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Country plan 2011-2015

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- Part I: Strategy -

1. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

1.1 Analysis of Main Rights Deficits

Vietnam has a long history of struggle for independence and has lived under the power of and in war with China, Japan, France and US. Vietnam gained its independence from France in 1945 and was re-unified under the communist party in 1975 following the end of the American war. Since then the country has been governed under a one-party system, under the communist party. Vietnam has during the last decades gradually opened up to the outside world, especially when it comes to global trade.

Since the beginning of the economic reform (Doi Moi¹) in 1986, Vietnam, with a population of 88 million people², has achieved remarkable economic growth and development. In 2010-11 the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita surpassed the threshold of USD 1,000 for middle-income countries³. The 1990 poverty rate of 58.1% was reduced to an estimated 14,5% percent in 2008 – a reduction of 75 percent⁴. Vietnam is now put in the bracket of lower Medium Human Development as 128 among the total of 187 listed countries in UNDP's human development index for 2011.

According to the World Bank Vietnam report for 2012, the country still faces major challenges in the transition to market economy. During the last years, the country has had one of the worst inflation rates in South East Asia, rising to two digit figures, around 20%, in 2011. Vietnam ranks 112 among the 182 countries listed by Transparency International in their corruption ranking list⁵. In response to this challenge the Vietnam Anti-Corruption Initiative Program 2011 (VACI 2011) was launched by the Vietnam government and World Bank Vietnam in December 2010 to minimize corruption, strengthen transparency and bring better living environment.

There are also challenges in regards to un-equal income distribution and employment opportunities, as well as limited resources invested in the poor rural areas. The agriculture sector accounts for more than 22% of GDP and 52% of all employment⁶. Many rural areas are still more or less neglected, which is forcing young people to migrate into the larger urban areas. Out of the 88 million people living in Vietnam, according to official statistic around 12% are poor⁷ living under the absolute poverty line. The most vulnerable groups are the ethnic minority groups in the highland areas (constitutes around 13% of the total population, but accounts for almost 30% of the poor), together with people living in coastal areas prone to adverse climate events, female headed households or people with disabilities, migrants and landless people. The regions with the highest relative poverty rates are the north-west, north-central and north-east regions. However in terms of absolute numbers, more poor people live in the north-central and north-east regions, in the Mekong Delta and central coastal regions⁸.

Overseas development assistance (ODA), reached its highest level in 2009 exceeding 8 billion USD⁹, however as a result of the middle-income status, Vietnam has experienced a gradual downsizing of traditional development aid recently. There is a greater earmarking of aid within specific sectors, considered as weak, such as natural resource management, renewable energy, good governance, human rights and civil society to mention a few of relevance to this plan. Some of these earmarked initiatives are creating reactions, sometimes defensive, from the government who consider some of these areas as interference with their internal political affairs.¹⁰

Many of the larger and influential donors in Vietnam have agreed to implement the aid effectiveness agenda, supporting what is called the "new aid architecture". One part of

this is the strengthening of the 'one UN initiative'.¹¹ This is also resulting in a more focused and streamlined top-down driven development perspective. The space for grass-root oriented local NGOs and INGOs to influence and cooperate with international donors has been shrinking as a consequence, especially for those who are not represented on a national level, but working more in remote and neglected provincial levels.

1.1.1 The weaker position of girls and women in society

Vietnam is ranked 71 out of 134 countries on the 2009 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index¹². Still strongly influenced by Confucianism, many Vietnamese give higher value to men compared with women.

PARTICIPATION and EQUITY: Although legal frameworks ensure equity in terms of economic and political involvement, in practice women's participation is not equal to that of men, and women are discriminated against in terms of salaries and job opportunities. Many women lack the needed skills, experience, knowledge, networks and confidence necessary for gaining leadership positions in politics, business, government administration, and the party apparatus.

PROTECTION: In spite of stronger legal protection, and increased awareness of the destructiveness of domestic violence –such as physical violence, psychological, economical, and in particular sexual violence– receive little attention¹³ Lack of livelihood opportunities, as well as climate change is forcing many young women and men to migrate, which introduces them to the risk of exploitation and trafficking. Services to protect victims such as legal assistance and access to information of rights, shelters and counseling remain underdeveloped for all forms of violence.

1.1.2 Climate Change and the fragility of affected communities

Over 70% of Vietnam's population live in the countryside. The agricultural sector employs 60% of the work force, but only accounts for 20% of the GDP¹⁴. The majority is self-employed and do not have access to pensions, social insurance, or insurance in case of loss of crops, income or assets as result of natural disasters.

Vietnam has a 3,260 km coastline along the Pacific Ocean typhoon route, which exposes the country to an average of 7 typhoons per year, particularly in the north and central parts of the country¹⁵. There are predictions that the sea level will rise between 28 cm (low-emission scenario) to 33 cm (high emission scenario) by 2050¹⁶. If the sea level continues to rise, this will heavily impact on Vietnam's rice harvest and also force coastal communities to relocate. On average there are more than one million people in need of emergency relief assistance every year according to UN in Vietnam¹⁷.

Climate change impacts on the livelihoods; health and security of the rural poor. In 2008, Vietnam experienced the most hurricanes globally and was ranked number 6 among the most climate vulnerable countries in the world¹⁸. The southern delta area is the most affected and has also received most of the support in relation to climate change adaptation, DRR and other adaptive and resilience measures. The Central areas of Vietnam are also highly vulnerable to storms and flooding related to climate changes and extreme weather patterns, such as drier dry season, cold spells, and more severe flood and typhoons seasons¹⁹. So far the Central areas have received much lesser attention and support, compared with the South, and there are also fewer international development actors present.

With the rapid economic and industrial development in Vietnam, there is a need to support the development of renewable energy sources. In Vietnam the dependency on fossil fuels and firewood is still huge, while other alternative renewable energy sources are still in need to be identified and developed. One of the key findings in the two targeted communes for NCA's climate justice programs was that the dependency on fire

wood was very high, 50% and 90% respectively in the two target communes²⁰. The traditional habit of burning rice husk is also contributing to CO2 emissions. With a more modern lifestyle there is also an increased need to develop sustainable waste management systems both in urban and rural settings, in order to promote a more environment friendly and sustainable development.

The government has developed a National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020²¹. However the strategy needs to be transformed into local community action and the Strategy is still lacking a gender perspective²². The Strategy also has to give greater importance to a more sustainable socio-economic development that is friendly to people and climate. There is also a need to make sure that allocated resources are trickling down from the national level to the climate affected communities. Key remaining deficits:

PARTICIPATION and PROTECTION: Consequences of climate change vary greatly with topography, type of soil, available infrastructure and economic activity. The plans for socio-economic development are still developed top down and people affected by environmental degradation still have limited influence. Women are underrepresented in local and sub-regional formal decision making structures, such as the Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CFSC) or in Search and Rescue Committees on different administrative levels.

In order to foster ownership and sustainability, climate change adaptation on grass root level should be developed with the participation of local communities, including women's participation, making sure that their needs are properly addressed and their skills and knowledge utilized in the implementation of the plans. There is a need to create platforms for dialogue and strengthen cooperation between government agencies and climate change affected communities.

So far the potential role of the Vietnamese FBOs in responses to Climate Change has largely been neglected, both by the donor community and in the Vietnamese strategies for responses and coordinating mechanisms. Many faith communities are prepared to carry out "charity" work during and after disasters. However they are requesting more capacity building in order to improve local resource mobilization and to strengthen the sustainability of their responses.

EQUITY: Women, especially in rural areas, are more vulnerable to the effect of climate change for their livelihood. Despite this women are most often not consulted when plans and activities are developed related to disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation²³.

1.1.3 The lack of quality health care and social justice

Despite rapid economic development serious illness and expensive medical care remain risk factors for poor families, as they often enter into debt and increased poverty when family members are in need of advanced medical care. Although the government have introduced medical insurance systems, Vietnam is amongst the 50 countries globally who spend the least on health care - under 7% of its state budget and only USD 86 per person²⁴ and most people do not have sufficient health coverage (insurance) in the case of serious illness.

The prevalence of cancer and genetic modifications is high in Vietnam and one assumed factor is related to the chemical warfare and the use of Agent Orange by the Americans during the war²⁵. Vietnam is also experiencing an increase in tuberculosis (TB), HIV and AIDS.

Young women are particularly at risk of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Despite progress in reproductive health and gender equality, there are significant gaps, especially related to people living in rural and remote areas where many still practice unsafe health behaviors. One particularly vulnerable group to reproductive health related risks are female migrants²⁶.

The Vietnamese Ministry of Health has estimated that there are 280,000 people infected with HIV and AIDS and the infection is still spreading rapidly, with a trend of more women being infected. At present, only 52% of the people with AIDS have full access to Antiretroviral (ARV) treatment. The majority of people living without access to HIV treatment are in the prison. At present there are only minor pilot projects introduced in the closed settings according to NCA's own observation. Vietnam is also ranked as 12 out of the 22 most TB burdened countries globally by WHO. It is also assumed that the populations in closed settings are among the most vulnerable people in Vietnam to be infected by TB and/or living with HIV.

There are also rising concerns related to health and the cross cutting issues related to the impacts of climate changes. There is an observed increase of vector born diseases, such as dengue fever and malaria, as well as water born diseases such as diarrhea and cholera²⁷. There are also psycho-social aspects related to disasters, due to loss of harvests and assets and people being burden with heavy debts, which is harming the mental health and well being of affected families.

Water and sanitation related diseases are still major health problems in Vietnam. There are more than 250,000 cases of people being hospitalized due to diarrhea annually and the country still has a high rate of child malnutrition. Water quality, particularly the contamination of groundwater with arsenic, is remains a serious concern. Even if Vietnam has made rapid progress to improve the water supply situation during past decades, there are still parts of the country where the needs are unaddressed, such as poor rural areas and the highlands where the ethnic minority groups are living. Only 18% of the rural communities in Vietnam have access to latrines meeting the hygienic standards of the Ministry of Health. The same survey indicated that only 12% of the schools have safe hygienic sanitation facilities.²⁸

PARTICIPATION and PROTECTION:

The approach in the public health system is still hierarchical and insufficient. This is a major hindrance for poor and seriously sick people to access quality health care and psycho-social support. People living with HIV and AIDS and their families are still poorly organized, thus lacking voice, and are often faced with social isolation, discrimination and exclusion from their community. The present health care system is also mainly focused on the clinical medical aspects, and does not have the resources needed to provide health care, including psycho-social care, which is particularly affecting PLHIV.

EQUITY:

Access to health care depends on the ability to pay for a health insurance or pay for quality treatment. At present it is only an approximate 50% of the total population who has health insurance coverage²⁹.

1.2 Role of local civil society and FBOs (in the context of state and market)

Whilst there is an emergence of civil society in Vietnam³⁰, it is important to remember that the society is formed by Confucianism, a history of war, and a national unification under the one party communist system. With this backdrop, a debate remains in Vietnam regarding what should be defined as civil society and how independent these actors are from the state. In the years after reunification in 1975, Vietnam did not recognize civil society as an independent sphere from the party-state at all. The way of organizing people was by mobilization through large mass-organizations, who to a

certain extent were and are still taking the function of civil society organizations, even if these are not independent or separated from the state and one party structure. The Doi Moi in 1986 was a turning point, marking a new era of relative openness and since the 1990s there have been an emerging number of nongovernmental organizations formed.

CIVICUS identifies seven general types of CSO in Vietnam; 1) mass organizations, 2) umbrella organisations under Fatherland Front, 3) Professional associations, 4) VNGOs (also called Science & Technology organizations if registered under VUSTA), 5) Informal groups, 6) Faith based organisations and 7) INGOs³¹.

According to the People's Aid Coordination Committee (PACCOM)³², over 800 International NGOs (INGOs) are represented in Vietnam³³, however they do not represent the civil society in Vietnam. CIVICUS, in their report from 2005, estimated that there were roughly 140,000 CBOS, 3,000 cooperatives, 200 charities and 1,000 local NGOs registered in Vietnam and the numbers have increased since then.

At present the legal frameworks to register national civil society organizations are complicated, time consuming and not sufficient, even if the legal frameworks are improving with the development of policies, laws and regulations providing space to register and establish legally. The 'grass-root democracy' policy of the government has also provided an avenue for participatory planning, participatory budgeting and boards composed of residents and officials to oversee and monitor public work and projects on community level³⁴. During the last decades there has been an increased space and platforms for dialogue and trust established between civil society and state interactions, as well as joint collaboration.



Monk Thich Thang Huan from the Buddhist Association in Hanoi providing home based care and counseling for PLHIV, Photo taken by Huynh van Ty.

During the last years there has been a rapid growth of civil society involvement in relation to provision of health and climate change responses. It is important to recognize this trend and at the same time also be careful in order not to create a political back lash or having unrealistic expectations on a development that is still in its infancy. The PACT survey on CSO engagement in climate change is clearly pointing out weaknesses related to strategizing, networking and organizational capacities amongst these new actors. Projects are often carried out effectively, but not always resulting in sustainable organizations and networks. Organizations are claiming participatory training methods, however often not followed through with community-centred programming. Many large scale initiatives such as REDD+ and provincial adaptation planning have begun with little consultation and participation of affected citizens and civil society organizations³⁵. Many

VNGOs are still donor driven and lacking a broader constituency to make the accountable and do not have the legitimacy of representing the rights holders.

One often neglected type of civil society actor in Vietnam are the faith based communities and organizations. There are still few international donors and actors who pay any attention to their existence and their potential role as actors for sustainable development is sometimes not recognized or undervalued. The CIVICUS Vietnam report also stated that there is very little research or studies carried out in relation to the faith based communities' role in response to different development sectors³⁶.

There are between 15-20 million people belonging to different faith-based groups in Vietnam. The number might be higher since many people are still not officially registered, but are privately engaged in religious communities. There are twelve official religions in Vietnam. The largest faith based communities are; Buddhists, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Coa Dai, Hoa Hoa and Muslim. The faith based communities are represented all over the country, even if some of the most active FBO's are in the Center and in the South. Many faith based organizations are carrying out community based charity work, have generally a high legitimacy in their local settings and the potential to mobilize both voluntary workers and raising local funds. The authorities are having an increasingly positive attitude to the social and development work carried out by the faith based communities, which is presently creating a momentum to support the establishment of legal frameworks for their social and development activities.

1.3 NCA's comparative advantages in country

NCA has been working in Vietnam since 1994, when Nordic Assistance to Vietnam (NAV) was registered with PACCOM by three Nordic INGOs, with NCA as the lead organization in cooperation with two other ACT Alliance members, Diakonia (Sweden) and DanChurchAid. Since then the other two organizations have phased out their programs in Vietnam, so NAV is today the representation office of NCA in Vietnam.

NCA in Vietnam has a reputation of being a pioneering organization and opening up space for development intervention within the field of gender based violence, HIV and lately linking poverty to Climate Change. NCA is also unique with a comprehensive HIV project in the prisons and by mobilizing faith based organizations. NAV has also been successful in advocating for new interventions with the authorities (through dialogue and non-confrontational advocacy efforts) and mobilize support from the authorities even on sensitive issues within areas where there was reluctance in the initial phases³⁷. The unique contribution of "opening doors" for collaboration with Faith based actors was highlighted by USAID's evaluator in their evaluation of the NCA cooperation. NCA is also unique as INGO with permit to work with Tuberculosis and HIV in the prison settings.

The fact that NCA in Vietnam has primarily Vietnamese local staff, with the exception of the Country representative and international volunteers, has been considered a strength when influencing and advocating the duty bearers, such as authorities and FBO leaders, and to secure necessary permits and engagement. NCA has also documented experience in putting national policies into practice on local level³⁸, with internal expertise and resource partners able not just to share general knowledge, but also the technical and practical approaches for implementation. This 'practical' approach with developing and documenting models and best practices has also been one of the success factors for past advocacy with the authorities, as the resistance has often been more based on lack of capacity to address deficits, and made it possible to repeat project models in new targeted areas. NCA has also been able to scale up, both in geographic reach and scale of program, and comply with donor demands in the past³⁹.

NCA's programs are rooted with a bottom up approach with a grass-root focus, prioritizing partners. In this revised version of the country plan there is a greater

emphasize on strengthening civil society partners, by a focus on supporting core partners such as Faith based and community based organizations, as well as program and resource partners (e.g. mass organizations, research institutions, government agencies) with a strong presence and legitimacy in the local communities.

NCA's cooperation with Faith based organizations and inter-faith collaboration is unique in Vietnam. There are no other international development actors (e.g. INGO's or intergovernmental organisations, such as UN bodies) working in a similar comprehensive way. The unique cooperation with the FBO has been made possible through the involvement of the Vietnamese Committee of the Central Fatherland Front (the umbrella organization for the Mass Organizations) and has led to an increased acceptance of the potential role of the faith based communities to contribute to development in the society. The model of working with the faith based organizations has proven itself to be sustainable and partners have been able to mobilize resources with the support of NCA.

NCA is also prioritizing vulnerable groups in target areas, as gap filler, where there are not many other development actors present⁴⁰. Even if NCA is not able to carry out specific gender justice interventions, mainly due to decreasing funding for gender projects in Vietnam, the present revised Country Plan for Vietnam has decided to maintain the expertise on gender with an ambition to focus on gender dimensions within all the selected program areas, within partner organizations and communities.

NCA has recently invested more in joint collaboration and networking with different international and local actors⁴¹. Since 2010 there is a formal collaboration between the ACT members in Vietnam regulated in a Memorandum of Understanding. NCA in Vietnam is also actively participating in global networks on HIV with USAID/PEPFAR funded organizations. NCA in Vietnam has been part of establishing a joint coordinating mechanism for Climate Change in the Central region⁴². Furthermore, NCA was from the start one of the members of the NGO resource centre and the ambition is to participate actively in the relevant thematic working groups. NCA has also established good working relationships and collaboration with UNAIDS, WHO, UNWomen and other inter-governmental bodies involved in development in Vietnam.

1.4 Relevance in relation to development priorities

1.4.1 Relevance to national policies, plans and priorities

All the main rights deficits analyzed above are in line with the plans and priorities of the government in Vietnam. A number of policies and programs have been approved in each area of concern, as shown in the table below;

Area	International and National policies and programs
Climate change	Signed United Nations Framework Convention On Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 National Targeted Program on Climate Change 2009-2015 approved in 2008 with budget of 2,000 billion VND (over 100 million USD) National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 ⁴³ National strategy on environmental protection 2010, with a vision towards 2020 (NSEP) Directives, decisions and plans related to the Kyoto protocol implementation National Climate Change strategy in 2011 National targets in response to Climate Change in 2008 Program of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions reduction in the Agriculture and Rural Development sector up to 2020

Gender inequality	Signed CEDAW Article 63 of Vietnam’s Constitution Law on Gender Equality (2006) Law on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence (2007) The law on marriage and family National Strategy for Advancement of Women 2000-2010
HIV/AIDS	Law on HIV Prevention and Control (2006) and related sub-law documents Strategy on HIV/AIDS Prevention & Control in VN until 2010 & Vision 2020 ⁴⁴ National plan of action for HIV/AIDS affected children up to 2010, with a vision towards 2020 National strategic plan on protection, care and enhance of people’s health for 2011-2020 and toward 2030. Law on Health Care

The priorities of the Country Plan Vietnam for the next 5-year planning period is well in line with police and plans mentioned above. The ambition is to support the set ambitions and targets of the government plans. The draft 5-year Socio-Economic development plan includes explicit targets on gender, health care and climate change. On gender, the plan sets out an objective of ensuring gender equity in every aspects of social life, gradually shortening the gender gap and eliminating gender stereotypes. On health care the plan aims to restrain and reduce HIV infection significantly and provide every citizen with access to qualified health services. Issues related to climate change appear even more prominently; it is mentioned in the context analysis, overall development objectives, specific tasks and sector priorities.

1.4.2 Relevance to Norwegian development objectives

Norway’s international development cooperation contains three key components summed up in a parliamentary proposition number 13 (2008-2009), namely climate, conflict and capital, known as the three Cs. The Vietnam program takes place primarily within the realm of climate and capital. The overall objective of Norway’s development policy is poverty reduction and securing social justice. Both objectives are reflected in NCA’s country program in Vietnam. Furthermore, NCA’s Vietnam Country Plan corresponds with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Vietnam strategy⁴⁵ since it prioritizes climate change and sustainable development and strengthened civil society. The collaboration with the faith based actors is also seen as a contribution to a greater respect for religious freedom.

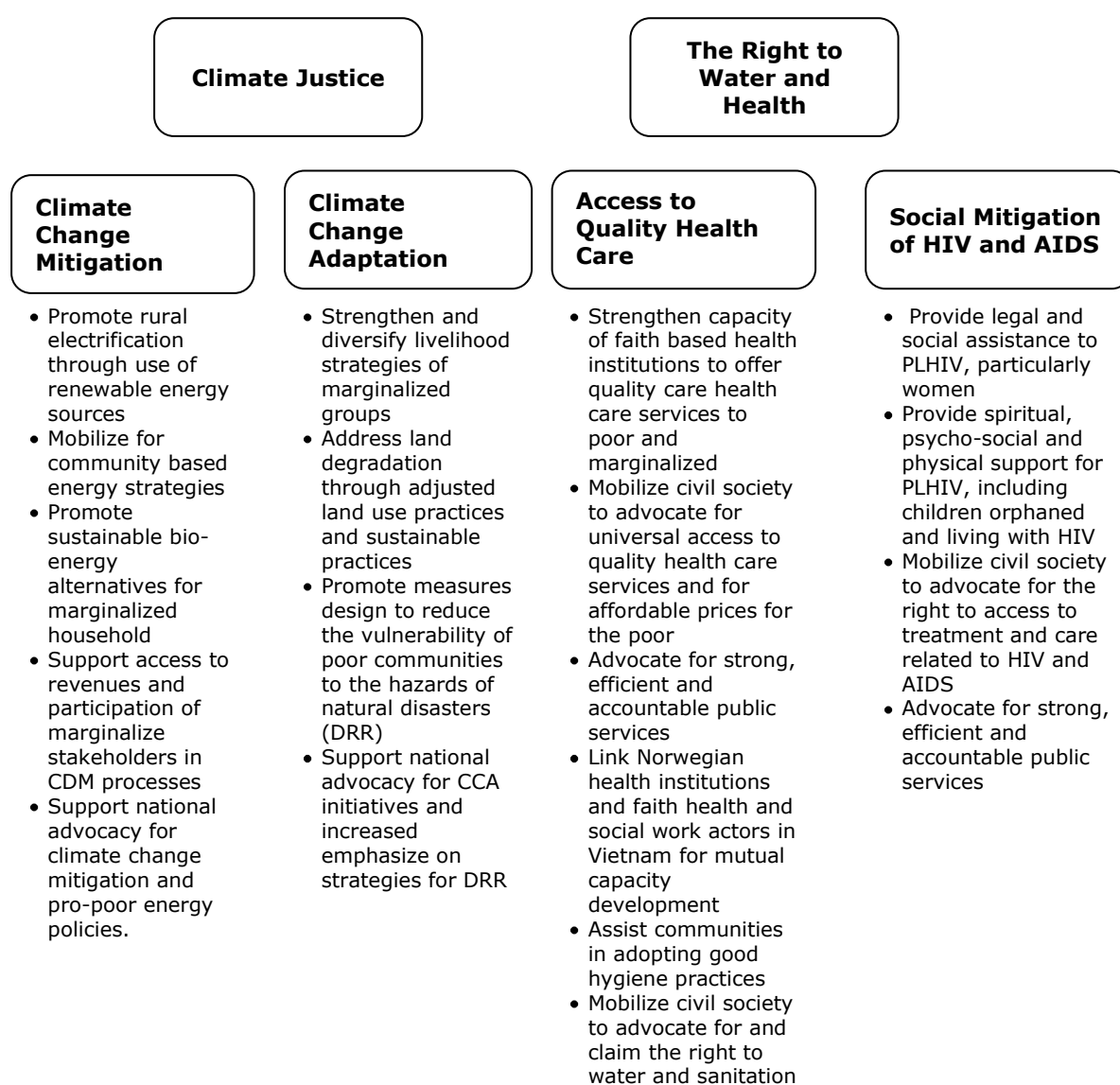
NCA’s program is also in line with NORAD’s position document on principles for support to civil society, as there is a clear aim to build organizational capacity and strengthen civil society actors to take active part in development, the struggle against poverty and promote social justice. The Country Plan is also in line with the Norwegian government’s recent white paper on Global Health⁴⁶ with a focus on rights based approaches to promote the health rights of highly vulnerable women and their children. The white paper has a special focus on HIV and Tuberculosis both prevention and right to treatment; sexual and reproductive health rights; and right to social inclusion (important for mental health and well being) well in line with the priorities for the Country Plan Vietnam.

2. MAIN INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

2.1 Strategic Priorities and Programmes

One of the major changes in this revision compared to the previous version of the Country Plan Vietnam (2011-2015) is that the strategic priority Gender Justice and the two programmes under it were phased out by June 2012. This was due to lack of funding and the decision to invest in more focused growth within fewer thematic areas. The capacity on gender will be maintained and there will still be a focus on gender equity with a mainstreaming approach within the two selected strategic priorities; Climate Justice and the Right to Water and Health. The other major change is the phasing in of the Right to Water and Health strategic priority and the Social Mitigation of HIV and AIDS program under this priority.

Country Program Vietnam, Strategic priorities and Programs for 2012-2015:



The revised Country plan also reflects changes in NCA's mode of operation in Vietnam. The Country Representation should gradually become less operational and the cooperation with partners should be strengthened. There will be a greater focus on strengthening civil society; especially the role and capacity of faith based actors. The ambition is to gradually move the full responsibility for the project cycle management to partners. As part of this transition there is also a need to invest more in strengthening thematic competence and organization development, including governance and accountability; of partners. There will also be a shift from delivery of services and instead strengthen rights based approaches and advocacy to influence decisions and plans within the areas of Climate Justice and Right to Water and Health.

For the strategic period 2011-2015, the focus for Climate Justice will be to develop Climate Change Adaptation (CCA), coupled with mitigation activities. Initially the focus has been on developing best practices and models on community level for Climate Change Mitigation (CCM) and CCA. In the future there will be a focus to influence provincial and community developments plans to include pro poor perspectives and measures related to climate change adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and renewable energy policies.



Biogas construction in Quang Tri Province commune in 2012, Photo taken by Le Than Tung, NCA

The focus for the Right to Water and Health priority will be to continue the strengthening of the capacity of faith based actors, as well as health authorities to provide quality health care and access to care and psycho social support to people living with HIV (PLHIV) and other vulnerable groups with a lack of access to quality health care.

2.2 Strategies for strengthening local civil society from a rights based approach

NCA has chosen to have a wide cooperation with different stakeholders, including partners representing different aspects of civil society functions in the specific Vietnamese context, such as Mass Organizations, Vietnamese NGOs and Faith based actors. NCA has made a conscious decision to focus on strengthening of civil society, however based on previous experience and the environment (enabling space, legal frameworks and political context) the approach is to have a transformative process approach and gradually support different actors to open up the space for stakeholders who represent the interest of poor, vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

NCA's partner portfolio is therefore a combination of stakeholders and interest, based on the assessment that different actors have complementary strengths and weaknesses in

relation to poverty alleviation, the global millennium goals and participation. The Mass Organizations have proven themselves to be efficient partners for poverty alleviation. They are efficiently involving people from National, Provincial and Local level in development responses. Many of the Vietnamese NGOs, in the health and climate change sector, are good in aligning with international donor requirements and have good technical competence, however with weak constituency and are heavily dependent on foreign funding. The Faith based actors have constituencies, have established presence all over the country and are good in resource mobilization, both volunteers and funding. However, they need capacity building and also an increased enabling space, including legal frameworks and permits to run development programs outside their faith constituencies. NCA in Vietnam has established a close collaboration with the Vietnamese authorities, which has been very important to advocate for permits and space to carry out projects in sensitive areas and in collaboration with the faith based partners.



Joint inter-faith meeting on HIV and AIDS in 2009, with representatives from the Roman Catholic, Muslim and Buddhist communities in Vietnam. Photo taken by Ingunn Brandvoll, NCA

Until present the country programme has to a high extent been operational, meaning that the representation has been developing plans, and been responsible for the implementation, monitoring and reporting, both narrative and financial, of all projects. This has been a "secure" and accountable way of working. However, with a clearer strategy to strengthen civil society the ambition is to gradually scale down the operational programmes and establish a partner based approach, which supports partners to take full ownership of plans, implementation, monitoring and reporting of their own projects.

NCA in Vietnam has during the last years re-assessed its modality of operation. The recent decision to invest in a partner based approach, is based on the increased space for civil society actors to contribute to development in Vietnam together with the trend of an increasing number of civil society actors established, as well as the representation's positive experience of strengthening the FBOs involvement and capacity in response to HIV. The impact of the FBO program has been that there is now a greater openness from the authorities to allow faith based actors to involve in social and development work.

NCA is presently mapping existing and potential partners. During this phase NCA is developing a plan for strengthening the partnership portfolio and collaboration with different development and influential actors in Vietnam.

The ambition is to strengthen the collaboration with Faith based partners, representing the Buddhist and Catholic communities, with an openness to collaborate with other faith communities, such as the Protestant, Cao Dai and Hoa Hoa. As well as, developing the collaboration with potential core and resource partners representing Vietnamese non-governmental organizations, mass-organizations (such as Women's Union, Youth and Farmers Association, Fatherland front) and research partners (technical experts and research institutions etc).

NCA will continue to focus on advocating and supporting the development of legal frameworks, registration and permits for CBOs and FBOs' work and organizations. As well as enhance their technical and management capacities, and to build their links, also across faith and provinces to other organizations and relevant government authorities. The aim is to improve coordination and resource mobilization on local level, to strengthen collaborative efforts, referrals systems, and with time facilitate advocacy efforts.

The longer term objective is to strengthen the capacity with partners in relation to rights based principles, in order to support them to effectively advocate and address structural causes of inequity, non-discrimination, empowerment, participation, accountability and the rights of people to organize themselves for sustainable development. Capacity building and system strengthening will therefore be a prioritized area of intervention in order to transfer the whole cycle of project and financial management to partners, while at the same time building their good governance and accountability system.

Partners will also be made aware about Vietnamese legal and policy frameworks and their relevance to vulnerable groups, their rights and the government's obligations, in order to foster greater accountability with the duty bearers and support them to live up to their promises and commitments. NCA will also build capacity with partners to identify, develop and advocate the solutions to their own problems in relation to the two strategic priorities; Health and Climate Change.

Together with partners, NCA in Vietnam will work towards ensuring the participation of the rights holders. This include securing their participation in design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and activities, as well as their representation in project management and decision making structures.

The ambition is that there should be an established partner portfolio of independently working core partners (FBOs and CBOs), programme support and resource partners to carry out collaborative efforts in regards development programs and advocacy in relation to the strategic priority areas by the end of this period.

2.3 NCA Integrated Approach

NCA in Vietnam's priority the last decade has been on long-term development. This will remain the main focus for the period of 2011-2015. In addition, NCA in Vietnam will continue to provide emergency relief when appropriate in geographic areas were NCA and partners have established ongoing project. The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and emergency preparedness interventions will be integrated into the climate change adaptation programs. NCA's emergency assistance will be carried out in close coordination with the authorities and other actors operating within the affected geographic areas. NCA is also coordinating with the other ACT members. One new ambition, with the greater focus of strengthening the Faith based partners, is to improve capacity for disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness in order to provide efficient relief in coordination with other actors. Another focus will be to monitor relief responses in order to ensure that the aid is distributed to the affected people with accountability.

In order to maximize the impact of the long-term development projects, the ambition is that each program should integrate a rights based perspective. The way of initiating projects in Vietnam is often based on service delivery, however the long term perspective is to shift this into practical development models and best practices, that can be used both for advocacy for up-scaling and expanded reach, as well as supporting partners and authorities to strengthen existing structures to deliver improved services in relation to existing deficits and gaps.

The programs are also increasingly focussing of the rights based perspective of advocating for access to basic rights such as; livelihood, rights to health, right to protection, gender rights etc. The ambition is to strengthen and develop advocacy and rights based approaches in a context sensitive way. The advocacy has so far been based on dialogue and trust building with duty bearers and mobilization and empowerment of the rights holders to address development deficits. This has proven to be a productive approach, instead of using public confrontation and statements. To strengthen the role and acceptance for FBO engagement in Health Rights and Climate Justice, will also be a priority in the future. The selected advocacy method used are; 1) Working through partners, particularly Mass Organizations, Community Based Organizations and Faith Based Organizations, to support mobilization of local communities through capacity building and community organizing to strengthen the participation and influence of the rights holders and 2) Establishing dialogue with relevant authorities and influential stakeholders, including religious leaders, on different levels to provide arenas and space for the rights holders and partners to raise their concerns and also influence plans for development.

Major advocacy priorities will be to ensure that gender, climate change and health concerns are included in policies and socio-economic plans, both on national and especially on provincial and local levels. NCA will also continue to advocate for a more conducive environment for FBOs and CBOs involvement in Health and Climate development, as an integrated part of the FBOs social work in the society. Advocacy activities will include workshops, conferences, capacity building, study tours and development of publications, studies and evaluations. The aim is to support down-ward accountability (and bottom up influence) and greater interaction between policy makers, government administrators, partner organizations and rights holders.

The method of rooted advocacy and dialogue, which is already used widely in the HIV and AIDS program in Vietnam, will be applied for all program areas and partners. The Climate Justice programs will also include the cooperation with the FBOs and build their capacity as climate justice advocates.

2.4 NCA Accountability Commitments

NCA in Vietnam will continue to strengthen accountability and quality of the development programs towards the rights holders, host communities, partners and other stakeholders (including government authorities and donors) based on the seven HAP principles.

The main items in the implementation plan within this Country Plan's period are the following;

Establishing and delivering on commitments (1)

- The Vietnam office has developed the accountability commitment, frameworks and plans. This will be followed up regularly as part of management and regular monitoring of organisational plans.
- Securing that all important binding documents should be translated into Vietnamese, in order to share it with all Vietnamese staff and relevant stakeholders.

Staff competency (2)

- Ensure that staff members understand the Code of Conduct and their responsibility under the accountability framework, as well as following up on CoC with partners (as part of their obligation).
- Regular orientation with staff about the HAP benchmarks and integration into annual plans, internally and with partners.
- Strengthen performance management of staff, develop capacity building plans based on organizational/program quality needs and needs assessments with staff.

Sharing information (3)

- To develop information sharing system, make sure that minutes and decisions are properly shared.
- To ensure that documents are translated to Vietnamese and English in order to secure that information are shared and understood by relevant stakeholders.
- That plans and cooperation with partners will be shared in a transparent manner.

Participation (4)

- Selection criteria and assessment criteria in relation to rights holders and partners will be further developed, ensuring that the programs are not discriminating, with the aim to consider gender, age, diversity and special needs.
- The programs will continue to strengthen the participation of women, men, boys and girls to be subjects and part of their own development.
- Feedback mechanisms to collect inputs will be developed in a context sensitive manner and to assure that there is community consent for the actions.
- To strengthen partners to improve to meet the requirement of participation will be a priority concern for capacity building.

Handling complaints (5)

- Continue to develop routines and systems for complaints and feedback handling related to programs and partners, as well as strengthen internal incident monitoring and reporting.

Learning and continual improvement (6)

- Strengthen PME and financial routines internally as well as with partners
- Accountability commitments will be included in the agreements with partners. Agreements should be reviewed with partners before signing to make commitments clear.
- Good governance, accountability and transparency will be key issues to address for the organization development both internally and with partners.

2.5 NCA Commitments to mainstreaming development principles

2.5.1 Gender equality

Gender equity is a cross cutting issue on the organizational and program level. In 2012 the Vietnam representation carried out a gender audit with the support of an external consultant. The office has also developed a draft gender manual for the office. Based on these the office will produce responses and plans for implementation. The ambition is to develop these into parts of the quality control tools and approaches for the Vietnam program.

2.5.2 Conflict sensitivity

To minimize harm is an important aspect of the back ground analysis when NCA is developing programs in Vietnam, especially related to sensitive areas to avoid

unnecessary resistance and conflicts. The strong Vietnamese presence in management is also securing that the programming is carried out in a way that is not creating unnecessary conflicts and harm to rights holders, partners or local staff members.

2.5.3 Environmental sustainability

The ambition is to develop tools for carbon foot printing and Environment Impact Assessment (with the support from NCA Oslo) to be used as tools for the office, partners and programmes. The ambition is to promote “greening” both the office and programmes and commit to energy and water saving. NCA in Vietnam is cooperating with Nexus, and international NGO, with expertise in carbon foot printing and social enterprising, with the ambition to strengthen the capacity of NCA and partners to support “greening” of the development programs in Vietnam.

For programming the Vietnam office is investing in Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation with the ambition to promote environmental sustainability.

End-notes

- ¹ 'Doi Moi' is a Vietnamese word for Renovation. It was the name given to the reforms initiated in 1986 and represents the move towards a 'socialist-oriented market economy for Vietnam'. See Wikipedia on 'Doi Moi'. [Url:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doi_Moi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doi_Moi)
- ² Population in 2011 was 87,800,000, ranking Vietnam as the 13th most populated country globally.
- ³ World Bank website: The international poverty line is defined as an income sufficient to ensure a food intake of 2,100 calories per person per day, plus necessary non-food expenditures.
- ⁴ UNDP's homepage in Vietnam reporting on the results of the Millennium Development Goals to be found at: <http://www.undp.org.vn/mdgs/viet-nam-and-the-mdgs/?languageId=1>
- ⁵ <http://www.transparency.org/country#VNM>
- ⁶ World Bank. Report No.: 44575-VN (Washington, DC, 2008).
- ⁷ UN in Vietnam's official statistic. From 2009. <http://www.un.org.vn/en/about-viet-nam/basic-statistics.html>
- ⁸ IFAD; http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/rural-poverty-portal/country/home/tags/viet_nam
- ⁹ Ministry of Planning and Investment; *Donor pledges top 8 billion USD, Hanoi (10 May 2010)*, [url://http:// www.mpi.gov.vn/portal/page/portal](http://www.mpi.gov.vn/portal/page/portal)
- ¹⁰ Nhan Dan (the news paper 'The people') published, on August 31, 2012, a political editorial saying that civil society (CS) is a tactic of the peaceful evolution, a term for a non-violent campaign against communism.
- ¹¹ More details are to be found on UN's on web-page in Vietnam on http://un.org.vn/en_/the-one-un-initiative-in-viet-nam-mainmenu-265/one-plan.html
- ¹² The Global Gender Gap Index is based on the following sub-indices: economic participation, educational attainment and opportunity, health and survival, political empowerment. Source: World Economic Forum 2009 The Global Gender Gap Report, Geneva Switzerland.
- ¹³ In the 2008 survey by Ms Phuong nearly 9% of 246 women answered that they had been forced to have sex¹³. She states: "Most people in the survey area have a limited understanding of domestic violence. Villagers and local authorities commonly consider domestic violence to be verbal abuse and/or the physical assault on one spouse by another. Sexual violence or psychological/ emotional violence is not regarded as domestic violence and was not mentioned in the group discussions or in-depth interviews." The BMC Public Health study reports: "The term "marital rape" appears to be unrecognised in the Vietnamese society however, there is evidence that "forced sex" in the context of marriage does occur..." Both studies agree that cases are underreported. For full references see endnote 28.
- ¹⁴ World Bank (February 2007), <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/EASTASIAPACIFICEXT/VIETNAMEXTN/0,,cont entMDK:20534368~isCURL:Y~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:387565,00.html>
- ¹⁵ Climate Risk and Adaptation country profile, April 2011, http://sdwebx.worldbank.org/climateportalb/doc/GFDRRCountryProfiles/wb_gfdr climate_change_coun try_profile_for_VNM.pdf
- ¹⁶ UNEP& IPONRE (2009)
- ¹⁷ <http://www.un.org.vn/en/about-viet-nam/overview.html>
- ¹⁸ <http://germanwatch.org/klima/cr i.pdf>
- ¹⁹ Bui Dung The et al (February 2010); *Situation analysis on climate change in Thuan Thien Hue Province, Vietnam*, a study commissioned by NCA Vietnam in 2009 to Hue University of Economics, Hue, Vietnam
- ²⁰ According to NCA's baseline survey on renewable energy in Vinh Hai and Phong Binh communes in 2011
- ²¹ The National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 including its implementation plan focuses on decentralization of disaster prevention, response and mitigation as well as enhanced international and national cooperation and coordination. The National Targeted Programme to Respond to Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation outlines guiding principles, objectives, tasks and targets, and responsibilities of various sectors for activities and responses to climate change. For more information on the implementation plan of the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control, see [url: http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MYAI-82X2VE-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MYAI-82X2VE-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf) and for the National Targeted Program [url: http://www.presscenter.org.vn/en//images/Decision_158_on_approval_of_NTP-1.pdf](http://www.presscenter.org.vn/en//images/Decision_158_on_approval_of_NTP-1.pdf)
- ²² Policy brief on gender equality in CCA and DRR in Vietnam, by Oxfam. Shared during the national *Policy dialogue on promoting gender responsive development and Implementation of policies and programs in the Central of Vietnam*, from 28-29 November 2011.
- ²³ Third Global Congress of women in politics and governance, theme Gender in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction www.capwip.org/3rdglobalcongress1.html
- ²⁴ United Nations Development Program - UNDP (2009); *Human Development Report 2009; Human Mobility and Development*, table N, Health and Education.

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- ²⁵ <http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/OtherCarcinogens/IntheWorkplace/agent-orange-and-cancer>
- ²⁶ <http://www.un.org.vn/en/about-viet-nam/overview.html>
- ²⁷ According to WHO in Vietnam. http://www2.wpro.who.int/vietnam/sites/dhs/climate_change/
- ²⁸ According to UNICEF in Vietnam. <http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/wes.html>
- ²⁹ According to Björn Ekman, Nguyen Thanh Liem, Ha Anh Duc and Henrik Axelson, 9% of the Vietnamese population have social health insurance through employers or retirement schemes, 18% have access to insurance through poverty certificates, 11% are children under 6 years of age with right to free health care and 11% have voluntary health insurance through schools and mass-organizations. See Health Policy and Planning (19 April, 2008); *Health insurance reform in Vietnam: A review of recent development and future challenges*, Volume 23, Number 4, pages 252-263, Oxford Journals, the UK, url: <http://heapol.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/23/4/252>
- ³⁰ Forms of engagement between state agencies and civil society organizations in Vietnam, study report by VUFO-NGO resource centre, Vietnam, Hanoi, December 2008
- ³¹ The emerging civil society in Vietnam – an initial assessment of Civil Society in Vietnam, CIVICUS, 2006
- ³² PACCOM, which is a part of the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO) is responsible for facilitating aid from INGOs, for processing licences for INGOs, for assisting local partners in their relationship with INGOs, and for guiding and monitoring INGOs with regard to Vietnamese regulations. See url: <http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/content/comingo-vufo-paccomm>
- ³³ According to PACT's report over 500 INGOs, 'Civil Society and Climate Change in Vietnam, Actors, Roles and Possibilities' – a white paper prepared for PACT Vietnam, April 2012, by Andrew Wells-Dang
- ³⁴ Forms of engagement between state agencies and civil society organizations in Vietnam, study report by VUFO-NGO resource centre, Vietnam, Hanoi, December 2008.
- ³⁵ PACT's report over 500 INGOs, 'Civil Society and Climate Change in Vietnam, Actors, Roles and Possibilities' – a white paper prepared for PACT Vietnam, April 2012, by Andrew Wells-Dang
- ³⁶ Page 60, The emerging civil society in Vietnam – an initial assessment of Civil Society in Vietnam, CIVICUS, 2006
- ³⁷ Pioneering HIV programs with FBOs and in the prisons. Pioneering GBV programs on local level.
- ³⁸ NCA has been able to work in the prisons, develop a comprehensive cooperation with the FBOs in the areas of access to Climate Justice and Rights to Health. Influencing laws related to Gender based violence as well as the process to develop legal space for FBOs to engage in development outside faith activities.
- ³⁹ NPI grant with USAID, TBREACH grant with WHO, renewable energy grant with Statkraft etc.
- ⁴⁰ Climate vulnerabilities in Central Vietnam are not the radar of the larger development community and to a high extend still neglected.
- ⁴¹ ACT Alliance Vietnam Forum, part of the initiative to establish the Central Vietnamese coordination mechanism on climate change etc, member of the VUFO-NGO resource centre since it was established etc..
- ⁴² the Central Regional Climate Change Network (CRCCN), established in 2011, with NCA as the rotating lead agency during the first six months.
- ⁴³ The National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 including its implementation plan focuses on decentralization of disaster prevention, response and mitigation as well as enhanced international and national cooperation and coordination. The National Targeted Programme to Respond to Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation outlines guiding principles, objectives, tasks and targets, and responsibilities of various sectors for activities and responses to climate change. For more information on the implementation plan of the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control, see url: [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MYAI-82X2VE-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MYAI-82X2VE-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf) and for the National Targeted Program url: http://www.presscenter.org.vn/en//images/Decision_158_on_approval_of_NTP-1.pdf
http://www.presscenter.org.vn/en//images/Decision_158_on_approval_of_NTP-1.pdf
- ⁴⁴ The full name of the strategy is HIV/AIDS Prevention & Control in Vietnam until 2010 with a Vision to 2020. See url: http://vietnam.unfpa.org/documents/Vietnam_aidstrategy.pdf for information on the strategy and url: http://www.unaids.org.vn/local/legaldocs/Law%20on%20HIV.AIDS%20Prevention%20and%20Control%20No%2064%20of%202006_.pdf for details on the law.
- ⁴⁵ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Vietnam strategy, published in June 2008
- ⁴⁶ Meld. St. 11 (2011-2012) Meldning til Stortinget: Global helse I utriks- og utviklingspolitikken