

Summary of the eight papers on Localising the MDGs
for Poverty Reduction in Viet Nam

Achieving the Vietnam Development Goals: an Overview of Progress and Challenges

June 2002

This summary paper was compiled and written by Rob Swinkels and Carrie Turk of the World Bank. It provides a synthesis of the eight thematic papers on the Vietnam Development Goals that were prepared by the Poverty Task Force. We would like to thank the authors of these eight thematic papers as well as all those that contributed to it. We are grateful to Nguyen Thi Minh Hoa for editorial assistance.

FOREWORD BY THE POVERTY TASK FORCE *

This series of papers on the Vietnam Development Goals (VDGs) reflects a collective effort by the Poverty Task Force to propose a set of goals and intermediate indicators, which represent both the core developmental vision of Vietnam as well as the Government's efforts to meet international goals. This analytical work was carried out during 2001 and early 2002 as the Government of Vietnam drafted a Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) and was trying to establish a clear accountability framework for monitoring future progress. This process involved looking across the many goals and targets incorporated in key strategy documents (especially the Ten Year Socio-Economic Development Strategy and the ten-year sectoral strategies) to select a small number of goals that could reflect the strong national strategic emphasis on economic growth, poverty reduction and social equity. Although national strategies were used as a starting point, the CPRGS drafting team was also aware that international commitment to achieving important poverty and social outcomes across the globe had intensified – an effort expressed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are a set of goals embodied in the Millennium Declaration, which has been adopted by 189 countries including Vietnam. A report on progress made in Viet Nam towards achieving the goals was prepared by the UN Country Team in July 2001.

The Government wanted to ensure that the CPRGS reflected their commitment to the international targets. For a number of reasons, however, it was important to adapt the MDGs to fit local circumstances rather than adopting them in their original form. First, Vietnam has reached, or nearly reached some of the MDGs. Poverty, for example, has already halved between 1990 and 2000. It makes sense, then, for Vietnam to define a new localized version of the poverty goal in order to motivate policy formulation over the coming years. Secondly, though Vietnam performs well on some of the access targets – for example in basic education – there are urgent challenges associated with improving the quality of those services to international levels. While it is clearly still important to strive for universal primary education, for example, it is also important to make sure that the children in school are attaining standards that are similar to other countries. Thirdly, Vietnam has its own strategic planning cycle with different start and endpoints from the MDGs. It is helpful to align the 25-year cycle of the MDGs with the five and ten year cycles of the Vietnamese planning horizons so that measures and actions can be tailored to outcome targets for 2005 and 2010 which are, in turn, consistent with targets for 2015. Fourthly, there is a call for establishing subnational targets to capture, for example, issues related to ethnic minority development or inequality. Finally, there are areas which are particularly challenging for Vietnam at its current stage of development but which are not covered by the MDGs. As an example, although Vietnam has performed well in delivering basic social services, it has lagged behind in initiating necessary governance reforms which will be crucial to attaining some of the other outcome targets proposed in the national strategies.

This series of papers was prepared to contribute to the Government's thinking on target-setting and monitoring in eight thematic areas:

- Eradicating poverty and hunger;
- Reducing vulnerability and providing social protection;
- Providing quality basic education for all;
- Improving health status and reducing inequalities;
- Ensuring environmental sustainability;
- Promoting ethnic minority development;
- Enhancing access to basic infrastructure ; and,
- Ensuring good governance for poverty reduction.

* The Government-donor-NGO Poverty Task Force has been working collaboratively on poverty analysis (World Bank et al, 1999) and strategic planning since 1999. While the CPRSG was being drafted, the PTF comprises 16 Government ministries, 6 donors, 4 international NGOs and 4 local NGOs.

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No separate paper was produced on promoting gender equity for two reasons. First, it was considered important that gender issues were mainstreamed across these eight areas. Secondly important issues outside these eight areas were already being addressed as the Government formulated its Second Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women.

Early versions of these draft papers were discussed at a 3-day workshop held in September 2001 attended by nearly 100 policymakers and practitioners. Government agencies, NGOs and donors have all participated in the working groups established to oversee the production of these documents. Further consultations on the drafts took place with sectoral ministries and agencies over the early part of 2002, the most intensive drafting period of the CPRGS. The CPRGS has been approved by the Prime Minister in May 2002 and outlines a set of goals and indicators which clearly reflect the analytical work and debates that have taken place over the last year. A slightly shortened, summarized table of VDGs (as articulated in the CPRGS) is included at the end of this paper.

Now that these papers are finalized, we hope that they will serve as a useful input for the implementation of the CPRGS, including the preparation of annual action plans.

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	1
1. THE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT	3
Strategic Planning in Vietnam	3
Institutional Context	4
2. SCOPE OF ANALYTICAL WORK	7
3. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS	10
<i>The Millennium Development Goals and the Vietnam Development Goals (VDGs)</i>	10
<i>Vietnam Development Goals directly based on the MDGs</i>	10
Goal One: Eradicate Poverty and Hunger	10
Goal Two: Achieve Better Education for All	13
Goal Three: Reach gender equality and empower women	15
Goal Four: Reduce Child Mortality	17
Goal Five: Improve maternal health	19
Goal Six: Combat HIV/AIDs, malaria and communicable diseases	21
Goal Seven: Ensure Environmental Sustainability	22
<i>Vietnam Development Goals not directly based on the MDGs</i>	25
Goal eight: Reduce vulnerability	25
Goal Nine: Ensure Good Governance for Poverty Reduction	25
Goal Ten: Eradicate poverty and preserve the culture and diversity of ethnic minorities	26
Goal Eleven: Ensuring pro-poor infrastructure development	27
4. LESSONS LEARNED AND REMAINING CHALLENGES	28
Lessons from the Vietnam experience in goal-setting	28
Remaining challenges	29
REFERENCES	32

CONTENTS

List of Tables

Table 1: The Vietnam Development Goals*	9
Table 2. The Duration of Primary Schooling in selected countries, 2001	14
Table 3: Decline in Infant and Child Mortality: International Comparison	17
Table 4 : Mortality Indicators for Disadvantaged Areas.	19

List of Boxes

Box 1: Government-donor-NGO collaboration in designing poverty reduction strategies	1
Box 2: Institutions involved in identifying the VDGs	4
Box 3: MDG Goal One: Eradicate Poverty and Hunger	11
Box 4: MDG Goal Two: Achieve Better Education for All	15
Box 5: MDG Goal Three: Reach Gender Equality and Empower Women	16
Box 6: MDG Goal Four: Reduce Child Mortality by two thirds by 2015	17
Box 7: MDG Goal Five: Improve Maternal Health (reduce MMR by three fourths by 2015)	20
Box 8: MDG Goal Six: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other disease	21
Box 9: MDG Goal Seven: Ensure Environmental Sustainability	24
Box 10: Goal Eight: Reduce vulnerability	25
Box 11: Goal nine: Ensure Good Governance for Poverty Reduction	26
Box 12: Goal Ten: Eradicate Poverty and Preserve the Culture and Diversity of Ethnic Minorities	26
Box 13. Goal Eleven: Provide basic infrastructure services to disadvantaged groups	27

List of Figures

Figure 1: Strategic Planning Framework in Vietnam	3
Figure 2: Faster-growing regions have reduced poverty most	11
Figure 3: Poverty reduction projections under different growth scenarios	12
Figure 4: Illiteracy Rate of 15-24 year-olds in Selected Countries, 1999	13
Figure 5: Trends in Primary Net Enrolment Rates, 1993-1998, by income quintile	14
Figure 6: Primary Completion Rates for selected countries and region, 1997	14
Figure 7: Girls as a percentage of boys in primary and lower secondary education: Levels in 1993-98 and goals for 2005	16
Figure 8: Projections for Infant Mortality	18
Figure 9: Projections for Under 5 Mortality	18
Figure 10: Future Projections for Reduction in Malnutrition	19
Figure 11: Maternal mortality goals are achievable if past performance is replicated	20
Figure 12: Targets for contraceptive prevalence ambitious but achievable	21
Figure 13. Trends in Vietnam's Forest Cover (percentage of country area)	23
Figure 14. Country Comparison of Access to Safe Water, 2000 (percentage of population)	23

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CG	Consultative Group
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
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CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
GIS	Geographic Information System
GoVN	Government of Vietnam
HEPR	Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction program
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
JBIC	Japanese Bank for International Cooperation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOH	Ministry of Health
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MTEFs	Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks
NGO	Non- Government Organization
NSEP	National Strategy for Environmental Protection
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PIP	Public Investment Programme
PREM	Poverty Reduction and Economic Management
PRGF/PRSC	Poverty Reduction and Growth Framework/Poverty Reduction Support Credit
PTF	Poverty Task Force
PWG	Poverty Working Group
SDS	Socio-Economic Development Strategy
SRV	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
TB	Tuberculosis
VDG	Vietnam Development Goal
VLSS	Vietnam Living Standards Survey
WHO	World Health Organization

BACKGROUND

This paper sets out work which has been carried out in Vietnam to assist the Government of Vietnam to identify a core set of development goals. This work was carried out during 2001 to inform the development of the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) and – through analytical work carried out in eight thematic areas - examined how the Government could bring together the national challenges and its international commitment to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)¹. Much of this analytical work has now been incorporated into the Government's final CPRGS², which outlines an accountability framework for demonstrating progress against a defined set of goals. These Vietnam Development Goals (VDGs) are closely associated with the MDGs, but are adapted and expanded to meet Vietnam's national challenges and reflect its unique circumstances, and the government's ambitious development plans.

The analytical work is detailed in a series of eight papers. It was carried out in a context of ongoing Government-donor-NGO collaboration to strengthen evidence-based policy-making for poverty reduction in Vietnam³. Some main milestones in this work, which has been ongoing since 1999, are set out chronologically in Box 1. Though the focus of this paper is on the analytical work on goal-setting and the processes surrounding it (work carried out since May 2001), the two prior years' collaborative work was important in laying the foundations for making the goal-setting work useful and effective. This work on goal-setting should be seen as a step in a longer-term process which seeks to strengthen national planning and monitoring for poverty reduction and we would argue that its value as an exercise would be very much diminished were it not for this broader framework of collaboration.

Box 1: Government-donor-NGO collaboration in designing poverty reduction strategies

January 1999:	Government-donor-NGO Poverty Task Force (PTF) established
January-June 1999:	Carried out 4 PPAs ; collaborative analysis of quantitative and qualitative poverty data
December 1999:	PTF publishes poverty assessment "Vietnam: Attacking Poverty"
January 2000:	PTF supports drafting of the Government's 10-year strategy for Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction
June 2000:	Government asks PTF to support process of producing I-PRSP; 3-day workshop held in Sapa with more than 100 Government officials, donors and NGOs to discuss strategies for poverty reduction across all sectors
March 2001:	I-PRSP approved by the Government of Vietnam and discussed by Boards of IMF and WB
May-Sept 2001:	PTF agrees to support Government work on setting targets for CPRGS Analytical work on outcomes and Vietnam Development Targets (VDGs) –eight thematic papers produced
September 2001:	Workshop in Haiphong to discuss targets – more than 100 participants
December 2001:	Work on VDGs present to and discussed at CG meeting;
December 2001:	Community-level consultations on draft CPRGS
January – May 2002:	4 national and 4 regional consultation workshops on draft CPRGS (incorporating the VDG work) Iterative re-drafting of CPRGS Work on resource implications of CPRGS
May 2002:	CPRGS finalized and approved by the Prime Minister

¹ See also work by the UN Country Team (UNCT 2001)

² SRV, 2002

³ More details are available in Turk (2001) and Swinkels and Turk (2002)

BACKGROUND

This paper starts by describing the overall context for goal setting in Vietnam and places this work in the broader strategic planning framework in Vietnam (Section One). We then describe the work carried out and the process that was followed in building consensus around the analysis, addressing questions frequently asked of this work in Vietnam of who was involved,

what the main players and what did the work achieve? (Section Two). The third section provides a summary of the analysis in the eight papers and draws directly on the work of others. We conclude by reflecting on some of the lessons learnt from this work and identify some of the challenges ahead in relating these goals to future action on the ground (Section Four).

SECTION ONE: THE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Strategic Planning in Vietnam

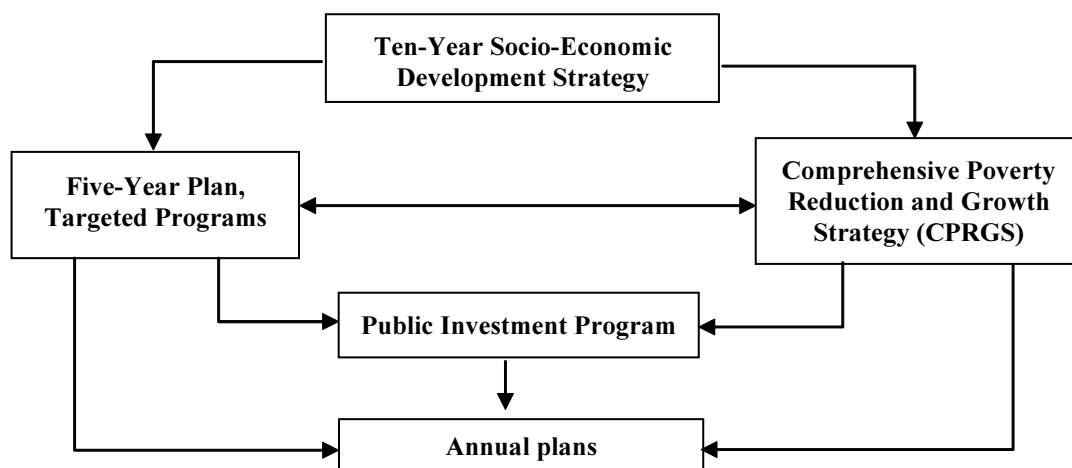
Vietnam has a strong government with functioning levels of administration down to the commune level. Policy formulation and public actions are guided by a range of ten-year strategies and five-year plans, prepared at national and provincial levels of Government. Provinces have considerable power in determining their local plans and in allocating public resources. The recent Public Expenditure Review⁴ found that nearly 40% of expenditure decisions were made by provincial governments, with the proportion being very much higher for certain sectors. Although there are a number of urgent governance issues which need to be addressed, the government has a track record in sound macroeconomic and basic public service delivery.

Vietnam has articulated its development vision for the coming decade in the Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SDS), which expresses a strong commitment to growth, poverty reduction, social equity and a more modern system of governance⁵. This document - prepared by the Communist Party of Vietnam and endorsed at the Ninth Party Congress in 2001 - lays out a path of transition towards a “market economy with socialist orientation”. It commits Vietnam to full openness to the global economy over the coming

decade, and the creation of a level playing field between state and private sectors. It emphasizes that the transition should be “pro-poor”, and notes that this will require heavier investment in rural and lagging regions, and a more gradual reform implementation than is often recommended by the international community. It gives strong emphasis to poverty reduction and social equity. The specific actions, needed to translate this vision into reality, are described in the draft five year plan for 2001-2005 and in a number of sectoral ten year strategies and five year plans. These sectoral plans and strategies are approved by the Prime Minister and each one of these strategies details a large number of goals, targets and indicators. The goals included in these strategies are generally not prioritized, are not costed and tend to emphasize inputs and outputs rather than outcomes.

In early 2001, the Government of Vietnam began setting out the steps necessary to develop their Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS). The Government described the CPRGS as an “action plan that translates the Government’s Ten Year Socio-economic Development Strategy, Five Year Socio-economic Development Plan as well as other sectoral development plans into concrete measures with well-defined roadmaps for implementation”⁶. The links between the various components of the planning framework are presented in the CPRGS (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Strategic Planning Framework in Vietnam



Source: SRV, 2002

⁴ Government of Vietnam-donor Working Group, 2000

⁵ World Bank et al, 2000

⁶ SRV, 2002 p.2

The Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) was assigned the task of drafting the CPRGS and MPI, in turn, established an inter-ministerial drafting committee to generate broad-based input from across Government into the drafting process (Box 2 sets out some of the main participants in this process). Key to the task of formulating the CPRGS was the need to prioritize across the wide range of goals and targets in the full range of strategies and plans to identify those which would most effectively capture progress in reducing poverty and promoting social equity. This task involved the identification of clear goals, outcome targets and corresponding indicators which would explain the changes the Government of Vietnam was seeking to generate over time, and which could be tracked and monitored regularly (annually or biannually) to assess progress towards the targets. In this context, the Government of Vietnam asked the Poverty Task Force (PTF) to support some background analysis in eight thematic areas.

Institutional Context

The work on the CPRGS and, in particular the work on goal-setting, has drawn in a wide range of organizations (Box 2). Most of the description here focuses on the

roles of various government institutions and the interactions which took place to facilitate effective broad-based input across government. However, international NGOs, local civil society and poor communities have also been involved at various stages of the work – less directly so in the analysis itself but more actively in some of the processes surrounding this work.

Ministry of Planning and Investment and the CPRGS Drafting Committee

Until the Government of Vietnam began work on an interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) had really been leading work on poverty reduction in its role as coordinator of the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction (HEPR) Programme. The HEPR is a collection of targeted programmes and social assistance initiatives, which are targeted at individual households identified as poor using a rice-income measure of poverty. The ten year strategy for Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction outlines the key components of this programme, but does not outline an attack on poverty which looks more deeply at some of the structural causes of poverty. MPI – a central agency

Box 2: Institutions involved in identifying the VDGs

Key actors involved in the work on defining local development targets

- The Government of Vietnam, particularly the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) who has led work on developing a CPRGS and the members of the 16-agency CPRGS Drafting Committee;
- Line ministries, but particularly the Ministries of Health; Education and Training; Transport; Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs; and, Agriculture and Rural Development.
- Sub-national levels of government, who have interacted with the CPRGS Drafting Committee to debate and provide feedback on drafts of the CPRGS;
- The Poverty Task Force (PTF), which provides a mechanism for Government-donor-NGO collaboration on strategy formulation for poverty reduction and which funded the analytical work and consultation processes. Other Government-donor-NGO partnership groups have also been involved in the target-setting work in certain sectors;
- The Consultative Group (CG) Meeting, which over the last few years has allowed for formal dialogue between the Government of Vietnam and the donor community (including NGOs) on poverty diagnostics, strategy development and (in December 2001) goal-setting for poverty reduction.
- In the future, a CPRGS Steering Committee and Poverty Unit are likely to play an important role in overseeing the implementation of the CPRGS, including monitoring progress against defined targets and intermediate indicators.

responsible for drafting the Five Year Plan and the Public Investment Programme - was assigned the task of preparing a more comprehensive strategy to reduce poverty over the medium term. Identifying clear goals to form the backbone of the CPRGS quickly emerged as one of the key challenges that MPI would have to address in the drafting. Through their prominent role on the PTF, they were active in initiating and then defining the scope and substance of the analytical work on goal-setting.

To facilitate cross-sectoral input, MPI established a multi-agency drafting committee. MPI wrote to the heads or Ministers of 16 agencies⁷ and requested that they nominate representatives to sit on the drafting committee. MOLISA remained engaged in the process through this committee. A total of 55 people are members of this committee. Some Ministries and agencies have established internal working groups or organized internal consultation exercises to generate cross-departmental input into the CPRGS. These sectoral groups very often included the same representatives that worked with the analysts on the VDG papers. For example the work on health goals was led by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in close collaboration with the broader health sector working group. This health sector working group also performed a broader role in the CPRGS-drafting process by supporting the Ministry of Health in formulating its substantive input into the CPRGS.

Sub-national levels of Government

There are 61 provinces in Vietnam, with important functions in local policy formulation and resource allocation. With some exceptions (for example on the analytical work on reducing vulnerability) local level of government were not involved directly in most of the analytical work on target-setting. Sub-national levels of Government have engaged actively in consultation exercises where draft versions of the CPRGS - incorporating the goals - have been debated.

An important question which will need to be addressed as the CPRGS is implemented refers to how outcome targets defined at national levels can be aligned with resources which are allocated, often, at local levels.

The Poverty Task Force and other Partnership Groups

The analytical work to identify a core set of Vietnam Development Goals from the many strategies and plans was collectively organized by the Poverty Task Force (PTF). The PTF was initially established to coordinate detailed analysis of poverty in Vietnam through Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) and household surveys. But it then – at the request of the Government of Vietnam - continued as a mechanism for coordinating support to the development of the CPRGS. As well as the goal-setting work describe here, this has included support to six village level consultations on the draft document, four regional and two national consultations, the hiring of local and international consultants and logistical support.

The PTF is a Government-donor-NGO task force comprising 16 Government ministries⁸, 6 donors, 4 international NGOs and 4 local NGOs. Membership has changed since it was established in 1999: it has expanded to broaden the government input and to involve more donors. The NGO membership has rotated (at the request of the NGO community) and more local NGOs are involved than at the time of formation. The 6 donors include 3 multilateral agencies (UNDP, Asian Development Bank and the World Bank) and 3 bilateral donors (on a rotating basis). The 4 international NGOs are selected by the NGO community and rotate every two years. Meetings are co-chaired by a representative from Government and a representative from the international community and the minutes are posted on a local website⁹. Members are expected to provide active support in the form of resources or ideas and it is therefore a requirement for the donors and NGO representatives in the PTF that have the authority to make decisions and provide immediate commitment for

⁷ The multi-agency drafting committee include representatives from Ministries Foreign Affairs, Planning and Investment, Agriculture, Trade, Health, Construction, Labor Invalids and Social Affairs, Industry, Finance, Transport and Communications, Education and Training, General Statistical Office, Committee for Ethnic Groups and Mountainous Areas, Committee for Innovation Guidance and State Owned Enterprises Development, State Bank of Vietnam, Government Commission on Organization and Personnel, Electricity of Vietnam.

⁸ While the CPRGS is being drafted, the entire drafting committee is invited to PTF meetings.

⁹ www.vdic.org.vn

support. To maintain an effective focus on delivering on specific tasks of benefit to the Government, the PTF has been kept small and donor numbers limited so that Government can dominate. To meet the interest of the donors not in the PTF, the Poverty Working Group (PWG) was established. This wider group – which is open to any interested donor or NGO – serves as a mechanism for information sharing of progress made and decisions taken by the PTF. UNDP serves as a conduit for involving other agencies that are part of the UN Country Team.

Through the PTF, responsibility for the analytical work on goal-setting – the series of eight papers - was divided among a number of donor organizations: the UNDP, Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the Department for International Development of the UK, and the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). Donors leading the work defined their own consultation process with other actors working in that sector. In some instances – such as the work on health – other existing partnership groups were used as a mechanism for involving and consulting the main interested Government and international agencies in a sector. For other areas of work – such as the study on reducing vulnerability – there were no pre-existing partnership groups. Interested agencies were called together at periodic intervals to discuss progress and the emerging analysis.

The Consultative Group (CG) Meeting

Although there are more than 30 donors operating in Vietnam, donor activities are generally quite well-coordinated. Much of the credit for this goes to the Government of Vietnam, which plays a strong role in ensuring coherence. The CG meeting provides an important opportunity for the Government to present its key developmental challenges and to discuss with the international community how development assistance might best be used to address these

challenges. Recent CG meetings for Vietnam have had poverty reduction as a key theme. The work on developing the VDGs was presented at the CG meeting in December 2001 and there was widespread support among the delegates for incorporating this work into the CPRGS. Discussions also covered the need to make development assistance more effective in supporting progress in achieving these outcomes. A number of initiatives in aid harmonization are underway in Vietnam and several donors view the CPRGS – and the goals identified in it – as an instrument for raising the quality and effectiveness of aid delivered.

Looking Forward: the CPRGS Steering Committee and Poverty Unit

The process of drafting the CPRGS and identifying priority goals and targets demonstrated the challenges involved in ensuring coordination across sectors and across the levels of Government. As the Government seeks to implement the actions it has now identified and to make progress against their national goals, these challenges will intensify. The CPRGS proposes the establishment of an inter-ministerial steering committee at a senior (vice-ministerial) level, to coordinate the implementation of the CPRGS and monitoring the progress towards meeting the goals. The committee is likely to be chaired by a senior leader of the government such as Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister and encourage broad input from across Government.

The steering committee will be supported by a poverty unit, to be established in MPI, that does the day-to-day coordination work. This unit will be staffed with technical people who are strong in data collection, poverty analysis, policy-making and monitoring and evaluation of the CPRGS. In the future, this would make a sensible institutional home for much of the analytical work associated with monitoring the progress towards meeting stated outcome targets.

SECTION TWO: SCOPE OF ANALYTICAL WORK

In March 2001, the Government of Vietnam asked the PTF to support background analysis on goal-setting in eight thematic areas. These eight themes were chosen by the Government of Vietnam as representing the heart of their strategy to fight poverty. Several of the themes had a direct link with the Millennium Development Goals. Others lay outside the territory defined by the MDGs but were chosen on the basis of their strategic importance in terms of economic growth, poverty reduction and social equity. Through this work, the Government hoped to establish a clear monitoring framework for their CPRGS and other Government strategies.

The goals and targets were presented and discussed in a series of eight papers that were led by various agencies, each covering one thematic areas¹⁰:

- Eradicating poverty and hunger (led by the World Bank);
- Reducing vulnerability and providing social protection (led by the World Bank);
- Providing quality basic education for all (led by DFID);
- Improving health status and reducing inequalities (led by the ADB and the WHO);
- Ensuring environmental sustainability (led by UNDP);
- Promoting ethnic minority development (led by UNDP);
- Enhancing access to basic infrastructure (led by JBIC) ; and,
- Ensuring good governance for poverty reduction (led by the ADB).

No paper was devoted specifically to gender issues, given that Vietnam already had a sound national gender action plan (the ‘National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women’) from which gender indicators could be taken. It was agreed that all indicators identified in the other eight papers would be broken down by gender (and region and ethnicity), though this turned out to be difficult in practice for some indicators.

The eight papers all took national strategies as a starting point and explored the links with the MDGS. In particular, analysis concentrated on:

- Making the MDGs consistent with Government goals set in the 10 Year Socio-Economic Development Strategy for 2001-2010 and other sector strategies;
- Identifying process indicators and intermediate indicators as well as the outcome indicators and presenting a discussion of the key public actions needed to influence the intermediate indicators;
- Including the quality dimension where necessary (such as in primary education);
- Raising the bar where the original MDG has already been met in Vietnam (as in halving extreme poverty); and,
- Making the set of indicators more comprehensive by including indicators on empowerment/governance, vulnerability – where currently indicators are ill-defined in Government documents and absent from the MDGs.

Work on each of these papers was led by a donor agency from the PTF. The lead agency was then responsible for coordinating the interaction with relevant Government agencies and civil society organizations while the analysis was taking place. This was usually coordinated through small working groups. Key issues for discussion within these groups included:

- What does the goal mean in Vietnam? How is it measured and where do they stand today? How does Vietnam performance compare internationally? What are the trends – cross-country and time trends in Vietnam?
- Is this MDG (and its sub-indicators) right for Vietnam? Is it capturing all it needs to capture? How can it be supplemented? Is it consistent with GoVN goals, or how could it be brought into line with GoVN goals?
- How can the localized MDGs (or VDGs), which are very aggregate outcome measures, be disaggregated into intermediate indicators that can be used to measure progress on a more short-term and regular basis?
- How can the localized indicators be measured? By whom? What are the data limitations and how can they be addressed? How can equity issues

¹⁰ These papers can be downloaded from: www.vdic.org.vn. (A full reference list of these papers is provided at the end of this paper.)

– ethnic, gender, locational - be explored in a meaningful way?

- What are the main policy, investment and institutional development issues influencing achievement of the localized MDGs and the intermediate indicators? What are the main challenges and priority strategic responses?

Government agencies, NGOs and donors all participated in the working groups established to oversee the production of these documents. First drafts of the papers were discussed at a 3-day workshop held in September 2001 attended by nearly 100 policymakers and practitioners. In some areas there was immediate agreement that a goal was needed, but also that more work and discussion was necessary to assess what is realistic and attainable. Very tangibly, the workshop resulted in a tentative list of draft Vietnam Development Goals to serve as a basis for further consultation across Government as the CPRGS drafting process intensified.

The work in progress was discussed by delegates at the Consultative Group meeting in December and there was strong support for the proposal that these localized goals should form the backbone of the CPRGS. Further consultations on these drafts took place with sectoral ministries and agencies over the following months. By June 2002 final versions of these reports were released, which presented consensus views of core development goals and targets for Vietnam. Though not every proposed goal and target was eventually adopted by the Government, the final CPRGS reflects much of the analytical work that was undertaken and sets a framework of goals and targets that largely covers, and extends beyond, the areas defined by the MDGs. Table 1 sets out the Vietnam Development Goals included in the CPRGS. The following section summarises the analytical work from the eight papers.

Table 1: The Vietnam Development Goals*

Vietnam Development Goals directly based on the MDGs
Goal 1: Reduce the percentage of poor and hungry households
Target 1: Reduce by 40% the proportion of people living below the international poverty line between 2001 and 2010
Target 2: Reduce by 75% the number of people living under the international food poverty line by 2010
Goal 2: Universalize education and improve education quality
Target 1: Increase net enrolment in primary school to 97% by 2005 and to 99% by 2010
Target 2: Increase net enrolment rate in junior secondary school to 80% by 2005 and 90% by 2010
Target 3: Eliminate the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005, and the gap with ethnic minorities by 2010
Target 4: Increase literacy to 95% of under-40-year-old women by 2005 and 100% by 2010
Target 5: By 2010 have improved the quality of education and increase full-day schooling at primary level (target depends on funding)
Goal 3: Ensure gender equality and women empowerment
Target 1: Increase the number of women in elective bodies at all levels
Target 2: Increase the participation of women in agencies and sectors [includes ministries, central agencies and enterprises] at all levels by 3-5% in the next 10 years
Target 3: Ensure that the names of both husband and wife appears on the land-use right certificates by 2005
Target 4: Reduce the vulnerability of women to domestic violence
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality, child malnutrition and reduce the birth rate
Target 1: Reduce the infant mortality rate to 30 per 1000 live births by 2005 and 25 by 2010 and at a more rapid rate in disadvantaged regions (see below)
Target 2: Reduce the under-5 mortality rate to 36 per 1000 live births by 2005 and 32 by 2010
Target 3: Reduce under five malnutrition to 25% by 2005 and 20% by 2010
Goal 5: Improve maternal health
Target 1: Reduce the maternal mortality rate to 80 per 100,000 live births by 2005 and 70 by 2010 with particular attention to disadvantaged areas
Goal 6: Reduce HIV/AIDS infection and eradicate other major diseases
Target 1: Slow the increase in the spread of HIV/AIDs by 2005 and halve the rate of increase by 2010
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
Target 1: Extend forest cover to 43% by 2010 (from 33% in 1999)
Target 2: Ensure that 60% of the rural population has access to clean and safe water by 2005 and 85% by 2010. This should be the case for 80% of urban people by 2005.
Target 3: Ensure there are no slums and temporary houses in all towns and cities by 2010
Target 4: Ensure that all waste-water in towns and cities is treated by 2010
Target 5: Ensure that all solid waste is collected and disposed of safely in all towns and cities by 2010
Target 6: Air and water pollution must attain national standards by 2005
Vietnam Development Goals and Targets <i>not</i> directly based on MDGs
Goal 8: Reducing vulnerability
Target 1: By 2005, increase the average income of the lowest expenditure quintile to 140% of that in 2000 and to 190% of that by 2010
Target 2: Reduce by half the rate of poor people falling back into poverty due to natural disasters and other risks by 2010
Goal 9: Improving governance for poverty reduction
Target 1: Effectively implement grass-roots democracy
Target 2: Ensure budget transparency
Target 3: Implement legal reform agenda
Goal 10: Reducing ethnic inequality
Target 1: Preserve and develop the reading and writing ability of ethnic languages
Target 2: Ensure entitlement of individual and collective land-use rights in ethnic minority and mountainous areas
Target 3: Increase the proportion of ethnic minority people in authority bodies at various levels
Goal 11: Ensuring pro-poor infrastructure development
Target 1: Provide basic infrastructure to 80% of poor communes by 2005 and 100% by 2010
Target 2: Expand the national transmission grid to 900 poor commune centers by 2005

* Note: This is a summary of a fuller set of VDGs outlined in the CPRGS. The VDG papers have more targets and indicators.
Source: SRV (2002).

SECTION THREE: PROGRESS TOWARDS THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Millennium Development Goals and the Vietnam Development Goals (VDGs)

The discussion of goals in this section follows the two categories set out in Table 1 above. It starts by setting out the MDGs, assessing recent trends and examining the prospects of goals being reached. In the Vietnam context, however, where analytical work has been carried out helping the Government to develop a core set of development goals that specifically address national challenges for the period up to 2010, it makes sense to look at the MDGs as a subset of a broader set of VDGs. These VDGs include the localized MDGs, but adjust them and expand on them to give a more comprehensive set of goals and corresponding goals. The second part of this section looks at some complementary goals which the Government has set for themselves over the 2001-2010 period. By focusing on the full range of VDGs, rather than the MDGs alone, this chapter reflects the goals outlined in the Government's CPRGS. Focusing on the VDGs rather than the MDGs is important for a number of reasons:

- First, Vietnam has reached, or nearly reached some of the MDGs. Poverty, for example, has been halved between 1990 and 2000. It makes sense, then, for Vietnam to define a new localized version of the poverty goal in order to motivate policy formulation over the coming years;
 - Secondly, though Vietnam performs well on some of the access goals – for example in basic education – there are urgent challenges associated with improving the quality of those services to international levels. While it is clearly still important to strive for universal primary education, it is also important to make sure that the children in school are attaining standards that are similar to other countries;
 - Thirdly, Vietnam has its own strategic planning cycle with different start and endpoints from the MDGs. It is helpful to align the 25-year cycle of the MDGs with the five and ten year cycles of the Vietnamese planning horizons so measures and actions can be tailored to outcome targets for 2005 and 2010 which are, in turn, consistent with goals for 2015.
- Finally, there are areas which are particularly challenging for Vietnam at its current stage of development but which are not covered by the MDGs. As an example, although Vietnam has performed well in delivering basic social services, it has lagged behind in initiating necessary governance reforms which will be crucial to attaining some of the other outcome targets proposed in the national strategies.

Vietnam Development Goals directly based on the MDGs

Goal One: Eradicate Poverty and Hunger

Achievements

Vietnam has already met the international MDGs for poverty and hunger reduction. Although accurate estimates of poverty before the early 1990s are not available, many believe that in 1990 approximately 70 percent of the population was living in poverty. By 1998, data show that the incidence of poverty had been halved to 37 percent (World Bank et al, 1999). Food poverty reduced from 25 percent to 15 percent over the 1993-1998 period. Simulations based on data from 1993 and 1998 suggest that by 2001 32 percent of the population are living under the international poverty line¹¹ and 13 percent are under the food poverty line.

Poverty is not distributed evenly across Vietnam: mapping poverty by province through combining the Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VLSS) data and the Census data demonstrates that the poverty headcount varies from a low of 4 percent of the population in Ho Chi Minh City to a high of 78 percent in Lai Chau (Baulch and Minot 2001). Although the reduction in poverty between 1993 and 1998 occurred in both rural and urban areas, the 1998 VLSS showed that poverty was higher in rural areas and among ethnic minorities. The percentage of the population living below the total poverty line declined from 66 percent in 1993 to 45 percent in 1998 in rural areas and from 25 percent to 9 percent in urban areas. Using the food poverty line the

¹¹ The “international poverty line” here refers to the poverty line estimated by the General Statistics Office, using an internationally-recognized methodology based on a national minimum set of food and non-food requirements. This is not the PPP \$1 per day poverty line.

decline in rural areas has been from 29 to 18 percent and from 8 to 2 percent in urban areas over the same period.

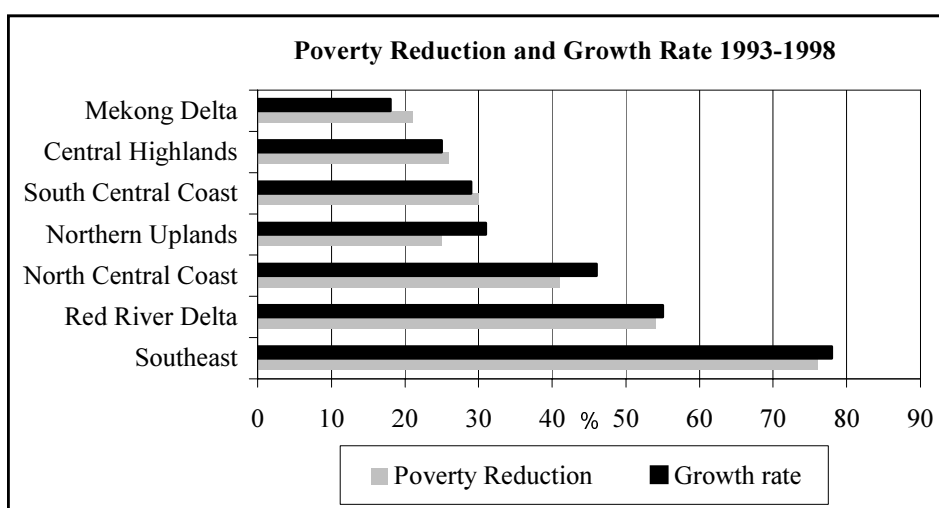
Although poverty has declined in all 7 broad regions of Vietnam, the pattern of these declines has been uneven. The greatest reductions have occurred in the South East and in the Red River Delta. The Northern Uplands and the Mekong Delta reduced poverty at a slower rate between 1993 and 1998. Poverty reduction was closely associated with economic growth (Figure 2). Certain regions contribute more to overall poverty than others: the Northern Uplands, North Coast and the Mekong Delta together account for nearly 70 per cent of the poor in Vietnam.

The divergence in poverty reduction and growth rates is caused by a number of factors that are likely to be related to differences in physical infrastructure, access and quality of social services, and governance institutions. Differences in labor and capital endowments as well as in productivity performance across provinces also clearly played a role.

Goals and future challenges

In the CPRGS, the Government of Vietnam commits itself to a poverty reduction goal and two outcome targets that reflect the national strategic direction and that over-achieve the MDG by some way (Box 3).

Figure 2: Faster-growing regions have reduced poverty most



Source: World Bank (2001a)

Box 3: MDG Goal One: Eradicate Poverty and Hunger

Vietnam Development Goal: Reduce the percentage of poor and hungry households¹²

Target 1: Reduce by 40 percent the proportion of people living below the international poverty line between 2001 and 2010

Target 2: Reduce by 75 percent the number of people living under the international food poverty line by 2010

Source: GoV (2002).

¹² Indicators of progress in reducing child malnutrition are included in the child mortality goal

The first poverty reduction goal essentially means that poverty incidence will need to come down from 32 percent in 2001 to 19 percent in 2010. If we take as a baseline the 1998 poverty incidence of 37 percent, the goal implies again halving the number of poor people between 1998 and 2010. Food poverty stands at about 13 percent now, which means that by 2010 it should have been reduced to just 3 percent. In addition to the poverty reduction goals, the Government of Vietnam has set a number of specific job creation goals, job creation being the most important vehicle for reducing poverty and sharing growth among the population. These goals include creating 1.4 million jobs annually, increasing the proportion of women hired in the new jobs created to 50 percent by 2010; and increasing the proportion of trained workers in the total workforce to 40 percent by 2010.

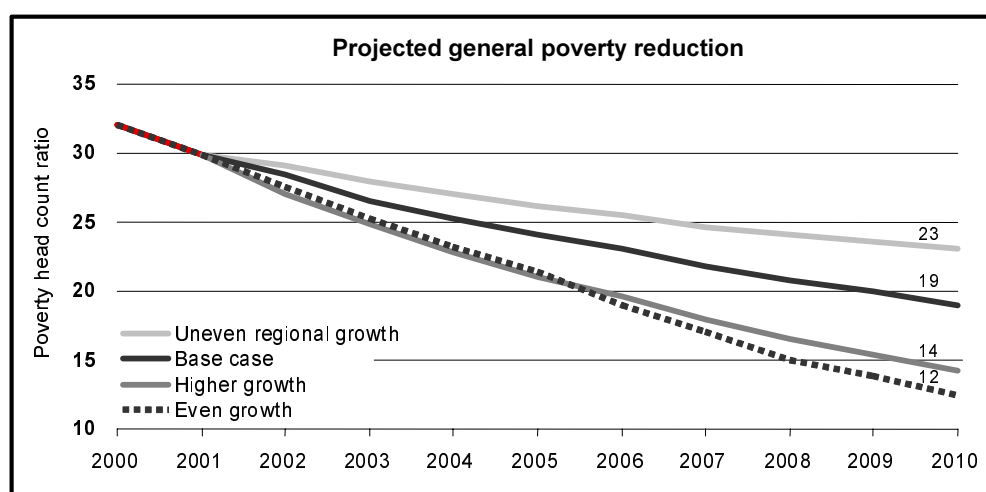
Meeting these goals will require economic growth that is both rapid and that distributes benefits more evenly than in the past. Different patterns of growth across Vietnam will have different effects on Vietnam's poverty reduction efforts. Growth that is concentrated in urban areas will raise incomes in the cities but have less immediate impact on the incomes of the many poor located in rural areas, except through rural urban migration which is likely to speed up in the future.

Figure 3 illustrates the potential impact on poverty reduction of different levels and patterns of growth in Vietnam. Four different scenarios are shown:

1. A base case projection assuming annual GDP growth rate of 5 percent and no change in the pattern of growth across regions;
2. A higher growth scenario based upon the CPRGS goal of doubling real GDP by 2010 (requiring a real GDP growth rate of 7.5 percent till 2005 and 7 per cent till 2010);
3. An even growth scenario where all regions and locations (rural and urban) grow at the same rate (the 5 percent assumed in the base case scenario); and
4. A more uneven regional growth rate, where the relative growth rates between the regions are based upon each region's share of new enterprise registrations in 2000.

The final scenario sees the South East and the Red River Delta regions (incorporating Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi City) experience the fastest growth and could be interpreted as a 'growth pole' scenario, whereby the majority of future growth is concentrated in two or three key regions.

Figure 3: Poverty reduction projections under different growth scenarios



Source: World Bank (2001a).

Not surprisingly, achieving a higher growth rate will lift more people out of poverty. But the importance of ensuring that the benefits of growth are distributed widely are also highlighted with the even growth scenario — 5 per cent real GDP growth distributed evenly across the population can achieve greater reductions in poverty than a higher growth rate (7 per cent) distributed unevenly across the population. In contrast to the even growth rate scenario, a more uneven pattern of regional growth results in a higher level of poverty than in the base case. It is roughly equivalent to a reduction in the overall GDP growth rate of around 1.5 percentage points.

Implications for the Vietnam’s development goals

Based upon the projections it is clear that reducing the poverty rate by 40 percent will require either:

- Growth of at least 7.5 per cent annually (in line with the goals set out by the SDS and the CPRGS); or
- Significant improvements in the sharing of the benefits of growth across regions, particularly in areas where there are high levels of poverty; or
- A combination of high growth and a more even distribution of growth.

This will not be an easy feat. But it is possible that poverty reduction of the orders of magnitude envisaged by the government are achievable, provided the economy is able to generate the growth rates that are goaled in the CPRGS or that growth is spread more widely across regions. If the government’s goal is achieved, then poverty will be approximately halved once again between 2000 and 2010.

Poorer provinces will need to make greater efforts themselves to create a better climate for private domestic and foreign investment and to allocate public funds to redress the severest physical and social infrastructure deficits in their provinces. The central government can only ensure that the national investment framework is favorable, the barriers to movement of goods, capital and labor across provinces are minimal and that intergovernmental fiscal arrangements provide sufficient support to the poorer provinces.

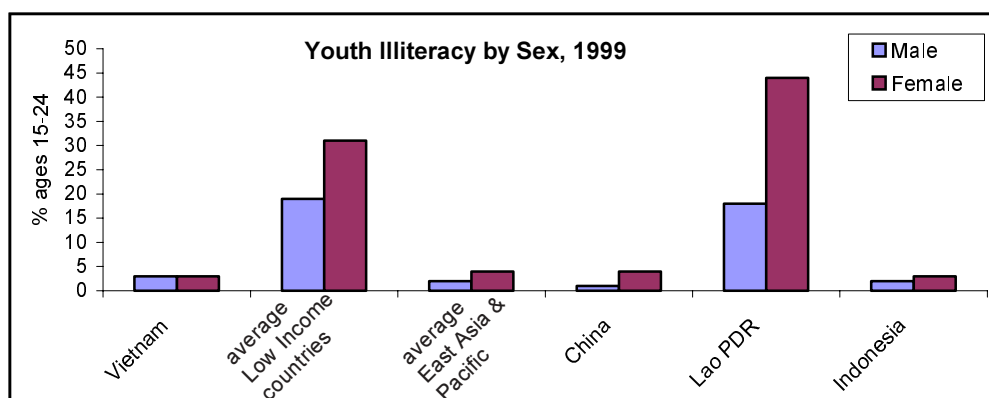
Goal Two: Achieve Better Education for All

Achievements

By signing In the Millennium Declaration, the Government of Vietnam has committed itself to achieving universal completion of primary education by 2015. This MDG includes three indicators: net enrolment rate in primary education, the literacy rate of 15-24 year olds, and the proportion of pupils completing grade 5. In Vietnam net enrolment in primary education stands at 91 percent in 1998 – a very positive outlier by low-income country standards. Another successful outcome is youth illiteracy rates – these are not only much lower than the average for low-income countries, but also lower than in neighbouring countries, even those with higher incomes (Figure 4).

By this the Government has shown what can be achieved by prioritizing social sector investments. It is recognized, however, that the high enrolment rates for both girls and boys mask significant challenges in addressing disparities (socio-economic and geographic) in access, coverage and participation in education. For

Figure 4: Illiteracy Rate of 15-24 year-olds in Selected Countries, 1999



Source: DFID (2001).

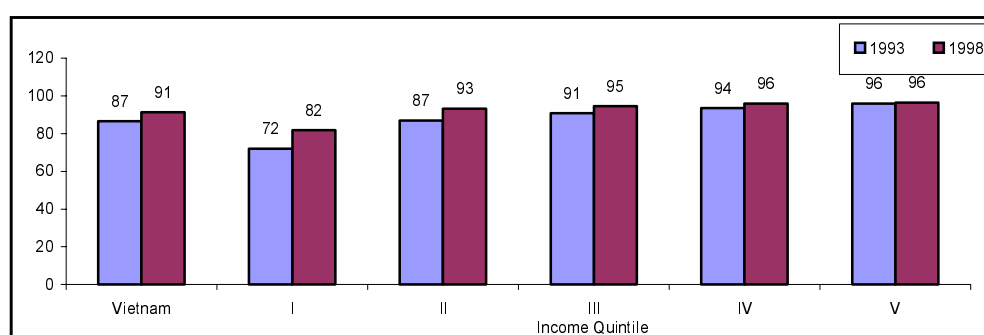
example, the net enrolment rate for the lowest income quintile is 82 percent, which is 14 percent below the one for the highest quintile (Figure 5).

The successes in enrolment also sit beside deficiencies in quality: only two-thirds of those enrolled in primary school actually complete. And even when they do complete, the primary school curriculum provides less than half the number of tuition hours a child completing primary school in Sri Lanka would have had and only

40 percent of the number of hours a child in Thailand would have enjoyed (Table 2).

Lastly, while primary enrolment rate is high, many children do not stay in school to reach grade five: approximately one third of children do not complete primary education. This outcome is much worse than the average for East Asia and most of the neighboring countries (Figure 6) and represents a large waste of talent and resources.

Figure 5: Trends in Primary Net Enrolment Rates, 1993-1998, by income quintile



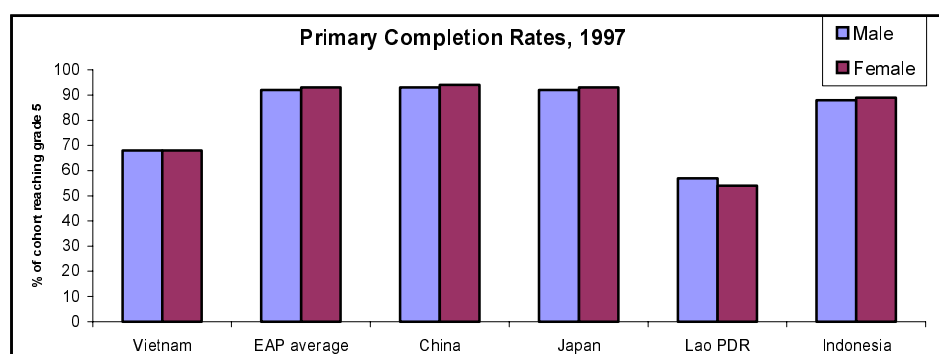
Source: DFID (2001).

Table 2. The Duration of Primary Schooling in selected countries, 2001

	Vietnam	Thailand	Sri Lanka
Hours per day (average)	3.5	6	6
Days per week	5	5	5
Weeks per year	33	40	40
Years	5	6	5
Total hours per year	577.5	1200	1200
Hours per cycle	2887.5	7200	6000

Source: DFID (2001).

Figure 6: Primary Completion Rates for selected countries and region, 1997



Source: DFID (2001).

Goals and future challenges

The proposed national goals and goals for the education sector as presented in the CPRGS reflect the challenges ahead in completing universal primary education and ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning outcomes is improved, especially for the poor (Box 4).

These goal and targets imply the need for a strategic focus within the education sector on important shortcomings. To achieve these targets, 1.6 million primary school-aged children — currently out of primary school (1 million of them from the lowest two expenditure quintiles) — will have to be included in mainstream education. It requires that those children least likely to be at school – those in the lowest quintiles, those in the central highlands, northern uplands, central coast and Mekong Delta regions, and ethnic minority children will have to be particularly targeted. The Ministry of Education and Training is currently estimating the costs involved in moving towards full-day primary schooling. It is important that this does not lead to an increase in the private costs of education, which are already high for poor households.

Raising and equalizing the quality of learning outcomes across regions and population subgroups will demand a full range of measures. Among other measures currently under consideration by Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) are extension of the instructional time to full-day education; reforming the curricula and teaching methods; upgrading facilities; strengthening education management; professional development for teachers; establishing education and training facilities of international standard; and, expanding the use of information technology. Over the last few years, Vietnam has been building the capacity to assess and monitor student learning achievements. Data which is

soon to be analyzed may help in identifying which actions are paramount in addressing quality deficiencies.

Goal Three: Reach gender equality and empower women

Achievements

Gender equality in education — Vietnam performs well relative to countries of comparable income levels on many indicators of gender equality and this applies to the four internationally-agreed gender equality indicators. Data from the 1998 VLSS survey shows that there is little difference between male and female enrolment in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school. (Figure 7). Gender differences in access to education are far more pronounced, however, in some ethnic minority areas and for the lowest quintile of the population. Vietnam performs well in comparison with low income country averages in this respect and this success is reflected in a gender-balanced youth illiteracy rate (see education goal).

Most men and women in Vietnam work as self-employed farmers. In 1998, 24 percent of men and only 15 percent of women worked for wages and a still smaller proportion (20 percent of men and 10 percent of women) worked for wages in the non-agricultural sector. The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women to 2010 sets targets for women’s access to new jobs in the formal sector: the objectives specify that by 2005, 40 percent of new jobs in the formal sector will be taken by women and by 2010, 50 percent of new jobs should go to women. In 1998, women earned an average wage that was 87 percent of the male average wage. It will be important, as the formal sector grows, to ensure that women have the skills to compete for the better paid jobs as well as the lower- paying

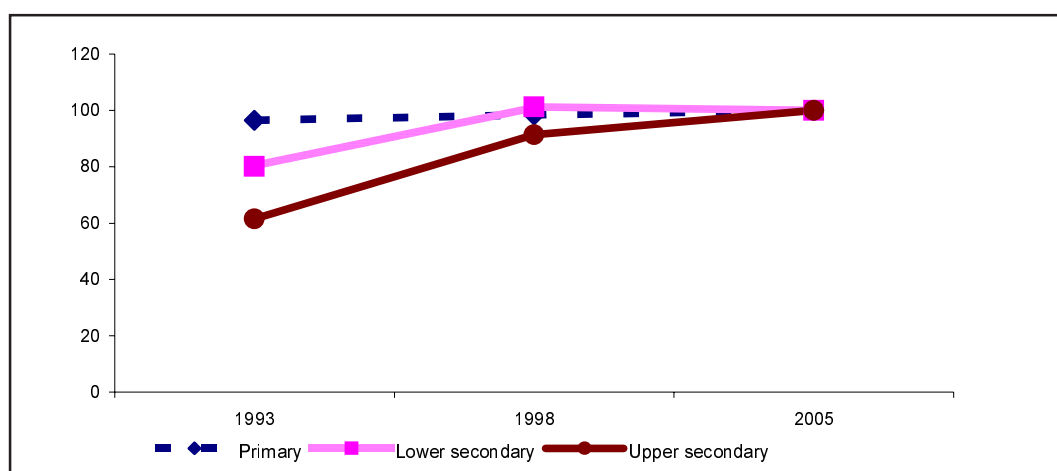
Box 4: MDG Goal Two: Achieve Better Education for All

Vietnam Development Goal: Universalize education and improve education quality

- Target 1:** Increase the net enrolment in primary school to 97 percent in 2005 and to 99 percent in 2010
- Target 2:** Increase net enrolment rate in junior secondary school to 80 percent in 2005 and 90 percent by 2010
- Target 3:** Eliminate the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005, and the gap with ethnic minorities in 2010
- Target 4:** Increase literacy to 95 percent of under-40-year-old women by 2005 and 100 percent by 2010
- Target 5:** By 2010 have improved the quality of education and increase full-day schooling at primary level (exact target depends on funding).

Source: SRV (2002).

Figure 7: Girls as a percentage of boys in primary and lower secondary education: Levels in 1993-98 and goals for 2005



Source: DFID (2001).

service jobs (where they currently dominate).

Goals and future challenges

Over one quarter (27 percent) of the newly-elected National Assembly deputies are women. Though this fell short of the target level of 30 percent, this still represents a slight increase over the last five-year term of the National Assembly (26 percent) which in turn was an increase over the previous term (18 percent). This level of female representation in national legislative bodies is high by Asian standards (comparing with 20 percent in China, 11 percent in the Philippines, 9 percent in Laos and 6 percent in Cambodia) but is less

impressive at sub-national levels. The Government has set ambitious goals for the representation of women in political and government bodies over the coming decade. If met, this would see:

- 15 percent of party committee members elected during the term of the 10th National Congress will be women;
- 33 percent of National Assembly delegates during the 12th Legislature (2007-2012) will be women; and,
- 28 percent of city/provincial People's Councils members will be women in the 2004-2009 term (23 percent at district level).

Box 5: MDG Goal Three: Reach Gender Equality and Empower Women

Vietnam Development Goal: Ensure gender equality and empower women

Target 1: Increase the number of women in elective bodies at all levels.

Target 2: Increase the participation of women in agencies and sectors [includes ministries, central agencies and enterprises] at all levels by 3-5 percent in the next 10 years.

Target 3: Ensure that the names of both husband and wife appears on the land-use right certificates by 2005

Target 4: Reduce the vulnerability of women to domestic violence.

(Targets to improve equality in education are included in the education goal – which emphasizes universality of access to primary and lower secondary school)

Source: SRV 2002 and National Plan of Action for Advance of Women

In addition to specifying targets for the core areas covered by the gender equality MDG, the Government has set out a number of other important ways in which gender equality will be pursued. The National Commission for the Advancement of Women and the Women’s Union provided substantial input into the drafting of the CPRGS, which involved consulting women National Assembly delegates as well as Women’s Union members at local level. This input is reflected in a strong agenda for gender equality, which includes separate targets where gender concerns are pressing (for example, facilitating legal asset ownership) as well as mainstreaming gender equality across the various sectors.

The CPRGS sets explicit targets for improving legal ownership of key assets (especially land) for women. This specifies that all land use certificates will be issued in the names of both men and women (rather than just the male household head) by 2005. This will be important in allowing women access to financial services as well as giving them greater security in case of the death of their husbands, separation or divorce.

Setting quantitative indicators for the reduction in gender-based and domestic violence is extremely hard. The actions to tackle violence against women outlined in the national strategy for the advancement of women revolve around bringing greater clarity to the legal framework. Indeed, they are part of a goal to improve the gender sensitivity of the legal framework rather than part of a goal against violence. International experience suggests that these actions will need to be supplemented by a more comprehensive package of measures that involve generating attitudinal changes as well as adjusting legal instruments. If these measures are successful, one might reasonably expect an increase in number of reported incidents of gender-based violence as the problem is addressed in a more open

manner before the incidence starts to decline. There is, as yet, no reported baseline for the incidence of domestic or gender-based violence in Vietnam – nor are there any good proxy indicators which are readily available or collected. This should be addressed as part of a monitoring system that seeks to measure progress in gender equity.

Goal Four: Reduce Child Mortality

Achievements to date

Infant mortality in Vietnam has declined at a remarkable rate by international standards – more than 20 percent per decade over the last thirty years. Child mortality has also reduced rapidly, but less dramatically than the average rate of decline in the East Asia and Pacific Region (Table 3), and it has reduced also much less for the poorest 25 percent (Wagstaff and Nga Nguyet Nguyen, 2002).

This recent progress gives Vietnam an impressively low starting point (by international comparisons) for infant

Table 3: Decline in Infant and Child Mortality: International Comparison

Region	Rate of Decline(1990-98)	
	IMR	U5MR
World	11.5	9.3
Low and middle income countries	10.6	6.6
South Asia	14.9	18.2
East Asia and Pacific	12.5	20
Vietnam	17.3	16.7

Source: ADB and WHO (2001)

Box 6: MDG Goal Four: Reduce Child Mortality by two thirds by 2015

Vietnam Development Goal: reduce child mortality, child malnutrition and reduce the birth rate

Target 1: Reduce the infant mortality rate to 30 per 1000 live births by 2005 and 25 by 2010 and at a more rapid rate in disadvantaged regions (see below)

Target 2: Reduce the under-5 mortality rate to 36 per 1000 live births by 2005 and 32 by 2010

Target 3: Reduce under five malnutrition to 25 percent by 2005 and 20 percent by 2010

Source: SRV (2002).

and child mortality. If Vietnam followed a pattern more typical of Asia, it would have an infant mortality rate approximately double its current level, given current per capita income levels. In 1990 the infant mortality rate (IMR) stood at 44 per 1000 live births and the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) was 58 per 1000 live births. Given these low starting points, achieving the MDG – which calls for a two-thirds reduction in the infant and child mortality rates between 1990 and 2015 – is unrealistic.

Goals and future challenges

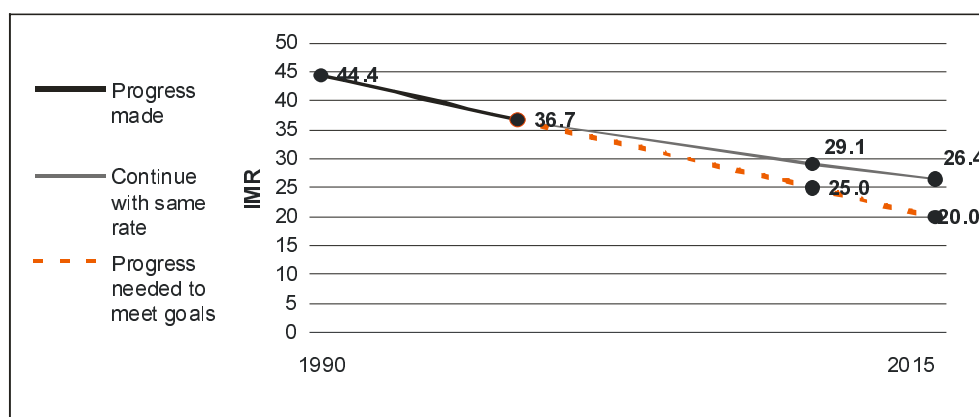
National goals for reductions in mortality rates are less ambitious than the MDGs. These are set down in the ten-year health strategy and included in the CPRGS as a core outcome targets. These goals specify that the IMR will fall to 25 per 1000 live births and the U5MR to 32 per 1000 live births, representing a decline of 44 percent in both rates over the 1990-2010 period. They

are also more realistic, however, than the MDGs, and achievable if there is a stronger focus than hitherto on regions where mortality figures are highest (Wagstaff and Nga Nguyet Nguyen, 2002). Projections demonstrate that both rates will have to reduce more rapidly over the coming decade than in the past if national goals are to be achieved (Figures 8 and 9).

Analysis shows that a positive relationship between infant mortality and poverty: infants have a lower chance of survival in poor provinces. These regional disparities in mortality rates suggests that there is scope for setting more ambitious goals, in line with the MDGs, for these areas

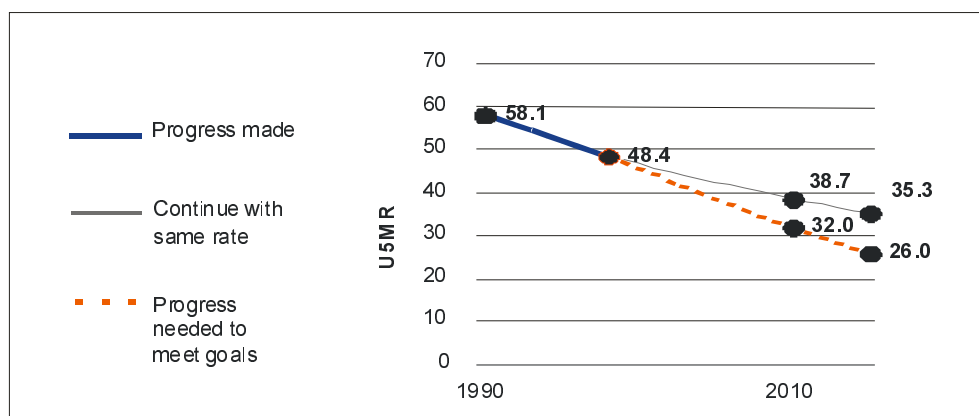
In addition to the two goals for mortality rates, it is proposed that the child malnutrition indicator – often included as an indicator under poverty goals – be identified as an important strategic goal for the next decade within the health sector. Unlike many other

Figure 8: Projections for Infant Mortality



Source: ADB (2001a).

Figure 9: Projections for Under 5 Mortality



Source: ADB (2001a).

health outcome indicators where Vietnam outperforms expectations for its per capita income levels, child malnutrition levels remain one of the highest in the region: in 2000, one third of children under the age of five were underweight. Estimates based on observed relationships between poverty and child malnutrition suggest that expected reductions in poverty will – in the absence of other measures – have only a minor impact on child malnutrition. Specific measures to address this problem will be necessary.

The Government of Vietnam’s own national goals for reducing malnutrition, which imply a reduction of child malnutrition levels of 60 percent between 1990 and 2010, are more ambitious than the MDGs, which call for a halving of malnutrition between 1990 and 2015 (Figure 10). Projections suggest that these ambitious rates will be achievable if the rapid rates of decline over the 1990’s continue.

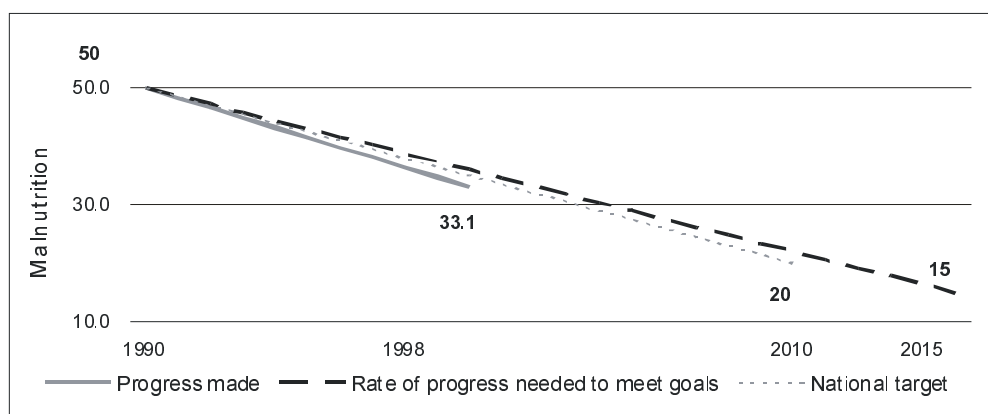
Reaching goals will depend crucially on making rapid progress among the poorest 25 percent (Wagstaff and Nga Nguyet Nguyen, 2002) and in the most disadvantaged areas. This is especially so for the mortality outcomes, where gains in some of the best-performing regions are likely to be minimal. It is therefore also suggested that separate targets be established for the central highlands and the northern mountains (Table 4).

Goal Five: Improve maternal health

Achievements

The MDGs call for a reduction in the maternal mortality ratio to one quarter of its 1990 level by 2015. This goal is reflected in national targets, which seek to lower the maternal mortality ratio to 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2010 (from 200 in 1990). Maternal mortality is difficult to measure accurately and questions have

Figure 10: Future Projections for Reduction in Malnutrition



Source: ADB and WHO (2001).

Table 4: Mortality Indicators for Disadvantaged Areas.

Indicator	Targets				Latest Value
	1990	2005	2010	2015	
IMR					
Northern Uplands	62	31	30	21	44.0 (1998)
Central Highlands	72	40	36	28	64.4 (1998)
Malnutrition					
<i>Percent of underweight children (0-59months)</i>					
Northern Uplands	--	35	30	25	41 (1997)
Central Highlands	--	35	30	25	42 (1997)

Source: ADB and WHO (2001).

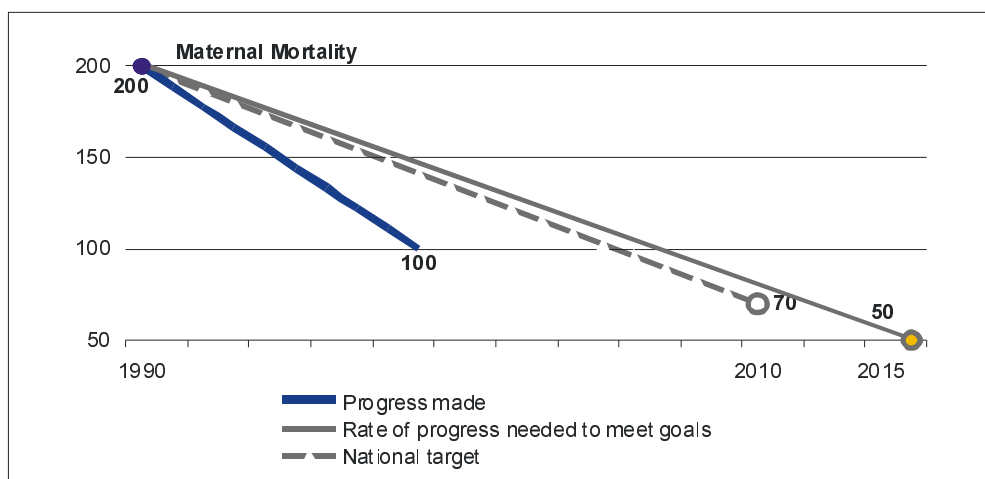
been raised about the reliability of the data in Vietnam. Official data shows that declines in maternal mortality over the 1990s have been rapid and, if replicated over the next decade, are sufficient to attain these goals (Figure 11). As with infant and child mortality, Vietnam’s performance in reducing maternal mortality has been remarkable by international standards. Regional differences in maternal mortality within Vietnam, however, highlight the central highlands, other central provinces, and the northern uplands as areas that warrant special attention.

Goals and future challenges

The Vietnam development goal related to improving maternal health is presented in Box 7.

Analysis by the Ministry of Health shows that 53 percent of maternal mortality is preventable and an additional 35 percent of maternal mortality could be averted through timely intervention. 70 percent of maternal mortality is believed to be caused by obstetric complications and unsafe abortions. Vietnam has the highest abortion rate in the world with the Ministry of Health estimating a total abortion rate per woman of 2.5. This high rate poses a significant health risks to women, with one third of women reporting a health problem following a pregnancy termination (World Bank et al, 2001). Though the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate has increased by 2 percent per annum over the past 10 years, measures are clearly still needed to provide better access to alternative means of contraception.

Figure 11: Maternal mortality goals are achievable if past performance is replicated



Source: ADB and WHO (2001)

Box 7: MDG Goal Five: Improve Maternal Health (reduce MMR by three fourths by 2015)

Vietnam Development Goal: Improve maternal health

Target 1: Reduce the maternal mortality rate to 80 per 100,000 live births by 2005 and 70 by 2010 with particular attention to disadvantaged areas

Source: SRV (2002).

The percentage of births attended by trained personnel has been rising. National reproductive health goals (not stated explicitly in the CPRGS but included in the Government’s reproductive health strategy) state that 90 percent of births will be attended by 2010 (up from 77 percent in 1997). Forecasts based on past trends suggest that this could be achievable and would put Vietnam on course to cover all births by 2015.

Goal Six: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and communicable diseases

Achievements

HIV/AIDS has spread to all 61 provinces since 1990 when the first case was detected in Vietnam. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of reported HIV/AIDS cases rose at 7 percent per annum. WHO estimates that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is around 0.29 percent among adults. At the early stages of the epidemic the disease was confined mainly to injecting drug users. However, it has now spread to other population groups including sex workers, patients with tuberculosis and the general population.

Goals and future challenges

Making future projections for the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is methodologically problematic. The spread of HIV/AIDS from vulnerable groups to the general population suggests that the past trend of increasing prevalence is likely to continue for the next few years. The Government has articulated its HIV/AIDS strategy for the next five years and the goal proposed here (Box 8) captures the direction outlined in the strategy. Recent work suggests that reaching this goal poses a number of serious institutional, practical and attitudinal challenges (United Nations, 2001).

The Government hopes that 70 per cent of couples will be using modern contraceptive methods by 2010, up from an estimated 40 percent in 1990. Recent analysis suggests that this is ambitious but also achievable if past improvements are continued into the next decade. This would set Vietnam on course for achieving “universal” (75 percent) access to modern contraceptive methods by 2015 (Figure 12).

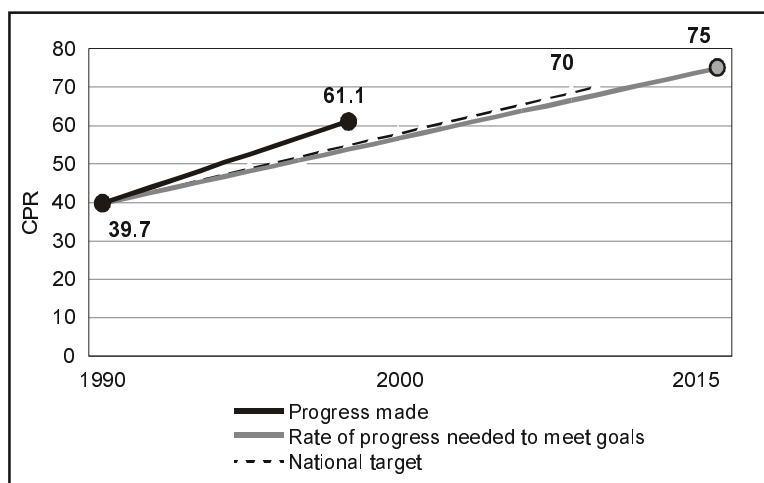
Box 8: MDG Goal Six: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other disease

Vietnam Development Goal: Reduce HIV/AIDS infection and eradicate other major diseases

Target 1: slow the increase in the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2005 and halve the rate of increase by 2010.

Source: SRV (2002).

Figure 12: Targets for contraceptive prevalence ambitious but achievable



Source: ADB and WHO (2001).

Targets for reducing other communicable diseases, such as malaria and TB, are articulated only in very broad terms in the CPRGS, but are specified in the national health strategy. Despite considerable progress in reducing the incidence of and mortality from major communicable diseases, significant burdens of disease (especially TB and malaria) persist among poorer households. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has set targets for reducing malaria morbidity and mortality rates. About 15 million people live in malaria endemic areas, mostly in the central highlands and the southern provinces. Malarial morbidity rates are 50 percent higher (at 6.6 per 1000 of the population) in malaria endemic areas than for the nation as a whole. Mortality rates in endemic areas are 150 percent the national average. The Ministry of Health hopes to reduce the endemic areas by 40 percent, to reduce the morbidity rate in endemic areas to less than 5 per 1000 of the population (3.5 per 1000 for the nation as a whole) and the mortality rate to less than 0.4 per 100,000 of the population (from 0.5 per 100,000 now).

Vietnam's National Tuberculosis Control Program is recognized as one of the most successful in the world. Strenuous efforts since 1986 to detect and treat TB have covered 99 percent of the Vietnamese population. Reported cases of TB have increased dramatically largely because of improved detection. The Government of Vietnam hopes to reduce the prevalence incidence to 70 percent of its 2000 level by 2010 (MOH, 2000).

Goal Seven: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Achievements

In recent years, Vietnam has witnessed a significant degradation of its natural resources. The country's biodiversity is threatened, forest cover has dwindled, near-shore fish stocks have declined sharply, groundwater quality and quantity have decreased substantially, pesticide and fertilizer use is growing fast and urban air pollution is on the rise (UNDP 2001a). The Government recognizes that the main challenge of the next decade will be to improve livelihoods while simultaneously protecting the environment. The poor benefit most of such an improved environment. This is because they depend more on natural resources, they are less able to protect themselves from environmental pollution, and they suffer more from natural disasters than others. The two poorest regions of the country,

the northern uplands and the central highlands, are both areas with a high proportion of ethnic minorities and forest cover. Studies in Vietnam have shown that those who depend most upon forest resources are ethnic minorities.

Vietnam has completed a National Strategy for Environmental Protection (NSEP) for 2001-2010. This strategy identifies the need to protect, conserve and sustainably use natural and biodiversity resources, and to control pollution and improve environmental quality in urban, rural and industrial areas. A number of institutional arrangements have been proposed that should encourage further mainstreaming of environmental issues in the different ministries. The draft NSEP 2001-2010 recognizes this and even sets a number of relevant cross-cutting targets.

Reversing the loss of environmental resources is obviously a difficult part of the MDG, given that the loss of environmental resources has been precipitous in Vietnam. By the mid- 1990s the environmental trends were becoming worrisome, particularly in forest cover (Figure 13). But by the late 1990s the government's interest in and ability to address environmental problems were much stronger. Reforestation programs became more ambitious, and the number of protected areas was significantly expanded, and pollution controls were put in place and new laws on environmental protection were promulgated.

At present, Vietnam, internationally and regionally compares favourably in forest cover. Unlike most of its neighbours, Vietnam has in all probability stopped the decline in its forested area. The country's total forest coverage also compares favourably with that of almost any other country. The average national forest cover world-wide, according to the 2001 World Development Indicators, is 29.7 percent. However, Vietnam falls short of many other countries in protected area coverage. World-wide, the average country has 6.5 percent of its total land area within protected areas. Vietnam has about 3 percent of its area under protection.

Sustainable access to safe drinking water is part of the Government's traditional emphasis on the role that investments in infrastructure can play in reducing poverty (see below). Infrastructure forms the core of key targeted programs to address poverty and these include the provision of clean drinking water systems and seven other components. In 2000, 56 percent of

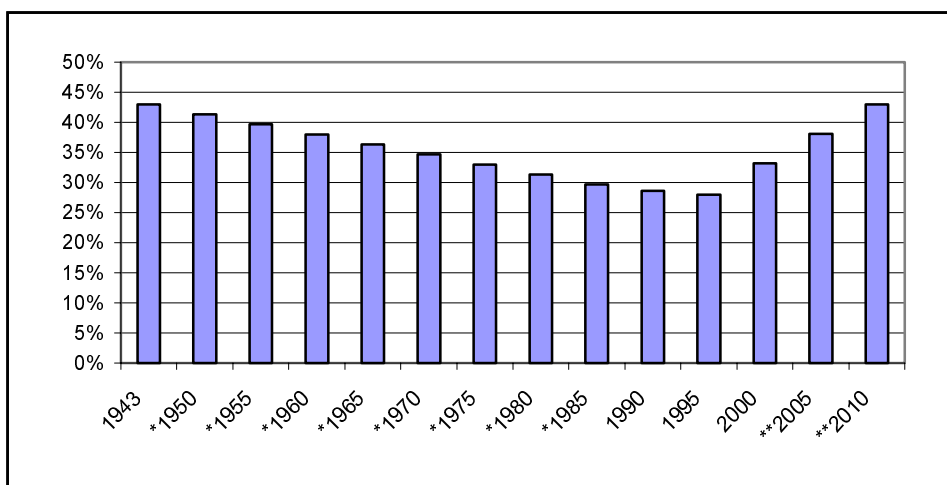
the population had access to safe water. This is a commendable increase from 48 percent in 1990. However, Vietnam is on the lower end regionally and globally for access to safe water (Figure 14).

The urban poor in Vietnam live in areas with poor infrastructure and the access to basic services (safe water, sanitation, water drainage, electricity, garbage collection) is limited. Most slum dwellers have unstable jobs and unstable incomes and their difficulties in securing permanent registration makes things worse. The VLSS data show an urban poverty rate of 9 percent, but this is likely to be an underestimation, as many urban slum dwellers are not registered.

Goals and future challenges

The CPRGS recognizes the importance of environmental protection for sustainable poverty reduction and growth and proposes a number of key measures. These include strengthening conservation of natural forests and protection of watersheds through the involvement of the people that depend on them for their livelihood, enhancing access of the poor to clean water, and halting urban pollution. To monitor progress towards environmental sustainability, six specific targets are identified (Box 9).

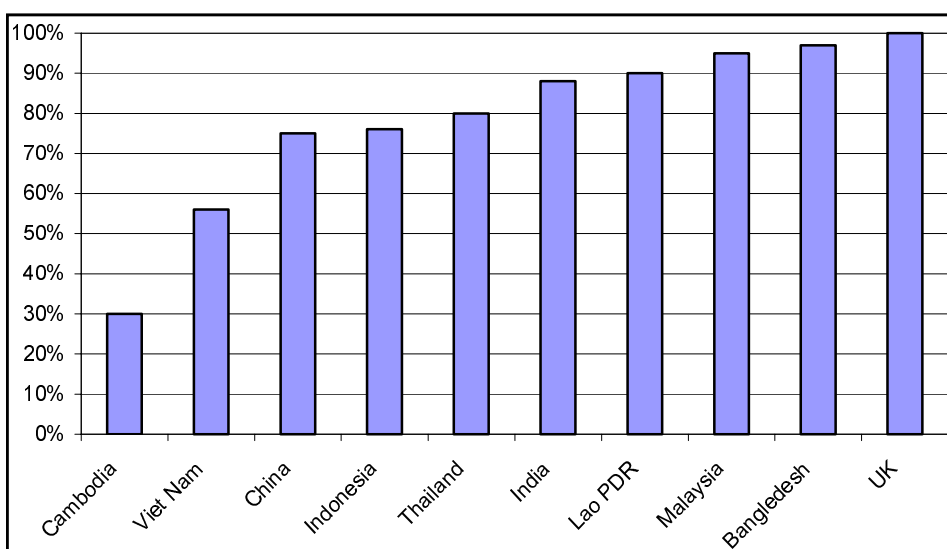
Figure 13: Trends in Vietnam’s Forest Cover (percentage of country area)



* Extrapolated based on trend.
 ** Government targets.

Source: UNDP (2001a).

Figure 14: Country Comparison of Access to Safe Water, 2000 (percentage of population)



Source: UNDP (2001a).

Box 9: MDG Goal Seven: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Vietnam Development Goal: Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 1: Extend forest cover to 43 percent by 2010 (from 33 percent in 1999);

Target 2: Ensure that 60 percent of rural population will have access to clean and safe water by 2005 and 85 percent in 2010. This should be the case for 80 percent of urban people in 2005.

Target 3: Ensure there are no slums and temporary houses in all towns and cities by 2010

Target 4: Ensure that all waste-water in towns and cities is treated by 2010

Target 5: Ensure that all solid waste is collected and disposed of safely in all towns and cities by 2010

Target 6: Air and water pollution must attain national standards by 2005

Source: SRV (2002).

The first and biggest challenge for this VDG is implementation of the government's NSEP. This requires concerted efforts to strengthen capacity in government agencies at the central and local level, creating opportunities for community participation, enforcing laws by expanding the choice of regulatory instruments and incentives, and allocating substantial resources to this plan.

While the first target only refers to extending forest cover, the CPRGS includes two indicators for monitoring forest quality. These are: the area of 'special-use' (protection) forest to be preserved, and the biodiversity rate of these protected areas. A weakness in Vietnam is the lack of a reliable system for monitoring forest cover. This could probably be improved by focusing more on quality than quantity and making more use of aerial photography and GIS, and by better coordination of data collection among the different agencies.

The second target aims to reach a safe and clean drinking water coverage of 60 percent of the rural population by 2005 and 85 percent by 2010. Although the institutional, financial and policy environments for this indicator are largely in place, Vietnam is unlikely to meet this goal. From 1990 to 2000, the overall safe water coverage increased 8 percent (from 48 to 56 percent). Even if population growth were zero, to achieve the 2010 level, coverage would have to increase an average of 5 percent each year between 2005 and 2010. Sri Lanka, Nepal and Paraguay were the countries with the greatest increases in access to safe water during the last decade, yet these countries

averaged only about 1.7 percent growth in coverage annually.¹³ Analysis presented in the VDGs background paper shows that a 80 percent coverage in 2015 is probably a more realistic target (UNDP, 2001a). This would still require doubling the current rate of improving access to safe water (from a 0.8 percent to a 1.6 percent net increase per year), but this is more feasible given other countries' experiences.

Targets 3-5 reflect the due attention given to urban development issues in the CPRGS, which stresses the need to develop policies for urban housing development for the poor, and minimise health risks for the poor by adopting pollution control measures. In the CPRGS the Government announces it will develop a national urban development strategy and this would enable the actions outlined to be addressed in a consistent manner while promoting balanced urban development. The government now acknowledges the problem of social exclusion in the urban areas and the lack of access of unregistered urban migrants to basic services and that labor migration and household registration policies need to be reviewed. This presents an important step forward for addressing the pressing urban poverty issues.

The sixth specific target focuses on reducing pollution in order to improve the quality of water and air. The Government is in the process of finalizing national standards for air and water quality, and also working towards strengthening the environmental monitoring network.

¹³ www.oecd.org/dac/indicators 21 August 2001.

Vietnam Development Goals not directly based on the MDGs

As mentioned earlier, there are a number of Vietnamese development goals that are not directly based on the MDGs. These either refer to aspects of poverty not well addressed in the MDGs such as vulnerability and governance/ empowerment, or they respond to particular challenges that have emerged in Vietnam such as reducing poverty among ethnic minorities, or reflect the emphasis the Vietnamese government puts on infrastructure development in ‘isolated and difficult’ areas for poverty reduction.

Goal eight: Reduce vulnerability

There is an explicit recognition in the CPRGS that gains in poverty reduction should be sustainable and that non-poor households should be prevented from falling back into poverty and hunger. Many recent quantitative and qualitative studies have emphasized the high levels of vulnerability which even non-poor households face to individual, household and community-level shocks.

The proximity of non-poor households to the poverty line means that just one episode of ill health for an economically active member of a near-poor household is sufficient to push households into poverty, or even hunger (World Bank et al 1999; World Bank 2001b). This is the case in many countries and there is a considerable amount of new work on measuring vulnerability to suffering declines in consumption and falling into poverty. In the CPRGS, the Government of Vietnam adopts a specific goal for addressing vulnerability which supplements the other poverty reduction goals (Box 10).

The government’s traditional approach to reduce vulnerability has been providing social assistance to defined vulnerable groups such as humanitarian support for the aged and disabled, and subsidies for production

inputs and transport services. But in the CPRGS the government recognises the importance of additional measures for reducing vulnerability that are related to building the assets of the poor and near-poor households and increasing their ability to manage risk. Some proposed measures to that effect include: improving access to affordable health care, improving access to agricultural extension to help diversify farm incomes; and improved disaster mitigation and response mechanisms. However, to make sufficient progress in reducing vulnerability, the government should take some additional measures such as enhancing access to savings facilities, and fully relax restrictions associated with being a migrant with temporary residential status.

Goal Nine: Ensure Good Governance for Poverty Reduction

The Government faces pressing, cross-cutting governance challenges which will need to be met in order to achieve the desired outcomes. The CPRGS includes some goals for improving governance (Box 11) and elaborates some actions to be undertaken in the areas of public administration reform, the promotion of grassroots democracy and legal reforms.

A five year Master Program for Public Administration Reform for 2001-2005 has been approved, but a detailed strategy for implementing reforms is yet to be formulated. The CPRGS therefore lacks detail in specifying concrete actions for the next few years. The Government has carried out a legal needs assessment and an action plan is being drawn up. The action plan emphasizes legal needs for the poor and the CPRGS draws on this work to define clear tasks in improving the access of the poor to justice.

The Government articulates strong commitment to implementing the Grassroots Democracy Decree throughout the country and this is fundamental to ensuring that poor communities are fully involved in

Box 10: Goal Eight: Reduce vulnerability

- Target 1:** Increase the average income of the lowest expenditure quintile to 140 percent of that in 2000 and 190 percent of that in 2010
- Target 2:** Reduce by half the rate of poor people falling back into poverty due to natural disasters and other risks by 2010

Source: SRV (2002).

Box 11: Goal nine: Ensure Good Governance for Poverty Reduction

Target 1: Effectively implement grass-roots democracy

Target 2: Ensure budget transparency

Target 3: Implement legal reform agenda

Source: SRV (2002).

planning and resource-allocation decisions at the commune level. Community-level consultations held to discuss with poor communities the draft CPRGS found that there was little implementation of this Decree to date and that there was high demand at the community level for strengthened accountability systems and mechanisms for greater community participation. Improved performance will require considerable training and information dissemination at the commune level. Mechanisms to monitor progress on a regular basis will also be needed.

Greater participation by poor households will require that more information on a broad range of issues of importance to poor people is more widely available – to poor people and to civil society organizations which work to support them or represent them. Some measurement of information flows and dissemination could be extremely useful in indicating progress towards greater participation. Citizen feedback should be actively sought on public actions and services. In many countries, mechanisms such as scorecards and rankings by households of the quality of public services have provided a powerful tool in reorienting public services to be more useful and relevant to those who use them. These could be used in Vietnam to provide monitoring information on many of the sectors included

in the core Vietnam Development Goals and Targets set out in this chapter while also giving poor people more influence in the content and nature of public actions.

Goal Ten: Eradicate poverty and preserve the culture and diversity of ethnic minorities

Over 13 percent or about 10 million people in Vietnam belong to an ethnic minority group. Analysis using various criteria has shown that while progress has been made, reduction in poverty for these minority groups has been much slower than the national average.¹⁴ Between 1993 and 1998, the poverty rate among ethnic minorities reduced from 86 percent to 75 percent, in contrast to a reduction from 54 percent to 31 percent for the Kinh majority.

The CPRGS clearly stipulates that, to achieve the national poverty reduction goals, special attention will have to be paid to eradicating poverty among the ethnic minority groups. As a result, the CPRGS identifies a number of special targets and indicators for the main ethnic minority groups to be embedded in the sectoral goals. Such goals refer to closing the gap between ethnic minorities and the rest of the population for each of the sectors. However, some areas cannot be fully

Box 12: Goal Ten: Eradicate Poverty and Preserve the Culture and Diversity of Ethnic Minorities

Target 1: Preserve and develop the reading and writing ability of ethnic languages

Target 2: Ensure entitlement of individual and collective land-use rights in ethnic minority and mountainous areas

Target 3: Increase the proportion of ethnic minority people in authority bodies at various levels

Source: SRV (2002).

¹⁴ It should be noted that a substantial diversity in development progress exists among these ethnic groups. The Central Highland minorities lag behind most substantially with a level of expenditure that has remained stagnant since 1993. Of its inhabitants, 91 percent live below the poverty line. Of the northern upland minorities, about 73 percent are poor. Separate targets may be warranted for several groups.

addressed within any one sector and deserve special attention. This has led to the following three additional targets (Box 12).

Educational achievements of ethnic minorities in the past ten years have lagged behind national ones (see for example the analysis by Baulch et al, 2001). Given that many of the ethnic minorities are not fluent in Vietnamese, preserving and developing literacy in the local language may be an important vehicle for improving education performance of ethnic minorities and for preserving their culture. The right to mother tongue instruction is mentioned in the 1992 Constitution.

Enhanced living standards of ethnic minorities require a more intensive, diverse and sustainable use of uplands. A key constraint here is land allocation. A recent review points towards the need to speed up land allocation and improve land titling measures for all categories of land that are in line with ethnic community traditions, practices and systems (UNDP, 2001b).

Ethnic minority members rarely participate actively in local governance processes for various reasons, and few are employed as government staff. As a consequence, they have little influence over government decisions that affect their lives. To improve this, a further increase in the proportion of government personnel of ethnic origin is required. And far more input from ethnic minority households, and more decentralization in anti-poverty programs is needed than has occurred up to now (see goals on governance).

Goal Eleven: Ensuring pro-poor infrastructure development

The Government of Vietnam attaches great importance to the role that investments in infrastructure can play in reducing poverty. Infrastructure forms the core of

key targeted programs to address poverty – notably the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction program (HEPR) and the national Program for Socio-economic Development in Communes in Especially Difficult Circumstances (“Program 135”). The Government’s socio-economic development strategy similarly emphasizes the role of pro-poor infrastructure development. Infrastructure is usually regarded more as an input than an outcome in its own right. Investment in schools is a means to achieving better education outcomes. Investment in rural transport is a tool for opening up remote areas to markets and social services and so is a means for achieving poverty reduction and better social outcomes. But given the importance of infrastructure in Government’s own strategic plans and given the level of resources allocated to infrastructure, it is appropriate that the expected impact of infrastructure development be specified and formulated into a national goal with explicit targets (Box 13).

“Essential infrastructure” in the goal and target refers to the eight components included in Program 135: basic road access, schools, health centres, clean drinking water systems, electrification, markets, post and irrigation. Identifying the proportion of communes with access to these facilities and services will form the foundation of regular monitoring and serve as intermediate indicators. Gauging the impact of infrastructure on changes in welfare of poor individuals or poor communities will be important. In addition, some kind of mechanism to include citizen feedback on the quality and relevance of infrastructure and infrastructure services could be very valuable. Affordability is likely to arise as an issue and prioritization should be guided by consultation with the local beneficiaries at the commune levels, so as to meet local needs and increase the awareness for operation and maintenance responsibilities.

Box 13: Goal Eleven: Provide basic infrastructure services to disadvantaged groups

Target 1: Provide basic infrastructure to 80 percent of poor communes by 2005 and 100 percent by 2010

Target 2: Expand the national transmission grid to 900 poor commune centers by 2005

Source: SRV (2002).

Lessons from the Vietnam experience in goal-setting

Defining a set of outcome targets which bring together international commitments and the challenges set out in national strategies was a complex task. The work on developing national development goals in Vietnam was, by design, embedded in the process of developing the CPRGS. The conceptual territory of the MDGs and the CPRGS overlaps in many ways and the Vietnam experience suggests that a medium term strategy for poverty reduction is a strong instrument for giving the MDGs a greater sense of local reality. Sectoral strategies in Vietnam only deal with certain elements of the MDGs while the broader, visionary documents – which have the scope to deal with important cross-cutting issues – lack the prioritization and detail needed to make firm commitments. In providing the opportunity to look across a broad range of sectoral strategies and to prioritize those objectives central to achieving broad poverty and social goals, the CPRGS has filled an important gap in the strategic planning framework. The result is a collection of Vietnam Development Goals which establish realistic but ambitious targets and which (i) are consistent with the planning horizons of the Government and integrated into national strategies to reduce poverty; (ii) are realistic in the Vietnamese context; and (iii) address the most pressing development challenges facing the Government in the coming decade. Some of the important lessons from the goal-setting work over the last year include:

- **The strength of starting with national strategies and goals** and working to combine them with international commitments in generating ownership by national government: in Vietnam it was necessary, for example to re-think the timeframe of the MDGs to make sure that targets were meaningful in the various planning cycles operating in Vietnam – which have both different start dates and end dates from the MDGs. This highlights the need to use the MDGs flexibly, in a way that is locally-relevant and motivating. In the case of the work described here, this involved reworking the 1990-2015 timeframe of the MDGS to the 2001-2005/10 timeframe of the national planning cycles; balancing realism with ambition; adding new goals where national challenges make it appropriate; analyzing where key constraints lie and modifying intermediate indicators to track progress in these areas (for example, emphasizing quality of service provision over access, where access is already good);
- **The opportunity for broadening public discourse on poverty reduction:** many sensitive and political issues underlie the choice of targets and strategies to achieve them and it is important to ensure careful consultations with all key agencies, and to allow time for extensive debate to take place. In the Vietnam context, where the target-setting work was part of drafting the CPRGS and where the process of drafting the CPRGS involved community-level consultations, the discourse on poverty reduction was broadened in two respects: first by including new voices and secondly by putting new topics on the agenda for mainstream debate.
- **Pay attention to cross-government linkages:** While the CPRGS process may be led by a central government agency, line ministries have a strong interest in how the goals may be set. Communication between the central and line agencies may not happen automatically – or well - and may need to be facilitated and strongly supported. This is particularly important when resource allocation issues are tackled. In Vietnam, there was a need for continuous support to key line ministries in the form of providing ideas, facilitating discussions or financial means is essential for them to engage in the effort of localizing the MDGs within the context of the CPRGS process.
- **Linking partnership with practical workability:** while it is essential to have good partnerships (among donors and NGOs, among government agencies, and between donors/NGOs and the government), it is important to ensure operational effectiveness of them. In Vietnam, the Poverty Task Force and the Poverty Working Group provided an effective mechanism for coordination and consensus-building which allowed joint decision-making and resource allocation for supporting the process. Supporting the government in its goal-setting work was a labor-intensive effort and it drew heavily on the time of poverty staff in the organizations most actively involved who were facilitating the process both within their own agencies and with some of the government line ministries they are closely engaged with. The availability of flexible

grant money that can be used instantly in response to a demand for support from the government has proven to be very valuable.

- **The importance of starting off with high-quality and detailed poverty analysis:** The kind of analytical work that was undertaken in Vietnam was made possible because detailed quantitative and qualitative country data were available on poverty in all its dimensions. Because preceding collaborative work had built a general consensus of views on the causes and trends in poverty and on the policy measures and public actions which were most likely to address poverty, the goal-setting work was grounded in broad agreement about priority areas for attention. For example, the debate and discussion that took place in 1999 when a collaborative poverty assessment was prepared about issues associated with ethnic minority poverty, the need for improved governance and the overwhelming vulnerability of poor and near-poor households set a solid basis for goals-setting work in these areas.

Remaining challenges

A number of issues and themes arose repeatedly across the series of papers and these will pose challenges for the government, both in reaching the goals and monitoring their progress against the goals.

Equity issues

Strong Government commitment to poverty reduction and human development over recent decades has allowed Vietnam to make striking improvements in poverty and social outcomes. The poverty headcount for the population as a whole has halved over the 1990s and Vietnam outperforms other countries of comparable per capita expenditures in most of the social and human development indicators. There are, however, marked differences in performance between regions and between ethnic majority and minority populations. The poverty headcount ranges between 8 per cent in the south east to 59 per cent in the northern uplands. The poverty gap index is only 1.3 in the south east but 19.1 in the central highlands. One third of the majority Kinh population lives in poverty, but three quarters of the ethnic minority population is below the poverty line.

The policy measures and public actions needed to ensure that the VDGs are met vary from goal to goal and have

been the subject of widespread and lively discussion in Vietnam. To a large extent, these necessary measures have also been described in the Government's newly-approved CPRGS. One key issue that lies behind the challenges in several of the goals, however, is the need for rapid progress for disadvantaged groups and disadvantaged areas. Projections show that the locally-defined poverty reduction goal, for example, is more likely to be reached if growth patterns are more equitable than in the past and this will require measures that encourage growth and investment in lagging regions. But this is not just an issue of regionally-balanced growth. The same areas that lag behind economically lag behind in many of the areas defined by the VDGs. The education goals for universalizing primary and lower secondary education requires targeting specially disadvantaged groups and it is widely acknowledged that bringing the final 7 percent of children into mainstream education will require different and more expensive measures. Similarly, analysis shows clearly that progress in reducing infant, child and maternal mortality will require rapid improvements in indicators in disadvantaged areas – especially the mountainous regions. Improved targeting of areas and certain sub-groups of the population will be fundamental to achieving these goals.

The Government of Vietnam sets out its serious commitment to narrowing ethnic and gender gaps in performance the interim CPRGS (SRV, 2002) and this has been elaborated in the drafts of the CPRGS. The Government would like strategic goals, particularly in areas where needs are basic and universal, to apply equally to ethnic minorities and the majority population, regardless of sex. The needs of special groups were identified and discussed in each of the thematic papers – most clearly so in the papers which explored target-setting in the health and education sectors. Ensuring that this mainstreaming of the needs of the less advantaged does result in greater equity of outcomes, however, will be a major challenge for Government and has implications for policy measures, public actions and public expenditure (World Bank et al 2000; UNDP, 2001). This is particularly true in sectors such as education where the absolute target – that of universalisation - will require much more rapid progress for minority groups because the baseline is much lower. Some national strategies – such as health – identify separate targets for lowland and upland areas and the emphasis here needs to be on aiming for greater equity in outcomes over the long term. Progress in improving

equity in outcomes is clearly unmeasurable unless data is available disaggregated by different sub-groups of the population. The thematic papers and discussions around setting targets recognized that while national level monitoring is adequate for the broadly-phrased MDGs, outcomes will have to be tracked at sub-national levels if priorities of social equity and inclusion are to be reflected. The household survey strategy will allow analysis which is representative when broken down by province, sex and ethnicity.

Aligning resources to strategic targets

The thematic papers were expected to include some indications of the resource needs associated with meeting the proposed targets. This – with the exception of the infrastructure paper – was more challenging than foreseen and generally glossed over in the analysis.

A supplementary costing exercise was organized after the first draft of the CPRGS was released. This took five priority sectors – health, education, transport, agriculture and rural development, and urban development – and attempted to cost some of the priority actions identified by the Government of Vietnam as fundamental to achieving stated poverty objectives. In conjunction with MPI, the ministries responsible for these sectors have identified the priority CPRGS outputs which need to be produced over the remaining three years of the current five-year plan (2003–2005). These outputs do not represent the whole of the investment programme within these sectors. Nor do they represent the complete set of activities pursued by Government in support of growth and poverty reduction. Nevertheless, they provide a first estimation of the core programme of public spending actions necessary for the CPRGS. As the CPRGS is developed and refined over 2003 and 2004, this core programme will be reviewed and updated.

There are three reasons for identifying this core programme explicitly:

- Firstly, by separating out these actions and identifying their funding implications, it will be possible to give them greater priority in implementation. It should also be possible to protect their funding in the event of any fiscal crisis.

- Secondly, the process will assist Government to implement the core programme in a co-ordinated and consistent manner, both within and between the Central Government, Provinces, Districts and Communes.
- Finally, it will make it possible to identify short-term funding gaps so that these can be filled without compromising essential poverty-reducing activities.

The idea behind this exercise was less to determine affordability in any precise sense and more to begin to establish processes whereby, in the longer term, resource allocation decisions could be more closely tied to national strategic objectives. Though this exercise fell well short of providing the sort of comprehensive costing that is necessary for expenditure planning, it marked an important step forward in the overall strategic planning framework for poverty reduction by bringing together desired outcomes, planned investment and recurrent expenditure and a prioritized set of actions. In the Vietnam context, where there is no Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), where sectoral strategies are not costed or prioritized and where processes guiding decisions on recurrent and investment expenditure are divided institutionally, this represents significant progress. We hope that the process that has guided the preparation of the cost estimates can be built on in coming years to provide a more robust system of outcome-related expenditure planning.

The CPRGS proposes an increase in the share of the government budget going to both the education and health sectors (the share going to education rising from 15% in 2000 to 20% in 2010 and the share going to health rising to 5% in 2005 and to 8% in 2010) and the actions proposed are generally consistent with the need to improve access to these services and the quality of the services provided to the poor. In addition to the increase in resources, it is important that the Government act on its plans to adopt a formula-based system for cash transfers to provinces to promote equity. This reform is particularly important for the delivery of basic social services. A similar commitment in terms of government resources is required for reaching the environmental goals and targets.

Most donors have already announced to the government that as the government aligns its own resources to the CPRGS, their future assistance to Vietnam will also be

guided by the framework of goals and targets outlined in that document. Donors will also intensify efforts to harmonise their procedures and a number of interesting pilots and experiments are underway that should further enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of ODA delivery. This should provide a substantial boost to the implementation of some of the key policies and strategies for reaching the desired outcomes.

Data limitations

While high quality quantitative and qualitative research has enabled an in-depth understanding of poverty trends and its causes in Vietnam, there remain a number of shortcomings. Firstly, there is a shortage of quantitative data on governance and empowerment. While participatory assessments have shown the poor's frustration with their lack of consultation in local level resource allocation decisions, the extent of this problem has not been quantified through formal surveys. Secondly, the quantitative surveys most probably underestimate urban poverty as many unregistered urban migrants will not have appeared on the sampling frame, which are household lists based on the country's census. Thirdly, no data have been collected on the quality of government services and opinion surveys to collect household's feedback on this have not been gathered.

Vietnam is putting in place a sound system of bi-annual household surveys and annual enterprise surveys which – along with improved administrative reporting – should allow many of the goals and indicators to be tracked reliably. Measuring some of the non-material dimensions of progress will require putting in place mechanisms to collect and analyze qualitative information. In addition, improved public access to survey data and strengthened capacity for data analysis will allow for multi-stakeholder, broad-based monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment. In contrast to monitoring social outcomes, the tracking of environmental indicators remains weak and requires substantial improvement if progress towards meeting the environmental goals is to be monitored in a meaningful way. But some of the greatest challenges to monitoring lie in the goals that Vietnam has set outside the narrower MDGs: monitoring improvements in governance or achievements in reducing vulnerability, for example, will require more thought and work in future.

National goals and local implementation

The final chapter of the CPRGS outlines the steps the Government will take (under the guidance of an Inter-ministerial Working Unit led by the Ministry of Planning and Investment) to ensure that “ministries, sectors and provinces... integrate the CPRGS into... their annual and five year socio-economic development plans”. Ensuring that the commitments and priorities of the CPRGS are reflected in the five-year plans of each of the 61 provinces is perhaps the single largest challenge to effective implementation of the CPRGS.

The goals and targets outlined in the CPRGS are all specified at the national level. Many of the critical decisions and choices about public actions and expenditure, however, are made at the provincial or district level. Strengthening the planning process at local levels so that officials are able to base medium term plans and expenditure decisions on robust local analyses of the causes and dimensions of poverty and of key constraints to progress in achieving priority social and poverty outcomes will require dramatic improvements in capacity. The CPRGS specifically commits to strengthening the network and capacity of poverty staff at all levels, but with a particular focus on poor and remote communes.

The Government plans a significant information dissemination campaign to ensure that local officials are aware of the CPRGS and what it means to the local level planning processes. This builds on interactions between the national and sub-national levels of government that took place as the CPRGS was being drafted. Consultations with local officials were held at regional workshops, where proposed targets for the CPRGS and associated policy measures were discussed. More than 500 officials were involved in this exercise and the debates that took place influenced the final content of the strategy.

Local levels of Government have been involved in setting the VDGs through the CPRGS consultations, but it is too early to presume broad-based commitment at the local levels to these goals and targets. This commitment will be fundamental if the ambitious VDGs are to be met since provinces have significant powers in determining public actions and expenditure.

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Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Goals and Targets	Indicators
Goal 1: Eradicate poverty and hunger	
Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day	1. Proportion of population below \$1 per day 2. Poverty gap ratio [incidence x depth of poverty] 3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption
Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	4. Prevalence of underweight children (under-five years of age) 5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	
Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education 7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 8. Literacy rate of 15-24 year olds
Goal 3: Reach gender equality and empower women	
Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education no later than 2015	9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 10. Ratio of literate females to males of 15-24 year olds 11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	
Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate	13. Under-five mortality rate 14. Infant mortality rate 15. Proportion of 1 year old children immunised against measles
Goal 5: Improve maternal health	
Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	16. Maternal mortality ratio 17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	
Target 7: Have halted by 2015, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS	18. HIV prevalence among 15-24 year old pregnant women 19. Contraceptive prevalence rate 20. Number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS
Target 8: Have halted by 2015, and begun to reverse, the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	21. Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria 22. Proportion of population in malaria risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures 23. Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis 24. Proportion of TB cases detected and cured under DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short Course)
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	
Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources	25. Proportion of land area covered by forest 26. Land area protected to maintain biodiversity 27. GDP per unit of energy use (as proxy for energy efficiency) 28. Carbon dioxide emissions (per capita)
Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water	29. Proportion of population with sustainable access to improved water sources
Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.	30. Proportion of people with access to basic sanitation 31. Proportion of people with access to secure tenure [Urban/rural disaggregation of several of the above indicators will be relevant for monitoring improvement in the lives of slum dwellers]

Vietnam Development Goals* (VDGs)

Vietnam Development Goals directly based on the MDGs
Goal 1: Reduce the percentage of poor and hungry households
Target 1: Reduce by 40% the proportion of people living below the international poverty line between 2001 and 2010
Target 2: Reduce by 75% the number of people living under the international food poverty line by 2010
Goal 2: Universalize education and improve education quality
Target 1: Increase net enrolment in primary school to 97% by 2005 and to 99% by 2010
Target 2: Increase net enrolment rate in junior secondary school to 80% by 2005 and 90% by 2010
Target 3: Eliminate the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005, and the gap with ethnic minorities by 2010
Target 4: Increase literacy to 95% of under-40-year-old women by 2005 and 100% by 2010
Target 5: By 2010 have improved the quality of education and increase full-day schooling at primary level (exact target depends on funding)
Goal 3: Ensure gender equality and women empowerment
Target 1: Increase the number of women in elective bodies at all levels
Target 2: Increase the participation of women in agencies and sectors [includes ministries, central agencies and enterprises] at all levels by 3-5% in the next 10 years
Target 3: Ensure that the names of both husband and wife appears on the land-use right certificates by 2005
Target 4: Reduce the vulnerability of women to domestic violence
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality, child malnutrition and reduce the birth rate
Target 1: Reduce the infant mortality rate to 30 per 1000 live births by 2005 and 25 by 2010 and at a more rapid rate in disadvantaged regions (see below)
Target 2: Reduce the under-5 mortality rate to 36 per 1000 live births by 2005 and 32 by 2010
Target 3: Reduce under five malnutrition to 25% by 2005 and 20% by 2010
Goal 5: Improve maternal health
Target 1: Reduce the maternal mortality rate to 80 per 100,000 live births by 2005 and 70 by 2010 with particular attention to disadvantaged areas
Goal 6: Reduce HIV/AIDS infection and eradicate other major diseases
Target 1: Slow the increase in the spread of HIV/AIDs by 2005 and halve the rate of increase by 2010
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
Target 1: Extend forest cover to 43% by 2010 (from 33% in 1999)
Target 2: Ensure that 60% of the rural population has access to clean and safe water by 2005 and 85% by 2010. This should be the case for 80% of urban people by 2005.
Target 3: Ensure there are no slums and temporary houses in all towns and cities by 2010
Target 4: Ensure that all waste-water in towns and cities is treated by 2010
Target 5: Ensure that all solid waste is collected and disposed of safely in all towns and cities by 2010
Target 6: Air and water pollution must attain national standards by 2005
Vietnam Development Goals and Targets <i>not</i> directly based on MDGs
Goal 8: Reducing vulnerability
Target 1: By 2005, increase the average income of the lowest expenditure quintile to 140% of that in 2000 and to 190% of that by 2010
Target 2: Reduce by half the rate of poor people falling back into poverty due to natural disasters and other risks by 2010
Goal 9: Improving governance for poverty reduction
Target 1: Effectively implement grass-roots democracy
Target 2: Ensure budget transparency
Target 3: Implement legal reform agenda
Goal 10: Reducing ethnic inequality
Target 1: Preserve and develop the reading and writing ability of ethnic languages
Target 2: Ensure entitlement of individual and collective land-use rights in ethnic minority and mountainous areas
Target 3: Increase the proportion of ethnic minority people in authority bodies at various levels
Goal 11: Ensuring pro-poor infrastructure development
Target 1: Provide basic infrastructure to 80% of poor communes by 2005 and 100% by 2010
Target 2: Expand the national transmission grid to 900 poor commune centres by 2005

*Note: This is a summary of a fuller set of VDGs outlined in the CPRGS. The VDG papers have more targets and indicators.
Source: Govt of Vietnam (2002). *Comprehensive Poverty Reduction & Growth Strategy*.