

# **Evaluation with recommendations on exit strategy**

**For**

**Civil Action for Socio-economic Inclusion III**

**(CASI III) Programme Vietnam**

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<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>	
ADC	Agriculture Development Centre
CASI	Civil Action for Socio-economic Inclusion
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CECODES	Centre for Community Support Development Studies
CEMA	Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs
CIRUM	Culture Identity and Use Management
CISU	Civil Society in Development
CIVICUS	World Alliance for Citizens Participation
CSO	Civil society organisation
DAC	Development Action Committee
DKK	Denmark Kroner
DMHCC	Department of Metrology, Hydrology and Climate Change
EM	Ethnic Minority
EMWG	Ethnic Minority Working Group
EU	European Union
ICCO	Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
ISEE	Institute for Studies of Society
LandNet	Land Right Network
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay Bi-Sexual and Transgendered
LISO	Livelihood Sovereignty Alliance
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid Term Review
OD	Organisation Development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PPWG	People Participation Working Group
SRD	Sustainable Rural Development
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollars
VCCI	Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry
VNGO	Vietnamese non-governmental organisation
VTV	Vietnam Television
VUFO	Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations
VUSTA	Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Association

## 1 Summary

The evaluation was undertaken on the background of a fast shifting context in Vietnam. The report outline these shifts in respect of the socio-economic situation for ethnic minorities, government policy related to ethnic minorities, trends in civil society and the funding situation for Vietnamese civil society organisations.

Vietnam has during the last two decades seen a rapid decline in overall poverty. Based on the official “basic needs” poverty line, the number of poor fell from 58 per cent in 1990 to 14.5 per cent in 2008. The overall level in poverty reduction is however not reflected in the situation for ethnic minorities. Vietnam’s ethnic minorities makes up less than 15 per cent of the population yet they accounted for 66.3 per cent of the poor in 2010. It is acknowledged that the remaining poor are hard to reach, and face a number of combined challenges. There is an increasing recognition in Vietnam that previous approaches to poverty reduction are not sufficient for targeting this group. The Vietnamese government acknowledge that there is a need for more cultural sensitive approaches, and that experiences from VNGOs are relevant, and that some of the methods should be applied within government programmes. This provides important opportunities for NGO advocacy work.

While the formal legal framework governing the civil society sector remains unchanged, there is consensus amongst stakeholders that the space for civil society activities has broadened during the past 20 years. An important recent trend amongst VNGOs is that they increasingly engage in networks and coalitions when engaging in advocacy. Most advocacy work still occur in invited space, but an increasing number of NGOs are engaged with own advocacy agendas.

VNGOs have primarily been funded by bilateral donors and INGOs. These funding sources has already dwindled and it is foreseen that this trend will continue in the coming years. It is anticipated that some funding will remain at least in the medium term. Corporate philanthropy is fairly common and has been mentioned as a potential alternative. Corporate funding is however confined to support of people in need, disaster relief and poverty reduction. The support is however un-strategic and scarcely targeting NGOs. Trust in NGOs are relatively low amongst corporate philanthropists. Government funding is for legal reasons not possible. Based on this the most likely source for CASI partners in the foreseeable future is the shrinking international development assistance.

The 2012 Midt Term Review lead to a major redesign of CASI III. The redesign provides a focused and consistent programme strategy in support of ethnic minority civil society development, with a particular focus on ethnic minority self-articulation and voices. The strategy represents a major shift from an initiative driven to an organisational focus. The strategy has been implemented in a consistent yet responsive manner by the programme management, and most CASI partners. The strategy has proven to be relevant and consistent and with a high level of realism.

CASI has provided tailor made capacity building support for partners. The quality and relevance of the capacity building is with a few exceptions rated high by partners. The small grant support mechanism implemented as part of the programme is rated high by partners. The support mechanism combines small grants with capacity building. Even though the small grant mechanism is relevant, there is a need to strengthen the strategic relevance in relation to the CASI objectives of the intervention.

The evaluation has identifying outcome and potential impacts in relation to the three result areas of the programme. The conclusions on outcome or likely impact are:

Result area 1: Partner VNGOs gain influence and recognition as effective and legitimate change agents for rights-based ethnic minority inclusion in line with their strategic plans and mandates.

There are clear examples of outcome and likely impact, where CASI has significantly contributed to the achievements. In a number of instances the achievements can directly be attributed to the CASI programme interventions.

Result area 2: Ethnic minority-led civil society groups and ethnic minority leaders' networks are empowered to systematically feed information into decision-making processes at different levels and benefit from programme-wide learning through enhanced links and networking with other civil society actors.

The focus on ethnic minority led civil society organisations and ethnic minority leaders' network was included as a result area in 2013 and it is thus too early to observe substantial outcome. Important initiatives have been supported by CASI, including the formation of the Ethnic Minority Leader/Pioneer Network, The Land Net and more recently the Ethnic Minority Youth Network. Further important initiatives on involving ethnic minority CBOs in informing/influencing local decision making processes have been taken. All the initiatives are still work in progress, and results are emerging. Besides some limited examples of ethnic minority involvement in local forest land processes, there are no significant outcome, let alone impact level results. The main challenges are however, not weak performance, but rather an unrealistic level of ambition for a three-year intervention.

Result area 3: Policy-makers, planners and other key stakeholders increasingly get timely access to accurate, relevant and peer-reviewed evidence on key issues that can improve development effectiveness for CASI target groups.

There are clear examples of outcome and likely impact, where CASI has significantly contributed to the achievements. In a number of instances the achievements can directly be attributed to the CASI programme interventions.

CARE Denmark has developed Value For Money Framework providing guidance on cost effective programme design and development. The CASI programme is in line with the Framework. The relevance and cost effectiveness of the CASI III is assessed to be relatively high.

The analysis and recommendations on the exit strategy (CASI IV, 2015 – 2017) is based on the findings from the evaluation as well as strategic dialogue with CASI staff and CASI partners. The findings and recommendations are provided at a programme level as well as a partner level.

The overall objective and the existing results areas are assessed to be relevant for the exit period with some modifications. The main modification to the results areas is that sustainability at an organisational/partner and institutional level should be emphasises.

Based on the assessment from existing CASI partners it is recommended that exit strategy shall not work on sustaining CASI as a shared platform.

The likely overall decline in funding provides the main challenge for partner sustainability. The exit strategy shall focus on strengthening partners in position themselves as relevant organisations able to attract funding from the traditional funding sources. The sustainability of the yet weak ethnic minority networks is a particular challenge, and full organisational sustainability is not anticipated to be reached during the exit period. The networks will remain dependent on support of strong and compassionate NGOs.

Another exit strategy challenge to be addressed by the exit strategy is the ability of CASI partners to set and influence agendas with governments in relation to ethnic minorities without the backing from CASI/CARE. The emphasis on support for Vietnamese networks as lasting entities shall be continued and is seen as an important resources and brokers of contacts for CASI partners to policy processes.

The CASI small grant support shall be continued but with a more strategic focus. Further the organisational set-up and the potentials for sustainability of a funding and capacity building mechanism shall be investigated as part of the preparation of CASI IV.

The main task of the CASI staff shall be to secure that the programme remain strategic with a strong focus on securing CASI partners sustainability. Tailor made exit strategies shall be agreed with each partner. Recurrent strategic dialogue on progress shall be undertaken, with a focus on organisational and sustainability issues.

CASI should continue to provide capacity building support and serve as a broker of contacts with policy processes. However CASI should as part of the exit phase work on finding ways and means of securing the sustainability of these functions by working with strengthening the local capacity and transfer important functions to sustainable Vietnamese structures.

In order to maximise the use of resources it is recommended to focus the programme by reducing the number of partners in the exit phase. This has been done based on a set of criteria relating to; relevance of the organisations for CASI objectives, track record with CASI, short and medium term economic viability and the availability of clear exit strategies.

Based on an assessment of the individual partners it is recommended that CIRUM, ISEE and ADC shall remain part of the CASI for the entire exit period. SRD shall be supported during a fast exit of six month and VUSTA shall be discontinued as partner, but with potential for future collaboration.

Suggested focus of the exit strategy and overall level of support is provided for the individual partners.

## 2 Introduction

This report represents the findings of the CASI evaluation undertaken in August 2015 by two external consultants, Flemming Gjedde-Nielsen, team leader, Networking Consultants, and Phạm Thị Thùy Chi IRC Consultants.

The findings are based on a two weeks study period in Vietnam which included interviews with all CASI partners, CARE staff and major stakeholders including civil society networks, development partners and INGOs and CEMA. A short field visit with meetings with local CASI stakeholders was undertaken. The findings from the End-line Surveys and Impact studies undertaken by IRC prior to the start of the mission have proven to be indispensable as a basis for the evaluation. Without these studies it would have been impossible to cover as much ground as has been the case. The team would like to comment CARE for the well planned evaluation process, and for supporting the team in an effective and flexible way. A special thank should go to all persons interviewed, and not least to the CASI partners who spent hours engaged in open critical dialogue with the consultancy team. We sincerely hope that the evaluation process and the final report will be of assistance in securing a successful CASI exit and a continuation of the good work of the CASI partners beyond CASI support.

The responsibility for the content and presentation of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation rests with the evaluation team. Findings and recommendations expressed in the evaluation report do not necessarily correspond to the views of CARE, CASI partners or other stakeholders.

## 3 CASI III Programme Context

The assessment of the CASI Programme and the recommendations on an exit strategy has been undertaken based on an assessment of the potentials and challenges provided by the Vietnamese context with a particular focus on issues related to ethnic minorities and the space and potential role of civil society in the Vietnamese context. The envisaged shift in donor funding for Vietnam has been of particular importance to the recommendations on the exit strategy.

The subsequent sections will provide a short background on recent trends in the context related to the CASI programme focus on ethnic minorities and civil society, including ethnic minority led civil society. The aim of this section is dual, on the one hand it shall provide a contextual basis for assessing the CASI performance, and on the other hand it shall provide an informed basis for a contextually relevant and feasible exit strategy for the CASI programme.

The analysis is based on interviews undertaken by the evaluation team as well as reading a limited number of studies on recent development in Vietnam.

### 3.1 Ethnic minorities: The socio economic situation and government policies

Vietnam has during the past two decades witnessed a remarkable level of progress in poverty reduction. Using a “basic needs” poverty line agreed in the early 1990ies, the poverty headcounts fell from 58 per cent in 1990 to 14.5 per cent by 2008. This figure is estimated by the World Bank to be less than 10 per cent by

2010. The “basic needs” poverty line is somewhat lower than the international standards of USD 1.25 and USD 2.00, but even when using these standards the level of poverty reduction is truly remarkable<sup>1</sup>.

Vietnam’s success has revealed new challenges. The World Bank 2012 poverty survey concluded that: The remaining poor are hard to reach; they face difficult challenges – of isolation, limited assets, low level of education, poor health status – and poverty reduction has become less responsive to economic growth. Ethnic minority poverty is a persistent challenge. Although Vietnam’s 53 ethnic minorities make up less than 15 per cent of the population, they accounted for 47 per cent of the poor in 2010, compared to 29 per cent in 1998. Using an updated poverty line that reflects living conditions in 2010, 66.3 per cent of minorities are poor compared to only 12.9 per cent of the Kinh majority population.<sup>2</sup> Poverty is geographically concentrated to the North East and North West Mountains of Vietnam, identical to the target areas for most of CASI interventions.

Even though the poverty is concentrated amongst the ethnic minorities, this group is in no way homogenous. In recent years significant progress has been made amongst a number of ethnic minority groups. According to a research undertaken for the EU on the development during 2007-2012, based on official data from the Programme 135, the H’Mong and BaNa groups have experienced more than 20 percentage points poverty reduction in this period, well above the Kinh ethnic majority. In the other end of the spectrum, the Muong, Dao and Cu Tu experienced less than the national average decline in poverty of 6-10 per cent<sup>3</sup>.

The disadvantaged situation for ethnic minority groups is complex and includes economic as well as non-economic factors such as school enrolment, literacy, access to drinking water, improved toilet facilities, etc. The general pattern remains that ethnic minority groups continue to be marginalised on almost all social parameters.

There is an increasing realisation in the Vietnamese government and amongst development partners that previous approaches to poverty reduction are not sufficient for targeting the hard to reach excluded parts of the population. The above mentioned EU commissioned study outlines a number of policy challenges identified by the government of Vietnam, including:

- Overlap and fragmentation of policies directed at poverty reduction. There are 78 different policies and programmes on poverty reduction and all of these put an emphasis on ethnic minorities. This situation has led to overlap, fragmentation and lack of coordination of government interventions.
- Under-resourced programmes: Existing policies and programmes represent a long ‘wish list’, but almost all of them are seriously under-resourced. For instance one of the major poverty reduction programmes P30a has only received 10-15 per cent of expected financial resources.
- Overconcentration of financial resources on infrastructure development. It is assessed that as much as 90 per cent of existing policy programmes on poverty reduction for ethnic minorities is allocated

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, Well Begun, Not Yet Done: Vietnam’s Remarkable Progress on Poverty Reduction and the Emerging Challenges, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, Well Begun, Not Yet Done: Vietnam’s Remarkable Progress on Poverty Reduction and the Emerging Challenges, 2012. P 2

<sup>3</sup> EU Bluebook 2014 for Vietnam, draft version prepared by Dr. Pham Thai Hung, IRC, p 1.

to infrastructure. This might have been relevant in the past, but the dramatic improvements in infrastructure do not render such a strategy relevant in the future.

- Existing poverty reduction programmes appears to be a “one-size-fit-all” approach lacking responsiveness to different cultural and socio-economic conditions of ethnic minority groups located in very different and diverse areas of Vietnam.<sup>4</sup>

Most of these challenges are similar to what came out of previous policy reviews, such as the Mid Term Review of the CEMA (Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs) implemented P-135 in 2009. It is however, a major shift that CEMA acknowledges that fundamental shifts in approaches are needed and has embarked on a process of reviewing and rethinking its approaches to poverty reduction amongst ethnic minorities.

The review includes a broad number of issues; amongst these are institutional issues, including the role of CEMA, policy issues including the scope of future poverty reduction initiatives and methodological issues, aiming at a more cultural sensitive approach in the government programmes.

There is an acknowledgement in CEMA, of the need for seeing ethnic minorities as agents in own development rather than as in the past passive targets of government initiated and directed top down poverty reduction interventions. It is acknowledged that such a shift requires a shift in methods and approaches applied within government programmes.

Further, CEMA now acknowledges that some of the experiences from participatory development approaches applied within VNGOs interventions are very relevant and should be applied within government programmes<sup>5</sup>. CEMA has in recent years developed a close working relationship with the VUFO Ethnic Minority Working Group (EMWG) on policy and methodological development. This openness and willingness towards cooperation with VNGOs, INGOs and UN agencies were recognised by all stakeholders interviewed<sup>6</sup>.

This situation provides a unique opportunity for VNGOs for influencing government policies and approaches in respect of ethnic minorities. CASI partner organisations have already been able to utilise this opportunity. This is further elaborated in section 4.1 of this report.

### **3.2 Civil Society: Space, roles and capacity**

This analysis is informed by studies and discussions from the last decade on the scope, nature and role of civil society in Vietnam<sup>7</sup>. The scope of this short section is however, much more limited in focusing on current trends and potentials for civil society action. The issue of civil society trends was part of almost all interviews conducted, and a fairly consistent picture with limited deviations emerged from the interviews.

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<sup>4</sup> EU Bluebook 2014 for Vietnam, draft version prepared by Dr. Pham Thai Hung, IRC, p 3-4

<sup>5</sup> Evaluation Mission interviews with CEMA.

<sup>6</sup> Evaluation mission interviews with; Vo Hoang Nga; UNDP, Andrew Wells-Dang; OXFAM, Senior staff CIRUM and ISEE.

<sup>7</sup> CIVICUS Civil Society Index, The emerging civil society, An Initial Assessment of Civil Society in Vietnam, Hanoi 2006. Joseph Hannah; *Local Non---Government Organizations in Vietnam: Development, Civil Society and State---society Relations*, Ph.D. 2007 <http://faculty.washington.edu/jhannah/dissertation/Hannah%20---%20dissertationTOC.htm> Reference is made to; Andrew Wells-Dang; The political Influence of Civil society, in; J.D. London, Politics in Contemporary Vietnam, p 162 – 182. For a short introduction to the civil society debate see; Claus Thure Hastrup and Flemming Gjedde-Nielsen: CISU Learning Visit, Vietnam, December 2013,

There has been no development in the formal framework for VNGOs and CBOs during recent years, and the modes of registration and control remain unchanged. The Law on association, which has been on and off the political agenda for more than 10 years, has once again surfaced on the agenda; this time on the initiative of the National Assembly. There is no consensus amongst civil society and informed observers on whether a Law will finally be passed, or whether it will be an advantage to have a law passed at this time or whether it would be more advantageous to wait. The 12<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party congress to be held in 2016 will most likely provide a clear indication on the fate of the Law on Associations.

Despite lack of formal change in the legislative framework, there seems to be a broad consensus that even though progress is not linear, there has been an overall positive trend regarding civil society space during the past couple of years. Some observers noted that recent development has been in the opposite direction; this is ascribed to the forthcoming Party Congress and is perceived as a temporary set-back.

Vietnamese NGOs are increasingly invited to provide input and to comment on policies and legislation. CEMA, the main government player with regard to ethnic minorities, is as already mentioned seen by VNGOs from the sector as very open towards policy input from NGOs. According to CEMA, the NGO input is valued as it represents a major resource for the on-going policy reform process. The experience in the NGO sector on bottom-up cultural sensitive and empowering approaches to ethnic minority development is acknowledged and seen as relevant.

An important new trend during the last 2-3 years is that Vietnamese NGOs increasingly engage in networks and coalitions, when engaging in advocacy work. This provides a strong base for developing representative evidence based advocacy agendas, strengthening civil society cooperation rather than competition and hereby strengthening likelihood of policy influence. This trend in horizontal integration has been complemented by a limited number of vertical networks, linking CBOs amongst themselves and linking the CBO level to national NGOs, the Landnet and the Ethnic Minority Network/Pioneers Network supported within the CASI programme are good examples of this trend. Even though still in its early stage, these networks represent a new trend towards a more accountable form of advocacy work.

Most advocacy work takes place in invited spaces, however a limited number of examples of civil society owned agendas – mainly in the form of Internet Blocks, or Facebook Groups – has emerged, and in some cases been able to affect policy decisions. The number of examples is still limited, and mostly related to local environment issues.

The overall assessment is that the space for civil society activities is enhanced and that new trends on the web and in the form of horizontal and vertical alliances have emerged. Some of these trends are somewhat hopefully termed social movement.

### **3.3 Funding for civil society activities**

This section will provide a short overview of current and likely future trends in funding possibilities for Vietnamese NGOs and CBOs. The assessment of trends is based on informed observers' assessments, but can in no way be taken as more than indicative, since a high level of uncertainty prevails and trends might shift.

The main source of current NGO/CSO funding is from international bilateral donors and INGOs. However, with the observed likely decline in this source, the chapter includes an analysis of potential alternative funding, including Vietnamese Private Sector Philanthropy and government funding.

### **3.3.1 Bilateral, multilateral and INGOs funding of civil society activities**

Exit plans for ODAs were drawn up by the major bilateral donors around 2007-2009, and a large number of bilateral donors has closed down by now. The significance of ODA for the Vietnamese government is fairly limited by now. There are however, exceptions to the general trend, and amongst other EU and USAID will continue to run large programmes for at least the next 4-5 years; also AUS-AID, Irish Aid, and the Canadian Embassy is anticipated to continue for some time. A number of INGOs have left; others are in the process of leaving, while some are expected to stay for some time.

The VNGOs are still largely dependent on international funding from bilateral, multilateral and INGO funding. The decline in NGO funding is somewhat delayed compared to bilateral funding; the effects have thus not been seen yet. It is anticipated that there will be a drastic decline in available funding for the NGO sector. One informed observer estimated that up to 80 per cent of VNGOs will fold up in the next 5 years.

Most observers however, agree that the cut in NGO funding will not be equal across the board, and that the cuts in funding for livelihood activities will be faster and more severe, whereas there will continue to be some funding for advocacy, governance and climate change related NGOs.

### **3.3.2 Corporate funding as an alternative?**

The only comprehensive studies of corporate philanthropy and NGOs have been commissioned by the Asia Foundation. The latest (second study), Corporate Philanthropy and Corporate Perceptions of Local NGOs in Vietnam, by Giang Dang and Pham Minh Tri, was undertaken by CECODES in collaboration with the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), and finalised in late 2013. Even though the study is a few years old, the findings are still valid according to Asia Foundation and CECODES<sup>8</sup>.

The main findings are that philanthropy is fairly common in particular amongst major Vietnamese companies. Amongst the 500 companies involved in the study, over three quarters of the companies had engaged in some giving over the last year. When it comes to companies with more than 500 employees this rate was as high as 96 per cent. The main focus of giving was for people in need (e.g. war veterans, orphanages), disaster relief and poverty reduction. With culture, art and religious purposes coming in as a fourth, support for pagoda construction was common within this category.

The study found that there is a profound lack of strategic philanthropy. Most philanthropic activities do not follow a strategic assessment nor align with the companies' core business. Only 5 per cent of businesses choose to give based on "potential for social impact". The report concludes that this undermines the ability for businesses to create long term, sustainable social benefits.

The business perceptions of VNGOs are characterised as "not outright hostile"; the relationship can rather be characterised as "unengaged and not particularly positive". Only 9 per cent of the businesses in the sample had collaborated with VNGOs, and in the limited number of instances, where they collaborate, had in most instances been with Mass Organisations or business related organisations such as the Young

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<sup>8</sup> Separate interviews with Michael R. Di Gregorio, Country Representative, Asia Foundation and CECODES

Entrepreneurs Association or VCCI. The level of insight in the nature of NGOs was in general very low in the business sector.

It was observed that international organisations have a much higher level of trustworthiness than VNGOs in the eyes of the private sector companies; 60 per cent perceive international organisations as trustworthy, while the figure for VNGOs are just over 30 per cent.

The overall priorities of interventions and the general perception of NGOs represent a major challenge for fundraising for more policy and advocacy oriented organisations such as the CASI partners. Based on the report and the interviews with Asia Foundation and CECODES, it is the assessment that private sector philanthropy will not in the foreseeable future provide a realistic alternative funding source for NGOs on a large scale. The outlook is even more blurry when it comes to advocacy oriented activities such as the one CASI partners are engaged in. Vietnamese private sector philanthropies in general shy away from involvement in what is perceived as risky policy interventions, which might backfire on the company's main business.

The relative higher level of trust in international organisations compared to VNGOs might provide CARE with an opportunity as a broker of resources from the Vietnamese private sector for VNGOs in the medium to long term perspective. This might include fundraising from private philanthropy for ethnic minority related issues. The time perspective for substantial fundraising and the likely limited scope when it comes to advocacy activities makes it less relevant as part of a CASI exit strategy.

### **3.3.3 Government funding**

There are explicit provisions in Vietnamese laws prohibiting the transfer of funds from government budgets to VNGOs; the only exception is for funding that derive from a third party such as a Development Partner. The same limitations do not exist with regard to CBOs, limited funding is already provided from local government to CBO activities.

## **3.4 Conclusions and recommendations**

The overall funding situation for VNGOs looks rather bleak. Based on the above analysis it is unlikely that there will be substantial "alternative" funding to the conventional international funding sources within the short to medium term. Based on this it is recommended that:

- The CASI partners (with ADC as the partial exception see section 5.5.3) focus on positioning themselves towards the shrinking international funding base.
- CARE continue to monitor the development in alternative funding opportunities, and where relevant serve as a broker or even as a venue for emerging alternative funding.

## **4 Evaluation, scope and methodology**

The findings of the evaluation are mainly based on the thorough documentation of achievements undertaken by IRC in the CASI End-line and Impact studies. Due to the limited time to cover the comprehensive TOR of the evaluation the evaluation, and the pressing need for addressing issues related to the exit strategy, only limited independent documentation has been undertaken by the evaluation team.

The team has benefitted from the participation of Phạm Thị Thùy Chi who served as one of the main researchers on the End line and Impact Studies.

The role of the team leader has mainly been to assess the quality of the findings in the above studies, and to a limited extent complement the findings. The overall conclusion in this respect is that the findings are based on available evidence and well documented and that the general conclusions represent sound judgements. This subsequent section will to a large extent build on and present some of the key findings from the studies; the interpretation is however based on the judgement of the team leader and might differ somewhat in interpretation though not significantly from the conclusions of the End-line and Impact Studies.

The evaluation team has used the data and own observations to draw out conclusions relating to cost effectiveness/efficiency and programme implementation.

#### **4.1 Programme implementation**

CASI III has since the redesign of the programme in 2012 had a clear focus and consistent strategy in support of ethnic minority civil society development with a particular focus on ethnic minority self-articulation and voices. The programme level Theory of Change from 2012 is sharp and consistent; the underpinning assumptions are based on a high level of realism – yet willingness to engage in innovative initiatives such as the ethnic minority lead networks. The programme focuses on diverse sections of Vietnamese civil society, including national NGOs, networks and CBOs. The aim of the programme is to foster links between these levels with a strategic aim to foster ethnic minority voices. The programme represents a fine example of CARE Denmark's strategic transition from an initiative driven and less focused strategy, to a much stronger focus on the organisation and strategic programming. The CASI staff with partners has in general been highly successful in undertaking the transition. This success can be ascribed to the thorough process in relation to the Mid Term Review (MTR) and the subsequent programme development. Further, it appears from interviews with CASI and CARE partner staff that the observations in the MTR resonated well with the learning in CARE and partners. The MTR findings thus provided a sound basis for the development of the clear and consistent programme document with a high level of ownership amongst CASI and at least key partners.

In spite of the overall success in the transition process, it is worth noting that the transition was not equally utilised by all partners. The SRD partnership has largely stayed within an activity driven mode. For the cause of general learning it is worth to analyse why this was the case.

The evaluation team found that there are a number of likely explanations for this situation, including:

- SRD's value base, strategic focus and organisational Theory of Change are much less explicit. It appears e.g. that the organisation has not been consistent and focused in its approach to advocacy, ethnic minority voices and networks.
- Further the role and scope of ethnic minorities in the programme portfolio is a lot less prominent than is the case for ISEE and CIRUM. SRD does not see itself as a specialised resource within ethnic minorities, but rather as a broker of resources and funder and implementer of primarily community based participatory development.

- The drive for funding in SRD is more guided by the potential for funding within the broad livelihood scope than by a focused organisational strategy. In spite of minor challenges in undertaking the 2013 strategic change, the level of success has been no small achievement.

#### 4.1.1 Lesson on partnership selection in civil society strengthening programmes

A general lesson for CARE could be that it is essential that partners for civil society focused interventions are selected based on strong values and identity, a clear understanding of own role and the ability to develop a consistent and realistic Theory of Change for the organisation. Focus on strong administrative systems and project implementation capacity should be secondary.

#### 4.1.2 Programme management

A major reason behind the relatively high rating of the CASI programme is the high level of responsiveness of the programme to the needs of partners, shift in context and lessons learned. The programme management and staff were consistently praised by the CASI partners and other stakeholders in the ethnic minority sector for a timely and flexible response to emerging opportunities and challenges. This overall assessment is confirmed by the results of the CASI annual partner review.

The finance department of CARE Vietnam should be commended for its engagement in supporting flexibility in programme management in close collaboration with CASI programme staff. The high level of understanding and commitment to seeking developmental rather than technocratic solutions are quite seldom in international development agencies. CARE Vietnam's financial staff has managed within the financial and contracting system of CARE International to develop a responsive and developmental approach to finance management. The administration of funds is in line with the aim of the CASI development approach. This achievement might have been facilitated to some extent by the relatively strong tradition in Vietnamese NGOs for solid financial management and accountability. Never the less, it would be worthwhile to analyse and document this practice as a best practice for broader application within CARE International.

#### **Recommendation:**

- It is recommended that the experience from CARE Vietnam on developing flexible and developmental financial management practices within the CARE International system should be analysed, documented and disseminated within the CARE International system.

#### 4.1.3 Partner dialogue

The flexible and responsive programme management approach is based on a sound relationship with partners. CASI staff has been able to engage in an on-going dialogue on areas related to the cooperation, including capacity building and financial support. This has been done in a respectful and confidential way, where organisational boundaries have been acknowledged.

The dialogue appears in some instances as having been focus too narrowly on the implementation of the specific CASI initiatives in the partner organisation, gender, advocacy etc. rather than engaging in a strategic dialogue that includes broader organisational issues –potentials and challenges. As a consequence important organisational challenges and opportunities were apparently not proactively addressed in a sufficiently thorough manner, hereby missing opportunities for enhancing the broader impact of CASI on the work of the organisations. This goes for both SRD and ADC, where some of the fundamental challenges

and opportunities (see section 5.4) were at least not sufficiently addressed in the dialogue, and potentials for more strategic interventions were missed.

**Recommendation:**

- It is recommended that the scope in the partner dialogue during the exit phase be broadened to include organisational challenges in partner organisations, to strengthen effectiveness and relevance of the interventions. The dialogue must continue to respect organisational boundaries, and should not be linked to conditionality in the support.

**4.1.4 CASI capacity building**

CASI has provided substantial capacity building support. This has either been provided directly by CARE/CASI staff or through subcontracting of external expertise. A substantial part of the capacity building has been tailor made to the individual partners or partners with similar capacity building challenges. This has proven to be effective. The Endline Survey has thoroughly documented the experience and assessment by partners of the quality of the different capacity building initiatives. Reference is made to this material. The overall conclusion is that the quality and relevance with few exceptions are high. The observations from the evaluation team concur.

**4.1.5 Small Grant Facility**

Besides providing financial and capacity building support for the five CASI partners a small grant funding facility targeting local ethnic minority lead CBOs has been implemented. Besides providing small grant support, the facility has also included capacity building support. Capacity building has been undertaken by CARE staff and included diverse subjects ranging from narrow project management to content issues such as climate change and discrimination. The programme has promoted networking by referring the participating organisations to North Net. The evaluation mission did not meet any of the recipients, but consistent feedback from the CASI partner organisations and CARE provide an overall very positive assessment of the facility. The small grant facility was highlighted as providing a unique opportunity for ethnic minority CBOs to access otherwise unavailable funding and capacity building. The experience of successfully managing funds, and growing own organisations was assessed to be highly empowering. The facility has mainly supported livelihood activities, even though they have contributed to empowering local CBOs livelihood is however not a priority for CASI. The level of individual grants has been another challenge. Important experiences have been gained, and potentials for growing this facility exist – this is further discussed in the sections on CASI exit strategy (section 5.4).

**4.1.6 Monitoring and evaluation**

The CASI M&E system has been inconsistent and in its initial form designed in a very complicated way. The monitoring and evaluation system developed as part of the original programme as well as the 2012 programme revision was very complex, with an excessive number of indicators. Further, a number of indicators were hard to understand by partners who had to report on them. As a result, reporting was either lacking results on indicators, or the reported results were ambiguous. There were good reasons for revising the system or at least the monitoring process. CASI has adjusted the reporting system from a traditional log-frame based monitoring to partner based monitoring and quarterly reporting system. Further outcome mapping has been introduced. Even though the overall direction of the changes undertaken is sound, the substantial adjustments over the short time span since the MTR has led to

confusion and uncertainty on reporting requirements. The reporting requirements were perceived by partners as quite heavy. The most recent redevelopment, based on Outcome Mapping, was welcomed as was the quality of the training provided by CARE Denmark. Outcome Mapping was seen as potentially applicable in the organisations beyond monitoring of the CASI programme.

**Recommendation:**

- It is recommended that the CASI log-frame and monitoring system for the exit phase should be thoroughly revised and aligned with the Outcome Journal/Audience Profile of CASI.

## **4.2 Programme achievements**

The programme strategy has been guided by the programme objective: “Civil society organisations and representatives of those who are at risk of socio-economic exclusion among Northern ethnic minorities are increasingly involved in setting the agenda for more inclusive development approaches and policies”.

The programme has been implemented with a focus on three outcome areas, understood by the evaluation team as being similar to immediate objectives in the LFA terminology.

### **4.2.1 Programme outcome and potential impact**

The evaluation mission has aimed at identifying significant outcome<sup>9</sup> and potential impact in relation to each of the three individual programme results areas, which relate to the achievement of the programme objective. It is still too early to make final judgements on which of the outcomes might develop into impact<sup>10</sup>. An informed assessment has been made based on the rich material in the end-line and impact studies and the observations from the interviews of the evaluation mission.

The results will be presented within each of the three relevant CASI results areas which each represents important contributing factors to the achievement of the programme objective. The presentation will only provide a short outline of each outcome/impact area – for a more comprehensive presentation reference is made to the CASI Endline and Impact Studies.

The issue of attribution is a general and methodological challenge to evaluation.

Changes occur in complex societal settings, where it is not possible to identify simple causality relations: most significant positive and negative changes will have a large number of contributing factors. In respect of the CASI programme, this challenge is augmented by the otherwise developmentally sound CASI funding praxis, where the focus is on support for the strategies of the organisations, and the general development of the organisation – rather than on specific activities. It is often more realistic and relevant to look at the outcome and certainly impact based on an understanding of contribution, rather than attribution. The

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<sup>9</sup> The DAC definition has been used as the basis for the assessment. The definition reads: The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs.

<sup>10</sup> The DAC definition has been used as the basis for the assessment. The definition reads: Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

following summary includes outcome and potential impacts that can either be significantly attributed to CASI interventions or where CASI and partners are judged to have made a significant contribution.

*Result area 1: Partner VNGOs gain influence and recognition as effective and legitimate change agents for rights-based ethnic minority inclusion in line with their strategic plans and mandates.*

There are clear examples of outcome and likely impact, where CASI has significantly contributed to the achievements. In a number of instances the achievements can directly be attributed to the CASI programme interventions.

**ISEE:** There is significant evidence of results within results area 1. The overall assessment is that results are clear examples of outcome, and likely to be sustainable impacts.

ISEE is recognised amongst government, international development partners and civil society organisations as a major change agent within ethnic minority related issues. Important indications of this recognition are selection of ISEE to be one of two VNGOs represented at the annual Vietnam Development Partnership Forum in 2013 and 2014. In both of these fora ISEE represented topics related to ethnic minorities. The significant position of ISEE has further been highlighted by UNDP, who characterised ISEE as a pioneer in raising ethnic minority voices and in providing access for ethnic minority representatives to policy fora (see also results area 2). CEMA has highlighted ISEE along with CIRUM as the two strongest VNGOs related to ethnic minorities when it comes to concrete input into policy processes. ISEE has gained concrete influence on changes in CEMAs methods in the direction of more cultural sensitive approaches. CEMA has approved “anthropological approaches” in its work; ISEE will continue to play an important role in consolidating these changes through support for the use of the anthropological methods in CEMA. ISEE’s approaches and methods are based on a strong human rights perspective; the right to participate is of particular importance in respect of the ethnic minority programme.

CASI has been a significant partner in ISEE work, and contributed financially to the core strategies of ISEE, and provided relevant capacity building in relation to amongst other advocacy capacity and the organisations’ generational shift. This process is well underway, but might need further input from CASI. CASI has significantly contributed to the above outcome and likely impact areas.

**CIRUM:** There is significant evidence of results within results area 1. The overall assessment is that results are clear examples of outcome, and likely to be sustainable impacts.

CIRUM is recognised amongst key central government institutions, including CEMA and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), and local government institutions in the targeted forest areas as an important partner and change agent when it comes to ethnic minorities and forest issues. CIRUM is well connected with other forest and land organisations through networks. Significant indicators of the close working relationship with relevant government agencies and ability to influence relevant policies is the recent signing of a MoA with CEMA and the frequent consultation of CIRUM by MARD on forest related issues. CIRUM and CEMA have successfully organised consultation processes for the circular draft on guiding the implementation of Prime Minister’s Decision No. 755/2013/QĐ-TTg dated May 20, 2013 during

the phase of 2013-2015<sup>11</sup> and the Decision 64/2014/TTg on resettlement programmes related to irrigation and hydropower, which consider forest land as a resource to support local people. CIRUM's public profile is less prominent and more focused than ISEE, though CIRUM has featured in VTV Channel 5 on land forest allocation and a talk show at the same channel. The recognition by government institutions is to a very large extent a reflection of the solid knowledge and close relationship with local forest dependent communities. CIRUM has established its local legitimacy through its participatory approach and through linking local issues to national agendas within the Land-net. CIRUM and its alliance partners in Land Net and Livelihood Sovereignty Alliance (LISO) has explicitly adopted a rights based approach and practice. CIRUM is working with the capacity of rights holders to claim their rights as well as the capacity of duty bearers to fulfil their responsibilities.

As one of the major partners of CIRUM, CASI has significantly contributed to the above outcomes/impact areas, mainly through financial support for significant parts of the CIRUM programme. Within significant areas such as advocacy and network formation, CASI can directly be attributed the growth and ability to engage in policy processes.

**SRD** has only made limited progress in positioning itself as a recognised, effective and legitimate change agent for the rights of ethnic minorities. SRD has been heavily involved in ethnic minority livelihood initiatives, but the capacity for bringing disparate initiatives together into a concerted advocacy agenda has been limited. Recently SRD has engaged in developing and testing models for community participation in the Socio Economic Development Plans – it is however too early to judge the successes. This initiative is relevant, but is yet at a pilot stage. There is no explicit strategy for scaling up or replication of a potential successful model, limiting the likelihood of substantial outcome, let alone impact. SRD has participated in joint initiatives and participated in network advocacy activities. The organisation is however, not presently assessed as a significant player as described in outcome area 1.

**ADC** is perceived as a key local stakeholder in the mountainous part of Vietnam. However, this is presently mainly as a technical resource and not as a legitimate civil society change agent promoting the rights of ethnic minorities.

In spite of this ADC has been successful in advocating for the Indigenous Knowledge (IK)-based Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) models at the local level – to the extent that some of the models and methods have been adopted and financed by the local government extension service. ADC was normally described by local stakeholders as a provider of economic-technical solutions rather than an organisation working on ethnic minority rights and inclusion. The policy makers in Bac Kan province frequently requested ADC to provide them with economic, environmental solutions/evidence rather than social/ethnic minority related information.

The existing work and contacts to local government institutions along with the solid community level CBO work offers ADC a high level of legitimacy. This is providing ADC with a solid basis for developing into a legitimate civil society change agent for ethnic minority agendas. Such a shift however requires a conscious shift in the organisation's self-perception and clarity on own values as well as a clear organisational strategy

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<sup>11</sup> The Decision is the Prime Minister Approval of the policy on provision of support to increase the access to housing land, farming land, drinking water for the poor households in extremely disadvantaged communes.

for undertaking such a change process and communicating this to external stakeholders. A strategy focus on support for ADC's change process could provide substantial outcomes within Results area 1 by the end of the CASI exit in 2017.

**VUSTA** is not having a particular ethnic minority focus. The strategic purpose of the VUSTA inclusion in the CASI III programme was to facilitate contact between the CASI partners and relevant government institutions. VUSTA has not taken any specific initiatives in relation to results area 1.

*Result area 2: Ethnic minority-led civil society groups and ethnic minority leaders' networks are empowered to systematically feed information into decision-making processes at different levels and benefit from programme-wide learning through enhanced links and networking with other civil society actors.*

The focus on ethnic minority led civil society organisations and ethnic minority leaders' network was included as a result area in 2013 as a result of the Mid Term Review recommendations for revisions. Provided the marginalisation of ethnic minorities and the lack of tradition for ethnic minority leadership and involvement in decision making processes beyond the family and community level organisations (mainly livelihood related CBOs), the level of ambition expressed in the results area is high.

Important initiatives have been supported by CASI, including the formation of the Ethnic Minority Leader/Pioneer Network, The Land Net and more recently the Ethnic Minority Youth Network. Further important initiatives on involving ethnic minority CBOs in informing/influencing local decision making processes have been taken. All the initiatives are still work in progress, and results are emerging. Besides some limited examples of ethnic minority involvement in local forest land processes, there are no significant outcome, let alone impact level results.

The main challenges are however, not weak performance, but rather an unrealistic level of ambition for a three-year intervention. It is acknowledged by the evaluation team that although the formulation of the result area is too ambitious, it has served as a clear strategic beacon and guided the programme.

Some emerging results include:

SRD, CIRUM and ADC have been involved in establishing close to 100 ethnic minority CBOs. These organisations provide an important organisational basis for local decision making processes mainly around own livelihood. The functioning of these groups and the level of sustainability varies; however, they are all likely to contribute to the development of a local organisational tradition, which is likely to contribute to economic and social empowerment of ethnic minority groups.

In the case of CIRUM, CBOs have been engaged in solving problems in forest and land related issued. In the case of SRD, CBOs have been supported to engage in the local Socio Economic Development Plans, but a delay in the planning process on the side of the government has meant that no experiences could yet be gathered. The extent to which this will also affect the interest and ability to engage in local (e.g. municipality) decision making processes has not been systematically documented and it varies. Substantial support from the NGO partner is needed.

CIRUM has facilitated the establishment of Land Net, a network of forest related communities, and ISEE has facilitated the development of the Ethnic Minority Leader/Pioneer Network, and more recently the Ethnic Minority Youth Leader Network. There are similarities in the approach to network formation: both organisations see themselves as facilitators and supporters of the development of the networks at their own pace and own direction. The Land Net is based on local CBOs as a platform for sharing and joint input into national policy processes around land and forest related issues. The Ethnic Minority Leader Network and Youth Leader Network is based on individual existing and emerging leaders from civil society, local government etc. The Leader Network has a strong focus on strengthening the awareness, pride and importance of own ethnic minority culture as a platform for securing own rights. The empowering strategy and role of culture is still in its formative stage. The “supporting from behind” approach provides a sound basis for long term sustainability and hereby a basis for impact. It is however, not the assessment that any of the networks will be fully organisational sustainable by the end of the CASI IV. Continued support from the NGOs will be needed.

Even though the strengthening of ethnic minority leadership is still work in progress, it was noted that a number of examples exist of ethnic minority leaders who have been brought into larger systems of dialogue and change, at national, provincial and local level. The networks supported through CASI partners have played an important role in this respect.

Besides the emerging results described above, CASI through its lifespan has contributed to the development of independent CBOs as a model for self-management of local mainly livelihood related issues. This model is now acknowledged by the CEMA as an effective way of strengthen ethnic minority development and self-management.

*Result area 3: Policy-makers, planners and other key stakeholders increasingly get timely access to accurate, relevant and peer-reviewed evidence on key issues that can improve development effectiveness for CASI target groups.*

There are clear examples of outcome and likely impact, where CASI has significantly contributed to the achievements. In a number of instances the achievements can directly be attributed to the CASI programme interventions.

All four partners can provide examples of input into policy processes related to ethnic minority issues. Reference is made to the end-line survey for a comprehensive list of policy related evidence. The number of targeted policy makers and planners varies as do the numbers of input. Some examples from CASI partners include:

**ISEE** has systematically worked on establishing reliable relation with government Ministries. It has been successful in establishing relationships with CEMA, Ministry of Justice, MOLISA and the National Assembly. All these agencies have frequently requested ISEE for evidence/research on ethnic minority related issue. ISEE has established close links and work jointly with university departments and has initiated cooperation on developing methods, including participatory research methods. ISEE is assessed to have succeeded in developing sustainable relationships, and in-house and network capacity on providing quality input into policy processes. CASI is assessed to have substantially contributed to this achievement.

**CIRUM** has established close working relation with key Government and Party institutions<sup>12</sup>. The content of the relationship varies from support to capacity building to direct policy input. CIRUMs input are based on the close relationship and experience with local forest communities, which provide a sound basis for evidence based input. Besides drawing on CIRUMs own capacities they can draw in strong research capacity from LISO network partners. The signing of an MOU and the assessment provided by CIRUM is a strong indication on the relevance and quality of the input to policy processes and policy implementation. CIRUM is assessed to have developed sustainable relationship, based on quality input and trust. CASI has substantially contributed to this achievement.

**ADC** Has a very solid foundation in the university environment and per review research. ADC is acknowledged to be strong in applied research. The input often relate directly to the livelihood of ethnic minorities, but often with a technical focus. The quality is accepted by partners in central government and local government, and has in a number of instances directly influenced models and methods applied. CASI can be attributed to a number of studies which has formed the basis for change at local level.

**SRD.** There are no examples of policy level research input from SRD, and only limited examples of input in support of implementation. CEMA commented positively on a policy study commissioned by SRD; however the mission did not hear any evidence on experiences from SRD's own studies. It is thus not possible to comment on the capacity of SRD beside its ability to commission and secure relevant studies.

It has not been possible to directly assess the quality of the documentation/policy input, but based on the assessment of the quality from a limited number of government stakeholders including informants from CEMA and local government, the quality of input from ISEE and CIRUM to national policy and planning processes is deemed to be of a high quality. The quality of the input from ADC for provincial and local planning processes was assessed as highly relevant.

### 4.3 Gender as a crosscutting issue

CASI has in a significant way contributed to strengthening the focus of partner organisations on gender related issues in their development practice. This has in particular been the case for CIRUM, SRD and ADC where tailor made gender mainstreaming support has been provided. This includes training on gender forest management and climate change for ADC and CIRUM; a training workshop on gender and development of a gender action plan for SRD; support to SRD in development of gender integrated guidelines to be added in their Program Manual; support to and coordination of the support for CIRUM in their development of a gender policy; support to SRD in reviewing their policies to ensure integration of gender responsiveness; support to SRD in the development of staff appraisal indicators regarding their gender capacity; development of a gender checklist of the network operation under SRD; a study on barriers toward women participation in forest management, in advocacy on climate change and in the development of the social and economic development plan as well as supporting CIRUM to develop and implement a campaign on "Women to Protect the forest" which involves men and community in promotion

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<sup>12</sup> This includes: CEMA (Department of policy); MONRE (Department of registration and land inventory; Department of Legislation in Vietnam Administration of Land Management); MARD (Vietnam Administration of Forestry (VNFIRST)); Vietnamese Fatherland Front; Office of National Assembly (Department of EM); Central Economic Commission (CEC) of the Vietnamese Communist Party; Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

of women's role and status; providing ADC with references on gender and CC and CIRUM on Gender in forest management; documentation of the process of organizational gender mainstreaming in CIRUM processes.

The substantial emphasis on gender was visible in discussions with all partners in the form of a clear understanding of gender issues, gender roles and strategic gender work. Prevailing gender roles in the ethnic minority societies are reflected in the work. Most CBOs related to farming had a dominance of women, whereas CBOs related to forest were almost totally dominated by men. A focus on gender issues, and particularly promoting the role of women in leadership, was noted in the form of strong women's voices.

In relation to CIRUMs work in forest communities, the organisation was very clear on prevailing gender roles and had secured that forestland use certificates of households who have been allocated forestland always include names of both husband and wife. CIRUM argued convincingly for it being problematic to promote equal participation of women in forest land related issues, as it would expose women to increased risk of violence. CIRUM consider gender a high priority and has employed a gender development advisor and developed a gender policy. CIRUM has a clear understanding of gender issues, and has integrated gender concerns in its work. This includes a recent gender action research to strengthen gender inclusiveness.

**ADC:** ADC has promoted women's participation; it has established CBOs with a clear majority of women, and worked effectively on women leadership. Gender has been integrated and systematically reflected in various materials developed by ADC, namely: The performance reports of the CCA models which were sent to DMHCC, and Bac Kan PPC analysed the effect of the models on women (especially the social impact for women). The documentation of the models (potatoes, green bean and banana) included gender analysis in social performance; in the material of IK identification methodology, the role of women has been analysed in the application of indigenous knowledge, and the benefits for women when applied IK in agriculture production were indicated. It is expected that ADC's handbook on Gender and Guidance to gender mainstreaming in ADC's study shall be published soon (the first version has been drafted in June 2015).

**SRD:** SRD has integrated gender issues into all activities including: (i) A gender manual book (draft 1); (ii) All consultations and advocacy documents with policy makers always include gender as a cross-cutting issue; (iii) Project designs, implementation, and assessments all including gender sensitive analysis. There is a strong commitment to gender issues in SRD, and the organisation has significantly benefitted from the CASI capacity building support.

**ISEE:** ISEE is having a strong gender focus in its rights based activities, but this cannot be attributed to CASI. ISEE has only participated in CASI gender training to a very limited extent.

The chosen tailor made approach to capacity building has proven effective in supporting the partner organisations in developing their individualised approaches to gender. There are clear differences in the relative importance and emphasis that the individual organisations are putting on gender. This is a consequence of the CASI modality of supporting the organisations' own agendas. It is however, assessed that all organisations have considered gender issues clearly in their own planning and strategies.

#### 4.4 Effectiveness and efficiency

The evaluation has only had a limited basis for assessing the cost effectiveness and efficiency of the CASI and partner implementation. The bases for this assessment are the overall budgets and general partner budgets along with limited observations on systemic issues from CARE, partner and field visits.

CARE Denmark has in recent years developed a Value for Money Framework (VfM) with the aim to “...prioritise taking a pragmatic and realistic approach to Value for Money where we demonstrate how we manage our organisation and programme in a way that create value for money at all levels.”<sup>13</sup> The overall approach and focus in the framework on; transparency and accountability, programme design and monitoring, evaluation and learning is sound. In the following the main focus will be on assessing the programme in light of the CARE VfM Framework, with a particular focus on programme design and implementation.

The VfM argues that focusing on improving policy and their implementation rather than targeted interventions in a particular community increases the VfM. This is of course ultimately conditioned on success in securing policy changes and the implementation of these changes. The overall, design of CASI is in line with the policy focus. The partner strategies are for CIRUM and ISEE in line with the policy focus, whereas ADC and SRD is partly in line with this focus. In all cases CASI has supported a shift towards a policy focus in the partner organisations. As outlined in section 4.3 Programme achievements, CASI partners has been fairly successful in securing actual policy changes and changes in policy implementation, hereby securing a relative high overall score on effectiveness on this parameter.

Another parameter in the VfM is replication. Cost efficiency and effectiveness are important when it comes to models for replication and up-scaling. As noted in section 3.1, resources are a major constraint in government programmes targeting ethnic minorities. The likelihood of success in providing input into government policies will to a large extent be conditioned on the ability to develop and document cost effective solutions. The CASI programme as outlined in section 4.3 has already had some success in securing replication of its interventions, including through local government use of CBO models for extension support, the use of methods such as the anthropological approach is another example.

Working with strategic partners rather than CARE implementation and allowing strategic partners to take the driving seat is argued in the VfM to strengthen cost effectiveness. As described in previous sections CASI is since the 2012 strategy revision fully in line with this approach. In budgetary terms this has meant a shift in the allocation of resources between CARE and partner. This is also reflected in the number of CARE staff involved in the programme. The partner/CARE division of programme resources in the 2015 budget is 52.2 per cent partner/47.8 per cent CARE<sup>14</sup>. The present level of division of the budget between CARE and partner implementation is more or less in line with the CARE Denmark targets<sup>15</sup>. Provided the halving of the annual budget in CASI IV, compared to CASI III, and the need for strong strategic management of the exit phase, it is not deemed possible to drastically reduce the CARE implemented share of the budget.

It has not been possible for the evaluation team to undertake a systematic analysis of the cost level and cost efficiency of the partner programmes. CARE staff discusses partner budgets in connection with the

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<sup>13</sup> CARE Denmark Results Reporting 2010 – 2013 p 53 – 59.

<sup>14</sup> The CARE share includes CARE International implementation (45,3%) and CARE Denmark implementation(2,4%).

<sup>15</sup> The target for CARE funds to be channeled through partners was 50% for 2014, this should increase to 75% in 2020.

budget allocations and reallocations, but there is no systematic assessment of cost efficiency, neither at a CARE/CASI level nor at a partner level. As an example, three of the four partners provide support for CBO capacity building, and it is stated by CARE that cost efficiency and effectiveness has been considered, but comparison on cost effectiveness has only been undertaken in a few cases.

The general observation regarding the CASI III is that the overall programme set-up is rational and in line with the VfM Framework and that the functions involved in the programme is relevant for the implementation of the programme. The level of cost efficiency is in general reasonable. However this is based on general sound judgement by programme and finance department staff, rather than a systematic analysis of cost efficiency.

CARE Vietnam is cost conscious and the resource allocations appear relevant and reasonably cost effective. Cost effectiveness is certainly a consideration for CARE, and CARE Danmark's VfM Framework provides a sound basis for overall programme design. CASI implementation of the VfM Framework approach on cost efficiency and effectiveness in project design and implementation. Cost efficiency analyses are however not systematically undertaken, when it is decided whether capacity building is carried out by CARE staff or independent providers (consultants, VNGOs etc.).

The issue of cost efficiency and effectiveness takes on a new level of importance during the exit period. Cost effectiveness and the ability of VNGOs and an independent CARE Vietnam to document sound cost effectiveness considerations in programme activities are likely to be an important parameter for the ability to attract future funding in a situation of limited funding. In this context, it would be relevant to look at how partner organisations might be able to use some of the private sector insights on lean organisations.

#### **Recommendations:**

- CASI should strengthen the focus and systems for assessing cost effectiveness, and support partners to be able to assess and document cost effectiveness. Increased documented cost effectiveness is likely to be a parameter for competition on scarce resources.
- Cost effectiveness consideration is an important parameter when developing models intended to be replicated. In this connection the cost effectiveness parameter is not primarily on the cost in developing the models, but the cost for e.g. government institutions in taking up these models for replication on a large scale.

#### **4.5 Conclusions of the evaluation**

The triple focus on: i) ethnic minority socio-economic inclusion, ii) strengthening the self-articulation, and iii) voices of ethnic minorities which form part of the programme objective is assessed to be highly relevant in the Vietnamese context. This is based both on the assessment of the continued marginalisation of most ethnic minority groups in Vietnam with respect to most socio economic indicators. The assessment of the importance of ethnic minority voices and participation in decisions on own development is now broadly accepted in Vietnam, including by CEMA, the central government agency with responsibility for ethnic minority issues. The focus of the programme as expressed in the three results areas and related strategies has proven to be relevant. The increased openness from CEMA to cooperation and ideas from civil society has further strengthened the relevance. The relevance of the partners for the focus of the programme will be further analysed in relationship to the exit strategy, but varies. The conclusions of the analysis in the exit

strategy section are: ISEE and CIRUM are highly relevant; ADC is relevant and holds potential for developing into a highly relevant regional player; SRD is having a less sharp focus on ethnic minorities, is less central and is thus deemed partly relevant in light of the programme objectives. VUSTA has not taken up the role as a bridge between NGOs and government institutions within the ethnic minority field and is thus only having limited relevance to the programme objectives.

Significant outcome – some with strong potential for developing into impacts – has been achieved in results area 1 and 3. Results area 2 which related to ethnic minority voices is formulated in a very ambitious way; this has provided an impetus for action – but is not deemed realistic within the provided timeframe. Very interesting initiatives have been taken within this field in the form of support for three ethnic minority led networks. These initiatives represent new and innovative approaches with potentials for major long term impact for the entire ethnic minority sector in Vietnam. It is still not possible to assess the outcome. CASI and partners should be commended for supporting these innovative – and therefore also uncertain, but important – initiatives. The effective, risk willing and responsive programme management by CASI staff has secured that the programme and partners have been able to respond to emerging challenges and hereby remained relevant.

The CASI programme is in its design in line with the VfM Framework of CARE Danmark. The overall assessment is that CASI is at least reasonably cost effective and efficient. Due to lack of systematic approaches to assessment of cost effectiveness and cost efficiency at an activity level, it is not possible to draw firmer conclusions. Cost efficiency and effectiveness, and the ability to document these parameters, are likely to be of increasing importance in a future scenario with declining funding. A more explicit focus on partner level assessment and documentation is recommended as part of the exit strategy.

The programme has to a large extent supported the organisational sustainability through targeted capacity building of partners and support for strengthening their programmes and hereby programme management capacity. Even though progress has been made the organisational and not least the financial sustainability is still a challenge for some of the organisations. The envisaged declining funding for VNGOs from traditional international funding sources poses a major challenge for the sustainability of the entire NGO sector. There is a need in the exit phase to strengthen the focus on organisational and financial sustainability, despite the contextual challenges – the outlook for financial sustainability in the medium term (3-5 years) looks relatively good for CASI partners, if appropriate steps are taken during the exit phase.

## **5 CASI exit strategy**

Due to Vietnam's status as a middle income country CARE Danmark has taken the initiative to negotiate an exit plan with CARE Vietnam. The plan has subsequently been approved by the CARE Danmark board. According to the plan the Danida funded CASI programme shall end by December 2017, and three EU funded programmes with matching Danida frame funding must end no later than December 2018.

It has been decided that the CASI IV (2016-2017) shall serve as a two-year exit period. The aim of the exit period is to support CASI partners and ensure sustainability of project results over the coming two years. The annual budgets during the exit phase will be half of the annual turnover in DKK during the CASI III.

## 5.1 Methodology and approach to exit strategy development

The evaluation team has seen its task as to provide recommendations on how to prioritise shrinking resources in the most strategic way with the aim to secure organisational sustainability of CASI partners and CASI results. This task has involved tough prioritisation, including recommendations on cuts in relevant and worthwhile civil society sector initiatives in support of the ethnic minority.

The prioritisation and recommendations on the CASI exit strategy (CASI IV) has been informed by the CARE Danmark board decisions, the findings from the contextual trend analysis, the findings from the evaluation of existing initiatives, and strategic discussions with CARE/CASI staff and CASI partners.

The overall level strategy has been developed based on consultation with CASI/CARE Vietnam staff and CASI partners on strategic needs and the assessment by the consultants of the challenges for the ethnic minority sector within the current Vietnamese context.

The recommendations on the future involvement of existing CASI partners and the financial scope of the collaboration have been undertaken on the basis of the assessment by the consultants of the individual partner organisations. The assessment was based on a set of criteria developed by the consultants (see section 5.4.2).

Even though the CASI partner organisations are sharing a focus on ethnic minority organisations and have benefitted from taking part in the CASI programme, the individual organisations and the challenges relating to sustainability are diverse. It is neither feasible nor conducive for strengthening sustainability to develop a uniform approach to the partner exit strategy. Recommendations on the concrete partner level exit strategies have been developed based on strategic dialogues with the individual partner organisations.

Provided the limited time available for the evaluation process the recommendations will be at a strategic level. CASI partner ownership to the exit strategy is seen as essential for success and has guided the process. It is hoped that the recommendations can form the basis for elaboration of concrete exit plans jointly developed and owned by CASI IV partners and CASI staff.

The subsequent section on exit strategy is by nature very different from the evaluation section. This is also reflected in the format of the section, where analysis of the major challenges during the exit phase will be followed by sections outlining recommended strategies. The short recommendations following the main text with proposed strategies merely serve as short conclusions providing the essence of the suggested strategies.

## 5.2 Continued relevance of the CASI objective and results areas

It was concluded in the evaluation part of this report that the programme objective and three results areas have provided a sound basis for strategic transition and management of the CASI III programme. The central question is whether the objective and results area will be equally relevant in guiding the exit phase, and if not, what kind of change and adjustments are needed.

<b>The CASI III objective and results areas</b>
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*Civil society organisations and representatives of those who are at risk of socio-economic exclusion among Northern ethnic minorities are increasingly involved in setting the agenda for more inclusive development approaches and policies.*

Since the CASI III strategy revision in 2012, the programme objective has been promoted within three results areas:

Results area 1: Partner VNGOs gain influence and recognition as effective and legitimate change agents for rights-based ethnic minority inclusion in line with their strategic plans and mandates.

Results area 2: Ethnic minority-led civil society groups and EM leaders networks are empowered to systematically feed information into decision-making processes at different levels and benefit from programme-wide learning through enhanced links and networking with other civil society actors,

Results area 3: Policy-makers, planners and other key stakeholders increasingly get timely access to accurate, relevant and peer-reviewed evidence on key issues that can improve development effectiveness for CASI target groups.

**Programme objective:** Recent development in Vietnam underpins the continued importance of the CASI objective. On the one hand, the continued socio-economic marginalisation of the ethnic minorities not least in the Northern mountainous areas underscores the need for a change in agendas and approaches related to poverty reduction. On the other hand, the growing acknowledgement within sections of the Vietnamese government of the need for major adjustments in policies and approaches used in addressing poverty amongst ethnic minorities opens new opportunities for civil society influence. Further, the acknowledgement by government of the relevance of the NGO experiences with empowering approaches to development of ethnic minorities is an important platform for future advocacy work. The objective is assessed as not only relevant, but it is also assessed to be realistic that CASI and partners can significantly contribute to the objective.

**Results area 1.** As outlined in the evaluation part of this report, major achievements have already been made within this result area. The strategic objective within this results area shall be to deepen and consolidate the influence and secure sustainability of the gains in a post-CASI IV scenario.

**Results area 2.** The progress on this result area was assessed to be less significant and the level of policy involvement and consolidation of ethnic minority lead groups are still relatively low. The shifts in government policies have made this results area even more relevant and feasible. The results area is however, rather ambitiously formulated and the ethnic minority organisations and networks will not have reached a level of consolidation and the ability to “systematically feed information into decision making process at different levels” will continue to need significant, albeit diminishing backing from NGO partners beyond the CASI IV.

**Results area 3.** The results from CASI III and the increasing openness from particularly CEMA makes this results area relevant and realistic. The task will be to maintain and develop the capacity of strategic CASI partners in respect of capacity to positioning themselves vis-à-vis decision makers and to sustain the capacity to formulate relevant input, while maintaining and strengthening the linkages to the target group.

## **Recommendations:**

- It is recommended that the CASI III objective continue to guide the exit phase. The project should focus on securing that the achieved results are sustainable in a post CASI scenario – with such an implicit understanding of the objective, there is no need to make any adjustment to the programme objective.
- Results area 1 & 3 remain relevant. It is however, recommended to amend the formulations in both results areas to underscore that the programme should secure the organisational sustainability in results area 1, as well as the organisational and institutional sustainability, the ability of NGOs/CBOs to position themselves vis-a-vis decision makers and maintaining close links with the target group<sup>16</sup>.
- Results area 2 remains relevant, not least in the light of the increased emphasis in government thinking on ethnic minorities as subjects in own development. The results area is however, formulated too ambitiously. It is recommended that the level of ambitions is downgraded for what can be achieved during the CASI IV. This could be done by underlining the need for continued close cooperation and partnership with NGOs, not least in the role of broker of contacts in respect of securing policy influence and facilitators of continued growth in the capacity of networks and ethnic minority leaders<sup>17</sup>.

### **5.3 Major sustainability challenges for the CASI exit strategy**

Taking the point of departure in the programme objective of CASI, the explicit success criterion is the existence of civil society organisations and representatives (this is understood in the programme document to include ethnic minority informal/formal leaders, ethnic minority lead organisations, networks and platforms) able to set relevant inclusive ethnic minority agendas.

In light of this, the main exit strategy shall focus on the sustainability of relevant civil society actors rather than e.g. sustainability of the policies promoted or the community level changes that the programme has supported. It is acknowledged that there is a relationship between sustainability at the different levels and that sustainability at one level is likely to reinforce sustainability at another level.

The CASI 2012 Mid Term Review and the subsequent revised strategy saw potentials in CASI developing into a lasting platform for collaboration and learning amongst CASI partners. Consultations with partners have revealed that there is no consensus on sustaining CASI as a platform in a post CARE DK funding

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<sup>16</sup>Tentative suggestions for revised results area 1 and 2 could read:

1. Partner VNGOs are influential and sustainable organisations recognition as effective and legitimate change agents for rights-based ethnic minority inclusion in line with their strategic plans and mandates.
2. Policy-makers, planners and other key stakeholders have timely access to accurate, relevant and peer-reviewed evidence from sustainable and legitimate civil society organisations (CASI partners) on key issues that can improve development effectiveness for CASI target groups.

<sup>17</sup> A tentative suggestion for a revised result area 2 could read: Ethnic minority-led civil society groups and networks in alliance with VNGOs/Networks are empowered to systematically feed information into decision-making processes at different levels and engage with alliance partners in learning and capacity development as equal though diverse partners

scenario. The organisations who could realistically be drivers of such a platform argued that there are sufficient platforms, that CASI do not represent a strong and coherent group in itself, and that the interest in collaboration during the present phase has been diverse. It is thus, not recommended that efforts are made to make CASI a lasting platform. The strategy should focus on identifying potential areas/functions presently hosted by CASI that need to be sustained, and then develop concrete strategies for hosting these areas/functions within sustainable structures. This includes CASIs/CAREs role as a broker of contacts to policy makers this has been a major contribution by CASI which needs to be secured in a post-CASI scenario, this could amongst other be done by strengthening the status and capacity of EMWG and PPWG as a broker of such contacts. Another example is the role of CASI in providing capacity building, as described in the evaluation section this has been a valued input but the strategy needs to be adjusted to secure that capacity building support will be available through national organisations in the long term, this could e.g. be done by consciously aiming at providing capacity building to CASI partners in partnership with local service providers who at one and the same time is involved in providing a capacity building service and being strengthened by CASI in providing this kind of support. Additional examples include the CASI learning platform and the small grant support facility, as outlined in section 5.4.

Due to the declining international funding and the absence of obvious alternative funding as outlined in section 3.3 the most pressing contextual challenge for the sustainability of Vietnamese civil society, including ethnic minority related organisations, is funding. The general trends in donor funding for civil society activities (with the level of uncertainty that relates to trends) are given and beyond the influence of CASI. The financial sustainability challenge will thus be addressed as a coping strategy for CASI partners within a shrinking financial environment.

CASI can play an important role in supporting CASI partners in positioning themselves as attractive objects for the future, albeit limited funding. Strategies for positioning include issues such as securing clear, and relevant organisational identity and strategies, ability to “read” donor agendas, and the ability to present and position own organisational agendas within the provided framework, relevance and cost effectiveness strategic interventions, visibility of organisations, documented capacity and use of relevant platforms and networks, etc. The challenges amongst CASI partners are diverse and strategic dialogues with partners have been used to identify these challenges. The results for the individual organisations are presented in section 5.5.

The sustainability of the yet weak ethnic minority lead networks remains a particular challenge. None of the networks are likely to be sustainable in organisational terms, let alone financial terms by the end of CASI IV. The ability of CASI partners and other NGOs to provide continued support for ethnic minority leader networks (Ethnic Minority Leader Network, Land Net etc.) to grow and develop as independent self-articulated networks is a particular challenge and should be a central part of the exit strategy.

Another essential element in the CASI objective is the ability of Vietnamese organisations to be involved in setting agendas in relationship to inclusive development approaches relating to ethnic minorities. As described in the evaluation section, progress has been made in this respect – a number of partner organisations has been able to position themselves vis-à-vis government decisions. Other CASI partners however, expressed a concern on their ability to secure the same level of access without the support of CASI/CARE. The exit strategy needs to address this issue and to secure sustainable approaches securing that civil society is able to position itself and be heard by policy makers.

## **Recommendations:**

- It is not recommended to work on making CASI into a lasting platform in Vietnam. Where functions hosted within CASI will be of relevance in a post-CASI situation, the exit phase should be used to support the institutionalisation of these functions within sustainable Vietnamese structures, such as networks or individual NGOs, or specialised agencies within capacity building.
- The financial and organisational sustainability of key CASI partners and ethnic minority networks shall be at the centre of the exit strategy. The focus shall be on strengthening the CASI partners' capacity to secure funding from a dwindling international funding base.
- The exit strategy shall further focus on sustaining mechanisms for continued access and inclusion of civil society organisations in policy processes.

## **5.4 CASI IV focus of the overall exit strategy**

The strategic focus for the exit strategy should be to support the development of a strong and sustainable civil society sector focusing on ethnic minority rights and related issues. Emphasis should continue to be on promoting the voices of ethnic minorities and the capacity of self-organisation at all levels.

Cognisant of CASI IV being an exit phase, there is a need to adjust the strategies with a particular focus on securing the long term sustainability of diverse ethnic minority civil society organisations and networks, capable of promoting the rights and interests of ethnic minorities. The strategy shall not only support the sustainability of the organisations, but also the sustainability of the values and approaches around ethnic minority issues developed in and amongst CASI partners, including the emphasis on ethnic minority participation and leadership.

Provided the relative short time span of the exit phase and the importance of the existence of effective and sustainable civil society organisations for the long term change for the ethnic minorities, the focus on organisational and institutional sustainability should be at the overarching exit strategy. This might even in some cases be at the expense of initiatives promoting immediate gains on the rights and interests of ethnic minorities.

It is assessed to be of strategic importance for securing the interests and rights of ethnic minorities, and their own nascent organisations, that strong compassionate NGOs are sustained to facilitate and support the promotion of ethnic minority voices and interests. NGOs with analytical capacity and broader insights in political processes will be needed, even in a long term scenario, where a vision of a strong ethnic minority led social movement has been realised.

The strategic challenge is to secure the continuous development of the relationship between ethnic minority led initiatives/social movements and NGOs. In line with the strategic approaches of key CASI partners a focus on shifting the balance in the relationship towards ethnic minority control in agenda setting should continue to guide the CASI IV exit strategy. At least in the short to medium term, there is no inherent contradiction between supporting NGOs and ethnic minority led social movements. It is thus recommended that the exit strategy maintain a dual focus on sustainability of ethnic minority oriented NGOs along with the development of ethnic minority led organisations and networks, which might contribute to an emerging social movement, or at least strong ethnic minority led networks and organisations.

The CASI III strategy has seen the promotion of networks and networking as an important means for the growth of influence of policy and advocacy oriented civil society organisations. This has been done through the promotion of the CASI partner participation in existing and emerging independent networks such as the EMWG, the PPWG and others. CARE through CASI funding has further provided support in the form of co-funding of important initiatives by these networks; this support has promoted e.g. the EMWG as the entry point for civil society organisations to government policy processes. Initiatives that will support the development of independent networks should continue to form a central part of the exit strategy, in particular with a focus on initiatives that are strengthening the role of the networks as brokers of civil society participation in policy advocacy processes.

The current CASI learning space is an example of a CASI initiative that needs to be reconsidered and for large parts of its activities needs to find a relevant host institution, where the more narrow internal CASI learning might be retained for the exit period. The general strategy is seen as a venue to support institutionalisation and hereby strengthening sustainability of civil society participation in policy processes beyond the life of CASI.

The CASI small grant support has been highlighted by a number of CASI partners as an important tool for grooming ethnic minority CBOs and CBO leadership. The small grant support is said to facilitate support to initiatives that are otherwise unlikely to receive funding from conventional funding opportunities. While not disputing this observation, there is a need in a situation with declining funds in the CASI programme, and eventual exit of CASI to sharpen the strategic approach and role of the small grant facility. There is a need to rethink the small grant facility in respect of strategic purpose, including criteria for what should be supported during the exit phase, and more importantly the role of the CASI small grant facility, if any, in seeking long term sustainable solutions to the continued (beyond CASI IV) challenge of small grant support. The relevance of a continued small grant funding mechanism within CASI IV to a very large extent depends on the potential for such a mechanism to provide a basis for sustaining a funding mechanism beyond CASI. It is suggested that the feasibility of developing a joint funding mechanism, managed by interested CASI partners, in collaboration with representatives from ethnic minority leaders from existing networks is tested prior to the start of the CASI IV, and that the relevance and level of funding is decided based on the outcome of this process. See the inserted box for a short discussion on potentials and challenges in setting up a small scale grant mechanism.

Considering the declining funding during the exit phase, there is a need to critically assess the use of CASI resources and to focus on strategic challenges and long term sustainability of strategic partners. The concrete suggestions are provided in section 5.5.

Further, due to declining resources, but also as a means to strengthening CASI partners, issues of cost effectiveness and efficiency should be promoted and methods developed for the inclusion of these considerations in the work of CASI partners.

Within the strategic focus of the exit strategy on sustainability, CASI should maintain and, where relevant, increase the flexibility in respect of reallocation of funds. CASI should allow that partners see and use the CASI funds as largely fungible resources, which can be used to match the existing and upcoming alternative funding.



### **Challenges and general lessons learned from small grant support through networks**

It is recommended that the small grant facility continue, but with a dual purpose of providing relevant strategic support for CBOs, while at the same time developing the capacity amongst CAS partners, including ethnic minority leaders and potential organisational set-up for continued post-CASI grant making.

International experience with civil society grant making mechanism is abundant and should inform the set-up of the grant making mechanism.

Major lessons:

- The issue of legitimacy, transparency and relative independence of the grant making is central to success vis-à-vis recipients of grants and potential donors.
- Transparent and explicit criteria for assessment of applications are important. Good practice includes that assessment relates to criteria and that assessment is made available for applicants.
- The selection committee should hold a high level of integrity, be knowledgeable on relevant development practices. Clear and explicit rules related to conflict of interest should be available and strictly adhered to.
- Grant making should be de-linked from policy network. If not, grant making tends to take prominence, hereby undermining the policy work and potentially distorting membership – membership is driven by access to grants rather than policy interest.
- Grant making for CBOs should be combined with potential for coaching and capacity building, the grant making authority and the capacity building function needs to be separate
- Capacity building should be optional – not conditional for receiving grants.

#### **5.4.1 Programme level exit strategy – the role of CARE Vietnam**

A strategic CASI programme management is essential in optimising the exit phase and hereby the likelihood of sustainability of strategic CASI partners and their interventions. The CASI/CARE staff's main function during CASI IV should be to secure that the programme remains strategic and responsive to contextual changes, to changes in strategic partner needs and programme learning.

Prior to the start of CASI IV, CASI staff should consult with continuing partners in order to elaborate and refine strategies and develop the individual plans. Tailor made exit strategies should be agreed with the individual partners with agreements on relevant capacity building support to be provided by CARE or relevant resource organisations in Vietnam. The plans should include indicative milestones and targets related to sustainability. Suggested overall priorities of the individual exit strategies and the allocation of resources are outlined in section 5.5.

Prior to the start of CASI IV, CASI staff should initiate the discussion and secure conclusion on the issue of the small grant support facility, functioning and organisational setting.

Further, CASI should on a continuous basis (at least semi-annually) engage in strategic dialogues with partners on progress, relevance of chosen strategies and needs for adjustments. Provided the enhanced focus on organisational sustainability during the exit phase, the scope of the dialogue should ideally include broader organisational and strategic issues. The dialogue with partners should take the form of a dialogue with a “critical friend” – supportive, yet critically questioning the relevance of chosen strategies and

approaches and the potential for improvements. The critical dialogue should always be based on consent by partners, and “advice” should never be conditional or directly linked to funding. However, respect is essential for the integrity and organisational boundaries of partners. In some instances, it might be appropriate to subcontract external resources to undertake parts of the critical dialogue in order to maintain organisational boundaries. However, dialogue with CASI staff needs to be maintained to ensure overall strategic adjustments in strategies.

CASI staff should continue to be engaged in capacity building activities, dependent on the field, the capacity of CASI staff, and the cost effectiveness. This could either be in the form of direct provider of capacity building or as a broker of resources and contacts to external providers.

CASI secretariat should continue to play a role as a broker of relevant contact for partners with government agencies and funding possibilities and, where relevant, promote CASI partners for external funding. The main focus of the exit phase should however, be on supporting partners in their strategy for positioning themselves vis-à-vis government and funding agencies. This includes a strong focus on strategic networking as outlined in section 5.3. Other relevant strategies to be promoted relate to strengthening ability to understand and position own agendas vis-à-vis emerging funding possibilities, strategic communication enhancing organisational visibility, strengthened documentation of best practices for advocacy and organisational promotion.

Besides focusing on issues directly related to organisational sustainability, the CASI phase out strategy should continue to fund strategic partners’ own initiatives and networks. These activities are obviously important for achieving the programme objectives and ethnic minority empowerment, but they are also important in maintaining the relevance of the organisations and hereby strengthening fundraising potentials and ability to engage as legitimate partners in policy dialogue.

#### **5.4.2 Criteria for prioritising support for partners**

To support a strategic, informed and transparent prioritisation of the limited resources provided for the CASI exit period, the evaluation team has developed a set of criteria to guide the process on resource allocation. The criteria have been guiding and used as a tool for a holistic assessment of partners and strategies.

It is important to underline that the criteria is exclusively focusing on the relevance and needs of partners within the framework of CASI. As a consequence the assessment can in no way be taken as a ranking of the partner organisations, their general work and performance.

The criteria are:

- Relevance of the organisation and intervention for the objectives, overall strategies and approaches of CASI.
- Track record within CASI – to what extent has the partner organisation been able to benefit from past CASI III support in promoting own organisation objective regarding ethnic minorities and hereby the objective of CASI.

- The general economic situation of the organisation. What is the medium term outlook and future sustainability?
- The immediate economic situation of the organisation. What would be the implication for the organisation and its activities of an immediate cut in the budget allocation?
- To what extent was it possible during the conversation between the individual partner representatives and the consultants to outline realistic and relevant exit strategies based on the organisations' own strategies?

## 5.5 Individual partner assessment and exit strategy

All partners had prior to the dialogue been provided with a set of strategic questions related to the CASI exit. The dialogue took the point of departure in the organisational strategies of the partner, the intervention strategies on ethnic minorities, and the challenges in respect of sustainability of the strategic interventions and the organisations. The role of the consultants was to probe into the strategies, their relevance in addressing long term organisation and intervention sustainability. The dialogue took the form of joint reflection on challenges, potentials and potential exit strategies.

Provided the limited time available for partner dialogue, the aim of the dialogue was to identify concrete major challenges for sustainability, and develop the strategic direction and framework for the exit strategy. In the case of CIRUM and SRD, a second meeting was organised to strengthen the basis for the recommendations.

The subsequent section will provide an insight into the assessment based on the assessment criteria, and an outline of the focus of the individual partner strategies. The intention is that these outlines would form the basis for the partner dialogue prior to the start of CASI IV. The suggested strategies are indicative and need to be further elaborated and turned into concrete plans in a close dialogue between the partners and CASI staff.

### 5.5.1 CIRUM

CIRUM has undergone a rapid development from being a small locally based NGO, dealing with forest land allocation. The scope of the involvement, the strategic thinking, and the methods employed have developed fast. CIRUM is a now medium sized NGO, but with an engagement both at local and national level and with an acknowledged capacity for linking these levels. CIRUM has a strong bottom up and empowering approach in its work. Local communities and CBOs form the basis for the organisation's work. A strong sense of accountability exists. The CIRUM initiated LandNet is embodying these values, and is a promising example of promotion of ethnic minority led initiatives. CIRUM is recognised as a major civil society resource within ethnic minority, forest and land related issues. CEMA acknowledges the relevance of the cooperation, including the ability to link and support input from a community perspective combined with a high level of professional knowledge within forest and land related issues. A MoU has recently been signed between CEMA and CIRUM. CIRUM is working with likeminded organisations within the LISO network. Based on negative experiences from cooperation with other NGOs with different values at earlier stages of its development, CIRUM has developed a rather exclusive approach to networking and cooperation. Further, CIRUM's high level of commitment to community engagement has probably overshadowed the acknowledgement of the strategic importance of networking and exposing CIRUM. A

consequence has been that CIRUM is somewhat isolated and less visible among important stakeholders. This is assessed to be a major strategic challenge for CIRUM in respect of its ability to attract funding in the future. An increased engagement in networking activities is also assessed to hold potential in respect of

The financial situation represents the biggest short to medium term problem for CIRUM. CASI funds 30% of CIRUM. ICCO which is the major donor of CIRUM – presently providing 50 per cent of the funding – closes its operations in Vietnam by the end of 2015. The remaining 20 per cent is funded by three INGOs. Parts of the funding gap from ICCO might be covered in the short to medium term by a recently approved CARE Denmark EU grant: Promoting Land Rights for Ethnic Minority People in Vietnam. However, as development of significant funding relationships takes time, CIRUM is in need of urgently diversifying and increasing its funding base. CIRUM has been very selective in its donor choice, but has realised that it may have been too selective. Potential new funding sources are being explored and some minor initiatives have been initiated. CIRUM is assessed to have a potential for attracting funding, but the medium term funding situation is fairly critical and the capacity to positioning CIRUM vis-à-vis relevant funding resources must be prioritised. Further, the technical capacity (writing funding proposals) is a challenge. The leadership needs to have a more balanced focus between the organisations well-being and the programme activities.

CIRUM and its work are highly relevant for the objectives of CASI, and CIRUM has been effective in utilising the opportunities provided by CASI, not least in respect of advocacy. The major challenges are related to organisational and institutional issues, and not atypical for a fast developing and highly committed organisation. The overall challenges are acknowledged by CIRUM and they have initiated important processes related to internal governance and clearly shown an interest in and an understanding of, how an exit strategy can be used in addressing some of the organisational and sustainability issues.

#### **Recommendations:**

- CASI should provide CIRUM with funding at approximately the current level during the phase out. The funding should be provided as a flexible support to the continuation of the current programme with targeted capacity building support as outlined below.
- CASI should work on capacity building related to organisational positioning and visibility primarily in relation to fundraising, but also in relation to continued positioning vis-a-vis policy processes. This includes strategic coaching of CIRUM leadership on how to position themselves vis-à-vis the donor community, and support for development of its fundraising strategy.
- CASI should provide support for CIRUM to strengthen the project/programme development capacity. CIRUM identified a need for strengthening and broadening the skills base.
  - At senior programme level there is a need to enhance and sharpen the capacity to develop fundable proposals. It is suggested to do this by providing critique and guidance from an experienced CARE programme person in connection with concrete CIRUM applications.
  - There is further a need for training and grooming a new generation in CASI in project planning; this would require basic training. CASI could fund the participation of relevant staff in a programme/project development course.

- As part of the repositioning and visibility strategy, CIRUM should be encouraged to rethink its approach and relationship with existing networks, not least EMWG. Based on its values, facilitative development methods, and strong community experience, CIRUM would be able to contribute to the network. Network participation would provide an opportunity for increased visibility and for keeping on top of policy processes and advocacy potentials.

### 5.5.2 ISEE

ISEE is one of the major rights and advocacy VNGOs. It has a clear profile with a very strong human rights focus on sexual minorities (LGBT) and ethnic minorities. Recently the organisation has decided to give priority to issues related to civil society space. ISEE has in itself had a tradition for testing the boundaries for civil society activities. This includes social mobilisation around LGBT rights. Presently ISEE is engaged in issues related to the use of social media in mobilisation. ISEE has embarked on a generational transition plan. The plan has been supported by CASI and appears to be on the right track.

The CASI support has provided ISEE with an opportunity for strengthening its ethnic minority engagement. The focus of the ISEE ethnic minority network is on: evidence based advocacy, empowering of ethnic minority groups/leadership, networking with and amongst ethnic minority groups. CASI funding has been used as a flexible funding in support of the ISEE ethnic minority programme. The support for the Ethnic Minority Network/ Pioneers Network was particularly appreciated as it came at a time where no one else had trust in the idea. ISEE is playing an important role at central government level advocacy, and is in general well connected to government institutions and media. CEMA highlighted ISEE along with CIRUM as the main VNGO players in respect of ethnic minorities. As mentioned in section 4.1, ISEE has been able to influence ethnic minority related issues, including the introduction of “anthropological methods” in the work of CEMA and is a strong promoter of co-research methods, where local communities work with professional researchers – hereby securing that findings are closer to the perceptions and challenges of the target group.

ISEE is having a programme approach to its work and a clear Theory of Change for the ethnic minority activities with a realistic assessment of what can be achieved. Programme activities are in general funded by a number of partners. ISEE has at any time had between 10 and 17. Besides the CASI programme ISEE has together with CARE Danmark secured EU funding for the Voice and Rights for Ethnic Minority Women programme.

ISEE’s work and capacity is highly relevant for the CASI objectives. The ISEE programme approach and ability to match different funding sources provide a sound basis for sustainability of programme interventions. The economic short and medium term outlook is relatively good.

#### **Recommendation:**

- It is recommended that CASI continue to provide funding on a reduced level (approximately 50 per cent) for ISEE core ethnic minority activities. The funding should be flexible to secure maximum relevance for the ISEE ethnic minority programme.
- CARE should continue to offer support and capacity building related to the leadership transition phase, if requested by ISEE.

### 5.5.3 ADC

ADC is described in the CASI 2012 programme document as a research partner with a special role in providing applied research with a particular focus on climate change adaptation. ADC is acknowledged for its ability to provide high quality research for central and local government institution. ADC is registered as an NGO housed at Thai Nguyen University. The organisation is particularly interesting as one amongst a relatively limited number of NGOs in the northern mountainous areas home to the majority of ethnic minorities. As noted in the evaluation section of this report, ADC has been providing relevant quality services to local government institutions in relation to agriculture and climate adaptation. It has further been able to influence local government approaches on extension to ethnic minorities with respect to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge (IK), climate adaptation and the use of CBOs as the platform for extension services.

The quality and relevance of the services is thus not in question. The major challenge for ADC is an unclear organisational identity or at least organisational image – is ADC an NGO or is it a professional service provider – a sort of consultancy company?

The lack of clarity on identity can probably be traced back to the dual mode of operation. ADC is mainly known for being an effective broker of professional services between the Thai Nguyen University and clients, mainly local government institutions and development projects. ADC's role in this respect is to identify the relevant researcher from the university or amongst own staff. ADC takes a small fee for the service as broker and contract holder from the subcontracted researcher. ADC appears to be highly effective in this role. Besides this ADC has also been running a small project funded by CASI on developing models for climate adaptation by the use of IK.

At least the ADC leadership wants ADC to be seen as an NGO and is having an ambition of developing into the leading ethnic minority advocacy NGO in the northern mountainous areas. This vision is in sharp contrast to the public image, which is based on the “consultancy” work, and reinforced by the absence of clear communication on the identity of the organisation.

ADC is uniquely positioned as one of the few NGOs outside Hanoi working on ethnic minorities. Further, the track record of providing quality services has secured ADC with a high level of legitimacy and trust with local government. This can be utilised in advocacy work. ADC is having relevant civil society capabilities in the form of experiences with advocacy, CBO capacity building and civil society network formation (NorthNet).

ADC holds potential for developing into a unique locally based NGO resource for ethnic minorities. For this to happen, there is a need to establish clarity on own identity, including the relationship between its consultancy services and its NGO work and how they can mutually reinforce each other. Further, ADC needs to be able to clearly communicate this identity of a combined service provider and a value based NGO.

ADC is in need of OD facilitation support to clarify and internalise its identity and develop clear organisational strategies for the change processes it wants to embark upon. This is a major change process which needs full commitment and buy-in from all ADC stakeholders, including organisational leadership, staff and associates who provide the professional services.

Based on clarity of the organisation's identity, ADC needs to be able to clearly brand itself as a value based but highly professional NGO, which at one and the same time provides high quality services and engage in local development processes in support of ethnic minorities.

Provided the good services rendered by ADC, the contacts and trust developed through these services with important local stakeholders, but not least the income generated for the organisation through its consultancy, it is important that ADC maintains the two legs in its work. ADC is through its relationship with the university and its success in providing consultancy services secured its basic sustainability.

#### **Recommendation:**

- It is recommended that CASI continue to provide funding to ADC, but at a slightly reduced level due to the overall budget cuts. The priorities in programme funding should follow the suggested priorities of ADC, which means less focus on model development and direct farmers support.
- CASI should support ADC in clarifying its organisational identity and organisational strategy (Theory of Change). This strategic clarification should include the relationship between the two legs of its operations and how they can support each other. The strategic process needs to be an inclusive process with ADC staff, board and associates to ensure ownership.
- CASI should follow – and where needed support – the implementation of the above strategic redirection. This could include concrete capacity building activities or support for OD process facilitation.

#### **5.5.4 SRD**

SRD is one of the major VNGOs within sustainable rural development with a particular focus on vulnerable communities. SRD is one of few organisations with a nationwide engagement. The scope of the interventions covers a number of areas, including sustainable agriculture, climate change – climate risk reduction, and forestry related community issues. Ethnic minorities are but one target group of SRD. SRD is having a strong focus on community level support through participatory processes. This includes most recently piloting of ethnic minority participation in the Socio Economic Development Planning. SRD is an active participant in a number of fora and networks. SRD participates in the EMWG, but is having more of a facilitative role, supporting different events such as consultations and broker of resources for e.g. hiring of external consultancy support. SRD is not seen by major ethnic minority stakeholders as a specialised resource with regard to ethnic minorities. SRD has not taken a leading role in any of the advocacy initiatives around ethnic minorities. The SRD Theory of Change and the exact nature of its added value within the ethnic minority work beyond the community level were not clearly expressed during the meeting with the consultants.

SRD has benefitted from the CASI capacity building. The support on advocacy was highlighted along with the gender training.

The CASI financial contribution to SRD is currently approximately 4 per cent. SRD is having a solid and diversified funding base and the immediate and midterm financial base of the organisation appears to be solid.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Provided the cut in the CASI budget, the less strategic nature of SRD, and the level of financial consolidation of SRD, it is recommended that the CASI financial contribution to SRD be discontinued by mid-2016. The financial support during the first six months of 2016 should be limited and targeted at areas of strategic importance for SRDs continued work with ethnic minorities. SRD has expressed an interest in strengthening their work with networks, rather than presently working more with individual CBOs, this in order to secure the voices of ethnic minorities and increased participation in policy processes at local and national level. CASI could offer SRD to support the facilitation of the development of a SRD strategy on networking, including a the development of a consistent and realistic Theory of Change on networks as a means to secure voices and influence policy processes.
- SRD emphasises the importance of networking and mutual inspiration amongst CASI partners. SRD should be offered to continue in the CASI learning space and other initiatives during the CASI exit period.

#### **5.5.5 VUSTA**

VUSTA is part of the Father Land Front, and is one of the main venues for NGOs to register. It is a central player in the relationship between NGOs and the government. CARE has had a partnership with VUSTA since 2004. The partnership has been appreciated in providing support for important transition processes in Vietnam. This includes support for strengthening VUSTA and member organisations' capacity in developing relevant research methods and the M&E capacity. The CASI III partnership was intended to serve as a means for strengthening contacts between CASI partners and relevant government institutions. Ethnic minorities per se have not been a priority area for VUSTA, and there have not been any activities directly related to ethnic minorities during the CASI III. VUSTA has been involved in broader civil society legislative issues of relevance for CASI. This includes work in relationship to Decree no. 93 on financial provision for VNGOs from INGOs. Further, VUSTA has made comments to the first draft of the Law on Associations.

Due to leadership changes in VUSTA during 2014 the organisational agendas and focus for advocacy is still not developed. VUSTA is likely to remain an important actor with regards to securing the space and interest of VNGOs but the role and direct relationship to the CASI programme is deemed to be limited. VUSTA is secured funding from the Vietnamese government.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Provided the diminishing funding during the exit phase, and provided the less immediate strategic role of VUSTA vis-à-vis the scope of the CASI programme, it is recommended that VUSTA no longer receive funding as a core partner.
- Limited co-funding of activities which are deemed relevant for the scope and focus of CASI might be provided.

## 6 CASI and CARE Danmark regional programme

CARE Danmark is in the process of developing a new South-East-Asia programme with focus on Laos and Cambodia. CARE has within the framework of CASI developed a very sound civil society programme, adapted to the challenging context for civil society work in Vietnam. The programme is fully in line with the CARE Danmark strategies and approaches, and can show examples of best practice.

Laos and to some extent Cambodia have important similarities in respect of history, political tradition and culture. The CARE Danmark approach is envisaged to be quite different from most CARE project activities in the two countries, the experiences from CASI could serve as inspiration, and a living example of how the CARE Danmark strategies could be implemented in a context with at least some similarities to the one in the two new partner countries.

Besides the CARE level inspirations, the CASI partner experiences from working within the framework of CARE Danmarks strategy, in a somewhat similar political context could be of inspiration for the future partners in Cambodia and Laos and facilitate the understanding and contextualisation of the CARE Danmark approach.

There are numerous ways that can be used in sharing experiences, some obvious examples include:

- CARE Danmark could use CARE Vietnam resource persons in support of the programme development and start up in the two countries. This could be organised by structured learning exchange or through the use of CARE/CASI staff as resource persons in programme and systems development. This could be relevant both for programme and financial staff.
- Similarly facilitated exchange could be organised at a partner level. This could be around thematic issues such as advocacy, networks, facilitating voices etc., or it could be around content issues such as forest, land, culture and identity.
- Based on the above it could be considered to support twinning arrangements as a strategy for long term capacity building and mutual inspiration. Such an approach would support regional civil society networking with potential long term effects.

## **Annexes**

Annex 1: TOR

Annex 2: Evaluation Plan

Annex 3: Discussion paper for discussion with CASI Partners on exit strategy

## ANNEX 1.

# TOR for the final external evaluation of the Civil Action for Socio-economic Inclusion (CASI) Programme Vietnam

## Background

### 1.1. The CASI programme

In Vietnam, CASI is one of the pioneering initiatives in the field of civil society strengthening for increased rights and voice of marginalised people within ethnic minorities in the Northern areas. Since 2010, it is also part of CARE's national Ethnic Minority (EM) programme which contains a number of separately funded initiatives that share the common overall objective of *enabling remote ethnic minorities who are land poor, have weak resilience to hazards and shocks, and in particular women, to participate equitably in the economy and have legitimate and respected voice.*

The CASI program, funded by Danida through CARE Denmark, is implemented by CARE International in Vietnam in the northern mountainous areas over a six year period, until the end of 2015. An extensive programme formulation process for CASI was undertaken at the outset of the programme in 2009, building on previous phases of the programme. In 2012 a mid-term review provided the conceptual basis for a re-design of the programme for the remaining 3 years. The re-design sought to focus the programme more firmly towards *civil society strengthening* where *core partners* are supported to fully take on their role as *change agents for ethnic minority inclusion* in line with their own strategic plans and mandates. It also sought to simplify the implementation structure and better link the partners horizontally towards strengthened rights and voice of marginalised people among ethnic minorities.

The programme objective of CASI is that:

Civil society organisations and representatives of those who are at risk of socio-economic exclusion among Northern ethnic minorities are increasingly involved in setting the agenda for more inclusive development approaches and policies.

There are three main result areas for the CASI programme, corresponding to the main partner groups that the programme will directly support or work to influence:

Result area 1: Partner VNGOs gain influence and recognition as effective and legitimate change agents for rights-based ethnic minority inclusion in line with their strategic plans and mandates.

Result area 2: Ethnic minority-led civil society groups and EM leaders networks are empowered to systematically feed information into decision-making processes at different levels and benefit from programme-wide learning through enhanced links and networking with other civil society actors,

Result area 3: Policy-makers, planners and other key stakeholders increasingly get timely access to accurate, relevant and peer-reviewed evidence on key issues that can improve development effectiveness for CASI target groups.

### 1.2. The programmatic context

The space for civil society engagement on the rights and voice of marginalized people among ethnic minorities has gradually widened in Vietnam as INGOs and VNGOs have gained legitimacy through their hands-on support to communities and engagement with local stakeholders and planners. Yet ethnic minority-led civil society has been virtually non-existent as is the concept of constituency-based representation and engagement in local planning processes, despite the intentions in the governments

Grassroots Democracy Decree. Moreover, many of the established VNGOs now face the challenge of shifting from delivering services at community level to engaging more strategically with communities, officials and stakeholders to make sure that sustainable systems for gradual rights fulfillment are left behind, and that evidence and lessons are informing national policy.

Government policies and programs intended to improve the situation of remote ethnic minorities have often been inappropriate or ineffective, adopting a ‘one-size fits all’ approach to policy and service delivery, often with fragmented roles and blurred responsibilities when it comes to programme delivery. As a result, development initiatives by government agencies – including the implementation of national targeted programmes such as P135 and 30A – do not produce the intended poverty reduction results they were designed to deliver, leaving some population groups systematically behind in national development.

Poverty analysis points to a divide in poverty reduction rates between the majority ethnic group and the other 53 ethnic groups in Vietnam over the last decades. Prevalence and causes have been well documented, but a more nuanced understanding of non-economic factors for social equity and dignity is just starting to emerge. This was being further explored during the first part of the CASI programme.

## 2. Main purpose of the evaluation

The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the CASI programme and to generate lessons learnt and recommendations for a two-year phase out period.

## 3. Key evaluation questions

The evaluation will answer the following questions:

1. *To what extent has the project strategies and approaches supported the objectives of the CASI programme?*
2. *What are the key lessons learnt which should inform the work of CARE and others?*
3. *What recommendations can be made for a 2-year phase out period?*

The evaluation will apply OECD/DAC’s five criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, (emerging) impacts, and sustainability to answer the overall evaluation questions through a number of detailed questions, some of which are listed according to these criteria below.

The main focus will be on relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability as impact may be more difficult to trace and document. When considering, especially effectiveness, relevance and efficiency, the evaluator will also take into account the key evaluation questions developed by CARE Denmark to assess progress against it’s overall theory of change. These will be shared with the evaluator.

DAC Criteria	Evaluation issues/questions
<p><b>Effectiveness</b>                      “The extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance”.</p>	<p>Based on the three results areas of the project, to what extent has the project achieved the desired changes?                      How and why have project strategies and tools influenced the achievement of results?                      What has been the role of and interplay with contextual and external factors?</p>
<p><b>Relevance</b>                      The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries’ requirement, country needs, global priorities and partners’ and donors’ policies”.</p>	<p>What is the relevance and value added of the different project strategies and methodologies? What is the relevance of the partnership modality?</p>

	<p>What is the relevance of the approaches to building the capacity of partners? How strategic and appropriate were the choices made by CARE DK, CARE Vietnam and partners in operationalizing the project?</p>
<p><b>Efficiency</b> “A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results”.</p>	<p>What are the results (outputs, outcomes) achieved relative to the investment? What is the efficiency of the current organizational set-up of CARE and partners?</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b> “The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. Probability of long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time”.</p>	<p>What are the positive and negative factors determining sustainability of supported initiatives? To what extent have these factors been addressed; and with what effect? What is the likelihood of continuation and long-term benefits of the project initiatives?</p>
<p><b>Impact</b> “The positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. This involves the main impacts and effects resulting from the activity on the local social, economic, environmental and other development indicators. The examination should be concerned with both intended and unintended results and must also include the positive and negative impact of external factors, such as changes in terms of trade and financial conditions”.</p>	<p>What are the emerging impacts and trends which can be attributed to CASI, or where a significant contribution by CARE and partners can be verified?</p>

#### 4. Outputs

An evaluation report (drafts and one final version) with consistency between findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations (max. 30 pages).

An evaluation debriefing to be presented to the CASI team in Hanoi.

*NB: Responsibility for the content and presentation of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation rests with the evaluation consultant. Findings and recommendations expressed in the evaluation report will not necessarily correspond to the views of CARE (or other stakeholders). It is the responsibility of the evaluation team to ensure that there is a clear link between findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations and in general to ensure that the evaluation is based on solid evidence (and/or indicate solidity of evidence for the various judgments made).*

#### 5. Scope of work

The focus of the evaluation will be on the results and strategies of the current phase of the CASI program, initiated in 2010. As the project design was updated with effect from January 2013, the latest results framework should be used as reference.

In terms of documenting results, the evaluation will mainly focus on outcome level. The evaluation will be informed by an end line survey conducted by the CASI team, the mid-term evaluation of CASI and previous annual reports and outcome studies. The evaluation will not repeat data collection and analysis but identify information gaps at the outset and analyze and reflect on results documented and strategies applied.

The evaluation will reflect on strategic choices made in operationalizing the project at the community level as well as at the organizational level (partners and CARE).

Recommendations for the future should consider how CARE can best support its partners and ensure sustainability of project results over the coming two years.

The field work should cover key activities and interventions under CASI to adequately inform findings on the strategies and approaches followed by the project. A final field visit schedule will be put together after the initial literature review and identification of knowledge gaps in the project monitoring reports and end-line survey.

## **6. Approach and methodology**

The evaluator will refine the approach and methodology based on a review of the end-line survey and annual reports. Any gaps in information should be addressed in the evaluation.

The evaluation methodology will be presented to the evaluation managers before commencing the fieldwork, and the approach will be described briefly in the initial sections of the evaluation report.

The evaluator should conduct the evaluation bearing in mind the following principles:

- ✓ Judgments should be made relative to context (the evaluation will draw conclusions and identify trends taking into consideration the role of and interplay with context);
- ✓ Strong engagement of CASI staff, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of the evaluation (respecting time constraints);
- ✓ Using/building on previous studies and evaluation;
- ✓ Attention to principles of human rights in all aspects of the evaluation

## **7. Evaluation management and implementation**

The evaluation will be supervised by the CARE Denmark program coordinator for Vietnam, Morten Fauerby Thomsen (based in Copenhagen) with co-supervision from Nguyen Duc Thanh, Portfolio manager, based in Vietnam. For logistics and support during the field work, the evaluator will be in direct contact with the CASI team.

## **8. Qualifications of the Evaluator**

The evaluator can be Vietnam national or international professional with relevant education and working experience including:

- ✓ Proven capacity and extensive experience in management and conduct of evaluations, including strong analytical skills and experience from evaluating rights-based and civil society support type programs
- ✓ Strong understanding of program approaches as well as the relationships between NGOs, CSOs and donors
- ✓ Experience with the Vietnamese development context
- ✓ Experience in analysing partnerships and capacity development (preferred)
- ✓ Experience with participatory natural resource management methodologies (preferred)

## **9. Timing and reporting**

The evaluation work is expected to commence **in early August 2015** and the Final Evaluation Report shall be submitted by **18<sup>th</sup> September 2015**.

It is expected that the consultancy can be divided between a national and international consultant, depending on the qualifications of the consultant. A division is likely to amount to 24 working days for the International Consultant and 14 working days for the National Consultant, **37 consultancy days in total**.

Time	Contents	Exp. time	Remarks
June 2015	Finalise consultant contracts and update TOR if necessary based on discussion with consultants		To be prepared by CARE Denmark
Early August	The consultants review key documents and refine the approach and methodology of the evaluation based on a review of the end-line survey and other key reports	3 days	Methodology to be presented to CARE's evaluation managers before commencing the field work
Mid august	Commence evaluation in Vietnam including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting with program team and partners;</li> <li>- Conduct field trip (5-6 days);</li> <li>- Meeting key stakeholders</li> <li>- Brief or workshop of key findings with the program staff/senior management and key partners</li> </ul>	13 days	Detailed itinerary to be prepared by CARE Vietnam and agreed with consultant prior to evaluation start
7th September	Evaluator submits a 1 <sup>st</sup> draft report	6 days	
11th September	Review and comment on the draft reports		By CARE DK, CARE Vietnam and partners
18th September	Finalize report and submission	2 days	To CARE DK and CARE Vietnam

## 10. Key documents

Key documents include, but not limited to:

- ✓ CASI program document
- ✓ End-line survey
- ✓ Annual progress reports
- ✓ Annual financial reports
- ✓ Outcome surveys
- ✓ Mid-term review report
- ✓ Monitoring framework

These will be made available to the evaluator by CARE in due time before the evaluation work is to commence.

ANNEX 2.

# CASI Final Evaluation Plan

From 10<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> August

Consultant team: Mr. Flemming Gjedde-Nielsen and Ms. Pham Thuy Chi

Date	Time	Activities <sup>18</sup>	Location	Participants
<b>10<sup>th</sup> August</b>		<b>Start up meeting with CVN</b>		
<i>Morning</i>	9:00-10:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation of scope and methods as well as guiding questions of the evaluation by the team.</li> <li>- Final agreements and refine the evaluation process and plan</li> </ul>	CARE office, second floor meeting room	A.Linh, Liz, A.Dzung, Thanh, Nhan, Giang, Chi, Hanh, Phuong
	10:00-12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Briefly presentation on key findings from CASI end line survey + impact study</li> </ul>	As above	As above + IRC consultant
<i>Afternoon</i>	14:00-15:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus group discussion on CARE perspective on exit strategy (see the guiding questions in the section 5.1 below ) including strategic considerations</li> </ul>	As above	Program management staff (A.Linh, A.Dzung, Liz, Thanh,...)
	15:30-17:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interview on core evaluation with regards to achievements, challenges and strategic considerations(see the guiding questions in the section 5.1 below )</li> </ul>	As above	CASI management and technical team (Thanh, Nhan, Hong, Giang, Chi, Hanh)
<b>11<sup>st</sup> August</b>	Morning (9:00-12:000)	<b>Meeting with iSEE partner</b>	iSEE office	Director, managers
	Afternoon			
<b>12<sup>nd</sup> August</b>	Morning (9:00-12:000)	<b>Meeting with SRD partner</b>	SRD office	Director, vice director, project managers etc.
	14:00 -15:00 (TBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting with World Bank</li> <li>- Meeting with EMWG members ( Action aids, NGO resource centre) – Note: iSEE and SRD are core members</li> </ul>	World Bank Office	Ms. Hong Mai
<b>13<sup>rd</sup> August</b>	Morning (9:00-12:000)	<b>Meeting with CIRUM partner</b>	CIRUM office	Director, Vice director, project manager etc.
	Afternoon 13:30-14:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting with LISO members &amp; Land Net representatives (Note: Cirum is a core member of LISO, Land Net is an national wide EM network on forest land rights that CIRUM and LISO are supporting the network)</li> </ul>	CIRUM office	
	15:00-16:00	Meeting with UNDP's official	UNDP office 304 Kim Ma street	Ms. Hoang Nga
	16:20-17:00	<b>Midterm meeting with CARE program management team</b>	CARE office	A.Linh, Liz, A.Dzung, Thanh, Nhan, Giang, Chi, Hanh
<b>14<sup>th</sup> August</b>	Morning (8:30-10:30)	<b>Meeting with ADC partner and field visit</b>	ADC office	Director, Vice director, project manager -Consultants + Liz+ Thanh+ Loan+Dzung

<sup>18</sup> Please see preparatory notes by international consultant in the below pages for more information and requirements for the final evaluation

	Afternoon (13:30-17:00)	- Meeting with Commune Authority + CBO representatives	Cho Moi district	Commune officials, CBO representatives (men & women) -Consultants + Liz+ Thanh+ Loan+ Dzung
15 <sup>th</sup> August	TBC	- Meeting with Commune Authority + CBO representatives  - Meeting with local authorities at district and provincial level	Cho Moi district Bac Kan province	- Consultants + Liz+ Thanh+ Loan+Dzung
16 <sup>th</sup> August	Sunday	Prepare for feedback meetings, others works		Consultants
17 <sup>th</sup> August	9:00-10:00 TBC 14:00-15:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with VUSTA partner</li> <li>• Government Agencies (CEMA)</li> <li>• Meeting with CECODES in Viet Nam</li> </ul>		Mr. San+ Linh (VUSTA) Ms. Suu/Anh (CEMA) Mr. Dang Hoang Giang
18 <sup>th</sup> August	9:00-10:00 AM  16:00-17:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with Asian Foundation</li> <li>• Meeting with PPWG's chair</li> </ul>	The Asia Foundation   #10-03, Prime Center, 53 Quang Trung, Hanoi, Vietnam  iSEE office	Ms. Thu Hang – Governance and Development sector  Mr.Le Quang Binh
19 <sup>th</sup> August	14:30-15:30  Flexible time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with EU <sup>(*)</sup></li> <li>• Skype meeting with Mr. Andrew wells-Dang</li> </ul>	24 <sup>th</sup> Floor, West Wing, Lotte Centre, 54 Lieu Giai, Ba Dinh, Hanoi	Hong Anh (Ms.) Programme Officer - Governance & Civil Society, Development Cooperation
20 <sup>th</sup> August	Morning  15:30-16:30	Prepare for feedback meetings  Meetings with CIDA in Canada embassy	Ha Noi tower 12 <sup>th</sup> Floor, No 49 Hai Ba Trung	Consultants  Ms. Bich Van and her colleague- CSO coordinator ( Mobile: 0912255150)
21 <sup>st</sup> August	9:30-11:00	Final debriefing with CARE VN's SMT	CARE office	All SMT members
	14:00-16:00	Feedback meeting with all CASI partners	Cong Doan Hotel	All CASI partners management team

## **ANNEX 3**

### **Discussion with CASI partners on exit strategy**

#### **To CASI partners**

**From: Flemming Gjedde-Nielsen Team leader CASI Evaluation.**

#### **Introduction**

CARE Denmark has decided that its engagement in Vietnam including in the funding of CASI III shall be phased out during a period of two years, 2016 – 2017. An external evaluation will be carried out to capture the achievements and draw out major lessons learned from the CASI III intervention. A particular focus will be on providing recommendations for CARE on the exit strategy.

The perspective of the CASI partners are essential for planning of an effective phase out process, and hereby secure the sustainability of the gains achieved. In order for the consultation process to be as effective possible I would like to ask you to consider the following issues relating to the planning of the exit process. The issues raised below will form the basis for a dialogue with you during the evaluation process.

- What do you see as the main challenges for your organisation in sustaining the CASI achievements in the post CASI period? This could amongst other include organisational, financial, relational (with other CASI partners, government relationships), access to information or capacity building.
- How should the phase out be designed to assist you in overcoming or reducing the identified challenges.
- What should be the concrete focus of the phase out strategy? is there a need for changing the focus during the phase out process?, e.g. that the focus in the first year will be different from the second? .
- Do you see a need for changing the partnership roles and relationship with CARE during the phase out to prepare your organisation for a post CASI situation? Are there things CARE should stop doing? Should CARE do something different? Should you or other CASI partners take on new roles in the cooperation?
- The potential for sustaining CASI as a shared platform or a donor financing mechanism has been mentioned in the 2012 Mid Term Review report of CASI III. Is this relevant and feasible in your perspective. If so what could a “new CASI” entail, what should be done during the phase out process to secure this?
- Other issues ideas are most welcome