

Minutes from the 17th Meeting of ISG Steering Board

Chaired by: Vice Minister Bui Ba Bong,
Chairman of ISG Steering Board,
Time: 8:30 – 11:30, 7th April 2010
Venue: Room 101, B6 No. 2 Ngoc Ha

Participants: ISG SB members and their counterparts (See list attached).

OPENING

Dr. Bui Ba Bong, Vice Minister of MARD and Chairman of the ISG Steering Board.

Vice Minister Bui Ba Bong introduced the meeting with brief on ISG's overview and its future. He then, discussed and sought approval to move forward with the proposed agenda.

PART I: Information Sharing

MARD REPORTS TO THE STEERING BOARD

- Mr Trang Hieu Dzung, Director General of Planning Department reported on the progress of MARD implementation of 5 year workplan.
- Mr Luong The Phiet, Director General of ICD-MARD and ISG Secretariat briefed on activities in ARD's International Cooperation for 2009
(The detailed report was already sent to all the participants at the meeting)

Comments and Questions on Part I:

Mr Nguyen The Dzung – World Bank

Mr Dzung commends MARD/ISG for their comprehensive reports.

Regarding the assessment of 2009 performance, Mr Dzung notes that:

- 2009 was a successful year for MARD for achieving its growth targets, but questions what has been achieved in terms of the 'effectiveness' of these targets. For example, he suggests that the quality of food and food safety may be still behind and far away from achieving the target?;
- Vietnamese rice is good in quality, however, the rice competitiveness of Vietnam is still far away from Thailand rice . This will increasingly become a challenge/pressure for farmers in the common-world market. Mr Dzung suggests MARD should continue to think about and focus to work on these quality issues. He agrees with MARD about making the Year of 2010 as the year focusing on "Quality" and need to have a common market between China and Southeast Asia;
- Raises the issue of the 'quality' of Vietnam's forests. He notes that MARD has, so far, not been able to provide the data for quality of forest;

- Improving agriculture infrastructure. Mr Dzung notes that MARD has achieved much in terms of cooperation etc, but visits to provinces show that there are some remaining issues, including a lack of maintenance on this infrastructure; and
- *Overall, problems in the 'quality' of growth must be paid more attention in coming years.*

Regarding ISG Performance, Mr Dzung observes:

- 2009 seems to be a quiet year of ISG and that there was many reason for this, particularly staffing issues in 2009. Planned activities did not take place. Yr 2010 should look toward addressing this.

Regarding MARD and ISG focus for next 5 years, Mr Dzung suggests:

- *More focus on the 'financing' of development targets.* MARD to pay more attention to securing resources, costing of MARD initiatives, discussing these in detail. He mentions the M & E Network for the assessment of SEP and asks whether MPI will allow MARD/International communities to make renovation to the SEP.
- A focus for ISG for the year 2010 will be to mobilise MARD Departments and get them to coordinate together. ISG should also focus on bringing together cooperation amongst donors and aligning their operations with MARD's five year plan framework.
- ISG MARD should be working toward setting up the framework for the Public Expenditure Review - establishing working groups, costings and a planning review. They should focus on the costings of the 5 yr plan, as these will be the foundations for them to discuss FDI and with their donor community.
- ISG in 2010 can also make a contribution toward National Food Summit because food security is a major issue.

Ms. Johanna Palmberg – Swedish Embassy.

Ms Palmberg thanks MARD for reports. She questions whether any conclusions have been drawn from these presentations? She notes that while the results are presented well, there are no conclusions being drawn and learning to plan for future. For example, problems will occur more frequently and this factors in how the future can be planned for or what can we learn from the 2009 report? She asks, 'Does there need to be some structural changes to allow for this?'

She questions: How does MARD's vision/roadmap fit in with the forthcoming 5 year plan? Is it not relevant to this? The links are not clear. She suggests that the content here is fine, but it leaves us wondering...'what next?'

Answers by Mr. Nguyen Trang Dung – Director General of DPI-MARD

- Food Safety: MARD has Department of Agro-forestry and fishery product quality management specializing which performs quality management from Central level to province level. However, the quality management process has a lot of steps. Quality management must be socialized. And it takes time to do socialization of quality management.
- 5-Year Workplan: The draft of 5YP was consulted widely during its development. The next two consultation rounds will be continued for its finalization. The set of M&E indicators was established to evaluate the previous 5-Y Workplan. It will be revised to be more practical and appropriate with the new 5-Y Workplan.
- MARD has assigned Department of International Cooperation, Planning Department and Department of Science, Technology and Environment to coordinate the Climate Change related activities.
- MARD has gradually finalized the Vision. The newly-establishment of three Directorates is one part of such a process. The Ministry is now focusing more on institution rather than project/program management. The decentralization process will be conducted significantly.

PART II: Discussion and Approval

1. ISG Performance 2009 and ISG Work Plan 2010'

Mr Luong The Phiet presented ISG Performance 2009 and ISG Work Plan 2010

The activities complete in 2009 for each key area were discussed with acknowledgement that the key area of capacity building and management was an area that plans were not achieved.

The outline of the plan for 2010 highlighted the need to continue ongoing activities, recruit the ISG manager and the work being facilitated by the Australian Volunteer to update the ISG website.

Mr Phiet thanked the volunteer for her strong contribution to ISG over the last 6 months and the current work she is doing to improve the website. Mr Phiet thanked the Australian government for funding the volunteer position.

Comments on Part II :

Ms. Claire Allidenes, AusAid

Regarding the ISG Annual Report, Ms Allidenes suggests:

- It has been a tough year to achieve this plan;

- There are some other lessons learnt to be captured, so that 2010 can build on these;
- Staffing gaps were discussed, but perhaps there are other issues to be identified;

Regarding the 2010 workplan Ms Alidenes had no detailed comments, but notes;

- The Australian Government will be interested to see how ISG will plan for its next phase;
- 2010 will be a busy year to delivering the activities planned for 2010 and planning next phase; and
- Australia is open to considering support of ISG, subject to design phase and model as well as gaining the support of other donors etc.

Ms. Johanna Palmberg. Swedish Embassy

Regarding the Performance in 2009, Ms Palmer notes:

- It would have been advantageous to see conclusions drawn from 2009, not just what was done, but a further analysis of this. For example, what was done well/right/needs to change? Key Areas are presented – but underlying issues are there;
- Donors need to see more of the 'thinking' behind what the activities were – not just 'activities listed'. Suggests MARD take this in consideration in planning for year 2010. For example, 'What is the actual GOAL and how are these goals facilitated. She suggests it will make it easier for end of year evaluation and will bring the process forward; and
- She notes that an example would be to write, "We achieved X, through X activities, which was constructive in bringing X and X issue forward. The activities should be tied into the goals MARD wants to achieve.

Ms. Pham Uyen, Royal Netherlands Embassy

Regarding the focus of ISG in 2010, Ms Uyen notes:

- The focus should remain on facilitation of policy dialogue, but it should be increased with other participants. For example, ISG should become more involved with Climate change office. She expresses Netherlands' desire for ISG to be involved in a workshop to share priorities on climate change;
- There should be more cooperation with Forestry Support partnership;
- ISG in 2010 should try to support the network between Government and private sector- both international and National; and
- ISG should support the development of the 5 year plan and NME system final plan.

2. Dr Bong presents MARD's orientation for ISG next phase 2011-2015

- ISG is a reflection of MARD – wanting to be open and transparent and willing to listen.
- Policy and dialogues – Wanting to expand partnership (expand Private sector, Ngo, science)

- Prioritise:
 - Review of implementing Tam Nong (Res 26.)
 - Food security and food safety under climate change
 - Farmers' during industrialisation
 - WTO and global integration
- ISG provide technical-level consultancy dialogue on policy implementation
- ISG prove consultancy on coordination of international community – orientation alignment
- ISG support transfer of dialogue results to communication (horizontal, vertical)
- ISG management:
 - Support at high level
 - Small but high quality staff
 - Enough funding
 - Review the composition of Steering Committee
 - Convene a working group to prepare 2011-2015 plan

Comments and Advice on Dr Bong's Presentation:

Mr Nguyen The Dzung, World Bank

Mr Dzung commends Vice Minister Bong on his very concise presentation and notes:

- The presentation expresses MARD's commitment to continue this partnership. However, he suggests ISG is a 2-way commitment, reflecting the commitment of the broader community to support MARD in implementing priority of ARD in Vietnam;
- ISG is good for policy dialogue at Macro level. However, ISG may need to open up to become more 'specific' and take the 'learnings from field' (information and experiences) from a more expanded set of stakeholders (private sector eg) to improve MARD policy framework;
- The presentation about ISG places too much stress on the 'consultancy' function. ISG should be focused on bridging the gaps between what Government and Donors cannot address themselves. For Eg: World Bank has a lot of experiences to share with those who need them through the ISG process;
- There are a few more priority issues that ISG could address:
 - Sustainable of development in ARD sector to counter future generations paying the high cost of rapid development
 - MARD's 5 year plan and incorporating good governance issues, admin reform. This is key interest of donor community.
- Difficulties for ISG – Implementing the Hanoi Core statement raises the issue of Cost-sharing and sharing responsibility, MARD should make some more specific commitments for ISG next phase.
- MARD staff should become more involved in various activities of ISG, particularly in coming to ISG's next stage, where the management of ISG is important.

Mr Jun Saotome - JICA Office

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Mr Jun would like to express on behalf of the Japanese Government that they would like to continue its support to MARD's activities in its next stage. He also requests that MARD give more comprehensive assistance to JICA in bringing together other Ministries (MOH, MOIT, MOST, MPI) in food safety issues such as SPS activities, and climate change issues.

He notes that MARD has been very cooperative in doing so, however he has concerns that in the implementation stage, MARD tend to isolate themselves. Regular meetings with other Ministries and information share are important. JICA request MARD to take strong leadership with other ministries to implement projects.

Ms Lan Huong - SIDA

Ms Huong notes that the next phase of ISG is moving from ODA coordination mission to policy dialogue forum and a part of the policy analysis process. She suggests that:

- ISG forum needs to be involved with policy advisory process. Should push ISG mission in this area in future;
- The priority policy issues for next phase ISG are closely linked to objectives MARD to achieve in 5 years. However, what is role of the State Government system to promote ARD (i.e. the province level). ISG should be active here; and
- Another area for ISG to focus on is the Institutional reform process.

Ms Huong notes that Sweden supports the next phase of ISG, but has to have discussion about which level of support and contribution.

Ms. Johanna Palmberg, Swedish Embassy

Ms Palmberg offers background information to her colleague's comments:

- Sweden is phasing out bilateral cooperation as Vietnam reached MIC status. Sweden will remain in Vietnam but will change its modality. Sweden will rarely have bilateral coordination projects, only in the areas of Environment & Climate Change and Democratic governance. However, there are areas within MARD that are affected by climate change and Sweden will work within these areas.
- MARD has shown interest in following up with SIDA about the roadmap and they will consider modalities to support this. SIDA focus on initiating partnerships between Swedish and Vietnamese partners and an MOU is being developed. Sweden working on linking research institutes (Gov-to Gov and private-public).

Ms Palmberg sincerely hopes that MARD and Sweden can continue cooperation as 'more equal partners' rather to than one of dependency as may have been in the past.

Mr Luong The Phiet, ICD Director

MARD has submitted its application to extend ISG for new phase and so far have received positive support from various ministries. Based on the ISG review the Ministry has

suggested the option 3 that "ISG focus on both high-level policy as well as technical-level consultation"

Claire Allidenes, AUSAID.

Ms Allidenes notes that:

- The proposed modality is a big shift from the current phase and will be a challenge;
- MARD needs to think carefully about timing and preparations of the plan for next phase. Particularly, the internal planning within MARD and how to engage external parties and financial contributors;
- Regarding the governance structure, AusAid supports institutionalising ISG into MARD as soon as possible and believes that this will be appealing to donors. MARD must demonstrate how ISG will fit in with ICD centrally and the international cooperation units in the new directorates of MARD; and
- Overall, planning is requires to develop an understanding how ISG's next phase will fit in with administration of MARD.

Meeting Closure

Vice Minister Bui Ba Bong

Dr Bong, on behalf of Ministry, thanks participants for presence and contribution to success of meeting. He summarises the meeting with the following comments:

- MARD's work plan for ARD sector includes more attention to QUALITY of development. However, this needs to be analysed in more detail. Food safety, protection of climate, quality of forests, farmers livelihood will be core activities in Ministry for coming years and will be integrated into MARD's work plan.
- MARD will focus on SPS issues, and many other issues of production requirements.
- Generally, MARD appreciate the performance of ISG in past and now MARD need to prepare full plan for next 5 years. Today's comments have been useful, but MARD will call on comments in more detail once the work plan is in further development.
- Recommends urgently establishing a working group to develop ISG's 2011-2015 work plan. The working group includes donors, MARD's units and line ministries A good plan will take MARD ISG in the right direction.
- Recommends allocating some of ISG's 2010 budget to prepare for the next phase. MARD wants to continue with donor support in this process.
- Lastly, on behalf of MARD, Dr Bong thanks participants for their wider support for the VN ARD sector.

List of participants

Stt	Name	Position	Agency
1.	Ms. Johanna Palmberg,	First Secretary	Swedish Embassy
2.	Ms. Lan Huong		SIDA
3.	Do Thi Phuong Thao		Danish Embassy
4.	Mr. Atsunori Nishino	Second Secretary	Japanese Embassy
5.	Ms. Claire Alidenes	Senior Program Manager (Cross Sector Support)	Australian Embassy
6.	Jun Saotome		JICA
7.	Taigo Endo		JICA
8.	Mr. Karimata	Dispatched Expert in MARD	JICA
9.	Nguyen The Dung		WorldBank
10.	Pham Minh Uyen	Policy Officer	RNE
11.	Nguyen Ngan Vy		ISGE
12.	Le Van Diem		ISGE
13.	Nguyen Danh Soan		RWWSP
14.	Vice Minister Bui Ba Bong		MARD
15.	Trang Hiếu Dũng	Director	Planning Department
16.	Nguyen Quoc Manh		Department of Crop Production
17.	Hoàng Kim Giao	Cục trưởng	Department of Husbandry
18.	Nguyen Van Ha	Deputy Director	Finance Department

19.	Triệu Văn Hùng	Director	Department of Science, Technology and Environment
20.	Lương Thế Phiệt	Acting Director General	ICD-MARD
21.	Nguyễn Thị Tuyết Hòa	Deputy Director General	ICD-MARD
22.	Nguyễn Vũ Hoan		ICD-MARD
23.	Shannon Bakker		ISG
24.	Dinh Pham Hien		ISG
25.	Hoang Mai Van Anh		ISG
26.	Nguyen Quynh Hoa		ISG