

Sustainable Development in Vietnam: Environment Sustainable Indicators in Vietnam

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Vietnam's sustainable development planning network has been established and carried out an intensive program of studies. The main focus of the work was a critical analysis of the institutional and procedural framework for developing, planning, and environment protection in the country. The network explored strengths and weaknesses of the current system in meeting sustainable development objectives.

In this paper I would like to introduce issues of sustainable development such as:

- Governance and institutional reform for sustainable development
- Sustainable development mechanisms
- Simple sustainable development for Vietnam.

1. Governance and institutional reform for sustainable development

Sustainable development associated with governance and institutional reform are discussed like building law, policies, establishing environment protection institutions at national and provincial level.

- *Role of National assembly strengthened.*
- *Law for environment protection and sustainable resource introduced.*

These are some key laws since 1992, moving Vietnam toward sustainable development:

1994 Law on Environment Protection;

1993 Land law introducing long-term individual and community rights over agricultural and forest land;

1996 Civil Code which regulates the relationship between the main groupings within society. It creates the right, for example to organize unions,

1996 Labor law,

1996 Mineral law;

1998 Water Resource law;

The legislative framework for sustainable development is steadily being put in to place concerning with basic environment protection and land use law, water law. However, the implementation of these laws has slowed progress because the slow development of regulations and operational procedures supporting new laws has impeded progress in

implementation. The separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judiciary bodies is not well defined – each is not fully independent of the other.

- **Global integration:** Vietnam has increased participation in international environment forums and in environment agreements. Since 1994, Vietnam has become party to major global environment conventions including:

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild Fauna and flora (1994)

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1994)

Vienna Convention for Protection of the Ozone Layer (1994)

Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1994)

Basel Convention on Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (1995)

United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (1994)

The coordination in implementation of international agreements has been limited.

- One of important issue of **Administrative reform** is environment protection institutions were established. These institutions operate effectively and well resource at all levels of government and within all sectors. In 1992, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment was established with National Environment Agency, operating within it. The establishment of a separated Environment Ministry is under consideration. At local level, from 1995, environment management divisions were set up in every DOSTE through out the country.

Vietnam has good progress within the environment field. Important innovation has also begun at the top with an expanded role for the National Assembly in debating and passing legislation. In general, institutions have been slow in fully understanding and acting on their responsibilities in implementing the government's policies.

2. Sustainable development mechanisms

These records display an impressive performance within the environment sector in introducing the key produces for integrating environment with investment such as a system of EIA for new development and monitoring and reporting on environmental quality.

- **Development planning:** In the process of turning the country 's economy in to multi – sectoral market economy with government regulation, the mechanisms for development planning are being reformed in five important ways: broader coverage, greater flexibility, more cross linkage, management decentralization, regional planning.

One very important legislative innovation was the provision in the 1994 Environment Law for the preparation of “regional environment plans”. However, many obstacles to sustainable development remain in development planning process like lack of planning legislation and regulatory framework, lack of detailed administrative procedures.

- **Environment strategies:** Five national environmental strategies prepared in past 10 years. In 1986, National Conservation Strategy was prepared, five years later, in 1991 with the adoption of ten years National Environment Plan for sustainable Development. Other four

years on and two plans were prepared – the national Environment Action Plan and Biodiversity action Plan. Currently, MOSTE is preparing a second ten years National Strategy on Environment Protection. In fact, Environment strategies lack cross-sectoral support and not integrated in to socio – economic plan.

- **Environmental assessment:** About legal framework for EIA, after EPL came in to force providing the legislative umbrella for EIA. A series of Degrees and Circulars have now been issues filling out the system with regulations and guidelines for the preparation and appraisal of EIA reports. Numbers of EIA reports are increasing significantly. 330 large projects have been reviewed in five years since 1994. One of the most important but difficult steps is in expanding the sense of responsibility for EIA implementation from the environment agencies to other arms of government. NEA is now making sound progress on this front with the drafting of nine sector guidelines; hydropower, thermopower, mining, beer production, industrial zones, cement plants, textiles, highway, and urban development. EIA skill staffs are increasing significantly. System of environmental standards was introduced. Since 1995, MOSTE has issued 97 national environmental standards relating to air, water, and land pollutants (Decision 2920/QD-MTg). Although EIA works has made progress, sectors reluctant to comply with EIA regulation, Provinces not fully committed, Cooperation lacking on EIA of master plans, quality control lacking.

- **Environmental monitoring and reporting:**

Regular state of environment reports is prepared. First state of environment report was prepared in 1994, and since then one has been submitted to National Assembly each years. Each provincial DOSTE prepares similar environmental issues and recommended general strategies.

Network of monitoring stations established. The Vietnam government is committed to setting up a national monitoring program with decentralized centers and has directed a number of international projects to support this priority. To 2001, MOSTE had build 20 monitoring station in different localities to provide data for the SOER process.

In fact, SOER have little impact on development. Each SOER is different. There is no consistent format or linkage from one year to the next. Participation of sector and local authorities in formulation of SOER is still weak. SOER information neither put to practical use nor shared between sector at both central and local levels. Information on environmental quality and the status of natural resources is unreliable.

3. The simple Vietnam national sustainable development index – an initial framework

Every sector and level of government needs to develop a set of sustainable development indicators, which best suit the special nature of their activities, the resources they use and the areas where they have an impact. Those indicators will form the basis for setting annual and longer term planning priorities, and for monitoring progress in addressing them. They would provide a consistent framework for government to assess the sustainable development performance of its various arms and guide to allocating the budget to those areas of greatest achievement or which show greatest provide.

Vietnam sustainable development index covers three components of sustainable development – the *economic, social and biophysical environment*. Indicator fields are selected to present

sustainable development performance in each component. Several sustainable development indicators are subjected for each field.

In this paper, I would like to mention in all fields but biophysical environment development in detail.

- **Economic development: sustainable development indicators include:**

Increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. This is a key measures of the economic aspects of sustainable development.

Economic policies and instruments becomes a principle force in implementing sustainable development and environment protection objectives. It is two indicators. One relates to building environmental factors into all economic policy, the other to using various economic intensive mechanisms to achieve environment protection and objectives.

Expenditure on environmental protection increases as percentage of GDP. This indicator reflects the efforts undertaken by Vietnam to protect and restore the environment.

Disbursement of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to sustainable development

- **Social development: sustainable development indicators include:**

Population growth rate. This indicator measure how fast the size of population is changing?

The proportion of the population with a standard of living below the poverty line.

Adult literacy rate. A response indicator, which could be used is GDP spent on education.

Life expectancy at birth;

Human and economic loss due to natural disasters;

Governance and institutions: sustainable development indicators include:

Increasing authority and democratic working of the National Assembly

Active involvement and commitment to intentional environment agreements and forums

An increasingly open, honest and competent administrative system

Environment protection institutions are established, operating effectively and well resource at all levels of government and within all sectors.

Sustainable development mechanisms: This measure would need to be advised that show the level of performance in applying SD mechanisms to all decision making.

Human settlements: this fill out a picture on sustainability of urban centers. Sustainable development indicator is *waste recycling and reuse.*

- **Biophysical environment development:** Five indicator fields have been selected as representative of sustainable development performance relating to the biophysical environment in Vietnam: forests, water resources, energy, fisheries and Biodiversity resources.

Forests indicator: Increase in total coverage, density and quality of forest. A number of measures are required for this indicator.

Water: three indicators are selected to reflect the status, accessibility and use or misuse of water resources. Sustainable development indicators include:

Annual withdrawal of ground and surface water. This provides a measure of total water extracted for various uses as percentage of the total average available volume of fresh water.

Access to safe drinking water. This reflects the quality of water resources.

Waste water treatment. This indicator provides a sense of progress in integrated water resources management.

Energy: The long-term sustainable development goal of Vietnam' energy policies is for development and prosperity to continue through gains in energy efficiency rather than increased production. The three indicators suggested here relate to energy conservation, use of renewable resources and total consumption over time. Sustainable indicators include:

Annual energy consumption per capita;

Expenditure on energy conservation as proportion of GDP;

Energy consumption from renewable sources as a percentage of total energy consumption;

Biodiversity: There is three kind of Biodiversity: species, ecosystem, genes. Sustainable indicators include:

Threatened species as a percentage of total native species.

Protected areas as a percentage of total land and sea area.

Number of protected area management plans, staff and size of budget

Fisheries: It is an expression of the state of fishery resource exploitation to its sustainable size. Sustainable indicator is maximum sustained yield.

Reaching agreement on a basket of practical indicators for the economic, social and biophysical environment that can reflect progress in sustainable development of the country would be a relatively straightforward matter. The next step is much more difficult. Should a formula be devised for aggregating them into one index of sustainability, and if so how should this be done?

Conclusion: Development in Vietnam involves maintaining and improving the well being of ecosystems and people. The indicators should be simple and measurable. And each government sector should be supported in expending their current indicators of process to cover more fully all aspects of their sustainable development performance. Development needs to be a continuing process of listening, learning and responding to its affects on the economic, social and biophysical environment.