

**Proposal on MeKong Community Networking and Ecological Trading
(MECO – ECOTRA 2006-2009)**

**Social, Political and Ecological Research Institute (SPERI)
21 June, 2006
Vietnam**

Introduction

Herewith we introduce our new vision for the future and its practical implementation. The proposal marks a crucial transition in our work.

TEW, CHESH, CIRD working for about 10 years in development work will combine together into one organization, the Social Political Ecology Research Institute (SPERI). We are happy to announce that the new organization SPERI has been approved by the Ministry of Science and Technology on June 5, 2006.

All contracts of TEW, CIRD and CHESH will be audited by July 1, 2006. The remaining budget of the three organizations¹ will be transferred to the MECO-ECOTRA proposal when the proposal is approved by the donor organization.

In the coming years CHESH will remain registered under Vusta to keep linking with VUSTA. Therefore a few contracts of CHESH will continue until June 2007². For more financial details, see the last paragraph of the proposal.

The proposal will first introduce the MECO-ECOTRA farmer network and afterwards the new organization SPERI. From July 1, 2006 we wish to start implementing this proposal.

Our aim was to develop a comprehensive proposal, sharing why this crucial transformation is taking place, sharing our long term vision and finally focusing on MECO-ECOTRA and SPERI development for the coming three years.

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¹ With a few exceptions, see the paragraph financial details at the end of the proposal.

² These are the key farmer network contract (VN080111) and the farmer field school contract (VN080121).

Ideological Background

Farmers in Vietnam have been suffering from unconstructive implications of the former agricultural cooperative model, resettlement programme, and centralization of forest and land in the hands of state-owned enterprises. The poor and marginal minorities living in the isolated highlands have been lacking opportunities. Many feel unconfident of their identity and cultural value though they still remain traditional communal structure and customary law.

These have been the results of a long subsidy and planning economic system, bureaucratic management, and uneven distribution of resources under the socialist institutional arrangement. Establishment of national parks, nature reserves and state agricultural and forest enterprises has mapped the marginal communities out of their living areas. New hydro-power constructions have relocated thousands of minorities out of their traditional land. Emerging economic zones and industrial parks have taken away their land.

These social groups face frequent crises and feel disbelief at the formal system. *Where is social justice and dignity?!* The traditional social political structure of marginal communities remains strong and independent from the formal political structure; nevertheless, it has not had the genuine freedom and opportunities for them to preserve and practice their own value and identity. It is therefore TEW-CESH-CIRD³ determines and positions our mission to stand beside and seek ways to facilitate the new environment which offers them freedom and opportunities to voice problems, promote strengths, nurture creativeness whilst enhancing their voluntary.

The concept of key farmers' club occurred in the 1990s. *Who are the key farmers?! Why are the key farmers?!* Key farmers have good understanding of their social relations inside and outside their community. They have critical mind and long term development view. They are willing to get involved in social and risk taking activities. They are voted by the community with trust as they represent community's concerns. They understand problems, causes, and consequences of their community problems. Key farmers are the key actors to act and dialogue with local formal system. By using their community value and shared responsibility, hand-in-hand with traditional social political structure⁴ they inspire and lobby the formal system for the recognition of their identity and revival of traditional structure.

An environment for a healthy civil society is developed when voices of different social groups are represented and each group is accountable with their political social economic behaviors. **Networking** helps key farmers to recognize rights and responsibilities in the policy making and implementing processes. Networking strengthens the power from the below. It minimizes the centralized power and top down policy implementation. It encourages freedom for the marginal to participate, promotes the transparent institution, brings about better social equity, and that contributing to the democratization process.

³ TEW-Towards Ethnic Women
CIRD- Center for Indigenous Research and Development
CESH- Center for Human Ecology Studies in the Highlands
⁴ See annex 1

History of networking: key farmer networks from 1994-2005

After studying the interrelationship between Dao women and their local knowledge⁵ on herbal medicinal plants, an idea of networking these Dao women was initiated. These Dao women come together, share knowledge on using herbal medicine, and formulate among them as an interest group. Their group has developed and expanded across different scales. The integrity between Dao identity and diversity of their knowledge on using herbs has enhanced their cultural value and knowledge on this resource.

Dao women and other minorities continued to open up to other interests such as preservation of handicraft textile, local knowledge in sustainable slope-land farming, and traditional regulations on land use and forest protection. Dao women and Mong women in Sa Pa district, and also black Thai women in Son La province together formulated the cross-cultural handicraft group. They maintain each cultural identity in using natural material to produce traditional textile product. In their group-working, they share among them knowledge and experience⁶. The Dao community networking became a live-forum for different ethnic minorities to come and exchange. The forum gets involved of inter-generational, inter-identity, and inter-traditional structure participation⁷.

The Sinh Mun⁸, Mong, Thai, Dao, Kho Mu, and La Hu women in northern Vietnam⁹ formulated different interest groups e.g. herbal medicinal plant, handicraft textile, savings and credits, land use planning, community based forest management in the watershed. These women were empowered and become more confident to decide a fairer exchange of their products in the local market e.g. soybean, tofu, handicrafts, and local corn species. They also successfully built ecological village through integrating traditional mode of production, communal consensus in decision making and strong lobby in recognizing forest land use rights for households and community. These women were officially recognized as co-owners in the forest land use rights certificates¹⁰.

Associated with Gia Rai, E De, Mo Nong, Kho Me, Cham, Ba Na minorities in central highlands and southwestern provinces, networking has expanded to poor Kinh majority in central Vietnam. The network links to Mong, Kho Mu, and Laos in Lao PDR; Macanho, Dao, Mong, Thai, and Karen minorities in the northeastern Thailand. The capable key farmers coordinate to help the poorer households in the network. Some of them have been selected to become formal local officials. Key farmers' networking is now seen as one of the strategic focuses in the formal development frame.

⁵ Referred to the PhD study of Madame Tran Thi Lanh – Founder of TEW-CHESH-CIRD.

⁶ The Ba Vi case study became an applied Pilot Research on Preservation of Traditional Social-Economic and Political Civil Rights but yet has been intervened by the Conservation Policy under the centralized government power i.e Establishment of National Parks maps out the Dao indigenous people.

⁷ Referred to Elders i.e. Traditional Leaders, Young Generations, NGOs, independent scholars from Australia, U.S.A, Thailand, and France; UNESCO and CBOs coming from other countries. They came to learn local knowledge, lobbying approach, and how to get back Dao political civil rights. Since 1990, the Dao networking has received Thai, Mong, Sinh Mun, Kho Mu, Ma Lieng, Ruc, Khua, Sach, Gia Rai, E De, Mo Nong, Laos, and Thai minorities, and also ethnic Kinh majority.

⁸ An extremely vulnerable ethnic minority living in the northwestern Vietnam.

⁹ In Ha Tay, Lao Cai, Lai Chau, and Son La provinces.

¹⁰ From 1994 to 2000, TEW lobby successfully the women's right in the forest land right certificates. The Law on Land in 2003 recognized officially in its articles.

8,000 women are the co-owners of forestland use right; 3,000 members of the key farmer network are confident and active farmers, participating in several community development activities; and 25 women have become government officials at the local level. Networking methodology brings needs and concerns of key farmers at different regions become more advanced but also stimulate new initiatives and creative.

For more information about (the history of) the work of TEW, CHESH and CIRD, please see the annexes 3 to 5.

Rationale for the Coming Networking 2005-2015

- Networking builds stronger traditional community power, and that strengthening ***social capital*** at the grassroots level. Strong social capital is a fundamental base to promote ecological and economic capital.
- Diverse issues of interests are the foundation to stimulate different interests' groups and expand to interests' clubs. Networking promotes ***cross-identity learning*** and ***cross-cultural interfaces*** that encourage the marginal expressing their power in a more free and genuine manner. By networking methodology, this encourages the emergence of new needs and interests in Vietnam and neighboring countries in the Mekong region¹¹.
- The transitional networking expands to Mekong regional scale. Mekong farmers' networking focuses on ecological trading. They understand the idea of ***fair social economic values***, and practice it by including not only benefits generated between producers and traders, ***but also share benefits to the vulnerable who have not been members of the network. Fair social economic values include also the returns to re-nurture natural resources.***
- Networking is named **Mekong Community Networking for Ecological Trading – MECO-ECOTRA**. TEW-CHESH-CIRD merges into one under the **Social Political Ecology Research Institute – SPERI**¹².

Please see annex 2 for a diagram presenting roles and interests of MECO-ECOTRA and SPERI.

¹¹ Laos PDR; Northern Thailand; downstream of Sesan river of Cambodia i.e. Ratanakiri province; and Yunnan province in China (of the traditional local side)

¹² See annex 2.

MECO-ECOTRA Vision

MECO-ECOTRA promotes and strengthens civil society in order to achieve a harmonious life, social justice and democracy for highlanders and indigenous peoples living in Mekong region.

MECO-ECOTRA Mission

MECO-ECOTRA lobbies for social – political and economic rights of indigenous peoples including their dignity, beliefs, traditional social institutions, community rights and natural resources.

MECO-ECOTRA promotes networking among key farmers at the Mekong regional scale. They take collective action to deal with:

- Ideas, policies and programs from the Government and influential companies / organizations
- Impacts of market economy, specifically by working on a) fair trade products e.g. non timber forest products, b) ecological trading for handicraft and herbal medicine resources, c) eco-tourism, d) organic agricultural farming, e) bio-fertilizers and bio-gas for farms.

The current farmers/CBOs¹³ networking is seen as ‘visible political and social discourse’ with the formal institution. Key farmers are referred to as “political sensitive” local forces.

Networking will be professionalized into six thematic forum-focuses:

1. Human Ecology village network;
2. Herbal medicine network;
3. Handicraft network;
4. Sustainable organic farming by household and community pilots;
5. Customary law and watershed forests management;
6. Vocational training fields for community development.

MECO-ECOTRA Long term goal

Ethnic minority communities are recognized as equal social-economic and political players in society.

MECO-ECOTRA is consisting of several thematic networks able to organize all its activities independently in a suitable legal framework.

¹³ CBO – Community Based Organisation

MECO-ECOTRA Challenges

This new vision and mission of the key farmer network provides challenges to networking and facilitation by SPERI.

Challenges of Customary Law in Natural Resource Management and Sustainable Organic Farming:

- How to apply achievements of Customary Law Networking into lobbying for community rights to lands?
- How to lobby Local Government and State Forest Enterprises to decentralize land use rights to individual households, in order to allow individual households to practice their organic farming?
- How to analyze and document impacts indicators from these practical pilots for lobbying and policy change purposes?
- How to coordinate traditional elders, key social activists, independent lawyers, anthropologists, and media at the local, national, and Mekong regional scales? So to link these different practical pilots on Traditional Customary Laws at varied minority communities to inspire the young generation, influence the views and understanding of policy-implementers, policy-makers¹⁴?
- How to facilitate these inter-key social activists working together to build up 'Regional Council' for later MECO-ECOTRA and new ICCO¹⁵ in the Southeast Asian¹⁶?

Challenges of Networking on Micro-enterprise and fair trade for green and ecological products at the local market:

- How to avoid negative impacts from mono cropping and cash-cropping by lessons learnt e.g. from LTOs¹⁷ in the Netherlands, Philippines, Thailand, and Brazil?
- How to analyze advantages and disadvantages of the market-based agriculture and NTFPs¹⁸?
- How to raise awareness of organic farming products through Ecological Trading and Permaculture network (under Bill Morrison)¹⁹?

Challenges of Networking on Lobbying on Community Rights to Land; and Information Sharing in the Local Means of Media:

- How to strengthen capacity within every local practice on Networking, Shared Responsibility, and Decentralization?
- How to lobby Networking of local practices to be part of legitimate entity in the legal frame?
- How to increase awareness of Networking in the local, national, and Mekong regional media?

¹⁴ See separate proposal: Customary law pilot and Watershed Management in Mekong region, June 2006.

¹⁵ Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation.

¹⁶ See separate proposal: Customary law pilot and Watershed Management in Mekong region, June 2006.

¹⁷ Farmers' Association of the Netherlands.

¹⁸ Non timber forests products.

¹⁹ See action plan of Corporation between HEPA and Permaculture Research Institute of Australia <http://www.permaculture.org.au/index.php>

- How to professionalize the current lessons and experiences of Networking and integrate them in the local farmers' newsletters and magazines?
- How to integrate newsletters and magazines into international farmers' exchanges, internships towards Fair Economic Development?
- How to lobby private enterprises and business sectors to invest into Networking and Membership Fees?

Activities and outputs per thematic network

To cope with these challenges the following activities have been developed.

1 Networking on Human - Ecology Villages

This network will present indicators for the holistic human ecology approach to sustainable community development. These are the most important indicators of our work and will provide input for research and lobby.

For coming three years, MECO-ECOTRA will take four pilots including Ke village in Quang Binh; Pom Om and Na Sai village in Nghe An – Vietnam and Long Lan village – Laos.

1.1 Ke village

- 1.1.1 Participatory socio-eco-ecological evaluation for ten days
- 1.1.2 Participatory training workshop on human-ecology village concept for seven days
- 1.1.3 Participatory mapping human-ecology village / facilitate human-ecology village planning (design) or improve planning for seven days
- 1.1.4 Participatory training workshop on action planning for seven days
- 1.1.5 Training workshop on sustainable farming pilot (permaculture) for ten days
- 1.1.6 Improving and developing different pilots on community organic farming and gardens, herbal medicine, renewable energy, cultural maintenance, community forest management, native seed bank.

1.2 Nasai village

- 1.2.1 Participatory socio-eco-ecological evaluation
- 1.2.2 Participatory training workshop on human-ecology village concept.
- 1.2.3 Participatory mapping human-ecology village / facilitate human-ecology village planning (design) or improve planning.
- 1.2.4 Participatory training workshop on action planning
- 1.2.5 Training workshop on permaculture for ten days
- 1.2.6 Improving and developing different pilots on community organic farming and gardens, herbal medicine, renewable energy, cultural maintenance, community weaving, community forest management, native seed bank.

1.3 Long Lan

- 1.3.1 Participatory socio-eco-ecological evaluation
- 1.3.2 Participatory training workshop on human-ecology village concept.
- 1.3.3 Participatory mapping human-ecology village / facilitate human-ecology village planning (design) or improve planning.
- 1.3.4 Participatory training workshop on action planning
- 1.3.5 Training workshop on permaculture for ten days
- 1.3.6 Improve and develop different pilots on community organic farming and gardens, herbal medicine, renewable energy, cultural maintenance, community weaving, community forest management, native seed bank.

1.4 Forum / seminars for raising public awareness and lobby' purposes

- 1.4.1 Develop common perspectives / understanding on human ecology village that will be organized in HEPA.
- 1.4.2 Facilitate setting up network between human ecology villages that will be organized in Ke village or CCCD.
- 1.4.3 Link up with global eco-village networks (<http://www.ecovillage.org>) through participating in their seminar or workshop
- 1.4.4 Cross-exchange between members of the human ecology village network (e.g. native seeds / animal and plant species).
- 1.4.5 Overseas study visit
- 1.4.6 Carrying out action research based on concerns and interest defined in Ke village in Lam Hoa commune, Tuyen Hoa district, Quang Binh province; Nasai village in Hanh Dich district, Nghe An province and Long Lan village, Luang Prabang province.

1.5 Participatory monitoring for new revised action plans in the coming years.

2 Networking on Herbal Medicine

This network strives for a strong position of indigenous knowledge and skills on using herbal medicine for community health linked with the rights to manage and collect herbal resources. Further more, by showing reliable indicators, this network will lobby for legal frame for copyright for indigenous knowledge and for the rights of community for community forest management.

2.1 Improving communal herbal medicine gardens and herbal forest gardens.

Key farmers and healers have established herbal medicine gardens already at the mentioned communes and villages. Main activity in the coming period is exchange of knowledge and improvement of gardens. These areas can have multiple functions as farmer field practice areas during training courses.

- 2.1.1 13 communes (Lu Than, Lung Sui, Can Cau, San Chai, Can Ho, Quan Than San, Si Ma Cai, Man Than, Nan San, Ban Me, Nan Sin, Thao Chu Phin, Sin Cheng) in Simacai district - Lao Cai province
- 2.1.2 On Oc village, Muong Lum commune Yen Chau district - Son La province
- 2.1.3 Yen Son village, Ba Vi commune, Ba Vi district - Ha Tay province
- 2.1.4 Na Sai, Pom Pom, Pa Kim village, Hanh Dich commune, Que Phong district.
- 2.1.5 Son Kim I, Huong Son district - Ha Tinh province
- 2.1.6 CCCD and Ke village, Lam Hoa commune, Tuyen Hoa district; Hoa Luong village, Hoa Son commune, Minh Hoa district - Quang Binh province
- 2.1.7 Long Lan village, Luang Prabang Province – Laos

2.2 *Lobbying for legal status for herbal medicine association and forest land-rights to develop herbal medicine gardens and forests in Can Ho, Nung Sui and San Chai commune, Simacai district and, Lam Hoa commune, Tuyen Hoa district. (This activity will be combined with lobbying activity for community forest and land use rights)*

2.3 *Research and public herbal medicine handbooks for Simacai, Hanh Dich, Quang Binh, Long Lan*

- 2.3.1 Record herbal medicine knowledge in the different regions. (Look for cooperation with Herbal Association, University of pharmacology-students).
- 2.3.2 Document and public herbal medicine handbooks.
- 2.3.3 Register copyright for herbal medicine handbooks.

2.4 *Social Enterprises on herbal processing and services in Huong Son and Hanh Dich.*

- 2.4.1 Survey and identify possible herbal products for larger market.
- 2.4.2 Work plan for processing and marketing herbal products i.e. setting up a small processing unit.
- 2.4.3 Facilitate to set up two small local micro-enterprises for herbal products.
- 2.4.4 Give training where needed, on product processing, quality control, packaging, labeling, accounting, selling...

In the long term registration of trademark(s) for herbal products will become important.

2.5 *Herbal medicine treatment centers*

- 2.5.1 a forum to discuss with Huong Son oriental medicine association and Son Kim herbal medicine network to set up a herbal medicine treatment center.
- 2.5.2 Selected healers for a treatment center.
- 2.5.3 Prepare and build equipments and tools the treatment center (one in Son Kim and one in Hanh Dich)

2.5.4 Set up a network and a procedure to run the treatment centers in the different areas.

2.6 *Yearly seminar*

Every year one herbal medicine seminar will be organized in Hanoi to exchange between healers, provincial and national associations and academics.

2.7 *Monitoring and Evaluation*

3 *Networking on Handicraft:*

Handicraft is one the traditional external forms which reflects the values of indigenous people. The networking on Handicraft tries to preserve, promote and strengthen indigenous identity in a manner of integrating aspects of indigenous culture into community development programs. The handicraft network will link Lao Cai, Son La, Nghe An and Laos.

3.1 *Re-organizing handicraft networking*

3.1.1 Need assessment handicraft potential at four pilots. These are 1) Han Dich commune (Nghe An province) 2) On Oc village and Chieng Dong village (Son La) 3) Long Lan, Xieng Da and Nam Kha village (Laos) 4) Can Chu Su (Lao Cai) and link with the existing model Ta Phin village (Lao Cai).

3.1.2 Participatory training workshop to set up action plans for each pilot and network

3.1.3 Facilitate cross-exchange between pilots

3.1.4 Facilitate participatory training & TOT by women to improve the quality of embroidery, tailoring, and use of natural dyes.

3.2 *Designing new products based on traditional patterns and natural colors.*

3.2.1 Facilitate to design and develop some new products based on traditional patterns and natural colour.

3.2.2 Facilitate a practical training for other women to learn about new design

3.3 *Improving new economic and marketing skills.*

3.3.1 Market assessment for handicrafts products

3.3.2 Identify training needs for production and marketing

3.3.3 Develop curricula that suitable to locations and groups

3.3.4 Facilitate training on production and marketing

3.4 *Setting up handicraft cooperatives*

The cooperatives are local production and market players, which in the future might link up with national or international shops/chains.

3.4.1 Facilitate participatory workshop to develop clear vision, clear objectives and action plans, structure and procedure of the cooperative.

3.4.2 Register with local authorities and legal policy for a legal cooperative

3.5 *Forum/exhibition/senimars*

3.5.1 Organise culture show or exhibition

3.5.2 Facilitate a forum about handicraft initiatives, including the role of micro-enterprises, local knowledge etc.

3.6 *Monitoring and Evaluation*

4 Networking on Sustainable Organic Farming

For the network on organic farming, the permaculture approach will be used. Permaculture (Permanent culture) is a holistic approach based on human and ecological resources. Close cooperation with the Permaculture Institute in Australia will lead to pilot models balancing between ecology, natural and human environment.

4.1 *Develop regional permaculture pilots at HEPA, CCCD, Simacai.*

4.1.1 Facilitating Participatory design of permaculture sites for farmers and students. This training workshop will help participants to understand and to apply principles of permaculture design and practice.

4.1.2 Learning by carrying out permaculture activities (e.g. gardening, animal raising, water management, forest management, wastes treatment, soil erosion protection)

4.1.3 Implementing different experiments on plants, animals, soils, local knowledge/techs, simple techs i.e. solar energy, hydroelectricity, water mill.

4.1.4 On-ground issues-based training and workshops. During carrying out pilots and practicing there will be issues arising which need to be shared and discussed among members of the network as well outsiders.

4.1.5 Setting up native and introduced nurseries that server as seed reserves for different farms and future.

4.1.6 Developing field pilots: in one hand the field pilots will run as field curriculum for permaculture training for farmers and students. In other hand they will present as life indicators on sustainable farming systems and natural resources management.

4.1.7 Publish curriculum manuals.

4.2 *Develop community permaculture pilots at Ke, Nasai, Long Lan village (see more details at Human – Ecology Village).*

4.2.1 Facilitating Participatory designing permaculture sites (this will be combined with activity at No. 1)

4.2.2 Onground issue - based training and workshop, learning by carrying out permaculture activities (e.g. gardening, animal raising, water management, forest management, wastes treatment, soil erosion protection)

4.2.3 Setting up native and introduced nurseries that server as seed reserves for other farms and future.

4.2.4 Developing field pilots: the community pilots will run as field curriculum for field-exchanges and will present as life indicators on sustainable farming systems and natural resources management of the communities.

4.2.5 Publish curriculum manuals

4.3 *Develop household permaculture pilots.*

4.3.1 Designing permaculture sites. Households who are interested and volunteered to apply permaculture principles will participate in a participatory training workshop at activity

4.3.2 On ground - training, learning by carrying out permaculture activities (e.g. gardening, animal raising, water management, forest management, wastes treatment, soil erosion protection). These activities will be combined at activities of No. 1

4.3.3 Setting up home nurseries and networking on home nurseries.

4.4 *Setting up eco-product shops and networking on eco-product shops (e.g. HEPA, CCCD and Luang Prabang).*

4.4.1 Participatory local market analysis

4.4.2 Participatory prioritized main eco-products identification

4.4.3 Friendly environmental techs/ processing

4.4.4 Participatory marketing strategies identification

4.4.5 Look for niche markets of the prioritized eco-products

4.4.6 Set up regulations for running and developing the network of eco-product shop

4.5 *Forum/seminar*

4.5.1 Share / exchange permaculture experiences and combine with exchange of plants and animal species, organized in vocational centers.

4.5.2 Organize public events to introduce eco-products.

4.6 *Monitoring and evaluation*

5 Networking on Customary Law and Watershed Forest Management in Vietnam

The customary law network focuses on the role of customary law in watershed forest management as a decentralization strategy in natural resource management. Activities focusing on forest land allocation and forest management in Vietnam are included.

5.1 *Taking different action research at Ke village, Hanh Dich commune, Mu Trang Phin and Can Chu Su on:*

5.1.1 Participatory natural resources assessment and planning natural resource management

5.1.2 Participatory mapping community-based forest and land use

5.2 *Lobby for communal forest and land use and management right: Mu Trang Phin and Can Chu Su in Simacai, Hanh Dich in Que Phong and Ma Lieng group in Lam Hoa and Thanh Hoa commune, Tuyen Hoa district.*

5.2.1 Setting up a core group to lobby for community land & forest use rights for Can Chu Su, Ma Lieng in Lan Hoa and Hanh Dich, Que Phong.

5.2.2 Set up a technical working team who work with local people to prepare documents, resource management maps, analysis technical work.

5.2.3 Facilitate participatory workshops to identify objectives, approaches, time-frame, and stakeholder analysis etc. of a lobby

5.2.4 Organizing different seminars, informal discussion and study tours including different stakeholders (e.g. communal and district authorities, policy makers, researchers, technical implementers).

5.3 *Allocate communal land and forest for Mu Trang Phin and Can Chu Su – Lao Cai province, Malieng in Lam Hoa and Thanh Hoa – Quang Binh (around 1000 ha)*

5.4 *Lobby for reallocate land and forest use and management rights for households from State-Owned Forestry Enterprises – Xuan Trach and Son Kim commune.*

5.5 *Allocate land and forest for households in Xuan Trach commune – Quang Binh province and Son Kim 1 commune – Ha Tinh province (around 2000 ha)*

5.6 *Forum/seminars*

5.6.1 Forums discussing legal frame and customary law in watershed forest management

5.6.2 Link different forums up to different regional and international networks.

5.7 *Promoting local initiatives to strengthen customary law.*

These initiatives can consist of youth programs, community newsletters, community debates, action research etc).

5.8 *Monitoring and Evaluation.*

6 Vocational Training fields (HEPA, CCCD, SIMACAI) for community Development

Selected key farmers and coordinators are trained in vocational schools. These training activities fall under this item.

After vocational training, the key farmers and coordinators go back to their commune, village and they retrain the other members of the network. This second type of training activities has been mentioned under every specific network.

6.1 *Developing Human Ecology villages*

6.1.1 Organize training (living and learning) and learning by doing on planning human eco-village (training field will be selected). This activity will be combined at activities of No. 1 and No. 4.

6.1.2 Organize seminars/forum to share and exchange experiences on developing human eco-village.

6.2 *Learning Herbal medicine*

6.2.1 Organize several practical training, training workshop, cross-exchange activities on herbal medicine

6.2.2 Develop herbal medicine gardens/forest

6.3 *Set up a weaving training centre and handicraft training centre to training women, young girls and boys*

6.3.1 Weaving training centre in Hanh Dich

6.4 *Organic farming and permaculture design*

6.4.1 Organise an international practical training on permaculture design in HEPA, CCCD, Simacai

6.4.2 Organise seminar/forums to share

6.4.3 Develop on-ground curriculums and materials for training as pilots (biodiversity farm, safe energy - take samples of soils, plants, water)

6.4.4 Basic infrastructure for vocational training fields such as living house, water,

6.5 *Evaluation on training methodology*

6.6 *Develop training methodology / framework of vocational fields for farmers.*

This activity will be in cooperation with an international institute such as an AOC (Agrarisch Opleidings Centrum – Agricultural Education Centre) or Larenstein. This institute can contact directly with ICCO.

Expected results of MECO-ECOTRA

The current interests in NIRD²⁰ (Lao Cai province), TEW (Nghe An province), HEPA²¹ (Ha Tinh province), and CCCD²² (Quang Binh province) networks are to strengthen field offices, farmers' schools, and a regional headquarter.

Field offices have been handed over to key farmers to practice basic skills in building community development pilots, coordinate activities at the local level, organize forums for local people to dialogue with stakeholders and participate in lobby policy changes.

Farmers' school/vocational training field offers spaces for developing sustainable community development pilots e.g. sustainable farming, non timber forest products extension, traditional handicraft products, regulations on forest use in the watershed, and trade mark for herbal resources.

Farmers' school encourages farmers in carrying out applied-research studies; organizes forums for them to exchange ideas with academics and politicians; and promotes young leaderships to engage in lobbying civil rights and natural rights.

Networking methodology brings needs and concerns of key farmers at different regions become more advanced but also stimulate new initiatives and creative. Networking will be professionalized into six thematic forums.

²⁰ Northern Centre for Indigenous Research and Development

²¹ Human Ecology Protected Area

²² Center for Community Capacity Development

SPERI - Social Political Ecology Research Institute

Background

The grassroots development work that TEW-CHESH-CIRD has been doing for the last 10/15 years has resulted in key-farmer networks, which in turn have consolidated into community based organizations. (CBO's). As a result of this development, the CBO's are now step by step taking over the facilitating and coordinating role of TEW-CHESH-CIRD.

When the key farmer network develops further, it also means the organization has to develop further to keep up with the new developments. In the coming 10 years, ECO-MECOTRA will become an independent network. The MECO-ECOTRA network will remain the most important partner to SPERI; however the network will undertake its own activities.

TEW-CHESH-CIRD will combine into a new organization (SPERI). Where TEW-CHESH-CIRD were spreading itself thin trying to do all activities in all regions in the past, the new structure (SPERI) will focus only on specific professional services for the whole region.

SPERI will develop research and lobby, in order to scale up the approach to sustainable development, to influence policies on (inter)national level and to contribute to developing innovative models in working with ethnic minorities.

In the long term research and lobby will be the pillars of the organization. However in the coming years, SPERI will also facilitate the MECO-ECOTRA network.

Vision of SPERI

SPERI (TCC²³) has learnt and believes that the indigenous peoples do the best work, engagement and have main responsibility to improve their quality of life and their environment.

SPERI sees itself as the facilitator providing opportunities to stimulate social justice, equity and dignity for poor people in mountainous and isolated rural areas, especially indigenous peoples, by strengthening livelihood strategies and contributing to democratization processes. Important values are: respect for cultural identity, gender equity, fair social economic values, balance between traditional livelihood strategies and market economy.

Mission of SPERI

SPERI strengthens the Mekong Community Networking and Ecological Trading (MECO – ECOTRA farmer network) to empower indigenous communities socially and economically.

SPERI's development research and lobby strengthens development activities and policies from non governmental organizations and government, thus scaling up experiences and approach of SPERI towards working with ethnic minorities and with civil society issues

²³ TEW-CHESH-CIRD

Long term goal of SPERI

SPERI aims to become a professional research and lobby organization, able to support and represent the interests of its target communities, acting as a partner for the MECO-ECOTRA network, standing by its side. SPERI will offer professional services to the CBO's and to other 'customers' (f.i. consultancy work for other governmental or non-governmental development organizations).

SPERI will transform into three main skills²⁴

- Development Research and Publications skills.
- Development of Lobby skills.
- Transforming Key Farmers Network capacity skills²⁵ including:
 - Generating Profits facilitating capacity skills.
 - Promote Social Entrepreneurship Leadership Networking Initiatives skills.
 - Offering Care and Services to larger Community via farmers – vocational technical schools at region wide, nationwide, and Mekong levels.

Challenges of SPERI

- How to upgrade development research, communication, and cooperation skills to work in the integrated global economy?
- How to develop professional lobby skills on local, national and international levels?
- How to become an Independent Coordinator in the multi-stakeholder meeting involved politicians, academics, key farmers, media, international organizations, lawyers, and donors?
- How to deal with the transformation of Networking particularly at Mekong regional scale?
- How to professional our staff members to meet higher needs of the MECO-ECOTRA?
- How to stimulate Social Entrepreneurship Leadership initiatives and integrate with staff innovations in the World Development Marketplace to generate profits?

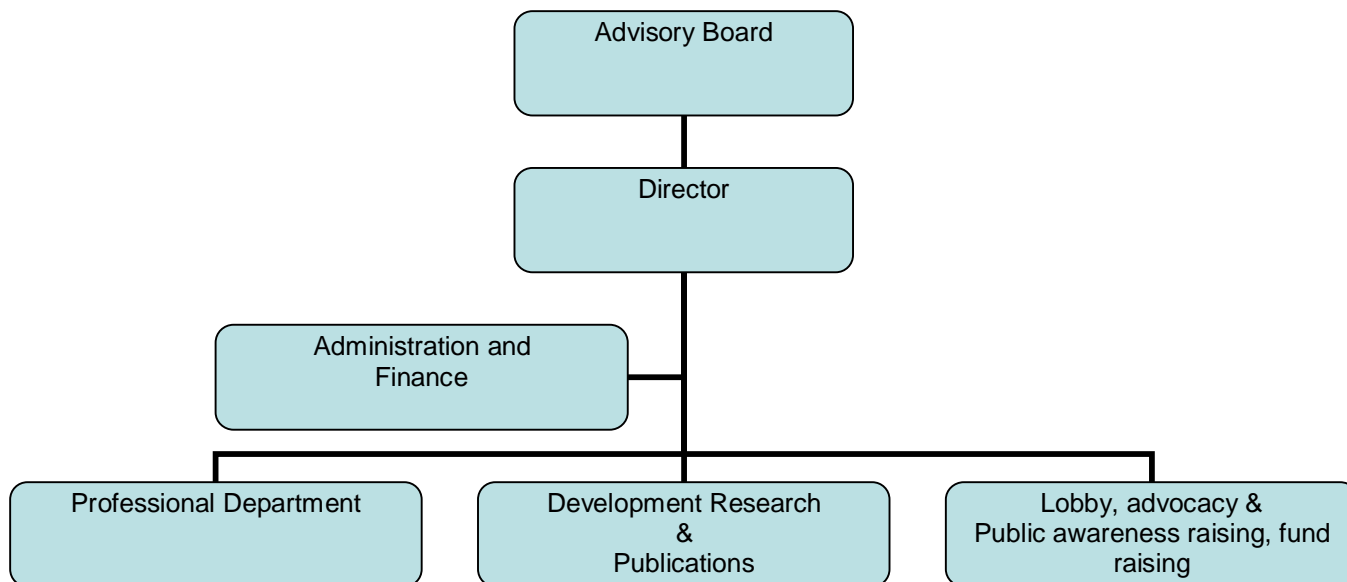
Expected results

1. **A well structured organization with staff**, able to support field activities as well as NGO specific activities like administration, finance, lobby activities and research.
2. **A visible and well known NGO**, able to attract long term partners and donors.
3. **An NGO able to positively influence policy makers and international organizations.**
4. **An NGO able to implement as well as communicate and publish its development approach.**
5. **An NGO capable of expanding its activities and network** from Vietnam and Laos towards other countries in the Mekong region and beyond.

²⁴ See annex 4 and 5 for the shift from current situation to professional departments.

²⁵ See annex 2

Organizational structure of SPERI



To successfully grow into this new structure, SPERI will need help from full time experts. This help will be necessary to facilitate the scaling up from an NGO to a professional office. One of the crucial tasks for the outside experts will be to link SPERI to international organizations, universities and fundraising institutes to ensure a continued influx of intellectual and financial support to keep SPERI functional and in the long run, self-sustainable. The NGO needs to identify the right staff for each department, optimally using each person's education, training, experience and interests. Both shortages and excess of personnel needs to be identified and addressed. All this should lead to a more efficient structure within the NGO.

SPERI is registered and approved directly under the Ministry of Science and Technology following the new resolution no 81 in which it is possible to set up an organization with founders from Vietnam (mrs. Tran Thi Lanh and mr. Duong Quang Chau) and from abroad (mr. Geoff Lawton from the Permaculture Research Institute of Australia). The director of SPERI is Mr. Duong Quang Chau.

7.1. *Professional department*

Professional department covers below topics:

- i. Marketing: Product development-quality control-micro-enterprises-community based tourism.
- ii. Technical assistant: Organic farming-animal husbandry-gardening-landscaping-construction.
- iii. Health care: Herbal medicine-hygiene-herbal forest gardens.

- iv. Educational department: Training and vocational schools and farmers' field schools.
- v. Legal assistant: Land rights-land use, customary laws, patent protection, trademark registration, commercial laws.
- vi. Natural resource management: human ecology, nature and forest protection, natural resource management.

When lacking expertise, SPERI, will outsource tasks and cooperate with other institutes, organizations or universities, and even industry.

7.2. *Research and publications*

Research will strengthen development activities and will support awareness raising and lobby activities implemented both by the NGO and the CBO's. For research SPERI will draw heavily on results and achievements from the field, on grassroots level, focusing on development issue research. CBO's will collect information in a database. The departments and research coordinators will use collected data for publications and use these to support awareness raising and lobby activities. Activities undertaken over the years will be analyzed and will contribute to innovative models in collaborating with poor and minority communities. Publications will improve visibility and recognition of the NGO, and its achievements. The research group will cooperate with outside institutions, universities or academics to conduct some research work, other research will be conducted by internal research staff.

Research has the following objectives:

- Improved knowledge and understanding of development issues
- Providing data and publications for lobby and promotional purposes
- Providing practical data and results for implementation of field programs

The organization will develop case studies on issues like community forestry and land decentralization. These will be published on a website, in newspapers, in reports, and presented during lectures and congresses, and result in a book and a film for promotional purposes.

Also data will be collected related to the activities of the different networks, like inventories of fauna and flora, research on medicinal plants, anthropological research on minority culture and traditions, research on handicraft designs.

The research and publications group will link its research activities with universities and academic institutes also to develop research together.

The Research and Publications group will need one or two full time coordinators, who will also be responsible for quality control, lay-out and timely availability of data, updating the website and contacting journalists. They will give training to staff members on data collection, analysis skills and writing/publications skills.

7.3. *Lobby-advocacy-public awareness*

During past years we saw a growing need to use results from development work to influence policy-making processes. Traditionally, government agencies lack the necessary contacts with the needs and problems at grassroots level which should guide them in choosing directions when deciding on policies that will (in)directly influence the lives of the communities.

NGO's play a vital role in defining these needs and are in a good position to offer advice to policy makers.

Lobby activities will focus on two main topics:

- Civil Society issues: lobbying policymakers in creating a legal framework for grass roots organizations.
- Needs and concerns directly linked to grassroots level: e.g. land-decentralization, customary law, community forests.

The lobby-advocacy group will rely on results from field work, on papers published by the research group and also on contacts with national and international institutes and organizations. For lobby and advocacy activities we need strong, skillful, experienced and trustworthy staff and committed national and international partners and the power of representing a critical mass through networking.

Raising the publics' and governments' awareness on the needs and interests of poor and ethnic minority communities and their development is crucial in safeguarding future support for the NGO and the CBO's by government and international organizations alike.

Responsible for Public relations: in one hand, SPERI will inform about its philosophy -goals – strategies – projects – structure of the organization to its networks, partners, resource persons. On the other hand, SPERI will be informed well about activities from other members that belong to its networks, partners and resource persons / contacts. SPERI will cooperate closely with media for raising public awareness relating to development issues of indigenous peoples.

7.4. Administration and finance

1. Administration department

Responsible for:

- reception and incoming phones and enquiries.
- human resource management.
- logistic support, including transportation, ticketing, hotel reservations, schedules, planning.
- for information sharing between the different departments. A good communication system between different departments should be designed to make sure all departments receive all necessary information at all times.
- for library system: update all documentation on practical information and lessons learnt into the library system. This will be an useful source for staff and others who are interested in development work of indigenous peoples.

2. Finance department

Responsible for

- financial administration
- yearly financial audit,

- accounting,
- salary payments.

A decent working structure should be designed, and communicated to all other departments in the NGO, so that all staff can follow the same bookkeeping system.

7.5 Personnel

SPERI has totally 30 fulltime staff²⁶ and 10 learner staff of whom:

There are five staff working in the Hanoi office (head quarter office) as office management and financial management.

The others are mainly working in field offices in Lao Cai, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh provinces, Laos and linking between different areas. Over time staff becomes more specialized in specific themes.

SPERI tries to create and provide opportunities as much as possible for young students to learn how to learn and work with indigenous peoples; to practice on designing and farming systems, community forest management, nurseries, husbandry and veterinary, herbal medicine, etc.

SPERI also has remained close relationships with other external experts and part-time staff who provide their consultancy in different issues.

Activities of SPERI:

Human resource development: capacity building of staff

- Facilitating participatory training and sharing among staff from different level of experience and areas. This is the self-learning process of SPERI.
- Inviting external experts (IC-consult) to facilitate on organizational and institutional development for SPERI and help staff themselves to identify their needs and a direction within organization.
- Training on lobby-skills by BBO and/or local lobby institute.
- Sending staff to attend short training courses on development issues relating to land, natural resources, social conflicts, etc. from one to three months at international institutes or universities.
- Organizing internship and exchange program on topics that closely to SPERI works for staff to other institutes or universities
- Attending seminars / workshops / conferences
- Select staff for Master degree training and obtain funds via other programs.
- International experts working for/with SPERI to increase staff capacity in 1) lobby, research & networking and 2) coordination & marketing and 3) curriculum development for vocational training.

²⁶ 42 staff from July, 2007 onwards. From July, 2007 all CHESH staff will transfer to SPERI (see also budget).

Professional Department

These activities are mentioned within MECO-ECOTRA.

Research and publications

- Practical action research for implementation of field programs (see MECO-ECOTRA)
- Development research linked to concerns of ethnic minorities; case studies and policy analysis with regard to community forestry, gender, local knowledge in NRM, land use planning, customary law etc.
- Link with research programs and universities.
- Training in research skills
- Develop, update and maintain website.
- Publish articles in newspapers (a.o. Saigon Economic Times and Literature News) and on the website.
- Make video/film relating to themes of the networks. These materials will serve for: 1) raising public awareness and 2) lobby and advocacy and 3) training for other farmers.
- Training in writing skills

Lobby, advocacy and public awareness raising, fund raising

- Develop and implement lobby action plans on local level with regard to community forest land.
- Lobby on specific issues on national level related to the needs of ethnic minorities and local organizations.
- Share process and results with other stakeholders
- Fund-raising and profit generating activities consisting of:
 - Incorporate revenue-generating activities into the new structure.
 - Manage the links between SPERI and potential funding parties.
 - Implement a transparent formula to run both profit and non-profit making activities side by side.
 - Develop procedures/ guidelines on all profit making activities.
 - Design and involve in marketing and promotion activities to become more well known.
 - Linking between international funding agencies and grassroots organizations, since the last are as yet unable to register as independent organizations.

Administration and finance

- Improve financial system

- Strengthen information sharing between departments
- Maintain and update library system

Expectations of SPERI for the Role of Donors

- Direct the fund resources to the CBOs network. Local NGOs could play the role of ‘back’ transformers if the legal frame has not yet ready authorized.
- Stimulate the small fund resources, through objective proposals, to facilitate creative Social Entrepreneurship Leadership initiatives from CBOs. Funds for policy analysis, lobby policy changes, and publications in public media.
- Spend fund resources to provide professional and stable marketing, coordinating, and managing experts to facilitate the MECO-ECOTRA.
- Prioritize the fund resources for Vocation and Technical Schools - Field Schools to provide basic facilities and conditions for farmers – young generations to practice, exchange, dialogue, and lobby.
- Working with new target groups e.g. independent media, parliamentary members, and private enterprise activists who focus on building stronger civil society.
- Inform about other networks and organizations SPERI and ECOMECOTRA can learn from.
- Advise on experts and consultants for capacity building (e.g. IC consult, BBO, ICCO-PSA)

Financial details

Per July 1, 2006 TEW, CHESH and CIRD will audit all current contracts. Together with the audit, financial and narrative reports will be written. Therefore all current contracts can be finalized per July, 2006. Remaining funds of the contracts of TEW, CHESH and CIRD will be transferred to the MECO-ECOTRA proposal as agreed with ICCO.

This way it is possible to get a complete overview of the financial situation of the three organizations before starting with the new organization SPERI.

A few exceptions to this general agreement with ICCO are proposed by TEW and CHESH.

The first one concerns the contract VN036131 – New office of TEW. During the last years, there were considerable procedural difficulties before the building of the new office could start. Finally, building the new office started at the beginning of 2006, about 5 years after approval by ICCO. Because of this background of difficulties, TEW would like to propose not to change the contract for the new building. In two years the building will be finished and TEW will close the contract by then. The contract is included in the audit of July, 2006 to get a complete overview of all contracts.

The second exception concerns CHESH. The new organization SPERI is approved according to a new resolution. SPERI is the second organization being approved in this way in Vietnam. This means that SPERI is a pioneer organization in applying a new resolution.

Therefore it is good to have a back lash by keeping one of the organizations, CHESH, running for a bit longer according to the known framework under VUSTA. Besides, it is also important to keep linking with VUSTA.

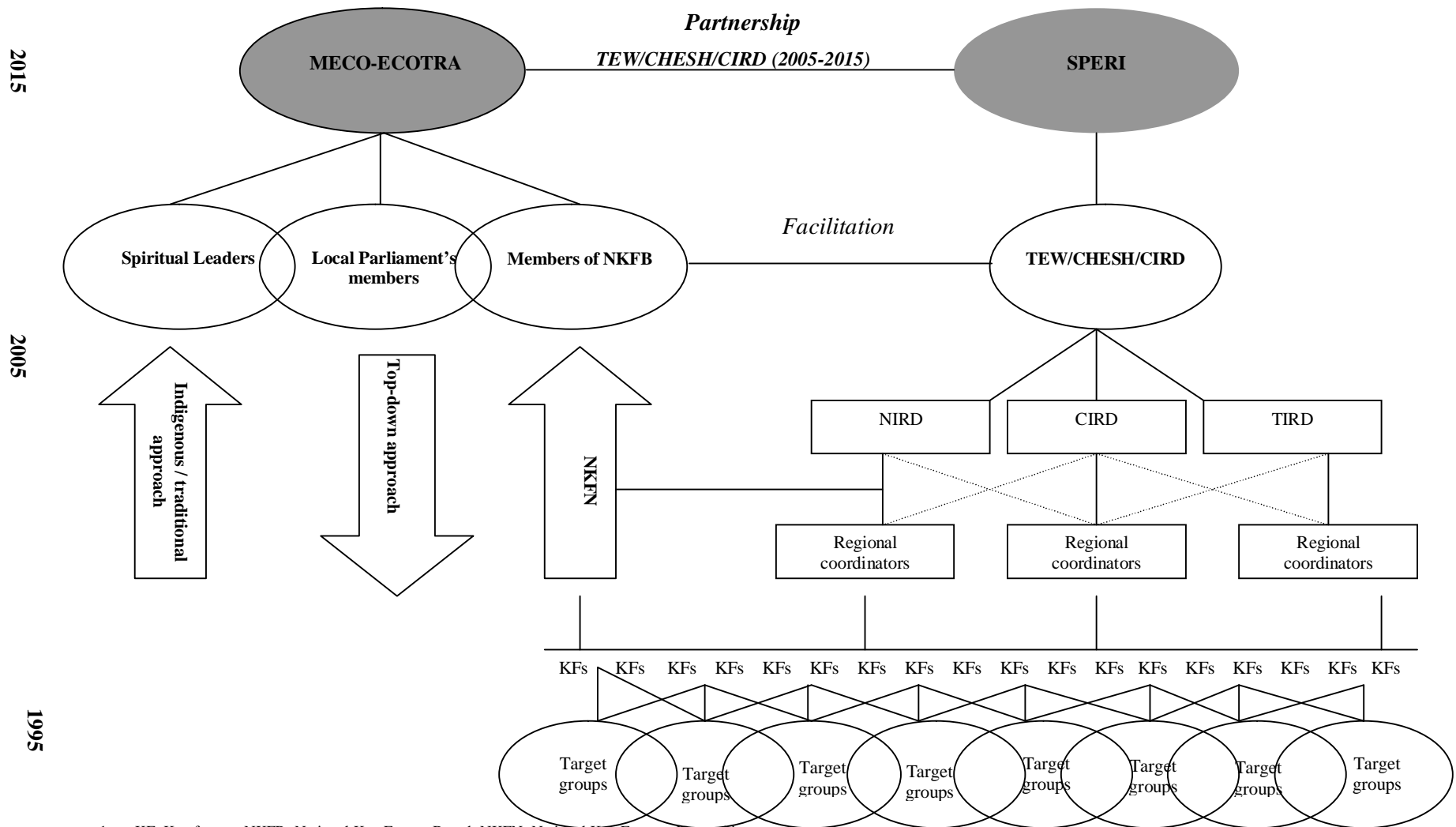
Therefore two contracts of CHESH will continue to June 2007: these are the key farmer network contract (VN080111) and the farmer field school contract (VN080121). In 2007, SPERI has more experience working under the new legal framework and assuming it is all positive, from July, 2007 the three organizations are fully combined. The contracts are included in the audit of July, 2006 to get a complete overview of all contracts.

From all the contracts that will be closed down per July 1, 2006, the estimated total remaining budget is about Euro 210.000, mainly from the TEW-NIRD-contract.

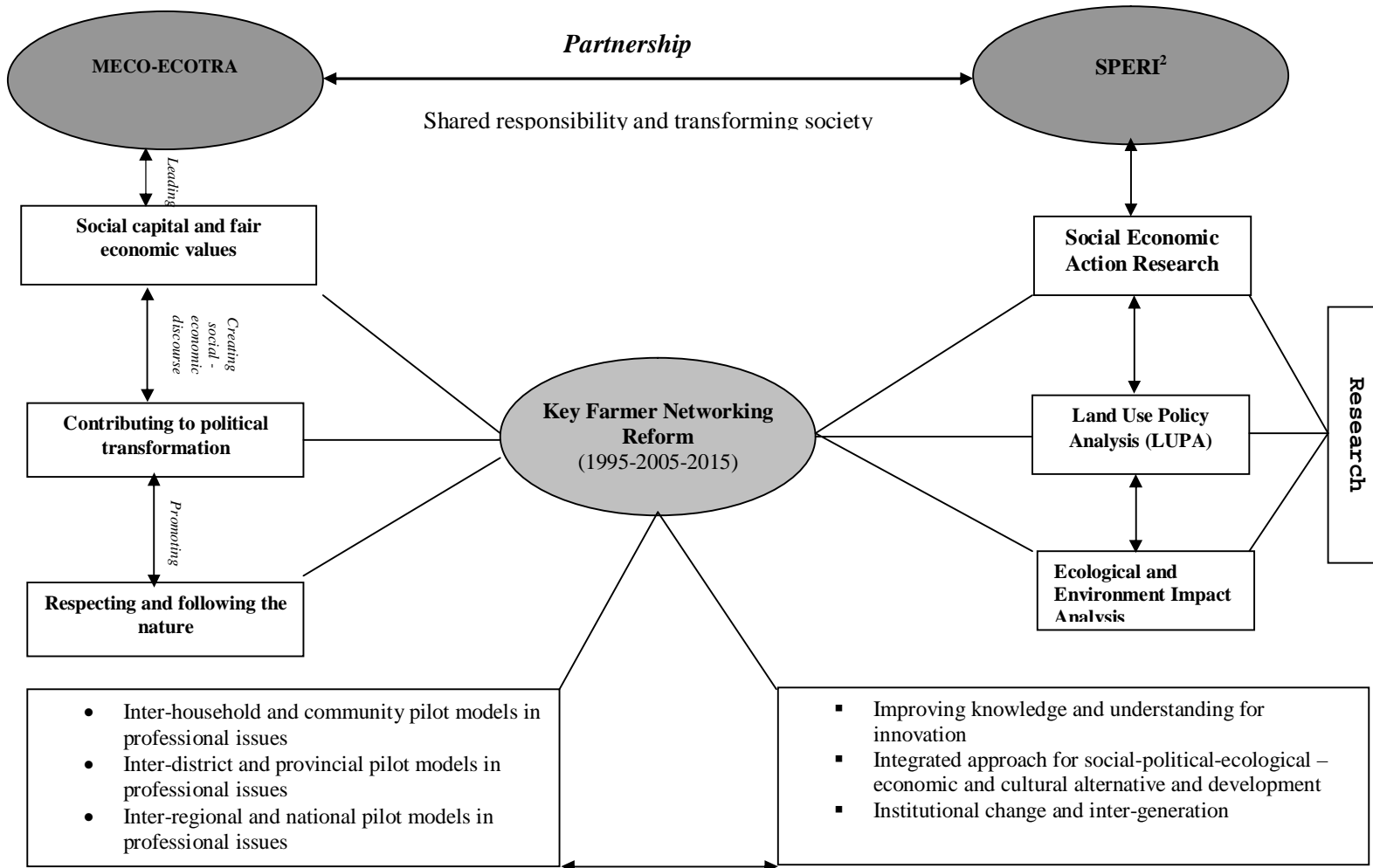
The budget presents all costs for three years. This is similar to budgets for three organizations before. However, due to the combination of the organizations and only one budget for the whole organization, the budget may seem rather large.

The remaining (left over) budget of TEW-CHESH-CIRD is not yet taken into account in the budget. The contracted amount will therefore be lower.

We would like to refer you to the budget in the enclosed file for more details.



1. KF: Key farmer; NKFB: National Key Farmer Board; NKFN: National Key Farmers Networking
2. NIRD: Northern Indigenous Research and Development; CIRD: Central Indigenous Research and Development; TIRD: Tay Nguyen Indigenous Research and Development. TEW/CHESH/CIRD – 2005. Hanoi, Vietnam



1. MECO-ECOTRA: Mekong Community Networking for Ecological Trading

2. SPERI: Social Political Ecological Research Institute

**Annex 3: Ladders of Development
TEW/CHESH/CIRD**

Integrated Activities		Approaches	Objectives		
National Board of People's Organization National Board of LNGOs	Learn to become a professional organization	Constructiveness cooperation / partnership networking	Self-confidence in community development	Development	
People's Organization 4. Procedure and structural system 3. People organization 2. Program/strategy 1. Philosophy/policy/vision	Lobbyist / advisor 3. Learn how to be partnership membership 2. Learn how to become a consultant 1. Learn how to become an advisor	3. Publish outputs, effects and impacts 2. Share professional tasks and methodologies in CD 1. Introduce international or national donors with RO	4. Reduce risks 3. Influences / less control 2. Long-term objectives 1. Visionary planning	Autonomy and sustainability	Vision the 5 th and paradigm the 5 th and Independence
Pre-People's Organization 4. Self-encourage challenges and adapt to new situations and challenges 3. Self-look for own approaches 2. Orient strategies 1. Set up own objectives	Program coordinators 3. Learn how to be a coordinator working on CD 2. Learn how to identify local human resource for CD 1. Learn how to identify indicator for CD	3. Link policy makers and local leaderships 2. Link leaderships and high ranking levels 1. Share effects and approaches to other networking	2. Complexity and multi dimension 1. Impact indicator	Accountability	Vision the 4 th and paradigm the 5 th and Lower independence
Coordinators 8. Self-implement 7. Self-plan 6. Discuss and sharing 5. Interested groups 4. Exchange visions among KFs 3. Self-organize 2. Self-monitor and assess activities 1. Self-integrate activities	Managers 4. Learn how to develop strategic planning 3. Learn how to monitor program/project 2. Learn how to manage new challenges integrated with new needs 1. Learn how to manage / coordinate networking	5. Make linkages between NGOs and GO programs on CD approaches 4. Respect decision making 3. Integrated indigenous resources and new adapting techniques 2. Empowerment local's capacity contributions 1. Promote customary law on solving problems	6. Reduce risks 5. Less control 4. Mid-term objectives 3. Strategic planning 2. More dimensions 1. Effect indicators	Self-responsibility	Vision the 3 th and paradigm the 5 th Upper semi-independence
Key-Farmers (KFs) 4. Self-manage their micro activities particularly within the TGs 3. Self-coordinate among TGs 2. Self-analyze and criticize their problems 1. Understand and realize their own problems and solutions	Practicers 6. Learn how to facilitate KFs and new situation. 5. Learn how to coordinate between your job 4. Learn how to manage your job and real situation 3. Learn about your job 2. Accept to learn from the situation of community development 1. Learn how to facilitate networking between KFs	5. Provide concept of sustainable CD 4. Provide facilities 3. Provide practical TOT, pilot activities of demonstration of CD 2. Provide seminars and workshops 1. Provide and facilitate exchange experiences (by study tour)	5. Some risks 4. Could be controlled 3. Action plan 2. Simple dimension 1. Outputs and some effect indicators	Capacity building by learning and doing (pilot actions)	Vision the 2 nd and paradigm the 5 th Lower semi-independence

Integrated Activities		Approaches	Objectives		
<p style="text-align: center;">Farmers ← → Learners</p> <p>5. Enhance TG's confidence and their local resources in order to solve their own problems</p> <p>4. Self-identify solutions to problems</p> <p>3. Self-identify nature of causes</p> <p>2. Self-identify causes of problems</p> <p>1. Self-identify problems</p>	<p>9. Self-wisdom</p> <p>8. Self-experience to phenomenal problems</p> <p>7. Self-question to these problems</p> <p>6. Self-respond</p> <p>5. Self-realize problems</p> <p>4. Vision realize real problem</p> <p>3. Attitude towards real problems</p> <p>2. Behavior towards real problems</p> <p>1. Understand and think of how to solve real problems</p>	<p>6. Together to look for new ways for adaptation</p> <p>5. Together to confront new challenges</p> <p>4. Together find out solutions to satisfy the needs</p> <p>3. Improve the needs between TGs and DLs</p> <p>2. Cultural relativism and respect each other</p> <p>1. Share problems, experiences, lessons learnt, visions/views and values</p>	<p>6. More risks</p> <p>5. More control</p> <p>4. Short-term vision</p> <p>3. Action plan</p> <p>2. More simple dimension</p> <p>1. Output indicator</p>	<p>Participatory rural appraisal</p> <p>Participatory learning and action</p>	<p>Vision the 1st and paradigm the 1st</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning from each other (e.g. between TGs and DLs) - Better mutual understanding towards each other - Strengthening confidence - Depending upon each other (dependence)
Target Groups (TGs)	Development Learners (DLs)	Approach between Target Groups and Development Learners	Objectives	Method of community development (CD)	

Annex 4: Current situation of TEW/CHESH/CIRD

TEW		CHESH		CIRD	
1.	Poverty alleviation	1.	Development Research	1.	Poverty alleviation
2.	Gender – networking - Community Development	2.	Decentralization - Democratization	2.	Community Development
3.	Action Research	3.	Policy Research and analysis	3.	Indigenous Knowledge Research and alternative solutions
4.	Network & exchange	4.	Network and exchange	4.	Network and exchange
5.	Lobby and advocacy	5.	Lobby and Advocacy	5.	Lobby and advocacy
6.	Awareness raising	6.	Awareness raising	6.	Awareness raising
7.	Administration and finance	7.	Administration and finance	7.	Administration and finance

Annex 5: TCC shift to professionalized departments which support for networks of farmers

Specialized	Lao Cai, Son La, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh – Vietnam and Luong prabang - Laos	Coordination	SPERI
	Professional support for networks (Community development)		
	Development Research and Publication		
	Lobby, advocacy, Public awareness and fund raising		
	Administration and finance		

