
GEF Evaluation Office

Stockholm Environment Institute

Evaluation of GEF Capacity Development Activities

Vietnam Country Case Study

*Capacity Development Information Document No. 4
Prepared by Stockholm Environment Institute*

September 2007

NOT EDITED

This paper was commissioned by the GEF Evaluation Office (GEF EO) as an input into its evaluation of GEF capacity development activities.

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the GEF Evaluation Office, the GEF Council, or the Governments they represent. The authors of this document would welcome any comments or suggestions on its contents.

The papers in the Capacity Development Information Documents series, as of October 2007, are:

- No.1 Approach Paper (original version - November 2006) - *Todd and Risby*
- No.2 Literature Review of Guidance on Capacity Development - *Angulo*
- No.4 Philippines Country Case Study - *Viggh and Todd*
- No.3 Vietnam Country Case Study - *Stockholm Environment Institute*

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Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by the Stockholm Environment Institute, with Professor John Soussan the lead author and evaluation team leader and substantial inputs provided by Eva Lindskog and Dr. Tim McGrath. The SEI team was supported throughout by a dedicated group of Vietnamese colleagues who in particular undertook the substantial quantity of fieldwork the evaluation necessitated. Dr. Dang Vu Khac coordinated these inputs and provided many insights to the final product. The rest of the team, whose efforts are greatly appreciated, was Professor Nguyen Hoang Tri, Dr. Dinh Van Thuan, Nguyen Lan Phuong, Vu The Ha, Bui Thi Hong Tham and Vu Hoang Khanh Linh.

The SEI team was supported and assisted throughout by many people in Vietnam. Special thanks are due to the Vietnam GEF Focal Point, Nguyen Van Tai, who provided the SEI team with invaluable support and encouragement throughout. Many other people also provided support, including invaluable information and advice provided by Nguyen Thi Kim Anh, Koos Neefjes and several of their colleagues of the UNDP office in Hanoi as well as Pham Nguyet Anh and colleagues of the World Bank.

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Summary of Key Findings

The **GEF portfolio** in Vietnam consists of ten biodiversity projects (two FSP and eight MSP), five climate change projects (all FSP) and an active SGP with 72 projects active or completed and others in the pipeline. There are also six international waters projects listed that contain a Vietnam component, but only two of these are in practice active in the country.

The overall assessment of the **coordination and management** of the GEF programme in Vietnam is good, with a coherent set of institutional arrangements and a planning process based on widespread stakeholder consultations. This reflects the successful implementation of enabling activities, including the preparation of a Strategic Action Plan prepared through the National Capacity Self-Assessment process.

The evaluation found that **capacity development activities** of various sorts were a major part of the GEF portfolio across the board. All projects examined contained some capacity development activities and in most cases these were central to the attainment of the project's objectives. All stakeholders consulted and documents examined identified capacity development as an integral part of the GEF programme in Vietnam,

A diverse range of capacity development activities was identified, including formal training activities, 'learning by doing' and awareness raising activities at the individual level, the introduction of various forms of improved management, production or marketing systems, pilot/demonstration activities, enhanced monitoring and evaluation and, in a few cases, the establishment of new organisations and the development of new or improved laws, policies and strategies and enhanced coordination between organisations at the systemic level.

The capacity development activities scored well in terms of their **relevance** to the contemporary situation in Vietnam, with a good level of **national ownership** of most of the capacity development activities. Most projects were well aligned with national policy priorities and institutional processes and were relevant and valuable in providing strategic opportunities to innovate and lessons for replication. The climate change and SGP portfolios were seen as particularly relevant.

The **effectiveness** of the GEF capacity development activities in Vietnam is mixed, with some areas of activity seen as effective in terms of providing new skills and institutional capacities that had direct and immediate impacts on the concerned sector; but others where the capacity development activities had less immediate and direct impacts.

Overall, in project evaluation terms the capacity development activities were **efficient** in that goals and targets were met to a satisfactory level. All of the projects examined in detail have performed reasonably or well in terms of meeting capacity development objectives within budget and on time. The overall management of the portfolio by the national focal point and the Implementing Agencies was very good, efficient in terms of the resources used and appreciated by all stakeholders.

The **sustainability** of the capacity development impacts of the GEF portfolio is a mixed story. There are a number of significant changes to individual capabilities, national policies and strategies and to institutional structures and mandates that are long-term and have been adopted with a good level of commitment. The SGP projects scored highly in terms of sustainability: the support given by the SGP was usually complemented by additional support from other sources. In contrast, there are concerns over the sustainability of other aspects of the capacity development activities, especially in relation to changes at the community level and in livelihood activities. In some cases, training was appreciated but new capabilities were not used.

All aspects of the GEF Vietnam portfolio included a considerable range and quantity of capacity development activities focused at the **individual level**. The effectiveness and long-term impacts of these efforts is mixed, with a range of benefits that are making a difference to environmental management in Vietnam and that are likely to endure but also questions over the sustainability and effectiveness of other activities given the lack of an environment in which the individual capabilities that were developed could be effectively employed. The SGP and climate change projects were more consistently effective at the individual level than the biodiversity and international waters projects.

Overall, the impacts at the individual level are positive; a reflection of the very substantial efforts put into capacity development activities at this level in many projects; but also a reflection of the changing institutional environment in Vietnam, where in many cases the needs for new skills and approaches is recognized and where improvements to individual capabilities are accompanied by changes to institutional structures and procedures that mean these capabilities can be utilized.

There are also significant results at the **institutional level**, with many projects including the introduction of institutional reforms and/or new management systems that have enhanced institutional capacities in the different focal areas. The institutional systems introduced were often of a very practical nature, aimed at improving resource management or production systems. This includes the creation or improvement of protected area management, changes to electricity utilities and manufacturing enterprises, changes to planning and management systems in local and central government agencies and the wide variety of small scale but valuable innovations found in the SGP.

Two areas of the institutional changes where there are concerns are, firstly, the introduction of higher levels of community participation and, secondly, the development of sustainable management approaches. The scale and effectiveness of these key areas of institutional development were somewhat limited, reflecting a very low starting point and a high level of institutional inertia, and substantial challenges remain for improving and disseminating new approaches in these pivotal areas of institutional development.

The **systemic level** impacts of the GEF portfolio in Vietnam are patchy, with some aspects of the portfolio having a substantial impact, whilst others have been far more limited in their influence. Overall, the capacity development impacts at the systemic level have been positive, again reflecting the conducive environment for this in Vietnam, where the government is actively

seeking to improve environmental management and conservation. Of particular note at this level is the enabling activities implemented in Vietnam, which have been undertaken thoroughly and with wide participation. These have created a high level of coherence and effectiveness in the overall management of the GEF portfolio in Vietnam, which is well-embedded in the key national institutions.

The **overall impact** of the GEF portfolio in capacity development in Vietnam is significant and in general positive. There are a wide range of impacts on capacities at the individual, institutional and systemic level that taken together lead to the positive conclusions presented here. Of course, all is far from perfect and the analysis presented above has identified areas where there is room for improvement. In particular, there is scope for more innovative approaches, though introducing such innovations can be challenging in Vietnam. There are also concerns over the sustainability of a number of the capacity development activities implemented, with this particularly true in the biodiversity portfolio.

Balanced against these areas of concern are the positive impacts identified in many areas. Overall, these positive impacts accumulate to support the conclusion that the GEF has had a major impact upon environmental management capabilities in Vietnam: an impact that was noted by a wide range of stakeholders at all levels. In consequence, the overall conclusion on the **impact of the GEF on capacity development in Vietnam** is that it has been very positive, but that there is room for improvement in relation to engagement with local communities and the sustainability of some aspects of the impacts.

1. Evaluation Scope and Methodology

Background

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the impact of GEF activities on capacity development in Vietnam. The Vietnam country case study is part of a wider GEF evaluation of capacity development activities, with a parallel study in the Philippines. The approach and methodology followed was designed to permit comparability with the results of the wider study. The evaluation approach also reflects the Vietnam context, as a large and rapidly developing country that is undergoing structural change to many aspects of its policy and institutions.

Vietnam is increasingly integrating into global processes and shows a commitment to meet its international obligations with regard to environmental issues. There has been a significant shift in development thinking in the last two years, with a move from a “growth at any cost” approach to a desire to balance economic development, social equity and environmental sustainability in all areas of policy, investment and regulation. There is also an increasingly significant process of decentralization taking place that places responsibility for planning, budgeting and implementation of policies with province-level institutions. The government is also committed to policies of “grassroots democracy” and “socialization”¹ that together foster community participation and encourage local level private sector development.

These change processes have been rapid and structural: in many ways Vietnam today is profoundly different to the Vietnam of a decade ago. Many of the projects being evaluated were designed some time ago, when the political and institutional setting was very different to that found today. This presents challenges to an evaluation of capacity development, as activities undertaken have to be placed in their time and unrealistic criteria and expectations need to be avoided. This contextualization to the situation at the time activities were undertaken has been carefully followed in this evaluation.

The focus of the evaluation is on **capacity development**, as opposed to capacity building. The GEF see capacity development as a wider and continual process that reflects strong national ownership, building on what is available and allowing for synergies between local and external knowledge.

Definition²: Capacity Development is the process by which individuals, entities (groups, organisations and institutions) and systems (countries or societies) increase their individual and collective abilities, (a) to perform core functions, resolve problems and define and achieve objectives, and (b) to understand and deal with their

¹ The concept ‘socialization’ is under debate in Vietnam. Critical voices argue that it covers the intention of the central authorities to delegate costs down to local level; in other words: local people will have to carry the burden of commitments made at higher levels.

² Todd, D. (2006) *Evaluation of GEF Capacity Development Activities: Approach Paper*, GEF Evaluation Office, Washington D.C.

development needs within a broad context and in a sustainable manner....capacity development is a process of change that aims to induce various actors to adopt new responsibilities, skills, behaviour, values and policies.

GEF and the Implementing Agencies (UNDP, UNEP, World Bank) define three levels of capacity development.³ The evaluation of the GEF programme in Vietnam has examined the impacts of the activities undertaken in relation to these three levels, which are:

- **Individual:** changing attitudes and behaviour through training, learning by doing, participation, ownership, motivation, morale, accountability and responsibility.
- **Institutional:** overall performance and functioning capabilities, e.g. mandates, tools, procedures, guidelines, levels of decision-making, management and information systems, etc.
- **Systemic:** the overall policy, regulatory, economic, political and accountability framework within which individuals and institutions operate, including the nature and effectiveness of relationships between different institutions and categories of institutions.

Areas of Activity for Investigation

The GEF supports capacity development in Vietnam through five types of activity, listed below. The evaluation looked at what has happened in Vietnam in relation to each of these areas of activity. The method used to accomplish this is briefly described with each of the activity areas. The five areas of activity are:

National Focal Point Capacity Enhancement: In Vietnam this relates to the work of the overall focal point in MoNRE. There has been some small funding for this through UNDP. The objective of this programme is to:

- Increase the awareness of GEF strategic priorities, policies and programs;
- Creation of enhanced institutional memory of GEF activities within National Government Ministries;
- Support the creation of GEF coordination and resource units within National Government Ministries to increase coordination among national agencies and improve country ownership and a cohesive approach to global environmental issues;
- Promote mainstreaming of global environment issues into national sustainable development agendas;
- Strengthen stakeholder involvement in global environmental programs:

³ *ibid*

Method: the evaluation of this activity was mainly accomplished through a series of interviews with the national GEF focal point and other stakeholders. All relevant documents were also reviewed.

Enabling Activities (EAs) for Conventions: The objective of these programmes in the focal areas of biodiversity, climate change and persistent organic pollutants is to prepare and guide effective response measures (e.g. investment priorities); produce plans, strategies and encourage integration of Convention objectives into national development efforts and sectors; in doing so strengthen individual, institutional and national capacity that will contribute towards the achievement of Convention objectives.

Method: There have been a number of enabling activities funded by GEF and administered through the UNDP. There are five listed in the project list provided by GEF EO: (i) Development of National Implementation Plan for Vietnam in the Process of Accession, Implementation and Enforcement of the Newly-signed Stockholm Convention on POPs; (ii) Conservation Training and Biodiversity Action Plan; (iii) Enabling Activities for the Preparation of Initial Communication Related to the UNFCCC; (iv) Enabling Activity for the Clearing House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity; and (v) Expedited Financing for Interim Measures for Capacity Building in Priority Areas (Phase II) (administered through UNEP). The evaluation investigated their content and impact through the review of documents and discussions with UNDP, the national focal points and other participants in the different activities.

National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA): The objective of NCSA is to assist countries in preparing self-assessment of their capacity development needs and priorities to manage global environmental issues. Once countries identify capacity gaps, they are encouraged to develop a plan of action for overcoming them. NCSAs are intended to be entirely country-driven exercises.

Method: Vietnam has completed the NCSA process and the GEF focal point provided all reports from the exercise. The evaluation reviewed all documents, examined the NCSA process and planned follow-up and interviewed participants in the exercise.

Full Size Projects / Medium Size Projects Capacity Development Components: The main activities supported by the GEF are projects: FSPs and MSPs. These include national projects, covering only Vietnam, and regional projects, which include more than one country. Most GEF projects contain substantial capacity development objectives aimed at augmenting individual (e.g., training; skills and knowledge transfer; awareness-raising), institutional (e.g., organization development of existing governmental and non-governmental institutions) and enabling environmental (e.g., policy and legislative development and harmonization) capacities critical to the achievement of global environmental goals. However, in most of these projects, capacity development is not the principle objective, but a means to a broader global environmental goal. This has been the principle pathway for addressing country capacity development needs and GEF strategic priorities.

Method: the assessment of the FSPs and MSPs was the main area of evaluation. The Vietnam portfolio contains seven national FSPs (two biodiversity and five climate change), eight national MSPs (all biodiversity) and six regional (involving more than one country – all international waters) GEF projects (annex 1). The evaluation reviewed all available project documents for *all* of the projects, looking for all information on capacity development activities. This information was systematically collated and the information gathered was integrated into summary project pro formas. Where possible, interviews with the executing agency and other key stakeholders were also undertaken.

In addition, a **sample** of projects was selected for more detailed analysis including field based research and interviews with key stakeholders where necessary. The sample reflected a balance between focal areas and Implementing Agencies. A list of projects for more detailed analysis was agreed following discussions with the national GEF focal point, UNDP and the World Bank. The sample list is:

- Hon Mun Marine Protected Area Pilot Project (biodiversity, MSP, World Bank).
- Vietnam PARC - Creating Protected Areas for Resources Conservation (PARC) in Vietnam Using a Landscape Ecology Approach (biodiversity, FSP, UNDP).
- The Green Corridor (biodiversity, MSP, World Bank).
- In-situ Conservation of Native Landraces and their Wild Relatives in Vietnam (biodiversity, MSP, UNDP).
- Promoting Energy Conservation in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (PECSME) (climate change, FSP, UNDP).
- Demand-Side Management and Energy Efficiency Programme (climate change, FSP, World Bank).
- Building Partnerships for the Environmental Protection and Management of the East Asian Seas (international waters, FSP, UNDP).

Small Grants Programme (SGP): The SGP is primarily active at local individual and institutional capacity development scales in its activities to develop and implement technologies, building partnerships and share knowledge to address environmental problems. A strong emphasis is placed on replication of local activities over time through capacity development activities. The SGP is managed at the national level by UNDP and projects are selected on a flexible basis for funding up to a maximum of \$50,000. There are at present 72 SGP projects approved in Vietnam.

Method: the evaluation of the SGP in Vietnam is part of a global evaluation of the SGP and the GEF EO provided a list of 12 projects for field investigation (annex 1). Each was visited and an interview was conducted with the organisation that was the recipient of the grant. In some cases,

additional interviews with local stakeholders were also undertaken. The interviews assessed the actions implemented in terms of capacity development and what changes, if any, this has led to in the organisation's long-term capacities and work.

2. National Context and Creation of an Enabling Environment

The introduction emphasised the extent to which Vietnam is experiencing rapid change, both in general development terms and in relation to its approach to environmental management and sustainability. The receptivity of national institutions to improving the sustainable management and conservation of environmental assets is stronger than it has ever been, but all stakeholders interviewed stated that this willingness to act is not reflected in the policy or regulatory environment (though, as we shall see, this is changing rapidly) or, in particular, the capacities of institutions at all levels. The setting for effective uptake of capacity development from GEF-supported activities is consequently supportive.

This chapter discusses whether the activities in the GEF Vietnam programme have had an influence on the national context, both in terms of the specific enabling activities listed in section 1.2 and in relation to the overall influence of the GEF on environmental management and conservation capacities in Vietnam. The latter is in part assessed in relation to whether the GEF has influenced the trends towards greater concern over environmental sustainability within the national development process.

The first enabling activity to consider is the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA), which is intended to provide participating countries (there are 152 committed to producing a NCSA) with the opportunity and support needed to assess their capacity needs and to prepare a plan and initiate a strategy for strengthening national institutional capacities for environmental management. Peter Hunnam and Uli Piest⁴ identified a number of features of an effective NCSA process in the first quarter review of the NCSA Global Support Programme, which are in summary: (i) the NCSA is well planned and understood by national stakeholders; (ii) the outcomes are institutionalized; (iii) there is a lead agency; (iv) information sharing takes place; and (v) the NCSA develops the country's enabling environment.

Vietnam has a clear lead agency, the GEF Focal Point within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MoNRE). The Focal Point is supported by a National Steering Committee, consisting of representatives of several key ministries, and an Expert Group of leading environmental experts. Both of these support structures appear to meet regularly and their members are actively involved with GEF activities, including the NCSA process that Vietnam implemented. There are also sectoral focal points for three international conventions: the focal points for UNCBD and UNFCCC are located in MoNRE and the focal point for the UNCCD is located in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).

⁴ Powerpoint presentation to the NCSA national workshop, Hanoi, June 2006.

The NCSA process itself was well-organised and participatory. It started in October 2004 and support was provided by a group of international consultants with extensive experience of both the GEF and Vietnam. The NCSA was implemented through a structured and planned process consisting of seven identified stages and a series of consultations, stocktaking activities and meetings were held that culminated in three major outputs: a “Cross-Cutting Report on Capacity Constraints, Needs and Priorities in the Implementation of Rio Conventions” produced in February 2006, a “NCSA National Report” and “Vietnam’s Strategic Action Plan for Global Environmental Management”, both published in June 2006.

The content of these reports shows a good awareness of the key concepts of capacity development and an honest appraisal of Vietnam’s strengths and weaknesses at the time of writing. The first report assessed capacity constraints based on the three-fold categorization followed in the GEF assessment process: systemic, institutional and individual levels. At the systemic level, the report notes issues of poor coordination, limited implementation of existing laws and regulations, limited mechanisms for community participation, problems with information dissemination and *“inefficient integration of general environment needs, biodiversity, climate change and land degradation into socio-economic development programmes”*. Weaknesses at the institutional and individual levels are also noted, including limited knowledge, low staffing and budget commitments, poor technical and managerial skills and weak institutional support to environmental management issues.

The Action Plan includes a systematic and clear assessment of capacity development needs in five categories and actions to address these needs categorized into systemic, institutional and individual levels. These are summarised in a logframe. The categories of capacity development needs are: (i) awareness and knowledge of the three Rio conventions (UNCBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD); (ii) development and implementation of laws, policies, plans and programmes related to the conventions; (iii) collaboration between ministries and sectors; (iv) data collection and management; and (v) monitoring and evaluation.

The actions identified in the Action Plan are, on paper, logical and systematic. They are generic in character and their effectiveness will be contingent upon the extent to which they are planned in more detail and implemented, but these caveats aside the outcomes of the NCSA process are a balanced, systematic and open appraisal of Vietnam’s current limitations and a realistic portfolio of actions to address these weaknesses. Overall, Vietnam has diligently followed the NCSA process and produced the specified reports, and has done so in a way that has been open, participatory and thoughtful. It is too early to say whether the actions identified in the process will be fully and effectively followed through, but the NCSA process itself was important in bringing stakeholders together and creating a national consensus on capacity development needs and actions.

The NCSA process also included an assessment of earlier enabling activities in relation to the three conventions. These activities were also discussed with relevant stakeholders, including the UNDP as the principle Implementing Agency. Most were small in scale and duration and it is hard to separate their impact from wider capacity development activities and changes to the

policy and regulatory environment. The stakeholders consulted were appreciative of the enabling activities connected to the conventions and stated that they had permitted the implementation of activities, however modest, that it would have been difficult to support otherwise: overall, the GEF enabling activities provided modest but timely and strategically valued support to the development of an enabling environment in the fields of biodiversity conservation, climate change and degraded lands protection and restoration.

With regard to the overall national context, there is little doubt that the last decade, and especially more recent years, has seen major changes to the approach to environmental conservation in Vietnam. There has been a wide range of new legislation and new regulations in areas such as biodiversity conservation and, to a lesser extent, climate change. This reflects the changes in overall national approaches to sustainable development discussed above. The changes, which are inventoried in detail in the NCSA National Report, include the approval of the “National Sustainable Development Strategy or the Strategic Orientation for Sustainable Development in Vietnam” (the national Agenda 21) in 2004, the 2005 Law on Environmental Protection, an overall national strategy for environmental protection up to 2010.

Vietnam’s Agenda 21 redefined the traditional concept of ‘socio-economic’ development into ‘a tight, reasonable and harmonious combination of three elements: economic development, social equity and environmental protection’. This viewpoint on sustainable development has become centralized into the overall approach to the country’s future as the central philosophy in the 2006 Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010 (SEDP), which is the key document defining the development goals and mechanisms for the country. It defines a balanced set of economic, social and environmental goals and targets to support an overall sustainable development agenda. The new SEDP represents a radical departure from previous 5 year plans, where growth was emphasised as the central objective and physical investment targets were the main mechanism to achieve it.

The localization of the Agenda 21 in Vietnam is taken place in the city of Vinh as a pilot case. ‘The Agenda 21 Project’ supported by UNDP and Sida since 2001 is executed by the Ministry of Planning and Investment. The aim of the support is to constitute the framework from which future project interventions will be defined in partnership with the Government and other donors. Vietnam Agenda 21 will also raise the awareness of sustainable development, strengthen the capacity of Agenda 21 implementation for the key groups of partners, and policy analysis and establish database on sustainable development. The first phase of Vietnam Agenda 21 focused on drafting National Agenda 21 and preparing a report to the Johannesburg Summit in 2002. In 2005, intensive work (supported by UNDP and Sida) took place at the Ministry of Planning and Investment to develop a Strategic Environmental Assessment policy and plan and to enhance further and concretize the meaning of the ‘sustainable development’ paradigm at the local level.

Vietnam has also introduced specific legislation on topics such as the control of trade in wild species, a national wetlands action plan, an action plan to implement the Cartagena Protocol, a new law and a series of regulatory measures related to forest conservation (including significant GoV investment programmes such as Programme 327 and Programme 661), the creation of a

national system of protected areas, new policies and regulations related to different aspects of water resources management, actions to encourage energy conservation and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, a national action plan on the implementation of the UNCCD, legislation and regulations related to POPs and other forms of pollution and a range of other laws, decrees, policies, strategies and regulations related to environmental management and conservation.

This wide range of new laws and other measures have transformed, on paper at least, the national context for environmental management in Vietnam. That so many changes have happened so rapidly is placing severe strains on the system. Indeed, several comments received indicated that the main challenge facing Vietnam in this field relates to the capacity to implementation of the existing regulatory framework rather than further strengthening this framework. In other words, existing capacities are insufficient and are over-stretched, placing capacity development at the centre of concerns for environmental protection in modern Vietnam. Another well known constraint to the implementation of the existing laws and regulations is the lack of means for enforcement. This is also related to the lack of capable staff but also to the fact that the system is too weak to avoid influential forces being able to pay their way through the system.

These efforts to strengthen the national context have received support from a wide range of international development partners, including UN agencies, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, several bilateral donors including Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, Switzerland and others, and major international NGOs such as IUCN and WWF. In many cases, some of this support came through co-financing with GEF activities. It is impossible to distil the influence of GEF support from that of the rest of the international community in this field, but all stakeholders consulted spoke positively about the role of the GEF (and the Implementing Agencies in general) in catalyzing, directing and legitimising the process experienced over the last 10 years of strengthening the national system for environmental protection in Vietnam.

This positive perception included the views of government officials, who in general spoke very favourably about the influence of the GEF-supported activities in capacity development at the national level. Specific projects, such as the PARC (Creating Protected Areas for Resource Conservation) were cited as developing benchmarks and best practice models that have been replicated elsewhere and providing direct support that is instrumental in influencing the content of the emerging legal, policy and regulatory framework for Vietnam. The Small Grants Programme was also widely appreciated and praised, as the support to many small projects that were spread across the country, in different sectors and with a range of organisations is seen as instrumental in broadening the support base for environmental conservation beyond the “usual suspects” in Hanoi.

The development of the GEF Action Plan and the associated consultation process from the NCSA is also appreciated in providing a platform for consensus-building. The institutional system of Vietnam works through such consensus-based processes. This can be challenging where there is the sort of institutional fragmentation that characterises many areas of environmental support and protection. The existence of the GEF Focal Points, the National

Steering Committee and the NCSA consultation process have provided a coherent and legitimate structure for this consensus building. This resonates beyond the immediate outputs of the process and influences the creation and strengthening of constituencies that support the environmental field within a national development framework: something that has been identified as a systemic weakness.

The role of the National Focal Point in the overall positive conclusions on the creation of a national enabling environment should be noted. The Focal Point has worked in an efficient and organised manner to overcome institutional weaknesses and make best use of the resources available. Processes such as the NCSA have been followed diligently and the outputs from these processes are of good quality. There are, as has been noted, still structural weaknesses to the national enabling environment for conservation and protection, but progress is being made and the actions identified in the national action plan suggest that further improvements can be anticipated.

One key area for improvement is the better integration of environmental issues in the overall national development framework. The dominant national approach is still too often a protectionist, “safeguards” one where the perception is that the challenge is to stop development damaging the environment. A more positive approach that is based on seeing environmental management as a positive tool for sustainable growth and development has yet to emerge in Vietnam in any systematic manner. This to an extent reflects the strong focus on the conventions, which GEF has encouraged, as these are inherently protectionist in character. A key focus of future capacity development in relation to the overall enabling environment should be to develop a more coherent approach to linking conservation and development in Vietnam.

3. Results Achieved in Capacity Development

Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the evaluation on the projects in the GEF Vietnam portfolio. The chapter is organised into sections that reflect the type of project categories, rather than in relation to the categorization of capacity development activities. This structure has been used after some thought, as the findings indicate that there are structural differences between project types and consistencies within each category. The structure will also make the findings easier to follow for readers, especially at the national level, who are not familiar with GEF evaluation terminology and categorizations. These are reflected in the analytical chapters that follow this one: the purpose of this chapter is to present the findings in a factual manner before analytical judgments on their significance are made.

The results presented here are based on the findings from the documentary reviews, stakeholder consultations and field visits outlined in chapter 1. There are limitations to the information gathered, as the documentation available was by no means complete and the relatively limited resources available for field research meant that it was not possible to undertake extensive interviews on the ground. Despite these information limitations, some consistent patterns were

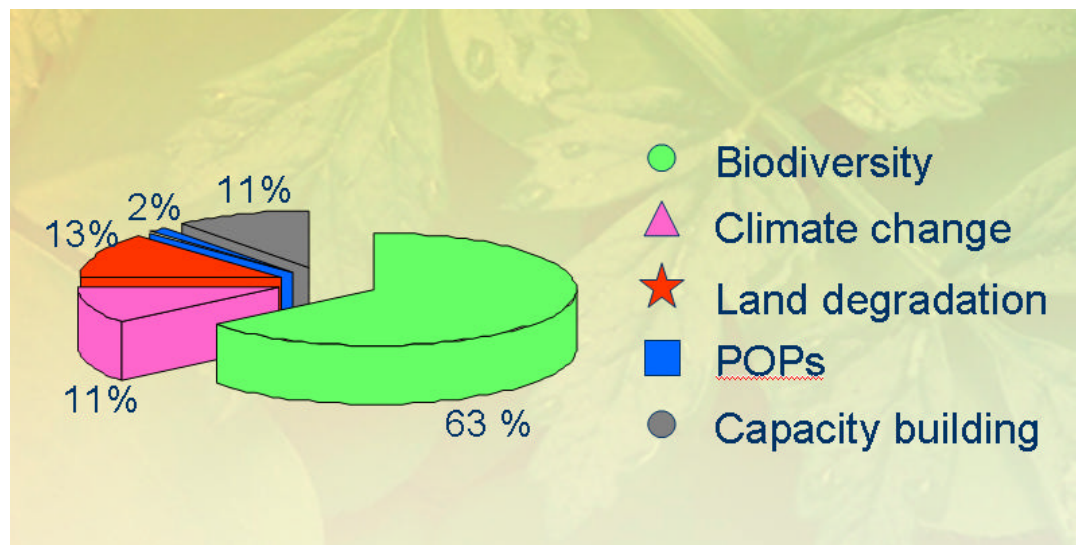
found in the results of capacity development activities in the GEF projects in Vietnam. These patterns are identified here.

Small Grants Programme

Capacity development is a central rationale of the SGP in Vietnam. The programme is well-organised and has coherent criteria for the selection of proposals to be funded that reflect the need to enhance capacities for environmental management in many sectors, across the country and for different forms of institutions. One very positive feature of the Vietnam programme is its diversity both in terms of the topics covered and in relation to the organisations supported. A total of over 700 project concept papers have been received by the SGP by June 2007, 89 of which went on to full project proposals and 72 of which to date have become full projects with others still in a planning stage. The total value of the SGP to date is more than \$5.2 million of which \$2.96 million has come from the GEF SGP and \$2.2 million from other sources (a level of matching funds which is itself worthy of note). The Implementing Agency, the UNDP country office, has provided effective and consistent management of the SGP and the programme as a whole is generally appreciated by all parties consulted. This includes the GEF Focal Point in MoNRE, who has stated the GoV's commitment to continue to support the SGP.

The organisations supported are varied, including both local and international NGOs, mass organisations such as the Farmer's Union and Women's Union, research and educational institutes, local government and private sector enterprises. The breakdown of projects by subject area up to 2005 is shown in Figure 1. The first impression is that biodiversity, with 63% of grant commitments, is dominant, but this category includes a very wide range of topics, many of which relate to the sustainable management of natural resources. They include projects concerned with the use of medicinal plants, biological fertilizers and composting, the sustainable production of plants such as cashews, bamboo, mushrooms and fruit trees, the management of coastal ecosystems and a range of other topics in addition to the more familiar issues of protected areas management. There were a number of specific capacity development projects that include community awareness programmes and training on different technical issues.

Twelve SGP projects were visited in the field (annex 1). All contained capacity development activities, mostly aimed at the individual level but several also contained activities designed to enhance institutional capacities. The latter were aimed at the local level in most cases; reflecting the localized character of the SGP. Table 1 lists the types of activities undertaken by the number of projects in which they were found for the 12 projects in the sample studied at the field level.

Figure 1: GEF/SGP 1999 – 2005 Grant Commitments versus Grant Allocation⁵

It is clear from the data in table 1 that all projects contained multiple capacity development activities, and in many cases there was more than one specific activity for each type: several training courses or a range of awareness activities. Training was the most universal type of activity, and the extent of involvement of local communities is noteworthy (the one project not including this was a national-level workshop). The approach to training was varied. In most cases, tailor-made formal courses were used, but there were also more “hands-on” approaches where training was in the field or through practical classes in areas such as communications and IT skills.

Table 1: Capacity Development Types in the SGP Project Sample (12 Projects)

Capacity Development Type	Number of Projects
Development of Laws, Policies, National Strategies	1
Training to Grant Organisation Staff	11
Training to Local Community	11
Training to Other Organisations	8
“Learning by Doing”: On the Job Skills Development	9
Awareness Raising/Education Activities	8
Improved Resource or Enterprise Management Models	8
Improved Monitoring & Evaluation/Information Management	7
Pilot/Demonstration Activities for Wider Replication	6
Establishment of Local Community/Stakeholder Groups	2
Improved Production or Marketing Systems	7
Improved Coordination/Communications between Organisations	4

⁵ Source; GEF/SGP 9 May 2006 Presentation to VN GEF Support Project

Box 1: Two SGP Projects with Extensive Capacity Development Activities

The “Developing a model for management, protection and rational utilization of the environment and natural resources of Chi Lang Nam Bird Area” project contains a wide range of capacity development activities, including the development of management and resource utilization models for the area, training and awareness raising for project staff, local people, schools and local government agencies, the development of eco-tourism management models for the protected area and local communities and the introduction of sanitation and waste management models in the local community. The experiences have been shared with other bird protection areas in Vietnam.

The “Conservation and sustainable use of indigenous fruit tree varieties of the low-lying delta agricultural ecosystem in Ly Nhan district, Ha Nam province” project is in its second phase of implementation and includes a wide range of capacity development activities aimed at promoting the conservation and sustainable use of indigenous fruit tree varieties. The approach includes the establishment of a Farmers Interest Group for indigenous fruit production & sale and the creation of a Forum on bio-diversity conservation and development, including agricultural ecosystem protection policies and an enabling regulatory environment for conservation and development of indigenous fruit tree varieties. It consequently includes activities aimed at the enabling environment as well as a significant level of institutional capacity development. The project has a large scale awareness raising component, including regular radio broadcasts and has undertaken a series of technical training activities for local communities, agriculture extension staff and members of a technical advisor group. The project has also assisted with the development of improved production and marketing models for the varieties of indigenous fruits.

The SGP projects tend to be very practical in their approach, with many including the development of improved management, production or marketing systems that will bring tangible and lasting benefits to the communities and organisations involved. This included the development of improved management approaches for protected areas and improvements to production techniques for crops such as cashews and indigenous fruit trees. A feature of the approach to protected area management in all cases was that the models introduced included the participation of local communities and were based on a sustainable management, rather than conservation, approach.

As box 1 shows, the extent of capacity development activities in what are small (less than \$50,000) projects has in some cases been remarkable. Overall, the scale, range and quality of capacity development activities in the SGP in Vietnam is extremely good, the programme is greatly appreciated at both local and national levels and it can be regarded as an important part of the overall impacts of GEF activities on capacity development.

Biodiversity

The Vietnam portfolio contains 10 biodiversity projects: 8 MSP and 2 FSP, with a total value of over \$115 million and GEF support of \$24 million. This includes the Forest Sector Development Project (World Bank), which has received a GEF grant of \$9.2 and \$66 million co-financing, a figure that represents two-thirds of the total financing of the 10 biodiversity projects. The other

FSP, the PARC project, received \$6 million GEF financing and only \$2.3 million co-financing (from UNDP). The remaining eight MSPs ranged between \$1.3 million and \$3.9 million in total value with GEF financing of less than \$1 million in all cases. A feature of the biodiversity projects in Vietnam was consequently that all attracted some level of co-financing, principally from bilateral donors and/or international NGOs such as WWF and BirdLife International.

All 10 projects were evaluated through documentary review and stakeholder consultations and four were further assessed through field visits and interviews with local stakeholders. Of the 10 projects, six (five MSP and one FSP) were principally concerned with the establishment and management of specific protected areas, three were sectoral in character and operate at a national level and one (the Green Corridor project) aimed to introduce an ecosystems and landscape management approach in a specific region. All included capacity development activities as a core part of the project design and all have undertaken a number of specific capacity development activities during their implementation. The World Bank is the Implementing Agency for five projects, UNDP for four and UNEP for one. The types of capacity development activities found in the biodiversity projects are shown in table 2, although of course this does not indicate the scale of the activities in each project.

Table 2: Capacity Development Activities in Biodiversity Projects

Capacity Development Type	Project									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Development of Laws, Policies, National Strategies	X	X	X		X		X			
Training to Executing Organisation Staff	X	X		X		X	X	X		X
Training to Local Community			X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Training to Other Organisations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
“Learning by Doing”: On the Job Skills Development	X				X	X			X	
Awareness Raising/Education Activities	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Improved Resource or Enterprise Management Models	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Improved Monitoring & Evaluation/Information Systems	X	X		X						X
Pilot/Demonstration Activities for Wider Replication	X		X	X	X					
Establishment of Local Community/Stakeholder Groups	X							X		
Improved Production or Marketing Systems	X							X		
Improved Organisational Coordination & Communications		X		X			X		X	

Project Code

1. Forest Sector Development Project
2. Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework
3. In-Situ Conservation of Native Landraces and their Wild Relatives
4. The Green Corridor
5. Protected Areas for Resource Conservation (PARC)

6. Watershed & Biodiversity Management in Chu Yang Sin
7. Conservation of Pu Luong-Cuc Phuong Limestone Landscape
8. Coastal and Marine Conservation in Con Dao Islands
9. Hon Mun Protected Area Pilot Project
10. Kon Ka Kinh and Kon Cha Rang Nature Reserves

The most notable feature of table 2 is the dominance of formal training activities in the approach to capacity development. Almost all 10 projects included training for the executing agency and to local community members and all 10 included training for other organisations, including local government, technical agencies and research and educational institutes. In some cases, these formal training components were large: for example, the Hon Mun Marine Protected Area Project held more than 20 formal training courses on subjects as diverse as alternative income source development, communication skills, seaboard safety, concepts of marine protection, emergency diving, computer skills, gender issues and English language. The beneficiaries of the training were staff of the protected area, local community members, local government staff and people engaged in tourism activities in the Nha Trang area.

Eight projects also included some form of awareness raising and/or educational activities. These took many forms, but several projects worked to introduce environmental awareness in local schools, whilst a number used mass media as a dissemination tool. One common feature of the approach to awareness-raising was to produce printed materials that were disseminated through schools, the media, by placement in facilities open to the public and other means. The effectiveness of the awareness raising activities is hard to assess, but substantial efforts were made in many places in this regard and overall the issue of awareness raising and education has been a core component of the biodiversity portfolio.

Eight projects introduced new or improved resource management models, and indeed this was often the main rationale for the project (particularly for the six projects concerned with protected areas). The approach to improved resource management was very similar in most of the projects. It combined the development of more information-based and scientifically coherent management decisions with some sort of community participation, though the extent and effectiveness of the latter component is far from clear in many of the project documents. In general, a core element of the latter component, the participation of local people, was the involvement of key personnel from formal organisations (whether local administrative units such as communes or wards or mass organisations such as the women's or farmer's union). The creation of community-based organizations (whether new or based on traditional social structures), which is a common approach internationally, is seen by many in authority as not appropriate for the Vietnamese context even though civil society organizations not linked to the state or the Communist Party have only recently begun to emerge in many parts of the country.

Participation has consequently been approached through a somewhat *status quo* model in the biodiversity projects and does not reflect what are generally seen as key principles for participatory development internationally. In particular, there were few attempts to work through existing social or religious structures within the local community, with a preference to working with formal organisations dominating. This was found in areas where the local communities are members of ethnic minorities (this is especially the case in and around protected areas). The extent to which formal organisations are relevant to and adequately represent minority communities is a matter of much debate in Vietnam, and these communities generally have long and effective traditions of social organisation around natural resource management.

There were few attempts to work with and use the potential of these traditional forms of social organisation in the participatory development in the biodiversity projects.

Half of the projects sought to enhance the national policy and legal framework, including the three projects where this was a central objective of the projects. The Forest Sector Development Project has a substantial set of activities in this area. This includes a review of the overall national legal, policy and planning framework for the forest sector, the development of more effective institutional mechanisms for the management of specific types of forests such as plantations and “special use forests” and improvements to the regulatory framework for the commercial exploitation of forests. The approach entails working at all levels: central government, provincial, district and commune authorities and at the local level. The National Biosafety Framework Project is focused more on the issue of the implementation “gap” where existing regulations are not implemented, but it also included elements that are intended to ensure more effective consistency with the Cartagena Protocol.

A number of projects included structured learning-by-doing activities (though this was implicit in others), four aimed to improve monitoring and evaluation capacities, four had specific components that aimed to enhance inter-organisation coordination and communications and two included components to form new local community organisations (though as discussed above participation through existing organisations was far more common).

The overall approach to the development of the six protected area projects was similar, with a focus on on-site activities and the formal structures of a protected area. Within these parameters, the projects can be judged to be successful in most cases: the protected areas exist and have both staff and an infrastructure of buildings, signs, fences where appropriate, etc. (see Box 2 for a more detailed example of this approach). This is a reflection of the overall approach to biodiversity conservation in Vietnam, which is largely protected area-based and concerned with formal structures. Some changes are occurring, with the wider involvement of local communities and the recognition of ecosystem-based approaches, but again this tends to be through formal mass organisations and local government structures. This is again fairly representative of wider trends in Vietnam, where concepts of bottom-up planning, the development of civil society organisations and community participation are fairly new and run counter to traditional decision-making systems.

The Green Corridor Project is innovative in the Vietnam GEF biodiversity portfolio as the first example of landscape, ecosystems approach to biodiversity conservation that goes beyond the management of protected areas. It has an explicit objective of providing a model for replication elsewhere, but there is little evidence that such replication is taking place as an integral part of the approach of the government (though there are other efforts to establish biodiversity corridors, such as the ADB-supported Biodiversity Corridors Initiative within the Greater Mekong Subregion Programme, that have been influenced by the Green Corridor Project’s experiences). The project has undertaken capacity development activities targeted particularly at officials in government organizations, though there has also been some community involvement. The project’s approach has been successful in some areas, such as reducing forest fires, developing

and enforcing forest use regulations, undertaking studies and preparing a zoning and information system, where the predominant regulatory approach can work most effectively. The Green Corridor Project is less successful in modifying resource management practices and engaging with local communities (especially ethnic minorities). In part these problems reflect the lack of an effective institutional or regulatory framework and the absence of effective incentives for local communities to modify long-established resource exploitation practices: it reflects systemic issues, whereas the project approach has mostly been focused on individual and, especially, institutional capacity issues.

Box 2: Hon Mun Marine Protected Area Pilot Project

The Hon Mun Marine Protected Area (MPA) has been established off the coast of Nha Trang, one of the emerging beach tourism centres of Vietnam with the pressures on development and marine resources this suggests. Tourism-based pressures such as water sports, diving and recreational fishing and the rapid development of the town and nearby tourist facilities are added to longer-standing pressures from commercial and artisanal fishing to generate severe pressure on marine resources in one of the richest marine biodiversity resources of Vietnam. The project was established with the explicit intention of providing a model of MPA development for replication elsewhere in Vietnam. It aimed to preserve the coral reef, mangrove, seagrass and marine animal stocks of the MPA, as well as enabling local island communities to improve their livelihoods.

Capacity development has been central to the project's approach. The project assisted the MPA to establish the Khanh Hoa MPA Authority, to construct offices and other physical infrastructure for the MPA, to prepare a new management plan and to establish relations with local communities and other local organisations. The MPA Authority has worked with local fishing communities to end destructive fishing practices and develop alternative livelihood activities. A large number of training programmes on alternative income generating activities have taken place and the project has attempted to establish a micro-credit facility. The approach has been mainly through formal training courses. Consultations with project staff and local stakeholders indicated that these were not frequent enough and were not followed up by activities to ensure that the skills and knowledge acquired could be used.

A major structural issue has been the effectiveness of the approach to the MPA in limiting pressures arising from developments outside the MPA boundaries, especially rapid urbanization and increasing tourism pressures. The extent of support for the MPA in the town and provincial governments is mixed, with pressures to de-regulate part of the MPA and signs of some unwillingness to limit the pressures beyond the MPA boundaries. There has been an increase in support for marine resource conservation in these political bodies that is a result of awareness activities from the project.

3.4. Climate Change

The climate change portfolio in Vietnam consists of five projects that focus on improving the efficiency of the electricity sector or energy utilization in different ways. The total value of these

five projects is extremely high: one project, Rural Energy II has a total budget of \$279 million, of which GEF financing is \$5.25 million. The other four projects have a combined value of \$78.6 million, of which GEF financing is \$18.8 million or less than one quarter. The level of co-financing is consequently extremely high in the Vietnam climate change portfolio but even so, with an average GEF component of around \$5 million in each project, the scale and impact of GEF-supported capacity development activities could be anticipated to be significant and visible. All the projects are, of course, full-size projects.

The World Bank is the Implementing Agency of three projects, UNDP of two. Coordination between the projects was regarded as good by national stakeholders despite their division between two IAs. This is in part because the Executing Agencies on the Vietnamese side, which included the Ministry of Industry (MoI), the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) and Electricity Viet Nam (EVN) are efficient and coordinated agencies that work within a clear legal, policy, regulatory and planning framework. Enhancing the effectiveness of the power sector is also an extremely high priority for the Government of Vietnam, so these are projects that can be expected to receive a high level of attention and support.

The foci of the project, on improving the efficiency of the power sector and on energy demand management, are ones that are of direct and material relevance to climate change mitigation: their impact on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is potentially significant. This is particularly true for Vietnam, which is experiencing rapid development, a boom in enterprise formation and a rate of increase in demand for electricity of well over 10% per year. In effect, the climate change projects in Vietnam are focused on where the greatest mitigation potential lies, enhancing the relevance of lessons learnt from the projects for the country as a whole.

The results of the assessment of capacity development activities undertaken in the climate change projects are presented in table 3. The general character of the projects as being focused at the institutional and systemic levels in terms of their capacity development activities is clear: all projects included elements to influence the legal, policy and regulatory framework, whilst none included the formation of local groups and only two included any training at the community level. In these two cases, the targets of the community level training were specific stakeholder groups: entrepreneurs, teachers, etc, rather than the general public.

Table 3: Capacity Development in Climate Change Projects

Capacity Development Type	Project				
	1	2	3	4	5
Development of Laws, Policies, National Strategies	X	X	X	X	X
Training to Grant Organisation Staff	X	X	X		X
Training to Local Community				X	X
Training to Other Organisations	X	X	X	X	X
“Learning by Doing”: On the Job Skills Development	X		X	X	X
Awareness Raising/Education Activities		X	X	X	X
Improved Resource or Enterprise Management Models	X		X	X	X
Improved Monitoring & Evaluation/Information Management		X			X
Pilot/Demonstration Activities for Wider Replication			X	X	X
Establishment of Local Community/Stakeholder Groups					
Improved Production or Marketing Systems		X	X	X	
Improved Coordination & Communications between Organisations	X	X	X		

Project Code

1. Rural Energy II
2. System Efficiency Improvement, Equitization and Renewables
3. Energy Efficient Public Lighting
4. Demand Side Management and Energy Efficiency
5. Promoting Energy Efficiency in Small and Medium Enterprises

The influences on the behaviour and knowledge of the wider community were mostly intended through awareness and information campaigns, with four of the five projects containing activities in this area. But overall the focus of the climate change projects has been on changing the behaviour of institutions, whether government agencies or private sector enterprises. This is reflected in the strong focus in the capacity development activities on training, both through formal courses and on-the-job training, for the staff of different institutions: central and local government agencies, parastatals such as EVN and private sector companies. The introduction of new management and/or production and marketing systems to complement the skills development was also a general feature of these projects. Three projects also contained structured pilot schemes, through which the lessons learnt at the level of individual organisations or enterprises was to be developed as a model for wider replication (though in most cases it is too early to tell whether this will happen on a systematic level).

The scale of the capacity development in the climate change projects is substantial: with activities at both the individual and the institutional level planned (some of the projects are still under implementation, and the largest, Rural Energy II, is in its early stages) or implemented in

multiple institutions across the country. For example, Rural Energy II plans to work in 1,200 communes in 30 provinces; the System Efficiency Improvement, Equitization and Renewables Project is in the process of implementing training courses in 26 provinces (with participants from multiple institutions in each province); and the Demand Side Management and Energy Efficiency project has implemented energy efficiency programmes in schools in 18 provinces. The Promoting Energy Efficiency in Small and Medium Enterprises project has an on-going programme in 10 provinces or cities to develop energy efficiency improvements in 500 enterprises that include brick production, ceramics, knitwear and clothing, paper production and food processing.

The overall approach to capacity development in the five climate change projects in Vietnam is consequently substantial and coherent. Capacity development is central to all the projects and all have planned and are in the process of implementing capacity development activities at the systemic, institutional and individual levels. The strong focus on systemic change, with specific components on the policy and regulatory environment in all projects, is noteworthy in terms of generating substantial and sustainable changes and it has been noted that the general setting for the uptake of such changes is very positive in Vietnam's present state of development. The stakeholders interviewed in organizations such as Electricity Vietnam, local government agencies and individual enterprises that have participated in the different projects cited the capacity development activities as directly contributing to a higher level of awareness of energy efficiency measures and improvements to organizational efficiency in managing both energy utilities and high energy usage manufacturing activities.

This focus on the enabling environment is complemented by the systematic and coherent approach to institutional change and development, complemented by skills development for the individuals in the target institutions. The fact that GEF funding is complemented by far more substantial co-financing in all projects is also an important aspect of the climate change portfolio, as the principle of additionality seems to be followed in practice here and the capacity development activities supported with GEF resources are paralleled by other investments that will ensure these activities are more effective. The good coordination between the projects and the Implementing Agencies has been noted and there is strong support for and appreciation of the projects in the climate change field by the different Government of Vietnam agencies involved.

International Waters

The overall situation with the implementation of activities in Vietnam from the International Waters portfolio is somewhat confusing. There are six International Waters projects listed as containing Vietnam activities, but of these six the information available suggests that two⁶ to date have not undertaken any activities in Vietnam, whilst three are closely connected and in

⁶The Mekong River Water Utilisation Project, which has focused almost entirely on the Mekong River Commission, and the Livestock Waste Management in East Asia Project which is in its initial stages of implementation.

Vietnam are regarded in practice as part of the same programme.⁷ In consequence, the results presented here relate to two projects: the Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand project (REDSCS) and the Building Partnerships for the Environmental Protection and Management of the East Asian Seas project (PEMSEA), with the latter including the associated smaller projects that are inseparable in terms of their capacity development impacts.

For all of the International Waters projects, there is little separation of information in project documentation (including any evaluations) by the different countries involved. It is consequently almost impossible to distill a coherent picture of what has happened in Vietnam from this documentation. Discussions with stakeholders and, in particular, a field visit to the PEMSEA integrated coastal management (ICM) site in Da Nang provided clearer insights into what has happened on the ground. What is clear is that the projects have substantial capacity development activities planned as central aspects of their overall programme. In both cases this included activities targeted at systemic, institutional and individual levels. The character of the projects, as part of the International Waters portfolio with activities in multiple countries, means that an emphasis has been placed on capacity development through the sharing of cross-country expertise and experiences. This aspect of the projects was certainly appreciated by the stakeholders interviewed, and reflects a wider momentum in Vietnam to learn from international experiences and adapt them to a Vietnamese context.

The main approaches to capacity development in the **REDSCS** project have been an extensive programme of research and information gathering, a series of formal training programmes and the establishment of demonstration sites on specific themes. There have also been activities to foster regional cooperation and discuss the establishment of mechanisms for regional cooperation in resource management, but these have as yet not been consolidated into actions.

The substantial programme of research, studies and information management means that the main beneficiaries of the REDSCS project in terms of capacity building have been the research and scientific community concerned with coastal and marine resources in Vietnam. This is reflected in the active involvement of national research institutes such as the Institute of Oceanography and the institute of Marine Environment and Resources (who house the project focal points for the coral reefs and seagrass components respectively). From the evidence available, the research and data management activities of the project have been executed effectively, and have added to national capacities in areas where there were clear needs for capacity development. The focus has been mostly on scientific issues, rather than sustainable resource management; reflecting the existing orientation of the institutes involved. The research

⁷ The largest of these three is Building Partnerships for the Environmental Protection and Management of the East Asian Seas (PEMSEA), and the other two are closely linked: the Prevention and Management of Marine Pollution in the East Asian Seas project has had very limited activities in Vietnam, with those implemented linked to the PEMSEA coastal management pilot site whilst the Development and Implementation of Public Private Partnerships in Environmental Investments is a direct follow on from PEMSEA and is implemented through the institutional structures developed by the PEMSEA project.

and studies aspect of the project can consequently be said to have deepened existing areas of capability rather than adding new ones necessary for a more comprehensive approach to coastal and marine resource management.

The extensive training programme implemented by the project is more comprehensive in character. It includes in the courses planned for the year 2007 alone nine training courses on a diverse range of topics, including sustainable use and management of mangroves, of reefs and seagrasses and of wetlands (three separate courses), the economic valuation of goods and services derived from coastal habitats, community-based resource management, project planning and management and information and communications technology. The number of participants is limited to 3-4 from each country, and the project documentation places particular emphasis on the training of young scientists. The scope of the regional training programme is consequently impressive, but the number of participants from Vietnam will be limited and again the main beneficiaries are the research and scientific community, though there is also some provision for staff from demonstration sites and for local government officials to participate where demonstration sites have been established.

At present only one demonstration site has been established in Vietnam, the Phu Quoc Coral Reef and Seagrass Demonstration Site in the waters around Phu Quoc Island in the south of Vietnam. This is a site of particular importance in both ecological and economic development terms and the establishment of this site is of national significance if it provides an effective management model. There is a proposal for a further coral reef demonstration site at Ninh Hai but as yet this site has not been developed. The two Vietnam demonstration sites are out of a total of nine planned in the project. The approach to the demonstration site development includes working closely with local government and, to a lesser extent, local communities and involves sustainable management as well as protection approaches. The capacity development impacts of these demonstration sites cannot as yet be discerned, as they are very new, but there is potential for significant local level impacts in the places where they are established. The extent to which they will provide models for wider replication is not clear. Overall, the REDSCS can be regarded as an effective project that includes a substantial and coherent approach to capacity development. The focus is on knowledge development and enhancing regional collaboration, and at these levels the project is successful.

The main site for the **PEMSEA** project in Vietnam is Da Nang, which is an integrated coastal management (ICM) pilot site under the project. The capacity development impacts here are clearer, as the pilot has been going for some years and the effects at local and national levels can be discerned. Discussions were held with stakeholders at national level and in Da Nang city. All reported a substantial capacity development impact of the ICM activities of PEMSEA in Da Nang, with the full institutionalization of an ICM planning and zoning system in the city as a direct result of project activities. Da Nang is a major city with a range of development pressures resulting from a diverse and growing economy and the city's role as a regional centre for the central part of Vietnam.

An ICM zone has been established that includes the city itself, adjacent district and an area of seas extending out from the coastal boundaries of the ICM zone. A management plan has been prepared for this zone and this plan has been fully adopted by the municipal authorities for the city with strong support from the provincial authorities. The plan includes a zoning of development areas, the Coastal Use Zoning Plan that was adopted by Da Nang People's Committee in October 2006, which is now the basis for planning permission in the city and surrounding areas. Discussions with local officials in Da Nang indicated that the city intends to continue with the ICM approach after the project is finished and has made necessary adjustments to institutional structures and procedures to allow this to happen. The local stakeholders said that the preparation of the Da Nang ICM has benefited greatly from the international experiences that PEMSEA has brought into the process, citing the ICM model of Xiamen in China as providing particularly valuable lessons for the development of ICM in Da Nang. Local stakeholders also stated that the institutional changes in Da Nang have been paralleled by significant changes in the awareness and attitude of local political leaders towards ICM and environmental protection in general, as they have seen the benefits that the ICM process has brought.

The institutional changes resulting from the introduction of ICM in Da Nang have to an extent had systemic impacts at the national level, though this is constrained by uncertainties at the national level on the overall policies, strategies and institutional responsibilities for coastal management in Vietnam. There have been a number of ICM pilots in Vietnam, including sustained efforts in some provinces supported by the Netherlands and Sweden amongst others. The importance of ICM is recognized in principle, but uncertainties over how institutional responsibilities should be distributed have led to delays in the development of a coherent approach to the institutionalization of lessons from the different pilots at the national level. The Da Nang pilot developed under PEMSEA is highly regarded, however, and the model of stakeholder involvement in the core committee for the ICM process (called the Project Coordination Committee in Da Nang, but to be institutionalized as a Sustainable Coastal Development Committee) is likely to be integrated as the national model in future legislation.

There have been further systemic impacts at the regional level, with PEMSEA holding ICM workshops with participants from nine provinces from central Vietnam. There are plans to establish an ICM learning centre in Da Nang that will service 14 provinces that cover the coastal areas of central Vietnam. Local government staff and stakeholders from other provinces have already taken part in study tours, workshops and training programmes on different aspects of ICM in Da Nang, further enhancing the regional capacity development aspects of the project. Finally, with regard to systemic level impacts, the PEMSEA ICM pilot in Da Nang has implemented a programme of public awareness and education on ICM and related coastal management issues. This includes fairly standard publicity activities as well as some novel approaches such as the use of film and mass media, public action days for activities such as beach cleaning, competitions amongst students in Da Nang University and schools, an artistic festival and other awareness activities. Many of these have been adopted on a long-term basis by local institutions such as schools, the municipal council and the University.

The PEMSEA ICM pilot in Da Nang has consequently had substantial institutional development impacts and some systemic impact, though the latter has been limited by national-level uncertainties on the overall approach to coastal development. These institutional and systemic level impacts have been complemented by a major training programme under the PEMSEA project. Training has taken place over several years on a wide range of topics associated with ICM, including the basics of ICM, Geographical Information Systems, integrated information management, environmental monitoring, project management, coastal zoning, environmental risk assessment, water quality assessment, communications in environmental protection and other topics. The training focused on local government staff in particular, but participants also included members of mass organisations, NGOs and educational institutions.

Nine local beneficiaries of the training were interviewed and all gave a very positive response when asked about the quality and utility of the training. The practical nature of the training was particularly appreciated by the respondents, with most reporting that they had subsequently been able to use the skills developed in their jobs. This immediate impact of the training perhaps reflects the institutional changes taking place in Da Nang with the development of ICM, as there was an immediate context for the application of the skills and knowledge developed in the changing institutional procedures and mandates of the city.

The respondents also noted that they had benefited from international contacts and experiences, and that the inclusion of people from a wide range of institutions in the city had been important in building constituencies that supported the ICM process. Several people, including senior staff of departments such as the Da Nang Environmental Protection Centre, reported that they had been able to pass on the knowledge gained in the training to other staff in their department. This was particularly the case for training concerned with technical skills such as information technology or water quality testing. The consequence of this is that the benefits of the training in terms of human resource development are wider than the number of people who were directly involved in the different training programmes.

The PEMSEA project has consequently had significant and sustained capacity development activities at all levels, systemic, institutional and individual. The project represents a sustained effort over several years. Not everything, of course, is perfect. The PEMSEA project itself noted constraints on the ICM process, including difficulties in engaging some key stakeholders such as private sector industrial concerns. Although there have been substantial capacity development efforts, limitations in institutional capacities in some areas were still noted, and were perhaps inevitable given the radical changes to institutional roles that ICM entails. The need for training in new areas, such as reef management, port management and the management of oil spills (in other words on specific priority topics in ICM) was noted. Problems with launching the intended public-private partnerships as a means for meeting investment needs for coastal development were similarly noted. Despite these caveats, the experiences of the PEMSEA project in Da Nang can be counted as successful in terms of capacity development for integrated coastal management in a Vietnamese context. It has led to substantial and sustainable changes to the coastal management system in the project area, including the formation of a new

regulatory department in the municipal authority and the development of new mechanisms through which different actors are brought together to discuss key coastal development issues. There has also been a major improvement in public awareness of coastal conservation and management issues in and around the city.

4. Analysis and Conclusions

Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability of the Results Achieved

Chapter 3 presented the results found in terms of capacity development of the GEF programme in Vietnam. The analysis, and indeed the level of detail, of these findings has been considerably impacted by the general tendency to have limited or no monitoring or (especially) evaluation of capacity development needs and impacts throughout the project cycle. Capacity development is a feature of all projects, but there is no evidence to demonstrate that specific capacity development needs were assessed during project design so it is not possible to tell whether the activities identified in project preparation were the most appropriate ones. Similarly, the monitoring of capacity development, where it exists, consists of little more than an inventorying of which activities were undertaken. No projects provide specific impact indicators or evaluations, so that it is very difficult to assess from the documentation available whether objectives with relation to capacity development were achieved.

Despite these caveats, the overall findings are that most projects have included substantial capacity development elements in their design and that these activities have in most cases been implemented at something close to the planned level. This provides a first conclusion: that capacity development is seen as an integral and important part of the GEF projects in Vietnam, with the Implementing and Executing Agencies putting substantial efforts into implementing the activities included in project design.

These findings at the project level are supported by the approach to the **enabling activities**, which was well organised and involved a range of stakeholders in an effective consultation structure. The detailed content of the NCSA documentation similarly demonstrated the recognition of the need for capacity development as a central dimension of the GEF programme in Vietnam. Has this commitment to capacity development produced results, in terms of enhancing Vietnam's capabilities to address the challenges associated with global environmental benefits in ways that are appropriate to the Vietnamese setting? This is discussed in this section in relation to four key evaluation criteria: relevance, sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness.

The capacity development activities scored well in terms of their **relevance** to the contemporary situation in Vietnam, with this including a good level of **national ownership** of most aspects of the capacity development activities. The consultations with stakeholders at all levels, in national institutions such as MoNRE, the Vietnam Environmental Protection Agency (VEPA) and NGOs like WWF and within individual projects, revealed a general affirmation that they had been involved in the identification and implementation of capacity development activities, and that these activities reflected the needs of the particular individuals and institutions concerned.

The issue of national ownership is seen as crucial in Vietnam, where there is a strong sense of doing things in a “Vietnamese” way; reflecting the country’s distinctive history and political system. Any sense of external imposition in development planning is strongly resisted and in consequence the approach of the Implementing Agencies in Vietnam has been to ensure a good level of national ownership in the GEF portfolio. The UNDP has played a particularly important role here, devoting resources to ensure the effective management of their GEF activities and actively engaging with national stakeholders wherever possible.

The portfolio of 15 FSP and MSP in the biodiversity and climate change fields demonstrated these characteristics. These projects were well aligned with national policy priorities and institutional processes and were cited as relevant and valuable in providing strategic opportunities to innovate and lessons for replication. This was especially true for the several protected area projects in the biodiversity portfolio, which have been implemented at a time when Vietnam is developing and expanding its protected areas system. The implementation of the GEF projects was cited as being important in ensuring that new protected areas could be established and new approaches to protected area management could be piloted. There are concerns that the extent of uptake of the lessons learnt are limited, and also that some of the approaches are “traditional” in character, with a strong emphasis on conservation rather than sustainable management. The biodiversity projects are consequently appreciated and seen as relevant, but could have been more effective in terms of introducing more innovative approaches based on wider international experience.

The climate change projects scored extremely highly in terms of relevance: they focused on, firstly, enhancing the operational effectiveness of the electricity generation system and, secondly, the introduction of energy conservation in key growth sectors of the economy. These are areas where there is great potential for climate change mitigation in Vietnam and it should be noted that the projects have been implemented during an era of rapid economic growth and change. The engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, and in particular of the electricity generation utilities, provincial authorities and small to medium private sector enterprises, has been instrumental in creating higher levels of awareness on both the problems associated with climate change and, critically, the actions that can help mitigate climate change impacts.

The relevance of the SGP is particularly noteworthy. The consultations with a range of stakeholders and the visits to the 12 sample projects demonstrated, as has been mentioned, a strong appreciation of the SGP in Vietnam. The programme was seen as extremely relevant to the country, providing small but strategic resources that could influence approaches to environmental management at the local level across the country as a whole and in relation to a wide range of institutions. The sense of national ownership and relevance is very high and there is universal support for the continuation (and even extension) of the SGP. The programme is effectively managed by UNDP but there is no sense that the Implementing Agency dominates: the national focal point in the government ministry is fully aware of and strongly supports the SGP and the process for submitting grant applications is widely known and understood.

The international waters projects were not based in Vietnam and have had less of a visible impact at the national level. The stakeholders consulted considered the activities undertaken in Vietnam to be extremely relevant at the place where they were implemented, and the approaches adopted are relevant to the country as a whole, but the lack of mechanisms to take the experiences gained to produce national level impacts on a substantial scale means that the potential gains have not been fully realised.

The **effectiveness** of the GEF capacity development activities in Vietnam is hard to assess. There is some evidence that the training and awareness raising undertaken at the individual level across all types of projects has in some examples been effective in terms of the new skills and experiences being translated into changes in work practices and attitudes towards environmental conservation. On the other hand, there is also evidence that in many cases this did not happen: the training and other capacity development activities targeted at individuals were appreciated but were not accompanied by substantial changes to the day to day work of the individuals concerned. The climate change projects appear to have performed better than the other focal areas in this regard, with projects focused on both energy conservation and improving the electricity generation and distribution system resulting in systematic changes. Many SGP projects were also valued in terms of the effectiveness of the activities undertaken in skills development.

Changes at the institutional level were in most cases effective in relation to the institutions directly involved in the projects, but the extent to which lessons learnt were disseminated to other similar institutions appears to be limited. This is particularly true of the biodiversity projects, which were seen as effective at the site level but less so in terms of national-level approaches or the adoption of lessons learnt at other sites. The enabling activities implemented in Vietnam have been successful, as reflected in the development of a coherent and well-managed GEF programme and the acknowledgement by many individuals that the GEF programme has played an important role in advancing the environmental agenda in recent years.

All of the projects examined in detail have performed reasonably or well in terms of meeting their immediate capacity development objectives within budget and on time. Some projects did experience delays, but this was mostly a reflection of external factors (such as delays in the negotiation of linked loans) or the complexity of the institutional arrangements of the projects. Overall, in classic project evaluation terms the capacity development activities were **efficient** in that goals and targets were met to a satisfactory level. A second view of efficiency is to ask whether alternative approaches to meeting the same goals would have been a more efficient use of resources.

There are some concerns over this: too many projects started from scratch when designing capacity development activities, rather than building on similar experiences from other projects and programmes in the GEF portfolio or from other sectors. In particular, experience in decentralized planning and in community-based activities has been growing in Vietnam in recent years, both through donor-assisted programmes such as the Sida-supported Chia Se programme and the GTZ-funded Tam Dao project, and through the initiative of many provincial

governments who have been assigned new responsibilities under decentralized planning and budget regulations. No evidence of links to or the use of lessons from these experiences was found in the preparation of capacity building activities in the GEF portfolio.

In part this appears to reflect the situation that there was often an over-reliance on individual consultants (international and national) and insufficient use of national institutions with experience in the relevant capacity development fields. Accumulated experience in capacity building in national institutions was not integrated into most GEF projects and the consultants tended to start from scratch as a means to ensure their vested interests in controlling the capacity development activities were retained. The recent emergence of a more coherent national programme suggests that this situation will improve in the future and overall the Vietnam GEF portfolio scores reasonably well with regard to the efficiency of the capacity development activities.

The SGP as a whole has been managed **efficiently and effectively**, with the UNDP providing the resources and administrative systems needed to ensure success. The large number of concept papers received has been processed within a reasonable time and the development and review of full proposals from the concept papers selected for further development has been managed effectively. The same is true of the projects examined in the field: in most cases they were completed on time, within budget and with the objectives of the project successfully attained (and those visited that are still under execution were on track for similar results). Capacity development was an integral part of all the SGP projects, and potential capacity development impacts were an important criterion in project selection procedures.

The **sustainability** of the capacity development impacts of the GEF portfolio is a mixed story. There are a number of significant changes to national policies and strategies and to institutional structures and mandates that are long-term and have been adopted with a good level of commitment. In fields such as protected areas policies, energy efficiency and coastal zone management the activities undertaken within the GEF projects were cited by senior policy makers as having a direct and important influence on the character and direction of these policy changes.

Similarly, in some cases skills and capabilities acquired through capacity development activities are being used on a daily basis by the recipients of training and awareness programmes. At the national level, the integrated structure and network of institutional involvement in the GEF programme is well-established and can be anticipated to last as long as Vietnam receives GEF funding (or until the GEF requires new systems be put into place).

The SGP projects visited can be judged to score highly in terms of sustainability: the support given by the SGP was usually complemented by additional support from other sources, ensuring the continued development of the activities in question. In addition, the content of the projects was defined by the grant recipients to fill strategic needs and the subsequent uptake of the new knowledge and management systems introduced appears to be good in most cases. Changes introduced through the SGP projects visited will in most cases endure into the future.

The evidence available (though it is still too early to tell conclusively) suggest the same is true for many of the innovations introduced in the climate change portfolio, as these changes are well embedded in institutions, such as electricity utilities and manufacturing enterprises, responsible for the implementation and management of the economic activities targeted for improving the mitigation of climate change impacts. The on-site development in terms of establishing and managing protected areas that were introduced in biodiversity projects will endure so long as the present national protected area approach lasts, and the impact of the international waters projects in places such as Da Nang are effectively institutionalised. There are consequently elements of the capacity development under the GEF that do well in terms of their likely future sustainability.

In contrast, there are concerns over the sustainability of other aspects of the capacity development activities. In many cases, training and skills development at the individual level were not followed through in terms of continuing support or changes to institutional procedures that would allow the new skills to be used. In a number of cases where projects attempted to introduce new patterns of livelihoods activities amongst local communities there were concerns that these would not persist once project support disappears as their long-term economic viability was not established. The story with regard to sustainability is consequently mixed, with excellent achievements in some areas but concerns in others.

Key Findings and Conclusions on Capacity Development

This final section of the report presents the key findings in relation to the capacity development impacts of the GEF portfolio of activities in Vietnam. The analysis presents these findings in relation to the structure of capacity development levels discussed in chapter 1, looking at the individual, institutional and systemic levels. Finally, the results identified in the evaluation are brought together to present overall conclusions.

All aspects of the GEF Vietnam portfolio included a considerable range and quantity of capacity development activities focused at the **individual level**. The effectiveness and long-term impacts of these efforts is mixed, with a range of benefits that are making a difference to environmental management in Vietnam and that are likely to endure but also questions over the sustainability and effectiveness of other activities given the lack of an environment in which the individual capabilities that were developed could be effectively employed.

These conclusions were generally true across all aspects of the portfolio, but the balance between positive and less positive did vary. Overall, the capacity development activities at the individual level undertaken in the SGP and in the climate change projects have been more practically-focused and have been undertaken in a context where the capabilities and skills learnt could be used in the execution of activities that impact upon environmental management and sustainability. The field visits to the SGP and climate change projects discussed this with many individuals who had participated in capacity development activities and they were generally well received and taken up immediately in their work. The same is true of the limited information available on the international waters projects, especially the ICM pilot in Da Nang.

The impact of the biodiversity projects in terms of individual level capability development was more mixed. Individuals directly involved in conservation management, such as the staff of protected areas, mostly reported positive benefits and immediate uptake of at least some of the capability development experienced. The response amongst other stakeholders, such as in local communities and local government agencies, was more mixed with positive and sustainable results in some areas and less positive impacts in others. The sustainability of the impacts was a particular area of concern. Overall, the **impacts at the individual level** are positive; a reflection of the very substantial efforts put into capacity development activities at this level in many projects, but also a reflection of the changing environment in Vietnam where in many cases the needs for new skills and approaches is recognized and where improvements to individual capabilities are accompanied by changes to institutional structures and procedures which mean that these capabilities can be utilized.

There are also significant results at the **institutional level**, with many projects including the introduction of institutional reforms and/or new management systems that have enhanced institutional capacities in the different focal areas. This includes the capacities of the Executing Agencies (or grant recipients for the SGP) and, in some cases, the capacities of other organisations that the project supported. The institutional systems introduced were often of a very practical nature, aimed at improving resource management or production systems. This includes the creation or improvement of protected area management, changes to electricity utilities and manufacturing enterprises, changes to planning and management systems in local and central government agencies and the wide variety of small scale but valuable innovations found in the SGP.

This practical character of the changes is widely appreciated and of particular significance within a Vietnamese context, where actions are valued far more than rhetoric in relation to environmental management and conservation. This “culture” of institutional reform is generally positive, as it does mean that reforms are meaningful and sustainable where they are introduced, but one problem with it is that it does tend to lead to short-term thinking and an inherent skepticism towards change by many individuals in key positions in government agencies. This reflects the time taken for the transition from a very centralized, top-down command structure that characterized Vietnam in the past towards more decentralized and initiative-based approaches that are contingent upon the understanding and enthusiasm of individuals at different levels in the institutional structure. The future trend towards institutional change is clear, but it can challenge the skills, authority and work practices of many individuals who tend to respond to change with conservatism that impacts upon the functioning of their organizations.

Two areas of the institutional changes where this conservatism was found are the introduction of higher levels of community participation and the development of sustainable management approaches, both of which are significant in the overall development of environmental management approaches in Vietnam that emphasize a move away from top-down management and protectionist approaches and towards bottom-up sustainable management. The scale and effectiveness of these key areas of institutional development were somewhat limited, reflecting a

very low starting point and a high level of institutional inertia. Substantial challenges remain in the future for improving and disseminating new and improved approaches in these pivotal areas of institutional development.

Sustained future support and actions to develop a more coherent and unified approach to participation and sustainable management, are needed. The GEF should work closely with other members of the international community active in Vietnam to create greater harmonization in the development of innovations in these areas. A wide range of activities in these fields are being supported by different donors, but these experiences (as in the GEF projects) are fragmented, usually site specific and do not have mechanisms for their wider adoption.

The **systemic level** impacts of the GEF portfolio in Vietnam are patchy, with some aspects of the portfolio having a substantial impact whilst others have been far more limited in their influence. Overall, the capacity development impacts at the systemic level have been positive, again reflecting the conducive environment for this in Vietnam where the overall system is actively seeking to improve environmental management and conservation. Of particular note at this level is the enabling activities implemented in Vietnam, which have been undertaken thoroughly and with wide participation. These, along with the approaches of the Implementing Agencies, have created a high level of coherence and effectiveness in the overall management of the GEF portfolio in Vietnam and the GEF programme is well-embedded in the key national institutions.

For the different focal areas, the biodiversity projects have mostly been site-focused on particular protected areas, but taken together they have been instrumental in advancing the biodiversity conservation agenda in Vietnam. The PARC project in particular has influenced the national approach to protected area management but other projects have added to this influence. Of course, the GEF projects are by no means the only influence and other international partners such as Germany and Sweden have also played an important role in this area, but all value the contribution of the GEF portfolio.

It is hard to tell whether the climate change projects have influenced and helped to create, or are a consequence of, the high level recognition of the need to improve energy efficiency and conservation. There is no doubt that this consciousness is there at the highest level and throughout the institutions involved in these issues. What is clear is that the GEF projects are valued in terms of providing practical examples of how greater efficiency and conservation can be achieved in booming economic sectors such as electricity generation and small scale industry. For this reason their systemic influence can be taken as significant.

Influences at the systemic level from the SGP have, perhaps inevitably, been far more limited. There have been some influences, with SGP projects providing practical examples of how new approaches to environmental management can work. This is particularly appealing in a Vietnam context, where practicality is appreciated in all things. There were few specific activities intended to enhance systemic capacities within the SGP as a whole, however, and impacts at this level are consequently less significant and harder to distinguish from a wider set of influences on the national level environmental agenda.

The **overall impact** of the GEF portfolio in capacity development in Vietnam is significant and in general positive. The definition of capacity development given on page 1 ended with the phrase: “capacity development is a process of change that aims to induce various actors to adopt new responsibilities, skills, behaviour, values and policies”. The process aspect of this definition is emphasised here: many of the project evaluated are still under execution, whilst others are only recently completed. The specific impact of the capacity development activities undertaken in many cases can only be assessed conclusively after some time. This means that the conclusions presented here are based on the evidence of results to date, the sustainability of which cannot be guaranteed. Given this caveat, there are a wide range of impacts on capacities at the individual, institutional and systemic level in Vietnam that taken together lead to the positive conclusions presented here.

Of course, all is far from perfect and the analysis presented above has identified many areas where there is room for improvement. In particular, there is scope for more innovative approaches in some areas, though introducing innovations can be challenging in Vietnam. This was particularly found with regard to community participation and capacity development at the community level, which is perhaps the greatest area of concern in the findings in Vietnam. The inherent conservatism of many government institutions and the currently ineffective indigenous civil society in Vietnam are major factors in this overall conclusion that cuts across all aspects of the portfolio. There are also concerns over the sustainability of a number of the capacity development activities implemented, with this particularly true of the biodiversity portfolio.

Balanced against these areas of concern are the positive impacts identified in many areas above. Overall, these positive impacts accumulate to the GEF having a major impact upon environmental management capabilities in Vietnam: an impact that was noted by a wide range of stakeholders at all levels. The effective and consultative management of the portfolio by the GEF Focal Point, the Implementing Agencies and others involved has played an important part in this positive impact, as the GEF is seen as a good and valued partner in the advancement of the environmental agenda in Vietnam.

Many hundreds, even thousands, of individuals have benefited from significant improvements to their capabilities, the overall impact of the GEF at the institutional level has been substantial and positive and the GEF has played an important part in the systemic development of the approach towards environmental management at a crucial time in Vietnam’s rapid development. The much higher priority given to environmental protection and management in the latest national development plan, the Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010 published in 2006, is in part a reflection of the effectiveness of the GEF at the systemic level.

In consequence, the overall conclusion on the **impact of the GEF on capacity development in Vietnam** is that it has been very positive, but that there is room for improvement in relation to engagement with local communities and the sustainability of some aspects of the impacts.