

**STRENGTHENING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL  
MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY OF VIET NAM**

**SEMA PROJECT**



**RESULT ANALYSIS REPORT**

**MAY 1997 - JUNE 2001**

**National Environment Agency  
Hanoi, March 2001**

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## Background

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 1997 the Government of Sweden and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam signed a Specific Agreement on support to "Strengthening of the Environment Management Authority in Vietnam (SEMA) 1997 - 2000". The long-term goal or development objective of the SEMA project is to achieve:

- a) "An established capacity within MoSTE, NEA and DoSTEs to develop and implement policies and strategies and to perform other key functions within their mandate in the context of the National Plan for Environment and Sustainable Development and the Law on Environment Protection."
- b) "A strengthened capacity within the Government of Vietnam to consider environmental implications in responding to anticipated future increases in development investment."

The specific or immediate objectives are:

1. Enhanced capacity of Senior Management of NEA, in particular with relation to international collaboration, policy development and planning.
2. Strengthened institutional capacity of NEA.
3. Well trained environmental officers.
4. An effective national environmental inspection service.

The above objectives are to be reached through the following four crosscutting project components or operational objectives:

- ú Environmental policy and institutional matters. (This component addresses in particular objective 1; it also covers part of objective 2.)
- ú Environmental inspection. (Which covers objective 4.)
- ú Environmental information management. (Which partly addresses objective 2.)
- ú Environmental awareness. (This component also partly addresses objective 2.)

Although the Specific Agreement was signed in May 1997, the implementation of the project got underway only in early 1998 due to the delay in the long-term Technical Advisors assuming their positions. Therefore, effectively the project would have been implemented for less than the originally planned period of 3 years. Fortunately, it was extended by one year beyond 30 June 2000, through a consolidation phase, up to June 2001 that allowed effective completion of project activities and utilisation of project funds.

Over the project period a large number of activities were implemented and the achievements were reported in two semi-annual (1998 & 1999) and three annual progress reports (1998, 1999 & 2000). A mid-term evaluation of the project was not carried out as mutually agreed by the project partners. However, Sida established a Permanent Advisory Group (PAG) to assist them in their follow up of the project and



### **Lack of up-to-date policy framework**

A draft National Conservation Strategy was developed in 1985 but not officially ratified. Although a National Plan for the Environment and Sustainable Development (NPESD 1991-2000) was adopted in 1990, there is no long term policy and strategy for environmental protection and conservation. Thus, the current environmental legislation exists with out an environmental policy framework.

### **Limited institutional capacity**

NEA was founded in 1993 with 11 staff. By 1994 at the beginning of the project's first phase it had grown to 30, and to 45 at the end of phase one. It currently stands at 82 and continues to grow. Several new divisions have been created since its foundation and clearly defined mandates for some are still being crystallised. Many new members have relatively limited "hands-on" experience in environmental management and protection. These factors, coupled with Vietnam's rapidly expanding industrial and agricultural sectors, make strengthening NEA's capacity to meet its mandate a key issue.

### **Poorly defined mandates and weak institutional linkages**

Ministerial Decision 545 that created NEA is clear with respect to NEA's role with regard to pollution control. However NEA's mandate does not include natural resources (land, water and forests) for which the MARD has responsibility. Never the less, NEA has been appointed (Decision 845/Ttg) as the key organisation in implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan. NEA has also been appointed the focal point for co-ordinating the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) in Vietnam. Strong linkages between NEA and other "green" institutions need to be developed.

The National Law on Environmental Protection (detailed under Article 5 of GD 175/CP) states that all ministries and other state organisations must co-operate with MoSTE in carrying out environmental protection within their sectors. In response ectocy standndndndndndnoty

and the DoSTEs are currently without access to environmental management and protection information available world wide on the Internet.

### **Lack of general awareness of environmental issues**

It is generally recognised that there is a low level of environmental awareness in Vietnam and a need to develop this through all levels and facets of society. NEA has a pivotal role in raising the current levels of awareness and education.

## **Project Priorities**

The SEMA project was designed to assist the Government of Vietnam to build the capacity necessary to tackle the above issues effectively. In particular, it identified the following priorities for assistance:

**Help develop the structure of NEA:** The NEA Director-General has indicated that a resident advisor is an important resource for the staff. The advisor will work directly with the Director-General, and help to develop the structure and organisation of NEA.

**Develop comprehensive policy documents and guidelines.** A strategic plan for NEA was, in principle, approved by the Ministry in July 1996. The project will help MoSTE to implement the recommendations of this plan. One of the objectives of the second phase of the project is to help strengthen the inter-divisional relations within NEA, and the links between NEA and its partners in the provinces and line ministries. A national, long-term strategy for conservation will be developed by MoSTE with assistance from the project. The project will also develop policy guidelines on environmental trade, green accounting and biodiversity conservation.

**Enhance the relations between NEA and its partners:** With assistance from the project, NEA is developing a national environmental information system, which will eventually comprise a network of users and co-operating agencies with applications for database, GIS and Internet access. This system will have two main functions. The first is to provide access to environmental information for provincial authorities, line ministries and co-operating institutions. This will include both Vietnamese information (through the NEA database) and international information (through UNEPNET). The second function is to enable NEA to collect data from provinces and co-operating institutions in order to prepare State of the Environment reports and annual environmental plans.

**Develop an environmental inspection service:** NEA has recognised that environmental inspection will rapidly become the key activity for the environmental authorities, both at provincial and national level. Already, each ministry and local authority has a department that is responsible for inspection. In MoSTE the Chief Inspector is responsible for the inspection of all activities related to Science, Technology and Environment and also oversees inspection activities at provincial level, which is the immediate responsibility of the provincial DoSTE. During 1996, it was agreed that the responsibility for environmental inspection should be handed

over to NEA, and a new Division for Environmental Inspection was created in NEA.





development objectives. The indicators shown against each output in the logical framework form the primary basis for evaluating the achievements. The

- ú The project supported the Policy & Legislation Division of NEA to prepare the environmental protection policy and strategy documents for 3 sectors: Energy, Fisheries and Tourism, in partnership with the relevant ministries.
- ú Consultations were also held to scope out issues relevant to the preparation of provincial level environmental protection policies and strategies for the Binh Dinh and Bac Giang Provinces.

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## **Constraints, external factors & recommendations**

- ú Need for expeditious approval of the NSEP and NEAP by the GOV with clear directions to MPI, MoFinance and sectors to adopt recommended measures for effective implementation, including their integration within sector master plans and allocation of required funds from internal and external sources.
- ú There is need for developing more policy/strategy planning capacity at the provincial level, including institutionalising the process for integrating environmental concerns into local socio-economic development strategies and plans.
- ú Success of implementation will also depend on the response of donors in funding the identified priority programmes and activities.

### **1.2 Institutional strengthening**

The project started when NEA was still a very new agency. It has provided critical support for improving the institutional framework in the NEA and at the DoSTEs. The major areas of support have been as follows:

- ú External review of the proposed institutional structure prepared by NEA for its upgradation as a General Department and discussions of the findings in a workshop that lead to specific recommendations for more rigorously defining the roles and functions of different departments and units, and more realistically assessing staffing needs.
- ú Clarified the roles and responsibilities of 3 NEA divisions - inspection, pollution control and EIA that were observed to have some overlapping jurisdictions and functions.
- ú The Policy & Legislation Division of NEA was supported in preparing a Strategic Human Resource Development and staffing plan for the proposed General Department.
- ú A study tour of 12 high level officials, led by the MoSTE Vice-Minister for Environment to Sweden and India in 2000, which yielded valuable lessons on development of environmental institutions in a developed and a developing country context.
- ú Institutional arrangement review of environmental management, inspection and control in the DoSTEs, as well as a detailed review of environmental management and inspection practices in the Ninh Binh and Binh Dinh DoSTEs.

#### **1.2.1 Relevance, effectiveness and impact Human Resource**

proposal has reportedly passed several stages of assessment within the government system and awaits final approval at the highest level.

- ú Lessons learnt from the study tour of high level officials have also been fed into the decision making process of the Government of Vietnam and are expected to substantially influence the shape of the structure that would be finally approved.
- ú The development of a strategic HRD and staffing plan for the new organisation and recommendations for clarified roles and responsibilities of its functional units would have the NEA in readiness to make the necessary re-structuring and fill new staffing positions as soon as approval is accorded to the upgradation proposal.
- ú Similarly, the institutional arrangement review of DoSTEs has yielded valuable recommendations that have been used and would continue to be used in the development of environmental institutions at the provincial level, including capacity development of the staff.
- ú There is greater awareness and appreciation of the developmental needs of environmental organisations from central to the local levels among the senior policy and decision makers in government, and an enhanced capacity within NEA and MoSTE to prepare plans for institutional and organisational development.
- ú These results have contributed to achieving the specific/immediate objective 1 and 2 and development objective (a) and (b).

### **Constraints, external factors & recommendations**

- ú The level of Institutional and organisational changes for the environment at the central and provincial levels will depend upon the nature and timing of the decision to be taken by the GOV and allocation of adequate resources for this purpose.
- ú Some of the functional changes, as recommended in the study of the three NEA divisions and the DoSTE institutional reviews could be implemented without any additional cost through administrative changes, thus, enhancing the efficient and effective functioning of these organisations.
- ú News about the impending upgradation of the environmental institutions has been current for a long time now and an early decision will greatly help in resolving this issue, building confidence in the donor community and targeting development inputs in a more co-ordinated and sustainable manner.

### **1.3 Management capacity**

The improvement of management capacity within NEA and the DoSTEs is further discussed under objectives 2 and 3 below. However, specific areas of support under objective 1 have included development of policy guidelines on environmental law,

environmental trade, environmental economics and biodiversity conservation, as follows:

- ú Review of the environmental legislation resulting inter alia in proposals for amending the civil and criminal codes, and development of a project proposal for separate funding to implement the prioritised recommendations of the review. Report also prepared for quantifying and categorising environmental crimes according to their severity. and ca1-n a3j -39 -13.5 TD ( 357( ) Tr ) Tj 0 (ntal crimes ) Tj 0-14.25

subjects: biodiversity conservation, environmental communications, general environmental engineering, and general environmental science.

### **1.3.1 Relevance, effectiveness and impact**

- ú A new chapter 17 on environmental crimes was included through an amendment to the criminal code in December 1999. The report on quantification of criminal frames seeks to implement the new provisions.
- ú Priorities identified in the BAP review process for enhancing its effectiveness have been integrated into the NSEP and NEAP to ensure their implementation and allocation of resources.
- ú Nominations for Ramsar listing would increase the number of such sites in Vietnam and enable greater international support to wetland conservation.
- ú Project proposal for enhancing the effectiveness of BAP would help in obtaining funds from international sources for implementation of the priorities.
- ú Awareness about trade and environment issues has resulted in a growing use of these concepts by different sectors in Vietnam. It has resulted in a network of experts and improved dialogue between the government and private sector. It also paved the way for approval and implementation of the Trade, Environment & Development Project by UNCTAD (D6 Tw 3ahvird in a netwTc -0.2996 Trojec0 T MoSTE0. e26mproved di7ecembern.33atain.

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- ú The numbers of inspectors at the Central and Provincial levels will have to be increased substantially if they are to be effective.
- ú Recommended regulations for improving inspections are proposed to be issued as a decree only after a decision is made on the proposed upgradation of NEA.
- ú The strategy on chemical safety and control needs to be implemented.

## **2.2 Training and equipment**

Provision of training and equipment to the inspection staff at NEA and at the DoSTEs was seen as one of the most important means of building capacity. The following results were achieved:

- ú Over 100 inspectors from NEA, DoSTEs and line ministries trained through a series of 5 modules of inspection training, comprising a total of 17 one-week courses and 41 themes covering subjects like environmental systems, management, technology, inspection, economics, information management etc. Each module was jointly designed and imparted by Swedish and Vietnamese experts from the Swedish university system, from a Vietnamese local training institution and NEA/MoSTE.
- ú 35 inspectors from MoSTE, NEA and the DoSTEs exposed to international concepts and pra

- ú All training and reference materials used for each of the 5 modules have been compiled, thus, providing resources for training of additional staff with assistance from the local training institution.
- ú With the training of staff from line ministries like MARD, industry, health, public security, defence, justice, trade, customs, land administration and tourism the co-operation and co-ordination between them and the inspection service was established and improved. This co-operation was considered by MoSTE's steering committee as one of the main reasons for the success of the National Survey on Environmental Compliance, 2000.
- ú Overseas experience has contributed in the process of developing an effective inspection service, training, inspection database, chemical safety and control practices, and conducting complicated inspections.
- ú Provision of equipment for field sampling has enabled NEA and the DoSTEs to be more proactive in dealing with environmental complaints and determining potential pollution sources and providing a scientific basis for their work. It has also supported environmental management and monitoring work, and helped to prepare rational strategies for environmental protection at the provincial level.
- ú Based on the support from the project by way of equipment and the provincial monitoring plan the People's Committee of Ba Ria-Vung Tau has approved the proposal to construct an environmental monitoring station at a cost of nearly US \$ 1,30,000, which would be put into operation by the end of 2001.
- ú The awareness of business enterprises of the LEP has been enhanced, which has resulted in a progressive decrease in the number environmental violations by enterprises since 1998. In Binh Dinh the number of enterprises violating the law has come down from 268 in 1998 to 22 in r field sampling has enabled NEA and the DlationDo

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they had the required knowledge of the basic concepts and participated only in the latter courses.

- ú Equipment originally planned to be procured in 1998 could be finally procured and supplied only in mid-2000 because of several administrative constraints. This has in turn impacted upon the timely training of staff and use of equipment during the project period.
- ú Capacity development at 3 centres for repair and calibration of laboratory equipment was not taken up as staff was provided training in their maintenance and it was decided to continue to rely on the available technical service centres for more advanced analytical services.

### **Operational Objective 3**

- ú A handbook on application of GIS for environmental management developed containing comprehensive training materials.

### **3.1.1 Relevance, effectiveness and impact**

- ú Environmental databases available to NEA LAN users as well as to remote users through Internet. Information finds application in various aspects of environmental management and protection activities and in planning and EIA work. Data sheets of good quality are available and the data is being used.
- ú Through the development of a common GIS database standard on environment NEA has successfully established a common technical policy on one of its thematic areas. This has facilitated the process of information sharing among line ministries, branches, institutions and provinces.
- ú GIS databases have facilitated DoSTEs in building their own environmental information system based on GIS technology.
- ú The Ba Ria-Vung Tau province has applied the GIS capability in preparing a master plan for waste management up to 2010 with a focus on wastewater and solid waste.
- ú Handbook used as a technical manual by GIS practitioners and as a training material at provincial level.
- ú These results have contributed to achieving the specific/immediate objective 2 and 3 and development objective (a) and (b).

### **Constraints, external factors & recommendations**

- ú All databases, including GIS databases need to be constantly updated for which dedicated human and financial resources must be made available.

### **3.2 Environmental information network**

NEA and DoSTEs were without access to environmental management and protection information that was available world wide and on the Internet. The project provided this access and achieved the following results:

- ú The database management division of NEA was equipped with IT equipment to expand NEA's LAN. Computers and peripherals were installed in 2 NEA divisions and all divisions networked to access the information on the main server in MoSTE building.
- ú Needs assessment surveys followed the procurement of additional software for the 6 project DoSTEs and 6 PCs for the departments responsible for environmental management in 5 line ministries - ministries of health, industry,

MARD, MPI, and office of government, as well as in MoSTE. This enabled all of them to have access to NEA's server and the Internet.

- ú Training imparted to about 150 staff from NEA, DoSTEs and line ministries through 6 different courses on using LAN, Intranet, Internet, NEA's databases, and on information searching, sharing and management.
- ú A dynamic GIS Website designed and installed on NEA's Website to enable the public to get access to NEA's GIS information through the Internet.
- ú Electronic version of SEMA management information and learning system (MILS) designed and integrated into NEA's LAN for enhanced information sharing, and training in its use imparted to the NEA and DoSTE staff.

### **3.2.1 Relevance, effectiveness and impact**

- ú Hardware, software, networking and training support provided to NEA, DoSTEs and the line ministries has proved invaluable to the staff and greatly facilitated them in their work. There is increased frequency of information sharing and network contact amongst them.
- ú Based on the good results achieved, the government has allocated 7 billion VND to NEA for procurement of equipment to upgrade the environmental information network by the Database Division.
- ú MILS on LAN has facilitated more effective communication and dissemination of project information within the agency.
- ú These results have contributed to achieving the specific/immediate objective 2 and 3 and development objective (a) and (b).

### **Constraints, external factors & recommendations**

- ú Network efficiency is limited by the capacity of equipment. As technology advances and faster and more efficient systems become available, it would be necessary for the NEA and the DoSTEs to upgrade their systems.
- ú There is need for increasing the computer network to enhance the effectiveness and level of information exchange between all DoSTEs and NEA/MoSTE.
- ú While information resources and means to access them can be made available their actual use depends on the motivation and interest of the users.

### **3.3 Environmental information management**

Development of competence in information management was achieved by making an analysis of training needs, designing and conducting training and exposure programmes, and making available necessary facilities and resources as follows:

- ú Two courses conducted for 46 participants from NEA, DoSTEs and line ministries at Hanoi and HCMC with the help of the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) UK, covering basic training on information needs assessment, information management, and accessing environmental information on the Internet.
- ú A three-member team from NEA sent on a 10 day study tour to UK to visit the WCMC and seven other environment information and data base management systems specialising in biodiversity information development and management.
- ú A two week study tour undertaken by 5 officials from NEA and MoSTE to Sweden to study environmental information system development and management practices at the Swedish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Chemical Inspectorate (KemI).
- ú Workshop conducted on the application of remote sensing technology for environmental management in Vietnam.

### **3.3.1 Relevance, effectiveness and impact**

- ú Training has improved the knowledge and skills of the staff in the use of information management for environmental management.
- ú Study tour to UK resulted in the development of a proposal for establishing a national biodiversity information network (ViBINEt) and a Website on Vietnam's biodiversity.
- ú Lessons learnt from study tour to Sweden were applied in the development of the databases on industrial environment and hazardous chemicals databases.
- ú NEA was able to formulate its policies and plans for application of remote sensing technology in environmental activities.
- ú These results have contributed to achieving the specific/immediate objective 2 and 3 and development objective (a) and (b).

### **Constraints, external factors & recommendations**

- ú The ViBINEt and biodiversity Website proposal has not yet successfully attracted donor interest and remains unimplemented.
- ú The English self-access centre was not developed, as learning in a classroom situation was found to be more effective for which excellent facilities exist within Hanoi and are being used regularly.



## **Operational Objective 4**

### **Increased Environmental Awareness**

The sub-objectives under objective 4 are:

- ú A public awareness campaign developed
- ú An increased environmental awareness of decision makers
- ú Foreign language environmental texts translated into Vietnamese
- ú A knowledge of other countries experience in raising environmental awareness
- ú Small scale environmentally related projects undertaken
- ú An enhanced NEA's Newsletter
- ú DoSTEs assisted with World Environment Day Celebrations
- ú An improved VACNE Magazine
- ú Environmental associations assisted

#### **4.1 Environmental awareness**

The results achieved by the project in helping NEA's education and training division to raise the levels of awareness and education in the Vietnamese society have been as follows:

- ú Discussion paper on public environmental awareness strategy produced, based on which a pilot proposal was developed and implemented for a comprehensive public awareness campaign in the Dong Thap Province.
- ú Weekend seminar for decision makers organised with the Vietnam Association of Nature and Environment (VACNE), including Swedish experts and targeting ministers and vice-ministers from line ministries, chairman and vice-chairman from provincial peoples' committees, and directors of DoSTEs.
- ú DoSTEs assisted with the observance of the World Environment Day (WED) and the Clean up the World Day (CWD) annually.
- ú NEA Newsletter/Bulletin upgraded to a monthly Environment Protection Journal (EPJ) and the publications unit of NEA provided with desk top publishing equipment, software and specialised training.
- ú Small-scale environmental awareness activities implemented in all 6-project provinces through voluntary associations and mass movements. Activities included preparing black lists of polluting industries (Thai Nguyen, Ba Ria-Vung Tau), demonstration projects on solid waste management (Ninh Binh, Nghe An), tree planting and ecological garden activities (Nghe An), improving hygiene and health conditions in rural areas (Binh Dinh), and construction of a water purification and supply system (Dong Thap).

- ú A dozen foreign language environmental texts translated into Vietnamese and distributed to DoSTEs, line ministries, universities, libraries, institutions, NGOs and other partners.
- ú Assistance was provided to environmental associations by way of distributing all relevant publications and materials. Special workshop held on environmental issues for journalists and other mass media presenters. Workshop held on the concept and practice of eco-villages with the institute of ecological economy. Workshop on human environment also held.

#### **4.1.1 Relevance, effectiveness and impact**

1. Provincial public awareness campaign in Dong T

- ú For example, the Ministry of Construction has appreciated the water supply scheme in Phung Thinh Commune of Dong Thap and is considering extending such schemes for other provinces in the Mekong Delta. This pilot effort from SEMA has prompted the local government to plan a mobile water treatment plant to be placed on a barge to cover a larger population along the banks of the Mekong River that would be operational in a few months' time.
- ú In Ninh Binh, implementation of the small-scale project on solid waste management has resulted in the Province issuing regulations in 2000 on environmental protection and maintaining a clean and healthy environment.
- ú Workshops on specific topics and publication and distribution of publicity materials have all contributed to the cause of raising public awareness for environmental protection and management.
- ú These results have contributed to achieving the specific/immediate objective 2 and 3 and development objective (a) and (b).

### **Constraints, external factors & recommendations**

- ú Publication of the VACNE's Green Vietnam magazine was discontinued and hence, no assistance was provided.
- ú Overseas study tour to Indonesia was not undertaken to learn from that country's experience of raising environmental awareness.
- ú Project proposal for raising awareness in central government ministries was not developed as several joint activities, including workshops have been held with them, which have been effective in fully involving them in and creating awareness on a range of environmental issues.
- ú Project beneficiaries have recommended that the project should focus more on environmental awareness activities in future.

### **Assessment of capacity building**

All objectives of the project have sought to build capacity for better environmental protection and management and a variety of means was adopted for this purpose. These included training in Vietnam and abroad, study tours, participation in conferences and workshops within and outside Vietnam, development of policy guidelines and other strategic documents, working with international and national experts and consultants, provision of equipment and facilities and the associated training in their use.

A total of 31 training courses were organised to help improve the technical

Parties on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Regional and World Conservation Congresses.

Capacity development through training, study tours and attending conferences and workshops abroad has made an important contribution to broadening the vision of the staff concerned, exposing them to the latest international concepts, technologies and resources. Such exposure has contributed to their professional development, enhanced their skills and level of technical knowledge, which is reflected in their increased efficiency and effectiveness at work.

The participants valued these overseas learning experiences greatly and recommend the need to continue such periodic exposure to latest technologies, concepts and best practice. The staff mention that they feel more confident in submitting proposals and ideas to the higher levels now. Although some of the experiences (from Sweden) may not be currently very relevant in Vietnam, considering its contrasting situation to that of a highly developed country, they do draw attention to the potential possibilities. It has also been observed that there is a need to make the selection process of participants for such overseas trips more objective and transparent.

Details of overseas training, study tours, attendance in conferences and workshops are given in Annex III & IV.

### **Utilisation of advisors and experts**

The project had provision for one environmental policy and institutional expert as a long-term advisor (CTA) for the duration of the project and another expert in waste management and pollution control as a technical advisor (TA) for two years.

Because of delays in the contractual process placement of the two long-term

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provincial environmental authorities will have to develop some in house capacity in this regard and be able to offer such services to other departments also.

The complete list of equipment and other assets procured and supplied under the project is at Annex V.

Capacity strengthening is very difficult to assess, especially in a situation where there is no institutionalised system for performance appraisal within NEA and the DoSTEs. Moreover, as it is a gradual process it takes time for the results to become apparent. Nevertheless, other quantitative and qualitative indicators have been used in this review to assess improvements in the institution's ability to achieve its goals and objectives. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that the quality of environmental management as a whole within the country has been influenced not only by SEMA but also through other bilateral and multilateral aid projects, both at the Centre and in the provinces.

The professional knowledge and competence of the environmental staff has been undoubtedly improved discernibly and the government now relies on NEA as the focal point for solutions to environmental problems, as opposed to approaching individual centres and institutions previously. This is reflected not only by the greater degree of confidence reposed in the organisation but also by the greater degree of confidence and ability with which the individuals within the organisation handle their responsibilities, as well as in the quality of their work output. The government has also stepped up its budgetary support to NEA from 20 billion VND in 1997 to 48 billion VND in 2000, which was doubled to 100 billion VND in 2001, including for support activities to the provinces and line ministries.

## **Gender balance**

Gender concerns were taken into cognisance in the various training programmes and other project activities to ensure that at least the existing patterns of the beneficiary organisations were well reflected. Gender considerations also came into play in the award of contracts for various studies and consultancies. Some activities like the small-scale projects on awareness generation were awarded exclusively to the Union of Women. Gender related information also formed important contextual information in the development of the NSEP and the NEAP.

## **Organisation and management**

This was the first major project to be nationally executed by NEA. Consequently, a lot of time was taken up initially for establishing proper working procedures and protocols, which was to be expected. This initial delay was responsible for the slow pace of project implementation in 1997 and 1998. The delay in negotiating and concluding the contract with IUCN for consulting services caused delay in the recruitment and placement of the long-term advisors, which in turn, delayed project planning and implementation.

The integration of SEMA within NEA has often been commented upon and the Organisational Study of 1999 observed that it was insufficiently integrated within the NEA divisions. The situation has been carefully analysed and it is revealed that such impressions and assessments are based on an incomplete appreciation and understanding of the functioning of SEMA within NEA.

The project activities are all part of NEA's mandate and priorities and are included within NEA's annual work programme. Each division concerned plans and implements the activities that relate to their divisions with guidance and support from the PMU. The progress of implementing SEMA activities is reviewed as part of NEA's weekly review of its work and relevant information is also shared among all units.

The existence of separate accounting and procurement procedures from NEA has also been mentioned as displaying lack of integration. This is inevitable, given the fact that government procedures are different from those that may be acceptable to Sida. However, the project accountant reports the accounts to the NEA accountant on a half-yearly basis, as required by government regulations and procurement of inspection equipment was done by the Administration Division of NEA.

It is noteworthy that while responding to the project review questionnaire all NEA divisions and the six project DoSTEs have specifically recommended that the responsibility for management should not be assigned to any particular division within NEA and that it should continue to be managed by the PMU.

The shortage of staff within NEA is also said to have limited the capacity building effort as more and more demands are being made on limited number of staff to implement various activities. The original proposed staff strength for NEA was about 150, against which they currently have 61 and some contract staff. Not only does NEA have its own annual work programme, but it has to implement activities under several projects<sup>1</sup> as well. However, as mentioned earlier, the various project activities are planned in advance and in concert with the planning of NEA's annual work programme. Nevertheless, care needs to be taken to ensure that the various project activities are mutually exclusive and do not make additional demands on limited staff time.

IUCN had the responsibility for providing overall technical assistance to the project. In addition to providing the two long-term advisors, it was responsible for short-term experts, planning, financial management, training, monitoring and procurement activities. The organisation has effectively used its experience and its regional and global networks in discharging its responsibilities of providing the most appropriate technical support and services to the project.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, in addition to SEMA, there is the VCEP II project of CIDA, the ICZM project funded by the Dutch, the World Bank project on Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Environmental Information Management, and a Spanish project on Biodiversity Conservation Awareness with IUCN.



SEPA was mainly responsible for co-ordinating all Swedish inputs, including providing short-term experts in specified areas, training and institutional arrangements for inspection, and study tours in Sweden. It has provided very valuable support to NEA and the DoSTEs, particularly in the development of the

It can be seen from these figures that:

- ú The rate of utilisation of funds has been very good (Figure 1).
- ú There is a steady increase in the rate of utilisation of funds, after the initial teething troubles had been sorted out (Figure 2).
- ú The figures for 1997 and 2001 represent expenditure only for 6 months each.
- ú The almost complete utilisation of project funds was made possible by the extension of the project by one year, beyond June 2000 through the consolidation phase.

The expenditure against the major components of the budget is as follows:

<b>Component</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>% Total Budget</b>
Policy & Institutional Matters	7,191,850 SEK	27.79
Environmental Inspection + TA	6,954,670 SEK	21.07
Information management	2,693,240 SEK	8.16
Environmental Awareness	1,451,810 SEK	4.39
Contingencies	114,030 SEK	0.34
Office Operations +CTA	5,985,820 SEK	18.13
Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation	216,250 SEK	0.65
IUCN Back up & Overhead Costs	1,619,990 SEK	4.90
SEPA Local Office Support	139,870 SEK	0.42
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,367,530 SEK</b>	<b>85.85</b>

The above figures reveal that:

- ú The priority established for the different components in the inception report has been maintained, as is evident from the relative levels of expenditure (Figure 3).
- ú The slightly higher level of expenditure against the policy and institutional matters component was due to the additional responsibility that was assigned for finalising the national environmental protection strategy and the national environmental action plan through an extensive public consultation process.

The expenditure towards the major forms of capacity building activities is as follows:

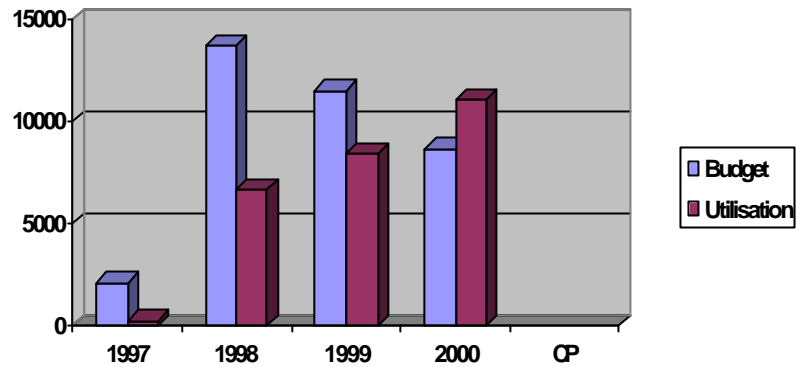
In terms of cost-effectiveness the following points are noteworthy:

- ú An important assumption in considering the cost effectiveness of capacity building activities like training and study tours is that the right candidates were selected and trained.
- ú All activities were implemented in accordance with established cost-norms and with minimal and only the most appropriate inputs.
- ú The results of each objective, as analysed in the previous sections, are wholly consistent with the total expenditure incurred.
- ú The use of international long-term advisors for more technical and less administrative work would have made these positions more cost effective.
- ú Timely procurement of inspection equipment would have ensured their use over a longer time period during the currency of the project, thus enabling a proper assessment of cost effectiveness.

The expenditure by partners is as follows:

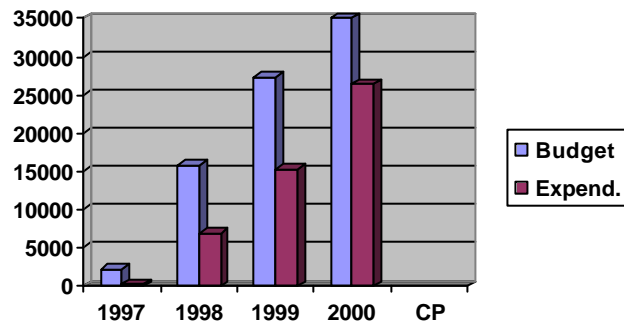
<b>Partner</b>	<b>1997 - 2001 Expenditure</b>	<b>% Total Budget</b>
NEA	18,136,244 SEK	55%
IUCN	9,786,610 SEK	30%
SEPA	3,523,210 SEK	11%
<b>Total 1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>%</b>

**Figure 1: Year-wise budget and utilisation (value in 000 SEK)**

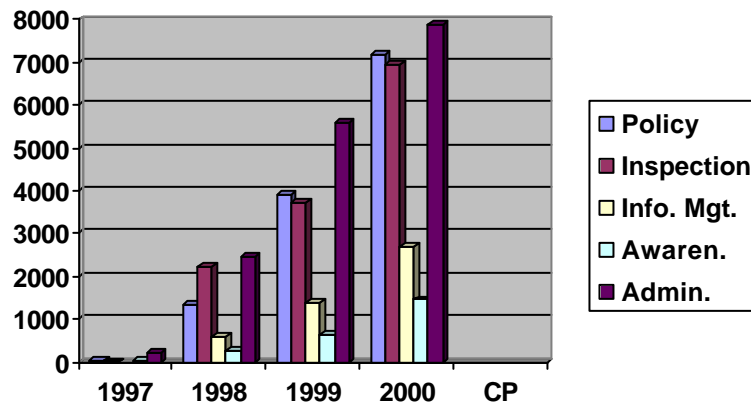


Note: Utilisation exceeds budget in 2000 as it also includes expenditure of 1999 that was charged in 2000

**Figure 2: Progressive total of budget and utilisation (value in 000 SEK)**



**Figure 3: Component-wise progressive expenditure (value in 000 SEK)**



## Conclusions and Directions for Future

### Conclusions

The project sought to overcome the following main constraints of the environmental agencies and institutions:

Lack of up-to-date policy framework; Limited institutional capacity; Poorly defined mandates and weak institutional linkages; Poorly defined information management systems; and Lack of general awareness of environmental issues.

It attempted to do this by:

Helping NEA to develop its institutional structure; Developing comprehensive policy documents and guidelines; Enhancing relations between NEA and its partners; Developing an environmental inspection service; and Building the human resources for environmental protection.

The analysis of results has clearly demonstrated that the project has been successful in achieving the stated priorities. In summary, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- ú The institutional structure of NEA has been further developed, with clarified roles and responsibilities of various divisions and a proposal has been prepared for the changes that are likely to take place in the near future. Similar institutional reviews with recommendations have been undertaken for the inspection and management divisions of the DoSTEs.
- ú Long-term (up to 2010) environmental strategy and medium-term (up to 2005) action plan have been prepared and submitted for government approval. Their integration with the national socio-economic development plan and the sector plans has already begun. Policy guidelines have been established for chemical safety, biodiversity conservation, trade and environment, economic instruments, strengthening environmental law etc. The capacity of the senior management of NEA in policy development was amply demonstrated through its able leadership in developing these strategic documents.
- ú Inter-sectoral consultation has been greatly enhanced through a variety of means. The linking of the departments responsible for environment in six line ministries with NEA has enabled regular information sharing and network contact. Organisation of joint workshops and establishing working groups representing all the relevant stakeholders has enabled a high level of consultative process in all aspects of environmental policy and programme development. The tertiary education system has also been involved with the joint development and use of curricula and teaching materials on the environment. Relations with the donor and international NGO community was improved and formalised with the finalisation of the ESG and associated partnerships.

- ú The inspection service at the central and local levels has been enabled to play a more proactive, professional and effective role and a strategic plan has also been prepared for this purpose. Additional legal instruments have been proposed to support environmental inspections and a handbook was developed to guide the inspectors in their functions. Knowledge and competence has been enhanced through targeted training spread over 3 years and crucial equipment supplied to improve performance and effectiveness.
- ú Human resources have been developed through a variety of means, including in-country and overseas training, study tours, participation in workshops and conferences, executing special assignments jointly with international and local experts, providing access to latest information and technology etc., covering various aspects of environmental protection and management. This has equipped the staff to develop and implement policies and strategies and to perform other key mandated functions with greater confidence and effectiveness. Some the HRD and awareness generation activities covered not only the staff but also decision makers, representatives of counterpart organisations, environmental associations and community groups etc., thus eliciting their support and participation in the environmental protection effort.

Therefore, the project has been able to institute a capacity within MoSTE, NEA and DoSTEs to develop and implement policies and strategies and to perform other key functions within their mandate in the context of the National Plan for Environment and Sustainable Development and the Law on Environment Protection. Consequently, a strengthened capacity is evident within the Government of Vietnam to consider environmental implications in responding to anticipated future increases in development investment.

## **Lessons Learned & Recommendations**

A number of important lessons and recommendations can be drawn from the implementation of the SEMA project. Recommendations specific to individual objectives and sub-objectives have already been highlighted in the result analysis section. The generic programme level recommendations are as follows:

- ú SEMA was the first nationally executed project on environment, whose implementation responsibility was assigned to a relatively young agency. Capacity building on national execution should have preceded project implementation, or at least included as a project activity. Initial delays and setbacks were eventually resolved as all partners concerned gained experience through implementation. Therefore, having now gained sufficient experience any future co-operation agreement with NEA should continue to be nationally executed.
- ú The observed lack of integration of the project within NEA is closely linked to the above issue. Perhaps due to past experience with donor executed projects, the officials were conditioned to view SEMA also in the same light. Having had no

inputs on the modalities of national execution it was left to "learning-through-implementation" to resolve this problem, which ultimately took time to realise and institutionalise.

- ú Staff capacity was, at times, stretched in implementing project activities. There is need for a better assessment of the absorptive capacity of the staff while planning project activities, both at the Centre and in the provinces. In other words, needs should be better co-related to practical feasibility. As far as possible inputs under different donor funded projects should be mutually exclusive and be





## **ANNEXES**

- I      Financial Situation**
- II     Training in Vietnam**
- III    Training Abroad**
- IV    Study Tours**
- V**