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vietnam



Country annual report  
2007





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# Acronyms

**AAI:** ActionAid International

**AAV:** ActionAid Vietnam

**ALPS:** Accountability, Learning and Planning System

**ARO:** Asia Regional Office

**DOVIPNET:** Domestic Violence Network

**EC:** European Community

**ECHO:** Humanitarian Affairs Department of the European Commission

**CEDAW:** Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

**CIFPEN:** Civil Society Inclusion in Food Security and Poverty Elimination Network

**CLC:** Community Learning Centre

**ELBAG:** Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability for Governance

**FDI:** Foreign Direct Investment

**GAP:** Gender Alliances Program

**COMMIT:** Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking

**CS:** Child Sponsorship

**CSAGA:** Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender-Family-Women and Adolescents

**GCAP:** Global Call to Action Against Poverty

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product

**GENCOMNET:** Network for Gender and Community Development

**CSO:** Civil Society Organisation

**CSP:** Country Strategy Paper

**CSR:** Corporate Social Responsibility

**CWD:** Center for Women and Development

**GMF:** Global Monitoring Framework

**GMS:** Greater Mekong Sub-region

**HRD:** Human Resource Development

**DA/DI:** Development Area/Development Initiative

**DANIDA:** Danish International Development Agency

**DIPECHO:** Disaster Preparedness European Commission's Humanitarian Aid

**HROD :** Human Resources and Organisational Development

**IASL:** Impact Assessment and Shared Learning

**INGO:** International Non-Governmental Organisation

**IDU:** Injection Drug User

**MDG:** Millennium Development Goals

**MOET:** Ministry of Education and Training

**ODA:** Official Development Assistance

**PLWHA:** People Living with HIV/AIDS

**PO:** Program Officer

**PRRP:** Participatory Review and Reflection Process

**R2EP:** Right to End Poverty

**RBA:** Rights-Based Approach

**SMT :** Senior Management Team

**STAR:** Stepping Stones and Reflect

**UNDP:** United Nations Development Program

**WB:** World Bank

**WTO:** World Trade Organization

# Vietnam country annual report 2007



## 1. COUNTRY OVERVIEW: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Over the last five years, Vietnam has experienced exceptional social and economic growth. In 2007, this trend continued. On 11 January 2007, Vietnam entered the World Trade Organization (WTO), becoming its 150th member, and, towards the end of the year, Vietnam was elected to the

United Nations Security Council, as a non-permanent member.

These two significant achievements highlight Vietnam's increasing involvement with the global economic community. In fact, the Vietnamese economy is one of the fastest growing economies in Southeast Asia.

This economic growth has been achieved alongside political stability

and other measures of progress. For example, the UNDP's Human Development Index awards Vietnam 105th place out of 177 countries (UNDP Report 2007-08). Efforts have also been made to legalise gender equality and to reduce the number of children that are considered as underweight. Vietnam's impressive 8.5% GDP growth rate has led to the Consultative Group agreeing to donate a record ODA of US\$5.4 billion in order to help Vietnam realise

its goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2010.

However, challenges still threaten to undermine the country's achievements. Widespread corruption and a rocketing inflation rate mar the impressive growth in GDP. Whilst negative factors affect the whole country, it is the poor that are affected the most. Smaller domestic companies often find it extremely difficult to compete with international companies that have entered Vietnamese markets as the country opens up to the global marketplace. Traditional trades also suffer when alternatives are presented to the consumer.

Poor and other disenfranchised groups, without the advantages of education or training, often have no part in and do not benefit from economic globalisation. The gaps between the rich and the poor and between urban and rural areas are both widening alarmingly, as more and more studies report.

For example, the rate of child mortality in mountainous and/or rural areas is three to four times higher than that in lowland areas, despite the overall rate of child mortality having been significantly reduced. This difference is mainly caused by the limited access of people in poorer regions to adequate health care (UNICEF: State of World Children 2008). Research conducted by Lancet (2007) highlights that child malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies in Vietnam are amongst the worst in the world. Vietnam seems set to meet its reduced level of child mortality target by 2015, as set by Millennium Development Goal 4. However, this should not disguise the fact that more measures will be needed to ameliorate the problem in specific regions where child mortality remains significant.

The UNDP Human Development Report 2007-2008 highlights actions concerning gender issues that must be taken in order to maintain development. The UNDP Human



Poverty Index for developing countries ranks Vietnam at a relatively high position (36 out of 108 countries). However, the percentage of literate adults remains low (9.7%), resulting in a rank of 83 out of 108 for this category. The ratio between the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Human Development Index is 99.9%, giving Vietnam a rank of 9 out of 156 countries measured in terms of this ratio. However, the Gender Empowerment Measure ranks



Vietnam at only 52 out of 93, as women remain underrepresented at all levels of administration, especially at provincial and local levels. Inequality between the sexes is most significant in isolated regions.

The Law on Gender Equality, which came into effect in July 2007, and the newly issued law against domestic violence reflect the government's resolve to help reduce gender disparities. The next step is how to enact these laws and policies in order to achieve actual gender equality. The Counter-trafficking Law will soon be developed, which will require consultation with various stakeholders, especially civil societies.

The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS is another challenge to the development of Vietnam. According to the latest official statistics, Vietnam has 116,565 recorded cases of HIV/AIDS (FHI, Final report for the IMPACT Project in Vietnam 2007). While HIV infection is most prevalent in the main at-risk groups – intravenous drug users, female sex workers and men who have sex with



other men – there are increasing numbers of women who are infected by their partners rather than via working as a prostitute or intravenous drug use.

Women with HIV/AIDS tend to suffer more than men with HIV/AIDS, as they usually have to endure more social stigma and domestic violence and have more household chores to perform. Also, people with HIV/AIDS now tend to be younger than before, which could damage the labour force and impact an individual household's income. Significant differences in access to gender-sensitive information about reproductive health exacerbate the problem, as do inadequate services for adolescents, youths, migrants, ethnic minorities and people living in remote areas.

However, the HIV/AIDS infection rate in Vietnam, currently at 0.53%, remains below the 1% WHO criterion. This indicates that Vietnam can still prevent the disease from becoming a countrywide epidemic. In 2007, the government issued Decree 108/2007

ND-CP, which provides detailed instructions concerning the Law on HIV/AIDS that was issued in 2006. This has established a crucial legal framework for the implementation of HIV prevention measures, treatment, care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS. 2007 also saw a rapid expansion of harm reduction programs, coverage and access to ARV treatment and efforts to reduce discrimination faced by PLWHA. Complementing these developments, the National Partnership Platform on HIV/AIDS was inaugurated, signifying the close cooperation of civil society organisations' HIV activities.

With regards to governance, 2007 marks the halfway point of the second phase of the Public Administration Reform Master Plan (2006-2010). There has been significant improvement in the way the Government of Vietnam operates. The recent general election saw an increase in the number of full-time National Assembly representatives. However, the results of the 12th National Assembly also saw a decline in the number of



women in parliament. A series of new laws have strengthened the capabilities of the National Assembly and of the People's Councils. More inclusive grassroots participatory planning processes have been institutionalised with the Social Economic Development Plan 2006-2010, confirming the positive move to an inclusive development orientation.

However, in order to improve governance in Vietnam it is necessary to empower other stakeholders by raising local capabilities, enhancing the role of the media and by promoting grassroots democracy. More freedom should be allowed for the civil society to use their resources and to simultaneously ensure inclusive development.

Lastly, natural disasters, that occurred repeatedly and caused serious damage all over the country in 2007, are another challenge to the development

of Vietnam. Vietnam is predicted to be one of the countries most seriously affected, especially with regard to agriculture, by rising sea levels in East Asia. Possible consequences of rising sea levels are forced human migration and severe ecological and economic damage. At present, the country has not yet developed its National Adaptation Program of Action, as recommended by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Such preparedness, together with other strategies for the sustainable development of the environment, is essential for reducing vulnerability, particularly of marginalised groups, to natural disasters.

## **2. ACTIONAID VIETNAM PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

At the beginning of the year, the new CSP IV was launched, bringing with it relatively new foci. The new program was influenced by several





reviews and critical analyses of both internal and external factors that affect the development perspective of AAV. The program incorporates a range of new initiatives that address the issues highlighted above. This gives it greater relevance on the ground whilst keeping pace with rapidly changing trends and new challenges at a local level as well as the needs of local poor and excluded people.

At national level, AAV continued to act as an agent of influence by joining the Consultative Group as the nominated member representing the INGO community. Membership allows participation in major policy formulation and influential forums, so increasing our engagement in the core issues of governance. This has given the AAV team the credibility and confidence to further their role as an influence on policy formulation.

In the light of Vietnam's new position as a member of the WTO, AAV's strategy

acknowledged the opportunity to focus more on human rights. Experience gained from our last three strategy periods provide a sound foundation for AAV to move from a small geographical base to a well-informed national player at the policy level.

Reviews conducted in 2007 have confirmed that there is a dire need to broaden our knowledge and understanding of policymakers and other key players in development, including AAV staff, in order to develop a people-centred approach to advocacy. The reviews have also helped us to understand how to work with rights initiatives, which is essential for successfully putting into action CSP priorities. The key priorities outlined in the CSP are as follows:

- The rights of women and children. More intensive policy advocacy, with a strong focus on issues across all DAs, is required.

- AAV to be more actively engaged in and contribute to regional and international campaigns on all issues outlined in R2EP.
- To ensure good quality intervention, so strengthening the ALPS process in order to focus on rights-based and people-centred approaches

With more opportunities within the processes of both local and national government, the 2007 AAV program focused more on the protection of the rights of vulnerable and socially excluded groups. Many program activities, previously considered as politically sensitive, have been based on the themes of RBA and R2EP. This report outlines many such initiatives – such as anti-trafficking measures, Post-WTO Poverty Monitoring, the Hunger Free Campaign and the establishment of local NGOs – which have been launched in many areas. This has even occurred beyond approved development areas that weren't possible

to initiate earlier. The key issues that have influenced our 2007 activities include:

- A stable political system, and the increased openness of government at all levels, supports AAV's work in poor and sensitive areas, such as the Highlands.
- Recognition of the law on grassroots democratic process would support AAV's ELBAG initiative and budget tracking-related activities.
- Joining the WTO will negatively affect poor and excluded people in a number of ways, as has already been observed in many other countries.
- Widening differences between the rich and the poor, urban and remote rural areas and ethnic minorities and the majority population. Poor and marginalised groups are now concentrated in remote rural districts. Ethnic



minorities mainly populate these areas.

- Significant differences between genders that persist. For example, only five percent of the People's Committee are women, women are still paid less than men for doing the same job, and the number of illiterate ethnic minority women remains high.
- A large number of PLWHA still don't receive care, support and treatment, especially those who live in remote and mountainous areas. The stigma and discrimination faced by these people is still a big issue all over the country.

Accompanying this, in 2007 the program has encompassed three new Development Areas (DAs): Vinh Long, Hoa Binh and Hanoi. This brings the total number of AAV DAs to 17 across the country. One of the

major achievements of AAV during the planning period was its first-ever permission as an international NGO to bring our program to the Central Highlands.

Activities related to food security, education and women's rights are active in almost all the DAs. However, the HIV/AIDS activities are mainly concentrated in urban hot spots, such as Ho Chi Minh City, Quang Ninh and Hai Phong. Governance initiatives largely revolved around ELBAG, the Global Call for Action against Poverty (GCAP) and Post WTO Poverty Monitoring. These initiatives were also implemented in various DAs in order to maximize their impact. Due to numerous natural disasters that affected thousands of poor peasants and vulnerable people, especially in the northwest and north of Vietnam, the AAV team undertook emergency relief operations in Ha Tinh and Hoa Binh provinces.



Putting the program into operation has required organisational restructure, as outlined in the CSP. This was needed in order to realise the program's foci and to restructure the regions where AAV works. It was a big challenge for AAV to move into more remote and poor regions, like the Central Highlands, the Northern Mountain Region and Laos. AAV also experienced great difficulties in recruiting staff members for the new



program areas and activities, resulting in delays in program implementation.

Given the lack of capacity and experience of the existing AAV team, staff training has been carried out. The program's expansion has also increased demand for new forms of resource mobilisation and increased the need to diversify sources of funding via partnership and child sponsorship, etc. Hence, greater emphasis has been put on official fund raising strategies. The team has successfully implemented a number of new rights initiatives. This has created an opportunity to pilot these models in order to develop a new generation program.

### **3. KEY PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS OF 2007:**

- AAV, together with other members of the GCAP Alliance, celebrated 'The Month for the Poor' that was organised by the Fatherland Front in Hanoi and which attracted around 3,000 participants this year. In line with GCAP, this initiative aims to increase solidarity and strengthen the fight against poverty. Related events included an award ceremony for a contest for workers to write about social responsibility in Hai Phong, 'Photo Voice: Globalisation – A perspective from Vietnam' in Hanoi, and 'Marching against Poverty' in Ha Giang.
- Post-WTO Poverty Monitoring began with the collection of baseline data that will be used to assess the impact of WTO accession in the next five years. This is a joint initiative with Oxfam GB to identify changes in the livelihoods of vulnerable groups and their market access. This is significant because it is proactive, prospective and participatory. The research's findings and recommendations will be useful to policymakers in designing a development agenda that minimises negative





impacts on the poor and the marginalised.on the poor and the marginalised.

The launch of the first Hunger Free Campaign was successfully organised by CIFPEN in order to put the issue of poverty at the top of the political agenda. The message of rights to food was conveyed, calling for a commitment to halve world hunger by 2015.

A directory of Ho Chi Minh City organisations working in the HIV/AIDS field has been published to aid cooperation of the network. At present, Ho Chi Minh City has the highest number of reported HIV cases in Vietnam. The directory provides detailed information of the missions, goals, location and activities of organisations. 37% of these organisations are government agencies, 11% are NGOs and the rest are community or faith based organisations. PLWHA now have a good source of information about access to services and care.

With funding from AAV, CSAGA (Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender-Family-Women and Adolescents) is operating a 24-hour hotline that provides information to potential migrants and psychological counselling for returnees from trafficking. This free-of-charge hotline covers the whole country. Thanks to CSAGA, numerous cases that sought support after returning have been referred to organisations that provide the most appropriate form of assistance.





## 4. THEMATIC OUTLINE OF THE PROGRAM

At the beginning of the year, AAV finally managed to unveil the new Country Strategy Paper (CSP IV) covering the period 2006-2010. The strategy builds on the strengths of AAI's 'Rights to End Poverty' strategy, which shows the link between poverty and injustice through an analysis of power balance as the root cause of poverty and injustice. For this strategy period, the AAV program prioritised the following key themes: (i) Rights of Women and Girls; (ii) Rights to Just and Democratic Governance; (iii) Right to Life and Dignity in the Face of HIV & AIDS; (iv) the Rights to Food; and (v) Rights to Education.

### 4.1 Rights of women and girls:

Strategic objectives as specified in Country Strategy Paper IV for 2006-2010:

- To ensure that women and girls are empowered in order to eliminate violence and harmful practices

against women, eliminate negative social attitudes and norms towards women, to attack patriarchy, including any discrimination against women or girls, and to attack the trafficking of women and children.

- To ensure that women and girls secure their rights to quality education, health, decent jobs and employment opportunities, and sustainable livelihoods.
- To promote the active and high quality participation of women in politics in Vietnam.

In 2007, one of areas focused upon was the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming. At a national level, we are promoting the exercise of the Gender Equality Law and the Anti-Domestic Violence Law. AAV is also contributing to the drafting process of the Anti-Human Trafficking law, which, according to schedule, will be issued in 2008.

Recognising the importance of networking in order to maximise the outcomes of our work, AAV is providing funding to various Vietnamese NGOs, such as GENCOMNET, DOVIPNET, GAP, CWD and CSAGA. We have also established links with other international NGOs and relevant government agencies. In particular, the anti-trafficking team has cooperated with partners in Cambodia and Taiwan, creating a referral system for Vietnamese women and children to return home.

In addition to advocacy, this year the Women's Rights team has concentrated on anti-trafficking and anti-domestic violence activities. We have particularly focused on the psychological aspects of these problems. One feature is a 24-hour hotline that provides information for potential migrants and psychological counselling for returnees from trafficking activities. We also provide psychological counselling training for government employees



that are directly involved in receiving returnees, so that they are capable of reintegrating victims into society. Counselling offices have also been set up in schools, providing schoolgirls with appropriate life skills to fight violence and discrimination. Additionally, with funding from AAV, two shelters are run by the Centre for Women and Development for victims of human trafficking and victims of domestic violence. The shelters help women to recover and to get vocational training for reintegration.

In DAs where trafficking and domestic violence are a high potential risk, we assisted local Women's Unions to set up clubs where at-risk women can discuss their experiences and empower themselves against harassment or trafficking. In particular, as we respect the legitimate right of women to marry foreigners, counselling is also provided to such women so that they can make the right choice for their own happiness and without falling victim to trafficking. Additionally, various forms of communication, including mass media, training, workshops and in-depth group-based learning, have been employed so as to maximise the reach of women's rights messages in general and against violence and trafficking in particular.

In an attempt to promote the participation of women in politics, AAV has set up a five-member working group, composed of representatives from the Vietnam Central Fatherland Front, the Women's Union, the National Assembly Office and the National Committee for the Advancement of Women. This working group is working closely with local authorities at all levels to ensure that 30% of deputies in the National Assembly are female. It

must be admitted that, despite efforts to enhance female political participation, the results of the last election turned out a lower percentage of female representatives. This once again showed how difficult this task is and many valuable lessons have been learned for the future.

#### **4.2 Rights to Just and Democratic Governance**

Strategic objectives as specified in Country Strategy Paper IV for 2006-2010:

- To ensure that government institutions and other development agencies are fully accountable and responsive to poor and excluded people's needs and priorities.
- To promote the role of women in politics, to participate in public affairs, and to take the lead in the administrative system at each level.
- To establish a network of supporters for AAV's struggle against the root causes of poverty and injustice.

#### **Marching Against Poverty - GCAP Campaign**

More than 3,000 people gathered in the town of Vi Xuyen, Ha Giang Province to march along the main streets of the town to protest against poverty. The march took place from 10-11am on 17 October 2007. Participating at the event were representatives from the Ha Giang Provincial Fatherland Front, the Women's Union, the Youth Union, the Farmers' Union and local people from both the majority Kinh group and the Meo minority group.





With regards to governance, AAV last year focused on promoting ELBAG as the key tool and platform for people monitoring processes. The network has been set up in seven DAs (Hanoi, Hoa Binh, Go Vap, Tra Vinh, Ninh Thuan, Soc Trang and Vinh Long). For the first time, community members had the opportunity to engage with local officers via a series of dialogues and group discussions, which significantly contribute to the implementation of grassroots democracy. This approach directly targets the accountability of District and Commune People's Committees to their respective communities.

The research 'Reviewing Roles, Responsibilities and the Authority of People Council Members at different levels in public budget management' was carried out in eight provinces in Vietnam. Its purpose is to better understand the implementation of Decree 79 on grassroots democracy, in order to ensure transparency and accountability. Another piece of research, 'Transparency and Accountability

practices in Vietnam', was carried out in association with International Budget Project. The key findings of the studies highlight the need for more investment in capacity building of local authorities so that they can understand the budget process as part of implementing grassroots democracy.

Although not aid-dependent, Vietnam receives one of the largest amounts of aid in the world, especially ODA. It is therefore important to make policymakers aware of the enigmatic nature of aid. In Vietnam ActionAid is, together with other NGOs, championing the monitoring of aid and aid effectiveness for transparency and accountability. Towards this, the International Real Aid Report was launched with a sharing workshop in Hanoi, which included the participation of 100 parliamentary members. Following this, training was organised to provide 30 selected members of the National Assembly with a basic understanding of aid and debt issues in Vietnam. ActionAid

Vietnam also took the initiative to facilitate the Aid Monitoring Group, with the participation of Oxfam GB, Plan International, SNV and the NGO Resource Centre.

Post-WTO poverty monitoring is another AAV activity aimed against the root causes of poverty and injustice. This real-time monitoring tool will raise warnings about the challenges that WTO accession will pose to the development process in Vietnam and, therefore, proactive measures that must be taken by the government to minimise any negative impacts on the most vulnerable groups. In partnership with Oxfam GB, the first round assessment of this pilot study has been completed in nine provinces in order to set up the baseline database for time-series monitoring.

#### **4.3 Rights to life and dignity in the face of HIV/AIDS:**

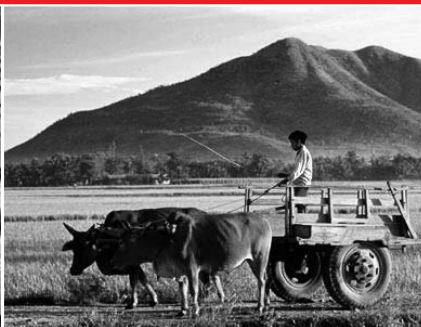
Strategic objectives as specified in Country Strategy Paper IV for 2006-2010:

- To ensure that people are able to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and mitigate its impact through raising their knowledge and understanding about modes of transmission and ways to avoid HIV infection.
  - To enable people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) to claim and secure rights to comprehensive care, support and related information on international and national policies, and be free from discrimination in exercising their rights, especially for women and children.
- To advocate to government policymakers and community leaders for effective enforcement of responsive policies on rights to health care and support for PLWHAs at all levels.

In 2007, AAV continued to promote the STAR approach in order for communities to gain information about HIV and, more importantly, to reflect upon how







HIV has affected their community and how to improve their situation. STAR has proved to operate well in Ha Tinh; a project funded by EC. To build on this success, STAR networks have been set up in six DAs and one Development Initiative. Cards that summarise the Law on HIV/AIDS, issued in 2006, have been distributed to local authorities, communities and especially to PLWHAs. As this law reflects change in the government's policies towards HIV/AIDS, the dissemination of information about

the law has enabled PLWHAs to have a better understanding of their rights and for communities to look at HIV/AIDS with reduced stigma and less discrimination. In addition, the 'Rose Bulletin' is produced monthly to provide HIV/AIDS-related news and stories in the most accessible language for the average reader. With the slogan "When you see a rose on each human face..."; short articles in the bulletin encourage readers to stop seeing HIV/AIDS as a 'social evil' and to work towards HIV/AIDS prevention and control.

AAV is currently collaborating with many other organisations so as to better coordinate resources and maximise the impact of their interventions. Realising the large number of organisations and the diversity of their activities, we have published a directory of organisations working in the HIV/AIDS field, which details locations, goals and activities of each organisation. This is AAV's contribution to facilitate the overall operation of the whole network. Additionally, this compilation shows

to policymakers how various types of faith-based and civil society organisations are working in the area of HIV/AIDS. This is potentially of great importance given the fact that, at present, there is no legal framework for civil society organisations to officially register their activities. This limits the financial support that they can obtain in order to provide care services on a wide scale.

During the plan year, the government issued Decree 108/2007 ND-CP to provide detailed instructions for the Law on HIV/AIDS. This also created a platform for AAV and other stakeholders to critically engage with lawmakers. Further, AAV joined the initiative to publish the law on a set of cards to facilitate wider dissemination of information about it.

Research is being conducted on PLWHAs' access to health services and comprehensive care. On completion, this research will serve as an advocacy tool

to raise awareness of the authorities and communities of the situation. Also, the findings and recommendations of this study will be one of the starting points for AAV in designing interventions for promoting the rights of PLWHAs.

#### **4.4 Rights to Food**

Strategic objectives as specified in Country Strategy Paper IV for 2006-2010:

- Poor and excluded people, in particular ethnic minorities and women, to have access to and control over production resources; namely, indigenous knowledge, local seeds/species, land, water, forest, affordable on-farm and off-farm livelihood options, and market information.
- Poor people to develop affordable long-term coping strategies that become an integral part of their long-term disaster preparedness and risk management.





- The civil society organisation network on food security to be active in influencing government policies and that pro-poor policies on land loss/landlessness are in place.
- Poor people, particularly women, to have reliable information and improved knowledge in order to make decisions about safe migration, so as to balance the impact of economic restructuring.
- For workers (particularly migrant workers), people negatively affected by inequitable corporate processes, and consumers to exercise their rights. Government and corporate associations to be

more accountable to workers and society at large, and to their corporate processes as well.

In 2007, the AAV Rights to Food team continued to invest in capacity building of the CIFPEN (the Civil Society Inclusion in Food Security and Poverty Elimination Network), which AAV and CARE have been co-funding since 2005. Training was provided in Gender mainstreaming, Communication, and Internal Communication Planning. A PRRP was also conducted for CIFPEN members, which created an opportunity to review and learn from achievements and failures. CIFPEN is becoming more capable and efficient in their advocacy to the

government about food security-related matters. One important event was the launch of the first Hunger Free Campaign by CIFPEN, used to disseminate food rights messages, especially to political leaders via the mass media.

#### **Emergency Relief for flood victims in Hoa Binh and Ha Tinh provinces**

The project provided emergency relief to some of the most marginalised and vulnerable communities affected by the floods in selected communes in two provinces of Vietnam. The operation is being conducted in the Vu Quang district of Ha Tinh and the Da Bac district of Hoa Binh.



The operation has reached 2,460 families, spread across these two provinces. While some of the activities, like health camps, have benefited the wider population, the key activities, like food security, seed support and capacity building, have targeted families belonging to the most vulnerable groups. One of the key components of the work planned is to start seed support, through a group of local cadres, so as to facilitate an institutional set-up for future disasters.

In Ha Tinh the beneficiaries are mostly poor farmers, women and children; in Hoa Binh the project largely covered ethnic communities, with a specific focus on women and children. In both Ha Tinh and Hoa Binh, the project has been implemented through local partners, but it will be fully coordinated by ActionAid and supported by volunteers from our partner organisations who also belong to the affected communities.

Support has been offered to other vulnerable groups, including women who are lactating and pregnant, families headed by single women or people with disabilities, uncared for elders and widows. Despite being smaller than other projects, this one is significant as it signals that ActionAid Vietnam has improved its reputation with ECHO.

Realising the disadvantaged position of poor people in the process of WTO accession, ActionAid Vietnam organised two training courses on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards for shrimp hatchers in Ha Tinh province. Trainees were provided with knowledge on food safety standards and requirements for export. Also, research and a workshop on land loss were carried out with regard to the establishment of industrial zones in the north. Recommendations for revising land use and planning policies at both national and local



levels have been forwarded to all stakeholders.

#### 4.5 Rights to Education

Strategic objectives as specified in Country Strategy Paper IV for 2006-2010:

- To improve access for women, men, girls and boys, especially those from ethnic minorities, to quality education.
- To improve people's participation, especially women, in community development processes, from planning to decision-making, through Reflect.
- To ensure that all stakeholders, including parents, the community and government, fulfil their obligations to provide quality education for all as a basic right.

The initiative on improving the quality of education received by

ethnic minority children has helped provide minority children in Ha Giang, Cao Bang and Lai Chau with better educational environments, methodology and facilities. The model has also been adapted and expanded by local education authorities to other areas outside the reach of AAV.

Participation of the most disadvantaged groups, particularly women, in the development process has been improved with the establishment and operation of nearly 200 Reflect circles in 13 Development Areas, including Laos. The application of Reflect has expanded further and proved sustainable. Over 100 community development groups have been established, originally evolved from Reflect circles, with a more active role for local facilitators and strengthened links with local government authorities and professional agencies.





The approach has been widely adopted by World Vision, Malteser and RUDEP (an AusAid project in Quang Ngai). In particular, this methodology has been given official recognition, with the training materials introduced by the authorised body of MOET.

Through the model of community development groups, integration of themes has been strengthened. The operation of community groups also brings a greater level of community ownership of implemented program activities. Awareness of parents, the community, education officials and local authorities of rights to education has been significantly influenced via a series of awareness training campaigns and forums.

## **5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND SHARED LEARNING**

A workshop was organised to introduce ALPS, the framework to

establish multiple accountability for realisation of the key objectives of the 'Right to End Poverty' and the CSP. It is planned to translate the document into Vietnamese for wider use by partners and other relevant stakeholders. Efforts are also being made to provide guidelines for review and reflection processes as required by ALPS.

Consultation with different stakeholders, including villagers, partners and AAV staff, was carried out to define what is, in general, a program of good quality. During the process of revisiting the Country Strategy Paper for 2006-2010, AAV realised that variations exist as to the definition of 'good quality'. This prompted the need to agree on its criteria through a participatory deductive process. Starting with the selection of Ha Tinh as a 'good' program, all stakeholders presented the qualities that they thought

attributed to the success of the program. Through this consultation process, the criteria for a good quality program were identified and this will serve as the basis for assessing all AAV programs.

Following this Quality Initiative, the Quality Facilitation workshop was organised to ensure AAV adherence to CSP priorities and commitments. The workshop included a reflection of the ALPS practice in 2006 and the lessons learnt from it, the sharing of the quality report, a briefing of the Global Monitoring Framework and an introduction to the tools and process for monitoring and PRRP.

### Lessons learned

- All themes identify better coordination between AAV staff and its partners and other organisations as key to more effective operational activity. The Women's Rights Theme has

emphasised the importance of community ownership in all steps of program/project implementation, especially in the relationship with partners. If activities are not based on a community's needs, we cannot expect much support or cooperation.

- Although it is taken for granted that participation is a principle that must be complied with by all AAV activities, it is time for us to reflect on whether what we perceive and practice in the name of 'community participation' is sufficiently meaningful for empowerment. More often than not, participation remains 'passive'; it takes the form of meetings where ideas are elicited from people rather than community-based initiatives or campaigns to direct these activities. It must be admitted that participation is not yet a means to empower communities with awareness of their rights.
- In order to enable better coordination between all stakeholders, it is important to create a learning culture, in which all sides understand their own strengths and weaknesses. This will motivate people to learn from each other, regardless of their role.
- As AAV adopts a rights-based approach, rather than solely service delivery, a lot of workshops, campaigns and training activities are being organised as part of capacity building and efforts to raise awareness. While the number of participants can be recorded, the impact of these activities on people's knowledge and behaviour are harder to measure. This pinpoints the need for baseline surveys before these activities. The baseline data should come from various sources, such as training needs assessments, general surveys of a representative sample, current literature or findings from similar



activities. With good baseline database, we can better measure how much we have changed knowledge or behaviour and what further must be done to reinforce the changes.

- Equally important, it is necessary to follow up with the participants of workshops or training sessions in order to check on the application of newly acquired knowledge or information. The point is that these capacity building and awareness raising events should not be considered as one-off activities that can be expected to immediately have a desired impact on participants. These events must be seen as a means to empower our targeted partners so that they are capable of demanding realisation of their rights.
- While Quality Control is in place for assessing the quality of programs, there is a need for the organisation

to develop sets of indicators for each theme in order to monitor activities and report on their overall outcomes. This monitoring system will serve as a good basis for PRRPs, as well as in response to accountability requirements to all stakeholders. These indicators will be determined with reference to available literature and, more importantly, in consideration of the local context to ensure their validity, appropriateness and feasibility. Data collected with these indicators will aim to answer guidance questions specified in the Global Monitoring Framework in order to check progress towards achieving the Rights to End Poverty Strategy.

- Internal communication was also identified as an area for improvement for AAV. As the organisation grows to cover a larger geographic area and to embark on a broader range of







activities, the number of staff increases, bringing with them varied expertise and experiences. It is a regrettable waste if staff members do not have more opportunities to share their experience and knowledge with each other. In an attempt to promote shared learning, AAV is setting up Facilitation groups in which Program Officers are encouraged to join a theme that they are interested in and wish to focus on as part of their long-term career. Also, this process improves engagement between Theme Officers and Program Officers, aiding mutual understanding and cooperation.

## **6. RESOURCE MOBILISATION**

Facing a change in the nature of donor aid for Vietnam as it heads towards becoming a mid-income country by 2010, AAV has seen it as a strategic task to sustain existing income from Child Sponsorship (CS) and diversify and localise International Partnership Development (IPD) income. This is reflected in the Country Strategy Paper IV (2006-2010), which was

followed by the separation of the Funding and Fundraising Department into two separate functions (CS and IPD), under the management of the Funding and Fundraising Manager.

In 2007, along with sustaining 14 existing DAs with funding from AA UK, AA Italy, AA Ireland and AA Spain, AAV created three more DAs, with two of them having income from new Greek and Swedish sponsors.

Until late 2006, the funding base of AAV's income was 71%-29%, with the larger proportion coming from CS. The ratio is targeted to change to 65%-35% by 2010. In 2007, AAV was successful in raising funds from institutional donors (such as DANIDA, EC and ECHO), foundations (the Ford Foundation and Renarto Corti) as well as major donors (mainly for construction of schools and bridges and to ensure children's rights to education).

Though emergency work is not emphasised in the Country Strategy Paper, since Vietnam is in a natural disaster band, AAV was very active in 2007 in responding to all four natural disasters that occurred, both in DA and non-DA areas. The work is continuing in 2008, with focus on immediate emergency aid, preparedness and mitigation.

The following table details projects started and implemented in 2007.





No.	Project Name	EUR/GBP/USD	Theme	Project Details
1	<b>Combating Cross Border Trafficking of Vietnamese Women and Children</b>	USD 600,000	WR	Combating cross border trafficking of Vietnamese women and children (Vietnam, Cambodia, China and Taiwan).
2	<b>Education for Ethnic Minority Groups - Ha Giang, Cao Bang, Lai Chau and Hoa Binh</b>	EUR 336,750	Education	Support for rights to education for ethnic minority groups: formal education and informal education through Community Learning Centres/Reflect.
3	<b>Combating Gender Inequality Through Women's Empowerment</b>	EUR 574,500	WR	ActionAid and its partners support communities to realise and exercise their human rights, especially those of women and children.
4	<b>Microfinance for the poor: Network strengthening for better contribution to poverty reduction</b>	EUR 180,000	Livelihood	ActionAid and its partners support communities to improve microfinance services and extend program activities to new areas.
5	<b>Proposed AAI Intervention in the typhoon hit areas of Vietnam</b>	GBP 25,000	Human security	Emergency relief for Da Nang: support food security and rebuilding collapsed houses.
6	<b>Durian Emergency Project</b>	GBP 25,000	Human security	Emergency relief for Vinh Long: support food security and rebuilding collapsed houses.
7	<b>Project for the renovation of two schools in Soc Trang</b>	GBP 6,500 (approx.)	Education	Upgrading two schools in Soc Trang.

8	<b>Forest land tenure and food security for the Bahnar community in Gia Lai province, Central Highlands</b>	USD 101,700	Livelihood	1. Providing land-use titles of forestland for communities would legally recognise community forestry as a management option in forestry. 2. Giving people long-term rights over forest resources will improve their commitment to forestry activities.
9	<b>Construction of a school in Tam Duong, Lai Chau</b>	GBP 40,000	Education	The project will be designed to help pre-school children from ethnic minority groups in remote villages to have better access to improved quality education by constructing/upgrading classrooms and supporting necessary facilities for them.
10	<b>Clean water for ethnic minority children in Dien Bien</b>	EUR 276,750	Human Security	Supply hygienic water for poor ethnic households and schools in project areas.
11	<b>Support to Dak Lak, Gia Lai and Ha Tinh</b>	USD 40, 000	Human Security	Food, shelters and immediate relief for victims of flooding.
12	<b>Lekima Relief package in Hoa Binh and Ha Tinh</b>	GBP 106,899	Human security	Seeks to provide emergency relief support to some of the most marginalised and vulnerable communities affected by the recent floods in selected communes in two provinces of Vietnam. The operation will be carried out in Vu Quang district of Ha Tinh and Da Bac district of Hoa Binh.

## 7. HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With regards to the human resources, it has been a very busy year for AAV in 2007. Two major initiatives have helped the organisation to overcome some of the major issues highlighted above.

The first step organisational restructure was introduced at the beginning of the year in line with the proposed CSP. Further, AAV also undertook a complete salary review to facilitate the restructuring process and to realise parity among the staff members. A big effort by the Management Team, and especially the Country Director, was required to do this.

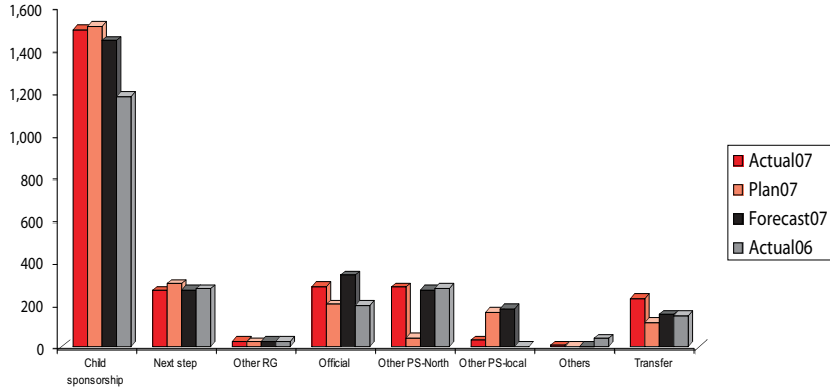
The role of Theme and Program was defined and organised with a competency-based framework that was established as a pilot initiative in Vietnam. However, the resulting

staff turnover rate during the year has increased the number of vacancies. During the year, the management team has taken proactive steps to address this issue, with 11 staff recruited and 3 leaving the organisation, out of a total staff of 43. Staff skills were developed with core training courses, such as the Rights Based Approach. Staff members were also sent on external training courses and to other AA Country Programs.

AAV also extended its support to other countries' programs by sending two staff on secondment to ARO. Establishing a representative office in Daklak in the Central Highlands was a particularly notable achievement as well. In addition, there were some lessons learned so that things should improve next year. Lacking human resources in projects/themes and function was a big problem. However, the reason for this was not only a shortage of human resources in the



**Chart 1: Income 2007 vs Plan and vs 2006**



HROD Department, but also from fluctuations in the external labour market.

In summary, HROD did have some important achievements in 2007, especially the new organisational structure and reviewed salaries. However, in 2007 HROD found it difficult to fill all job vacancies.

## 8. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2007

In 2007, ActionAid Vietnam experienced a jump in its growth: income increased by 23% and expenditure increased by 34%, compared to the equivalent figures in 2006. The utilisation of expenditure was slightly better than that in 2006 (87% and 85%

respectively). Income was more than planned (111%), and, finally, the reserve level was high, but within the allowed level (3.7 months).

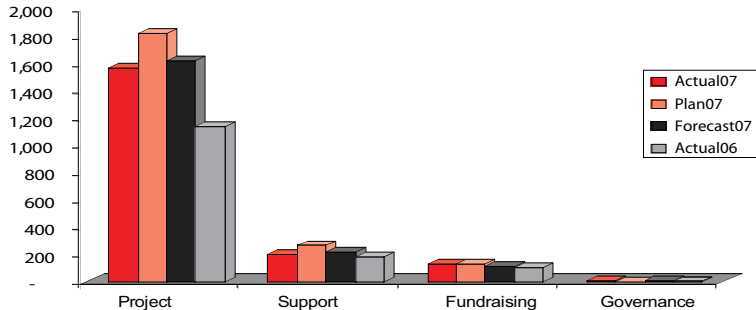
### 8.1 Income

Income in 2007 compared to the plan, forecasts and actual 2006 figures is shown in Chart 1.

It is clear from the chart that regular donor income (including child sponsorship, Next step and Amico) is almost the same as the plan (99%) and that forecast (104%). Lowest achievement of sponsorship income was from Italy (97%), while CS income from Greece was more than planned (328%). The reason for this is that there was a shift of 1,000 CHs from Italy to Greece due to an urgent need of CHs from Greece at that time.

Official income achieved was 43% higher than planned, as a result of a payment (GBP76,000) from the

**Chart 2: Costs by Statutory Actual - Plan - Forecast**



old DIPECHO project being delayed from 2006 to 2007 due to a reporting problem. However, compared to forecasts, official income achieved was only 85%. This was due to two main reasons: i) the decrement in income paid by Irish Aid as a consequence of a low spending rate; and ii) during the plan period, income from the EU Education Block Grant was recorded as official income, but when the income arrived it was recorded as a transfer.

Confirmed income from the One foundation in Ireland has not been received due to late acceptance of the report by the donor. This led to low achievement of other locally received partnership income. On the other hand, partnership income received in the north increased almost seven times compared to the plan, due to the four unplanned projects funded by various donors in Italy and the UK. This is the return from our investment

in the Partnership Development team in late 2006.

## 8.2 Expenditure

The utilisation of budget by statutory classification is shown in Chart 2.

Actual project costs were 86% compared to the plan and 97% compared to the figures forecast. The low achievement against the plan was caused by two reasons: i) The project on women's rights funded by Irish Aid and a cross-border anti-trafficking project funded by One foundation were delayed due to change in staffing (two staff in charge of these projects left at the beginning of the year); and ii) Those projects mentioned above have financial years different from ours that leads to a difference between our plan and project proposals.

Fundraising costs overspent as the result of the restructuring of the fundraising department in late 2006,

**Table 1: Partners' Spending**

Category	Amount (GBP 000)		Percentage	
	2007	2006	2007	2006
Project	922	647	84%	87%
Support	122	94	11%	13%
Fundraising	56		5%	0%
Total	1,100	741	100%	100%

in which we formed two separate teams: Sponsorship and Partnership Development. However, the fully-fledged Partnership Development team was only in place in 2007.

Support costs were 11% of total costs, which was better than planned (12%) and last year (13%), despite, over the year, rent increasing by 50% and staff remuneration increasing by 18.5%. With the planned replacement of a 15

year-old car, it is likely that support costs will increase in 2008.

2007 is the second year that we are able to analyse partner spending by statutory category. Details are shown in Table 1.

It can be seen from the table that the proportion of partners' support costs in 2007 and 2006 were very similar to those of AAV. This is a result of our

new policy that set up thresholds for overhead spending for all long-term partners. Fundraising costs spent by partners are those relating to sponsorship administration. In 2006, all sponsorship budget kept by the AAV Sponsorship function was spent on behalf of DAs. Therefore, no fundraising costs were recorded as partners' spending. In 2007, part of the sponsorship administration was allocated to DAs and spent by partners.

### 8.3 Reserves

There was unexpected accumulation of reserves compared to the plan. In absolute terms, GBP455,000 was added to planned reserves, taking total reserves to GBP1,451,000. Of this total, unspent partnership income was GBP461,000. This is a result of good fundraising performance and low utilisation of the budget. With the plan to use reserves in 2008, it is hoped that reserves will be reduced and kept under control.

### **ALPS and related processes**

During the last year, we were able to introduce a 'Practical Guideline' for finance staff participating in core ALPS processes, such as DA appraisal and PRRP. The document guides finance staff towards which information must be prepared in advance and what questions should be asked when interacting with different groups of people in the field, among other things. In fact, staff of the finance department used the guideline for two PRRPs in two DAs and one DA appra

Information about income and the budget was widely shared with partners during a three-day workshop, held in Hanoi in September, to review, discuss and agree on the plan for 2008 and projections for 2009 and 2010. It is part of the finance department's plan that in 2008 the department will work closely with one DA to pilot the disclosure of financial information to the community.

We have paid attention to spending by partners in the last few years. Therefore, the SUN system has been designed to record partners' expenditures by their nature. Based on this data, we are able to set limits (a percentage of budget) that each partner can spend on support costs. The definition of what is a 'support cost' is also part of the agreement, so that each partner knows what they can spend money on and how much they can spend.

### **Best practice, audit and other issues**

For the planning period 2007-2009, the finance department has set the following targets for 2007:





1. Improve the management account system.
2. Improve the internal control system.
3. Update the financial policy and guidelines for AAV and partners.
4. Strengthening the capacity of non-finance staff in financial management and of partners' accountants in using the accounting software.

With regard to target 1, we have designed management accounts for projects in addition to management accounts by DA and function. The timeliness of this was much improved; starting from June 2007, we produced management accounts

on a monthly basis. This first-ever practice was sent by email to budget holders. The HoF highlighted in red all DAs/projects that spent less than 50% of budget. This helped place special attention on SMT and for budget holders to carry out many measures, such as management visits to DAs.

With regard to target 2, we failed to recruit someone for the internal auditor position during the year. Therefore, we had to employ an audit firm to audit some DAs. However, by creating the program finance officer position and assigning specific DAs specific staff for financial monitoring and support, we were able to closely check partners' accounts.

With regard to target 3, we were able to finalise the FPPM for AAV in October 2007. Before that, we introduced a guideline on financial management to partners in July.

With regard to target 4, we organised training about T code and financial procedure for POs and thematic staff. This ensured that POs and thematic staff better understand the structure of management accounts. Following this, in preparation for planning 2008-2010, we redesigned the format for DAs and the department. This format includes not only financial data but also parts of programs, in an effort to integrate program planning and financial planning.











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