

### 3.2 Official Development Assistance

In writing this report, especially when it came to Cambodia, the evaluators looked at contribution towards development outcomes rather trying to focus on evidence of attribution.

The evaluators understand that the relationships in terms of development partners in Vietnam and Cambodia are very different and have had different impacts over time.

**Vietnam** - Swedish ODA has had a long history through a very traumatic time in Vietnamese history (Vietnam War). Indeed this relationship commenced with Vietnam in 1967 and moved very quickly fueled by internal sentiments in Sweden concerning the need to help the Vietnamese people to alleviate their suffering during the war. Sweden provided humanitarian aid in the form of medical supplies and non-ear-marked funds through the Red Cross since 1967. Official diplomatic relations between Sweden and Vietnam began in 1969 which helped cement the relationship between the two countries. In 1970, the Swedish Embassy opened in Hanoi. From 1973, Swedish ODA increased rapidly to \$US 157 million in 1975 with its peak in 1977 at \$US309 million. Following withdrawal of the US, and during the 1980s, Sweden provided 64 % of total bilateral ODA budget (GHD/Evaluation, pg. 28). It totaled no less than \$US100 million up to 1986. After this it ranged between \$US87 million and \$US28 million per year. Overall, Vietnam received ODA from all 23 current DAC donors. Since 1960, the most ODA came from the USA, Japan and Sweden (together accounting for 75% percent of Vietnam's bilateral ODA).

Swedish ODA in Vietnam partnered with the GoV through many stages driven by local needs:

- From a Paper and Pulp Mill to Broader Rural Development which helped publish text books for children
- The Emergence of a Participatory Agenda – an evolutionary perspective in many projects but particularly in the Chia Se Poverty Reduction project planned in 2001. It is still considered as highly innovative and progressive because it expands the poverty reduction theme to governance and democratic principles such as participation. In other words, although it is about alleviating poverty, it accomplishes this partly through a comprehensive effort to encourage meaningful village level beneficiary participation and encourages democratic ideals i.e. participation in governance and decentralization.
- Importantly, Chia Se boasts GoV ownership and leadership through being aligned with GoV objectives on comprehensive poverty reduction and growth strategies (CPRGS).
- Poverty has decreased more in areas where Chia Se has been active, i.e., Yen Phong commune, Bac Me district, and Ha Giang which fell from 70 % in 2004 to 24.6 % in 2009. This is important not only for results but also because it helps cement views that involvement in governance can help promote development, prosperity and D/HR.
- Another initiative that connected media and democracy in 2000 was preceded by an in-depth assessment of co-operation in media and culture which noted that greater priority was being placed on democracy in the 2000-2002 country strategy for development co-operation. This helped generate more openness and understanding by journalists and the public on issues i.e. need to combat corruption. The

assessment argued that, given its relationship, “Sweden at that point of time had an opportunity to influence and reinforce the democratization process and that this opportunity should not be lost” (Sida, 2002).

- In Vietnam, the ability to have an impact and be instrumental in changing attitudes and moving the agenda forward rested on the characteristics of Swedish ODA to Vietnam:

**The Platform - A ‘special relationship’** which is the base for all programming on sensitive issues in Vietnam. This platform gave Sweden the ability to make progress in areas such as anti-corruption, media, democratization and decentralization in rural poverty alleviation. This relationship, cultivated over 4 decades, helped to foster trust. The relationship building approach has, by all accounts, been characterized by flexibility, openness and willingness to push at the right intervals for change.

**A long term approach to development** – As we have said, Sweden’s long-term approach to development helped build the kind of trust between these two development partners that made sensitive subjects possible to address. In short, Sweden has been a good development partner: encouraging ownership, aligning with in country development needs, working to harmonize with other international development partners, and to manage results and be mutually accountable (GHD/Evaluation, pg. 59). By fostering understanding and trust, it was able to ‘read’ the moment when it was appropriate to move forward on difficult and sensitive topics for the GoV.

**Cambodia** - The longer term impact of the changing aid context in Cambodia (including with respect to Swedish ODA) is more difficult to establish. In terms of Swedish ODA, the timeframe is not comparable to Vietnam and the nature of the ODA relationship is also quite different. Swedish ODA in Cambodia has been characterized by work with many partners i.e. civil society, multilaterals, RGC TWGs, and other donors. Therefore, its relationship with the RGC is still developing at the same time as the Cambodian ODA context is changing.

For example, during the Phase 2 Evaluation of the PD in Cambodia, the evaluators found that a challenge was that China (a non-DAC donor), which is a major provider of financial assistance to Cambodia, is not working or supporting traditional development areas i.e. health, rural development, democracy, decentralization etc. The evaluators also pointed out the growing relevance of such donors (non-DAC and private funding) is important to keep in mind since it is likely to have a future impact on achieving the key tenets of the PD and AAA

Results based approaches are becoming common practice in development cooperation in Cambodia. However, many of these systems and working practices are not robust or fully matured to the level where results based approaches are routinely incorporated. Also, during this evaluation, although some development outcomes were evidenced, most results are output level (see below for details). Also, given the timeframe and multiplicity of partners in Cambodia, direct impact is more difficult to discern than in Vietnam where the progression is more readily visible.

In Cambodia there has been more work through other modalities such as working through Swedish Framework Organizations (such as Forum-Syd and Diakonia) which work with networks dealing with human rights and justice related issues. But at present, there is movement to work more closely with the RGC. In terms of work on decentralization and de-concentration through the PSDD and the NSDD, the RGC has worked well with development partners at the local level (commune but less well at the provincial level). To complicate this further, while PBAs, such as the PSDD, comply with the PD, they make it difficult to judge direct impact.

## Output and Outcome Level Results

### Freedom of Expression

**Result 1 (Cambodia):** Support for involving the press in peace building has helped tell the story to the larger society and swayed public opinion by conveying the message of reconciliation to their audience and making it part of the national narrative.

**Result 2 (Cambodia):** Using multi-partner approaches to influence media has resulted in a consistent and more broadly appealing message. Also, linking with the past (i.e., with the testimonials of the 1980s) can help Cambodian victims feel that they have not been forgotten and that indeed there is a desire to render justice. Also, this process links the international process (the ECCC) with the local (the PRK).

**Result 3 (Vietnam):** Professionalization of institutions has been an excellent way of institutionalizing change over time. This has helped make the work in which Sweden has been engaged for so long sustainable and also helps build long term capacity of national institutions.

**Result 4 (Vietnam):** As journalists professionalize and work their message into daily papers and newsletters, they have helped revise the public debate on many sensitive issues: participative governance, human rights, media, anti-corruption, access to justices, ethnic minorities, gender, etc.

**Result 5 (Vietnam):** The holistic approach which Sweden has used, i.e., working with professionals as well as the GoV and the Party, has helped transform debate at the higher levels (although it is certainly a slow process). The ‘Special Relationship’ is helping institutionalize some improvements.

### Political Framework for Democratic Procedures

**Result 6 (Cambodia):** There is increasing participation at many levels including the local level (i.e., in the commune government). This support has helped involve those who would not normally be empowered: the poor and rural communities, women, ethnic minorities, etc. Some of these groups now feel that they can have influence over their own reality and input into promoting greater participation and democracy in Cambodia.

**Result 7 (Cambodia):** The PSDD, which was in large measure supported by Sweden and benefited from their leadership, has also included support from other donors in a harmonized manner: DfID and UNDP worked with relevant TWGs. This is a very positive development and is consistent with the Paris Declaration Agenda on Aid Effectiveness.

**Result 8 (Cambodia):** Work is in progress to deal with local accountability issues and discretionary resources to communes, districts and provinces and technical assistance associated with the NCDD Annual WP and Budget.

**Result 9 (Vietnam):** Local decision-making has been enhanced and seems to have produced a multiplier effect vis a vis empowerment and a desire for people at many levels to participate in governance (which is a critical part of democracy)

**Result 10 (Vietnam):** Rural empowerment, as in Cambodia, has helped empower some of the most vulnerable members of society, i.e., rural poor and ethnic minorities. In addition, a sense of improved community relations in villagers is positive and demonstrates a growing sense of self-confidence in locals.

## Democratic Administration

**Result 11 (Cambodia):** Again there is a positive sense of commune council empowerment, and positive developments in terms of such mechanisms as the Sangkat Fund.

**Result 12 (Cambodia):** The PSDD project encourages more control at the local level. It has also enhanced the voice of local commune officials who defend their members against injustices.

**Result 13 (Vietnam):** The ‘one-stop- shopping’ approach of the Quang Tri Pilot seems to have been very effective and has reduced the amount of administrative time which many Vietnamese find critical to their well-being, i.e., land tenure certificates are obtained much more quickly and with less bureaucracy. This result is much better than the national average and has helped empower people.

**Result 14 (Vietnam):** Other donors have become interested in this approach, i.e. Finland. Findings of the Quang Tri project have been replicated in other areas.

## Justice Framework

**Result 15 (Cambodia):** Working to help draw attention to the legal system through the work of local NGOs funded by Forum Syd and Diakonia has had positive results. Both of these Swedish Framework Organizations work with, and provide support to, a variety of civil society organizations in a number of areas including legal aid.

**Result 16 (Cambodia):** For example, the Cambodian Defenders Project provides qualified juridical support and services in both civil and criminal cases to poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups of society. For example, Forum-Syd works with the CDP (Cambodian Defenders Project) to handle an increasing number of cases especially concerned with violations of women’s rights.

**Result 17 (Vietnam):** There has been an extensive amount of joint work and technical assistance provided by Sweden to help ‘modernize’ the Vietnamese penal code. This work, and recent work on anti-corruption, are both very sensitive issues for the GoV.

**Result 18 (Vietnam):** With respect to key justice sector institutions and rule of law, the Communist Party issued Resolution No. 49JRS. This was a very positive development originated by Vietnam. It calls for improvement of criminal policies and procedures, clear distinctions between administration management and judicial decision-making, including safeguarding the independence of the judiciary.

## Democratic Civil Society

**Result 19 (Cambodia):** The work of Forum-Syd and Diakonia supporting CSOs has helped build a vibrant NGO community that has the skill sets to work on issues related to: free and fair elections, judicial support services, land disputes, ethnic minority and indigenous rights, youth and women’s organizations and newer issues related to climate change and working to counter the effects of exploitation of natural resources by international business interests.

**Result 20 (Cambodia):** More successful CSOs have utilized informal links that they have developed with individual MPs and others. Other CSOs appear not to have established concrete networks with MPs or others. Developing these relationships appears important for CSOs.

**Result 21 (Cambodia):** It is important to think of the diverse but integral roles that each of the development programs being supported plays. These diverse programs would benefit from working more closely together since they could provide one another with cross fertilization of ideas and lessons learned which would support a more programmatic approach to Sida in Cambodia.

**Result 22 (Vietnam):** Thanks in part to the Access to Justice Initiative, there is a willingness on the part of the GoV to sit down with some NGOs to discuss this issue.

**Result 23 (Vietnam):** Sweden began this initiative and is now part of a group of donors including the Netherlands and UNDP with Denmark as lead now. This is an example of development partner harmonization. The grant fund provides valuable D/HR funds for CSOs.

### Gender Equality

**Result 24 (Cambodia):** More women than ever have been involved at the local level (commune level) in politics and many women are also part of women parliamentarian strengthening initiatives.

**Result 25 (Cambodia):** Gender equality was a concern for the PSDD. When it came to decentralization and de-concentration, some feared that increased local ownership would not retain a strong emphasis on gender equality but this doesn't appear to have happened. Many women seem to have benefited from this move to centralize.

**Result 26 (Vietnam):** Gender equality seems to have encountered less resistance in Vietnam than in some other SE Asian countries where fewer opportunities exist for women. Gender equality is an integral part of the development agenda for most donors and made an impact.

### Human Rights Strengthening

**Result 27 (Cambodia):** Forum-Syd and Diakonia have helped their local CSO partners through provision of technical assistance and capacity building. Their work as facilitators of networks has helped bring together interested CSOs at all levels of society. Many of their partners are leaders in human rights in Cambodia (i.e. LICARDO) and well known regionally within ASEAN.

**Result 28 (Vietnam):** There is a strong relationship between the MOJ of Vietnam and Sweden. As mentioned earlier, substantial work has been done reforming the legal system and drafting laws.

**Result 29 (Vietnam):** Work on dispute resolution and legal aid provide greater access to justice.

**Result 30 (Vietnam):** The Anti-Corruption dialogue is now led by the UK since Sweden has stepped back from its previous leadership role. Sweden is still involved but is supporting other donors and harmonizing in reporting results as is the case with the Access to Justice Project.