

Strengthening of the Environmental Management Authority in Vietnam (SEMA)

In Depth Review

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FOREWORD

Swedmar has been assigned by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to undertake an In Depth Review (IDR) of the project “Strengthening of the Environmental Management Authority in Vietnam”.

The IDR was undertaken in April 2001 by Mr Lars Johansson (Team Leader), Mrs Ingrid Carlman and Dr. Le Quy An. Interpreters have been Dr. Cung Thuong Chi and Dr. Nguyen Thuy Loan.

The Embassy of Sweden has provided the team with a detailed schedule for meetings with concerned parties as well as other logistic support. Briefings and debriefings have been held at both the Embassy, the NEA and Sida. The Project Management Unit (PMU) of SEMA has supported the team with project documents and in other ways asked for. A draft report was provided to Sida and the Embassy of Sweden and through them also to the National Environmental Agency. Based on comments from the Embassy and the NEA, the team has revised the draft. Especially the Embassy has asked us to provide additional inputs to the preparation of a new/continued support. Clarifications have been made and information has been added.

Though the many meetings both at MoSTE/NEA, other ministries and two DoSTEs, the team has been provided with important information for the IDR. We are grateful for the interest shown for the IDR and the open-minded attitude in discussions on experiences of the current SEMA as well as on possible orientation of a new or continued project. We hope that our report will assist Sida and MoSTE/NEA in the further discussions and preparations.

TABLE OF CONTENT

FOREWORD

1.	INTRODUCTION	4
2.	STRENGTHENING THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CAPACITY	5
2.1	With reference to Sida policies and the SEMA objectives	5
2.2	Capacity of NEA divisions	7
2.3	Capacity within Inspection	9
2.4	Capacity of the DoSTEs	10
2.5	Through participation in the preparation of the Environmental Strategy and Action Plan	11
2.6	The MILS system	13
2.7	The integration of SEMA in the NEA	13
3.	PREPARATION OF THE OUTLINE OF A CONTINUED SWEDISH SUPPORT	15
3.1	Introduction	15
3.2	Capacity development and objectives for a continued support	15
3.3	Points of departure in order to decide on programme content	17
3.4	Implementation arrangements	19
4.	SUMMARY FOR THE PREPARATION OF A CONTINUED CO-OPERATION	22
	LIST OF ACRONYMS	24
	APPENDICES:	
1	LIST OF CONTACTED UNITS AND ORGANISATIONS	25
2	TERMS OF REFERENCE	

1. INTRODUCTION

Swedmar has been assigned by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to undertake an In Depth Review (IDR) of the project “Strengthening of the Environmental Management Authority in Vietnam” (SEMA). According to the ToR, the IDR should preliminary concentrate on aspects related to capacity building and look into the activities carried out and the mode of operation applied by SEMA in its capacity building efforts. The IDR would thus be a complement to the reporting expected through the consolidation work and provide in-depth information on the core content and intentions of SEMA.

The specific issues of the IDR have been to:

1. analyse case studies of capacity building;
2. analyse MILS, the in-house Management Information and Learning System;
3. identify other issues of importance for the understanding of capacity building in an environmental authority and its relations to other agencies and administrations; and
4. comment on and provide recommendations on the planning for a new project.

The first three specific issues (1-3 above) are elaborated in section 2 of the report. Proposals on the planning for a new/continued support are elaborated in section 3. A summary for the preparation of a new or continued support is presented in section 4.

With reference to the ToR, the IDR is meant to be a complement to the final reporting by SEMA itself. We have therefore not scrutinised e.g. the Draft Results Analysis Report in details. Our findings are more related to the information we have obtained through interviews and discussions. Institutions met are listed in annex 1.

According to the ToR, we have had a large amount of freedom in our selection of issues related to specific questions 1 and 3 above. We have selected these cases or issues step by step based on what we have found important to bear in mind and report on for the preparation of a new/continued programme. It has not been an evaluation of SEMA.

SEMA has been “a nationally executed project”. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has been instrumental in the Swedish support to MoSTE/NEA since several years and has had a main advisory function within SEMA. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has provided technical assistance on request and study tours have been organised to Sweden. The inputs of IUCN and SEPA has been planned annually and agreed upon at annual meetings. Comments have been made during our meetings with concerned bodies on the relevance and efficiency of the support arrangements. The organisational set-up has been reviewed in an organisational study in 1999. Based on our findings we think that the organisational structure of a next SEMA should be discussed with concern. In section 3 we have provided some advice on these issues.

2. STRENGTHENING THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

2.1 Strengthening of capacity with reference to Sida policies and the SEMA objectives

Strengthening the capacity of MoSTE/NEA

In *Sida's Policy for Capacity Development*, such support is defined as the combined efforts to support the development of knowledge, competence and well functioning organisations and institutions. The role of informal norms and values such as democratic culture and environmental awareness is also stressed. According to Sida, the ultimate objective of the development of knowledge and capacity is to make it easier for people to build up an identity: for themselves and in relation to others.

The two major goals of the SEMA project are focusing on environmental capacity building, either within the environmental administration NEA/ MoSTE/DoSTE or within other sectors of the Government of Vietnam. There are also specific objectives and crosscutting projects or functions defined for the project which are combined in accordance with the spectrum of capacity building efforts that is called upon in the Sida guidelines – from informal norms and values to formal laws.

As stated in NEA's *Result Analysis Report* (March 2001) a number of activities with the purpose and function of strengthening the environmental capacity have been carried out. While reviewing documents and through interviews, we have found many examples of that kind. However, we also have found some criticism and demands for modifications. We have shown upon such aspects below.

In the Results Analysis Report it is stated that the project has successfully laid the basic foundations for capacity building in NEA, and that now there is a need for more specific and targeted actions in accordance with the priorities established in the Environmental Strategy and Action Plan. We agree to these conclusions based on our survey, especially that more targeted actions are needed to respond to these priorities.

MoSTE /NEA and related line ministries are now in a phase where the need for capacity building efforts has to be reviewed again. Capacity development efforts have to be planned in a systematic way, and on the basis of development scenarios formulated in the Environmental Strategy and Action Plan. The preparation of capacity development efforts should include formulation of objectives, priorities and then selecting activities for international support. The future institutional role of NEA - as it is today or as a department within MoSTE – will also affect the capacity development priorities and the means of executing international support.

Relations between MoSTE/NEA and line ministries

The specific objectives of the SEMA project are closely linked to the major goal of establishing environmental capacity within the MoSTE, NEA and DoSTE:s,

while no specific objective have been formulated for the second goal – a strengthened capacity within the Government of Vietnam to consider environmental implications in responding to anticipated future increases in development investment. With the Government of Vietnam we understand not only MoSTE/NEA but also the different line ministries. Without specific sub-objectives it is difficult to assess to what extent the second main goal is fulfilled.

The Decree no. 175/CP stipulates that the line ministries have to co-operate with the MoSTE to exercise the environmental functions of their sectors. A certain delay in concretising and articulation of the decree has weakened the cooperation and hindered operational steps to be taken.

SEMA has not been in a position to cover environmental implications in the sector policies and legislation. It was stated, in the SEMA Project Document, that the project would not be in a position to cover other environmental law issues. A sub-project proposal for a comprehensive law support programme was envisaged instead - a proposal that was developed by NEA with assistance from SEMA.

The issue of capacity development within the environmental sector in a broader governmental perspective has not been inserted appropriately in Vietnam. Environmental capacity development within the environmental sector is mostly understood as capacity development of NEA/MoSTE. As said above, SEMA has had a focus on MoSTE/NEA. In order to implement the Decree no. 175/CP, the understanding of the need for capacity development should be expanded to the functions of other ministries. In addition, the division of responsibilities between MoSTE and line ministries has to be better clarified and a better co-ordination should be set up.

Constraints concerning NEA:s mandate to deal with environmental issues related to different sectors are mentioned in the Results Analysis Report and in a concept paper for a new agreement. And according to the *Concept Paper for New Agreement of Collaboration with the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (November 2000)*, the situation is as follows:

“At present there are many agencies with individual and shared responsibilities for environmental management and development planning. Most of the staff within these agencies has had little experience in environmental matters..... Overlapping responsibilities among agencies create duplication. But lack of cooperation among agencies creates duplication, and lack of cooperation amongst agencies reduces the exchange and sharing of knowledge, expertise, and personnel.Socio-economic development planning and urban master planning have only begun to integrate environmental considerations and there are few formal mechanisms for doing so.”

During our review we have met several ministries and discussed the issue of co-operation between ministries within the environmental field. However few specific areas of co-operation were articulated in general or in relation to SEMA. We understand it as that the units responsible for environmental concerns are small and not in the main stream of policy and decision making within the line minis-

tries. Another explanation could be that some line ministries are not deeply aware about their role and responsibilities in environmental management. The sectors are very strong in their specific and main field of mandates, the governmental power is divided between them with few incitements to co-operate. And the MOSTE/NEA mandate is not particular strong in relation to this traditional management structure.

Based on the comments obtained the participation in SEMA was mostly related to ad hoc activities such as workshops, etc. The co-operation in developing Environmental Strategy and Action Plan was on the other hand a possibility to formulate co-operation initiatives in a long-term perspective (section 2.5 below). Some of the representatives met were however rather unfamiliar with this work. This could of course (hopefully) depend on the possibility that other personnel had been involved in the work.

In order to comply with Sida:s Policy for Capacity Development it would be needed to define the different identities – roles, obligations, rights, responsibilities, rules and authorities involved. In addition, our conclusion is that to strengthen the capacity of considering environmental implications of different sectors, it would be necessary to define more specific objectives in this area. Intellectual and practical tools required could then be applied in order to strengthen specific identities or relations. The institutional and formal identities should be reviewed in perspective of the new Environmental Strategy and Action Plan when considering the orientation of a further Swedish support for strengthening the environmental sector in Vietnam.

2.2 Strengthening of the capacity of NEA divisions

Several of the NEA divisions have been involved in the planning and implementation of SEMA capacity development efforts and are together one of our “cases”. The following general characteristics of the participation and capacity building efforts of some of the contacted divisions shall be seen parallel to the description in SEMA:s Results Analysis Report. Our findings are mainly based on interviews.

The role of the **Environmental Policy and Legislation Division** has been in focus of SEMA. The personnel of this division, and SEMA experts, have participated in the development of the Environmental Strategy and the Environmental Action Plan. The competence of the division to further deal with policy formulation and strategic planning has increased significantly through these works. The division has improved its capacity in designing and organising the whole process, in gathering and working with experts coming from many ministries, institutions and localities, and in exchanging ideas and experiences with international experts. In the future, the division could see a continued focus of the support on capacity building on legal issues, policy issues and strategic planning, including the use of economical tools. The Environmental Strategy and Action Plan will now be followed by a number of specific actions where the further preparation of legal, policy and strategic issues are essential for success in content. During these preparations for further implementation of the strategy and plan as well as the internal

strategy work of NEA, more direct contacts with international, including Swedish institutions and experts, are requested. The character of the duties of the division is such that inputs of international experiences and advice are essential, e.g. when preparing for the ratification of international conventions and regional agreements. This links up to the responsibility of MoSTE and the obligations to support to this ministry. We have not examined these linkages.

The **Education, Training and Information Division** has participated especially in training and awareness activities. SEMA has contributed significantly to the volume of awareness building activities at central level and in the participating provinces. Workshops for central / higher level decision makers have been important for the common understanding of environmental concerns and for future collaboration between sectors/line ministries. Campaigns at “Environmental Days” and other established celebration occasions have been supported by SEMA. The financial support has made it possible to work broader and with a larger volume. The officers of the division had already relevant skills as they started this kind of activities many years ago within the former State Committee for Science and before its transformation to the MoSTE. SEMA has not in any significant way contributed to upgrading the competence of the division in elaborating new forms of awareness activities. However, some training and study tour to Sweden have been provided to some officers to improve the effects of the information and awareness activities.

The **Networking and Environmental Database Division** has been promoted a lot through SEMA. Equipment and software has been delivered and the knowledge and competence of the personnel has been upgraded. SEMA has contributed to the elaboration of an environmental information system. The system development is at early stage and a continued upgrading of the environmental databases will be needed. This could be done through the combined efforts of many projects and financial sources. Through the LAN system and through the Internet, the databases of the NEA could in the future be of great importance for the environmental management in Vietnam.

The **other divisions** of NEA have only been involved in some specific activities, mostly training, and have not been strengthened as divisions. However, they have an interest to participate in a next phase or a new SEMA. Specific requests have been formulated, e.g. from the Nature Conservation Division.

The specific support to Inspection Services, where the **Environment Inspectorate** has been supported and involved are described below as a case study.

2.3 Strengthening of capacity within Inspection

One of the specific objectives for the SEMA project has been to promote the effectiveness of environmental inspection services, and one of the crosscutting components has also been related to inspection. The improvement of the environmental inspection capacity in NEA:s Environment Inspectorate and in six DoSTE:s has been supported. The plan for this support was elaborated already in

the beginning of SEMA.

The formation of an environmental inspection service has been an important part of the establishment of the NEA and the environmental sections of the DoSTE:s. It was the consequence of the development of environmental policies and legislation. The fundamental legal document on environmental inspection is the Law on Environmental Protection, Decree No. 175 CP, dated October 18, 1994. The provisions for the organisation, authority, and scope of activities of State Inspection on environmental protection are stated in Circular No. 1485/MTg dated December 12, 1994, and issued by the MoSTE. An important prerequisite for inspection and environmental management is stated in Decree No. 26/C, dated April 26 1996, concerning environmental crimes.

The SEMA project has contributed substantially to the strengthening of the inspection capacity in three main areas

- Under the SEMA project, the legal instruments related to environmental inspection have been reviewed, changes in the regulations on inspection have been proposed, such as strengthening the role of the inspector, requiring self monitoring by the enterprises, and charging an environmental fee.
- Based on the legal framework and experiences from Sweden, a handbook for inspection has been worked out. It was widely discussed and tested in provinces before it was settled. Procedures for environmental monitoring have also been worked out.
- A training programme, which consists of five modules, has been developed. The participants of this training have been staff from the “inspectories”, the environmental management sections of the 61 DoSTE:s, and the staff of environmental protection from ministry branches. From April 1998 to June 2000, the five training modules were implemented with 17 classes and in total 400 participants. The topics of the five modules have been basic environmental knowledge, environmental management, professional environmental protection inspection and different supporting systems as for information.

According to the information provided to us, the capacity for carrying out environmental inspection has increased substantially as a result of steps taken through the SEMA project – at the national level and at the DoSTE level, and especially in the directly involved DoSTE:s. Different prerequisites for inspection have been dealt with in terms of arrangements for:

- Legislation
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Pollution Control
- Monitoring
- Policies
- Information
- Awareness formation
- Sanctions, fees and fines.

In our view, SEMA has contributed significantly to the development of capacity for environmental inspection, especially in the six DoSTEs directly involved (based on our interviews at two DoSTEs). Through the experiences of the SEMA support to inspection services in the six Provinces it would be rationale and advisable to prepare for an expansion of the support to other provinces, with or without external support.

At the national scale, it is necessary to elaborate regulations for the inspection of environmental implications of activities in different sectors that have an impact on nature resources and environment. In addition, inspection is only one part of environmental management – a part that cannot replace the others and that is dependent upon these others. The ultimate aim of inspection is to control the compliance with regulations. Therefore elaborated and precise environmental legislation is fundament for a good quality of the inspection.

2.4 Strengthening of the capacity of the DoSTEs

The strengthening of the DoSTE:s environmental management capacity has been a central purpose of SEMA. The project has especially involved the DoSTE:s of six provinces. Maybe due to the cross cutting approach of the SEMA project, the DoSTEs have not been given a separate and comprehensive account for in the Result Analysis Report. It is advisable that analyses of the DoSTE participation today and for the future are undertaken in perspective of their main and urgent duties and roles.

Below we have pointed out, as a “case”, some experiences of the participation of the DoSTEs found at our visits to two DoSTEs.

The IDR-mission has visited the DoSTEs in the Ninh Binh Province and in the Thai Nguyen Province. These two DoSTE:s have been supported through training courses, work shops, study tours, equipment for monitoring and inspection, computer equipment, cameras, TVs, awareness campaigns, pilot projects, technical advisers and on the job training in carrying out environmental inspection and planning for monitoring.

The SEMA activities have been appreciated by the two DoSTE:s. The experiences have equipped them with competence to fulfil their responsibilities. The knowledge of the environmental legislation and related problems has improved considerably at the two DoSTEs, especially for the environmental inspection. In addition, the capacity for environmental management as a whole, and for awareness building, has improved. According to the two DoSTE:s visited, the (very late !) delivered equipment has also been very important - maybe the most important input. Pilot projects should, as in SEMA and according to the interviewed provinces, assist the (module) training. Fewer general seminars and workshops are recommended. Such ones that directly relate to topics that are relevant for the daily work should be prioritised.

In Thai Nguyen Province, a plan for an environmental monitoring program has been elaborated in collaboration with Hanoi University of Civil Engineering. The DoSTE and a Swedish expert assessed the outline of the plan and arranged workshops before it was completed. However, it seems that on-going Danish support, focusing on environmental monitoring and laboratory, might revise undertaken planning, even if the DoSTE is satisfied with the SEMA interference. This DoSTE has also participated in the elaboration of the national handbook for inspection. Personnel of the SEMA provinces could play a role as advisers and trainers in a new SEMA. For the near future an assessment workshop at the NEA is proposed, in order to provide NEA with experiences from the participating DoSTEs.

We find that such workshop could support NEA:s relations to other DoSTEs and provide perspectives on how a possible further Swedish support to DoSTEs should be focused. Many DoSTEs are still lacking enough competence and equipment to undertake the daily duties and responsibilities on e.g. monitoring and inspection. Sweden could support those DoSTEs that are lacking most in relation to their duties. The ways of communication and dialogue between the Vietnamese DoSTEs concerning policy issues should also be reflected upon.

2.5 Strengthened capacity through participation in the preparation of the Environmental Strategy and Action Plan

Several of the interviewed at both NEA divisions and line ministries have expressed how important it is that the work with the Environmental Strategy and the Environmental Action Plan has been finalised in a good manner and without further delays. Those that were aware/involved in the work were also grateful that SEMA has provided instrumental assistance through financing the participation of international and other experts. SEMA has been an important resource in the work.

The process of plan development and making priorities has also provided opportunities for experiences on environmental policy work and strategic planning where several ministries have co-operated. These experiences and networking could be explored in the further co-operation between divisions and ministries and in a new or continued project.

The below presentation of the process, in four phases, of developing the National Strategy for Environmental Protection (2001- 2010) shows where SEMA has provided specific support.

- **1998 - Directive from the Communist Party Political Bureau to MoSTE.**
- **1999 - Internal consultation and drafting stages.** A “Report on Scientific Basis for Development of the National Strategy on Environmental Protection the Period 2001-2010” was elaborated.
- **2000 – International review and second consultation phase with sectors**

and local government. MoSTE established a 12-member Steering Committee with representatives of ministries and DoSTEs, etc. NEA provided the permanent secretariat to the Committee. An Expert Group of 20 experts was also established. An early draft was subject for two workshops organised by SEMA.

- **2000 - Final drafting and formal submission to Government.** At a meeting of the Donor Working Group on Environment with NEA it was decided that the SEMA programme was best equipped to support the further process as technical and financial resources already was in place. A Special Project was prepared which comprised activities to develop and finalise the Strategy and help in preparing frameworks for developing the National Environmental Action Plan. Under the Special Project, NEA established a National Advisory Group from various ministries, sectors, institutions and organisations. A team of international experts was also identified, through the IUCN, and coordinated by the Senior Technical Advisor of SEMA. The group has worked with the national group in developing and finalising the Strategy. A sub-group of the National Advisory Group was constituted as the Core Drafting Group and a draft structure for developing the Strategy was produced. Thereafter, the national and international teams worked closely over several sessions. After receiving endorsement from the National Advisory Group as well as the Donor Working Group on Environment, the Strategy was submitted to the Government for approval.

The process of developing a national environmental protection strategy accelerated during 2000, thanks to the SEMA support. On the other hand one could ask if the process even was too quick with too much international influence? And what was the role of the 12 members Steering Committee from 1999 in the finalisation? Is the Environmental Strategy and the Action Plan already properly penetrated by concerned line ministries – common frameworks for environmental action - or will the review process have to continue through initiatives by the Government? And what will be the role and function of NEA? These questions should be touched upon when Sida and MoSTE/NEA are discussing and preparing a continued or new co-operation.

As stated above under “Environmental policy and Legislation Division”, NEA has improved its capacity in designing and organising such processes, in gathering and working with experts coming from many ministries, institutions and localities, and in exchanging ideas and experiences with international experts. This broad, and during a short time period intensive, exposure to and networking with important stakeholders in the economic development and environmental protection of Vietnam has to be followed up in more ordinary contacts during the implementation of the strategy and plan. It is a big challenge for MoSTE and NEA to keep the work running and planned actions implemented. We have not surveyed in what way NEA will organise itself and in relation to other ministries for these duties. We estimate that besides a broad participation from Vietnamese institutions and funding, a continued support from donors will be needed and requested. An institutional support from Sweden could be important in this further work.

2.6 The MILS system

The role of SEMAs Management Information and Learning System (the MILS) has been addressed in the organisational study of SEMA in 1999 and is also one of the issues of the IDR according to our ToR. Through our interviews, we have found that those who initiated the system probably have overestimated the importance of a MILS. Maybe we more deeply should have examined the process of initiating and developing the system. But looking at the situation today, we cannot see any tendency to, or practical reason for, why MILS should be a point of departure for the development of NEAs internal management and information systems. Such expectations, which were included in the system preparation, have been to optimistic or even un-realistic. We have found that MILS in the Local Area Network (LAN) and on the WEB-site is a way to present project information, e.g. the project purposes, implementation structure, etc. (a project manual) as well as information on SEMA activities and reports. These experiences could be reviewed by other SEMA projects as one way for presentation of project information.

MILS makes also references to the environmental databases of NEA. But this part (of MILS) will live its own life, to a large extent without deeper relations to “projects”.

In summary, we think that NEA and PMU have a realistic view of MILS – a project information system where project information is available through LAN and the WEB. The MILS system established by SEMA should not be dramatised as the “management, information and learning system”.

2.7 The integration of SEMA in the NEA

This issue of integrating SEMA into the overall management of NEA has been addressed several times, from the institutional study and forwards. We have also addressed this issue at most meetings - although it has not been a specific task of the ToR. The picture is not fully clear.

In principle all interviewed has mentioned – with proud and as with one voice - that “SEMA is the first nationally executed project at NEA”. We have found that SEMA activities are discussed at the regular (weekly) meetings of NEA and that an integration/co-ordination with other activities has been possible.

We have found that some co-ordination has been set up between e.g. the data base unit and other divisions, especially inspection and pollution control.

We have also found that SEMA the first 1,5 years, up to the time for the organisational study, had problems with the implementation, but that these problems have been handled in a satisfactory way. During the remaining time, the SEMA has been more effectively administrated. We are not sure if this more effective management has a price of less integration within NEA. The PMU has during the last period of the project period contributed significantly to the project effectiveness. Our picture is that SEMA to a large extent is administrated in the same manner as the projects in the NEA “project house”.

When summing up experiences from interviews at the NEA divisions and with other involved we have the general picture that SEMA in many cases, especially at central level, has provided valuable “extras” and less capacity support for daily and long-term requirements. And that points towards less integration in e.g. the whole NEA. On the other hand SEMA has, according to objectives, mostly worked with few divisions and these divisions are satisfied with the assistance. Examples are shown above.

The issue of integrating a new or continued project has to be discussed with care. All institutions and units to be involved have to be clear upon how capacity development project like SEMA can and should strengthen their capacity to undertake both daily work and the strategic planning and other long-term efforts.

3. PREPARATION OF THE OUTLINE AND CONTENT OF A CONTINUED SWEDISH ASSISTANCE

3.1 Introduction

The IDR is requested to provide comments on a *Concept paper for a new agreement of collaboration between Sweden and Vietnam* (NEA/MoSTE, November 2000). The paper is based on priorities and activities formulated in the Environmental Strategy and Action Plan. We have discussed the paper in general terms with several of the concerned parties and have come to a conclusion that a separate and specific analysis of it would not be adequate at the current stage of project preparation. In principle none of the contacted units or agencies have strongly recommended an implementation of proposed activities.

However, through the documentation sent for the de-briefing meeting at NEA, we explained our willingness to undertake such review if requested. Such review was neither requested at the meeting or in the comments on the draft report. Therefore we have instead further developed our general view of the framework and methodology for the preparation of development cooperation within the environmental sector between Vietnam and Sweden. We are in section 3.2 below proposing alternative or combined focuses of the support to capacity development in MoSTE/NEA, DoSTEs and also in line ministries. Based on our findings and referring to some institutional uncertainties – the future status of NEA and the role of SEPA and IUCN in a support – some time should be allowed and calculated for discussions and preparation of a new/continued support.

3.2 Capacity development and objectives for a continued support

According to *Sida's Policy for Capacity Development*, capacity development is defined as the combined efforts of supporting the development of knowledge, competence and well functioning organisations and institutions. The ultimate objective of the development of knowledge and capacity is to make it easier for people to build up an identity - for themselves and in relation to others. We have found that the SEMA project certainly has operated within this broad domain and has provided support for various improvements of environmental capacities. An application of Sida's policy for capacity development in a continued support would however implicate that, in the project preparation, more specific attention should be paid to what specific identities – functions, authorisation, roles and responsibilities – that are to be strengthened.

Based upon our review of experiences from interviews, e.g. at ministerial level, we find no reason to recommend any principal change in the overall objectives for a continued Swedish support. The two main goals of SEMA are still relevant. So are also to a large extent the specific objectives of the first major goal related to MoSTE, NEA and DoSTE. However, the fact that certain capacities already have been established, through SEMA and other initiatives, must be considered. The efforts should now be oriented to develop the capacity in certain fields. The first

main goal could therefore be changed from *established capacity* to *further strengthened capacities*.

No specific objectives were formulated for the second goal – a strengthened capacity within the Government of Vietnam to consider environmental implications in responding to anticipated future increases in development investment. With the Government of Vietnam we also understand other ministries than MoSTE with NEA. So, more specific objectives should be considered regarding this objective. The Environmental Strategy and Action Plan as well as well as important linkages between MoSTE/NEA and line ministries should be reviewed for this purpose. In section 2.2 below we have proposed that wider scope of a capacity development support, including support to line ministries, should be discussed at an early step of the further preparations.

While considering the experiences and frame of the current SEMA programme, and the expectations for the future of different interviewed institutions/persons, we have found three or four different focuses or operational objectives should be further reviewed and discussed in the project preparation process:

1. Support to the internal capacity of NEA to undertake its main and central Governmental functions and responsibilities. Such support could be provided to NEA as it is today or as a General Department of MoSTE. A general focus could be on policy formulation, strategy development, environmental sector and inter-sector planning and on legal issues. It would include the upgrading of the senior management capability through targeted training and support in strategy development within certain areas.
2. Support to capacity building at provincial level, of the DoSTEs, and improved linkages between DoSTEs and MoSTE/NEA. Such support could be provided to already involved provinces and/or to new provinces. The financial and technical possibilities to support a large number of provinces in strengthening their fundamental capacities needed for the most central and urgent responsibilities, including equipment, should be discussed as one alternative. The other alternative would be to continue in the already involved provinces (or others), but widen the scope to equip them with competence to participate in the strategic inter-sector planning as well sector planning of the line branches of the provinces. To include the environmental aspects in the social and economic development preparations.
3. Support in developing institutional linkages between NEA/MoSTE and line ministries. Co-operative efforts proposed in the Action Plan could be reviewed and followed up through SEMA activities. Priority could be given to such areas and linkages to other ministries, where NEA has an important stake and where a co-operation with a line ministry is especially important due to emergent development issues of Vietnam. Such capacity development in environmental management of the line ministries would be a support in the creation of an environmental management umbrella for the Government of Vietnam.
4. As a fourth and complementary focus, a new SEMA could serve the purpose

of facilitating a deeper cooperation between and a better use of different development co-operation projects in the environmental sector(s) of Vietnam. SEMA has already been supportive in such efforts as the principal development assistance in the development of the Environmental Strategy and Action Plan. A technical support to the secretarial function of the Environmental Support Group would be instrumental in such further efforts. This focus is especially relevant as a complement to focus 3 above.

3.3 Points of departure in order to decide on programme content

Below we have tried to highlight different background information that should be available and reflected upon when discussing and preparing for the focuses of a Swedish support.

The Environmental Strategy and Action Plan

The Environmental Strategy and Action Plan are in themselves the logical background and framework for the preparation of continued cooperation between Vietnam and Sweden within the environmental sector(s). A large number of areas and issues for possible support can be found in these documents. Some possible areas for co-operation have been proposed in the Concept Paper referred to earlier. It has not been our ToR to select and propose among the areas and issues of the Strategy and Action Plan. We have also at an early stage of our SEMA review come to the conclusion that the Concept Paper is far from the only possibility of environmental co-operation between Vietnam and Sweden.

The selection of areas and issues will also depend on which of the four focuses in section 3.2 that will be chosen. The alternatives are a support closely oriented to the NEA principal responsibilities or a broader including both DoSTEs and line ministries as well as an umbrella support to donor co-ordination within environment. These different perspectives of a support need to be clarified, discussed and tentatively decided upon at an early stage in the discussion. The character of the further project preparation will very much depend on these preliminary decisions.

The priorities of MoSTE/NEA

It is recommended that MoSTE/NEA prioritise those activity areas and issues where they have central and clear roles and responsibilities due to laws and other institutional frameworks. This process has already started through the elaboration of the Concept Paper. But, in the current situation we propose that NEA, for itself and for the dialogue with Sida, prepare a list of possible areas and issues without definite prioritisation of which of them that finally should be selected or how the implementation should be organised. We would advise that NEA in these preparations also reflect on where Sweden could have a suitable resource base (see below). NEA could, when preparing the list of options, also reflect on linkages to line ministries and how a Swedish support could include capacity development of line ministries within environmental management. See also "Linkages to line ministries" below.

The roles of the DoSTEs

Based on the good result of SEMA implementation in visited DoSTEs, and the urgent need for assistance in many others, we propose that a support to the DoSTEs should be a highly prioritised issue in the continued discussion between Vietnam and Sweden. A support to DoSTEs could either be a thematically concentrated support within established SEMA areas, such as environmental monitoring and inspection, for a large number of DoSTEs or a broader approach for only a few DoSTEs. A combination of these two orientations would also be possible. The latter broader approach could include e.g. methods for strategic EIAs and the participation in provincial development planning, sector/branches planning as well as inter-sector planning. When selecting issues or areas for a thematically concentrated and/or broader support, the specific roles, mandates and manning situation of the DoSTEs should be clarified in parallel.

In the section on “Other donor supported projects” below we have proposed that NEA should provide Sida with a list of on-going and planned projects of relevance for the preparation of the co-operation with Sweden. This list should also include a list of such donor support to the Provinces where the DoSTEs are involved as focal points and main receiver of the support, and even including those projects where the DoSTEs are partners to projects of other provincial branches. It is important to have a broad picture of on-going institutional support to the provinces in order to decide on content and geographical distribution of the support.

Linkages to line ministries

The linkages to line ministries should, as proposed before, also be reviewed as a background for deciding on priority areas for co-operation. MoSTE/NEA could prepare a list of important linkages to line ministries and highlight those that are urgent to explore in perspective of the current development and investment process of Vietnam. The relevant line ministries should be involved in the further presentation of these linkages if tentatively decided that the Swedish support also should include the capacity development of line ministries (alternative 3 in section 3.2 above). We think it is important, at an early stage, to tentatively decide if the Swedish institutional support should have a broader focus than only MoSTE/NEA. If this should be the case, the preparations have to go deep into issues of roles and responsibilities in order to clarify the most important linkages to be supported in the implementation, and in perspective of current and anticipated development trends of Vietnam. A group of representatives from concerned ministries could prepare such documentation, maybe with support from an external consultant.

Other donor supported projects

Parallel to the listing of possible areas and issues of co-operation, NEA could summarise current development co-operation with different donors. Such on-going or planned development co-operation, both with NEA and with other Government agencies, should be reflected in the perspective of avoiding duplications and provide for donor co-ordination within tentative project areas to be proposed.

The Swedish Resource base and Vietnamese partners

NEA has been exposed to Swedish competence areas through Swedish short-term

experts in SEMA, study tours to Sweden, etc. In addition the Government of Vietnam has co-operated with Sweden in several other projects that could be of relevance. With reference to discussion in the “Concept Paper“ (on the different types/”colours” of environmental issues), we would think that SEPA and other environmental agencies in Sweden could provide experiences for “brown issues” and “blue issues” (incl. coastal management issues) if requested. In general, we would think that a co-operation between governmental agencies of the two countries on institutional, policy and strategic environmental matters of all sectors would be fostering for both parties. For the “green issues” (without forestry where the Swedish resource base has experience from Vietnam since many years) alternatives to the Swedish resource base might be required if these issues should be prioritised in a co-operation. In the “Concept Paper”, IUCN has been mentioned as a possible partner for this area. For the green issues we also believe that several environmental institutions in Vietnam could be a good resource base and valuable partners to NEA.

3.4 Implementation arrangements

Project management

In principal all the interviewed persons/institutions during the IDR mission pointed out that SEMA is the first nationally executed project within NEA and that a new or continued project also should be nationally executed. The project management, including the possible role and function of the current PMU, should be discussed with the purpose of making SEMA as much nationally executed as possible.

If the Swedish support will have a strong focus on developing the internal capacity of the NEA (focus 1 above), one possibility to discuss could be to integrate a PMU function fully into the NEA organisation. The possibility to use the administrative functions within the Administrative Division and the overall management functions within the Policy Division for project management could be discussed in such alternative. The relations to the NEA leadership (DG, etc.) must be clarified in such alternative(s).

If a Swedish support will be oriented towards a support to DoSTEs (focus 2 above) and at a larger scale, with equipment, targeted activities, etc. in several DoSTEs, a special implementation arrangement might be needed. Like the current PMU and/or as services provided through a tendering procedure of consultant services and equipment. It could be organised as a sub-project to a national capacity development support.

Finally, if a Swedish support will be oriented towards supporting linkages between MoSTE/NEA and line ministries (focus 3 above) and/or co-ordination in relation to the donor society (focus 4 above), the project management function probably should be within MoSTE. We have not been in a position to further elaborate the project management consequences for such focus of the support.

In summary, we have found that the functional orientation of the further support, alternatives 1–4 in section 3.2 above, very much will influence the elaboration of proper project management function(s). Therefore, the dialogue between Vietnam and Sweden should start on these alternative orientations before further steps are taken in elaborating a management structure.

Twinning between Swedish and Vietnamese Environmental Agencies

We have found that NEA would like to continue the institutional contacts with the SEPA and related agencies in Sweden. Also the SEPA is prepared to discuss a continued co-operation with the NEA. A twinning arrangement has also been proposed in the Concept Paper and the Result Analysis Report. However, these reports do not define the twinning concept and they have not elaborated the possibilities and mechanisms. The earlier problems in the co-operation as well as the potential values of a long-term twinning should be examined and discussed between NEA/MoSTE and Swedish Governmental representatives. It is in first hand the tentatively identified twinning partners that should define the content and mechanisms of the twinning.

A twinning arrangement has to be defined very clearly in order to avoid misunderstanding in the implementation. Roles and responsibilities have to be clarified in dialogue between the twinning partners. In first hand SEPA could be invited to discuss possible areas of co-operation. In addition, if the co-operation should involve line ministries, other Swedish agencies could also be involved.

A broader environmental co-operation could include the possibilities and opportunities to exploit the Swedish resource base in a wide and flexible way. It could include the involvement of other to environmental protection related Swedish government agencies, including the County Administrative Boards in relation to a support to the DoSTEs. After a first discussion between MoSTE/NEA and SEPA, also related Swedish Governmental agencies could be invited to explore the twinning possibilities.

If a twinning arrangement between Swedish and Vietnamese Environmental agencies should take place, a representative of such an agency, possibly SEPA, should have a long-term engagement as adviser to MoSTE/NEA and facilitator of complementary short-term assistance. He/she should preferably have extensive experiences from environmental policy and planning functions in Sweden, including co-operation with other government agencies. He/she should also have experiences from international cooperation, preferably in developing countries.

Additional technical assistance

The implementation of concrete projects, pilot illustrations, training, etc. could firstly be based on the Vietnamese resource base of experts from NGOs, institutes, etc. Such an orientation would strengthen the Vietnamese resource base and could create long-term linkages between NEA and these organisations. Such arrangements could also become a good alternative to the proposed Environmental Research and Training Institute at NEA. The experiences (and possibly also some personnel after additional training) from the six DoSTEs involved in SEMA could be used in a possible expansion to other provinces.

A twinning arrangement with Sweden should not exclude the possibility to recruit international experts from the private consultant sector in Sweden as well as experts from other countries, e.g. in the region. In current SEMA, the IUCN has to a large extent had this logistic function in relation to the international resource base, including IUCN:s own international resource persons and affiliated institutions and functions.

When reviewing and discussing the alternative or combined functional focuses of a Swedish support (section 3.2 above), the points of departure proposed (section 3.3) and finally the implementation mechanisms discussed in this section, it might be found that different management and implementation mechanisms might be needed. We think, e.g., that a special mechanism might be needed for the implementation in provinces at a larger scale. A strong capacity development effort at provincial level could be organised as a special project or subproject with its own management and implementation structure. Experienced organisations, as the IUCN, could have a role and/or it could be open for a tender procedure. The provincial “ownership” in such interventions also has to be discussed and how it should influence the project management structure.

Targeted training

For the further development of the capacity of MoSTE/NEA, DoSTEs, and to some extent line ministries, we recommend that more targeted training is provided, and in the perspective of making it easier for senior officers, etc. to undertake their daily duties as well as plan for the future. Some of the specific objectives of SEMA are also oriented towards such efforts, especially within capacity building for environmental inspection. Donor supported projects can provide for such training but it would be wise that the e.g. NEA itself had a strategy and plan for how their personnel should improve their knowledge and capability. That would facilitate additional training with support from donors. Through our interviews and discussions we have found that training should be clearly targeted based on systematically identified needs.

5. SUMMARY FOR THE PREPARATION OF CONTINUED CO-OPERATION

In section 2 we have reported on capacity development efforts for some “cases”. We are not repeating the detailed conclusions here. But based on these “case conclusions” and other information obtained, we would like to make a general summary on objective level. In addition we are highlighting, based on section 3, clarifications that should be made at an early stage of project preparation for a continued co-operation.

Results in relation to the objectives of SEMA

The two major goals of the SEMA project are focusing on environmental capacity building within:

- the environmental administration of NEA/ MoSTE/DoSTEs, and
- the Government of Vietnam.

According to Sida's Policy for Capacity Development, capacity development is defined as the combined efforts of supporting the development of knowledge, competence and well functioning organisations and institutions. The ultimate objective of the development of knowledge and capacity is to make it easier for people to build up an identity - for themselves and in relation to others. We have found that the SEMA project, concerning NEA/MoSTE and DoSTEs, certainly has operated within this broad domain and has provided support for various improvements of environmental capacities. An application of Sida's policy for capacity development in a continued support would however implicate that, in the project preparation, more specific attention should be paid to what specific identities – functions, authorisation, roles and responsibilities – that are to be strengthened.

No specific objective have been formulated for the second goal – a strengthened capacity within the Government of Vietnam to consider environmental implications in responding to anticipated future increases in development investment. With the Government of Vietnam we understand not only MoSTE/NEA/DoSTEs but also the different line ministries with environmental management responsibilities. Without specific sub-objectives related to the second main goal it is difficult to assess to what extent this goal is fulfilled. In the report we have tried to illustrate in what ways different line ministries have been involved and supported. In a further possibly broader support to capacity development within the Government of Vietnam more specific objectives should be considered. The Environmental Strategy and Action Plan, important linkages between MoSTE/NEA and line ministries and the roles and the environmental responsibilities of these ministries should be reviewed for this purpose.

Clarifications to be made at an early stage of a continued co-operation

In order to continue the environmental co-operation between Vietnam and Sweden, the preparations for a next phase should start/continue without delays. In section 3 above we have provided some recommendations when entering this preparation process. We would like to propose that especially the following three overall clarifications are dealt with as soon as possible and before taking any further steps:

- It is recommendable that the potential functional focuses (section 3.2) are discussed with priority by the parties and between the parties. Tentative decisions on the functional orientation of the co-operation would simplify the further dialogue, the detailed programming and the elaboration of the management structure(s). We have e.g. touched upon the possibility that a strong focus on strengthening the DoSTEs could have its own preparation and management structure.
- We have above suggested how especially MoSTE/NEA could prepare for the discussions with Sweden. A short list of “points of departure” have been pro-

posed which further elaborated could support MoSTE/NEA in making their priorities. We propose that MoSTE/NEA clarify to the Embassy of Sweden if and how it will prepare for a background description for the priority discussion.

- It is also important that the Swedish side makes some initial clarifications. Based on the interest shown for co-operation with SEPA and the Swedish resource base, we find it important that the Swedish Embassy in contact with SEPA at an early stage clarifies the willingness and possibilities of SEPA participation to MoSTE/NEA. The possibility to include other Swedish agencies could also be touched upon at an early stage.

After the above initial clarifications it should be possible to arrange for the further preparation of a development co-operation within environmental management. NEA has in its comments on our draft report proposed a LFA workshop. If such a workshop should be held as a part of the programme preparations, the above clarifications should be made as agreed inputs to such a workshop and the selection of persons to be invited should reflect such initial clarifications and agreements. Otherwise the agenda of the workshop could be too wide and not possible to handle. We find that the dialogue between the potential twinning partners should have a central role in the project preparation dialogue.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

Danida	Danish International Development Assistance
DoSTE	Departments of Science, Technology and Environment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESG	Environmental Support Group
IDR	In-Depth Review
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
LAN	Local Area Network
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MILS	Management Information and Learning System
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MoSTE	Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment
NEA	National Environmental Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
PMU	Programme Management Unit
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SEMA	Strengthening of the Environmental Management Authority in Vietnam
SEPA	Swedish Environmental Protection Authority
Sida	Swedish International Development cooperation Agency
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Environment Programme
VCP	Vietnamese Canadian Environment Programme

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF CONTACTED UNITS AND ORGANISATIONS

IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

- Embassy of Sweden (briefing)
- SEPA (briefing)
- SEMA - PMU
- NEA - Inspection Division
- IUCN
- NEA - Journal Division
- VCP
- NEA - EIA Division
- MoSTE - Steering Committee
- NEA - Database Division
- NEA - Education and Training Division
- NEA - Pollution control Division
- MPI
- Ministry of Industry
- MoSTE - Vice Minister
- NEA - Policy and Legislation Division
- MARD
- Ministry of Health
- NEA - Administration Division, International co-operation section
- NEA - Natural Conservation Division
- UNDP
- Ninh Binh DoSTE
- PMU
- Thai Nguyen DoSTE
- Danida Project in Thai Nguyen
- Embassy of Sweden (debriefing)
- NEA - DG / SEMA /Sida (debriefing)
- Sida, Stockholm (debriefing)
- SEPA

