam: key dates**

1996	Diplomatic relations established
2005	Irish Embassy opens in Vietnam
2005	IA support to selected programmes in Vietnam initiated
	CSP design started
2007	First Country Strategy Paper
2009	Internal Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the CSP

IA originally envisaged establishing a South East Asia (SEA) regional programme, with Vietnam as a hub and focus of initial work, but with work extending over the CSP period to include Cambodia and Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR). In practice, some of the assumptions behind the regional programme (i.e. being able to transfer experience from Vietnam to other countries, and using a roaming group of experts based in Vietnam) did not hold up and most work has focused on Vietnam. The exception to this has been the Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF), which was

initiated pre-CSP, and a separate regional (IA and political) effort aimed at demining and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance.

There were various motivations for the choice of Vietnam and the region. An aid programme was seen as a key way of developing a presence for Ireland in Vietnam. It was clear that the primary goal of the aid programme would be to address poverty. However, the aid programme was also seen as an important means of strengthening bilateral relations and developing credibility as a trading partner.

#### **4.2 IA strategy**

The CSP took the Vietnam SEDP (2006-2010) as a starting point and was designed in a multi-donor context. It sets out Irish Aid's development programme for Vietnam for the period 2007-09. The overall goal was 'to promote and support the equitable reduction of poverty and vulnerability in Vietnam'. The original CSP presented what were seen as three pillars and objectives intertwined, relating to: access to service delivery and social protection for vulnerable people; economic growth, social transition and private sector development; and strengthening state accountability systems. These were elaborated on and further developed during the internal Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the CSP which took place in November 2009, during which a logic model and results framework were retrospectively fitted into the programme.

The five CSP objectives were now defined under the three CSP outcomes as follows:

- To improve participation in decision making and access to basic services for vulnerable people (ethnic minorities, people living with disabilities (PwDs), and people living with HIV&AIDS (PLHIV));
- To assist poor households and vulnerable groups to take up value-added agriculture and alternative income generation initiatives;
- To strengthen performance and business practices of small and medium-sized enterprises in selected sectors important to economic growth and poverty reduction;
- To increase the capacity of the public sector at national and local levels to support reform processes;
- To improve the implementation of the Hanoi Core Statement, including UN reform.

The CSP envisaged a 'balanced focus on development cooperation financing and engagement in the policy dialogue process' with a mix of aid modalities being employed (budget support, programme support, projects). The key strategies for achieving the CSP objectives were seen as: mainstreaming the priority issues of gender, governance, HIV/AIDS and the environment; targeting the most vulnerable and marginalised; and informing policy engagement through more direct engagement on programmes and projects.

The CSP was designed to deliver a development assistance programme to Vietnam. However, there is no doubt that it has contributed to a raised profile for Ireland as a constructive development partner in Vietnam, and has been a factor in strengthened bilateral ties between the two countries, including high-level political exchanges and cooperation between Enterprise Ireland and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Inspection Report (2009), for example, illustrates the extent to which this was an important part of the strategy: 'The Embassy is working hard to increase Ireland's profile in Vietnam and is using the aid programme to encourage visits and contacts between the two countries that contribute both to development objectives and to a closer bilateral relationship.' (p.4)

### 4.3 Budget and areas of intervention

In total, funding of €53.4 million was disbursed by Irish Aid in Vietnam by the end of 2009 against a total CSP budget of €87 million.

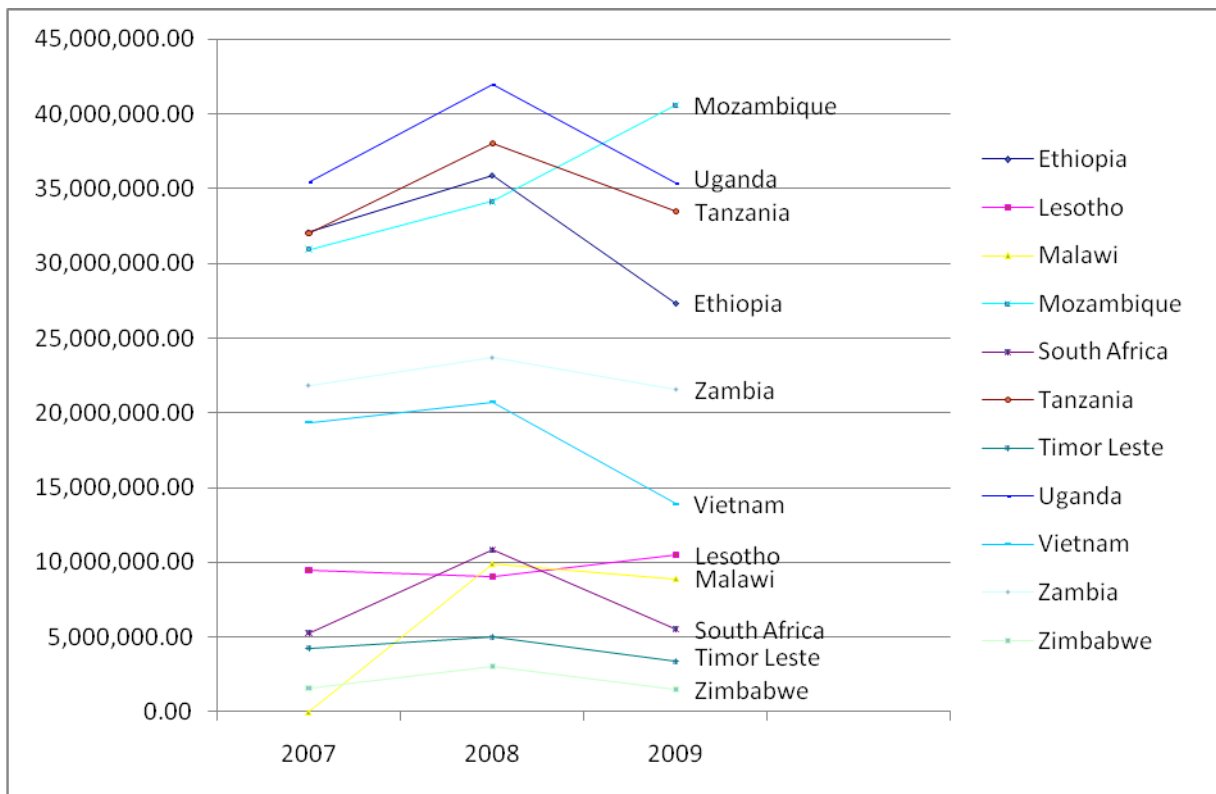
**Table 2 - Budget and Actual Disbursements for CSP Components: 2007 – 2009 (€m)**

Component	2007 budget	2007 actual	2008 budget	2008 actual	2009 budget	2009 actual	Total budget	Total spend
PRSC	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	1	1	16	16
P135	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7	7	22	22
MPDF[1]	1	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	4	4
PI – Prosperity Initiative	0	0	0	0	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45
IVVI	0.43	0.43	0.516	0.515	0.52	0.52	1.466	1.465
One UN Reform	1.06	1.06	0.2	0.128	1	1	2.26	2.188
CSF	0.3	0.32	1	0.987	1.22	1.22	2.52	2.527
IDEAS	0	0	0.1	0.073	0.31	0.28	0.41	0.353
VOICE	0	0	0.75	0.75	0.45	0.44	1.2	1.19
Regional (Lao, Cambodia)[2]	0	0	1.3	1.3	1.12	1.12	2.42	2.42
HoMF	0.05	0.05	0	0	0	0	0.05	0.05
Other Governance	0.05	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.15	0.1
Process Budget	0.2	0.08	0.084	0.061	0.08	0.06	0.364	0.201
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.09</b>	<b>17.94</b>	<b>20.45</b>	<b>20.314</b>	<b>14.75</b>	<b>14.69</b>	<b>53.29</b>	<b>52.944</b>

Ireland's overseas development budget has experienced a budget reduction by more than 22 % since the onset of the recession in 2008, and the Vietnam programme has been particularly affected<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> In 2009 the budget allocation for Vietnam was 33% less than 2008. Budgets allocations were less for 2009 than 2008 in all IA countries. Other programme countries which experienced a substantial reduction in budget allocation were Timor Leste (31%), Ethiopia (24%) and Mozambique (18%). The least affected country was Malawi, with a year-on-year budget change of -10% from 2008 to 2009.

Figure 1 - Expenditure in IA Programme Countries, 2007-09 (Euros)



Source: Irish Aid financial database

The revised CSP budget for Vietnam in 2009 was €14.75m as opposed to a CSP projected budget of €23.67m, a drop of almost 38%. Figure 1<sup>8</sup> above shows how the Vietnam CSP has fared alongside the other IA Programme Country CSPs in terms of expenditure trends: again, the extent to which Vietnam has been affected in relative terms is clear. Most of the ‘savings’ in the Vietnam programme were found by sharply reducing, and then withdrawing from the financing of the Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) (this is further discussed in Chapter 5).

Table 3 below describes the components that were identified in order to meet the CSP objectives. The programme was built on some of the initially supported areas from 2005 and was spread widely (covering poverty, economic development and some governance aspects).

<sup>8</sup> With respect to Figure 1 it should be noted that Zimbabwe is not an official Irish Aid Programme Country, but Irish Aid does have a programme there (administered out of Zambia until 2009, now through South Africa). South Africa is a middle-income status country where IA has an Overseas Office but it is not a Programme Country. Also, the rise in funding to Mozambique and Lesotho is a reflection of the fact that from 2009 Clinton Foundation funding was included in CSP budgets, whereas previously it had appeared under HQ funding.

Table 3 - Description of Irish Aid Programme Components in Vietnam, 2007-10

Programme Component	Description
<b>Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC)</b>	Donor support for GoV reform, to assist Vietnam develop its economic policies and institutions. Actions under PRSC pillars (social inclusion, business development and modern governance, natural resources policy) contribute individually and collectively to achieving the five CSP objectives.
<b>Programme 135, Phase 2 (P135-II)</b>	P135-II addresses CSP objectives and reinforces IA engagement with PRSC. P135-II specifically addresses needs of vulnerable ethnic minority (EM) groups, and aims to reduce poverty and promote economic growth. Managed and largely funded by GoV but supported by donors.
<b>The Civil Society Facility (CSF)</b>	An Embassy-level support to civil society organisations whose work is compatible with CSP objectives. Also includes a Head of Mission Fund (HoMF) for one-off grants to selected organisations.
<b>Irish Development Experience and Sharing; linkage between Ireland and Vietnam (IDEAS)</b>	A programme of bilateral scoping visits to promote exchange of knowledge and experience in macroeconomic governance. Coordinates technical assistance to GoV and shares lessons learnt from the Irish economic experience. Includes a scholarship component and an entrepreneurship training component.
<b>United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)</b>	Irish Aid engagement in four projects managed by UNDP to strengthen institutional capacity in policy and law making and also in budget oversight and local government strengthening.
<b>Support for UN Reform ('One UN')</b>	Irish Aid support to the Delivering as One UN reforms under UN System-Wide Coherence framework to ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency of UN operations in Vietnam.
<b>Provincial Programme (VOICE)</b>	Budget support to Bac Kan Province. Focus on basic service provision, small scale infrastructure and community/participatory planning.
<b>Ireland-Vietnam Blood-Borne Virus Initiative (IVVI)</b>	A partnership between National Virus Reference Laboratory at University College Dublin and National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology in Hanoi to build institutional capacity in clinical and diagnostic virology. Co-funded by private organisation, Atlantic Philanthropies.
<b>Other Governance: Transparency International (TI) (Towards Transparency)</b>	Support to assist the establishment of a Transparency International presence in Vietnam to strengthen anti-corruption demand from society, public and private sector.
<b>Business &amp; Economic Development:</b> <b>(i) Prosperity Initiative (PI)</b>  <b>(ii) The Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF) (Core)</b>	Support through a not-for-profit organisation, Prosperity Initiative, to develop the bamboo industry in NW Vietnam.  Multi-donor funded initiative across Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia to reduce poverty through advisory services for sustainable private sector development.

Programme Component	Description
Process Budget	Fund to support once-off initiatives such as research, workshops, or other activities in support of the CSP components.

The assumption was that the programme components would interact to a substantial degree. The manner and extent to which this was to take place in practice is further discussed in Chapter 5.

#### 4.4 Management arrangements

The Irish Embassy in Hanoi manages the Irish Aid programme as well as providing visa and consular services for Irish citizens and visitors to Ireland, political and diplomatic functions for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and promoting Irish economic interests in the region.

The Embassy is headed by an Ambassador who is the accounting officer for the aid programme. A Deputy Head of Mission, a First Secretary, looks after the consular, trade, political and administration sides of the Embassy. The workload here is sizeable: for example, the number of Irish visitors to Vietnam is growing annually (10,000 in 2007, 12,500 in 2008), in addition to a sizeable number of high-level visits to Vietnam over the CSP period. The First Secretary has also spent considerable time working on inter-country adoption issues<sup>9</sup>, and he has also been able to engage with the Irish Aid programme from a political perspective as well as working on the Towards Transparency initiative.

A Head of Development manages the aid programme, which is implemented by a Development Specialist (vacant until 2009) and national programme staff: a financial adviser, a social development adviser, and a rural development and private sector adviser. An administrative team and office manager support all embassy functions. A programme assistant has also been more recently recruited. See Annex 6 for the staff organigram.

A Business Plan for the Embassy is in place and this provides details of the core business, key priorities and tasks for the Embassy on a year-by-year basis (the Business Planning format was adapted by DFA for 2010 to make it more results focused).

A risk register has been in place and updated on a quarterly basis, although the reporting on this has only recently (first quarter of 2010) been included into the quarterly reports of the programme submitted to Irish Aid. A number of key risks have been identified, ranging from the external (e.g. high inflation, negative social impacts of rapid economic growth, weak governance, and natural disasters) to the internal (e.g. aid reductions, staff turnover, IT disruption). Although foreseen in the CSP, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework was put in place only in 2009. This is further discussed in Chapter 5.

## 5. Findings

The first two sections of this chapter (5.1 and 5.2) consider issues pertaining to the preparation and design of the IA CSP for Vietnam. They examine the key findings of the evaluation regarding the

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<sup>9</sup> In recent years, several hundred Irish couples have adopted children from Vietnam. Ireland terminated its bilateral adoption agreement with Vietnam in 2009 pending ratification by Ireland of the Hague Convention on Inter-Country Adoptions by the Oireachtas.



relevance, logic and coherence of the IA programme. In doing so they reflect back on the evaluation questions 1, 2, and 6 which are concerned with:

- The extent to which the CSP addresses:
  - the developmental challenges and priorities of Vietnam
  - the needs of poor households and vulnerable groups
  - issues of poverty reduction at national and local levels
- The extent to which the design of the programme has been inclusive, aligned with Government of Vietnam and IA policies, and harmonised with other development partners.

Sections 5.3 through 5.7 of this chapter focus on issues concerning the implementation of the CSP.

## **5.1 Findings on preparation and design of the CSP**

### **The context**

Vietnam was from the start a non-traditional cultural and social environment for Irish Aid. There were no other resident Irish development agencies which could help IA understand the context and develop the programme. The political context was also complex, with an independent and determined government deciding on and putting in place priority programmes which provide essential services and economic support for the Vietnamese people. Vietnam also represented a non-traditional aid environment, where the government considers aid somewhat secondary to bilateral relations that promote political, economic and trade support. One of the implications of this is that donor coordination is difficult to streamline as the government sees great value in engaging with partners individually and not necessarily as part of a collective dialogue.

### **Origins and pre-CSP activities**

Discussion on the establishment of an IA programme in the region originated almost a decade before the CSP was put in place. In 1999, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in its evaluation of the IA programme, indicated that 'Irish Aid should consequently evaluate carefully even a modest extension of the programme to new countries based on the expectation of additional resources being available over the next two years'. Internal and external assessments considering different programme options followed. In early 2003, an internal recommendation was made that Vietnam be established as a new Programme Country. This was followed in December 2004 by an Irish Government decision to establish an Embassy and development programme in Vietnam. In autumn 2005, a Chargé d'Affaires took up a posting in Hanoi, followed by the Head of Development Cooperation in January 2006.

The choice of Vietnam was not straightforward, and was the subject of considerable discussion in Irish Aid. Vietnam was not one of the poorest countries and its economy was developing quickly. Internal policy processes within the Department of Foreign Affairs, trade-offs between different country choices, and the identification of Vietnam as a priority in the Asia Strategy of the Government of Ireland ultimately played into the choice. An aid programme was seen as a key way of developing a presence for Ireland in Vietnam. It would also be critical in addressing poverty – which, while reducing, was still affecting a very large absolute number (in particular ethnic minorities) – and it would also support the development of bilateral relations, since Irish economic interests were considered to be very important.

Ahead of the design of the CSP, IA decided to initiate funding to a select number of specific initiatives, most of which were being implemented by other donors. This included €500,000 in 2006 to four projects managed by the UNDP to strengthen institutional capacity in policy and law making as well as budgetary oversight and a total of €4.5 million to PRSC in 2005 and 2006 (see Table 2). A third area of pre-CSP support was the Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF) which

received a total of €2 million prior to the CSP approval. Finally, also in 2006, and still prior to the CSP, IA initiated a programme of institutional support between University College Dublin and the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE) in Hanoi.

It was acknowledged at the time that ‘the different programmes were selected to provide exposure of governance and local government issues in Vietnam ... (but) ... that they do, however, stretch management in terms of transaction costs’ [Issues arising in preparation of the CSP (internal IA document) p.8]. The coverage of governance, poverty and economic development through these pre-CSP projects was later also to be reflected in the focus of the CSP. Of these programmes, only the support to UNDP was subsequently dropped, all other initiatives were integrated into the CSP.

During 2005 and 2006, extensive visits took place to Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia to prepare the CSP commencing in 2007. The intention at the time of these visits in the region was to have Vietnam as the hub for a regional programme, which would include the other two countries. A number of scoping visits were conducted by the office in Vietnam, with support from IA headquarters, to set out the parameters of the Vietnam CSP and to feed into the design of the regional programme. The other CSPs were intended to be developed for Lao PDR and Cambodia in 2007 and 2008 respectively.

Much of the coordination of this scoping phase on the ground was done by the Head of Development Cooperation, who was at the time the only international IA staff member in Hanoi, and who had experience from setting up the IA programme in Mozambique. It became rapidly clear during this process that assumptions about transferring lessons from the African experience to Vietnam, and vice versa, would not hold up. There was limited appetite for such lesson learning on the Vietnamese side, and the nature of the development programme and of the context was, as noted above, also very different.

### **Design – the process**

The CSP process in Vietnam included extensive consultations with government – in particular the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) – and with other development partners, as well as some civil society representatives. Other line ministries were not consulted on details, as it was clear from the start that the programme would not be following the traditional sectoral focus that IA programmes have in Africa. The exception to this was the IVVI project, which included consultation with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and approval from the Prime Minister’s office.

The experience which IA gained over a short period of time through funding selected programmes that were already ongoing (e.g. UNDP and PRSC) was fed into the design of the CSP. Some independent experts living in Hanoi and various like-minded partners – with a much longer track record in Vietnam – also provided critical inputs from their own experience into the choices that were made in the CSP. For example, the design of the IA provincial programme – VOICE (see Box 4) – was informed by the experience gained by the Swedish Development Cooperation (SIDA) and Finland and through the World Bank-funded Northern Mountains Programme. Some of these partners also commented on early outlines/drafts of the CSP.

The GoV made it clear from an early stage that its key interest was to ensure learning from the Irish economic experience. The GoV attached – and continues to attach – high value to learning from other countries, and to using experimentation (locally, and where relevant from abroad) to inform its policy making. This learning is a key element of capacity development, which is one of the pillars of focus of the GoV. It should be noted that in spite of the Celtic Tiger experience being a thing of the past given Ireland’s current economic difficulties, there continues to be an active interest by the GoV in Ireland’s economic situation and experience.

Involvement of civil society in the design of the CSP was somewhat more marginal. This was partially a result of the context in Vietnam where civil society, as it is known in other countries, does not exist<sup>10</sup> and is certainly not yet a full partner in the consultation processes. Nonetheless, various meetings were organised in the context of the CSP planning process where certain civil society organisations were able to share their experience and highlighted the importance of a focus on strengthening civil society.

### **Design – the focus and composition of the CSP**

CSP design required negotiating a balance between various interests and priorities. A first important input into this was the above-mentioned preference of the GoV for a strong focus on learning from the Irish economic experience (the so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’ experience). As the CSP noted, this was to focus on ‘the role of the government in promoting private sector growth ... (and its) ... changing role from controller to facilitator’ (CSP, p. 4).

At the same time, IA policies at headquarters (HQ) were also important. The IA White Paper for Development emphasised the focus on prioritising basic needs (health, education, etc.), while addressing also the productive sector as a means for lifting people out of poverty. Important complementary areas of the White Paper – reflected in the CSP – include a focus on building government systems, mixing aid delivery methods, and intensifying cooperation with the UN and its reform process. Other more specific policies were also important in decisions around the CSP, for example on including cross-cutting issues and on ensuring a focus on governance. There were also further clear goals and preferences at HQ level, among which was a desire to minimise ‘risk’ to IA in what was a very new context and where it was clear that quite a substantial programme – in terms of an anticipated large and growing volume of funds – would have to be managed with a small staff complement.

The experience and focus of other donors, and the fact that the programme would be rolled out in a context where substantial progress was being made to improve harmonisation among donors (see Chapter 3 above and Section 5.3 below) further fed into the choices. Large National Targeted Programmes (NTPs), which were being supported by various donors, were a natural candidate from this perspective. Traditional areas of support for IA – such as education and health – on the other hand, were already ‘donor saturated’ and were therefore not a logical choice. As an incoming development partner in Vietnam, the most logical and low-risk entry point was felt to be to join in with the existing agreed programmes which were addressing the needs of Vietnam (PRSC, Programme 135 Phase 2, MPDF) and which were being monitored and audited through established systems which had been verified by other donors. Two out of three of these programmes (PRSC and MPDF) preceded the CSP, so the CSP design and management arrangements could draw on their experience.

Supporting national programmes also ensured a clear link with the priorities identified in the GoV SEDP (2006-2010). The SEDP emphasises sustainable economic growth, improvement of people’s lives (material, cultural and spiritual), industrialisation and modernisation through a knowledge-based economy, and improving Vietnam’s status in the world. The CSP focuses directly on the first three of these objectives. At the same time, there were acknowledged limitations to the national programmes of the GoV in terms of their capacity to target the poor effectively, and their overlapping focus and targeting. To feed into the dialogue at national level – and in this manner

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<sup>10</sup> Before the ‘doi moi’ reforms there was little space for an independent civil society. However, with the changing economic and political context and globalisation, social groups have started to emerge outside the party, and space for these to grow has increased.

influence the effectiveness and targeting of the national programmes – it was understood that gaining experience on the ground would be an important added value to the programme. Other donors were doing the same, with various levels of success; for example, Australia and Sweden combined support at the national level with provincial-level activities through their Quang Ngai/ISP and Chia Se programmes respectively.

Negotiating the various interests and agendas that fed into the CSP was challenging and time consuming, and required treading a fine line in terms of CSP rationale, coherence and logic. The result was a programme that:

- Took the Vietnam SEDP (2006-2010) as a starting point, rather than IA's experience elsewhere;
- Combined a focus on government-driven multi-donor programmes (PRSC, MPDF, P135), which were in line with government priorities, and support to specific projects/initiatives which were designed to feed into national processes and to provide IA with opportunities for learning and establishing itself in Vietnam;
- Built on some of the areas which were supported by IA prior to the CSP (such as PRSC);
- Spread itself widely by focusing on the twin GoV priorities of economic development and poverty;
- Included a specific programme – IDEAS – to address the GoV expressed interest in bilateral scoping visits to promote exchange of information and promote trade; and
- Included certain carefully selected cross-cutting issues such as disability, which is very relevant but relatively neglected, and where IA neutrality was seen as an important asset alongside IA corporate cross-cutting priorities (HIV/AIDS, gender, and governance).

The CSP design also needed to take account of the particularly complex aid architecture in Vietnam. With ODA providing only around 3% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), donor influence is limited. Centralised policy and decision making in Vietnam makes it even more so. The programme therefore sought to balance lower risk inputs into existing programmes (PRSC, P135-II, MPDF) with potentially more 'risky' areas – such as the CSF and IDEAS, which were innovative and required careful management – where a particular 'added value' could be achieved. It also included a very deliberate focus on harmonisation and alignment – the principles of which had been laid down in 2005 in the Hanoi Core Statement (see Box 2). This was done by focusing on harmonised programmes (PRSC, P135-II) and including UN reform as an area of active engagement and spending. The focus on low risk – but also the desire to align with the GoV and harmonise with other partners – meant that a substantial part of programme spending (around 80% on an annual basis) would be devoted to three multi-donor programmes (PRSC, P135 Phase 2 and MPDF).

On the economic development side – and in addition to IDEAS – the CSP programme included a number of elements which aimed to strengthen small and medium enterprises (SMEs); this included MPDF and funding PI to undertake development of the bamboo sector, and also micro-credit grants for small enterprises and scholarships. IA had no in-depth economic/private sector experience in Vietnam and little experience elsewhere, but the design balanced these elements with more traditional areas of IA experience (VOICE, the Civil Society Facility, etc.).

In terms of governance, the CSP aimed to concentrate on both the demand side (people's voice, improving participation in decision making) and the supply side (elected representative capacity, enhanced state systems for accountability) of good governance. In terms of programming, governance mainstreaming was a key part of the VOICE approach, stimulating participation at the commune level, engaging with provincial authorities, and so on.

The CSP also deliberately supported a mix of aid modalities. PRSC funding was explicitly used to understand the Vietnamese context, especially the more remote ethnic minority areas and the political/economic/government context there, and enable IA to get a seat at high-level policy discussions. A feature of this support was the intention to use sub-national experience to feed into national-level governance and policy discussions. Projects (e.g. support to PI and civil society organisations) were selected to ‘open up the possibility of collaboration with a number of non-state civil society and private sector actors’ (IA CSP document).

The programme was designed to be flexible so as to support a number of initiatives (referred to as ‘letting a thousand flowers bloom’). Some programme elements were designed to draw directly on Ireland’s own experience (IVVI, IDEAS), or were explicitly ‘aligned’ with GoV programmes or interests (P135-II, VOICE) and with broader IA agendas such as the One UN. Because IA was new to the context it was felt that this flexibility – and the related broad scope and ‘learning nature’ of the programme – were essential to gaining an understanding of the context and to the identification, through experimentation, of areas where IA could really add value. The comparative advantage of IA would become clear through ‘further research and a commitment to learning’ (CSP, p.4).

Finally, and as noted earlier, the CSP was originally envisaged as a South East Asia regional programme, with Vietnam as a hub and focus of initial work, but with work extending over the CSP period to include Cambodia and Lao PDR. In practice, some of the assumptions behind the regional programme (i.e. being able to transfer experience from Vietnam to other countries, and using a roaming group of experts based in Vietnam) did not hold up and the programme instead refocused on Vietnam. The exception to this has been the Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF), which was initiated pre-CSP, and a separate regional (IA and political) effort aimed at demining and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance.

### **Design – CSP partners**

As noted earlier, the CSP design process included consultations with various stakeholders. The country strategy itself also ended up including engagements with this broad group of stakeholders. Through the various components of the programme, IA sought to engage with key partners in the Vietnamese development context (both on the economic and poverty side), including the GoV, other donors, the private sector (mainly small and medium enterprises), civil society and beneficiaries (through direct projects managed by IA). In addition to engaging with these partners, certain elements of the programme were designed to build capacity of these partners (e.g. through IDEAS and the CSF), to learn from Vietnamese experience (e.g. IDEAS and VOICE), and to influence priority setting and development agendas (e.g. PRSC, P135, One UN).

### **Design – lesson learning, monitoring and evaluation**

The period leading up to the CSP – with the various programmes that were funded at the time – was one of explicit lesson learning about a new country and an environment which was very different from that of other countries that IA had worked in. A number of these lessons are reflected in the CSP document itself (CSP, p. 16-17). CSP design sought to ensure that lesson learning would continue to be a dominant feature in which ‘institutional learning will be a key element’, in particular from the perspective of ensuring that the regional programme would be ‘informed by experiences gained in Vietnam’ (CSP, p. 23).

In this context the CSP made provisions for a monitoring framework to be drawn up based on frameworks from established programmes, and for research and learning to be facilitated through the use of technical advisors and high quality research. Social exclusion is an area of focus which was

specifically identified in the CSP as requiring a learning effort by IA and Vietnam, among other ways through visits to countries with advanced programmes in this area.

## 5.2 Conclusions with respect to CSP design

### Relevance

Assessing the relevance of the CSP design requires determining whether IA planned to do the 'right' thing in the particular context. It also presumes, within this overall question, a careful examination of the choice of objectives; strategies; areas of intervention; and partners as compared to priorities of GoV, of IA and of the beneficiaries of the programme.

The above analysis has traced the origins of the CSP and examined the decisions and influences on its design. ***This analysis shows that the CSP design was highly relevant from different perspectives.*** The twin focus on poverty and economic development matched the priorities of the GoV (although the emphasis in the SEDP on economic development is stronger than it is in the IA strategy). Efforts were made to include a programme that – in addition to the SEDP priorities – also met the specific interest of the GoV in Irish development experience.

The CSP was also in line with the priorities of the IA White Paper. A major focus of the programme in Vietnam is on addressing basic needs. The continued challenges to lifting ethnic minorities out of poverty and ensuring that they benefit from economic growth justified a strong focus in the CSP on strategies (through national programmes and direct interventions managed by IA) for addressing these problems, which is wholly in line with priorities for these beneficiary groups. In addition, the CSP included a focus on specifically disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities (PWD), and PLHIV, which was particularly relevant to the context where more sophisticated targeting is essential to making further inroads into addressing poverty.

### Logic

The evaluation was also tasked with examining the logic and coherence of the IA programme. This requires a more sophisticated examination of the CSP as it was designed.

'Logic' is understood to refer to the presence of a clear rationale for the choices that were made, i.e. the relationship between each element/component of the programme and the whole set of components. In the context of the CSP this refers to issues such as the choice of programme components and aid instruments, as well as the choice of partners.

As noted above, the CSP design sought to integrate initiatives initiated prior to the CSP (for example through IVVI) and different (although compatible) interests on the Irish and Vietnamese side. The programme also sought to address the need for a presence at national level, which had to be offset with a 'foot on the ground'. The balance in terms of partners (interacting with government, other donors and civil society partners) and in terms of a mix of aid instruments was motivated by an acknowledged need to engage widely in a relatively unknown and new environment, the importance of influencing various agendas, and the need to build a stronger civil society in a centrally-run country. IA also strategically recognised that 'traditional' areas were very crowded and that it should focus on areas where it had expertise.

The evaluation concludes that ***the logic behind the programme was clear***. However, in the absence of a logic model, as is now being developed in IA CSPs, the logic is not readily apparent.

The choice of components was motivated by the various factors noted above, all of which were in themselves logical and important given the context, and it was a rational choice in view of the newness of the programme and the need to establish a footprint in Vietnam.

## Coherence

‘Coherence’ relates to the extent to which these choices ‘hang together’, i.e. the degree of orderliness and consistency of the parts of the programme. For the purpose of this evaluation this is interpreted to refer to the closeness of the components in terms of the inter-linkages and synergies between programme components, the degree of flexibility and adaptability (to ensure these synergies), and the extent to which the level and allocation of resources (human and financial) were compatible with the ambitions of the programme.

The evaluation concludes with respect to coherence that because the CSP sought to meet a variety of agendas and interests, while accommodating commitments made prior to the CSP, and also wanted to ensure flexibility and learning in a challenging and new context, compromises had to be made. This meant that while many of the choices were relevant and logical, this did affect the coherence of the programme, although to a degree which in the opinion of the evaluation team was acceptable given the overall purpose of the programme, the new context, and the recognised and planned need for flexibility. As a result, certain areas of the programme hang together very well in terms of design, their anticipated contribution to the key objectives of the CSP, and also in their implementation (the latter aspect is discussed in the next section). This includes for example the support to the P135-II and the synergies and complementarity with VOICE in Bac Kan Province, and the expectation that engagement in these two programmes would ‘provide critical and practical learning opportunities’ (CSP, p. 21) which would feed into the dialogue around PRSC. Another example is the support to the One UN process and the overall poverty focus of the programme – a more coordinated and harmonised UN will deliver better results on poverty.

However, other areas of the programme – while relevant and logical in their own right – are more like projects on their own, with important objectives, but without the same degree of expressed synergies or inter-linkages with other components of the programme. The IDEAS programme, while important in promoting exchange of experience with Irish institutions – such as the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) – is one example of this, as it was explicitly linked to only one of the three original pillars of the CSP. IVVI is another obvious example. ***The result is a programme which has clusters where coherence is greater than in other areas.***

### 5.3 Implementation of the CSP

The next sections of this Chapter (5.3.1 through 5.3.7) examine the implementation of the CSP and focus on the issues that are raised in evaluation questions 3, 4, and 5, namely:

- The CSP response to Vietnam’s twin-track development approach focusing on a) rapid economic growth/industrialisation and b) pockets of chronic poverty
- The appropriateness of the choice of partners given the context and other donor activities
- The balance of support to government and civil society, and the different aid modalities.

The focus of this section is on emerging outcomes and on the OECD-DAC criteria of effectiveness and efficiency in programme implementation, and on the likely sustainability of the programmes supported by IA. The evaluation will also return to the issue of relevance which was discussed in Section 5.2, to look at how relevance to the context, GoV, IA priorities and beneficiaries was addressed in implementation.

This – major – part of the report starts with a section highlighting some general considerations on the IA programme as identified by the evaluation team. Section 5.3.2 then examines evidence of progress for each of the nine components of the CSP. This analysis includes how components have mutually interacted, and how effectively IA has worked with other partners. This is followed by a separate discussion of aid effectiveness, cross-cutting issues and monitoring and evaluation in Section 5.3.3, all

three of which concern the programme as a whole. Section 5.3.4 section then summarises evidence of overall progress with respect to the five CSP objectives. The final three sections (5.3.5 through 5.3.7 respectively) outline considerations with respect to effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Detailed questions on each of these three areas, and which guided the inquiry by the evaluation team, can be found in the Evaluation Framework in Annex 5.

### 5.1.3 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is general consensus from stakeholders interviewed, both on the development partner and host country government sides, that ***Ireland's/IA's efforts have led to some important changes***. Many examples were shared with the evaluation team where IA interventions have been perceived as useful and positive – prominent examples include Ireland's work on One UN reform, incorporating perspectives on participatory planning into P135-II's approach, the setting up of IVVI, and Ireland's work on disability and HIV/AIDS issues. A number of these are further highlighted in III below.

***In terms of implementation, PRSC, MPDF and Programme 135 Phase 2 (P135-II) support have been, as was foreseen, the core elements of IA support, and absorbed the bulk of CSP funding***. These areas of support were low risk, since they built on the scrutiny of other donors. They were also usefully in line with the focus on alignment with the GoV and harmonisation with other partners. These programmes also allowed IA to reach its spending target and – when this proved necessary as a result of the economic difficulties in Ireland – to reduce funding without too much impact on the activities that were being targeted. Specific progress with respect to each of these programmes is reflected below.

In addition to these central programmes, IA made the choice to directly manage a number of activities. ***VOICE, the CSF and IDEAS have allowed IA to develop a strong understanding of the context and to establish Ireland as an acknowledged valued Official Development Assistance (ODA) partner***. An early withdrawal from VOICE (which was implemented in Bac Kan province) in 2009 was considered necessary by IA in view of the time-consuming nature of the relationship and the diminishing returns to the time invested. VOICE is credited with having produced valuable lessons on decentralised planning.

As mentioned above, IA has done some ***very valuable and respected work around HIV/AIDS and disabilities***, focusing in particular on livelihoods for those affected, but also on raising the profile of these issues at policy level, for example in the informal Ambassadors' group.

More recently IA has sought to take forward the anti-corruption agenda through co-funding of a number of actions which target the ***establishment of a Transparency International (TI) chapter in Vietnam***. It is acknowledged that this may or may not bear fruit, but it is considered to be worth the effort as long as this continues to inform thinking within the Embassy and to make the connection between engagement on the political side (e.g. the anti-corruption dialogue between the European Union (EU) donors and the Government) and the Irish Aid side.

***A number of areas of collaboration (IDEAS, VOICE, CSF, IVVI) were explicitly designed to build on Ireland's experience and Ireland's ability to 'add value' to Vietnam's development process directly***. In discussions in Vietnam with Government counterparts, these components of the CSP were seen as particularly valuable. Specific progress on each of these components is further discussed below.

The next section of the report discusses progress with respect to each of the nine components of the CSP, as well as cross-cutting issues and monitoring and evaluation.



### 5.3.2. ASSESSMENT OF CSP PROGRAMME COMPONENTS

#### *The Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC)*

Table 4 – Annual Expenditure and Percentage of Total Spend to PRSC over the CSP Period

2007	2008	2009	2010 <sup>11</sup>	Total	% of Total
€7.5m	€7.5m	€1.0m	€0m	€16.0	23.2% <sup>12</sup>

**IA support to PRSC was initiated in 2005, two years before the CSP.** The PRSC is an annual WB-managed credit, which is aligned with the priorities in the Vietnam SEDP and includes a focus on economic development as well as poverty reduction. It is currently in its eighth credit cycle (the first was initiated in 2001). The credit is co-funded by selected bilateral and multilateral donors.<sup>13</sup> Progress on the PRSC agenda has matured to a system of monitoring through forward-looking triggers which reflect structural, social and governance areas of this reform programme.

In a 2006 evaluation report of the PRSC it was noted that PRSC funding has improved efficiency of public expenditure through reliable scheduling of funding. PRSC was also found to have helped the government to implement a number of important pro-poor initiatives such as the Health Care Fund for the Poor, the National Targeted Programme on Climate Change, the formulation of debt management law, the creation of a National Bar Association, and the establishment of a voluntary pension system for farmers and informal sector with support for the poor. PRSC has also promoted greater harmonization and has strengthened coordination of Technical Assistance by development partners which has had beneficial results for the quality of policy dialogue. There is also evidence that the broad based policy dialogue has reduced some of the vertical sector driven approaches in favour of more cross-cutting ways of working.

However, the 2006 report also noted that PRSCs primary benefits were found to be in providing a mechanism for donors to engage in high-level policy dialogue with the government and in constituting an incentive to keep reforms on track and that it had only had limited impact on income poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor. Overall progress against PRSC triggers has slowed as reforms have become more entrenched. In 2007 and 2008 progress was overall disappointing, also due to circumstantial (macro-economic turbulence) and institutional (lack of clarity on mandates of ministries) obstacles to implementation.

Support by IA to PRSC was seen as an important contribution to ensuring that poverty reduction is mainstreamed into the national budget, and to engaging with the Government's reform strategy. It was also a logical entry point for a new donor eager to obtain a seat at the table in national policy dialogue and to engage with other development partners, in a context where there is little room for parallel donor-driven initiatives. For IA, PRSC was its 'Trojan Horse': a way in.

In the context of the PRSC, IA identified social protection, financial management, economic reform and cross-cutting issues (gender, HIV/AIDS and governance) as key areas in which to exert influence. IA anticipated that it would participate actively in a number of the PRSC working groups and that it

<sup>11</sup> In the component financial tables in this section of the report (Section 5.2), 2010 figures reflect budgeted amounts, whereas 2007-2009 financial figures is actual spend. For 2010, spend figures over the full year were not available at the time of the writing of the report as the year had not yet been concluded.

<sup>12</sup> Percentage of IA spend is provided in the nine tables for each of the programme components in this section of the report and is calculated over the total of spend for 2007-2009 plus the allocated budget for 2010. The total adds up to 95.2% rather than 100% because the costs related to the last four budget lines of Table 2 are not included in the component breakdown (i.e. the regional programmes, the HoMF, the 'other governance' activities, and the 'process budget').

<sup>13</sup> PRSC 7 mobilised a total of 340 million USD, of which 150 million was provided by the WB and 190 million by donors.

would provide key inputs into the discussion around the annual triggers and performance monitoring.

The majority of external partners contacted by the evaluation underscored the constructive and targeted role of IA in the PRSC. IA is credited with being one of the donors that has consistently put poverty issues on the agenda. Particularly important is the fact that IA has its ‘feet on the ground’, i.e. is able to present the issues it has raised in a credible manner through its experience from the field.

However, in a multi-donor context, which is heavily driven by the World Bank, and which is not exclusively poverty oriented, staff at IA found that time invested in PRSC was not sufficiently rewarding in terms of outcomes or results. In practice, it has proven difficult to influence a vast and fluid agenda where the World Bank is the dominant partner. The fact that IA was unable to fill its development specialist vacancy until mid-2009 impacted on its capacity to contribute to the various PRSC working groups, and the overall feeling has been that much energy was expended for little result. A number of other donors contacted by the evaluation shared the view that this was a particularly difficult instrument to influence. These issues, together with budget cuts on the Irish side, motivated an early withdrawal from PRSC funding before the end of the CSP. IA expects, however, to continue to participate in the dialogue as a non-funding partner.

Various other like-minded donors have also withdrawn from PRSC (e.g. the Netherlands and Australia), and the understanding is that appetite for further PRSC cycles is waning in some circles, also in light of Vietnam’s upcoming MIC status. A number of partners – including the World Bank – nonetheless continue to see the PRSC as an important instrument for overarching high-level dialogue and from this perspective regret the decision by the above-mentioned agencies to withdraw from PRSC funding.

The evaluation finds that while support to PRSC is relevant overall to the priorities of the country, and was an effective means for IA of gaining entry into the aid context in Vietnam, the PRSC was not necessarily an effective or efficient means of achieving CSP objectives. From this perspective disengagement by IA was entirely justified.

***In summary:*** PRSC funding has constituted almost one quarter of IA funds to Vietnam. Involvement by IA in PRSC has served the anticipated purpose of allowing IA to establish itself as a partner in national-level dialogue. However, influencing of the PRSC agenda has proven difficult and the anticipated results were not achieved. IA withdrew from PRSC in 2009.

### **Programme 135 Phase 2 (P135-II)**

**Table 5 - Annual Expenditure and Percentage of Total Spending by IA to P135 over CSP Period (2007-2010)**

2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	% of Total Budget
€7.5m	€7.5m	€7.0m	€7.0m	€29.0m	42.1 %

IA support to P135-II was initiated in early 2007, when GoV and donor negotiations on the second phase of support to P135 were completed. P135-II is a Government-designed, managed and implemented programme of support to ethnic minorities and populations living in remote areas in Vietnam. As such, it is clearly aligned with GoV objectives. The first phase of P135 took place from 2001-2005. Following favourable donor-led Fiduciary Risk Assessments, several donors – including

the World Bank, DFID, Australia, Finland and Ireland – decided to support the programme. Successive joint reviews of P135-II, including the Mid-Term Review in late 2008, pointed to areas where progress was being made (e.g. on infrastructure construction), as well as a number of areas of weakness (e.g. the livelihoods component and improving programme management and the capacity of the Committee for Ethnic Minorities (CEM)).

As with PRSC, support by IA to P135-II was undertaken largely to contribute to the poverty reduction agenda, but also to engage with an important GoV programme and target assistance to the genuinely poor. Supporting one of the GoV's most targeted anti-poverty programmes was a sensible choice for a new donor in Vietnam keen to work on addressing poverty, especially ingrained poverty. P135-II is one of the few programmes that can be said to focus entirely on assisting the poorest communes in the country, and the ethnic minorities living there, so is a very good fit given IA's objectives. Successive reviews and audits have found that P135-II built much needed, and locally valued, infrastructure (roads, schools, commune centres, etc.) and provided capacity building to poor districts and communes. Irish Aid's value added to the programme was in its ability to draw very usefully on its experience (from mid-2008) gained through other activities, such as the VOICE programme. As the largest bilateral donor to P135-II, IA leveraged its unique experience working on the ground by co-chairing the GoV/donor Partnership Group for P135 in the first half of 2009, and this role was much appreciated both by donors and by the Government. Nevertheless, discerning the precise impact of Irish Aid on the implementation of P135-II, and on the drafting of the future P135 Phase 3 is challenging, given the size and complexity of the programme and the fact that – according to some views on the ground - P135-II was oversubscribed by donors and became larger than the GoV had intended, in effect leading to a simple programme becoming more complex, which reduced its effectiveness.

All donors contacted – and MPI – commented favourably on IA's useful role in the P135-II discussions. IA's integrity, commitment and positivity in the sometimes difficult discussions between the Government, the World Bank and other donors were noted. The ability to bring lessons from IA's work with Bac Kan province into P135-II discussions (for example, with respect to planning at commune level), and specifically in enhancing popular participation in what was always intended to be a programme implemented at the commune level, was specifically commended. Support to PRSC-II by Ireland also includes a technical assistance component with a budgetary allocation of €600,000 for studies, scholarships, and at hoc training for CEM. This component – which is implemented within a common TA framework with UNDP and Finland – but has only just been initiated due to delays in approval.

In terms of progress, and in spite of an overall positive trend, the P135 continues to face a number of core issues. This includes the need for better coordination with other NTPs and between ministries, the need to move from an NTP approach eventually to effective social service delivery with effective targeting within that, and the need for an approach to ethnic minorities that is less 'top down' and patrimonial, taking instead their culture and context into account and addressing the root causes of marginalisation.

In the face of budget cuts, IA decided to keep its contribution to P135-II, while PRSC support was stopped. Various other donors are considering withdrawing or have withdrawn from funding P135-II (e.g. The World Bank and Australia)<sup>14</sup> for a number of reasons, including a re-shaping of their own strategy. But a number of partners – including Finland and the EC – have either continued to fund or – as is the case for SDC and EC – have recently joined P135-II.

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<sup>14</sup> The World Bank, which is considering delaying Phase II disbursement but has not decided about Phase III, and Australia will continue support to the end of Phase II but will not fund Phase III.

The evaluation finds that support to P135-II is highly relevant to the priorities of the country, and has been an effective way for IA to gain profile and be seen as a committed partner by the GoV. P135-II support has required a substantial staff commitment, which given other demanding commitments (e.g. One UN reform, VOICE, IDEAS) has at times severely stretched IA resources.

***In summary:*** IA’s support for P135 Phase 2 has been important in establishing IA’s credibility in Vietnam. Ireland’s presence in discussions has widely been seen as successful, much appreciated and as a very positive donor contribution to this programme. However, given the broad and diverse nature of the programme, it has not always been possible to determine Ireland’s precise added value to programme outcomes.

### **Village Ownership and Investment for Community Empowerment (VOICE)**

**Table 6 - Annual Expenditure and Percentage of Total Spend by IA to VOICE over CSP Period**

2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	% of Total Budget
€0m	€0.75m	€0.44m	€0.5m	€1.69m	3.1%

VOICE was one of a number of initiatives which IA established with a view to gaining insight into local issues and realities and feeding this understanding into the dialogue at national level. In this respect IA followed lessons learnt from other programmes (Mozambique, Uganda) where a similar approach is used.

Focusing on Bac Kan province – one of the poorest regions in Vietnam, with a high concentration of ethnic minorities – the VOICE programme was initiated by IA in 2008 with a view to strengthening engagement of communes in decision making on local development. Lessons learnt from other donor-funded local development projects informed the design of VOICE. Support to Bac Kan was entirely managed by IA and deliberately did not include a project management unit.

Through VOICE, IA funds were provided to the lowest level of government (communes) using government systems and on the basis of priorities identified in agreed development plans. Training on participatory processes and on-the-job support was provided by IA staff.

Selected outcomes and lessons from IA engagement with VOICE are summarised in Box 4. A key outcome has been that VOICE has demonstrated that decentralisation of planning, decision making and funding can work – as one interviewee noted, ‘if it can work in a province like Bac Kan then it can work anywhere’.

**Box 4 - The VOICE Programme**

**Selected key outcomes:**

1. Capacity has been strengthened at local level for planning, procurement, reporting, etc., and infrastructure projects are being implemented in all communes targeted by the programme
2. Manuals and guidelines produced for Bac Kan are being adapted for use in the P135 programme and by IFAD, and will likely also inform the new D62 programme (which has been established by the GoV to target the poorest 62 districts in the country)
3. Bac Kan has provided IA with experience on how local-level decision making works, which has been fed into dialogue at national level, including in the design of the P135-III. For example, P135 has used the planning and training manuals developed by VOICE
4. Bac Kan was one of the first provinces to 'bid' for funding, and to be approved, under the new D62 programme using its experience in VOICE

**Issues/lessons:**

- IA approach differed from GoV national targeted programmes in being flexible regarding the use of funds, and effectively empowering communes to make decisions according to their priorities.
- Difficulties arose in Bac Kan over the purpose and use of funds. Clear communication on the purpose/parameters of projects is extremely important, and misunderstandings should be clarified as early as possible.
- Capacity constraints at province level need to be addressed from the outset and require considerable investment in time and energy by IA staff.
- VOICE has provided evidence that commune-level planning can work. Systematic lesson learning, which reflects the perspectives of the different groups of stakeholders, still has to be undertaken.

Support to VOICE ended earlier than expected in 2009, with funding continuing to end 2010. However, local authorities re-programmed remaining funds to ensure that the planned activities could still be completed.

Government and other stakeholders underscored to the evaluation team the usefulness of IA inputs into national dialogue and many examples were cited of how the understanding, approach and tools developed at local level through VOICE (and through the CSF) had been an influential input into discussions. Support to Bac Kan has thus not only been a relevant and effective way of supporting the development of the region, but has also been effective in highlighting for other partners how these processes can work in practice.

There are tentative indications that a degree of sustainability has been achieved, as Bac Kan has successfully 'bid' for funding from the new D62 programme to the poorest districts in the country. However, support to Bac Kan province was initially anticipated to continue until 2011 but it was agreed to close VOICE at the end of the CSP period following the internal IA review in late 2009. This raises questions regarding consolidation and the degree to which sustainability was achieved.

***In summary:*** VOICE was developed in Bac Kan province to inform IA understanding of the local context. It has provided useful lesson learning for IA on decentralising decision making to local levels, including on issues affecting minority populations. It has helped build credibility for IA. Experience from the project has been fed into discussions at national level. Support to VOICE will conclude earlier than anticipated and systematic lesson learning from the Bac Kan experience has not yet taken place.

**Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF)****Table 7 - Annual Expenditure and Percentage of Total Spend by IA to MPDF over CSP Period**

2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	% of Total Budget
€1m	€1.5m	€1.5m	€1.5m	€5.5m	8.0 %

The Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF) is a multi-donor funded initiative set up by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia, to reduce poverty through promoting the development of locally-owned SMEs in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. As noted in Section 5.1 above, support for the MPDF dated from 2005 (support to Phase II), and hence pre-dated the development of the CSP. The MPDF entered its third phase on 1 January 2008, and IA supported the programme with a further contribution of €4.5 million for the period 2009-11.

IA's intention in supporting MPDF was to support the economic development agenda in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam at a relatively *low cost* in terms of direct IA input. IFC manage all activities, and IA's monitoring of MPDF was undertaken by an outsourced consultant, which reduced the need for direct IA staff involvement. A further useful feature of support to MPDF was that it allowed IA to fund private sector *development work in the region*, and hence activities in Lao PDR and Cambodia. Aside from IA's important support for UXO, this was one of the few areas where Vietnam programme support could be – and was – translated into regional support. However, one implication of the more remote management of the programme is that this area of the CSP does not have strong links with other areas of the programme, except (in a historical sense) with activity undertaken by PI.

In practice, MPDF implementation has been successful in its own terms, and worthy of support – the programme has consistently received good ratings, for example at the major external review undertaken in mid-2007 on the operation of MPDF Phase II, resulting in donor support for an expanded MPDF Phase III. The impact at policy level of IA involvement has also been positive as this has facilitated MPDF support to farmers through value-chain activities, effective mechanisms for private-public sector dialogue, and setting up regional business forums. Examples of these MPDF outputs are:

- Support to government-business forums in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam (e.g. Vietnam Business Forum) to promote effective public-private dialogue and thereby foster discussions on investment and useful reforms to the business environment;
- Activities to improve the agricultural supply chains, including a specific sectoral focus (in bamboo) in 2007. This activity has been commendably developed into a further phase of support in 2009 through a new body, Prosperity Initiative;
- Support for activities to improve sector and firm-level recycling and environmental protection activities under the 'environment and social sustainability' strand of MPDF's work.

***In summary:*** MPDF is widely regarded as a well-implemented programme, although it is not strongly linked with other components of the CSP. Support to MPDF has allowed IA to fund private sector development work in the region, and also (importantly for IA) work in Lao PDR and Cambodia at low cost in terms of staff time and at low risk. IA has also been able to develop other CSP streams of activity – e.g. bilateral business forums (through IDEAS) and support to the bamboo sector (through Prosperity Initiative) – out of activity effectively 'trilled' through MPDF.

**The Ireland-Vietnam Blood-Borne Virus Initiative (IVVI)****Table 8 - Annual Expenditure and Percentage of Total Spend by IA to IVVI over CSP Period**

2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	% of Total Budget
€0.34m	€0.515m	€0.52m	€0m	€1.375m	2.1 %

Support to the IVVI was initiated in 2006, prior to the CSP. The main purpose of this project has been to strengthen institutional capacity in Vietnam in the area of clinical and diagnostic virology for four blood-borne viruses: HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and the human T Lymphocyte.

The programme has included construction of facilities and provision of equipment for in-country testing (previously tests had to be done abroad), as well as training of staff and exchange of experience with Ireland. IVVI was implemented through a partnership between the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) at University College Dublin and the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE) in Hanoi. A unique feature of the project is the co-financing, on an equal basis, by IA and a private organisation, Atlantic Philanthropies. The facility is conducting pioneering work on blood-borne viruses and also produced a prototype to respond to the 2009 H1N1 epidemic.

IVVI built on a clear need, in a specific technical area where the GoV needed to strengthen its capacity and expertise. The project has received a one year no-cost extension but the bulk of the activities were completed within the expected timeline and budget. There are a limited number of tasks outstanding, including two scholarships in UCD. The achievements of this project are judged by the evaluation to be relevant to the needs of the country, and have been achieved in an efficient and effective manner. The results are very likely to be sustained as the facilities created are fully linked to other existing institutions (Ministry of Health and the National AIDS Council). Building on this positive experience, further engagements with Atlantic Philanthropies look to be merited, although IA would have to consider carefully whether it has the capacity and time to devote the required attention to such work, and how this would fit with the revised priorities of the next CSP.

***In summary:*** The support to IVVI represents an example of an activity where IA's contribution has had a specific added value and succeeded in strengthening capacity. It has been uniquely co-financed on an equal basis by Atlantic Philanthropies. The IVVI initiative has covered a number of time-bound activities, which now that they have been completed have resulted in the expected outcomes (stronger capacity and better health services) and it is expected that these will be carried forward with government capacity and funding.

**Civil Society Facility (CSF)****Table 9 - Annual Expenditure and Percentage of Total Spend by IA to the CSF over CSP Period**

2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	% of Total Budget
€0.32m	€0.987m	€1.22m	€1.3m	€3.83m	5.6 %



IA established the CSF in late 2007 as a key element of its learning strategy, a flexible facility to identify opportunities, test ideas and learn from the results. The CSF was also seen as a key complement to the support by IA to large national government programmes and initiatives, in a country where independent civil society has been slowly emerging but is not always perceived positively by the Government, and where civil society is not yet fully part of mainstream political thinking<sup>15</sup>.

The approach of IA has been to seek partnerships with civil society in areas related to the CSP, which are supportive of government development objectives, and which are expected to yield value for money and be effective within the Vietnamese context. The CSF has funded a range of projects, with budgets varying from just over €10,000 to €350,000. Some funds have been channelled through international NGOs; other funding has gone directly to local Vietnamese NGOs.

The CSF has focused on a number of themes, including disability, planning and decentralised decision making, HIV/AIDS, and livelihoods for vulnerable groups. The Facility itself is managed by IA. The process is one by which IA actively seeks out certain partners and engages directly with them in developing concept notes and technical proposals for funding. Two independent consultants vet all proposals. Obtaining authorisation for the CSF within IA was somewhat of a challenge but the dividends are seen as being very worthwhile by IA staff.

The CSF has proven very effective: it allowed IA to get its feet on the ground, engage with a difficult and sensitive area on complex topics, and with small money get big results. A concrete example of this is the support which IA has provided through the CSF to the establishment of groups of PLHIV,

**Box 5 - Livelihoods for PLHIV**

In Thái Bình province, IA funding was used to establish a garment workshop for PLHIV. The programme was implemented by a Vietnamese NGO, COHED, which worked with HOPE, an association of PLHIV. The workshop has 10 sewing machines and members have received training in management and sewing techniques. Proceeds are divided among the members.

In interviews with the evaluation team, members of the association underscored the importance of the support provided for income generation, and in particular in enhancing self-esteem of members. Changing community perceptions of PLHIV was also seen as an important outcome.

A number of challenges were raised including:

- Difficulties in securing a stable flow of orders to guarantee income by members, among others because of competition from other workshops;
- The need for more specialist training as a means of obtaining higher quality & better paying orders;
- Frequent power cuts disrupting production;
- Lack of childcare facilities for working mothers making it difficult for them to work at the workshop.

which is contributing to reducing stigma and discrimination and to enhancing acceptance.

Through its work with these groups IA is credited with contributing to:

- Greater acceptance of vulnerable and excluded groups (including PWD and PLHIV);
- A growing acknowledgment that such groups can be included in planning and a gradual shift from a welfare approach to a rights-based approach in addressing the needs of these groups;

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<sup>15</sup> Mass organisations, linked to the political structures – such as women’s groups, social welfare groups, and veteran associations – have, however, been part of the broader civil society landscape for a longer period.



- Understanding of mechanisms that will allow for livelihoods development (other donors are looking at the IA experience for replication value);
- A more institutionalised approach by GoV to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, among others by lobbying the GoV to establish social work as a profession, which culminated in the recent decision to establish 44,000 social worker positions on the government payroll.



Important features of the CSF have been:

- The concentration on specific themes, a number of which are also reflected in other national IA-supported programmes
- The deliberate seeking out of partnerships with civil society organisations around priorities of the CSP (rather than operating an open challenge fund which would have resulted in more fragmented proposals)
- The linking of experience gained through the CSF with dialogue and lobbying at national levels
- The combination of diplomatic and aid activities to further the themes which IA has prioritised, for example through the IA lead of the Ambassadors' group. This is further exemplified by the fact that the HoM contributes directly to the expenditure under the CSF (€42,000 in 2009, and €40,000 in 2008), thus continuing the same focus.

Figure 2 - The garment factory in Thái Bình

The management of the CSF has, however, been intensive and time consuming, as the granting and grant management is entirely in the hands of IA. The wide range of activities, partners and approaches covered has contributed to the demanding nature of the management and monitoring processes.

Overall, however, the evaluation finds that the CSF has very effectively contributed to raising political and policy attention around vulnerable populations and that it has contributed to strengthening CS.

***In summary:*** The CSF was established as a key part of the IA learning strategy, and to complement IA support to government programmes. By focusing on a number of discrete and highly relevant themes, and linking this to advocacy in national level forums, IA has used the CSF to gain understanding of locally relevant issues, to effectively raise the profile of vulnerable populations, and to build capacity of an emerging civil society in Vietnam.

**Irish Development Experience Sharing (IDEAS)****Table 10 - Annual Expenditure and Percentage of Total Spend by IA to the IDEAS Programme over CSP Period**

2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	% of Total Budget
€0m	€0.073m	€0.28m	€0.75m	€1.10m	1.6 %

The IDEAS programme was launched by IA following Vietnamese Prime Minister Dung’s first ever official visit to Ireland and Tánaiste Brian Cowen T.D.’s subsequent private visit to Vietnam. The aim was for Ireland to respond to Vietnam’s interest in learning from Ireland’s experience of rapid economic growth by sharing some of its economic knowledge and expertise with Vietnamese institutions and businesses. The programme also envisaged the ability to ‘add value’ directly, through improving knowledge and human resources in Vietnam by setting up bilateral visits to promote the exchange of information and trade. The main components of the programme are:

- support by the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) to the National Financial Supervisory Commission (NFSC) in Vietnam;
- support by an Irish forecasting body (ESRI) to an MPI-affiliated forecasting institution in Hanoi (the National Centre for Social and Economic Information and Forecasting - NCSEIF);
- IA support to the development of bilateral trading links, through enabling the convening of regular Irish-Vietnamese Business Forums by Enterprise Ireland and mentoring of entrepreneurs;
- A Masters in Business Administration (MBA) programme and Masters-level scholarships with the Michael Smurfit School of Business at University College Dublin.

**Box 6 - Activities funded through IDEAS**

IA funding has been used to:

- Set up a programme of experience exchange between ESRI and an MPI-affiliated institution, the National Centre for Socio-Economic Information and Forecasting (NCSEIF). A visit to Dublin was arranged for Vietnamese staff from the NCSEIF in 2008, and a reciprocal visit from ESRI in 2009. Centre staff are planning to visit Ireland for an internship in 2010.
- Facilitate a workshop with National Assembly and representatives of NCSEIF and NFSC on issues raised by the financial crisis and macro-level prudential supervision in Hanoi, at which senior CBI, ESRI and Financial Regulator representatives spoke.
- One week training workshop held in Hanoi by ESRI for 12-15 NSCEIF forecasting staff on building and assessing simple five-year economic forecasting models.
- Assist Enterprise Ireland (EI), with support and some small funding, to organise business forum meetings in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (in April 2010) which have brought Irish entrepreneurs in the field of IT and software together with Vietnamese enterprises. Two signing ceremonies have been held (between CIC and D3D (Ireland) and between TMA and Irish Glandore Systems, with the latter setting up a software development and support centre in Vietnam).

Over time IDEAS has shifted more to focus on macroeconomic governance rather than the initial narrower focus on GoV’s role in enabling the private sector. As with VOICE and CSF elements, the IDEAS programme has allowed IA to build on the goodwill generated through high-level visits. It has facilitated the development of positive relationships between Irish agencies and firms and their Vietnamese counterparts. The IDEAS programme is a frequently quoted successful element of IA support to Vietnam and the profile it has is envied by some donors.

Regarding **institutional twinning activities**, while Irish bodies have provided advice to Vietnamese counterparts, there is a sense that continued engagement from the Irish side (ESRI, CBI) will need a firmer rationale. Discussion with ESRI noted that NCSEIF were not entirely clear about their role and their economic forecasting skills were limited. However, cooperation is admittedly at an early stage, which might partly explain the reported attitude on the Irish side.

One area of IDEAS that has brought dividends has been the provision of **scholarships**, where Vietnamese individuals have studied in Ireland and brought their skills back to their institutions. This has not been exclusive to IDEAS, as scholarships have also been provided through other means. For example, a member of CEM's office went to Ireland and has subsequently been promoted, and played a fruitful role in engaging with donors. In addition to the scholarships provided through the IDEAS programme, there have been two other sources for scholarships, through the IVVI and Fellowship programmes. The Fellowship programme is an IA scheme managed at HQ for all programme countries which is currently focused on scholarships for partner staff closely linked to CSP objectives. Only small numbers of scholars have come from Vietnam compared to other programme countries. IVVI has facilitated masters-level training for 8 staff to develop expertise in viral diagnostics using the IVVI equipment: 4 IVVI scholars have returned; 2 are still in Ireland; 2 Vietnamese are to go in 2010 and 1 is continuing on to do a PhD. The table below provides more detailed information on the Vietnamese IA Fellowships, IDEAS scholarships and IVVI scholars:

Table 11 - Overview of IA Scholarships

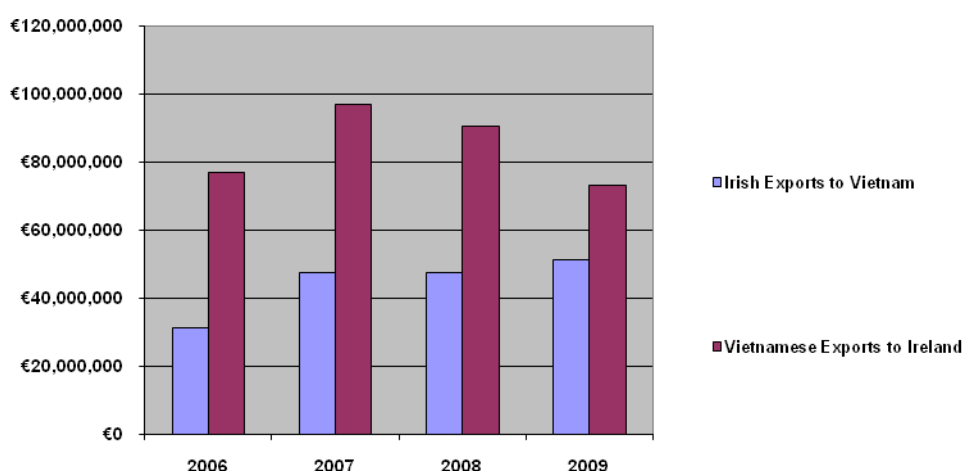
Graduation Year	Total Awarded	Study Course	Gender	
			Male	Female
<b>Fellowship Scheme</b>				
2008	2	MSc. in Agriculture (Environmental Resource Management) – UCD PG/MA in Development Studies (Kimmage Development Studies Centre (DSC))	2	-
2009	1	MSc. in Development Studies (UCD)	1	-
2010	1	MBS, Human Resource Management (Dublin City University (DCU))	-	1
2011	2	MSc. in Development Studies – UCD (second choice)		1
		MSc. in Environmental Science - TCD		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>IVVI</b>				
2008	2	M.Sc. in Clinical and Diagnostic Virology, UCD	-	-
2009	2	M.Sc. in Clinical and Diagnostic Virology, UCD	-	-
2010	2	M.Sc. in Clinical and Diagnostic Virology, UCD	-	-
2010	2	M.Sc. in Clinical and Diagnostic Virology, UCD		
<b>Total IVVI</b>	<b>8</b>			
<b>IDEAS</b>				
2010	4	MBA, Smurfit School of Business, UCD	2	2
2011	10	5 x MBA, Smurfit School of Business, UCD 5 x Other Masters (MSc Procurement; MSc Project Mgmt, MSc Finance), Smurfit School of Business, UCD	1	9
<b>Total IDEAS</b>	<b>14</b>			
<b>TOTAL OVERALL</b>	<b>26</b>			

On the Vietnamese side, strong interest has been expressed during IA staff visits regarding two further areas of cooperation: (i) partnerships between universities and recognised colleges in Ireland

and Vietnam on joint programmes to improve the quality of Vietnamese tertiary education (UCD, Griffith College and Maynooth have made visits to Vietnam to explore these opportunities); (ii) identifying good universities overseas to host major GoV scholarship programmes (Programme 165 etc.).

The rationale for the **business-to-business links** element of the programme is evident, and some specific relationships have been forged and collaborative agreements between companies signed (see Box 6). IA’s role has been one of facilitator and the Ambassador has lent her presence to Business Forum events. IA’s role, however, is subservient, both in funding and staff time, to Enterprise Ireland’s involvement. EI’s continued involvement will depend crucially on generating a flow of ‘deals’ over the next 6 months.

Figure 3 - Exports between Ireland and Vietnam and Vietnam and Ireland: 2006-2009



**In summary:** The IDEAS programme has capitalised on political goodwill on both sides, and is an acknowledged success. The twinning activities have been regarded as useful by the Vietnamese side, and to a significant extent on the Irish side but with a somewhat unclear benefit to Irish institutions which may partly be because of the early stage of the cooperation. The Business Forum events have generated interest of firms on both sides, and some initial deals have started to materialise. Time will tell if more deals emerge and this activity becomes self-sustaining.

### Prosperity Initiative (PI)

Table 12 - Annual Expenditure and Percentage of Total Spend by IA to PI over CSP Period

2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	% of Total Budget
€0m	€0m	€0.45m	€0.45m	€0.9m	1.3 %

IA has provided a two-year programme of support to Prosperity Initiative (PI), building on support through MPDF for the development of local industries in the bamboo sector in remote areas in

Vietnam. This was a relatively late-starting element of the CSP – funding of a total of €0.9 million was only approved by Irish Aid in May 2009. Support to PI is expected to continue through 2010.

The aim of IA funding is to enable PI to work with stakeholders in the bamboo value chain in Northwest Vietnam, to improve livelihood opportunities for poor farmers. As Luong Bamboo and bamboo shoots are important sources of livelihood for farmers in the poor districts in Northwest Vietnam, the bamboo market has considerable potential for pro-poor growth. A further goal of IA support to PI was to build up capacity in the GoV, especially in the policy section of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).

During a field trip to Thanh Hoa province, members of the team observed bamboo processing activities that PI is supporting<sup>16</sup>. In discussion with PI staff and with the bamboo weavers/processors, the following issues were raised:

- The villagers said they were happy to do the work, as they could weave the mats or split the bamboo in their home/village, in a relatively congenial environment. However, it was clear that the market position of the women was relatively weak, as the factory can source bamboo materials from many places.
- The trader raised the issue of his profit margin, which he stated was insufficient to make a satisfactory income from his activities. Without a ‘trader’ to collect the bamboo, the villagers’ income might be threatened (although it was said that the bamboo factory would locate another trader to take over).
- It was not clear how the price for the materials supplied had changed over time, but the team was informed by PI that the price the villagers received for the pre-processed (trimmed and split) bamboo is more than 50% higher than for supply of raw bamboo culms.
- Sustainability of bamboo processing seemed to be good, as the mats/split bamboo depended on the use of relatively aged bamboo and the processing involved very little waste (unlike paper processing or chopstick/toothpick making).



Figure 4 - Women Producing Bamboo Mats

Box 7 summarises some of the key outcomes and lessons from the programme. Despite PI’s work to develop a new high-value bamboo product, which would stimulate demand for bamboo, IA and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) have raised concerns that insufficient benefits from this market stimulation activity are flowing to farmers. PI has been asked to justify the benefits of their activities to farmers and is currently working on material to show such benefits.

PI has also been working to build up the capacity of MARD. A policy team at the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development (IPSARD) – an agricultural think-tank within MARD – has been co-located with PI since late 2009. The support to IPSARD staff has been a useful component of the programme as this has raised the knowledge of IPSARD regarding international

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<sup>16</sup> Visit to Dong Yen commune in Ha Tay Province to see a key element of the bamboo processing/value chain in operation – women weaving mats as pre-processing for construction board production by Tien Dong factory; and pre-processing of aged (sustainable) bamboo into bamboo strips to be used by Tien Dong factory to make pressed bamboo in Mai Chau district, Hoa Binh.

economic issues, value chains and the development of higher value agricultural products. This support also scores well on alignment and sustainability grounds.

**Box 7 - Support to bamboo producers through Prosperity Initiative (PI)**

**Selected key outcomes**

- This programme aims to improve the connection of remote poor, often ethnic groups, to markets.
- Capacity has been strengthened within MARD (IPSARD), especially on market analysis.
- PI has provided market information and technology exchange from China has been facilitated by PI and adopted by processors.

**Issues/lessons**

- IA lacks expertise in private sector development, and hence is supporting such an initiative without a well-developed internal knowledge base. This has led to difficulties in assessing PI's real value added.
- The capacity building component of PI's work with MARD has been appreciated by staff within MARD, and is in many ways the most obvious 'footprint' left by PI activity.
- PI has acted to stimulate the development of the market for new – higher value – bamboo products but it is unclear how much of the benefit of the additional investment is being passed down to raw bamboo harvesters/primary processors in terms of higher prices paid, and hence incomes.

***In summary:** There is a widespread view among donors that the bamboo sector is an important sector and has potential to relieve upland and ethnic minority poverty. Capacity building activity in MARD has been a valuable aspect of the PI Programme. However, there are concerns that the predominant focus has been on stimulating the market for higher value bamboo products, and that insufficient attention has been on the farmers and 'farm gate' prices. Benefits of its work to farmers in terms of jobs and 'farm gate' prices has yet to be convincingly demonstrated.*

**Support to One UN**

**Table 13 - Annual Expenditure and Percentage of Total Spend by IA to One UN over CSP Period**

2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	% of Total Budget
€1.06m	€0.128m	€1.0m	€1.0m	€4.19m	6.1%

The CSP foresaw a strong engagement on the One UN Reform which focuses on consolidating ad hoc and overlapping UN programme activities into One Plan and One UN Budget. Other 'ones' are foreseen through this process, namely One Leader, One Voice, One Set of Management Practices and One House. The underlying rationale for support was the anticipated consolidation of progress that Vietnam had already made on aid effectiveness through the Hanoi Core Statement and better coordination among development partners.

Specifically, support to One UN is expected – in the medium to long term – to improve the effectiveness of the UN delivery, move the UN country team contributions towards upstream policy advice and thus contribute to better and more efficient basic service provision and systems for social protection (one of the key CSP objectives).



The strong role IA has played in advancing the One UN Reform agenda is strongly appreciated by the GoV and development partners. IA financial contribution to the One Plan and to the Green House are also considered important, and in particular its decision to provide only untied aid. IA is also credited with having provided important inputs into the UN process as a partner, including through the chairing of the donor group on One UN in 2008. Specific results of this engagement included agreement on a donor code of principles, and an allocation process for the One Budget.

Impact of the One UN process is as yet difficult to assess. Preliminary findings from the recent external evaluation are that One Leader has facilitated a stronger leadership and better teamwork, and that progress has been made in consolidating budgets and unifying UN business practices. Overall, donors and the GoV expressed the conviction to the evaluation team that the process is moving in the right direction, although with some reservations about the pace, and the extent to which the UN is at present showing real comparative advantages and a more strategic and outcome orientation. However, because the process requires a substantial culture change within the UN, it is widely accepted that the quality of the next One Plan will be an important marker of progress, and these changes will emerge over time. It will be important for partners to stick with the process so that emerging changes can be consolidated and produce the expected outcomes. The UN will be very important in the changing context of Vietnam where bilateral donors like IA will exit as the country becomes more developed. The UN will continue to be present and will need to operate effectively, working towards the right goals to sustain policy reforms.

Strong buy-in and support from the Government of Vietnam and the donors has been important in bringing the process this far. The achievements to date are deemed by the evaluation to be highly relevant to the context and needs (with impacts beyond Vietnam) and moderately effective and efficient. The results – provided continued support is given by all partners – are likely to be sustainable. Further improvements, for example in efficiency and effectiveness, will be hoped for once the reforms become more institutionalised.

***In summary:** One UN is an important area of attention for the GoV. In the UN reform Ireland has played a key role at global and local level, and has provided critical funding and coordination and technical support to the One Plan. The impact of the UN reform effort - in terms of improved planning and greater effectiveness at delivery level- is expected to emerge in the medium term.*

### **5.3.3. ASSESSMENT OF AID EFFECTIVENESS, CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

#### ***Aid Effectiveness***

The performance of Irish Aid on aid effectiveness can be assessed at two levels: the extent to which Irish Aid has itself been compliant with the Hanoi Core Statement (see Box 2); and the extent to which Irish Aid engaged with the aid effectiveness agenda in Vietnam. On both fronts, the evaluation findings are positive.

In CSP design, IA deliberately sought to follow principles of aid effectiveness by harmonising with other donor-supported initiatives and aligning with government plans. Irish Aid is recognised as an effective donor and scores highly (2008 Paris Declaration Survey) on issues such as transaction costs, use of country systems, and untied aid (see Table 13). In relation to impact on the overall aid environment, Ireland is widely reported to be an important voice and actor. The strong role IA has played in advancing the One UN Reform agenda is particularly appreciated. As is the case with other

activities (PRSC, P135-II), IA on-the-ground experience is seen as giving it an edge over other partners in sharpening the dialogue around the UN reform and keeping the final objective in view.

**Table 14 - IA Programme Components Assessed Against Criteria of Harmonisation and Alignment**

Programme Component	Harmonisation	Alignment
<b>Support for UN Reform ('One UN')</b>	Fully harmonised: One UN reform is supported by all donors.	Fully aligned: One UN reform is a high priority of GoV.
<b>Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC)</b>	Fully harmonised: PRSC is a multi-donor instrument.	Fully aligned: supports SEDP & GoV reform and policy priorities.
<b>Programme 135, Phase 2 (P135-II)</b>	Harmonised: various donors, incl. WB, support or have supported P135 in past.	Fully aligned: P135-II is designed, managed, implemented and largely funded by GoV.
<b>Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF)</b>	Harmonised: multi-donor funded initiative set up by the IFC with support from ADB.	Aligned: addresses GoV priorities regarding private sector and SMEs.
<b>The Civil Society Facility (CSF)</b>	Not harmonised, although many donors support the work of NGOs.	Partially aligned: works with socially disadvantaged groups in Vietnam, though GoV not always supportive of 'independent' NGOs.
<b>Bilateral Links between Ireland and Vietnam (IDEAS)</b>	Not harmonised (by design).	Fully aligned: assistance requested by, and agreed with, GoV.
<b>Prosperity Initiative (PI)</b>	Partially harmonised: support flows out of MPDF and is alongside another donor (SDC).	Aligned: supports GoV policy to assist ethnic minority economic activities.
<b>Provincial Programme (VOICE)</b>	Not harmonised, although many donors provide capacity development help to provinces.	Fully aligned: institutional strengthening at provincial level.
<b>Ireland-Vietnam Blood-Borne Virus Initiative (IVVI)</b>	Not harmonised (by design).	Fully aligned: builds GoV institutional capacity in clinical and diagnostic virology.

In the wider aid environment, IA is credited with being an influential partner in the Like-Minded Donor Group (LMDG). Engagement with the EU harmonisation and division of labour process has, however, not been part of the IA agenda, in part because IA does not engage in sectoral activities. Wider efforts on aid effectiveness were deemed internally, however, as having 'borne little fruit', leading to a concentration instead on Irish Aid's own performance (CSP MTR 2009). Engagement in the 13-member LMDG, and the important work that is being undertaken there (for example the development of thinking on 'partner-led cooperation'), remains an important aspect of Irish Aid's programme. There are many issues of aid effectiveness of the donor community in general which remain to be tackled, such as the use of host country systems, the slow reduction of Programme Management Units (PMUs), and a lagging capacity for effective ODA management.

***In summary:*** IA has made a relevant and important contribution to the aid effectiveness agenda and to the UN reform process. IA has been an influential partner in the LMDG, and has followed the principles of aid effectiveness by harmonising and aligning a large part of its CSP. IA has been less active in the EU harmonisation and division of labour process.



### ***Cross-cutting issues (CCIs)***

The CSP identified gender, HIV/AIDS, environment and governance as cross-cutting issues in the programme. It was clear to IA that while many of the CCIs were addressed in the national programmes (PRSC, MPDF and P135-II), approaches would need to be further refined; it was also clear that IA could provide an added value in this area because of its expertise and focus on cross-cutting issues as a priority. In this context, an early identification was made for the need to develop background papers on key cross-cutting issues to develop more specific approaches.

Annex 7 provides an assessment of mainstreaming across CSP components. The evaluation finds that IA has very effectively raised issues of disability and vulnerability (PWD and PLHIV) and has raised the profile of these agendas. IA has been particularly effective in doing this where it has been in the position of chairing or influencing dialogue. Various examples of this are found in this report (see Section 5.2). However, while disability and HIV/AIDS have been a prominent part of the agenda, these issues are not mainstreamed across all areas of the programme.

IA has also effectively mainstreamed local governance across a number of its areas of focus, for example through attention to local planning in P135-II. The VOICE programme and the CSF are areas where valuable entry points for local governance mainstreaming have also been built on, for example supporting grassroots democracy in poor urban settings in Hanoi through Action for the City, and supporting Oxfam's work on social accountability. While it needs to be acknowledged that the documentation has been wanting, there is a solid base from which to build the governance mainstreaming approach in the programme.

Gender has similarly received attention through specific programmes, in particular in the form of quotas for participation and targets/triggers (in the case of PRSC) but has not been dealt with as a cross-cutting issue. Environment has not figured prominently on the agenda, although some activities have been undertaken. Annex 7 provides the evaluation's assessment of mainstreaming and integration of CCIs across the components of the CSP.

There has, however, been a lack of documentation and no clear strategy in this area. Given the lack of documentation, and in the absence of a clear M&E framework for most of the evaluation period, it is difficult to assess what progress specifically has been made on mainstreaming. In the absence of a clear M&E framework it is also possible that mainstreaming could be occurring, but not as consciously or effectively as might be the case with more rigorous documentation and monitoring.

***In summary:*** Gender, HIV/AIDS, environment and governance are the key cross-cutting issues identified in the Vietnam CSP. In implementing the programme IA has given prominent attention to disability and HIV/AIDS across various programmes and has integrated elements of governance and gender in different aspects of CSP implementation. However, overall mainstreaming has seen mixed success.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)***

As mentioned at the end of Section 5.1, the design of the CSP foresaw the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation framework with indicators based on those included in already supported programmes. However, a specific M&E framework for the CSP was only put in place when the CSP logic model and results framework were developed in late 2009 during the mid-term review of the CSP.

The renewed emphasis in Irish Aid on Management for Development Results (MfDR), together with the development of methodology for MfDR, meant that Vietnam was not alone in instigating this

approach late in the day. It has meant, however, that retrospectively fitting a logic model and results framework to the programme has not been an easy process. Furthermore, reporting on and usage of the MfDR has not been followed through thoroughly. This is an area that will be picked up more fully in the development of the next CSP.

Monitoring and evaluation of specific components of the CSP has therefore in practice been done by external agencies and entities in charge of these initiatives. For example, monitoring of One UN, PRSC, P135 and MPDF has been done through the well-established (and thorough) joint donor M&E systems incorporated in these programmes. For the CSF, monitoring has been conducted through field visits and reporting by the international and Vietnamese NGOs that have received IA funding. The IDEAS and PI activity has been monitored through attending events and (in the case of PI) through a field/site visit to Thanh Hoa province in November 2009.

It is thus fair to say that IA has had access to data on process and outcomes, and it is clear from the documents and interviews that this data has been used to inform thinking and decision making. However, the absence of an IA-specific M&E framework has meant that reporting has been very much process-oriented and that the overall picture of progress towards objectives is more difficult to pull together. This is especially true in the economic development areas (MPDF, IDEAS, PI) due to the multi-faceted nature of these activities (SME development, value chains, twinning, scholarships, etc.), and the fact that IA Vietnam staff lack deep expertise in private sector development.

***In summary:** A monitoring and evaluation framework for the CSP was put in place towards the end of 2009, but is in practice not yet in use. However, most programmes funded by IA have some external form of monitoring and evaluation, which yields information that IA uses for its decision making. However, this is without the benefit of providing a CSP-wide and overarching view of progress. The challenges around M&E have to some extent affected IA capacity to learn lessons across the programme, and to understand what progress is being made against its objectives.*

#### 5.3.4. PROGRESS WITH RESPECT TO THE FIVE CSP OBJECTIVES

The nine components summarised above were designed to respond to the CSP objectives. While a full-scale assessment of results is beyond the scope of this study – and is also limited by the absence of a comprehensive M&E framework as noted above – the evaluation was able to identify a number of ways in which the IA programme is contributing to the achievement of the CSP objectives. These are summarised in Table 14.

Table 15 - Selected Areas of Progress towards CSP Objectives

<p><b>Objective 1: To improve participation in decision making and access to basic services for vulnerable people (ethnic minorities, PWD, and PLHIV)</b></p> <p>With respect to this objective the evaluation found evidence that IA has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raised awareness of gender, disability and HIV/AIDS issues in various forums at national level, including through the group of five female Ambassadors which was chaired by IA.</li> <li>• Brought a specific focus on marginalised groups, in particular People with Disabilities (PWD) and People Living with HIV (PLHIV), raising the profile and attention to issues by civil society, donors and the GoV.</li> <li>• Contributed to ensuring that vulnerable groups are represented at national forums (e.g. in P135-II).</li> <li>• Developed alternative approaches to livelihood development for vulnerable groups.</li> <li>• Contributed to the drafting of a social work agenda and to establishing social work as a profession.</li> <li>• Contributed to the establishment and strengthening of associations of PwD and PLHIV.</li> <li>• Strengthened local-level participation in planning and decision making in Bac Kan province.</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributed to strengthening the planning and delivery capacity of selected local NGOs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 2: To assist poor households and vulnerable groups to take up value added agriculture and alternative income generation initiatives</b></p>
<p>Under this objective, IA has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated the training of farmers in bamboo pre-processing techniques (through PI) and thereby boosted their ability to improve their market position.</li> <li>• Developed approaches for livelihoods development for disadvantaged groups, for example through the community-based garment workshop in Thái Bình province and income-generating activities for PLHIV.</li> <li>• Generated models for income generation which are potentially replicable by other actors.</li> <li>• Taken part in discussions with CEM (including the P135-II MTR) on P135-II activities in generating improved livelihoods for ethnic minority upland farmers.</li> <li>• Assisted (through PI) in building up the capacity of MARD regarding alternative income generation activities (cash crops, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 3: To strengthen performance and business practices of small and medium-sized enterprises in selected sectors important to economic growth and poverty reduction</b></p>
<p>IA has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through core support for MPDF, contributed to strengthening the SME sector.</li> <li>• Helped to facilitated collaboration between Vietnamese and Irish SMEs in the IT and software sectors.</li> <li>• Targeted local economic development in poor parts of the country through VOICE and P135-II programmes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 4: To increase the capacity of the public sector at national and local levels to support reform processes</b></p>
<p>IA has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributed to enhancing community involvement in planning and infrastructure development processes through support to PRSC, P135-II and VOICE.</li> <li>• Through exchange of knowledge and reciprocal visits, has strengthened the economic decision making and capacity of Vietnamese economic policy-making and commentating bodies (NFSC, NCSEIF).</li> <li>• Supported MPDF in its extensive work with national and local government on reforming processes to facilitate dialogue, enhance governance and strengthen the enabling environment for business.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 5: To improve the implementation of the Hanoi Core Statement, including UN reform</b></p>
<p>IA has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed its programmes to align with the GoV and harmonise with other donors (see Table 13 above).</li> <li>• Contributed to streamlining the work of the 11 Programme Coordination Groups under the One UN process.</li> <li>• Set an example by providing untied aid to the One UN Plan. Played a key role in advancing the donor code of principles and the allocation process for the One Budget through its chairing of the Delivering as One process in 2008.</li> </ul>

### 5.3.5. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMME EFFECTIVENESS

The IA programme has been ambitious in scope. Its focus has been on engaging in a wide range of initiatives and actions at various levels. ***Overall the evaluation concludes that the programme has been effective, and that good progress has been made in the implementation of the CSP.*** Particularly effective areas of the programme have been VOICE, IVVI and the CSF. IDEAS interventions have certainly been much appreciated by the GoV. The effectiveness of IA contributions to PRSC, P135-II, MPDF and PI is more difficult to assess, though MPDF seems overall to be an effective – if largely macro-level – programme. In the case of P135-II and PI, further discussions should take place with relevant organisations – and evidence produced – to ensure that activity is effectively reaching poor farmers/harvesters and raising ‘farm gate’ prices/improving livelihoods, not simply stimulating

infrastructure/traders and markets. For the One UN process more time is needed for an assessment of its effectiveness, but indications are that the process is moving in the right direction. The evaluation also points to progress in reaching the CSP objectives, particularly with respect to Objectives 1 and 4.

However, it is the view of the evaluation that ***the IA programme could have been more effective if it had been more focused***. The wide scope of the programme and the engagement with a wide variety of actors and aid modalities at various levels (in a context of limited human resources) has been time-consuming, and has influenced IA's capacity to measure progress and to draw out lessons. The evaluation also finds that in some areas – such as the PI programme – IA has been stretched to provide effective support and inputs. This is a reflection of limited IA capacity in this field. The fact that IA engages with such a large number of partners raises issues about the quality of each engagement and the extent to which such partnerships can be effectively maintained over time.

### 5.3.6. CONSIDERATIONS AROUND EFFICIENCY OF THE PROGRAMME

This section of the report examines the efficiency of the programme.

***The IA programme has been characterised by its flexibility and capacity to adapt to emerging opportunities and changes in the environment.*** This has contributed to the effectiveness of the programme and has served the IA programme well. For example, IA has taken up the agendas to promote social work, support Transparency International, and to support the creation of livelihoods for those with HIV/AIDS and bolster emerging HIV/AIDS groups. Flexibility also allowed Irish Aid to take an early decision (at the time of the internal MTR last year) to exit from a number of areas. This was motivated by considerations of the heavy burden on staff time (in the case of VOICE) and by a perceived limited impact on dialogue (in the case of PRSC). Nonetheless, these two programmes were frequently mentioned by a number of other partners interviewed by the evaluation team as having been important to local understanding (in the case of VOICE) and as areas where IA had made a contribution and where continued engagement is important.

***Efficiency has been achieved through the mix of aid modalities.*** The predominant use of budget support (PRSC) and funding to national programmes has allowed Ireland to efficiently deliver substantial volumes of assistance through joint government-led modalities that align with jointly-agreed policy frameworks, and which are monitored through shared reporting arrangements. This has enabled IA to implement a broadly-based programme with limited staff resources, and to devote more time and attention to the directly managed components of the programme. It has also allowed IA to cut back its funding when needed without overly affecting the delivery of its programme (as most of the cuts were to the PRSC). As a result IA's own efficiency, in terms of predictability of aid delivery, was less affected by the budget cuts in 2009 than might have otherwise been the case.

***In terms of efficiency, it is clear that staff time has not been used equally over different programmes.*** In general, aid modalities have influenced the amount of time spent. For example, bigger 'spenders' such as PRSC and P135 have required proportionately less time than the activities which were not co-funded with other donors. The latter covered only a small proportion of the overall budget but absorbed a substantial amount of IA staff time – for example, VOICE absorbed 40% of the National Financial Adviser's time at various stages, and a one-week IDEAS visit took four weeks of IA staff time (2 weeks: expatriate; 2 weeks: Vietnamese staff member). However, for IA staff, the added time spent on these programmes has been well worthwhile in terms of gaining understanding of issues and being more effective and efficient in achieving objectives in national-level dialogue. Other partners – donors, civil society and GoV – confirmed this, and many donors expressed some envy of the flexibility and added insight which these programmes give to IA. So while

in terms of staff time some of the smaller components of the CSP have required a larger investment of time, in some cases this has paid off in terms of other objectives of the programme (e.g. effectiveness, relationship building, etc.). But there is an issue with the overall workload of these smaller components, and the extent to which this will continue to be sustainable.

**IA has very effectively and efficiently combined the input of both its political and development cooperation staff to further its agenda.** For example, the Ambassador and other consular staff were acknowledged by many to have played a major role in issues around child protection (adoption), disability and HIV/AIDS. The nature of the programme – with direct engagement by IA in implementation – has meant that IA staff have spent a good deal of time outside of Hanoi (compared to staff in other agencies), and this is seen – internally and externally – as a very significant advantage.

The fact that there was no results framework included in the original CSP design, together with the pressure associated with setting up a new embassy/IA programme, meant that **documentation and systematic lesson learning received less attention than it should have in a new and innovative programme of this nature.** This point was brought up clearly in the context of the MTR. In practice, IA has focused on dialogue and implementation, with less time and attention to pulling together evidence from monitoring into more systematic lesson learning. This has contributed to making it harder to understand what concrete lessons have been learnt, including with respect to mainstreaming. In addition, where there has been a focus of lesson learning this has been on Irish Aid bringing its experience to bear on policy dialogue externally, rather than on generating systemic learning from within which could be applied to IA's own ways of working.

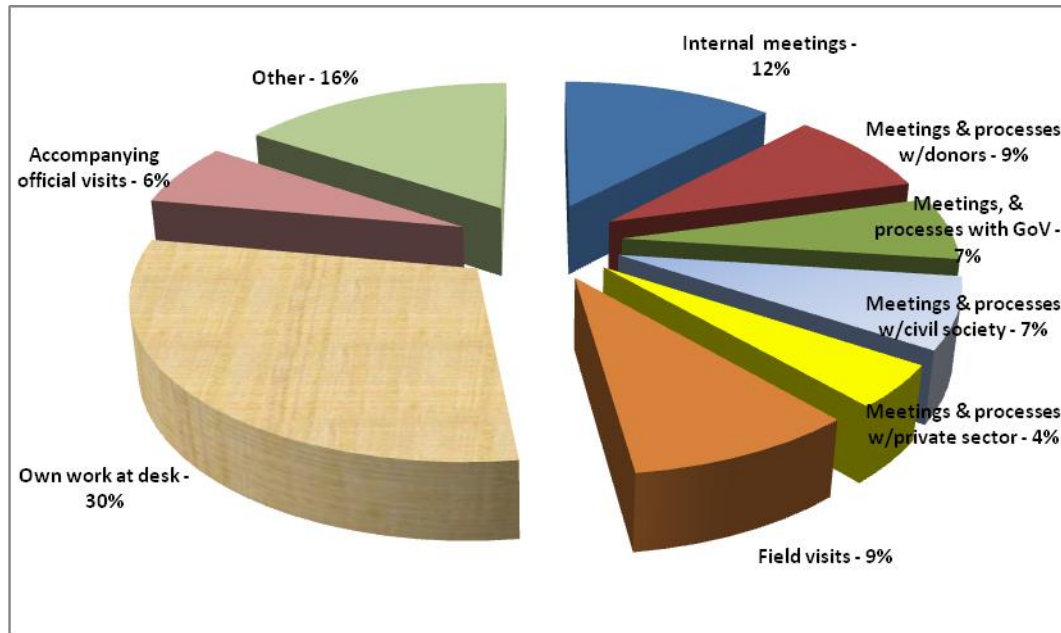
**CSP ambitions have exceeded the staff resources** available, with a resulting very heavy workload on (new) staff in post. This already significant workload was further exacerbated by the demands of setting up a new embassy/IA office and especially by (high value) reciprocal high-level political visits which have taken up considerable amounts of staff time. For most of the CSP period the programme has been implemented by one Development Specialist, in addition to the HoM, a First Secretary and a number of local staff. Those involved in the design stated that it was designed with a larger staff supplement in mind. The arrival of a second Development Specialist in 2010 has alleviated the workload. As a result of the work pressure there has been a lot of sharing of tasks between political and development cooperation staff. While this has implied a heavy burden on senior staff at times, it has also contributed – as noted earlier – to some of the very effective advocacy that IA has done.

**IA engagement with multiple areas, and multiple types of partnerships, has meant that the number partners which it engages with has increased steadily over time.** Currently IA interacts on a somewhat regular basis through its programme with over 70 partners. This raises concerns regarding the feasibility of continuing to sustain and nurture such a wide range of relationships into the future. It appears clear that choices will need to be made in the next CSP on modalities for engagement, and on which relationships should require priority attention. A stronger thematic focus of the programme might make it easier to make these choices.

**IA has been able to work efficiently due to the high quality of its local and international staff** – a point that was noted frequently by external stakeholders contacted during the evaluation. Team work is set up so that staff can cover for one another, ensuring continuity even in the absence of local and international staff members. This has been an important characteristic of the programme and has supported IA both from an effectiveness and from an efficiency perspective. However, since the Embassy opened, local staff have been recruited through the Vietnam Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Service Bureau (DSB) because of public service hiring constraints in Ireland. Whilst this is something that the GoV encouraged in the past, and other local embassies employed formerly, there has been less of a compelling reason for this methodology in recent years. Despite the issue being

brought up to be addressed on a number of occasions within IA, the hiring system remains with all of its attendant drawbacks, including from security, job security and accountability perspectives. In the final stages of this evaluation, the evaluation team was informed that steps are now being taken to address this situation.

**Figure 5 - Percentage of Time Devoted to CSP-Related Tasks Based on Survey Conducted by the Evaluation among IA Programme and Diplomatic Staff**



### **Summary of findings on efficiency**

**In many ways, IA’s CSP has been implemented very efficiently.** IA’s flexibility in use of resources and activities to provide support, together with use of a mix of aid modalities, has allowed IA to implement a complex programme with limited staff resources. However, a number of programme components have unintentionally taken up very considerable amounts of staff time. This has been the result of the need to gain recognition and visibility and of deliberate decisions around the management and operation of programmes – for example, the deliberate selection of CSF partners to work with, and the management of the IDEAS programme in-house, rather than through use of an outsourcing arrangement. This skewing of staff time has had an impact on the ability to undertake M&E and conscious lesson learning, which may have impacted more broadly on the efficiency of IA operations in Vietnam.

### **5.3.7. CONSIDERATIONS WITH RESPECT TO SUSTAINABILITY**

GoV revenue has increased yearly, in spite of occasional economic setbacks. ODA represents only a small proportion of the overall budget, and the Government budget is the dominant component in many programmes (e.g. PRSC and P135-II). Prospects for continued financing through domestic sources are therefore good.

A number of IA programmes are also strongly aligned with government (P135-II, VOICE, IVVI) and are integrated in government planning and budget cycles, so prospects for sustainability in these areas are also judged to be good. An important focus of the GoV is on lesson learning, and adopting effective pilots. IA has placed an important emphasis on sharing its experience with government

agencies. IA could probably do this even more effectively, and pay more attention to systematic lesson learning.

Some components of the IA programme (e.g. IDEAS, PI) have started up quite recently. This means it is very difficult to make an assessment of sustainability. In terms of the context, sustainability comes in part from the GoV adopting programmes that have been demonstrably successful. Sustainability may also come from the GoV co-financing some of these initiatives, for example, in the case of scholarships and exchange visits under IDEAS. It is too early to assess whether this will take place. The evaluation would recommend that considerations of sustainability be an important priority in the next CSP.

Human resource development is a very important priority of the Government. Capacity development, both externally with agencies supported, and internally through its own staff, has been a feature of IA's work, running right across the various initiatives it supports. In the case of VOICE the focus on provincial capacity development has paid off in enabling the province to bid successfully for funding from other sources, and PI has consciously tried to build capacity in MARD. Similarly, the One UN reform is based on the assumption that part of IA's role is to help enhance UN capacity.

Support to civil society by IA is an area where long-term engagement (beyond the next CSP) will probably be necessary and justified. Civil society in Vietnam is still fragmented and fragile, and although progress is being made, it will require considerable further support and strengthening. It also operates in a very difficult environment. Sustainability in this area will require a longer-term approach of capacity development, continued funding (and more longer-term funding) and continued advocacy with the GoV. Sustainability will also come from CSOs themselves adopting more empowering approaches and moving from a service delivery approach to one of development.

### ***Summary of Findings on Sustainability***

The evaluation finds evidence that ***sustainability has been considered by IA in its approach to most initiatives. In many of the CSP-supported programmes and activities, it is too early to make a complete judgement (e.g. IDEAS, PI, VOICE, etc.).*** IA support to national programmes (PRSC, P135-II, VOICE, work of IPSARD) includes a strong element of sustainability through capacity development and GoV commitment to these initiatives. Sustainability of other IA components of the programme, such as IDEAS and the CSF is more challenging, and there is a danger of these components becoming supply-driven in the absence of a clear demand from funding recipients.

## **6. Lessons learned**

The above discussion of the CSP provided an important input into the formulation of lessons. These are discussed in this section. The lessons should be of particular value to the next CSP design process, but are also relevant to IA overall, to its partner countries, and to other stakeholders in Vietnam and beyond.

***Interventions at a macro policy level need to be firmly rooted in a practical understanding of how institutions and government programmes work on the ground*** and engagement with national and local initiatives in parallel pays off. This is especially true of a start-up programme which needs to clearly demonstrate relevance and effectiveness. This 'head in the capital, feet on the ground' approach is, in many ways, already a guiding principle of Irish Aid, and was an integral part of the Vietnam CSP. It has also been present in other IA programmes (for example Uganda). This lesson

therefore points not to something that needs to be done differently, but is rather confirmation that IA approached setting up this CSP in the right way.

***Engagement in a populous and dynamic country like Vietnam necessitates the use of a range of aid modalities and a number of different entry points to government*** (at the centre, province, local and citizen/NGO levels). The first CSP had to establish a presence for Ireland, and therefore had to be particularly flexible and fairly wide ranging, and rely on broad skill sets among staff.

***Deliberately building flexibility into a programme can reap important rewards for programme relevance and effectiveness.*** However, withdrawing from engagements should be based on a thorough review of progress and lessons, and should emerge from a consultative process and careful reflection on the part of all partners involved. In the case of PRSC, IA's decision to exit coincided with that of other donors and therefore had a bigger impact, including in terms of budget predictability.

***Supporting different aid instruments allows for broad engagement and reduces risk*** (this was also useful when funds had to be cut) but has implications in terms of management time and harmonisation. The implementation of the diverse range of activities under the CSP as a whole has been management intensive. Also, the programme is less harmonised now than it was at the beginning. There is therefore a need to weigh carefully the benefits of having 'own' programmes with the drawbacks of not joining existing efforts.

Real benefits in terms of influence and added value have been, and can continue to be, derived from a ***fluid interaction between diplomatic and development elements of a country programme.*** This arose out of a necessity to bring sufficient human resource capacity into the management of the programme.

***Sufficient time and space needs to be present in all stages of the programme for review and lesson learning to emerge.*** The discussion in this report shows that the IA programme has not been able to devote sufficient attention to this important issue.

***The composition of the aid programme needed to address Vietnam's dichotomous development experience*** – areas of deep, persisting poverty on the one hand, and increasingly affluent, urbanised development on the other. This dichotomy necessitated engagement on poverty-related issues through the 'social inclusion' pillar of PRSC, P135-II, VOICE and the CSF, as well as on the wider growth agenda, through policy discussions under PRSC, and private sector-facing engagement through MPDF, PI and IDEAS. The CSP components that draw on Ireland's economic development history and experience (IDEAS, IVVI and potentially CSF) were particularly sought by the GoV.

***The selection of locally relevant cross-cutting issues which are important but not receiving prominent attention by others – in this case disability – can be an effective way of driving a policy agenda*** and can be a relevant and effective way of giving a thematic focus to a programme. IA had an advantage over some other partners in the Vietnamese context in being seen as a neutral partner.

***A whole programme approach*** – where multilateral engagements and bilateral support are tapped to maximum effect – is essential to progress on the aid effectiveness and harmonisation agenda. ***IA has effectively promoted aid effectiveness and harmonisation through a thoughtful design of the country programme and through the identification of specific interventions***, such as the support to the One UN. A ***clear vision of the desired outcomes*** (more effective and efficient processes, and further down the line, improved results on poverty alleviation) and of the strategies that contribute to achieving these objectives has been important in this respect.



***‘Mainstreaming’<sup>17</sup> needs to take account of the priorities of the Government and the extent to which change can be achieved.*** In retrospect, prioritising governance which could be effectively pursued through engagement in GoV programmes (e.g. P135-II, Bac Kan and through One UN), along with gender and disability issues, where Ireland has competence and a good track record, may have been enough of a challenge for a new CSP. Given the lower priority attached by government to dealing with issues of corruption, HIV/AIDS and environment (despite rhetoric aimed at donors), mainstreaming these issues is (and will be) a tougher challenge in Vietnam.

***Regionally-focused programmes<sup>18</sup> are hard to develop, especially in the context of a new country start-up.*** Experience from other donors shows that regional strategies are often really ‘multi-country’ or ‘parallel country’ strategies in disguise. Human resourcing requirements, specificities/complexities in the context, and budget cuts, have resulted in a programme that remains almost entirely focused on Vietnam. However, there is adequate justification for a Vietnam country programme, since remaining ‘pockets’ of poverty – centred largely on ethnic minorities and mountainous regions – still leave 8-10 million people below the poverty line in Vietnam (more than in Malawi, for example).

***A new country start-up needs to be given priority in the allocation of staff resources, and be effectively backstopped.*** In the case of a complex environment like in Vietnam, Irish Aid needed staff with specialist development skills and the ability to engage in complex and detailed policy discussions. IA sensibly grounded their intervention in PRSC and P135-II (post-2008) on experience on the ground in Vietnam. However, in the event IA staffing was not adequate to engage in sufficient depth in PRSC-led discussions with the GoV, and staff have been very stretched. In an emerging Middle Income Country (MIC) environment like Vietnam, it is likely that a core number of staff will need in-depth institutional, governance and/or public financial management expertise.

***The experience of working in Vietnam has yielded useful lessons in terms of learning about some of the issues associated with countries that are approaching MIC status.*** This includes issues such as mechanisms for policy influencing in these settings.

## 7. Conclusions

Ireland and Irish Aid have ***gained considerable visibility*** in Vietnam. The IA programme is seen as credible, and IA is perceived as a strong partner.

***Overall, the IA programme has performed well***, and beyond what might have been expected given that IA was a new donor with a relatively small budget. The evaluation finds that, for a small donor, IA has punched above its weight. The quality and commitment of local and expatriate staff, as well as the linkages/synergies between diplomatic and development sections of the Embassy have contributed to this strong performance.

***IA has made critical contributions in a number of areas***, including:

- generating experience and recognition of the feasibility and mechanisms of involving communes and communities in planning and budget allocation at local level through VOICE, and bringing new models and lessons of VOICE into P135-II;

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<sup>17</sup> Irish Aid will ‘***mainstream*** the priority issues of gender, governance, HIV/AIDS and environment’. (Section 5.3, page 19, CSP, Vietnam 2007-10)

<sup>18</sup> ‘***The Irish Aid programme in South East Asia*** will be phased in over the next 5 years ... The focus at this stage – and of this CSP – is on the programme in Vietnam.’ (Foreword, p. 4, CSP, Vietnam 2007-10)

- strengthening civil society through funding and technical inputs into capacity development and implementation;
- highlighting the importance of livelihoods in supporting PwD and PLHIV, through projects funded at CS level, and also by raising issues around vulnerability and the need for sustainable approaches to marginalised groups at national level;
- upskilling of Vietnamese officials through the IDEAS programme by providing opportunities for interaction between Irish and Vietnamese institutions; and
- providing critical coordination and support to the One UN process.

**The IA programme is relevant to priorities of both the Vietnamese and Irish Governments.** The CSP is explicitly aligned with the SEDP and is also in line with the priorities of the IA White Paper. Discussions with IA beneficiaries underscored the relevance of these activities which IA developed for their own priorities. However, education – a key factor in marginalisation – has not been a focus of the IA approach, although of critical importance to the further development and progress of the country.

**The CSP design required careful balancing of a number of interests,** including IA policies, the logic of support by other donors, the challenges of a new programme in a relatively new setting, and preferences of the GoV. The resulting portfolio of initiatives/choices in the CSP reflects a balance that addresses each of these interests/concerns very well. The choice to include existing agreed programmes in the CSP allowed IA to gain a seat at the table (as was envisioned). IA has had mixed success in influencing the dialogue in national forums (i.e. more successful in P135 than in PRSC), but overall most informants expressed admiration for the strong and consistent way in which IA has raised issues that it is concerned about (e.g. poverty, disability, and HIV/AIDS).

**The CSP has managed to support both poverty reduction and economic development.** This is perhaps best characterised by Ireland's interventions relating to poverty alleviation in the PRSC which includes attention to both. The CSP has included activities which support Vietnam's focus on economic growth and industrialisation on the one hand (IDEAS, MPDF, PI), while seeking to alleviate pockets of chronic poverty on the other (P135-II, VOICE, CSF). In practice the latter has received the bulk of the funding (over three quarters) and a considerable portion of the time and energy of IA staff. This reflects the fact that IA has a strong poverty focus and good technical expertise in this field, and thus has a clear comparative advantage in this area.

The strategy of **linking experimentation and local lesson learning to wider processes of dialogue has had some impact on policy dialogue and action**, in particular if seen against the backdrop of a challenging Vietnamese context where exerting influence is not easy, for example social work, registering HIV organisations, and the impact of VOICE on P135.

**The value of IA's involvement in P135** has been mainly through its role in facilitating policy discussions, rather than through its funding contribution (€29 million in 2007-10 out of an overall budget of \$1.1 billion). IA's funding contribution could be scaled back somewhat with little loss in terms of 'added value' or impact.

**VOICE has provided an important learning experience for IA** and key elements of this have been shared with other partners. The short duration of the intervention in Bac Kan province raises some questions as to whether this withdrawal may have been too early, and whether the intervention could have been better concluded with more time spent on an exit strategy from the engagement. Lessons should be learnt from the VOICE programme both with respect to decentralised planning by communes, and with regard to management arrangements and resource requirements for working with stakeholders at this level.

**The programme has had a strong focus on civil society.** In practice the CSF has focused on a wide range of priorities, including issues around disabilities; reforming planning; HIV/AIDS and other vulnerable populations; disaster, emergency and preparedness; and alternative income opportunities. The management of this process by the Embassy is envied by other DPs (to a large extent because of the perceived benefits of direct engagement), but has been very time consuming for staff. Lesson learning could be stronger in this area.

**IA has been less effective in mainstreaming.** While disability and HIV/AIDS have been a prominent part of the agenda, it is not mainstreamed across all areas of the programme. Gender has similarly received attention through specific programmes, but has not been dealt with as a cross-cutting issue. Examples of governance mainstreaming can be found in many areas, as mentioned earlier, but could be more systematically implemented. Environment has not figured prominently on the agenda, although some activities have been undertaken (e.g. on recycling through MPDF).

**The programme has had a strong and justified focus on addressing deep poverty,** which continues to be an important area of concern as gains from economic growth are insufficiently benefiting minority and very vulnerable populations. IA has been effective in bringing out lessons and establishing a platform around poverty issues, and has developed some innovative approaches. Education/capacity, a key factor in marginalisation, has not been a specific focus, although it continues to be a major bottleneck. This is potentially a weakness in IA's approach.

The evaluation finds that **while the rationale behind the selection of individual components for the programme was essentially sound, some parts of the programme are less 'coherent' than others**<sup>19</sup>. In part the issues around coherence are a reflection of a deliberate strategy of engaging in many different areas and levels of interaction – 'letting a thousand flowers bloom'. As noted earlier, this was considered essential given IA's newness in the Vietnamese environment. A number of components, while justified in their own right, were inherited from the pre-CSP period and do not 'fit' as coherently with the overall programme (e.g. IVVI, MPDF). Synergies have also only been a reality for certain clusters of activities within the programme (e.g. P135-II, VOICE and CSF). The twin focus on economic development and poverty has produced two streams of work which have been linked together to only a limited extent (mostly through discussions between IA staff).

**The programme has not been very successful in effectively learning lessons, monitoring and measuring results and documenting experience,** making it difficult to draw out lessons and conclusions about which areas have been most effective, and raising some questions about the analysis behind choices on discontinuing certain elements of the programme (although there may be valid managerial reasons for doing so).

It is the view of the evaluation that **the IA programme could have been more effective if it had been more focused.** The IA programme has been ambitious in scope. Its focus has been on engaging in a wide range of initiatives and actions at various levels (current mapping of partners found there were more than 70). This approach has been time consuming, and has influenced capacity to measure progress and to draw out lessons. The issues which arose around the VOICE programme reflect the time-consuming nature of some relationships and the difficult trade-offs between doing a wide range of things and the need for high quality, in-depth support.

The evaluation concludes that **sustainability is receiving attention from IA in its approach to most initiatives, although in many cases it is early to make a sensible judgement.** A visit to one of the IA-

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<sup>19</sup> The evaluation was asked to assess the coherence of the programme. The evaluation team has interpreted this as asking whether the programme represents a balanced selection of interventions which are interlinked and mutually complementary so as to achieve the full set of CSP objectives.

supported civil society activities – a garment factory for PLHIV – highlighted some of the challenges to sustainability (see Box 4). It is not yet clear to what extent PI activities are leading to sustainable income growth for local ethnic minorities. Other activities have been more immediately successful from this perspective, for example completion of the IVVI, which will be run by government, and the work that IA is doing in supporting action by city groups around ensuring a safer and cleaner city environment, where a dynamic has been generated by which communities are now contributing financially to continuing these activities.

## 8. Recommendations

As Vietnam transitions to Middle Income Country status, the relationship with the country is changing. Some donors are moving away from a focus on ODA to ‘partner-led cooperation’, which includes an increasing focus on trade and investment. Other donors are not (yet) making this change. ***Ireland should develop a clear vision on the likely focus and mechanisms for engagement in the region in the medium term (15-20 years)***, including on the role of IA in this context. This vision could then guide the development of the next CSP.

It is likely that the IA part of the engagement will need to be informed by ***an exit strategy*** as the trade and investment relationship will become more important, and the aid relationship will decrease. This would argue for a focus on the identification of strategies that will allow IA to consolidate the programme and achieve sustainable impact in the coming CSP period.

The first CSP was a new programme and necessarily had to be flexible and fairly wide ranging. ***The IA programme, and Ireland generally, have now gained visibility. The next CSP should be more focused***, to allow for consolidation and sustainability in priority areas. The next CSP should therefore incorporate lessons from its various areas of focus (such as around working with and providing support to community organisations, building capacity at local level, raising the profile of PwD and PLHIV) from the first phase, and emphasising areas where IA has and can continue to make a difference – for example with respect to marginalised groups, but also possibly including stronger attention (within the CSP components that will be retained) to education as a key bottleneck to development. This could be done through further strengthening the scholarship aspect of IDEAS, and through integrating an education focus in a possible future provincial engagement.

***A stronger thematic focus for the programme as a whole*** – for example around poverty, capacity development, governance or marginalised/disadvantaged groups – should be explored. Part of the focusing should also include an effort to contain the spread of the programme and the number of partners so as to ensure that the programme continues to be manageable and that other areas such as lesson learning can get adequate attention. IA should identify priority partners for each of the key areas of focus of the coming CSP and focus on working with these. A stronger thematic focus, and the identification of priority areas within this, should make it possible to identify the most important partners.

Within the more focused scope of the next ***CSP flexibility should continue to be a key characteristic***. This will allow IA to continue to play into emerging opportunities, while guided by a clear agenda of action. There are strong reasons, given the large number of poor and vulnerable people in Vietnam – and the challenges to further poverty reduction – why ***the next CSP should continue to have a very strong poverty focus, targeting marginalised and disadvantaged groups***. This is an area where IA has a solid track record, where it has successfully mobilised political will around key target groups, and also generated capacity, and where it has a solid comparative advantage. A continued focus on this area is justified, as the remaining ‘pockets’ of poverty – centred largely on ethnic minorities and

mountainous regions – still leave 8-10 million people below the poverty line. The challenge will be in making GoV programmes even more effective in targeting the specific groups and issues that impact on poverty, using the useful experience IA has gained so far through its support for P135-II and the VOICE programme, and also building on the experience of other partners and contexts.

***Continuing to contribute to a more effective UN would, in the opinion of the evaluation team, be an important part of the poverty focus.*** The One UN reform process has been a time-consuming and complex process, but the role of Ireland in terms of technical and political support at both a global and a local level has been seen as critical and is widely acknowledged and appreciated. The ‘signalling’ function of IA financial support to the One Plan is also critical, particularly in a context of diminishing resources with the economic crises and Vietnam moving to MIC status. Continued support to a more effective UN is also a priority for the GoV and makes strong sense in the context of a dynamic and changing aid environment where the UN will continue to play a role once support by other aid agencies has been reduced or phased out. The focus in the coming period would, in the opinion of the evaluation team, need to include continued high-level technical input and support to the reform process itself, ensuring that it is completed according to plan. It would also need to include a stronger focus on monitoring the expected outcomes of a reformed UN in terms of social and economic progress.

***Further provincial engagement would need very careful consideration in the context where bilateral aid is likely to have a very limited time horizon.*** While further engagement at this level would allow IA to consolidate its understanding of the context, it is clear that this would be a time-consuming engagement which would likely have to be scaled down with the timeframe of the next CSP. This would need to be taken into account in the design of the intervention. However, should IA decide to move forward with a provincial engagement then the option of providing direct budget or other support to provincial level could be considered. This would allow IA to work in an integrated manner on priority areas that have characterised IA support in Vietnam so far, such as issues of decentralisation, governance, capacity building, etc. Support to civil society and pro-poor private sector development could be explored as themes, so as to complement the priorities at this level and further focus resources and staff time. A provincial focus could also include a focus on education/capacity, identified above as a key area which has received little attention by IA.

***IDEAS has been a successful and valued ‘brand’ for Ireland in Vietnam, has effectively promoted sharing of experience, and is also an area where the GoV has a strong interest.*** It should therefore continue to be a key part of the next CSP. The IDEAS programme has been able to capitalise on the interest of GoV in Ireland’s economic experience. However, Vietnamese institutions will need to be able to articulate the ‘value added’ of Ireland’s support more clearly to their Irish partners if IDEAS is to deepen into a sustainable programme. As noted earlier in the report education/capacity - a key factor in marginalisation - has not been a specific focus of IA, although it is a major bottleneck. Further developing the scholarships aspect of the IDEAS programme would contribute to addressing this.

***IA could explore the possibility of expanding the ‘twinning’ between Irish and Vietnamese institutions in the area of social policy and development:*** for example, it might be worth considering an IDEAS+ approach whereby the scope is extended to cover potential areas of experience sharing such as social work and social policy (including social protection), the empowerment of ethnic minorities, and planning, and so on. This does not imply taking on more areas of focus, but rather using the successful and valued approach by IDEAS in other existing areas of the IA programme. The IDEAS approach, (linking with Irish institutions) could be used both to tackle the HR agenda through an ***expanded scholarships programme***, and to link in to the poverty agenda, for example, through working with the UN to develop Vietnam’s ***social policy agenda***. Private-sector components of the next CSP might be more linked to pro-poor growth by:

- (i) explicitly **drawing out the lessons learnt from MPDF experience**, and applying these lessons to the design for successor projects working on raising employment and incomes in the bamboo, and possibly other, sectors;
- (ii) **setting explicit employment and/or income growth objectives in PI support**, and commissioning independent monitoring of these pro-poor targets;
- (iii) Ensuring **continued collaboration with Enterprise Ireland in support of the Vietnam-Ireland Business Forums**, and possibly seeking to develop bilateral private sector activity that focuses on pro-poor growth.

**The CSP scholarship component should be expanded but the processes should be rationalised.** Up to now, the application processes for the three scholarships offered are all different. The IVVI scholarships are very specific and targeted, but IDEAS scholarships and IA fellowships are similar in nature. Currently, the IA website ([www.embassyofireland.vn](http://www.embassyofireland.vn)) is confusing and the forms, interview procedures, application timing, etc., are quite different. This leads to inefficiency in processing applications and is confusing for applicants, leading to some people not applying for scholarships at the right time. We **recommend that the scholarship application and management process should be streamlined**, for example IA could advertise, recruit and shortlist for all scholarships in one process. Furthermore, the focus of the scholarships should be brought more in line with the focus of the CSP – perhaps by exploring a pro-poor bias in scholarships (e.g. encouraging applications from ethnic minorities). The development of inter-university collaboration could perhaps be explored through visiting lectures initially, with the possibility that this co-operation could become more substantial over time.

**Private sector development will be an important facet to Ireland's involvement with Vietnam in the future.** However, it is not an area in which Irish Aid has demonstrated comparative advantage. The direction, shape and level of engagement should be carefully examined in this light.

**Lesson learning should be given a higher profile in the next CSP, with a clear, implementable M&E framework and focused deliverables.** Lesson learning should also be a feature of the concluding phase of the present CSP. This should include carefully analysing and documenting the areas in which IA is believed to have made a contribution. In the opinion of the evaluation team, this could include examining how the CSF has strengthened the CS response and helped raise the profile of issues such as disability and HIV/AIDS, the IDEAS programme and its impact on capacity building, a detailed case study of Bac Kan to record experience and lessons there, and a study on mainstreaming which would identify lessons from IA engagement and experience of other partners. This type of analysis – which would go beyond what an evaluation team is able to identify, and could be conducted prior to the CSP drafting exercise – would be a key input into decisions on the future, as well as a model for future lesson learning exercises.

The discontinuation of support to Bac Kan province should be reviewed to distil lessons about disengaging. The next CSP should use this **to develop a process of good practices around disengagement** which ensures that valuable lessons from the relevant initiative or programme component are captured and that disengagement is handled in a way that ensures that ongoing processes are completed and that partners on both sides can make necessary adjustments.

**The experience of working in Vietnam should feed into learning processes at the level of IA as an entity, and will be of particular relevance for countries that are approaching MIC status.** This experience could be valuable for looking at issues such as the work of Irish Aid in a place such as South Africa, as well as drawing out some lessons for looking at trajectories of less developed countries and the issues that are likely to be met in the future. However, the sharing of lessons and

experience between programme countries and within Irish Aid is something that requires more thought.

***There is a need for a stronger focus on mainstreaming in the next CSP.*** IA should carefully analyse what strengths and weaknesses have been present in the approach to mainstreaming so far and coordinate closely with other partners to identify lessons around mainstreaming in the Vietnamese context, and areas within this where IA can add particular value. There is a ***need for environment to receive higher attention on the mainstreaming agenda*** in the next CSP given the context. The Embassy may want to avail itself of the IA training module on environmental mainstreaming, and conduct some scoping work in this area in preparation for consideration of options in the next CSP.

Finally, the evaluation suggests ***a careful review of management arrangements for programmes supported by IA*** be conducted to ensure that the benefits of time- and staff-intensive arrangements correspond with the gains, and that such relationships continue to be manageable over time. The nature of the engagement in Vietnam, and the challenging context, would argue for the importance of ensuring that the current staff complement is maintained, and supplemented by short-term technical input where and as necessary.

## Annex 1 – Abbreviated Evaluation Terms of Reference

### Background

The first Irish Aid Vietnam Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2007-2010 was formulated in the context of Vietnam's Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP). The overall goal of Irish Aid in Vietnam is *'to promote and support the equitable reduction of poverty and vulnerability in Vietnam'*. Key strategic objectives under the CSP are:

1. To improve participation in decision making and access to basic services for vulnerable people (ethnic minorities, people living with disabilities (PWDs), and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV))
2. To assist poor households and vulnerable groups to take up value added agriculture and alternative income generation initiatives
3. To strengthen performance and business practices of small and medium-sized enterprises in selected sectors important to economic growth and poverty reduction
4. To increase the capacity of the public sector at national and local levels to support reform processes
5. To improve the implementation of the Hanoi Core Statement, including UN reform

At the end of 2009 (after 3 years of a 4-year programme), €53.4 million had been disbursed by IA under the CSP.

### Purpose of the Evaluation

The evaluation takes place towards the end of the current CSP. Its purpose is to provide Irish Aid and its partners with an independent assessment of the logic, coherence and strategic direction of the Irish Aid (Vietnam) CSP 2007-10 and a record of lessons learnt in this new programme. This evaluation will then inform future strategic decision making around the next CSP covering the period 2011-2016. In this context, the evaluation will examine:

- The extent to which the CSP addresses the developmental challenges and priorities of Vietnam and the needs of poor households and vulnerable groups
- The extent to which the CSP focused on issues of poverty reduction in a substantive manner at national and local levels
- The manner in which the CSP responds to Vietnam's twin-track development of rapid economic growth and industrialisation on the one hand and continuing pockets of chronic poverty on the other
- The appropriateness of the choice of partners given the political and development contexts within which the CSP is implemented and other donor activities
- The balance between support for government institutions and civil society, and between the different aid modalities
- The design of the programme with national and local authorities and other stakeholders and the extent to which it has been inclusive, aligned with Government of Vietnam and Irish Aid policies, and harmonised with other development partners



## Methodology

The evaluation took place in three phases:

- a preparatory phase with documentary review and initial interviews;
- a field work phase in Vietnam with detailed interviews and consultations; and
- a concluding phase involving further consultations and report writing.

The field work took place between the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April and 5<sup>th</sup> of May. The field work resulted in an Aide Memoire which captured initial findings and conclusions of the evaluation. The Aide Memoire was presented to stakeholders in Vietnam on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May. Comments to the Aide Memoire informed the finalisation of the report.

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## Annex 3 – Country Visit Programme and List of Persons Interviewed

### Week 1

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity/appointments</b>
Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13h00: Mark Minford (MM) arrives in Hanoi</li> <li>• 15h00: Video conference with Limerick</li> <li>• 16h30: Meeting with IFC/MPDF - Mr. Charles Schneider and Mr. Nguyen Van Lan</li> </ul>
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8h30: Breakfast meeting with Ambassador Collins and Mags Gaynor (IA)</li> <li>• 15h00: Muriel Visser-Valfrey (MVV) arrives in Hanoi</li> </ul>
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 06h30: Donal Cronin (DC) arrives in Hanoi</li> <li>• 12h00: Team meeting, Hilton Hotel</li> </ul>
Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9h00 - 10h00: Briefing session at the IA office in Hanoi</li> <li>• 11h00 - 12h00: Briefing on the Mekong Bamboo Project by Prosperity Initiative (Mr. John Marsh, Mr. Ngo Viet Hung) at Embassy</li> <li>• 14h00 - 15h00: Meeting with Benedict Bingham, IMF Resident Representative, at the IMF</li> <li>• 15h00: Individual interview with Ms. Minh (IA)</li> <li>• 15h30 - 16h30: Meeting with Forecasting Centre (IDEAS partner) in NCSEIF</li> </ul>
Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9h00 - 10h30: Meeting with Dr. Le Xuan Nghia, Vice Chairman, National Financial Supervision Commission (IDEAS partner)</li> <li>• 11h00 - 12h00: Individual interview with Mr. Cuong (IA)</li> <li>• 12h30: Lunch meeting with Like-Minded Donor Group (LMDG) Aid Effectiveness Advisor, Ms. Elke Foerster</li> <li>• 13h45 - 15h00: Meeting Mr. Steve Price Thomas, Country Director at Oxfam (UK)</li> <li>• 15h00: Meeting with MPI, Dr. Mai, at MPI office</li> <li>• 16h30: Meeting with UNFPA (Bruce Campbell) , UNAIDS (Eámonn Murphy), UNICEF (Jean Dupraz)</li> </ul>
Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9h00 - 10h30: Meeting with Mr Bay, Mr Quan, Ms. Truc, and Mr. Sin, Committee of Ethnic Minorities, National counterpart for P135-II CEM</li> <li>• 11h00: Meeting with Mr. Robert Hynderick de Theulegoet, Mr. Sion Morton, and Ms. Tran They Dzung, EC, at EC office</li> <li>• 12h00: MM and DC visit of Prosperity Initiative (PI) activities in Ha Tay &amp; Hoa Binh until 3 p.m. on Thursday 29th</li> <li>• 14h00: Individual interview (continuation) with Mr. Coung (IA)</li> <li>• 16h00: Meeting with Mr. Max von Bosdorff, Finnish Embassy</li> </ul>
Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8h45: Meet with Mr. Le Quang Binh, Institute for Studies of Society, Economy, and Environment (ISEE) – local NGO</li> <li>• 9h30: Individual meeting with Irish Aid staff</li> <li>• 13h30 - 14h30: Meet with Ms. Nguyen Thi Lan Houg, Institute of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs</li> <li>• 15h00 - 16h00: Stakeholder meeting with CSO partners on <i>disability and HIV</i>: EMWF, VSO, IDEAS, VietHealth, COHED, at the Embassy office</li> <li>• 16h30: Meeting with Dr. Nguyen Tran Hien, National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology</li> <li>• 17h50: Team meeting</li> </ul>

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity/appointments</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19h30: Phone conference with Ms. Carrie Turk, formerly with the WB in Hanoi</li> </ul>
Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> April (public holiday)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 07h00: Day trip to a project funded through the IA Civil Society Facility (CSF) and implemented by COHED in Thái Bình province</li> </ul>
Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09h00 - 12h00: Team meeting, Irish Embassy</li> <li>• 12h30: Meeting with Mr. Bob Patterson, First Secretary, Irish Embassy</li> <li>• 14h00 - 18h30: Team meeting, Irish Embassy</li> </ul>

## Week 2

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity/appointments</b>
Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> May (public holiday)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9h00: Visit to Action for the City Project, funded through the IA Civil Society Facility</li> <li>• 14h00 - 16h00: Team Meeting, Irish Embassy</li> <li>• 16h00: Individual Interview with Ms. Mags Gaynor (IA)</li> </ul>
Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 08h00 - 09h15: Meeting with Ms. Fiona Lappin (DFID), Mr. Andrew Smith (CIDA), Ms. Tove Degnbol (Danish Cooperation), Mr. Kerry Groves (Australian Government Aid Program), Mr. Patrick de Bouck (Belgian Embassy)</li> <li>• 9h45 - 10h30: Meeting with Mr. Alwin Nijholt and Mr. Peter Reeh on the UN reform process, at the UNDP Office</li> <li>• 10h30 - 12h00: Meeting with Mr. Christophe Bahuét, UNDP office, chair of P135 Partnership Committee</li> <li>• 14h00: Meeting with MOFA</li> <li>• 16h00 - 19h00: Team meeting</li> </ul>
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 08h00 - 09h00: Meeting with Mr. Martin Rama and Ms. Keiko Kubota, World Bank (WB)</li> <li>• 9h00: Meeting with the Committee for Social Affairs of the National Assembly, Mr. Dang Nhu Loi (Vice Chairperson)</li> <li>• 09h30 - 10h30: Meeting with Mr. Adam McCarthy, Mekong Economics</li> <li>• 10h45 - 12h00: Individual Interview with Mr. Ngoc Anh (IA)</li> <li>• 11h00: Meeting with Mr. Phuong, Atlantic Philanthropies</li> <li>• 14h00: Meeting with Dr. Thang, Center for Analysis and Forecasting</li> <li>• 15h30 - 17h00: Evaluation Team Debriefing with IA Staff</li> </ul>
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9h00 - 11h00: Debriefing session with external stakeholders on preliminary findings</li> <li>• Departure of team</li> </ul>

**List of Persons Interviewed for the Irish Aid CSP Evaluation of Vietnam**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Contact E-mail</b>
Mr	Andrews, Simon	Regional Manager, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia & Thailand	IFC	<a href="mailto:Sandrews2@ifc.org">Sandrews2@ifc.org</a>
Mr	Bahuet, Christophe	Deputy Country Programme Director	UNDP	<a href="mailto:Christophe.bahuet@undp.org">Christophe.bahuet@undp.org</a>
Mr	Bingham, Benedict	Senior Resident Representative	IMF	<a href="mailto:bbingham@imf.org">bbingham@imf.org</a>
Ms	Brennan, Nicola	Senior Development Specialist, Irish Aid Multilateral Section	Irish Aid	<a href="mailto:nicola.brennan@dfa.ie">nicola.brennan@dfa.ie</a>
Dr	Campbell, Bruce	UNFPA Representative in Vietnam	United Nations Population Fund	<a href="mailto:Campbell@unfpa.org">Campbell@unfpa.org</a>
Mr	Charleton, Peter		Special Projects, Central Bank of Ireland	<a href="mailto:Peter.Charleton@centralbank.ie">Peter.Charleton@centralbank.ie</a>
Ms	Collins, Maeve	Ambassador	Embassy of Ireland, Hanoi	<a href="mailto:Maeve.collins@dfa.ie">Maeve.collins@dfa.ie</a>
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#### Annex 4 – Timeline of key events for the CSP in Vietnam

Date	International Context	Vietnam Context	Other Development Interventions	IA Interventions/Decisions re: Vietnam
1999	OECD-DAC Review of Ireland Aid Programme validated cautious increase in number of programme countries.			Fitzpatrick Associates noted that South East Asia, with Vietnam as a hub, could be one of 3 nodes for CP expansion (others: i) E & S Africa & ii) W Africa).
2002				Feb 2002: Report of Ireland Aid Review Committee reiterated SE Asia programme expansion recommendation.
2003-04	Inflation rose sharply to 9.5% by end-2004, mainly due to supply shocks stemming from the avian influenza outbreaks, bad weather conditions, and hardened international commodity prices.	<p>2003: Grassroots Democracy Decree revised (GDD), foresees limited popular participation in decision making / implementation at the local level.</p> <p>2004: Population living in poverty falls to 19.5%, from 58% in 1993, an average decline in poverty of 3.5 % a year.</p>	Focus of MPDF activities changed from direct service delivery to developing local providers, as well as enhancing policy environment.	<p>Feb 2003: Internal country appraisal by IA recommended the selection of Vietnam as a new Programme Country.</p> <p>Dec 2004: GoI decision approved establishment of an Embassy and Development Programme in Vietnam.</p>
2005	2001-05: Negative impacts on Vietnam from SARS, avian influenza, poor weather, high commodity prices, inflation, and anti-dumping suits.	<p>2001-2005: Strong economic growth, with GDP rising by an average of 7.6% per year in real terms.</p> <p>Hanoi Core Statement signed, implementing Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.</p>		<p>Various visits from Ireland to identify programmes for potential support.</p> <p>Embassy initially established in Hanoi.</p> <p>Sept./Oct. - IA governance consultant (Dr Polhemus) review of IA portfolio of governance activities endorses involvement in UN reform, UNDP governance &amp; civil society activities.</p>

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Date	International Context	Vietnam Context	Other Development Interventions	IA Interventions/Decisions re: Vietnam
		Simplifying Decree 131 replaces Decree 17 governing how ODA is managed in Vietnam.		Next phase of Govt. of Ireland’s Asia Strategy launches ‘A decade of the Asia Strategy 1999-2009’. Includes on pg.5 a commitment to open a diplomatic mission in Vietnam in the second half of 2005.
2006	<p>Vietnam successfully hosts APEC summit.</p> <p>November - Vietnam accedes to WTO (effective Jan. 2007).</p>	<p>National Assembly approves 2006-10 Socio- Economic Development Plan.</p> <p>January: Ministry of Transport PMU18 corruption scandal.</p> <p>April: 10th Communist Party Congress.</p> <p>June: Anti-corruption law and anti-corruption agency within the Ministry of Public Security.</p>	<p>Vietnam identified as a pilot country for UN reform at country level. One UN roadmap drawn up early 2006.</p> <p>June: PRSC 5 approved by the World Bank board. 2006-07 MPDF work plan &amp; scoping exercise for formulation of a 3rd phase (MPDF III) approved.</p> <p>Joint evaluation of General Budget Support (GBS) commissioned by 24 aid agencies (incl. IA) and 7 partner countries, with Vietnam as only Asian case study.<sup>20</sup></p>	<p>2006 country budget €4.5m.</p> <p>January: Head of Development takes up posting in Hanoi. Preparation and drafting of CSP.</p> <p>April: Embassy moved to VINCOM Towers.</p> <p>June: Issues paper for SE Asia programme presented in Dublin. €4.5m spent by IA, out of €5m budget.</p> <p>Dec: Final draft of CSP presented.</p> <p>IVVI funding approved by GoI and GoV. Total programme budget of €5 million over four years. IA MPDF allocation increased to €1.5 million.</p>

<sup>20</sup> Report found PRSCs 1-5 to be effective at supporting policy reforms, linking policy and budgets, strengthening financial management and helping harmonisation. It identified weaknesses in the early cycles of the PRSC due in some cases to an uneven level of understanding between the sector agencies that were responsible for some of the triggers and the lead agencies, including the State Bank of Vietnam, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Planning and Investment.



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Date	International Context	Vietnam Context	Other Development Interventions	IA Interventions/Decisions re: Vietnam
2007	October: Vietnam confirmed as a non-permanent member of UN Security Council (for 2 years).	<p>Late 2007: Vietnam economy 'overheats' in response to capital inflows and a real estate 'bubble' and inflation rises significantly.</p> <p>July to October: Serious flood damage in central region resulted in estimated economic loss of 1 % of GDP.</p> <p>Vietnam agrees to become a UN 'Delivering as One' pilot country.</p>	<p>Feb: GoV/donor negotiations on P135-II (2007-10) completed, with \$300m agreed donor contributions. IA contribution: €7.5 million p.a.</p> <p>August: One Plan 1 signed. One Plan Fund established in Q3 2007, enabling donor pledges (inc. IA funding) to be disbursed.</p> <p>December: PRSC 7<sup>21</sup> cycle started.</p> <p>Some development partners state intention to scale down ODA due to imminent graduation from Low to Middle Income Country status.</p>	<p>2007 country budget: €18m<sup>22</sup>.</p> <p>March: IDEAS programme established in response to a study carried out by Fitzpatrick Associates.</p> <p>May: CSP finalised.</p> <p>July: CSP approved by PAEG with total 2007-10 budget of €87.5m.</p> <p>October: Fitzpatrick Associates presented findings on rollout of Celtic Tiger Study.</p> <p>November: Very positive evaluation of MPDF 2 presented to the MPDF biannual review meeting in Hanoi.</p>
2008	International financial crisis (sparked by US mortgage market financial dealings) affects international trade, FDI and commodity prices.	<p>Early 2008: GoV puts in place package of 'stabilisation' measures.</p> <p>High rice prices, layoffs in construction and lower agricultural outputs hit rural/poor.</p>	<p>April: Ireland assumed the chair of the Donor Group on UN Reform.</p> <p>One Plan 2: Joint donor assessment undertaken.</p>	<p>2008 country budget: €21.8m, of which €21.7m was disbursed.</p> <p>March: Prime Minister Dung made first ever official visit to Ireland, giving impetus to the IDEAS programme, and Tánaiste Brian Cowen, T.D., made an official visit to Vietnam. Bilateral Ireland-Vietnam MoU signed, formally setting up CSP.</p>

<sup>21</sup> PRSC 7 is composed of a total of 37 policy actions which are broadly representative of all the key priorities across government.

<sup>22</sup> €7.5m disbursed to PRSC 6 through a World Bank Trust Fund & €7.5m allocated to P135-II. €1 million contributed to the One Plan Fund and to a UN Special Facility to promote change management.

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Date	International Context	Vietnam Context	Other Development Interventions	IA Interventions/Decisions re: Vietnam
			<p>2008 Paris Declaration monitoring survey concluded Vietnam achieved 7 of its PD targets and on track for 2 more. Weak areas were alignment and results-based monitoring.</p> <p>Third P135-II Joint (GoV/donor) Progress Review.</p> <p>October: P135-II Joint Mid-Term Review (JMTR). IA was represented by Hanoi-based staff &amp; Local Governance Adviser from IA HQ.</p>	<p>Ireland-Vietnam double taxation agreement signed.</p> <p>IDEAS high-level visit to Ireland.</p> <p>May: VOICE programme approved by Office of the Government of Vietnam, with total budget of €2.9m.</p> <p>September: Advisory Board of Irish Aid visit to Vietnam.</p> <p>One UN visit to Vietnam with co-chairs of the SWC group (Ambassadors Kavanagh and Mahiga).</p> <p>November: Further €4.5 million committed to MPDF for the three-year period 2009-2011.</p> <p>December: PRSC 8 cycle began building on PRSC 7 policy areas.</p>
2009	<p>Ongoing impact of international financial crisis lowers economic growth.</p> <p>OECD-DAC Review of IA Programme: ‘Strong, cutting-edge development programme which is well focused on the world’s poorest people’. Presented number of recommendations for increased effectiveness.</p>	<p>GoV implements stimulus to prevent recession. Vietnam’s economic activity holds up quite well (WB 5% annual growth forecast).</p> <p>World Bank notes evidence of greater hardship during the first half of 2009, especially in industrial parks and handicraft villages.</p>	<p>April: Joint GoV-donor Mid-Term Review of P135-II undertaken (Ireland co-chair of P135-II Partnership Committee from January to June).</p> <p>June: PRSC 8 document submitted to the World Bank’s Board of Executive Directors.</p>	<p>Original 2009 country budget €23.7m revised down to €14.7m<sup>23</sup> due to global economic slowdown.</p> <p>Vietnam Deputy PM visits Ireland. MoU on political consultations signed.</p> <p>February: UXO and demining external evaluation by Irish Defence Forces and independent consultant (Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam).</p> <p>April: DFA Inspection visit.</p> <p>May: PAEG approval of IDEAS and PI. Two-year Prosperity Initiative (PI) programme launched to increase market access and waged labour in the bamboo sector (€0.9m</p>

<sup>23</sup> Includes €1m for unexploded ordnance clearance and demining activities in Lao PDR and Cambodia.

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Date	International Context	Vietnam Context	Other Development Interventions	IA Interventions/Decisions re: Vietnam
		<p>Typhoons Ketsana and Mirinae strike central Vietnam.</p> <p>Vietnam rates 2.7 in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, a ranking of 120/180 countries.</p>		<p>allocated); GoI/GoV joint evaluation of VOICE undertaken.</p> <p>June: Brendan Rogers, Director General of IA, visit to Vietnam.</p> <p>July: Development Specialist vacancy filled at Embassy.<sup>24</sup></p> <p>IA Vietnam team developed a preliminary results framework and logic model in advance of MTR.</p> <p>Oct/Nov: CBI, ESRI &amp; Enterprise Ireland (EI) visits/events.</p> <p>November: Internal Mid-Term CSP Review (MTR) undertaken.</p> <p>November: First Ireland-Vietnam Business Forum held in partnership with Enterprise Ireland under the auspices of the IDEAS programme.</p> <p>November: Committee for Ethnic Minorities on learning visit to Ireland.</p>
2010	<p>Vietnam assumes the chair of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).</p> <p>SBV devalues the dong by 3.25% and places a cap on US\$ deposit interest rates.</p>		<p>UNEG One Plan impact evaluation scheduled.</p> <p>Vietnam selected as a Division of Labour (DoL) country case study by EC and EU MS - reporting at mid-year EU DGs' meeting.</p>	<p>January: One week ESRI training for NCSEIF.</p> <p>Q2 2010: Anticipated arrival of new Head of Development at Embassy. With addition of a Programme Assistant, brings staffing up to complement.</p> <p>March: Ministerial visit to Vietnam; NCSEIF visit to Ireland and ESRI.</p> <p>April: Second Ireland-Vietnam Business Forum held in HCMC in partnership with Enterprise Ireland.</p> <p>June: IA's Technical Assistance proposal for P135-II</p>

<sup>24</sup> The vacancy at Development Specialist level in 2007 and 2008 impacted on the capacity of IA to contribute actively to the various working groups of the PRSC. Also with the departure of one staff member end 2009 there is still one vacancy at the Development Specialist level.

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Date	International Context	Vietnam Context	Other Development Interventions	IA Interventions/Decisions re: Vietnam
				approved by GoV. April/July: External evaluation.

## Annex 5 – Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions	Sources of Information
<b><i>Relevance – Did IA plan to do the right thing? Were the objectives of IA support in line with priorities?</i></b>		
Overall strategy and areas selected for intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does IA have a clear, focused country strategy that explains the rationale for the programme?</li> <li>• How far is the country strategy based on a realistic assessment of the country’s development plans, and how was that assessment carried out? Does the country strategy attempt to address identified gaps?</li> <li>• To what extent is the country strategy aligned with development needs and policy priorities of Vietnam? To what extent is it aligned with the principles in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Hanoi Core Statement?</li> <li>• To what extent is the country strategy aligned with the needs of poor households and vulnerable groups?</li> <li>• To what extent is the IA strategy in line with corporate priorities, and the principles outlined in the Irish Aid White Paper? Did some priority issues receive more attention than others, and if so what is the justification for this?</li> <li>• How was a balance achieved between corporate and country policy and priorities?</li> </ul>	<p>Documentary analysis looking at government policy, economic and social analysis reports, reports of other development partners, MDG reports</p> <p>Interviews with IA HQ and field, other donors, Gov. of Vietnam officials</p> <p>Analysis of CSP and internal documentation on process</p>
Choice of partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the choice of partners in the CSP appropriate to the context and the objectives?</li> <li>• How was the choice of partners made?</li> </ul>	
Approach to cross-cutting themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did IA have a strategy for addressing the identified cross-cutting issues of Irish Aid (gender, environment, governance and HIV/AIDS)?</li> <li>• To what extent was the strategy consistent with IA policy on cross-cutting issues?</li> <li>• How relevant was the accent on different cross-cutting themes to the development needs of Vietnam?</li> </ul>	Interviews with IA staff (HQ and field)
Risk management and flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How systematically did IA assess external risks in the CSP?</li> <li>• Were lessons learned from other IA programmes taken into account in the design?</li> <li>• Were elements/approaches built into the CSP to allow for the programme to adjust to evolving developments in the local, regional and global contexts? What risk management strategy was foreseen and employed?</li> </ul>	IA policy documents on cross-cutting issues

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions	Sources of Information
<b><i>Coherence – Does the programme represent a balanced selection of interventions which are interlinked and mutually complementary so as to achieve the full set of CSP objectives?</i></b>		
Nature of the design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the selection of programme components coherent with the CSP/IA overall objectives?</li> <li>• Were the assumptions behind the programme and the interaction of the different components realistic?</li> <li>• To what extent were synergies expected to emerge between the various components? Were the interactions between components thought through? Were there any obvious gaps?</li> <li>• What degree of emphasis was given to each component of the programme (in terms of budgets, staffing, engagement), and how did that match the CSP/IA overall objectives?</li> <li>• To what extent did Ireland ensure that there was an effective coherence between development and other objectives, especially in the context of the economic and trade ties between the two countries?</li> <li>• How relevant was experience elsewhere to the IA programme in Vietnam? To what extent did the programme build on areas of strength of Irish Aid and of its experience in development in other countries?</li> <li>• To what extent and how was M&amp;E integrated into the design at the outset, and how did this evolve during the course of the CSP?</li> </ul>	<p>Interviews with IA staff and with other development partners (especially those no longer in-country who are aware of the start-up)</p> <p>Analysis of budgets, expenditure and programmes for the CSP, including funding provided by other donors</p>
Choice of aid instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was the balance between different aid instruments determined?</li> <li>• Was the choice of aid instruments in line with the priorities identified and logical given the approach and interventions of other partners? Did it adequately take account of synergies with the approaches and interventions of the government and other partners?</li> <li>• How far was the political economy and governance context taken into account in deciding on aid instruments?</li> <li>• How were the aid instruments utilised to develop an Irish engagement on the policy priorities?</li> </ul>	
Level and allocation of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the strategy appropriate to the level of resources available?</li> <li>• Did the distribution of resources in the CSP reflect the priorities identified and make sense given the objectives of the programme?</li> <li>• How were the human and financial resources used in leveraging inputs into policy dialogue and priority setting?</li> </ul>	
Choice of partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the balance between government interventions, civil society and private sector support</li> </ul>	

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions	Sources of Information
	<p>appropriate to the focus of the programme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the balance between national and decentralised support appropriate and coherent with the objectives of the programme?</li> <li>• How were partners selected and involved in programme design? To what extent was this shared process with national authorities, development partners and other stakeholders? What lessons can be learned from stakeholder involvement in design and in the implementation of the programme?</li> <li>• How were the interests of various partners balanced off in the design of the CSP? Were the right decisions taken in this respect?</li> </ul>	
<b>Logic – Was the relationship between the components, approaches, and actors of the programme in line with the objectives and outcomes which were envisioned?</b>		
Context and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the approach of the programme logical given the political and development contexts within which the CSP is implemented?</li> <li>• Does/did the programme make sense given the objectives and the areas of focus of other partners?</li> <li>• Were the partnerships chosen logical given the activities of other donors and of the Vietnamese Government?</li> <li>• Has the balance of support to government and civil society and between different aid modalities been logical and appropriate?</li> </ul>	<p>Logic model</p> <p>Analysis of documentation on policy and programmes of other donors</p>
Overall strategy and areas selected for intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What evidence exists that the objectives that IA set out in the CSP are being achieved or are likely to be achieved in practice?</li> <li>• What are the areas of success/failure to date and what lessons can be learned?</li> <li>• Have there been unexpected outcomes? What factors and rationale explain areas of divergence from the initial CSP?</li> <li>• To what extent was the programme able to adapt to opportunities and changes in the environment?</li> <li>• Did the programme implementation allow for Irish Aid comparative strengths to be used to maximum effect?</li> </ul>	Interviews with key stakeholders
Choice of aid instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How far did the actual mix of instruments reflect what was planned?</li> <li>• What were the reasons for any departures from the planned mix?</li> <li>• How effective has the mix of aid instruments been/or is it expected to be in achieving objectives?</li> </ul>	

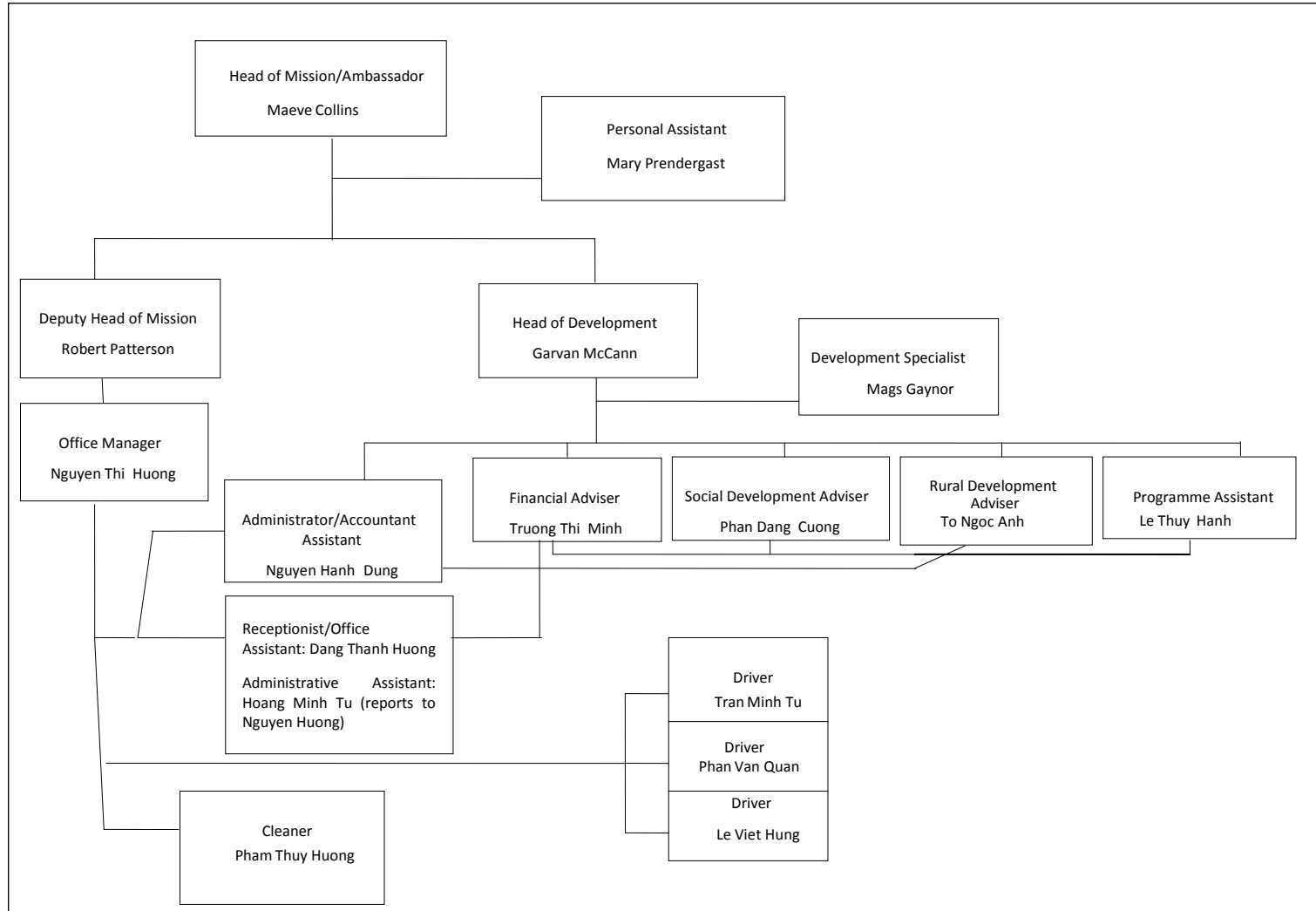
Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions	Sources of Information
Partnership strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has IA worked effectively with other partners? To what extent has IA been effective in communicating its approach and objectives to its partners?</li> <li>What influence has IA had on government?</li> <li>In what areas has IA support influenced actions by other partners?</li> <li>How has Irish Aid performed in relation to the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness/Hanoi Core Statement? How has Ireland engaged with other development partners, and others (including the Government of Vietnam), in terms of the overall aid effectiveness performance in Vietnam?</li> </ul>	
Cross-cutting themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have issues of gender, governance, environment and HIV/AIDS been addressed in implementation in an effective manner, and one that is coherent with the evolving priorities?</li> </ul>	
Level and allocation of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has resource allocation reflected priorities in the CSP?</li> <li>What adjustments were made and were these coherent with the context and needs?</li> <li>Have the budgets been based on sound macro-economic and public financial management (PFM) expenditure analysis?</li> <li>How have requirements in relation to value for money (VFM) and accountability been addressed?</li> </ul>	
Results focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What monitoring and evaluation system was utilised during the CSP?</li> <li>Have results been adequately monitored in practice?</li> <li>What linkages have been developed with national and other relevant results frameworks?</li> </ul>	
<b>Efficiency – How efficiently has IA delivered on its objectives?</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the skill mix and continuity of staff in line with the priorities of the CSP?</li> <li>Has the ratio of administrative to programme spending been reasonable?</li> <li>Has monitoring of results been effectively used to influence programme decision making?</li> <li>How far have results of monitoring informed decision making on resourcing and staff?</li> </ul>	<p>Interviews: Staff internal to IA</p> <p>Comparison with other aid programmes as relevant</p>
<b>Sustainability – Are the changes that are taking place likely to survive? How resilient are the benefits to risks?</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What approaches to capacity building are being taken?</li> <li>What mechanisms are in place to coordinate and build synergies across capacity-building initiatives (within Irish Aid and more generally)?</li> <li>Has a common framework and approach to capacity development been developed by the donor community in Vietnam, and what has been the Irish Aid role in this?</li> </ul>	<p>Interviews: In particular decentralised levels, also Vietnam Government and other partners + external stakeholders</p>



Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions	Sources of Information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has local capacity been built?</li> <li>• To what extent has the policy and governance environment been strengthened?</li> <li>• To what extent has transparency and accountability been strengthened?</li> <li>• Is there evidence that civil society and marginalised groups exercise greater influence?</li> <li>• Have key risks been addressed?</li> <li>• What are the critical success factors for the programme?</li> </ul>	

## Annex 6 – Staff Organigram: IA Office Hanoi

20 May 2010



## Annex 7 – Integration and Mainstreaming of Cross-Cutting Issues in the IA Programme

Programme component	Includes attention to the following cross-cutting issues:	Mainstreams the following cross-cutting issues:
<b>Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC)</b>	Gender Governance Environment Disability HIV & AIDS	Governance (mainly accountability)
<b>Programme 135, Phase 2 (P135-II)</b>	Gender HIV/AIDS Governance	Governance
<b>Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF)</b>	Gender	
<b>Ireland-Vietnam Blood-Borne Virus Initiative (IVVI)</b>	HIV/AIDS	HIV/AIDS
<b>Prosperity Initiative (PI)</b>	Gender Environment	
<b>Civil Society Facility (CSF)</b>	Gender Governance Disability HIV/AIDS	Governance (participatory and inclusive planning)
<b>Bilateral Links between Ireland and Vietnam (IDEAS)</b>	-	-
<b>Support for UN Reform ('One UN')</b>	Gender Governance Disability HIV/AIDS	Gender Governance HIV/AIDS (to some extent)
<b>VOICE</b>	Gender Governance	Governance (participation and decentralisation)

## Annex 8 – Summary responses to key evaluation questions

Evaluation question	Main findings/conclusions
<p>To what extent does the CSP address the <b>developmental challenges and priorities of Vietnam</b> and the needs of poor households and vulnerable groups?</p>	<p><b>The CSP addresses important Vietnamese priorities and needs.</b> To address poverty, Vietnam will need to further develop its economy and use the wealth that is being generated to benefit those that are poorest and most vulnerable. The CSP has a strong focus on poverty and ethnic minorities and on addressing issues of exclusion. It also focuses on improving economic activity, in particular of the most excluded groups.</p>
<p>Has the CSP focused on <b>issues of poverty reduction in a substantive manner</b>; is it addressing these at the national and local level?</p>	<p><b>Poverty has been an important but not exclusive focus of the CSP</b>, and a substantial amount of funding and staff time has focused on the poverty agenda e.g. through participation in P135-II, VOICE and through the CSF. IA has effectively identified a number of key themes that it has moved forward (e.g. disability, HIV/AIDS livelihoods support).</p>
<p>How <b>does the CSP respond to Vietnam’s twin-track development</b> of rapid economic growth and industrialisation on the one hand and continuing pockets of chronic poverty on the other?</p>	<p><b>The CSP includes a balance of economic and poverty-related components, reflecting the approach of the GoV.</b> On the poverty side the CSP has focused on vulnerable and marginalised groups, on addressing exclusion and marginalisation, and on livelihoods. The poverty focus has been on two of the three factors that are identified in the WB Country Social Analysis as contributing to exclusion (which are assets, capacity, and voice). Education/capacity, a key factor in marginalisation, has not been a specific focus, although it continues to be a major bottleneck. This is potentially a weakness in IA’s approach, and could be strengthened further through developing the scholarships aspect of the IDEAS programme and through integrating an education focus in a possible future provincial engagement.</p> <p>In economic growth the focus has been on strengthening SMEs, on encouraging business opportunities and on strengthening capacity for macro-economic management.</p> <p>While the IDEAS programme is valued by the GoV and considered innovative, IA added value has been strongest in the poverty/exclusion agenda. This reflects areas of IA’s own expertise and experience.</p>
<p><b>Has the choice of partners been appropriate</b> given the political and development contexts within which the CSP is implemented, and in light of other donor activities?</p>	<p><b>IA has engaged with a range of partners and has chosen to spread its area of outreach and influence widely.</b> This was inevitable for an inception programme in a new country that needed to make a mark. However, it was sensible to avoid areas where a large number of donors were already active (education, health).</p>

Evaluation question	Main findings/conclusions
<p>Is the balance between support for government institutions and civil society, and between the different aid modalities (general budget support, national targeted programmes, multi-donor pooled funds and projects) <b>logical and appropriate?</b></p>	<p><b>IA adopted a balanced intervention across national and local government, civil society and individuals.</b> Sensibly, given the need to establish a sound relationship first with GoV, IA has not worked much in the more specialised areas of the media, Parliament, judicial and audit institutions. Work across all major aid modalities was sensible initially, but modality choice should probably be more focused in future interventions. In particular, the rationale for general budget support and support to NTPs looks weaker than provincial budget support and projects in defined areas.</p>
<p>Has the programme been designed in a <b>collaborative manner with national and local authorities</b>, other stakeholders and in alignment with Government of Vietnam and Irish Aid policies, as well as in a harmonised way with other development partners?</p>	<p><b>Mostly design has been collaborative, but a stronger focus on civil society and decentralised levels could have been present.</b> The CSP was preceded by a long period of design. Consultation with stakeholders was a key characteristic of the design phase, with a particular focus on national level actors (GoV and other donors), as well as consultations with civil society representatives. The GoV took ownership of the programme by clearly indicating where its priorities and interests lay. The design reflects key GoV priorities (the SEDP) and the IA White Paper. Most of the components are harmonised with other development partners.</p>