

## Report

# Final Evaluation of WSBD Project - Vietnam



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## 1. Executive Summary

The purpose of the final evaluation of the Water- Sanitation and Branch Development Project (WSBD) was to capture specific learning from the WASH sector, from the project implementation process, the consortium cooperation and related processes. The intention was to contribute to learning for all partners and stakeholders by highlighting good practices, lessons learned and areas of improvement for future WASH projects.

The evaluation was done by a team of seven members, composed of project staff, GRC staff, GRC head of office and GRC Advisor for PMER as team leader. The evaluation took place in Vietnam from May 20 to June 4, 2016, including a validation workshop on June 2. (see annex 13).

### 1.1 Short project description

The WSBD project was running for 3,5 years, starting in January 2013, with a three month inception phase, and finishing end of June 2016. The project worked in two provinces Lang Son and Cao Bang, in six communes (Phu Xa, Trang Son, Chu Tuc, and Lang Mon, Dong Loan, Thang Loi) close to the Chinese border in Northern Vietnam.

The project was jointly implemented by a consortium of Vietnam Red Cross (VNRC), German Red Cross (GRC) and Australian Red Cross (ARCS), funded by different back donors. The total budget was EUR 700.000, pledged and shared 50% / 50% by GRC and ARCS.

The **Overall Objective of the project** was

*“To contribute to improved health and quality of life for vulnerable communities in Cao Bang and Lang Son Provinces and thereby contribute to Vietnam’s Millennium Development Goals and the Red Cross Global Water and Sanitation Initiative.”*

To achieve this, two specific objectives were defined with respective results:

**Specific Objective1: *Communities (including target households and schools) have improved practices in hygiene and sanitation behavior and are using and maintaining clean water.***

1.1 Target households in the 4 (later 6) target communes have and maintain water and sanitation facilities, and have knowledge of the link between safe hygiene and sanitation practices and water-related diseases.

1.2 Students in target schools have and maintain water and sanitation facilities, and have knowledge of the link between safe hygiene and sanitation practices and water-related diseases

1.3 Targeted Communities have and maintain water facilities, and have knowledge of the link between safe hygiene and sanitation practices and water-related diseases.

**Specific Objective2: *VNRC has adequate staff with improved skills and knowledge to support communities.***

2.1 VNRC staff are able to better support and implement RC activities in target communities

2.2 VNRC have increased capacity to communicate effectively with community members and external stakeholders such as government agencies and mass organizations.

2.3 VNRC staff have increased awareness about the importance and role of RC

The project intended to reach 1.680 people, mainly the most vulnerable (poor, near poor, women and PWD) and 800 primary school children in the selected communes with WASH activities and thereby contribute to existing government development plans.

Main project activities were PHAST and CHAST trainings and sensitization campaigns on hygiene, water systems and latrine construction in the communes, including schools, distribution of water tanks and hand washing devices (HWD) for HH and schools, formation and training of water committees. To strengthen VNRC structures especially on province, district and commune level, trainings for capacity building of VNRC staff and volunteers took place.

## 1.2 Key questions

In the ToR for the evaluation 20 specific questions were formulated related to the OECD-DAC criteria (Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, coherence and coverage). ARCS In addition had sent 4 specific questions during the evaluation process:

- What involvement did national government and district government have in the lifecycle of the project?
- What was the nature of the relationship / partnership between government and VNRCS at the project level?
- ARC would also like to suggest that questions to volunteers should consider whether the respondent has been included in M&E and what they understand about its use.
- Additionally, it would be helpful to capture respondents understanding on gender and disability inclusion.

Overview Evaluation Questions	
<b>1) Relevance</b>	<p>1.1 ) Are the outputs/outcomes consistent with needs of the specific beneficiary groups (households, communities, schools, VNRC)? (Pay special attention to poor, women, people living with disabilities.)</p> <p>1.2) To what extent has the programme reached those most vulnerable? (poor, young people (in-school/out-of-school); PWD; ethnic minority)</p> <p>1.3) What were the most relevant activities for VNRC in relation to VNRC's strategic priorities?</p>
<b>2) Effectiveness</b>	<p>2.1) To what extent were the Specific Objectives achieved and met the project overall needs?</p> <p>2.2) Which activities and strategies are seen by community members as the most effective and relevant for the improvement of their water and/or sanitation situation/needs?</p> <p>2.3) Did the branch development activities undertaken enable the VNRC staff to deliver planned project activities effectively?</p>
<b>3) Efficiency</b>	<p>3.1) Was the overall project cost-effective - have available resources been used efficiently?</p> <p>3.2) Was the revised community based hardware approach involving cash grants more efficient in comparison with hardware interventions with external companies in the earlier project phases?</p> <p>3.3) What were the major factors that were influencing (hindered / contributed) the (timely) achievement or non-achievement of the objectives? (consider management and cooperation elements, look into project design, PMER, consortium, PMU structure)</p>
<b>4) Impact</b>	<p>4.1) What evidence is available that the WASH components (hardware and software) contributed to improved WatSan practices (behaviour change) and thus to a healthier life style?</p> <p>4.2) What evidence is available that the Branch Development components contributed to improved capacity of VNRC staff and volunteer?</p> <p>4.3) Which other positive and /or negative changes have been observed?</p> <p>4.4) What would have happened without the activity? (evaluate a commune with similar initial conditions and no project activities as a "control sample"; include in endline)</p>
<b>5) Sustainability</b>	<p>5.1) Which measures were implemented to achieve sustainability (hardware, software)? What are the enabling and constraining factors?</p> <p>5.2) Which software skills and knowledge have been obtained as a result of the project and to what extent are those changes enabling VNRC to replicate community based projects in the near future?</p> <p>5.3) Which hardware solutions are likely to be sustainable and may be replicated by the same or neighbouring communes?</p> <p>5.4) Have any behavioural changes been identified among community members due to the impact of the project that are likely to be sustainable?</p>
<b>6) Coherence</b>	<p>6.1) Are the implemented methodology and standards (e.g. WASH hardware and software components, conditional cash grant guideline) coherent with regard to VNRC guidelines and / or Government policies and approaches of the International Red Cross/ Red Crescent Movement?</p>
<b>7) Coverage</b>	<p>7.1) Who was supported and why? (reflect on recommendations from previous project "go deeper, not further" and later changes of this approach by adding two additional project communes)</p> <p>7.2) Was the community selection in line with project design?</p>

The following chapter on key findings will cover the answers of the evaluation questions only partly, for more details see full report.

### **1.3 Key findings**

In most of the activities, the project achieved more than originally planned. With its activities the project reached 2.517 people with PHAST activities, 1.730 HH with WASH hardware, thereof 1.642 HH of the preferred target group: 824 poor, 721 near poor, 97 PWD HHs, and 674 students at 6 schools, which is a bit less than expected.

The two specific objectives were mainly achieved.

#### **Relevance**

The project was highly relevant

- for the government as contribution to the SDGs
- for the poor and near poor BF
- for VNRC, but only at the end of the project, in the beginning VNRC had other priorities. VNRC has not only more trained staff but especially more visibility and attention by the government and local authorities as actor in development. As a consequence, VNRC chapters in the two targeted provinces have handed in new WASH related projects and VNRC HQ has signed a new contract with the Ministry of Agriculture and Development for rural development activities, including WASH.

The project had lower relevance for PWDs, because the existing number was not known and the 97 PWDs reached represent 5,7 % of the targeted population. Compared to 20% PWDs countrywide this is a low percentage. There is no evidence that the target communes had only 5,7% PWDs in total.

Highly relevant was all WASH infrastructure and its use on HH and school level, with the exception of the hand washing devices in HHs.

#### **Impact**

The impact on improvement of health of the target population was difficult to measure, as any change in health cannot directly be attributed to the project alone, because there are several actors working on improvement of health.

The impact on improvement of quality of life was definitely achieved, especially for those BF receiving a latrine, a water tank or access to a small water system.

The outcome related to behavior change in hygiene is difficult to measure. Triangulated information has proven that the awareness increased, some behavior change has taken place especially on student level, but broader hygiene related behavior change will take more time.

#### **Effectiveness**

The effectiveness for SO1 was high

- for using and maintaining clean water
- for HH using a latrine
- for schools using latrines ( if water is available)

The effectiveness for SO1 was medium

- for general hygiene behavior change: more awareness was created, some cleaner villages, more hand washing in schools, but care taking at school for the facilities is not enough developed: The interest in maintenance is limited, because funds for maintenance are not existing in the school budget and the responsibility is given to the higher level authorities. Repairs depend on personal initiatives.

The effectiveness for SO2 was high

- for VNRC capacity building of staff and local capacity; plus for Focal Points (FP) and teachers was positive

The project had 22 indicators to measure project outcomes and success on objective and result level. According to the endline survey, only 3 of the 22 indicators were not achieved.

Nevertheless the analysis has shown that from the 22 indicators, 11 can be rated as useful indicators, 7 were not useful and 4 were not properly used and measured.

Therefore the indicators can be used to triangulate information and complete the picture. Their ultimate use would not be sufficient to measure the project success.

### **Efficiency**

The strength of the project team was: constantly learning and adapting the approach to changing circumstances, with mainly positive outcomes. Especially the cash grant approach can be seen as a turning point for an improvement of the project approach. The efficiency increased, the project built 140 latrines in the last year, compared to 137 in the two years before.

Hampering factors for a better efficiency were: Staff changes; VNRC having other priorities in the beginning; Procurement process difficult to manage; Too many rules and regulations; Only an annual planning including annually budget; Money losses due to exchange rate and inflation changes ( > 24.000 € ); No consistent reporting with unreliable figures resulting in monitoring efforts with high input from the project team; back donor *Thank you Water intended to (a) reduce the costs per beneficiary and (b) preferred action as well as a bigger amount of its contribution to be spend in the water sector.* The project consortium therefore proposed to *cover a bigger No of BF for this contribution* with HWD. The overall budget had a high ratio for overhead costs, due to the number of trainings demanding HR, but as well due to VNRC internal HR regulation for funding of staff. The part of the budget going directly to the BFs was around 37% (260.734 €) and the rest 63% (452.547 €) went to indirect costs incl. monitoring and evaluation.

### **Sustainability**

The **hardware components**, water systems for HHs, water tanks and latrines have a good chance to be sustained by their owners or groups of owners (water systems). People expressed their motivation to sustain their new infrastructure. In how far the water committees are effective can only be measured in an ex-post evaluation. So far the water systems are running well and people are motivated to do all to maintain these systems. One difficulty for the water systems could be the necessary electricity for the water pumps. User groups need their own meter, which is costly. Actually they use individual HH meters for the whole group, creating difficulties to find a payment regulation, because of the price system related to use.

The correct use of the double vault latrines needs some attention: observation has shown that the containers or clay pots foreseen for the collection of the urine are not always placed there. This mean urine flows behind the latrine into the ground, which was not intended.

The **maintenance of school infrastructure** will depend very much on the dedication of individuals. The government is expected to act and the limited available school budget causes difficulties. The **HWDs** once broken will never be replaced, neither in schools nor in HH. The **trained local builders** contribute to sustainability, because they can do repairs and spread the latrine models in the commune on demand.

The **PHAST training** might only partly be used by the trained volunteers. Some interviewees confirmed that they will use key messages in their village meetings or campaigns. The full PHAST cycle will not be repeated by volunteers, because it takes too many session and time which the people do not have. The use of PHAST as an analysis tool, with facilitators that were not trained to do a village assessment, is not sufficient. But a good assessment is the

basis for sustainability of the action. Example: PHAST trainers created maps of the villages indicating water points, but how many PWDs are living in the village and how their access is to water and sanitation facilities was never registered, because it demands much more detailed analysis, statistical data and visits to the HH which were not part of the PHAST process. **CHAST training** is not part of the official curriculum and can only be given outside the official classes and hours. The willingness of teachers to apply some of the CHAST methods in their lessons is there, but they will only apply parts in their official teaching, not the full CHAST.

### **Coherence & Coverage**

**The project was coherent** and followed existing government guidelines, rules and regulations as well as respected donor or own guidelines, some of them especially developed for the project (procurement guideline, communication guideline, etc.)

The choice of two new communes, to increase **the coverage**, was made against existing recommendations from the CBHC evaluation to “go deeper instead of broader”, which meant to cover chosen communities to a broader extent, instead of adding new communes. The project could realize this recommendation in the two former CBHC communes, where the needs for latrines were fully covered. In the other communes poor and near poor HH were covered with support, with water systems, tanks or HWD but there were still expressed needs for latrines, which were not covered. The project responded to donor needs related to access to water, while people’s expressed needs were latrines.

## **1.4 Main lessons learnt**

- Project preparation needs a proper assessment on commune and BF level to get a good understanding of the WASH situation. PHAST volunteers cannot collect this data, this is the project responsibility. Fully relying on official data is not sufficient, the project needs to get proof, which is not easy in the given context. Therefore enough time has to be planned for an indepth assessment in each village during the inception phase, and during the implementation phase for data verification, especially if a new approach needs to be developed with SOPs, rules and regulations.
- All relevant staff and volunteers need to be chosen and trained (including local volunteers) before a monitoring system is installed, to allow all of them to get a full understanding of the system and what they are supposed to contribute to.
- A monitoring system needs continuous hands on supervision, down to the lowest level, to be able to function well and generate the needed data and information.
- A WASH project needs permanent technical support and supervision on communal level, to ensure quality – staff on provincial level is not sufficient.
- The cash grant approach is a very useful tool to create local capacity (builders), allow villagers to copy the model, improve BF contribution and allow them to have a better control over prices and delivery of material for construction, as compared to the constructor approach.
- Partnerships need clear definitions of roles and responsibilities and the courage of the partners to claim their fulfillment in the running project.
- If a donor wants to support a running project, the already identified needs of the BF shall be respected and served by the Consortium Partners.

## **1.5 Main recommendations**

### **WSBD Approach**

- Document the WSBD approach based on lessons learnt and recommendations.
- Exchange more with other organizations on successful WASH approaches (e.g. CLTS)

- Plan for a deeper assessment on village level at project start, which allows for a better understanding of the situation in the village and gives the necessary data about the target population, their needs and priorities.
- Use baseline results to adapt project planning, indicators and PHAST approach.
- Reduce applied PHAST content to needed key messages to achieve project objectives.
- Use the cash grant approach for HH latrine construction and small water systems
- Define and fix BF HH contribution for latrines, tanks and water systems to allow transparency and equal treatment for the BFs.
- Use Hand Washing Device only for schools

### **Planning and Implementation**

- In general: All consortium members should stick to the expressed and identified BF needs, to ensure maximum impact. Compromises with donors need to be negotiated under consideration of existing needs.
- The planning should be based on the planning tool most commonly used by all partners involved, in this case the logframe. The Theory of Change is a useful additional tool that helps understanding the complexity of a situation, but is not a planning instrument.
- The planning and implementation on village level needs more direct communication and presence by project staff. Giving the responsibility to volunteers and local branches to spread key messages is not sufficient. Distance management is not sufficient.
- A communication plan should be set up at the beginning of a project, including a complaint mechanism for all stakeholders.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

- The monitoring system should be known by all implementers (formats for data collection, data analysis system and data flow) and needs a permanent supervision and adaptation to ensure data quality.
- Indicators should be reduced in number. In addition they measure what is intended to be measured
- A complex consortium project should have quarterly monitoring meetings on commune level with participation from all levels (province/district/commune/project).
- Technical project staff on provincial and communal level is needed to ensure supervision and monitoring.

### **Procurement and Finance**

- Always involve finance officers on all levels in the CBA monitoring
- Let the commune level do the procurement to allow better price control by BF
- GRC should reflect on simplifying procurement requirements
- Assure funding for the whole duration of the project to allow consistent planning of activities and budget, incl. consideration of contingency for hardware, inflation and exchange rate changes.

### **Partnership**

- All partners shall ensure more continuity of staff involved in the project
- Clarify and formulate roles and responsibilities clearly in Project Agreement /Mission instructions and regularly review their fulfilment and adapt if needed.
- Document significant changes during the implementation and adapt PA accordingly
- Clearly communicate back donor facts and requirements and negotiate with the donor the funding conditions under consideration of existing needs assessments.