



SOCIAL POLICY ECOLOGY RESEARCH INSTITUTE - SPERI

Yearly Narrative Report

July, 2007 - June, 2008

Department of Administration and Development (DAD)

1/7/2009



The yearly narrative report will review the process and its effectiveness of self-management, self-accountability, more cooperation and linkage of SPERI's DAD in the reforming.]

Acronym

CBOs:	Community Based Organizations
SPERI:	Social Policy Ecology Research Institute
DAD:	Department of Administration
DECODE:	Department of Community Development
DES:	Department of Development Studies
DEFO:	Department of Foreign and Cooperation
DELOBY:	Department of Lobby
DEF:	Department of Finance and Accounting
MECO- ECORA:	Mekong Community Networking for Ecological Trading
CHESH:	Center for Human Ecology Studies of Highlands
TEW:	Towards Ethnic Women
CIRD:	Centre for Indigenous Research and Development
VUSTA:	Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Association
HEPA:	Human Ecology Preservation Area
FFSs:	Farmer Field Schools
STOs:	Scientific Technology Organizations
OD:	Organizational Development
ID:	Institutional Development
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
GNH:	Gross National Happiness
ANU:	Australian National University
RCSD:	Regional Center for Social Studies and Development
AIM:	Asian Institute for Management

Introduction

The period from July 2007 to June 2008 is the middle term of SPERI's reforming. The reforming has brought lots of changes in organizational structure and practical performance as an independent scientific technology organization (STO) under the Decision No. 80/TTg-CP of the government and the Instruction No.10 issued by the Scientific Technology Ministry.

In order to address requirements of an independent organization, departments and thematic sections of SPERI¹ need to be restructured professionally and independently. Before merging TEW and CIRD into SPERI, every formality related to foreign cooperation and development was supervised by Vietnam Union of Scientific Technology Union (VUSTA). Now, SPERI's DAD has to be self-responsible to deal with such kind of function. 'Right persons in right places' in parallel with decentralization strategy is the direction of DAD to advise the SPERI's directorship board in the process of facilitating thematic networks in MECO-ECOTRA.

SPERI's DAD in the reforming has changed from administrative works to administration in development. It requires DAD's changes in its structure as well as the quality of staff in self-management, self-accountability.

Short-term objectives which SPERI's DAD has focused as following:

- ✓ Establishing a flexible and strategic organizational structure which meets requirements of the reforming as well as an independent organization;
- ✓ Every department has clear mission, direction, structure and functions;
- ✓ DAD becoming a professional department which creates an enabling environment for every staff to well-perform their tasks;
- ✓ Re-arranging the information system (e.g. library, email, filing, legal documents, etc) at the head office (Hanoi) and regional offices (e.g. Simacai-Lao Cai, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, etc);
- ✓ Coordinating developmental administrations effectively in accordance with needs and requirements of the fellow departments, thematic networks in MECO-ECOTRA.

The report has two main parts. The first aims to analyze the process of DAD's reforming, its achievements. The second part refers to key challenges and recommendations are also mentioned in this report.

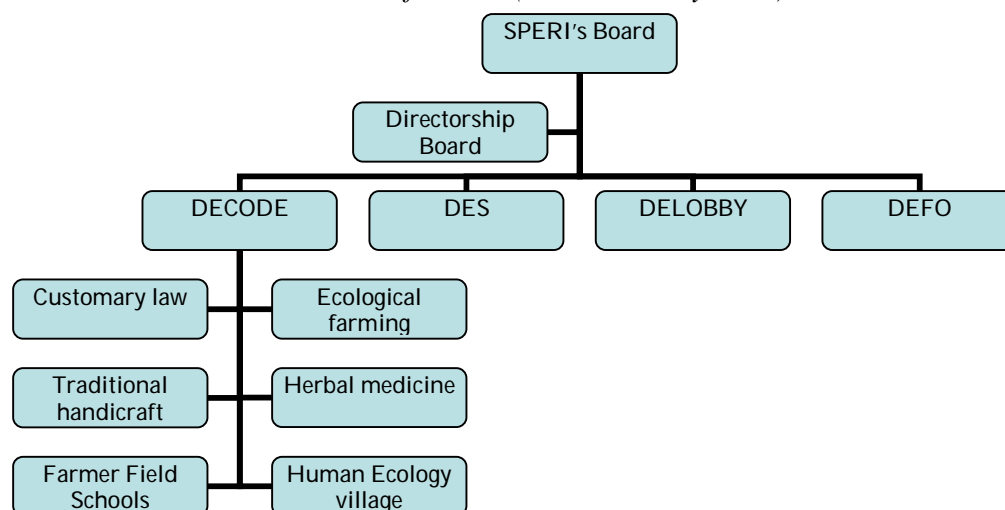
¹ Department of Community Development (DECODE) which has five thematic sections (e.g. customary law in watershed management, ecological farming, traditional handicraft, herbal medicine and farmer field schools), Department of Development Studies (DES), Department of Lobby (DELOBY), Department of Foreign and Cooperation (DEFO) and Department of Finance and Accounting (DEF)

SPERI's DAD in the Reforming

In the reforming process, DAD self identifies it's as not only in administrative works, but the most importantly administration in development. It means, DAD needs to self-equip of skills in advising MECO-ECOTRA to do their own administration, analyzing and criticizing the government policy in public administration towards values of grassroots democracy and transparency.

In order to address the requirements in reforming, SPERI's DAD actively decentralizes tasks, functions and decisions to the regional field offices (Simacai-Lao Cai, Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Quang Binh) as well each admin staff (see table below). Subsequently, the regional field offices are able to self-restructure, make plans and re-arrange tasks and positions of staff. Function of the field office is to facilitate and advise thematic networks/CBOs of MECO-ECOTRA the skills and knowledge in administration. In the same time, the headquarter office in Hanoi analyses the government policies related to public administration, and recommend DELOBBY for lobbying purpose. As well, the headquarter office assists SPERI's directorship board to maintain key relations at central level (e.g. national assembly, ministry of science and technology, ministry of finance, ministry of mountain and ethnicity, and others).

Table 1: Functional Structure of SPERI (revised in July 2007)



Communication between the regional field offices of SPERI used to be very difficult and cost due to they are located in remote areas and far from one to other. To dealing with this situation, DAD has set up e-communication via the internal internet (e.g. email, Skype and chatting). In every regional field office, there is an internet system which allows staffs could communicate with each other's conveniently, less cost and more effectively. Moreover, the information system (e.g. legal documents, activity reports, research report, staff profiles, books and articles) are well filing not only in hard copies, but in electronic versions (e.g. e-library and websites). This permits regional field offices and staffs to access for usage easily.

Multi-functional skills and quality are criteria for not only SPERI's DAD staff, but other fellow departments in the new times. Therefore, DAD has a policy to enhance capacity of its staffs through sending them to some short training courses (e.g. administrative skills, taxation and insurance organized by VUSTA, etc), internship, study tours and regularly exchange meeting among the field offices. Moreover, regional coordinators are normally the field project officers. This allows the fastest update of information, an integration between professional works and admin tasks, less structurism, high flexibility and more effective. In the field offices, admin staffs are not only working in administration, but also involving in professional tasks (e.g. practical training in FFSs, community development, etc). Result of the reforming so far is that some staffs could not meet criteria of the new DAD; they had to look for other jobs. For instance, before July 2007, number of DAD's staff in Hanoi is 9. Currently there are only 3.

SPERI's DAD in cooperation with other fellow departments qualifies staff profile system (e.g. CVs, scientific records, working records/reports). The working record or reports of staff are different between departments. For instance, with senior staffs that are involving in community development and research, the quality of report is highest. The reports could be used for publications in SPERI's websites (www.dolame.speri.org, www.vffs.speri.org), curriculum in FFSs and in the Environmental Policy and Sustainable Community Development (ECODE) in the Literature Magazine. By such a way, the critical thinking and writing skills of staff are enhanced significantly.

With junior staffs, quality of the report is required lower compared to the former group. The report only mentions outcomes, effective, impacts, difficulties and recommendations in areas to which they are responsible. While administrative officers only diary what has been done, and analyzing inappropriate points of the government policies related to public administration, particularly to civil society organization like SPERI.

Setting up the collaborative regulation among SPERI's departments and thematic sections is necessary to avoid the situation of miscommunication which leads to low effectiveness of project implementation. For example, in accordance with needs of MECO-ECOTRA, DECODE, DES and DELOBBY takes a responsibility to make a six monthly plan. This six monthly plan is an input for DEFO, DAD and DEF to set up plans to assist these above fellow departments. DECODE takes responsibility to facilitate and advise MECO-ECOTRA; DES focuses on action research and theoretical research in order to recommend DECODE the methodology as well as direction to support MECO-ECOTRA, and DELOBBY for policy criticism and feedback.

Indicators of the DAD's Performance

Changes in awareness and action of DAD from administration to development

DAD's staff understood that their works are not only in administration (e.g. dealing with legal documents, staffing, communication and public relations, etc), but the most important is serving for development process. Administration in development requires staffs to obtain professional skills in coordination and linking. Also, the staffs who involve s in DAD's work need to self-equip of critical thinking as well as knowledge in analyzing and criticizing the government policy in public administration. They are also able to advise thematic networks or CBOs in MECO-ECOTRA to manage their own administration. The lesson is that the process of DAD in development requires: a) well multi-functionally performed staffs, b) decentralized process of reforming, and c) flexibility in structure and well-informed professional functions of DAD's organization as well as its staffs.

Regional offices become live forums for CBOs to enhance their knowledge and ability in administration

Regional offices (e.g. Simacai-Lao Cai, HEPA-Ha Tinh, Dong Le-Quang Binh and CHESH Laos), especially field managers well play the role of connection and bridge builders for CBOs to directly contact with local authorities for administration. Instead of SPERI's admin staff, now CBOs could prepare all legal documents for their own activities (e.g. training courses, study tours, workshops, etc).

For instance, the Simacai-Lao Cai office successfully advised the traditional handicraft network in Can Chu Su village, Can Cau commune to prepare formalities to submit Simacai district people's committee to get land right certificate over 1,000 square meters for open the handicraft demonstration. CHESH Lao office successfully advised Long Lan community to kick out the business company who intended to take away hundreds of land and forest for growing coffee. The HEPA field office well assisted DECODE's FFSs to select minority youth (e.g. Hmong, Khmu, Tay, Nung, Black Thai, Malieng, etc) for practical training course in ecological farming.

So that, the regional field offices become live forums for CBOs and villagers to come to share and debate on the development policies and legal frameworks which directly effect to their livelihoods.

DAD's staffs are able to be self-management in connection with others

The requirement of multi-functional skill has helped DAD's staff more confident in self-managing their tasks. In accordance with needs of thematic networks of MECO-ECOTRA and plans of SPERI's departments, the regional field officers actively set up coordinating

plans which allow maximum of the involvement of multi-stakeholders (e.g. CBOs, local authorities, and SPERI's partners, etc).

Levels of task are also classified at this time. If the tasks relates to policy analysis and lobby, they will be transferred to DAD's headquarter office and DELOBY. If the tasks are only at local level, they are administrated by the regional field officers. Sometimes, the administrative work is carried out by other thematic departments instead of DAD. In this case, the regional field officer plays a role as a coordinator and bridge builder.

Organizational regulations are guideline for self-manageable and self-accountable staffs

Organizational regulations refer to developmental functions, direction and structure of every departments and thematic section of SPERI. DAD realizes that these regulations are not for 'controlling' staff behaviors, but a guideline and norms for staff's creative generation and development. The lesson of SPERI is that the process of self-management and self-responsibility could bring about miscommunication and less effectiveness. So that, DAD advised the directorship board to set up the coordination and cooperation guidebook for all parts of SPERI to follow. Similarly, each department also clearly defines its staff tasks in connection with others, and guides their future direction for development.

DAD is able to lobby with the government policy on public administration

In collaboration with DEF, DAD gathered and analysed information related to financial management of not-profit organizations like Vietnamese NGOs. Then, DAD recommended DELOBBY to successfully lobby the Ministry of Finance to change some articles in the Degree No.64/TTg-CP which regulates financial management of Vietnamese NGOs who are receiving foreign funds for philanthropy, research and development missions. One of the most important points is the Degree after lobbied it is more open and allows NGOs to be more independent to deal with their own tasks of financial management.

Challenges

For MECO-ECOTRA

Currently, thematic networks or CBOs of MECO-ECOTRA are confident and able to well-manage their own administrative and development works. Therefore, there are several questions in the process of supporting CBOs. They are:

Firstly, whether capacity and behaviors of DAD, especially the regional field office are good enough to following up new needs, higher skills and capacity of CBOs?

Secondly, the legal framework i.e Law on Association (not yet approved) not yet recognizes CBOs as legal entities in Vietnam. So that, activities of CBOs are mostly under the umbrella of SPERI, or sometimes the regional field offices. This barriers the development process of CBOs.

For SPERI

The emerging TEW/CIRD into SPERI, and results of SPERI's reforming have turn out effective and impact indicators related to organizational development (OD) and institutional development (ID) for both vertical and horizontal civil society development through key farmer networking methodology.

As mentioned elsewhere SPERI is independent STOs under the Instruction No.10/2005/TTg-the Ministry of Science Technology on the registration formalities of setting up STOs dated on 24/08/2005. This is still very new in Vietnam, especially policy makers and authorities. The first challenge is that, STOs under this legal framework are very risky. This Instruction could be withdrawn, if STOs (currently just having 10 organizations) are ill in their operation.

The second, currently SPERI's orientation is to focus on practical training course on ecological farming in the Farmer Field Schools (FFSs). So far, DAD has mostly worked on administration for community development via advising and supporting thematic networks/CBOs of MECO-ECOTRA. However, DAD now has to step on a new theme; that is administration with research, training and development. So that, it requires rather higher skills and knowledge of DAD's staff.

Recommendations

For the first challenge of MECO-ECOTRA: it needs to create more study and training environment (training, study tours, internships, seminar/workshop, etc) for DAD staffs, especially regional field officers who are in charge of advising CBOs to deal with their own administration works. The fact is that, these officers do not have many chances to enhance their capacity as the project locations are almost in remote areas.

For the second challenge of MECO-ECOTRA: SPERIs' DAD in collaboration with DELOBBY need to make a plan to lobby the government to issue a legal framework for community based organizations (CBOs). Then CBOs are legally recognized, they will be confident to contact directly to deal with their own development works. ~~Để theo kịp những yêu cầu khắt khe của quá trình cải tổ, năng lực của bộ máy kế toán cũng là một thách thức của Ban tài chính. Bộ máy kế toán hiện tại còn rất nhiều hạn chế về năng lực và nghiệp vụ kế toán, tiếng Anh kém làm giảm hiệu quả công việc và giảm tính tự chủ. Chế độ kiêm nhiệm công việc của các cán bộ kế toán vùng cũng ít nhiều ảnh hưởng đến công việc và tiến độ cập nhật báo cáo định kỳ cho cán bộ Quản lý tài chính.~~

For the first challenge of SPERI: In order to avoid risky for philosophy, legal status and images of the civil society organization as SPERI in case the Instruction No.10 above is closed, it is wise to re-establish TEW and CIRD which are under the VUSTA umbrella.

For the second challenge of SPERI: when TEW and CIRD are recovered legally, it is needed to re-specialize functions and missions of each organization. For instance, TEW will focus on women right to natural resources; CIRD specializes in indigenous rights via social / community entrepreneurship development; CHESH focuses on the indigenous youth rights to natural resources via FFSs; and SPERI will more professionalize on action, theoretical and policy researches.

That means, administration of each organization is also specialized in cooperation with others (e.g. CIRD's admin is more about social entrepreneurship and development; CHESH's admin specializes on training and development; TEW's admin is more about CBOs and development; and SPERI's admin is serving for research, policy lobby for development).

Annex: Cooperation of DAD with other fellow departments

Thematic networks / departments	Contents of Cooperation
<i>Ecological Farming</i>	Advise key farmers to organize exchange studies in sustainable ecological farming and herbal medicine application in agriculture
	Organize the practical training on permaculture lectured by Mr. Jeoff Lawton from Institute of Permaculture Research (PRI), Australia.
	Advise CHESH staffs for a study tour in sustainable ecological farming in Laos
	Support ANU students for exchange- study in HEPA
<i>Herbal medicine</i>	Advise network of traditional healers to organize study tours to Que Phong-Nghe and Simacai-Lao Cai.
	Advise traditional healers to organize a study tour and field survey on herbal plants and knowledge in Laos.
	Advise Lao Viet Traditional Cultural Herbal Network to set up a regulation for exchange and development.
	Advise Lao-Viet traditional cultural herbal medicine network to receive Norway delegation to visit herbal medicine network in Simacai-Lao Cai, Northern Vietnam.
<i>Farmer Field Schools</i>	Support class K5A-ecological farmin in FFS_Simacai, Lao Cai provine in the north of Vietnam
	Involve in selecting minority students for class K6B-ecological farming in FFS_Simacai, Lao Cai provine, northern Vietnam
	Supervise legal documents to select minority youths to participate in practical training course – K1A in ecological farming in FFS_HEPA, Ha Tinh province, Central Vietnam.
	Support minority students of K1A & K6B for the field study in Quang Binh, Ha tinh and Nghe An provinces
	Support the graduated minority students for field studies on sustainable ecological farming in Laos
	Prepare legal documents for CHESH Lao to set up a centre for human-ecology research and preservation in Luang Prabang-Laos

Thematic networks / departments	Contents of Cooperation
<i>Traditional handicrafts</i>	Support handicraft network in Can Ho commune, Simacai district, Lao Cai province, northern Vietnam for the practical training in tailoring and naturally dyeing.
	Organize the study exchange for members of Laos handicraft network in Vientiane, Laos and Chiang Mai, Thailand.
<i>Customary law in watershed management</i>	Advise Long Lan village, Luang Prabang province, Laos to resolve the conflicts over land and forest with the neighboring villages
	Advise Long Lan village, Luang Prabang province, Laos to set up a regulation on external exchange
Department of Development Studies – DES	Advise to organize a seminar on the proposal of setting up a human ecology village at Can Ho commune, Simacai district, Lao Cai province – north of Vietnam
	Support research team to conduct a research on community herbal medicine forest in Simacai, Lao Cai – north of Vietnam.
	Support DES to advise minority students to conduct research on indigenous knowledge of traditional farming of Hmong people in Lao Cai province – north of Vietnam
	Support to organize a seminar workshop of Prof. Chayan from RDSC-Chiang Mai Uni on research methodology and skills
	Support to organize a seminar workshop of Dr. David Leblance on development theories
	Support to organize a seminar workshop of Dr. Richard Baker, ANU on case of Can Ho community forest, Simacai district, Lao Cai province – north of Vietnam
Department of Foreign and cooperation - DEFO	Receive delegations of the Outer Voices – USA, Mrs. Stephany to do record voices of SPERI's staff and MECO-ECOTRA about methodology in community development, right of indigenous people to forest and land.
	Organize a field trip for SCUBA VISION to make a documentary film of SPERI (e.g. in Quang Binh, Nghe An - Vietnam and Luang Prabang-Laos)
	Support SPERI's staffs to participate in the international workshop in mining, dam and plantation in Chiang Mai, Thailand
	Organize a meeting of SPERI's leader and Denmark Embassy to discuss about the future cooperation and development
	Organize a meeting between SPERI's leader and Korean's delegation about the fair trade on handicraft products.

Thematic networks / departments	Contents of Cooperation
	Organize a study trip for SPERI's staff to Chiang Mai, Thailand (e.g. handicraft textile, organic farming, community forest, etc).
	Support the evaluator of ICCO, Mr. David Leblance to conduct evaluation of ICCO partners in Vietnam as well the trip of ICCO's representative in Vietnam, Mr. Henk Baker.
	Organize a field trip for expert on social entrepreneurship, Mrs. Lisa Macai from AIM, Philippines to visit some micro-enterprises in Quang Binh province, Central Vietnam facilitated by SPERI
	Organize a trip for DES's staff, Mrs. Tukien to participate in the international workshop on Palm Oil and Gross National Happiness (GNH) in Malaysia and Thailand.
Department of Lobby - DELOBBY	Organize a national workshop on climate change, warning and lobbying
	Organize a national workshop on lobbying: practice and legal frame
	Organize a ceremony to sign the MOU between SPERI and Ho Chi Minh Academy of Thought on research development
	Organize a ceremony to sign the MOU between SPERI and Lao Cai provincial Department of Labor, Invalid and Social Affair and Lao Cai Vocational Training School
Department of Administration - DAD	Organize a evaluative workshop of SPERI in the period from 2005-2007
	Complete formalities (e.g. regulations, functions, etc) of departments, thematic sections as well as individual staffs i.e. CV, scientific records, reports.
	Set up internal email network and e-skype conference for communication and exchange among SPERI's staff, departments and regional projects
	Upgrate the information system i.e. the e-library, reporting, research documents, legal documents, individual staff profiles
	Organize a seminar workshop for DAD's staff and regional field officers on administration and development

References

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3. The DECODE's yearly report: July 2007- June 2008 (DECODE-SPERI's progress report, 2007-2008)
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