

An Phu Integrated Community Development Project

Final Evaluation  
Phase 1: 2000 - 2004

Final report

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## Abbreviations

APCPC	An Phu Commune People's Committee
APICD	An Phu Integrated Community Development Project
APP	Agricultural Promotion Programme
APWU	An Phu Women's Union (Commune)
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CBP	Cow/Buffalo Programme
CC	Credit Centre
CCC	Credit Centre Chief
FIG	Farmers' Interest group
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIP	Multiple Investment Fund Programme
MTCP	Mid-Term Credit Programme
MTR	Mid-Term Review
PME	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PMT	Project Management Team
RGA	Raising Gender Awareness
RPHA	Raising Public Health Awareness
SCP	Short-term Credit and Saving Programme
USD	United States Dollar
VBARD	Vietnam Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development
VBSP	Vietnam Bank for Social Policies
VCDG	Village Community Development Group
VL	Village Leader
VND	Vietnam Dong
VVW	Village Veterinary Worker
VWU	Village Women's Union

## 1. Introduction

This report presents the main findings of the Final Evaluation of the first phase of the An Phu Integrated Community Development Project. The project is supported by Caritas Luxembourg, Caritas Norway and Caritas Switzerland and co-financed by the Governments of Luxembourg, Norway and Switzerland. The first phase of the project started in mid-2000 and will end in December 2005. It takes place in five villages, which were considered to be the five poorest villages of An Phu Commune<sup>1</sup> in the year 2000: Dong Chiem, Nam Hung, Bac Son, Bo Moi, and Roc Eo.

The project addresses some of the most critical problems causing poverty in the area:

- Insufficient control of water as reflected in seasonally flooded lowland areas and drought in upland areas resulting in a limited cultivation area and unreliable crop yields
- Poor knowledge of agricultural production methods and supply of technical services
- Inadequate credit services for the poor
- Poor and difficult accessible health care and education services

The goal of the project is 'to alleviate poverty by building sustainable livelihoods for the poorest people in An Phu Commune and by raising the general standard of living in the poorest communities, with care for a gender-balanced approach' (see Logic Framework in Annex 1). To do so, the project aims to improve the capacities of people to adopt adequate livelihood strategies and to reduce their vulnerability. In order to attain this purpose it carries out two sets of activities: providing rural infrastructure and stimulating community development. The rural infrastructure consists of two crop cultivation schemes with upgraded dykes, one primary school, and two village electricity networks. The community development consists of eight programmes that deal with capacity building for the Commune Women's Union, raising gender awareness, cow/buffalo bank for poor households, agricultural promotion, short-term savings & credit for women, raising public health awareness, micro-initiatives for community development, and a medium-term credit programme.

Reaching the end of the project's first phase Caritas has directed an evaluation and has started the formulation of the upcoming second phase. The Final Evaluation is aimed to determine the extent to which the project has achieved its goal (mentioned above) and to give recommendations for the set-up of phase 2 of the project. The Final Evaluation is focussed on the project's contribution to livelihood improvement, sustainability of project initiatives, empowerment of vulnerable people and project management aspects. The Terms of Reference of the evaluation are presented in Annex 2. The evaluation has been carried out by an international consultant who coordinated the evaluation and collaborated with national experts in the field of rural infrastructure<sup>2</sup> and community development<sup>3</sup>.

The consultant wants to acknowledge herewith the support received from all project stakeholders. They warmly received the evaluation team and settled for an open and fruitful discussion. The consultant also wishes to wholeheartedly thank the support provided by the staff of Caritas in Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup> An Phu Commune is the poorest and most remote Commune in My Duc District, Ha Tay province, Northern Vietnam

<sup>2</sup> Mr Khuc Phan, staff of Bac Hanoi, Consultant and Construction Investment Company

<sup>3</sup> Mr Tran Thap Long, Mrs Nguyen Thu Huong and Mrs Nguy Thi Khanh, staff of Centre for Sustainable Community Development (S-CODE)

## 2. Methodology

A research framework has been elaborated for conducting the assessment of the Final Evaluation. This framework is composed of the following research questions

1. Have villagers, in particular women and poor people, improved their livelihood, in terms of outcomes (food security, income, well-being, vulnerability, sustainable use or natural resources) ?
2. Have villagers, in particular women and poor people, been empowered ?
3. Have villagers been provided with activities they can continue without substantial external support (maintenance of infrastructure, financial viability of programmes, institutional sustainability of groups (CBO) initiated by the project) ?
4. Have project management aspects adequately been dealt with (increased APWU capacity for project management, ownership, follow-up of Mid-Term Review recommendations) ?

The research questions are derived from the objectives of the Final Evaluation as defined in the Terms of Reference. For each of these questions a set of indicators for guiding the information collection has been identified (Annex 3)

The information for assessing the project has been collected through contacts with relevant stakeholders. The project stakeholders involved in the Final Evaluation are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Project stakeholders participating in Final Evaluation activities**

<i>Province</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Commune</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aid Receipt Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Planning and Investment (DPI)</li> <li>• Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD): Agricultural Extension, Plant Protection and Veterinary Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commune People's Committee (APCPC)</li> <li>• Women's Union (APWU)</li> <li>• Other Mass Organisations</li> <li>• Commune Agricultural Cooperative</li> </ul>
<i>Selected Villages</i>		<i>Caritas Field Office</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village Leader</li> <li>• Party Secretary</li> <li>• Village Community Development Group</li> <li>• Village Women's Union</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management units for infrastructure works</li> <li>• Farmers' Interest Groups</li> <li>• Credit Centres</li> <li>• Water Users Association</li> <li>• Households</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegate</li> <li>• Project Officer</li> </ul>

Various methods were used for collecting the data of the Final Evaluation, as follows.

- Sources of secondary information, in particular project documents and statistical data, have been consulted.
- A household survey was carried out to assess the changes in the life of the villagers since the onset of the project. For this survey structured questionnaires were used to collect primarily quantitative information from 80 households in three of the five project villages<sup>4</sup>. The survey collected information on food security, cropping practices and yields, income and assets, health, education, quality of natural resources, participation in community activities, household decision making and participation in project activities.
- In group discussions with Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) in the three villages mentioned information about their activities and functioning has been gathered.

<sup>4</sup> The three villages are: Dong Chiem, Bac Son and Bo Moi

- Through site visits and discussions with village management units and relevant Commune authorities the present status of rural infrastructure provided by the project and the operation and maintenance of these works have been examined.
- In focus group meetings with project stakeholders information collected in the household survey, group discussions and site visits has been completed and cross-checked.
- In a general feedback meeting in the Commune the reaction of villagers and authorities on the main findings and preliminary conclusions of the Final Evaluation has been obtained.

The implementation of the Final Evaluation has been carried out as follows.

- The international consultant coordinating the evaluation and assigned well ahead of the national experts, has elaborated the research framework and made a preliminary selection of the topics for the household survey and the group discussions. These outputs have been discussed with and further finalized by the national experts.
- The national experts together with the international consultant have field-tested the questionnaire of the household survey and topic lists for the group meetings with the CBOs before application.
- The specialist in rural infrastructure carried out the survey regarding the sustainability of these works during a six-day period (July 15-20). The three experts in community development together with their assistants carried out the household survey as well as the group discussions with the CBOs during a four-day period (July 15-18). The quantitative data of the household survey were processed and analysed by computer using the software packages Epi Data 3.1 and SPSS 11.
- The national experts have reported to the international consultant, who after having analysed the results designed the topics for focus groups meetings with villagers and authorities. These meeting have been carried out in collaboration with the national experts on community development during a six-day period (August 22-27). They worked in 2 teams and at the end of each day findings were exchanged and discussed, and specific issues for the following days were defined.
- After the field work the international consultant together with one of the national experts analysed the findings and prepared and delivered a presentation in the feedback meeting in the Commune.
- Subsequently, the international consultant further worked out the analysis and wrote the present report for the Final Evaluation.

### 3. Sustainable livelihoods

*In this Chapter, the changes in and project impact on livelihoods are presented for four categories of households based on the wealth ranking made at the start of the project: very poor, poor, average and well-off. In assessing the changes and impact two viewpoints are considered. The first is the number of poor and very poor households improving their situation. This aspect reflects the cost-effectiveness of the project in contributing to poverty reduction. The second viewpoint is the proportion of households in each wealth category improving their situation. It indicates whether the project has adequately targeted poor people in its actions thus indicating the appropriateness of project design and implantation strategy.*

*The sample of the household survey, conducted to assess changes in and impact on livelihoods and empowerment, consists for 75% of poor and very poor households (Annex 4). It is equal to the proportion of these wealth categories in the five project villages. Since the sample does not contain the same number of households for each category, differences between household categories are difficult to validate through statistical analysis. Notwithstanding, these differences may indicate or suggest certain tendencies and trends which will be presented as such.*

#### 3.1 Food security

Findings of the survey show that at present households produce more staple food to feed the family than 5 years ago, reflecting a more secure food situation. In general, the proportion of households producing enough food all year round has increased from 25 to 46% (Table 2). The increase was considerable among the poor and average households, with 7 households (25%) and 6 (42%) respectively attaining food security. Of the very poor households only 3 (10%) did so. The proportion of households experiencing food shortage of more than 5 months has fallen from 48 to 35% (Table 3). Here again, very poor households tend to improve less well than the others. The figures correspond with the statement made during the focus group meetings that the very poor households did not improve their food security as much as the others. The lack of money and time to spend on crop cultivation were mentioned as main reason why the poor did not catch up with the others. The figures on food security reveal that even well-off households are not entirely self-sufficient and had to buy food with the money earned from other activities.

The improved food security is in particular due to the increased production of rice brought about by the full exploitation of both growing seasons and the shift to varieties with higher yield potential. The number of farmers growing a second season rice crop has increased from 51 % in 2000 to 79% in 2004 (Table 4). Evidently, this increase was most pronounced, 50%, in Dong Chiem where the irrigation scheme is operational since 2003. Average rice yields have increased from 137 to 158 kg/sao<sup>5</sup> for the spring crop and from 119 to 134 kg/sao for the autumn crop. The yield increase is not clearly related to the wealth situation of the households.

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<sup>5</sup> 1 sao = 360 m<sup>2</sup>

**Table 2: Attainment of self-sufficiency in food production at two times**

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
<i>N</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>
Yes	50	33	71	29	43	18	38	28	46	25

<sup>1</sup>: N = # respondents

**Table 3: Duration of household food deficiency at two times**

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
<i>N</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>59</b>
1 - 5 months	67	75	100	60	69	55	55	43	65	53
6 - 10 months	33	25	0	40	25	41	40	57	30	46
More than 10 months	0	0	0	0	6	5	5	0	5	2

**Table 4: Changes in paddy rice cultivation at two times<sup>6</sup>**

	Time	Growing rice (% hh)		Crop yield (kg/sao)	
		present	5 years ago	present	5 years ago
<b>Season</b>	<i>N</i>	80		76	77
Spring		96	96	158	137
	<i>N</i>	80		63	41
Autumn		79	51	134	119

**Table 5: Attainment of self-sufficiency in food production in relation to participation in SCP over the last five years**

Household category	Well-off			Average			Poor			Very poor			All farmers		
	Membership SCG	Yes	No	Withdrew	Yes	No	Withdrew	Yes	No	Withdrew	Yes	No	Withdrew	Yes	No
<i>N</i>	3	2	1	4	8	1	5	21	1	13	17	2	25	48	5
Present	33	50	100	50	75	100	40	45	0	23	41	100	32	49	80
5 year ago	33	50	0	0	50	0	0	24	0	8	41	50	8	35	20

<sup>6</sup> Figures on cropping season and rice yield per wealth class are presented in Annex 8

The project has substantially contributed to an increased rice production in three ways. First, upgrading the dykes in the rice cultivation schemes secured the first-season crop against flooding and allowed a second-season crop to be grown. Secondly, the loans of SCP allowed farmers to apply the inputs necessary to grow the new high-yielding varieties introduced by the agricultural extension service with support from the project. The proportion of SCG members achieving food security over the last five years was 24%, whereas this was 11% for those not participating in SCP (Table 5). However, the improvement seemed weak among the very poor households indicating that the project support did not enable them to catch up with richer households. Thirdly, stakeholders mentioned that training and models on crop cultivation technologies in APP (rice varieties and IPM) helped farmers to better use their inputs. According to the survey data, well-off households benefited from the APP activities to become self-sufficient, other household categories did not. Households participating in these activities reduced their food shortage period to a larger extent than those not participating; household categories did not differ in their response to training and models regarding rice cultivation technologies. These findings reflect a positive impact of APP activities on food security without giving a distinct preferential benefit to poorer households.

In the current context of An Phu Commune, the project was not the only force favouring an increased rice production. The government through its various agencies pushed in the same direction of development by upgrading irrigation schemes itself, by the large scale dissemination of the new high-yielding varieties and related inputs, and through the provision of credits for crop cultivation. These new rice varieties, introduced since 1999, are presently grown by an estimated 70% of the farmers.

### 3.2 Household income

Similar to the increased food security and food production, the survey discloses an increase in income over the past five years. This increase is related to changes in the economic conditions and activities in the villages as more crops are produced and animals are raised, and new agricultural such as mushrooms growing, bee keeping, and fish raising activities have taken up. Moreover, there are more small businesses and opportunities for off-farm employment. Among the 59 households reporting an increased income, 43 belonged to the poor and very poor (Table 6). Some households in these latter categories experienced a decrease in income instead of an increase, suggesting that poor and very poor did not as well as the better-off.

**Table 6: Change in the yearly household income over the last five years**

Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All villagers
<i>N</i>	6	14	27	32	79
Increase	67	86	67	78	75
Decrease		0	15	9	9
Same	33	14	18	13	16

The project has made a substantial contribution to increase the household incomes. First of all it has improved the conditions for crop production, in particular that for rice, as indicated in the previous section. Some contributions mentioned in the focus group meetings were village-bound like the IPM training in Dong Chiem enabling the farmers to save on pesticides, and the electricity network in Bo Moi permitting farmers to use a pump for irrigation. Survey figures indicate that most of the farmers (88%) being informed about new rice cultivation

technologies (high-yielding varieties and IPM) applied these. Nineteen of these adopters<sup>7</sup> (79%) had experienced an increase in income, 11 of them belonging to the poor and very poor households (Table 7). Among the very poor, the proportion of households increasing their income is lowest. It reflects the more general statement made in focus group discussions that poor endowment with means restricted these farmers of benefiting from the new technologies.

The project supported agricultural development in a broader sense by providing training and loans for animal raising and by introducing new commodities such as sugar cane, mushrooms and honey bees. Some people used the loans provided through the SCP to start a small business such as a shop. According the survey findings 88% of households participating in SCP had an increase in income, whereas this was 65% for those not participating (Table 8), indicating the positive effect of this programme on income. The effect appeared in particular pronounced for the poor and very poor households. Firstly, they make up 16 of the 22 households reporting an increased income. Secondly, about 20% of the poor and very households that did not participate in the SCP experienced a decrease in income, whereas this was not reported among average and well-off households. Participation in the CBP did not show a relationship with changes in income.

Over the last 5 years households not only increased their income, they also modified their portfolio of income sources. More households got income from crop production, animal raising, small business or remittances (Table 9). In Dong Chiem more households earned from handicraft, in Bac Son and Bo Moi more did so from off-farm employment. These changes reflect that households diversified their income sources as a livelihood strategy. Nevertheless, the three main sources of income hardly changed in this period (Table 10). Crop production was the most important one, followed by animal husbandry and off-farm employment. Fewer households cited collecting of forest and aquatic products, the fourth in ranking, as an important source of income. It suggests increased household income was merely due to better returns of the main economic activities. Participation in the SCP did not clearly result in a shift in main income sources.

In focus group meetings stakeholders reported interventions and forces other than the project to explain improved household incomes. The support of government services to increase rice production has been mentioned in the previous section already. These services have also supported agricultural development by promoting the cultivation of winter crops such as maize and soybeans. Bank credits (VBARD, VBSP) have provided households with a strong incentive to start animal raising or a small business<sup>8</sup>. At present, the total amount of credit in An Phu Commune set out by these banks is estimated at 5 billion VND (about 315,000 USD)<sup>9</sup>. The increased number of visitors to the nearby Perfume Pagoda has created more opportunities for temporary employment to inhabitants of An Phu Commune. Farmers participating in the context of Programme 661<sup>10</sup> receive a payment for forest protection measures, but the importance of these payments for household income has not been specified.

Although they have improving household incomes in general, the newly introduced activities and technologies may also have negative side effects in the form of increased risks farmers are exposed to. In the project villages these risks are related to farmers' limited knowledge of the new technologies and external support for appropriate application and management. For instance, animal raising, although being promising, may result in a failure due to diseases.

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<sup>7</sup> Caution is needed in interpreting data of the technology adapters as their number is low.

<sup>8</sup> These banks provide subsidized credits, but poor people tend to have a more difficult access because requirements for a collateral (VBARD) or complicated administrative procedures (VBSP).

<sup>9</sup> 15,900 VND equals 1.0 US Dollar (September 2005)

<sup>10</sup> Forest Protection Programme of the government

**Table 7: Change in annual household income in relation to adoption of new rice cultivation technologies (varieties, IPM) over the last five years**

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All farmers	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Applying new technologies	2	0	7	1	6	2	9	0	24	3
<i>N</i> <sup>1</sup>										
Increase	100		86	0	83	50	67		79	33
Decrease	0		0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Same	0		14	100	17	50	33		21	67

<sup>1</sup> Those having participated in project activities (APP) concerning these technologies

**Table 8: Change in annual household income in relation to participation in SCP over the last five years**

Household category	Well-off			Average			Poor			Very poor			All farmers		
	Yes	No	Withdrew	Yes	No	Withdrew	Yes	No	Withdrew	Yes	No	Withdrew	Yes	No	Withdrew
Membership SCG	3	2	1	4	8	1	5	21	1	13	17	2	25	48	5
<i>N</i>															
Increase	100	0	100	75	88	100	100	57	100	85	71	100	88	65	100
Decrease	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	0	0	18	0	0	15	0
Same	0	100	0	25	13	0	0	24	0	15	12	0	12	21	0

**Table 9: Sources of household income at two times**

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
<i>N</i>	6	6	14	14	28	28	32	32	80	80
Crop production	100	83	93	100	100	96	97	97	97	77
Animal raising	50	83	100	93	79	75	78	78	80	64
Handicraft	0	0	14	0	18	0	19	3	16	1
Collecting product	17	17	36	36	32	46	56	59	41	37
Employment	50	50	36	29	61	43	66	75	57	43
Salaries / subsidies	17	17	29	36	14	14	6	6	14	12
Small business	0	17	50	21	29	18	9	9	22	13
Remittance money	0	0	14	7	11	4	13	6	11	4
Others	33	17	21	7	11	14	31	16	22	12

**Table 10: Three main sources of household income at two times**

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
<b>Income sources</b>	6	6	13	13	28	28	32	32	79	79
Crop production	100	83	92	100	100	96	97	97	97	96
Animal raising	50	83	85	85	71	75	69	69	71	75
Handicraft	0	0	8	0	14	0	9	3	10	1
Collecting forest products	17	0	23	23	11	36	28	34	20	30
Employment	50	50	23	15	43	25	53	56	44	38
Salaries / subsidies	17	17	15	23	7	4	0	0	6	6
Small business	0	17	15	15	18	14	6	6	11	11
Remittances	0	0	8	8	11	4	9	3	9	4
Others	33	17	15	8	11	11	22	16	18	13

**Table 11: Change in wealth of households according to government classification system over the last five years**

Village	Rich		Average		Poor		Very poor	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
Dong Chiem	8	5	50	41	33	41	8	14
Bac Son	24	5	57	50	19	32	0	14
Bo Moi	12	6	53	35	29	35	6	24
All village	15	5	53	43	27	36	5	16

**Table 12: Household assets at two times**

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
<i>N</i>	6	6	14	14	28	28	32	32	80	80
Motorbike	50	17	79	7	36	4	13	0	35	6
Television	100	67	86	71	75	14	44	16	66	27
Pump	33	33	29	7	26	11	28	9	26	11
Electric fan	100	50	90	86	100	66	94	44	98	52

The project has tried to mitigate these risks by training veterinary workers at village level since 2002 and inserting them into the VCDG. Up to date these measures seem to have had a restricted success because farmers involved in the household survey and focus group discussions still mention diseases as key constraint. The new rice varieties require more pesticides to exploit their yield potential, thus contributing to the pollution of soil and water. In order to minimise the risk, the project provides training in IPM technologies. Since this training has started recently and the technology has not yet been applied on a large scale, the effectiveness of this measure cannot adequately be assessed at present.

The income increase is illustrated in the shift in household ranking according the government wealth classification. The proportion of poor and very poor households dropped from 52 to 32% in the three villages where the survey has been conducted (Table 11). The change in wealth is more pronounced in Bac Son and Bo Moi than in Dong Chiem.

Improved incomes are also reflected in changes in household assets, in particular motorbikes and electric appliances such as fans and TV sets<sup>11</sup> (Table 12). Increased number of these appliances in Bac Son and Bo Moi are explained by the access to electricity the inhabitants of these villages have acquired through the project. More households having a pump in Bo Moi implies that people are better capable of mitigating the effects of drought, most pronounced in the villages at higher altitude like Bo Moi and Roc Eo.

### 3.3 Vulnerability

There are various factors that may make people vulnerable to external influences and impede them to adopt sustainable livelihood strategies. The three main factors highlighted in this evaluation are occurrence of diseases, indebtedness and insecure access to resources.

Survey results indicate that at present fewer people suffer from diseases like malaria, diarrhoea, goitre and child malnutrition than 5 years ago (Table 13). Among the 19 households reporting a lower incidence of these diseases, 13 belonged to the poor and very poor households. Nonetheless, the relative high proportion of very poor households experiencing an increase in diseases suggests that this category has not improved its health situation as much as others. In the focus group discussions, project stakeholders confirmed the improved health situation, but pointed out that women's health situation did not improve as much as that of men.

**Table 13: Change in occurrence of common diseases<sup>1</sup> in households over last five years**

Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All villagers
<i>N</i>	2	12	18	25	57
More	0	8	11	28	18
Less	100	33	28	32	33
Same	0	25	33	28	28
No clear trend	0	33	28	12	21

<sup>1</sup>: malaria, child malnutrition, goitre and diarrhoea

Regarding the debt situation, the survey findings reveal that between 2000 and 2004, about 60% of all households have borrowed rice or money each or almost each year to cope with problems in their daily life. The amount of rice or money borrowed annually decreased (Table

<sup>11</sup> Assets assessed in the household survey do not include animals since they may have been obtained directly through participation in project activities (CBP/SCP) in which case they do not reflect increased income.

14). Among the 26 households reporting a decrease, 20 belonged to the poor or very poor. The majority (about 70%) of the average and poor households stated to borrow less, whereas this proportion was much lower for the very poor households due to increased borrowing in Dong Chiem notably.

**Table 14: Change in the yearly amount of rice or money borrowed to solve problems over the last five years**

Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All villagers
<i>N</i>	3	7	19	17	46
Increase	33	0	16	53	29
Decrease	33	71	74	35	56
Same	33	29	11	12	15

Concerning the use of resources for livelihood strategies, households lacking access to agricultural land have not been reported. About 75% of the households has access to agricultural land secured by official land tenure right for 50 years<sup>12</sup> (Table 15). The proportion of households having such a certificate was similar for all categories of households but differed largely among the villages, being highest in Dong Chiem and lowest in Bo Moi. The certificates have been handed out between 1999 and 2004. Only 28% of the certificates bear the name of both husband and wife, indicating that many women still keep an insecure access to agricultural land.

**Table 15: Households presently having a certified user right of agricultural land**

Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All villagers
<i>N</i>	6	14	27	32	79
Yes	67	79	74	72	73
No	33	21	26	28	27

A considerable number of households use forest resources for completing their income and food provision, thus the vulnerability of their livelihood also depends on their access to these resources. The results of the survey show that access to forest differs largely between the villages. In Bo Moi 43% of the households had access, whereas this proportion was 29% in Dong Chiem and only 12% in Bac Son. Among poor and very poor households this access was particularly limited. Since none of the households had a certificate for exploiting forest resources, access to these sources remains insecure.

The project is likely to have directly contributed to reducing the debt burden of household through its support in increasing food production and household income. The findings and collected information on the topic are not conclusive in this matter. Regarding the improved health situation, the project has not made a direct contribution. Its campaign for clean environment and sanitation under the RPHA started in the end of 2004, so unlikely to have a significant effect on health already<sup>13</sup>. Nevertheless, findings of a first assessment in May 2005 indicate positive changes in attitudes and actions of people such as building and upgrading animal pens, latrines and wells, using covered water tanks and water filter tanks, cleaner village roads and better use of mosquito nets (Caritas 2005b). In focus group

<sup>12</sup> so-called Red Book Certificate

<sup>13</sup> The RPHA is implemented by village volunteers (VV; 3 per village) and managed by a Commune Steering Committee under APCPC. Presently, it covers 3 project villages and 2 other villages in An Phu Commune. Awareness raising activities have been started after VV training in September 2004, reaching 190 households, 24% of all households in the three project villages (Caritas 2005a). The Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) method is applied to assist villagers in identifying and analysing problems and selecting, planning and monitoring the facilities and practices needed to improve their sanitation and hygiene conditions.

meetings, project stakeholders attributed the improved health situation to better services of the Communal Health Centre and to information on health issues disseminated through radio and TV. Probably the project has made an indirect contribution as the improved food situation and increased income resulting from its support have led to a better health situation. Since it has no activities in the domain of legislation and administration, the project did not have an influence in more secure access to cropland. The project has played a further role in reducing vulnerability by promoting diversification of income sources through the introduction of new agricultural activities and providing loans, as mentioned in the previous section. It also mitigated the effects of seasonal flooding by upgrading the dykes in the crop cultivation schemes increasing the opportunities for high yields, and by establishing an all year round accessible and solid school building in Dong Chiem reducing the danger of children are exposed to on their way to and from school and protecting them against rain and cold while attending classes.

### 3.4 Well-being

Well-being combines livelihood outcomes that cannot directly be achieved through money or material goods such as a satisfactory state of health, social capital and access to services. In the present evaluation, project impact on well-being has been examined by assessing the changes in access to health care, school attendance and participation in social and cultural activities in the community<sup>14</sup>.

Findings of the survey indicate that over the last five years access of people to Communal health services has been eased (Table 16). Among the 53 households reporting an improved access, 42 were poor or very poor. Both wealth categories mentioned also contained the highest proportion of households experiencing this improvement (77 and 93% respectively).

**Table 16: Change in access of households to Communal health services over the last five years**

Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All villagers
<i>N</i>	5	13	22	27	67
Easier	60	62	77	93	79
Same	20	38	23	4	18
More difficult	20	0	0	4	3

Regarding access to education, enrolment of children in the primary school over the last 12 months was 100%, meaning that all children between 6 and 12 years in the household were registered as school pupil. Since comparable data on enrolment at the onset of the project are not available, changes over time cannot be assessed. At present, all households are capable to pay the required fees for sending their children to the primary school. This contrasts with the finding in 1999 that 30 to 70% of the households were unable to cover all education expenses (Dang Ngoc Quang 1999).

Over the last 5 years villagers participated more frequently in social activities in their village (Table 17). Among the 27 households indicating to do so, 20 were poor or very poor. The proportion of households that increased their participation in community social activities was highest for the well-off and similar among the other three categories.

<sup>14</sup> Generally, determining the impact on well-being is complicated because of the broad concept of this outcome and the difficulty to define indicators that can be monitored in an easy way.

**Table 17: Change in frequency of household participation in community social activities over the last five years**

Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All villagers
<i>N</i>	4	9	21	24	58
Increase	75	44	48	42	47
Decrease	0	0	10	13	9
Same	25	56	43	46	45

Since most project activities have not directly targeted access to health services, school enrolment and involvement in social activities, a direct impact of project on well-being is difficult to assess. Some indications, however, make an indirect contribution plausible. Class attendance of children in the Dong Chiem school building constructed by the project varies from 90 to 100% during most months of the year<sup>15</sup>, suggesting that since June 2003 flooding no longer hampered their access to education. The communal authorities stated that the upgrading of the village communal houses through the Micro-Initiative Programme (MIP) of the project has made it easier to organise social activities. The project has made some further contributions to well-being. The provision of cows and buffaloes as draught power in the CBP has strongly reduced the required manual labour for land preparation. The installation of road lights in Roc Eo, Bac Son and Nam Hung in MIP has increased people's feeling of safety (Caritas 2004a). Moreover, the enhanced well-being is compatible with the improved economic situation mentioned in earlier sections and in that sense the project is likely to have an indirect impact

### 3.5 Sustainable use of natural resources

Villagers considered that the quality of their cropland, defined as its capacity to provide a good crop, had improved over the last 5 years (Table 18). At the same time the quality of rivers and streams has deteriorated. Their perceptions about the change in forest quality, being the capacity of the forest to provide wood, bamboo, animals and plants, were diverse and sometimes contrasting.

**Table 18: Perception of households on the quality of natural resources at two times<sup>16</sup>**

Natural resource	Crop land		Forest		Rivers and streams		
	Time	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
#N		77	73	61	67	77	75
Good - excellent		19	12	24	9	16	28
Medium		32	19	19	30	11	32
Insufficient - bad		49	69	57	62	72	40

The improved quality of cropland is the result of more fertilizers and manure being applied by farmers. The CAC and a local trader of farm inputs confirmed the increased application of fertilizers. The survey findings indicate that about 87% of the households apply manure and this proportion has hardly changed since 2000. The amount of manure applied, however, has increased over the last five years for 65% of the households, (Table 19). Stakeholders explained this change by the larger number of animals being raised. However, survey data on changes in the amount of manure are not clearly related to membership of the SCG or CBG.

<sup>15</sup> Attendance falls to 70% in February and March when children work at the Perfume Pagoda site.

<sup>16</sup> Figures regarding perception on quality of natural resources per wealth class are presented in Annex 8

**Table 19: Change in the amount of manure applied to crops over last five years**

Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All farmers
<i>N</i>	5	9	20	22	56
Increase	60	67	70	50	61
Decrease	20	11	20	23	20
Same	20	22	10	27	20

The deterioration of rivers and streams is due to three factors. Primarily, 70% of the households apply more pesticides to their crops at present than in 2000 (Table 20). Both the CAC and a local trader of farm inputs mentioned the increasing pesticide use. Secondly, the growth in animal husbandry has resulted in more animal dung being present, part of which may land in open water bodies like ditches and inundated fields. Thirdly, more hazard waste ends up in the water as the population in the villages has increased whereas people have not yet changed their waste disposal practices and behaviour. According to villagers water pollution is directly related to the depletion of snails and crabs in the streams because these organisms do not thrive under this condition, thus jeopardizing the livelihoods of some households<sup>17</sup>. Dong Chiem village seems in particular hit by bad water quality as it receives polluted water of the neighbouring villages due to its low altitude. This is clearly reflected in sharp decrease in villagers' perception on water quality in this locality.

**Table 20: Change in the amount of pesticides applied to crops over last five years**

Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All farmers
<i>N</i>	4	11	23	29	67
Increase	75	45	70	79	70
Decrease	0	27	17	10	15
Same	25	27	13	10	15

Stakeholders observing a deterioration of forest resources indicated the current and past exploitation as the main cause. Others perceived an increase in forest quality because of the current ban on tree cutting and the planting of trees and bamboo.

The project is likely to have both a positive and a negative effect on the sustainable use of natural resources. Through setting up the cow/buffalo bank, providing loans for animal raising and training in fertilisation, the project has contributed to better cropland quality. Since these activities imply an increased availability of dung, they may have contributed to increased water pollution, be it in a more indirect way. By introducing bamboo cultivation, the project has stimulated people to refrain from cutting down existing natural stands of bamboo and plant the species instead. The project activity on Integrated Pest Management (IPM), aimed at reducing pesticide use, is unlikely to have already contributed to decreasing water pollution because it is not yet widely applied. In the focus group meetings project stakeholders mentioned additional forces having affected the sustainable use of natural resources. The cropland quality has been improved through the Communal programme for road improvement, facilitating the transport of manure to the fields, and through the introduction of soybean as a winter crop by DARD. The quality of forest has improved due to planting trees and banning tree cutting in the framework of forestry protection programmes, in particular Programme 661. Information to verify the change in forest quality and the impact of various forces was not available.

<sup>17</sup> Some stakeholders indicated that snails and crabs were getting scarce because women participating in the SCP were obliged to hand in money each week for repayment of their loans.

## 4. Empowerment of vulnerable people

Empowerment of women and poor people is assessed by their participation in community decision making. Improvement of the position of women is also measured in their role in household decision taking. Access to and benefits from project activities have been investigated for both women and poor people, because it is a specific condition for empowerment.

*As in the previous chapter, findings on empowerment are differentiated for four categories of households and differences between household categories are presented to indicate certain trends only.*

### 4.1 Participation in community decision making

Results of the survey show that over the last five years more people attended public meetings in the villages (Table 21). The number of people indicating to go more frequently to meetings is about the same for women and men. However, among the latter group there were also more persons who reduced their participation. Hence, increased attendance of meetings is more pronounced for women than for men. The attendance to public meetings increased considerably among all household categories. Of the 51 women reporting to attend more frequently, 35 were poor or very poor; for men this proportion was similar.

Nevertheless, the proportion of households attending more meetings was lower among the poor and very poor than among the average and well-off households.

**Table 21: Change in the number of public meetings attended**

	Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All villagers
<b>Perception women</b>	<i>N</i>	6	12	23	26	68
	Increase	100	83	74	69	76
	Decrease	0	0	9	15	9
	Same	0	17	17	15	15
<b>Perception men</b>	<i>N</i>	6	11	24	21	62
	Increase	67	91	71	67	73
	Decrease	33	9	17	24	19
	Same	0	0	13	10	8

Increased attendance to meetings is partly due to the fact that more public meetings are held presently compared to 5 years ago. Nevertheless, it indicates an enhanced involvement of people in community-level decision taking, in particular women. In the focus group meetings villagers and authorities also said that women participate more actively in meetings.

The project has made a considerable contribution to people's involvement in public meetings. Firstly, people have become more aware of the importance to attend meetings by the way the project meetings were organized, specifically asking for participants' opinions and fostering joint decision-making. Secondly, people have gained confidence to speak out through the knowledge they have acquired in training events organized by the project.

Other factors also have contributed to increased attendance in meetings. Information disseminated by radio & TV has made people more aware of the importance to attend meetings. In the context of the Grassroots Democracy Decree released in 2003, authorities are said to better inform people and consult them in decision taking. Specific information

about how this decree has been carried out and the changes it has brought about is not available. Commune authorities (APCPC) said to stimulate the participation of poor people in meetings by explaining the content of the meeting and by specifically answering their questions. Survey findings indicate that over the last 5 years people, men in particular, had more opportunities to express their opinions or concern to authorities (Table 22). Among the 39 men and 31 women perceiving more opportunities, 28 and 23 respectively belonged to poor and very poor households. The proportion of men and women reporting changes in these opportunities did differ among household categories, but without indicating a distinct trend.

**Table 22: Change in opportunities people had to express their opinions and concerns to authorities**

	Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All villagers
<i>Perception women</i>	<i>N</i>	4	11	19	22	56
	Increase	75	45	47	64	55
	Decrease	25	9	16	9	12
	Same	0	45	37	27	32
<i>Perception men</i>	Household category	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All villagers
	<i>N</i>	4	11	21	18	54
	Increase	100	64	76	67	72
	Decrease	0	9	14	6	9
	Same	0	27	10	28	19

## 4.2 Household decision making

Empowerment of women is also expressed in their involvement in decision making within the household on issues like investing the household economics, attending village meetings as representative of the household and sending children to school. Over the last 5 years, women have been more involved in decision making within the household, either by deciding more on their own or together with their husband, although changes are slight (Table 23). For instance, the proportion of households where women were involved in deciding who attends village meetings, rose from 36 to 43%; that on sending children to school from 78 to 80%.

**Table 23: Household decision making as perceived by women at two times<sup>18</sup>**

Decision	investment for developing household economic		participation in village meeting as household representative		sending children to school	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
<i>N</i>	71	68	65	62	55	49
Husband decides <sup>1</sup>	42	46	57	64	20	22
Wife decides <sup>2</sup>	58	54	43	36	80	78

<sup>1</sup>: with or without consulting wife; <sup>2</sup>: alone of together with husband

Various interacting forces have brought enhanced involvement of women in household decision taking. Men and women have learned about women's rights and have been exposed to the promotion of women's role in decision taking through gender awareness activities from the Women's Union and Youth Union and through the media. Inhabitants of Dong Chiem mentioned that the training of the Catholic church on family management and equity between husband and wife has contributed as well. Moreover, women have gained confidence in taking part in decision making by participating more in training events. The training provided by the project has contributed to strengthening the position of women in the

<sup>18</sup> Figures on decision making per wealth class are presented in Annex 8

household. Project activities on gender awareness raising (RGA) have not been mentioned specifically in this context, probably because they have been focused on authorities at Commune and village level and not yet on the villagers themselves. Moreover, people probably do not distinguish between project activities and current WU activities in the domain of raising gender awareness. In the focus group meetings villagers have singled out the SCP as a specific support of the project to increased decision making since the loans have given women economic power relative to their husbands.

### 4.3 Vulnerable people's access to and benefits of project activities

#### 4.3.1. Women

The access of women to project activities and the benefits they obtain from participation reflect the extent to which the project has contributed to a gender-balanced development.

Access of women to project activities differs largely among the activities. The project has engaged in activities specifically focussing women, such as SCP and the capacity building of APWU, while it also carries out activities addressing all villagers irrespective their gender. The former category of activities is important in terms of the number of people reached and the number of activities carried out. As an example, presently the SCP involves 340 women in the 5 project villages corresponding to 49% of the households. In the context of this programme, participants meet weekly and receive training regularly. Capacity building activities for APWU<sup>19</sup> have provided 55 training events to 547 women in total and 12 study tours involving 250 women, an exposure far larger than provided in any other project activity. In the project activities addressing all villagers, participation of women seems considerable but not exceptionally high. For example, women made up 38% of the participants in APP training and 30% of the participants in APP study tours.

Women have substantially been involved in structures for managing project activities. They acquired an important role in project management because APWU has been appointed the main implementation partner for the community development programmes and specifically in charge of the SCP. Moreover, they constitute 33% of the members of VCDG and of the Village Volunteers in the RPHA. The available data on FIG composition indicate that the participation of women is rather diverse, running from 100% in the pig raising group in Bo Moi to 14% in the bee keeping group consisting of inhabitants of Bo Moi, Bac Son, Nam Hung and Roc Eo. Except for the APWU, however, women do not occupy a leading position in the project management structures

Main benefits women have obtained through their involvement in the project activities are threefold. They have gained a stronger economic position, in particular through the SCP, and with that more respect and an increased say in the household. They have also gained technical knowledge and skills as well as awareness about their position in the community, enabling them to better perform activities but also providing them confidence and more courage to voice their opinion. Women taking part in structures charged with project implementation have increased their management capacities. This is especially so for the members of the APWU, as will be further presented in Chapter 6.

A further action for promoting a gender-balanced development is the Raising Gender Awareness Programme which up to date has reached about 250 villagers, 60% of them being men.

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<sup>19</sup> Members of APWU in the 5 project villages and for some events those in all 13 villages are involved

### 4.3.2. Poor people

Information from project documents indicates that a large number of poor people have been involved in the main Community Development programmes. The extent of reaching poor and very poor households varies among the programmes. In CBP these categories make up 88 of the 92 households involved, while they represent 70 of the 113 households involved in APP models. The very poor households outstand other wealth categories in the proportion of households participating in CBP (outreach) and in the average number of loans per household in SCP (intensity) (Table 24). It indicates that these programmes are well targeted to the poor. Although the proportion of poor and very poor households participating in APP training is considerable, the number of training events per household is inferior to that of average and well-off households, as is their involvement in APP models. These findings indicate that APP is less effectively targeted to the poor.

**Table 24: Involvement of households in distinct project activities**

	Programme	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor
	<i>N</i>	44	84	219	230
Outreach <sup>1</sup>	CBP	5	2	9	30
	SCP	41	26	30	49
	APP model	36	32	16	15
	APP training	64	71	78	77
Intensity <sup>2</sup>	CBP	-	-	-	-
	SCP	0.91	0.69	0.78	1.15
	APP model	0.89	0.51	0.18	0.22
	APP training	1.36	1.23	0.86	0.97

<sup>1</sup>Outreach: proportion of households in the wealth category participating in an activity/programme

<sup>2</sup>Intensity: the average number of events in which households participate (# loans (SCP), # training events and models (APP))

According to the poor and very poor households, a majority (about 70%) of the reasons for not participating in CBP are related to limited access. Constraints mentioned in particular were the lack of household members to care for the animal, mainly in the very poor households, and the fact that they did not correspond to the criteria, for both poor and very poor households. The findings suggest that the requirements to borrow a cow or buffalo do not fit very well to the conditions of the (very) poor households. Reasons the poorer households bring forward for not joining the SCP are for about 60% related to limited access. Main constraints mentioned were a lack of time to attend weekly meetings, being unknown with the programme and not being accepted as member of a credit group.

Household survey data indicate that participation in CBP has improved the life of all households involved. Major contributions mentioned were the reduced labour requirement for land preparation, the increased availability of dung and having a calf as asset. Four out of nine households, all poor and very poor, also perceived some difficulties. The major ones were not having a calf yet and the requirement to build a shelter. Participation in the SCP has improved the situation for 24 out of 26 households involved. Joining this programme has worsened the situation for two very poor households only. Of the 18 poor and very poor households participating in the SCP, 7 also perceived problems. Diseases and mortality of animals was by far the main one.

In the household survey the exposure to and application of agricultural technologies has been followed for three technology types: rice cultivation (varieties, IPM), new commodities (mushroom, bamboo) and animal raising (pig, chicken, goose, bee, fish). Findings indicate that among the 52 households being informed about one or several technology types, 33 belonged to the poor or very poor, so a considerable number of poor people has been reached. The proportion of households being informed varies widely between household categories and technology types (Table 25). Generally speaking, the proportion of poor and very poor households being informed does not exceed those of other household categories,

indicating that they have not been effectively targeted. As explained by project staff, information dissemination regarding agricultural technologies has been guided by demands of the villagers, in particular during the first years. Since poor people tend to be less expressive than others, this may have been in their disadvantage. Another reason is that poor people tend to hesitate in experimenting new technologies and prefer following key farmers in technology adoption. Hence, it is also important to include these farmers, be it opinion leaders, villagers carrying a position of responsibility or good farmers.

**Table 25: Agricultural technologies: exposure - adoption - benefits**

Technology	Step	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All farmers
	N	6	14	28	32	80
rice cultivation	informed	33	57	25	28	33
	applied <sup>1</sup>	100	88	86	100	92
	benefited <sup>2</sup>	100	100	100	78	92
mushroom, bamboo cultivation	informed	17	14	0	0	4
	applied	0	50			33
	benefited		100			100
animal raising	informed	50	21	21	34	29
	applied	100	67	100	82	87
	benefited	100	100	100	100	100

<sup>1</sup>Expressed as proportion of households being informed about the technology by training, exposure visits or demonstration models

<sup>2</sup>Expresses as proportion of households applying the technology

Among the households having been informed about a rice cultivation or animal raising technology, 70 to 100% have applied it; and almost all households consider it beneficial. Differences between household categories do not indicate a distinct trend. Data interpretation requires caution because the number of households involved is small and technologies have been lumped. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that limited access to information is an important bottleneck for the adoption by poorer households. The high rate of adoption by the exposed households is probably due to the credit provided by the project to households applying new technology models.

Household survey data regarding the measures for improving the health and sanitation situation indicate that 57 to 65% of the households exposed are poor or very poor. Nevertheless, the proportion of poor and very poor household being exposed is inferior to that of the well-off households and the average households, indicating the activities have not specifically targeted to these categories (Table 26).

**Table 26: Measures for improved health and sanitation: exposure - adoption - benefits**

Measure	Step	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	All farmers
	N	6	14	28	32	80
Upgrading pens	informed	50	36	22	28	29
	applied <sup>1</sup>	67	80	65	44	60
	benefited <sup>2</sup>	100	100	100	100	100
upgrading latrines	informed	67	36	25	25	30
	applied	50	60	71	50	58
	benefited	100	100	100	100	100
Good and bad behaviour	informed	67	43	32	19	31
	applied	100	100	100	100	100
	benefited	100	100	100	100	100

Application rates regarding upgraded pig pens and latrines are variable, but seem low compared to the application rates of agricultural technologies. In contrast, proposed changes in behaviour are fully applied. These findings suggest that availability of loans is conducive for the adoption of measures. The unanimous appreciation of the measures is striking, but could not be verified.

## 5. Sustainability of project interventions

### 5.1 Maintenance of rural infrastructure

The maintenance of rural infrastructure has been assessed according to the following criteria: the present status and expected life-time of the infrastructure works, the current operation of these work, the way maintenance has been organised, the capacity of management units in doing maintenance and the involvement of users in operation and maintenance of the infrastructure works.

In general, the basic construction of all infrastructure works provided by the project was of good quality and corresponded to the specifications made in the original design. The finalization of the works has not been done adequately for most of the works as materials used were of poor quality or procedures in construction have not been respected. For example, the anti-lightning system of the school in Dong Chiem does not ensure adequate safety, the drainage system is inadequate causing walls and basement to get damp and cement floors are gradually deteriorating. The dyke body in Dong Chiem has partially been compacted by traffic whereas that in Bac Son lacks organic matter in the top layer so plants to stabilize the body are difficult to grow. Consequently, the status and construction quality of these works was estimated at 70 to 85% of the initial design. The electricity networks were in general in better shape, although materials used such as isolation ceramics was of poor quality and wiring of the poles was not adequately done. The status and construction quality varied from 70% in Roc Eo to about 100% in Bo Moi and Nam Hung. Given these findings, the expected life-time<sup>20</sup> of the works is restricted. The upgraded dykes are estimated to last 7 to 10 years, the pumping stations will last up to 15 years, the school up to 12 years and the electricity networks 15 years.

Operation of several infrastructure works appeared sub-optimal, partly due to weaknesses in the construction, partly due to poor management. For instance, the classrooms of the school in Dong Chiem have not enough benches and tables so children have to be squeezed in those available. Moreover, they have limited daylight in winter as glass windows are absent so shutters have to be closed. In the rice cultivation schemes in both Dong Chiem and Bac Son several stretches of the dyke are not sufficiently high to prevent overflowing entirely. In the scheme in Dong Chiem the same canals are used for both irrigation and drainage, whereas canals are absent in the Bac Son scheme. The pumping stations in the rice cultivation schemes as well as the electricity networks are adequately operated, although the long distance between poles and connected houses of consumers coupled with the substandard cable quality in the Bo Moi – Roc Eo network causes considerable losses in energy.

The APCPC is the main responsible for management of the infrastructure works. It formulates the plans for operation and informs the villagers. There are management units in the villages that implement these operation plans. These units consist of people having prestige within the community such as village leaders, member of the Commune electric management board or village security board etc. Important is that the opinions of these people are respected by the villagers. Poor people either women are member of the management unit, the latter because the work can be hard and difficult. The management units do not have a legal status; they act upon instructions of the APCPC.

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<sup>20</sup> Life-time is assessed in function of the quality of the construction and the current maintenance carried out. It represents the period during which the infrastructure work can be comfortably and effectively used by the beneficiaries in absence of major restoration efforts.

Members of the management units have the capacities required to operate the works and repair the main damages. They have been trained on management of rural electricity networks and irrigation schemes by My Duc District authorities. However, they lack the capacity to anticipate on weak points and to prevent future damages in the works.

In managing the infrastructure works, insufficient attention is paid to maintenance. Exception is the maintenance of the 35 KV line in Nam Hung that is carried out by the My Duc Electric Company. The APCPC, being main responsible for operation and maintenance of the works, does not have written plans and regulations concerning maintenance. The initial construction plans mostly did not include reservations for maintenance, or if they did, like for the rice cultivation schemes, these reservations have not been used to this end. Maintenance is mostly restricted to repairing the existing damages. Fees collected from users of the works are mainly used to cover the direct operational costs, such as electricity for the pumping stations and salary for the employees responsible for operation. Money for maintenance is levied over the users in case the estimated expenditures are below 300,000 VND (about 19 USD), otherwise it is requested from the APCPC. The following example regarding the fee the new school in Dong Chiem illustrates how the financial contribution of the beneficiaries of infrastructure is used. As for all schools in Vietnam, people sending their children to the new school pay a fee (construction fee<sup>21</sup>) which is for about 50% transferred to the national level for financing the education whereas the rest is used for maintaining school facilities in the Commune, with preference for those that are in worse conditions than the school in Dong Chiem.

In general, users are hardly informed about the amount of fees that have been collected or how these means are used. Consequently, they lack the opportunity to have an influence in the decisions taken regarding management of the infrastructure works and the extent these works fit their needs. In that sense, there is very little ownership of the infrastructure provided by the project. The rice cultivation scheme in Dong Chiem is an exception to the situation described above. The water users association is said to inform the users after the harvest (twice a year) about fees collected and main expenditures. Nevertheless, discussions among villagers in one of the group meetings in Dong Chiem made clear that people were not informed adequately about expenditures and maintenance activities.

## 5.2 Financial viability of programmes

The assessment of the financial viability of the programmes takes into account the returns generated and the external funding received. It has been concentrated on the SCP and CBP since other programmes in the project do not produce returns or have significant external funding. Perspectives of increased contribution by project partners have been assessed in a general way; it should be taken into account that the expressions are non-binding thus subject to change.

The criteria used to assess the financial viability are the cost recovery and the performance of the programme. In both the SCP and CBP the project has made an initial donation as seed money for credits or a herd of buffaloes and cows (over 60 animals) in order to start off. This donation will not be taken into account in assessing costs and returns of the programmes.

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<sup>21</sup> Construction fee for new school in Dong Chiem amounts to 25,000 VND/pupil/year, the total of annual fees represents about 1% of the total expenditures for school construction

### 5.2.1. Cow/Buffalo Programme

The total expenditures for implementing the activities of CBP are 10.1 M VND (635 USD) in 2003 and 11.6 M VND (730 USD) in 2004. The borrowers' fee collected in these years amounted to 5.2 M VND (327 USD) and 6.6 M VND (415 USD) respectively. These fees were just enough to pay the allowances to the VCDG (in 2004), as confirmed by the PMT, but insufficient to cover all further expenses such as training, vaccination and treatment. Given this situation, there is no possibility to set money aside for a risk fund or for replacing the animals once they have ended their productive life. Under the prevailing conditions cost recovery of the CBP is insufficient.

Since the start of the programme, collection of the borrowers' fee was indicated to be problematic. Although borrower's groups have been established in order to improve payment and some progress has been made in this aspect (Caritas, 2004a), the current repayment rate with 39% of the borrowers being in delay or in default is unsatisfactory. Regarding the performance of the programme, statistical data show that 23% of the total number of animals bought was not fit to produce a calf; it died or has been withdrawn (Table 27). After 4 years 48 animals had an offspring, representing 73% of the total number of animals bought or 94% of animals currently present. Since a buffalo may produce a calve every 18 month and the programme had projected 2 years for the first offspring, the current birth rate is 50% below the standards set. Mortality among calves is considerable, more than 20% over the entire period. The situation in 2004 is rather similar than that of previous years with 2 adult animals and 5 out of the 22 calves having died or withdrawn.

**Table 27: Performance of Cow/Buffalo Programme 2001-2004**

Category	Numbers (# heads)	Proportion (%)
Cows/buffaloes bought	66	
Cows/buffaloes died	4	6
Cows/buffaloes withdrawn	11	17
Cows/buffaloes present	51	77
Calves born	48	73 (total), 94 (present)
Calves died	10	21
Calves present	38	79
Cows/buffaloes transferred in 2004	21	
Transferred cows/buffaloes producing a calf	14	66

Source: APWU

Comparison of above-mentioned results with that of a cow bank project in northern and central Vietnam (ADRA 2003) indicates that the current CBP performance is poor<sup>22</sup>. The mortality rate in CBP is high, whereas the reproduction rate seems low<sup>23</sup>, although one should take into account that cows may produce a calve every 12 months while buffaloes do so every 18 months only. The poor performance is probably strongly linked to the feeding and care-taking practices. It also raises the question whether buffaloes are an appropriate type of animal in this kind of borrowing system for resource-poor farmers. Evidently, the current performance will strongly jeopardise the CBP to attain financial viability.

<sup>22</sup> The CBP could not be compared with a similar buffalo bank system because specific performance data of the latter were not available.

<sup>23</sup> In the ADRA cow bank project the mortality rate of adult cows and calves was 2.5% after 2 years, while 64% animals had an off spring and 23% animals had been transferred.

### 5.2.2. Saving and Credit Programme

The total expenditures for running the SCP amount to 12.1 M VND (760 USD) in 2003 and 17.8 M VND (1120 USD) in 2004. Interest collected in the same period is 6.9 and 33.0 M VND respectively, yielding 3.8 M VND (240 USD) and 18.2 M VND<sup>24</sup> (1145 USD) for covering implementation and management costs. These figures indicate that the programme has reached its break-even point in 2004. From the interest earned 0.7 M VND (44 USD) in 2003 and 3.3 M VND (208 USD) in 2004 is reserved as risk fund. This amount corresponds to 0.4 and 0.7% of the total loans disbursed in these years (181.5 and 499.5 M VND respectively). These reservations seem rather low, in particular when considering the demand of borrowers to increase the loan sum and to shift from weekly to monthly payments.

The rate of repayment is very high; in 2004, 99.95 % of the loans has been paid back within the term. Only two persons out of 340 have a default loan. This result is excellent compared with default loans amounting up to 8% of the total loans disbursed in a micro-credit project in northwest Vietnam (Caseley, 2000). According to participants in the SCP, failing investments in animal raising due to health problems is the main cause of default loans. The same was reported in the project mentioned above.

Regarding the achievements of the programme, the total capital available for disbursement was 286.5 M VND (about 18,000 USD) in 2004, composed of 218 M VND seed money from the project, 33 M VND interest and 35.5 M VND savings from the borrowers. In that same year 499.5 M VND (about 31,400 USD) had been set out as loans, implying the capital has been used for 174%, most of it being loaned out twice. It reflects a very efficient way of using the funds available.

### 5.2.3. Other programmes

Expenditures of other programmes are diverse. Those of APP and RPHA are considerable, exceeding the expenditures of SCP and CBP in 2004. Training is the major cost item in implementing these programmes, likely because numbers of participants are high. These programmes do not yield substantial returns, so they strongly depend on project funds. Financial contributions from other sources have not been reported.

In discussions held in the context of the evaluation, Communal authorities as well as representatives of DARD have showed interest in increased collaboration and indicated some opportunities for a contribution from their side. At this moment, the APCPC raises an agricultural tax used among others for inspecting pest incidence in rice fields. Part of this money may be available for a contribution to APP. In 2007 the Plant Protection Sub-Department in My Duc District has planned to start IPM training for about 75% of all households in An Phu, in the context of the National IPM programme. Collaboration with the project could be considered.

The findings indicate that financial viability of these programmes is not ensured but there is potential for external financial contribution or collaboration to improve this situation.

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<sup>24</sup> The proportion of interest available for training, administration allowances etc. is 55%

### 5.3 Institutional sustainability

The project has established organisations at village level, the so-called Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), for the implementation of community development activities. Due to their proximity to the beneficiaries, these groups are supposedly able to involve beneficiaries in the management of project activities. The capacity of these CBOs to continue their activities in a progressively independent manner is an important condition for community development to be continued beyond project life. Hence, the evaluation assessed the institutional sustainability of these CBOs. Given the perspective that they will play an increasingly important role in development at village level, the assessment of institutional sustainability took into account five major criteria, covering the knowledge and effective implementation of the main tasks and responsibility, the presence of the required human capacities, the balance between the efforts CBO members invest and benefits they obtain, the linkage of the CBO with village and Commune authorities and with technical services at Commune and District level, and the functioning of the CBO. The main findings regarding the institutional sustainability of three types of CBO, the Village Community Development Group (VCDG), the Credit Centres (CC) and the Farmers' Interest Groups (FIG), are presented in the following sub-sections

#### 5.3.1. Village Community Development Group

The VCDG has been established to assist in the implementation of the project activities at village level and to follow the implementation progress, in particular for the CBP and APP. The members of this group as well as the APWU and the VL with whom they collaborate considered that these tasks have been carried out effectively.

Members of the VCDG have the capacities to successfully coordinate and monitor the implementation of project activities. But they lack the knowledge and skills to take up a more independent role by formulating activities and assessing the results of the activities carried out. They also need support in solving problems occurring during the implementation such as refusal of repayment or violation of regulations. Experiences made during the current phase of the project indicate that members of the VCDG lack a sound technical background so they are unlikely to provide support in that sense to villagers. Although this is not their explicit task, the inability to do so restricts the success of various project activities. Up to date, the VCDG has received training in participatory planning and participatory M&E and in implementing the CBP. It needs further support from the PMT in applying the knowledge and tools they have learned. Regarding capacity strengthening and the related change in working relationship between VCDG and APWU, the recommendations formulated during the Mid-Term Review are insufficiently followed up.

In carrying out their tasks, the VCDG is closely linked to the APWU, with whom it has regular exchanges and monthly meetings. It also has a strong collaboration with the VL who assist this group in supervising proper care taking of the cows and buffaloes by the participants of the CBP and the selection of farmers for laying down models of APP. The VCDG supervises the use of loans handed out by the SCP and has a monthly informal exchange with the CCC. A fixed schedule for meetings and exchanges helps the VCDG to effectively coordinate the various activities and in that sense an appropriate follow-up of the MTR recommendations has been made. The VCDG linkages with technical services at Communal and District level are indirect as they pass through the APWU and therefore they are weak. The VCDG is restricted in ensuring an integrated development because it is not directly responsible for certain programmes, SCP for instance, and because the VL, responsible for all development activities at village level, is not a member of the CBO.

According to the participants of the group meetings, the time and energy they put into their work for the VCDG largely exceeds the remuneration they receive in allowances and other benefits. Hence, people feel overloaded and not very satisfied. Some members have been withdrawn due to poor performance, what may be related to the current workload.

### **5.3.2. Farmers' Interest Groups**

In the context of promoting new agricultural technologies in the APP, the establishment of FIG has been stimulated and supported. Within a group two farmers are selected for laying out a pilot model of the technology they are interested in. The inputs for these pilots are partly subsidized by the project. In the course of the project several FIG have been set up. According to the information available, there are four FIGs dealing with a specific subject (Annex 6). In two of them, members come from different villages. The size of the FIG varies from 13 to 30 members, the proportion of women from 14% to 100% (for the FIG closely related to the SCP). The FIGs have been established in 2004 or 2005, so they are just starting. Besides these "established" FIGs, the evaluation team has encountered small numbers of farmers grouped around certain APP models who meet once a month together with the CBG and the VCDG.

Members of the FIGs consider laying out pilot models as their main task. Exchanging experiences was mentioned as an advantage of the FIG, not so clearly as a task. Only the IPM club in Dong Chiem considered transfer of the knowledge to other people as a task.

Being recently established and thus just exposed to a new technology, most members of the FIG have a limited technical knowledge. Capacities in organising the group vary from good for the IPM club in Dong Chiem to poor for those who only join the regulated monthly meeting with the VCDG. In general, FIG members lack the knowledge and skills to effectively transfer their experiences to other people.

Through their involvement in the APP, the FIGs are strongly linked to the VCDG and APWU. As for other CBOs, FIGs have weak contacts with to the technical service as they pass through the APWU. The IPM club in Dong Chiem has established a more extended pattern of contacts and collaboration with other stakeholders in the Commune.

FIG members are well aware of the benefits in joining the group, in particular the access to a new technology, the participation in training, the opportunity to obtain a loan for implementing a new technology and the exchange of experiences with peers. These perceived benefits will contribute to the sustainability of the FIG, although the exchange of experiences without a linked economic benefit is generally considered not sufficient for the lasting existence of a farmers' group.

The way a group functions varies largely among the FIGs. In Bac Son for example, all FIGs come together once a month in a meeting with the VCDG and the CBG. This monthly gathering has been introduced as a follow-up of the MTR recommendations in order to increase the exchange among farmers. Due to the large diversity in interest among the people, this kind of gathering is unlikely to increase a fruitful exchange. In contrast, the IPM club in Dong Chiem gave the impression of independent functioning reflected in weekly meetings during the growing season for exchange and support and in clear ideas about activities. In the group discussions held during the evaluation, FIG members tended to connect the development of further activities with project support they desired. It indicates that ownership of the models and an independently functioning FIG are not yet attained

### 5.3.3. Saving and Credit Centre

The Credit Centre, established to carry out the SCP, combines at most six village Saving and Credit Groups<sup>25</sup> (SCG), which meet at weekly intervals. Main purpose of these Centre meetings are to hand out the loans, to collect weekly saving deposits, interest and loan repayments, to do bookkeeping of loans and repayment, to supervise proper use of the loans and to organize exchanges and training to the groups. The Credit Centre is under the responsibility of a Credit Centre Chief (CCC), being a member of the Women's Union in the village. The Credit Centre differs from the other groups presented in this report as it is directly linked to a mass organization (APWU) and management and responsibilities are concentrated in one single person, the CCC.

The CCC have the capacities to carry out the above-mentioned tasks effectively, as reflected by the high repayment rate and the intensive use of the credit funds available. The strict regulations of the SCP obviously facilitated the successful management of the Credit Centres. The CCC are still weak in bookkeeping and consider organizing the weekly meetings difficult, as attendance by members of the SCG was moderate (e.g.: 60% in Dong Chiem). They lack the technical background to support the SCG in using the loans for good investments, although this is not their explicit task. In former days, the absence of technical support has resulted in numerous cases of investment failures, mainly due to animal health problems. Findings of focus group discussions and the survey indicate that animal diseases remain a major constraint up to date. It suggests that the project's initiatives for reinforcing technical capacities through training village veterinarians, integrating them into VCDG and enhancing the exchange between VCDG and SCP, have not yet attained their expected effect.

The CCC tightly collaborate with the APWU that gives them a strong support in setting up the regulations, in supervising and monitoring programme activities and in financial management. Being member of the WU, the CCC has joined the APWU in numerous training events and study tours. They have regular exchanges with the VCDG who supervises the proper use of the loans, but this collaboration is rather weak. Up to date, the contacts of the CCC with the technical services at Commune and District level pass through the APWU and thus are weak.

The high repayment rate and few default loans indicate that the SCG and CC are functioning well. Women indicated that they have learned from their peers in the weekly meetings of the CC, but general attendance was moderate as women lack the time or consider the meetings boring. Initiatives to review the system of weekly meetings in order to make them more attractive and foster exchange of experiences among SCG members, as recommended in the Mid-term Review in 2003, have not yet been formulated.

The CCC have a high workload as they manage all the CC in their village, which may go up to 5. They consider the remuneration they receive low compared to their inputs, what affects their enthusiasm and efforts.

The CC is part of a larger structure in the SCP, which should be considered entirely to assess sustainability. In general, this structure has the required organizational capacity. Capacity in financial management has been improved but needs further strengthening. Sub-optimal linkages to technical expertise restrict the possibilities to call in support on appropriate moments. Up to date, financial sources needed were provided by the project. In the long-term, contacts and working relationships with the formal bank sector seem indispensable to ensure the continuation after the project life. Experiences with credit

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<sup>25</sup> The Saving and Credit Groups consist of five women who self-selected each other to the group and guarantee each other in borrowing and paying back the credit.

programmes elsewhere indicate that successful credit groups could be self-reliant after about 7 years (IFAD, not dated)

#### **5.3.4. Synthesis**

Although diverse in their tasks and responsibilities, the CBOs covered in this assessment presented various common points regarding institutional sustainability. They were effective in implementing the project activities, being their main task and responsibility. The members had the capacities for implementation, but lacked those for a more autonomous functioning of the CBO in terms of formulation and planning of activities, and assessment of the results. The CBOs had weak linkages to technical services at Communal and District level as their contacts mainly passed through the APWU. For that reason they were not able to ensure adequate technical support to the beneficiaries. Members of the VCDG and Credit Centres perceived that the time and energy they invest largely exceed the remuneration and benefits they obtain from it. Consequently, they lost motivation whereas poor people were automatically excluded for these functions as they lack the time to spend on them. On one hand, the fact that the project provides allowances may influence the perception of CBO members on remuneration. On the other hand, low remuneration relative to investments is found in many projects where villagers are involved in project management. It probably reflects the difficulties of villagers to integrate an ambitious agenda of project activities at grassroots level in their schedule of daily chores and commitments.

## 6. Project management aspects

Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skills necessary to manage the improvement of their lives themselves. Hence it is important to assess to what extent the project has contributed to the establishment of local capacity for development. The two main aspects considered here are the increase in management capacities of and ownership by local partners. Included are also the findings concerning the follow-up of the Mid-Term Review recommendations since they address management by local partners.

### 6.1 Capacity strengthening of main project partners

Project partners recognised that the APWU has raised its capacities in project management. Specifically its ability in coordinating and planning of activities, in reporting on the implementation and financial management were considered improved. Capacity building activities have made a contribution, but learning by doing was important as well for increasing these capacities. Training proved not always effective because further support to put the acquired knowledge and skills into practice was lacking; capacity building in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) being a marked example.

The APWU has increased its technical knowledge related to the various subjects of the project owing to its participation in training activities and its daily involvement in implementation of project activities. As a result, the APWU could better identify problems in project implementation and call in the support of experts when necessary. The APWU still lacks more advanced knowledge and insights in financial management of credit systems and in raising gender awareness. Hence, it feels insufficiently confident in taking the full lead in these domains for which it is specifically in charge.

Up to date, the capacities of the APWU in M&E of the project are still weak. Current M&E activities are mainly focussed on the implementation of planned activities and related information is gathered for a major part orally by exchange between project stakeholders such as CC, VCDG and APWU. The M&E findings are documented for the "end receivers", the Caritas Field Office and the Communal Communist Party. A systematic approach to collect, process and share information is lacking. Given its limited coverage, five villages, the project could do without. Due to the absence of an information system, however, little information is readily available and extensive sharing of information among stakeholders is impeded.

In the current M&E, little attention is paid to the reasons for delay in implementation, the results or outcomes of activities such as improved production, increased knowledge and skills, and the eventual benefits for the people participating in the activities (impact). It hinders the APWU in obtaining a clear overview of the activities and the achievements regarding the improvements in poor people's lives. Related to that, the APWU seems more focussed on achieving the planned activities than on access to and benefits of the poor.

Information gathered during the evaluation does not allow a clear assessment whether the APWU has improved its capacities to address the need of the poor and to increase their involvement in the project.

Although considerable achievements have been made, the capacity strengthening activities lack a systematic approach as well as a clear link to the qualifications the APWU is expected to acquire. The activities are carried out according to a Plan for Capacity Building that does

not mention these qualifications and that proposes training activities independent from the capacities of the APWU assessed at the onset of the project<sup>26</sup>.

Among the Communal authorities and villagers the APWU is appreciated as project manager, what reflects both the quality of its capacities to manage activities and its command over external funds for the Commune. Notwithstanding this improved image, there were no clear indications that the WU has gained a more important role in discussions and decisions concerning important commune development issues.

## 6.2 Ownership and sustainability in management

Since the start of the project, the APWU has gradually taken up more responsibility in project management, in particular in implementation. At present, the role of the PO is restricted to checking the implementation against the planning and the quarterly expenses against the budget. This increased autonomy of the APWU has been fostered by a policy of detachment from the side of the PO. On-the-job advice from the PO is the main type of support the APWU has received to gain more autonomy; specific training in this subject has not been provided.

The project has increased the number of community development activities at village level and, through the establishment of the VCDG, it has enhanced the involvement of villagers in the management of these activities. Nonetheless, the VCDG did not clearly gain a more autonomous role in community development over the last 5 years. Although its working relationships with the APWU have become more systematic, they did not clearly shift from instruction to support. At present, VCDG members still lack the capacities to engage into planning, formulation and assessment of activities. Since the VCDG is responsible for a part of the programmes only, it finds itself in a difficult position to promote an integrated development at village level.

The APCPC, having governing responsibilities for An Phu Commune and being the official project holder, has gradually been more involved in the community development activities of the project. It contributes to the implementation of these activities by informing the people, arranging disputes and by enforce regulations, but it still lacks a clear role and position relative to the APWU. Although being final responsible for the project, the APCPC does not receive financial management reports from the APWU. In line with the MTR recommendations, exchange and collaboration between APWU and APCPC has been intensified, but not in a well-structured manner as indicated in the follow-up plan.

Although the involvement of Caritas in project implementation has decreased, its input in the project still remains important and determinant, in particular regarding the formulation of new activities, strategic questions and assessment of programmes. Also in financial terms Caritas input in the development in An Phu Commune is large<sup>27</sup> and challenge the attainment of sustainability and ownership in project management.

Considerations for next project phase due to start in 2006, contain considerable changes in the project structure. The APCPC will become the overall responsible for managing the Community Development programmes and various organisations at Commune level will be

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<sup>26</sup> Training Need Assessment of APWU in 2000.

<sup>27</sup> As indication: the annual budget of the Commune amounted to 419 M VND (30,000 USD) in 1998 (Dang Ngoc Quang, 1999) and to 617 M VND (44,000 USD) in 2004 (Hoang Van Son, 2005), whereas community development activities and infrastructure in the first phase of the project had an average annual budget of 73,000 USD (Caritas, 2005a). (exchange rates of year 2000; 1 USD is 14,000 VND)

significantly involved in implementing activities and providing technical support. Through this modification in the structure, the project will make better use of the available (technical) capacities and reinforce an integrated management of development activities, thus strengthening of the weak points in the current project phase. This move to further integrate the project into the existing local structure is considered an important step to improve local ownership and to ensure sustainability of the project activities.

At present, the project is weakly linked to organisations at District level that are active in the various project domains, and to national programmes covering these domains. There is no collaboration with the branch offices of banks active in rural development (VBSP, VBARD), both providing loans with advantageous interest rates. DARD indicated to provide support specifically to An Phu being the poorest Commune in the District. This support is, however, not linked to the intervention of the project. The District Health Centre implements a national programme on prevention of malaria and child malnutrition, but is not involved in project activities in these domains.

### 6.3 Follow-up of Mid-Term Review recommendations

The Mid-Term Review of the project carried out in November 2003 has produced recommendations in order to improve the effectiveness of the project. A follow-up plan has been formulated to give suite to these recommendations. The follow-up plan has been formulated by the PMT; the specific role of APWU in this could not be assessed precisely. Findings suggest, however, that it did not have very much ownership in the process.

The follow-up plan does not present measures for all the recommendations of the MTR. In particular regarding project management and the SCP, follow-up activities are default. For instance, training APWU on problem solving and decision making skills has not been included, measures to improve the access of poor people to loans and to increase experience sharing between borrowers in SCP have not been formulated. Most of the measures in the follow-up plan are concrete and thus straightforward to implement.

Following points highlight the extent to what the follow-up plan has been realized and the main results obtained. In CBP, Village Veterinary Workers have been training enabling them to provide better support to the borrowers. The establishment of borrower groups (CBG) who meet monthly together with VCDG has enhanced the exchange of information among farmers. In APP, further technical training has been provided, the CAC being involved in that on IPM only. Post-training support has been guaranteed through the trainer (on contract basis) or through a local expert assigned to the FIG. FIGs have been established and members meet on their own or in a fixed monthly meeting with the VCDG (section 5.3.2). The APWU has gained knowledge and skills in Community Development and PME. It was able to apply the former successfully, doing so for the latter was problematic. The collaboration between APWU and APCPC has been increased through informal exchange; no mention was made about regular meetings or reporting. As to project management, division of tasks among the APWU staff has been introduced resulting in a more balanced contribution of the members. The APWU did not change its working relationship with the VCDG yet (section 5.3.1). Exchange between CCC and VCDG has been formalized.

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusions

In response to the major questions guiding the Final Evaluation of the first phase of the An Phu Integrated Community Development Project following conclusions can be drawn.

*The project has positively contributed to improved livelihoods*

Over the last five years, the situation in the project villages has considerably changed. The household food situation has become more secure, whereas household incomes have increased because of improved crop production technologies, the introduction of new crops, expansion of animal raising and more opportunities for employment. However, very poor people did not improve as much as other household categories. Life of the villagers became less vulnerable as the incidence of diseases and the debt burden decreased, access to cropland got more secure and income sources more diverse. Nevertheless, women remained more vulnerable than men to diseases and only few of them had obtained a land use certificate. The immaterial aspects of life also got better since people have gained better access to the communal health services, poor and very poor in particular, and participated more in the social activities within their community.

The project has contributed to improved food security and income by upgrading the crop cultivation schemes (dykes) in two villages, by handing out loans for input purchase and providing training and demonstration models on new cropping technologies and commodities. In particular, the SCP has been beneficial to the poor and very poor households for improvement. The project has played a significant role in reducing people's vulnerability by securing cropland from flooding and by providing classrooms accessible during flooding and protecting pupils against rain and cold. Furthermore, the project has indirectly contributed to better health and lower debt burden through the improvement of the food situation and income. Project activities on public health and sanitation are not likely to have affected people's health situation already, but they are appreciated by the villagers and adopted by considerable numbers of them. The project has contributed to improved well-being by providing animal draught power through the CBP and by giving access to electricity. It has also made an indirect contribution by creating the conditions for people to better access services and activities such as the new school building in Dong Chiem and the upgraded community houses.

Over the last 5 years villagers have changed their management of natural resources, not always towards more sustainability. On one hand the quality of cropland has been improved by the application of animal manure and fertilizers, on the other hand streams and rivers have become more polluted by pesticides, waste and animal dung. The impact of project activities tends to go along this general trend. The project activity on IPM, intending to protect the environment, is not yet applied extensively enough to have had an impact.

Considerable numbers of poor and very poor households experienced improvement of their livelihoods and have benefited from project interventions; they made up 58 to 79% of all households benefiting. It indicates that the project reaches the poor, so means are used in a cost-effective manner<sup>28</sup>. Although the Final Evaluation did not aim a scientific analyse, its findings indicate that the proportion of households improving their livelihoods or benefiting from project interventions was not equal for all wealth categories. Very poor people in

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<sup>28</sup> This is even more so if average households are considered also being among those targeted by the project, because the project deals with the poorest villages in a poor Commune, as viewed by Caritas Field Office

particular tended to lag behind. It suggests that the project interventions, although reaching many poor people, does not succeed in giving them an equal benefit.

*Marginalized people have been empowered by the project, in particular women*

Regarding the empowerment of marginalized groups, women have clearly improved their position in the community. They have increased their passive and active participation in public meetings and have slightly strengthened their role in decision taking at the household level. The project has made an important contribution by the way it involves people in discussions and decisions concerning project activities, by strengthening women's confidence through training and by enhancing their economic position relative to their husband through loans. It has been attained by engaging in activities specifically focussing women and by achieving a satisfactory representation of women in general activities. The project has effectively made further contributions to a gender-balanced development by largely involving women in project management and by implementing gender awareness raising activities. These efforts have made women aware of their position and rights and have increased capacities in managing community development.

Poor people also have enhanced their position, but very poor in particular seem to have been restricted in doing so. Like all villagers, poor people have significantly increased their participation in public meetings, but they are not member of village units for managing infrastructure and they lack the time to take up positions of responsibility in CBOs. A considerable number of poor people have been reached by the main Community Development programmes. The CBP and to a lesser extent the SCP have preferentially addressed poor people and almost all of those involved acknowledge the benefits these programmes have brought. Nevertheless, the requirements for participation in both programmes have hindered some very poor people to join effectively as they did not fit the required conditions. Moreover, poor people have experienced difficulties in participation due to the restricted performance of the animals in CBP and the risks of investment failure in SCP. Activities of APP and RPHA have not given a preferential access to poor people. The majority of poor people exposed to new technologies through APP have effectively applied them, the proportion of poor people having adopted measures for improved health and sanitation was lower, suggesting the enabling role of credit provided by the project.

*Achieving sustainability has still a long way to go*

The sustainability of project initiatives is an issue with multiple aspects. Infrastructure works established by the project are widely appreciated, but their capacity to serve people's needs without substantial further external support is at stake. Substandard quality and operation as well as poor maintenance of the infrastructure works reduce the benefits users may get and restrict the period users can enjoy these benefits. Apparently, control during the construction process has been insufficient. Maintenance has not been considered at its right value given that it has not been integrated in operation and that necessary funds others than people's contributions have not been secured. Although it remains a question whether users can and want effectively participate in operation and maintenance, their current restricted involvement may jeopardize their interest in contributing to a lasting use of the infrastructure works.

Concerning the financial viability, the SCP can be continued without substantial external finances were the project to withdraw. The CBP is financially not sound since expenditures are not covered and its performance is not satisfactory. Other programmes have an important training component and hardly any contribution from the beneficiaries or external financial support. It makes them totally dependant on the project. The importance of capacity

building in the project and in community development in general may plead for maintaining these programmes in the project

The Community-Based Organisations have made an important step towards institutional sustainability. Being established at the start of the project, these organizations have proven effective in implementing project activities at village level. Evidently they need more time than the current project phase to develop their capacity to manage community development in a more independent way. Presently, they lack the capacities and support for formulation of activities and assessment of results. They are insufficiently linked to the administrative structure in order to integrate development initiatives and have insufficient contacts with technical services at Commune and District level to ensure support to the beneficiaries. Members of most CBOs feel that their involvement is not appropriately compensated by benefits and remuneration, jeopardizing their motivation.

#### *Building up of local capacity for community development has taken off*

The project has contributed in increasing the ability of the APWU, currently the major local project partner, to engage in community development. On-the-job support and training provided by the project improved its capacities for project management, in particular planning, implementation and financial management. Other aspects like formulation and M&E are still weak; APWU seems still more focused on achievements than on access to benefits for poor people. The project offered limited support for capacity building in project management to the other local partners, the VCDG and the APCPC. Neither did it provide the APCPC and village leaders with a clear role in project management nor elaborated a systematic collaboration with technical services. Hence, it does not fully exploit the support that the Commune structure could provide, and renders coherence between project activities and other development initiatives in the Commune more difficult. Considerations to modify the project structure in the second phase are likely to take away much of these weak points. During the first phase Caritas has actively contributed to more autonomy of partners in project implementation. Nevertheless, it still exercises a strong influence on design, choice of project activities and assessment of achievements. The initiative of participatory village and commune development planning has successfully increased the contribution of local partners in these matters and may serve as a useful model. The APWU has followed up the recommendations of the MTR to a considerable extent and with encouraging results. Caritas is likely to have played an important role in that, particularly in formulating the necessary actions. Measures addressing recommendations regarding management aspects did not get enough attention.

## 7.2 Recommendations

Some of the recommendations that have been formulated in the context of this evaluation are already being taken into account in the Caritas' considerations for project management in the next project phase. Nevertheless, they are included in the recommendations presented below in order to give a full overview of the Final Evaluation results and to emphasize that they are needed.

Regarding project management the recommendations are as follows.

- a. Strengthen the linkage of the project with organizations and technical services in the Commune structure in order to better integrate project activities in the general

development efforts of the Commune and to have resort to technical support at short distance. In this respect, considerations made by Caritas to shift the overall project management from APWU to APCPC and to integrate the village leaders into the VCDG is welcomed. In charging other mass organizations and technical services in the Commune with the implementation of specific programmes<sup>29</sup> their capacities for this task should be carefully considered. These changes in the project structure may lead to compartmentalisation of the project, jeopardizing integration of project activities at village and Commune level and thus putting the position of the VCDG into question. Hence, project coordination at village and Commune level needs to be emphasized as specific tasks for the VCDG and APCPC.

- b. Emphasize capacity strengthening of the project partners at Commune and village level, in particular when the project will be more intensively linked to the Commune structure. The various implementation partners will need support to build up the required capacities for project management, in particular planning, implementation, financial management and reporting. The VCDG and APCPC, in charge of overall project management, will need support specifically in coordination, leadership and teamwork, and assessment of implementation (achievement) and results (outcome and impact). Stepping up capacity building efforts will help local partners in proper management of other external funds for support to poor people, a financial flow into the Commune that is likely to increase in the coming years.
- c. Give specific attention to support capacity strengthening of the organizations at village and Commune that are not related to the governing administrative structure in the light of Caritas' aim of furthering a civil society. This support will contribute in bringing the influence of villagers in balance with the enhanced weight that the Commune administration will acquire in project management following the considerations for next phase. Capacity support should target the beneficiaries groups like FIGs, credit groups and cow/buffalo borrower groups addressing organizational development topics such as group dynamics, need assessment, decision taking, leadership and management skills. It should also target the project management structures (APCPC, mass organizations and VCDG) on further involving the beneficiaries groups in project management, in particular in the formulation and assessment of activities. An active role of the APWU in providing this support to the beneficiaries groups and the project management structures may be considered. In that case, the APWU would require additional strengthening of its capacities to provide this support.
- d. Reinforce the M&E system of the project, in particular regarding the assessment of outcomes and impact<sup>30</sup>. Besides training on principles and practises of ME, support in setting up and running the M&E system, in data management and in reporting is required. A participatory approach in M&E is strongly recommended involving stakeholders, beneficiaries included, in the entire process going from indicator definition to decision making in response to M&E findings.
- e. Strengthen links with the technical services at District level in order to guarantee better technical support and facilitate coordination with and collaboration in the context of relevant national and district programmes. In particular relevant are better links with District branches of the banks (VBSP and VBARD), the District Women's Union, the District Health Centre and the Plant Protection Sub-Department. Support to capacity strengthening partners at District level may be necessary and desirable to make these links effective. However, the current size of the project and the workload of the District

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<sup>29</sup> APFA is identified to implement the CBP, CAC will implement APP

<sup>30</sup> outcome: the benefits project activities have brought to the beneficiaries; impact: effect of these benefits on people's life

services imply that opportunities are restricted and that the project has to make judicious choices as to who, when and how to give support.

Recommendations concerning the programmes of the project are as follows.

- a. In reply to the mitigated benefits for poor people in the current phase and to some cases where poor people have been excluded from participation, the project should consider a stronger focus on the poor. Since programmes dealing only with the poorest proportion of the population may not obtain sufficient support of the entire community, the project may consider activities specifically targeting the poor, besides more general activities for all segments in the community. Suggestions for specific activities are small loans under soft credit conditions coupled with insurance for animal diseases and technologies requiring low external input and external knowledge.
- b. Since project activities follow the current trend towards intensified agricultural production, the interactions between economic development, environmental protection and human health care need further attention. Future project activities should increase the emphasis on appropriate practices concerning the storage and use of manure and pesticides for minimising pollution, and those regarding housing and caring practices in animal husbandry for minimising risks to human health. On the pathway to a more sustainable development small-scale biogas installations and specific “green” or environment-safe agricultural production methods are to be considered.
- c. In order to make CBP financially viable, the project should enhance its efforts to improve the technical performance of the animals borrowed. To that end it is suggested to step up the monitoring of the animals at the farm, in particular with respect to incidence of diseases, feeding conditions and fertility status. The monitoring could consist of a peer review among members of the borrower groups (CBG) guided and supported by the VVW. Combined to monitoring, training of farmers on these topics can be enhanced if necessary.
- d. In reply to the deficient animal health care, an important constraint in the project activities, the introduction of village veterinary boxes may be considered. These boxes containing essential medicines for the most common diseases are managed by the VVW, so direct and prompt help can be provided. Topping up the price for medicines sold to the villagers will provide the means to remunerate the services provided by the VVW and the administration of the boxes.
- e. Since the market will increasingly determine the success of support in economic activities, the project should pay more attention to market opportunities of agricultural products and the skills of beneficiaries to successfully enter the market (business development, market access and demand identification).
- f. Regarding the existing infrastructure works, take away the elementary weaknesses in the construction and step up maintenance<sup>31</sup>, so they may better and for a longer time serve the beneficiaries. Stepping up maintenance may be achieved by increased labour input from beneficiaries and by spending a higher proportion of the user fees for that purpose with the argument that it yields potential savings in operation costs and a prolonged life-time.

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<sup>31</sup> For instance, repairing the drainage system of the school may prevent the construction being seriously damaged and ditching a separate irrigation canal will improve water management and thus crop production in the crop cultivation scheme of Dong Chiem. Enhanced maintenance like regular cleaning of the irrigation and drainage canals in these schemes and banking the dykes when necessary will further increase the benefits villages get from these works.

- g. As to future involvement in rural infrastructure, maintain and where possible increase efforts to obtain acceptable quality and life-time of works. Expand adequate control by technical experts<sup>32</sup> during the phases of construction and handing over in order to ensure quality standards are met. Further emphasize appropriate maintenance of the infrastructure works through agreements with the responsible institutions concerning regulations, operational plans, funds and technical capacity development. Mobilize additional external funds to ensure that maintenance can be carried out.
- h. Give extensive attention to the changing project context regarding the opening up of the Commune by the motor highway and the installation of a cement plant. Villagers will be more exposed to the risks of HIV/AIDS and drug use. The project could mitigate potential damage by awareness raising and prevention concerning these societal problems. It could also consider training in vocational skills in order to allow villagers to benefit from new opportunities of non-farm employment.

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<sup>32</sup> Besides the involvement of future beneficiaries in monitoring the construction process.

## 8. Annexes

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Annex 1: Logistic Framework  
of An Phu Integrated Rural Community Development Programme, 2000-2005

	<i>Narrative Summary</i>	<i>Objectively Verifiable Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verification</i>	<i>Important Assumptions</i>
Goal	To alleviate poverty by building sustainable livelihoods for the poorest people in An Phu Commune and by raising the general standard of living in the poorest communities, with care for a gender-balanced approach.	Living Standards Survey indicators, and income levels, in the 5 project villages, in 2005 and beyond	Project evaluation in 2004 to 2005 plus subsequent monitoring as recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project achievements result in empowerment of the poorest and most marginalised (including women) to maintain their own development, within supportive communities</li> </ul>
Specific Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households are able to adopt livelihood strategies which result in increased income and more sustainable livelihoods, especially the poorest.</li> <li>Reduced vulnerability especially for the poorest.</li> </ol>	Specific indicators will be determined through a participatory process, after baseline data has been collected in mid-2001.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project evaluation in 2004 to 2005, plus subsequent monitoring as recommended</li> <li>Midterm assessment around end 2002</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External environment or 'vulnerability context' remains stable (no great shocks)</li> <li>Local partners maintain the vision of building sustainable livelihoods for the poorest</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased human capital</li> <li>Increased social capital</li> <li>Increased natural capital</li> <li>Increased financial capital</li> <li>Increased physical capital</li> <li>More effective transforming structures and processes</li> <li>More influence on, and access to, transforming structures and processes by the most marginalised (the poor, women, others)</li> </ul>	Specific indicators and values will be determined through a participatory process, after baseline data has been collected in mid-2001.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project evaluation</li> <li>Midterm assessment</li> <li>External six-monthly reports</li> <li>Internal quarterly reports compiled from activity and village meetings and reports</li> <li>Monitoring visits by CARSWI HQ</li> <li>Monitoring visits by CARSWI Delegate</li> </ul>	All partners remain transparent and open in sharing needs, hopes & fears re. the project 'The poor' remain the focus of activities 'Bottom-up' approach is maintained Proposal is followed Maintenance of infrastructure is taken over by villagers
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity-Building for the An Phu Women's Union.</li> <li>Raising Gender Awareness.</li> <li>Cow/Buffalo Programme for Poor Farmers.</li> <li>Agricultural Promotion</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 TNA and follow-up training activities</li> <li>3 workshops and follow-up meetings</li> <li>5 groups formed and 75 animals distributed</li> <li>5 groups formed and 60</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External six-monthly reports</li> <li>Internal quarterly reports</li> <li>Notes/minutes of activity meetings and village meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relations between all partners are maintained, (local power struggles are minimised)</li> <li>Roles of all partners in the project are discussed, clarified as necessary, and</li> </ul>

	<i>Narrative Summary</i>	<i>Objectively Verifiable Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verification</i>	<i>Important Assumptions</i>
	(Extension) Programme.	demonstrations undertaken		respected
	5. Microcredit & Savings Programme.	5. 5 villages receiving services from APWU, 150 loans disbursed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring visits by CARSWI HQ</li> <li>• Monitoring visits by CARSWI Delegate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The APWU remains willing to take general overall responsibility for project management</li> </ul>
	6. Raising Public Health Awareness.	6. 3 workshops and follow-up activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits during average flooding season to observe effectiveness of dykes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key personnel changes come with sufficient advance notice</li> </ul>
	7. Support to Micro-Initiatives	7. To determine in 2002		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities are conducted fairly and without corruption</li> </ul>
	8. Credit to small enterprises	8. To determine after midterm assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visit reports by CARSWI Project Officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Villagers contribute some voluntary labour to infrastructure works</li> </ul>
	9. Development of Community Funds.	9. To determine after midterm assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget variance reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure works are well planned</li> </ul>
	10. Upgrade Dyke in Bac Son Village.	10. 4.8 km of dyke protecting 120 ha. of rice field in Bac Son		
	11. Upgrade Dyke in Dong Chiem Village.	11. Upgrade of dyke protecting 42 ha. of rice field, Dong Chiem		
	12. Construction of Primary School in Dong Chiem Village.	12. 1 new school with 4 classrooms		
	13. Provision of Electricity to Bo Moi Village.	13. Electricity supply available in village		
	14. Provision of Electricity to Nam Hung Village.	14. Electricity supply available in village		

## Annex 2: Terms of References of the Final Evaluation of the An Phu Integrated Community Development Project

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### *Background*

The An Phu Project is supported by Caritas Luxembourg, Caritas Norway and Caritas Switzerland and co-financed by the Governments of Luxembourg, Norway and Switzerland. The project started in mid-2000. It takes place in five villages, which were considered to be the five poorest villages of An Phu Commune in the year 2000: Dong Chiem, Nam Hung, Bac Son, Bo Moi, and Roc Eo.

The project was intended to last 4½ years. In mid-2001 it was clear that the community development activities would take longer than had been expected. The end date is now anticipated to be December 2005. The institutional partner of Caritas is the An Phu Commune People's Committee. The project is mainly implemented by the An Phu Women's Union, but during the development of the project, some other local institutions have taken up implementation roles, in order to improve the project's effectiveness.

The goal of project is 'to alleviate poverty by building sustainable livelihoods for the poorest people in An Phu Commune and by raising the general standard of living in the poorest communities, with care for a gender-balanced approach'. The project has two sets of activities: construction, and community development. The construction work consists of 5 items: two dykes, one school, and two electricity networks. The community development consists of 8 programmes: capacity building for the Commune Women's Union, raising gender awareness, cow/buffalo programme for poor households, agricultural promotion programme, short-term savings & credit programme, raising public health awareness, micro-initiatives, and a medium-term credit programme.

In mid-2003 the project had a Mid-Term Review (MTR). The purpose of the MTR was to explore and bring perspective to the effects of the An Phu project on the livelihoods of the poor, to enhance positive impacts on poverty elimination, to learn lessons, and to improve the design of the project for the remaining 1½ years. The MTR was carried out with a participatory approach, that is, it was designed largely as an opportunity for the villagers to inform other stakeholders about their experience of the project. External trainers provided training to key villagers regarding how to review the progress of the project in their village. The villagers then carried out the MTR and reported back to the other stakeholders.

The final evaluation, led by an external Consultant, is due in 2005. Meanwhile, the project stakeholders have already agreed in principle that a Phase 2 should take place from early 2006. In order for Phase 2 to have a timely start, the process for planning Phase 2 will also be taking place during 2005. The planning for Phase 2 will incorporate the results of the evaluation of Phase 1.

### *Goal*

The goal of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which the project has achieved its goal: 'to alleviate poverty by building sustainable livelihoods for the poorest people in An Phu Commune and by raising the general standard of living in the poorest communities, with care for a gender-balanced approach'.

[and give recommendations for the set-up of phase 2 (see output)]

## Objectives

1. To reach the above determination, the evaluation will consider the extent to which the project objectives have been achieved in the five project villages, especially for the poorest households:

- increased income
- increased well-being
- improved food security
- reduced vulnerability
- more sustainable use of the natural resource base
- *sustainable*
- *and with gender-balance*

2. The evaluation will analyse how far recommendations of the MTR have been considered in the last implementation phase

3. Regarding sustainability, the evaluation will analyse how maintenance of infrastructures is assured. Further, it will analyse the financial viability of the subprogrammes and the institutional sustainability of the different groups.

4. Regarding empowerment through the programme, the evaluation will trace whether the project has contributed to empowerment of poor people and women and whether and how behavioural changes have taken place in this respect.

5. Regarding the impact of the project, the evaluation will point out the positive effects but also investigates whether the project has produced negative effects as well.

6. As the project is co funded by Caritas Luxembourg through its Framework agreement with the Luxembourg Government, the consultant will analyse whether the project fits in the general strategy of the framework agreement and thus contributes to the objective of the framework. In this regard, the following documents will be delivered to the Consultant:

- Accord-cadre de coopération 2003-2005 entre la Fondation Caritas Luxembourg et le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères
- Cadre logique global pour l'accord-cadre 2003-2005
- Cadre logique du projet de développement intégré dans la commune de An Phu

## Local Stakeholders

For the purpose of the evaluation, the main local stakeholders are as below.

- Ha Tay Provincial 'Aid Recept' Committee
- My Duc District Department of Planning & Investment
- Other My Duc District technical departments
- An Phu Commune People's Committee
- An Phu Commune Women's Union
- Other An Phu Commune mass organisations
- Five village leaders
- Five village Community Development Groups
- Five village Women's Unions
- Villagers, especially the poor
- Caritas Field Office: Representative and Project Officer

## *Methodology*

The Evaluation will be coordinated by an International Consultant, contracted by Caritas Switzerland Hanoi office.

The International Consultant will use two local (Vietnamese) organisations to carry out the evaluation work in the five project villages. The choice of these local organizations will be taken in close coordination with the office of Luxembourg Government Office in Hanoi (Mr Leo Faber) One local organisation will be responsible for carrying out the evaluation work of the infrastructure components of the project. The other local organisation will be responsible for carrying out the evaluation work of the community development aspects of the project.

To the extent possible – in the limited timeframe and within the limits of the project activities – the evaluation will use quantitative methods. Qualitative methods will be used whenever quantitative methods are considered impracticable, and for support to quantitative methods as considered appropriate by the International Consultant.

Caritas normally strongly encourages participatory approaches. However, the project's Mid-Term Review in 2003 was already highly participatory, and therefore Caritas also welcomes an international expert opinion regarding the project final evaluation.

## *Profile of the international consultant*

### Essential

1. Rural community development specialist
2. Ability and experience to independently design, implement and analyse quantitative surveys/data
3. Excellent understanding and experience of participatory development methodologies (PRA, PME)
4. Ability to travel internationally, to work in a rural area, and to produce a strategic evaluation report within a limited timeframe

### Preferred

1. Vietnam experience
2. NGO experience
3. Interest in “sustainable livelihoods” and gender in development
4. ‘Women are encouraged to apply’

## *Process*

The work will be carried out in the following steps.

Caritas will provide all project documentation to the International Consultant. This will include:

- Caritas Country Policy Document, Vietnam
- The pre-project PRA report, 1999
- The Project Document, 2000
- Project Component Concept Papers
- Six-monthly project narrative reports
- Annual project financial reports
- The Mid-Term Review report, 2003

- The Sustainable Livelihoods Study, 2005
  - The Framework agreement and strategy paper from Caritas Luxembourg (in French)
1. Based on a review of the above documents, the International Consultant will prepare Terms of Reference, including relevant survey forms, for two local organisations to carry out relevant survey work in the five project villages. One survey will be in relation to the project's infrastructure activities, the other in relation to the project's community development activities. The scope of the surveys must be '*optimal*', that is, the surveys must aim to be sufficient for the goal and objectives above, yet not to waste time and effort for the interviewers nor the interviewees.
  2. Caritas will call for expressions of interest from local organisations in Vietnam to carry out the survey work. Caritas will send the expressions of interest, together with Caritas recommendations on which organisations should be selected, to the International Consultant.
  3. The Consultant will inform Caritas of his/her choice of two local organisations to carry out the survey work.
  4. Caritas, in collaboration with the Lux-Government Office in Hanoi; will engage the two organisations to carry out the survey work according to the Terms of Reference provided by the Consultant.
  5. The Consultant will analyse the data from the survey work.
  6. With the two local organisations, the Consultant will discuss the interpretation of the data, and will plan and prepare for relevant focus group meetings in the project area, and for meetings with relevant authorities, technical departments, organisations and individuals. The purpose of these meetings will be to obtain more information and/or to corroborate or triangulate information. The Consultant may also plan to visit project activities
  7. The Consultant and the local organisation which carried out the community development survey will arrange and carry out the relevant meetings described above.
  8. The Consultant will collate and analyse all information, and will give a feedback meeting to stakeholders in Vietnam. The stakeholder meeting will be an opportunity for local stakeholders to provide feedback on the summary findings of the evaluation.
  9. The Consultant will discuss the findings of the stakeholder meeting with Caritas Switzerland in Vietnam.
  10. The Consultant will prepare the draft report and submit it to Caritas Switzerland in Vietnam for comment.
  11. Caritas Switzerland in Vietnam will provide comment to the Consultant.
  12. The International Consultant will finalise the report and submit to Caritas agencies and to the Ministère de la Coopération in Luxembourg and to the Luxembourg Government Office in Hanoi.

## Schedule

The schedule for these steps outlined in the following table. This deliberately takes account of the harvesting season in July, when villagers are unlikely to have much time to participate in the evaluation.

Steps	Dates	No of working days Int. Consultant
Step 1, Orientation with Caritas Delegate	April	½
Step 2, Documentation review, evaluation design	April	3
Step 3, Familiarisation visit to An Phu	April	1
Step 4, TORs and survey format for local organisations prepared	April	1
Step 5, Recruitment of local organisations	April	1
Step 6, Orientation with local organisations	April - May	1
Step 7, Pre-testing survey	23 <sup>rd</sup> to 25 <sup>th</sup> May	3
Step 8, Survey work in the villages	26 <sup>th</sup> May to 17 <sup>th</sup> June	
Step 9, Initial analysis of survey data	4 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> July	2
Step 10, Focus group and other meetings	Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> to Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> August	14
Step 11, Feedback meeting in Vietnam	Monday 29 <sup>th</sup> August	1
Step 12, Meeting with Caritas and Lux-Government office in Hanoi in Vietnam	Tuesday, 30 <sup>th</sup> August	1
Step 13, Draft report prepared	Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> September	4
Step 14, Comments on draft report received	Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> September	1
Step 15, Final report completed	Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> September	1
Step 16, Analysis of Luxembourg strategy 1 day reading, 1 day discussion, 1 day report	May to September, discussion day possibly first week of September	3
Total		37½

## Outputs

1. Narrative report regarding the goal and objectives above, including recommendations on lessons learned which should be considered in the design of Phase 2 of the project. Major tables and all field materials and supporting documentation must be submitted as annexes.
2. Separate report regarding Objective 6, analysis of fit and contribution of the project to objectives of the framework agreement between Caritas Luxembourg and the Government of Luxembourg.

## Annex 3: Research framework

Based on the objectives of the Final Revaluation formulated in the Terms of Reference, the following research framework for conducting the assessment has been elaborated.

**Table: research framework of the Final Evaluation**

Research question	Main topics of research question	Indicators
1: Have local people, in particular poor people and women, improved their livelihood	Increased food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment of food self-sufficiency</li> <li>• Duration of food shortage</li> <li>• Cropping seasons utilized</li> <li>• Crop yields</li> </ul>
	Increased income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household income</li> <li>• Income sources</li> <li>• Household wealth ranking</li> <li>• Household assets</li> </ul>
	Reduced vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occurrence of diseases</li> <li>• Debt (borrowing money or food)</li> <li>• Land use certificate</li> </ul>
	Increased well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Communal Health Services</li> <li>• Participation in community social activities</li> </ul>
	More sustainable use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of crop land, forest, water sources</li> <li>• Application of manure</li> <li>• Application of pesticides</li> </ul>
2 Have villagers, in particular women and poor people, been empowered	Participation in community decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women/poor participating in public meetings (attending, speaking)</li> </ul>
	Household decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's say in household decisions making: investments, representing household in meetings, children's schooling</li> </ul>
	Access to and benefits of project activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women/poor participating in project activities</li> <li>• Women/poor benefiting from participating in project activities</li> <li>• Women/poor participating in a community based organisation</li> </ul>
3 Have villagers been provided with activities they can continue without substantial external support	Maintenance infrastructure guaranteed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current status and expected life-time of infrastructure works</li> <li>• Operation of infrastructure</li> <li>• Maintenance (plans available, funds assured)</li> <li>• Technical capacity for maintenance in place</li> <li>• Composition and status of village management units</li> </ul>
	Financial viability of programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost recovery (beneficiary fees, external contributions)</li> <li>• Programme performance</li> <li>• Reservations for unexpected events</li> </ul>
	Institutional sustainability of groups (CBO) initiated by the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibilities and tasks of CBO in community development activities are clear and fulfilled</li> <li>• Functioning of CBO (meetings, contributions, achievements)</li> <li>• Required capacities available</li> <li>• CBO members are compensated for their involvement</li> <li>• Effective linkage to technical services and authorities</li> </ul>
4 Have project management aspects adequately been dealt with	Capacity strengthening main project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject matter knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Management capacities</li> <li>• Position in commune</li> </ul>
	Ownership and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility in project management</li> <li>• Role of Caritas</li> <li>• Linkage to Commune and District structure</li> </ul>
	Follow-up of Mid-Term Review recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation and results of measures formulated as follow-up</li> <li>• Recommendations not considered in the follow-up</li> </ul>

## Annex 4: Sample of the household survey

In constituting the sample for the household survey a two-stage purposive approach has been applied. Out of the five project villages three have been selected, subsequently in these three villages the households to be involved have been chosen. Criteria applied to select the three villages for the survey were: topographical position (lowland, upland), related to that the crop production situation and the importance of irrigated crop cultivation, the proportion of poor people in the village and the ethnical belonging of village population. The villages selected were: Dong Chiem representing a lowland community with paddy rice as important cultivation activity, inhabited by Kinh people and having a high proportion of poor people, Bo Moi as an upland community where hill cultivation is important besides paddy land cultivation, inhabited by the Muong and with a relatively low proportion of poor people, and Bac Son representing an intermediate situation.

Households being involved in the survey were chosen relative to the proportion of households per wealth category (very poor, poor, average and well-off) in the five project villages. Moreover, at least 3 households per wealth category have been selected in each of the three villages in order to acquire an adequate representation.

The list of households per category established in the wealth ranking during the Participatory Rural Appraisal at the onset of the project in 1999 has been used as frame for sampling. The composition of the sample is presented in the Table below. The proportion of households per wealth category in the sample equals that of the total population in the five project villages.

**Table: Composition of the sample of the household survey**

Village	Well-off	Average	Poor	Very poor	Total
Dong Chiem	0	5	16	11	32
Bac Son	3	5	8	11	27
Bo Moi	3	4	4	10	21
All villages	6	14	28	32	80

## Annex 5: List of people interviewed

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>
Nguyen The Nghia	An Phu Commune People's Committee	Chairman
Dinh Huu Dong	An Phu Commune People's Committee	Vice-president
Nguyen Thi Hoa	An Phu Women's Union	Chairwoman
Tran Thi Thong	An Phu Women's Union	Vice-Chairwoman
Tran Thi Ngoc	An Phu Women's Union	Standing member
Tran Thi Uyen	An Phu Women's Union	Assistant
Hoang Xuan Noi	Commune Agricultural Cooperative	Head
Le Van Hai	Commune Agricultural Cooperative	Accountant
Bui Minh Guong	Commune Health Station	Head
Tran Thanh Van	Nam Hung	Village leader
Bach Cao Cuong	Dong Chiem	Village leader
Quach Duc Soan	Roc Eo	Village leader
Bui Dinh Nang	Bo Moi	Village leader
Nguyen Thanh Vuong	Bac Son	Village leader
Pham Thi Huong	Credit Centre Bo Moi	Chief
Le Thi Ly	Credit Centre Dong Chiem	Chief
Quach Thi Uyen	Credit Centre Roc Eo	Chief
Nguyen Thi Dai	Credit Centre Bac Son	Chief
Nguyen Thi Hoa	Credit Centre Nam Hung	Chief
Nguyen Van Chau	Security Unit Bac Son	Chief
Bach Ngoc Mui	Water Users Association Dong Chiem Security Unit Dong Chiem	Chairman Head
Dang Van Thu	Water Users Association Dong Chiem	Member
Tran Van Uy	Water Users Association Dong Chiem	Member
Dang Van Thuong	Water Users Association Dong Chiem	Member
Duong Duc Hai	Commune Electricity Management Unit	Member
Nguyen Tien Chep	Primary School Dong Chiem	Head master
Bac Ha Thu	Primary School Dong Chiem	Watchman
Tran Minh Thu	DPI My Duc	Staff member
Le Kim Thuy	DARD My Duc	Head of Agricultural Sub-Department
Nguyen Van Thanh	DARD My Duc	Head of Plant Protection Sub-Department
Pham Thi Vanh	DARD My Duc	Agricultural Extension
Nguyen Van Hien	DARD My Duc	Head Veterinary Services
Dang Van Giap	District Health Centre My Duc	Vice-Director
Nguyen Van Thu	DPI Ha Tay Province	Vice-Director
Vu Van Kien	Aid Reception Committee Ha Tay Province	Vice-Head
Graham Adutt	Caritas Field Office	Delegate
Vuong Dinh Giap	Caritas Field Office	Project Officer

## Annex 6: Farmers' Interest Groups

Village	Dong Chiem	Nam Hung	Bac Son	Bo Moi	Roc Eo
<i>Topic</i>					
<i>Pig raising group</i>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # Members:13.</li> <li>• Women:100% .</li> <li>• Meeting: weekly (combined with SCP)</li> </ul>	
<i>IPM club</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # Members: 30.</li> <li>• Women: unknown.</li> <li>• Meeting: weekly (season) - monthly (off-season).</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # Members: 17(1).</li> <li>• Women: unknown.</li> <li>• Meeting: monthly</li> </ul>	
<i>Bee raising club</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # Members: 14 (4 villages),</li> <li>• Women: 15%</li> <li>• Meeting: monthly (honey season) - quarterly (off-season)</li> </ul>			

## Annex 7: References

ADRA 2003. Final Evaluation Report for ADRA NewZAID Cow Bank Project in Nam Dinh, Quang Binh and Quang Nai- Vietnam.

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Dang Ngoc Quang, 1999. Water, forest and the farmers. Report on Participatory Rural Appraisal in An Phu Commune, My Duc District, Ha Tay Province, Vietnam. Rural Development Services Centre, Hanoi, Vietnam.

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Annex 8: Additional tables containing figures per wealth class

**Table: Rice cultivation in spring and autumn season at two times (Tables 4)**

Season	Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Time	Present	5 years ago	present	5 years ago	present	5 years ago	present	5 years ago	present	5 years ago
	<i>N</i>	6		14		28		32		80	
Spring		83	83	93	100	100	96	97	97	96	96
Autumn		67	67	79	50	79	46	81	53	79	51

**Table: Average rice yields (kg/sao) for two seasons at two times (Table 5)**

Season	Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
		Present	5 years ago	present	5 years ago	present	5 years ago	present	5 years ago	present	5 years ago
Spring	<i>N</i>	5	5	13	14	28	27	30	31	76	77
	Yield	160	158	161	135	160	131	156	141	158	137
Autumn	<i>N</i>	4	4	11	7	22	13	26	17	63	41
	Yield	185	148	144	147	133	79	124	131	134	119

**Table: Perception of households on the quality of natural resources at two times (Table 18)**

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
<b>Crop land</b>										
<i>N</i>	6	6	14	14	26	24	31	29	77	73
Excellent	0	0	7	0	4	0	0	0	3	0
Good	33	33	7	7	19	8	13	14	16	12
Medium	0	0	57	21	27	17	32	24	32	19
Insufficient	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bad	67	67	29	71	50	75	55	62	49	69
<b>Forest</b>										
<i>N</i>	5	5	9	13	22	23	25	26	61	67
Excellent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good	0	0	33	0	18	11	28	17	24	9
Medium	40	20	22	50	27	40	8	20	19	29
Insufficient	0	0	0	0	23	13	36	24	26	20
Bad	60	80	44	50	32	36	28	40	31	42
<b>River and stream</b>										
<i>N</i>	6	5	14	13	25	25	32	32	77	75
Excellent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good	50	80	0	15	17	27	18	23	16	28
Medium	0	20	21	25	11	44	7	30	11	32
Insufficient	0	0	7	6	0	0	4	0	31	2
Bad	50	0	71	46	72	29	70	47	41	38

**Table: Household decision making as perceived by women at two times (Table 23)**

*Decision: investment for developing household economic*

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Present	5 years ago	Present	5 years ago	Present	5 years ago	Present	5 years ago	Present	5 year ago
<i>N</i>	6	6	13	13	24	22	28	27	71	68
Husband decides	17	17	18	27	14	16	26	31	20	23
Husband and wife discuss but husband decides	0	17	27	27	33	26	15	15	22	23
Both husband and wife decide	50	33	36	45	33	37	26	27	32	34
Wife decides	33	33	18	0	19	21	33	27	26	21

*Decision: participation in village meeting as household representative*

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 years ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
<i>N</i>	6	6	11	11	21	19	27	26	65	62
Husband decides	50	67	73	91	43	47	44	46	49	56
Husband and wife discuss but husband decides	17	17	0	0	14	16	4	4	8	8
Both husband and wife decide	17	17	9	9	24	16	11	15	15	15
Wife decides	17	0	18	0	19	21	41	35	28	21

*Decision: sending children to school*

Household category	Well-off		Average		Poor		Very poor		All villagers	
	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 years ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago	Present	5 year ago
<i>N</i>	6	6	9	7	18	15	22	21	55	49
Husband decides	33	17	11	29	11	13	9	5	13	12
Husband and wife discuss but husband decides	0	0	11	14	6	13	9	10	7	10
Both husband and wife decide	50	50	22	29	67	53	50	52	51	49
Wife decides	17	33	56	29	17	20	32	33	29	29

