

Evaluation of Enhancing Poverty Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity for Women's Union and Farmers' Association in Tra Vinh Province, Vietnam

Full Report

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

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Evaluators: Dr. Lê Đại Trí and Trần thị Thanh
Hương

List of abbreviations

– PMB	Project Management Broad
– MRD	Mekong River Delta
– PC	People’s Council
– FA	Farmers’ Association
– WU	Women’s Union
– LISA	Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs
– Farmers	Farmers
– W	Women
– PC	People’s Committee
– HEPR	Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction

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Part 1: Background

Since 2003, Tra Vinh Provincial Women's Union in cooperation with the Farmers' Association implemented a 3 year project entitled: "Enhancing Poverty Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity for Women's Union and Farmer's Association in Tra Vinh Province" supported by Oxfam Great Britain.

The aim of the project was through participatory monitoring and evaluation of poverty policies in Tra Vinh Province, Women's Union and Farmers' Association will be able to timely discover and reflect mismatches and expectation of poor men and poor women, and to communicate to People's Committees and People's Councils as well as respective functional departments at different levels such as Department of Planning and Investment; Department of Agriculture and Rural Development; Department of Labour, Invalid and Social Affair; Department of Health, etc. in order to meet the pressing needs of the poor to improve livelihoods.

In the first year, the project was focused on providing training to WU and FA staff in monitoring and evaluation, social mobilization and communication strategies. However, the report submitted in April 2004, recommended improving quality of the training provided by the project, and to link project activities with hunger eradication and poverty reduction activities carried out by relevant departments.

In June 2004, the project organised a workshop to adjust the plan for the remaining two years, based on the aims, objectives and the indicators of the project to evaluate the project performance. The workshop developed a logframe with plan of action for the second year of the project. Following the planning workshop, an **Evaluation Mission** assessed training needs and organizational capacity of the Women's Union and Farmers' Association. The mission assessed the organisational capacity of WU and FA in monitoring and evaluating hunger eradication and poverty reduction policies and gender **mainstreaming** and recommended specific training programmes for project staff.

Responding to the request of Oxfam, GB and Tra Vinh Project Management **Board** the independent consultant conducted the final evaluation of the project based on the approved project logframe which was designed at the beginning of the second year. The evaluation was carried out from 22nd to 27th of May 2006 in four communes of four districts in Tra Vinh Province, where project worked.

Part II: Objectives, Description of Activities, and Project Approach

1. Objectives of the Evaluation

- 1.1 Considering the *objectives, strategies and activities plan* of the project, assess the *suitability, feasibility and sustainability* of the development.
- 1.2 Evaluating the *project progress and outcomes* based on the project logframe.
- 1.3 Evaluating the *impacts* of the project with the participation of the farmers, Women's Union and Farmers' Association in *formulation and amendment of local policies*, especially policies related to the improvement of poor households.
- 1.4 Documenting *lessons-learned on the organization and implementation* of the project (both success and failure), and providing with the recommendations for future improvement.

2. Evaluation approach

People interviewed:

• PMB staff:	2
• Provincial project staff:	3
• District project staff:	7
• Commune project staff:	7
• Commune People's Committee :	2
• Poor male headed households :	4 groups
• Poor female headed households :	4 groups
• Leaders from related departments ¹	3

2.1. Methodology:

Due to the nature of information requirement, time limitation and human resource constraints, the evaluation team decided to use qualitative evaluation methodologies. Following methods were used to generate qualitative information.

- Reviewing project documents

¹ Policy Bank, Department of Justice, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

- In depth interviews (for project staff and related staff)
- Focus group discussions (separately with male headed household groups and female headed households living in the project's hamlets).

2.2. Tools for information collection

- In-depth interview questionnaire for provincial/district/commune staff
- In-depth interview questionnaire for other stakeholders (line-department staff)
- In-depth interview questionnaire for Commune People's Committee staff
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) topical outline.

2.3. Evaluation team

Evaluation team includes two independent consultants:

Dr. Lê Đại Trí:	Team leader
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BA. Trần thị Thanh Hương.	Team member
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2.4. Data analysis method and report writing

Data from in-depth interviews were encoded and analysed manually. Information from focus group discussions were generated in the group discussion sessions and recorded instantly. The first level analysis was done at the source together with the FGD participants, cross-checked with other information sources and then documented as standard outcomes.

Draft report was submitted to the PMB and project staff to get feedback before finalization of the report.

2.5. The limitation of the evaluation

The evaluation was carried out conveniently with the cooperation of all stakeholders that provided information. However, it also has a number of limitations as outlined below.

- A number of farmers participated in group discussions are not among the poorest households. At Huyen Hoi Commune, a sizeable number of male FGD participants were from the People's Committee and Hamlet Cell of Political Party. This has the potential of information bias and more importantly the poor were afraid of raising their voices during the discussion.

- There were changes in WU and FA staff at Tra Cu and Tieu Can District, Ham Giang and Phu Can Commune, so the evaluation team failed to interview staff from the first year of the project.
- At Truong Long Hoa Commune, the evaluation team could not interview Commune WU staff as they were busy with the District Monitoring Team.

Part III: Evaluation

3. The project progress and outcomes:

1.1 *Progress compared to plan/framework*

- **In general, the project progresses were matched with the time schedule and regular tasks of the two organizations.** Most of the activities were implemented in time. However, a few of the activities were behind the schedule compared to plan. For example, planning of policy advocacy on the issue “*credit for the poor*” was behind the schedule because of the group that was responsible for implementation did not work full-time for the project and consultants were hardly available at the right time even after the research was completed. Although, communication leaflets and communication film were made available, the “overloaded” situation could not be avoided.
- **Farmers’ Association and Women’s Union in Tra Vinh Province put significant effort to implement project activities as a result satisfactory progresses were made for this objective.** Based on the ratio between number of project activities and number of staff, it seemed to the evaluation team that PMB was able to create a favourable condition for project staff to implement activities based on the annual plan at the provincial level and at four communes (where project operated). In the current context of top-down approach where the organisations mostly follow instructions and provincial requests in carrying out responsibilities and implementing programmes, the completion of the project activities is considered to be a great success. Even though these activities are also part of their main responsibilities, the evaluation team considers this as notable achievement.
- **The evaluation team found that the allocation of work given the time line was not reasonable especially for the activities related to enhancing capacity of local staff and ordinary people.** Time allocated to develop capacity of provincial/district staff was found to be too flexible while time allocated to some of the activities related to capacity enhancement of commune/hamlet level staff and farmers were extremely tight. Therefore, the change in knowledge, attitude and behaviour of farmers are happening at a slower pace and it was difficult to measure the change during the final evaluation.

1.2 *Goal level achievement*

The project has 3 goals, of which only the first goal was achieved satisfactorily.

The first goal: *“Tra Vinh Farmers’ Association and Women’s Union Participatory Poverty Policy Monitoring and Evaluation skills are improved to timely discover and reflect mismatches and expectation of poor men and poor women in province is communicated to relevant decision-makers at different levels in order to study and address them effectively”*. Based on project outputs and activities, it can be concluded that the goal is achieved to a certain extent. However, it is necessary to highlight that the capacity of provincial staff was improved significantly, while the capacity of district and commune level staff were not as improved as it was expected.

1.2.1 *The Second goal*

“Poor men and poor women, especially in project communes in Tra Vinh understand their rights and obligations well, and acquire necessary skills in poverty policy monitoring and evaluation as well as are able to communicate effectively to policy makers at different levels for timely and effective response”. The evaluation team concluded that, the poor men and poor women at four project communes have possibly been updated with better knowledge on their rights and obligations to some extent, but they are still lack in skills to monitor and evaluate the policies by themselves and reflect upon them. The reason for the partial achievement of the goal was the delay in implementation of capacity enhancement activities. The number of training imparted was inadequate and did not cover all targeted poor men and women.

1.2.2 *The third goal*

“The provincial poverty policies and practices in Tra Vinh will be revised and amended in response to the emerging needs and expectation from poor men and women.” In fact, the project did not achieve this goal. Little investment on influencing policies was made by FA and WU that did not bring any result, even at the commune level.

1.3 *Achieved Outcomes*

Outcome 1.1.: Through a series of training and practice courses at commune and or hamlet level, project formed Training Groups and Research Groups including young and capable staff of the two organizations. They were trained on training methods, communication strategies, and research and policy advocacy strategies to become key trainers of the organisations. This ensures sustainability of the capacities developed

by the project in the coming years. In addition, WU and FA staff who were trained are now being able to apply skills in data collection, and monitoring poverty policies.

Outcome 1.2. : WU and FA staff were able to train other staff and farmers. There were three curriculum developed on the grassroots democracy, gender, and skills related to monitor and evaluate poverty policies. Curriculum were developed based on learner-focused approach, and created opportunities for participation of the learners. Trainer Groups were able to improve the curriculum using participatory approaches.

Outcome 1.3.: To a certain extent, WU and FA staff were able to ensure the reflection of the aspirations and expectations of poor people to provincial authorities, especially Provincial People's Council and other related line departments. This capacity was reflected in organizing workshop to disseminate research results on policy advocacy and information collection using the organizational networks.

Outcome 2.1.: Although not many initiatives were undertaken to successfully achieve this outcome, through communication media, training, and participation in different forums, a small segment of poor men and women were able to understand their rights and obligations to build houses and roads as charity. In the meetings held at hamlets, these men and women gave opinions and ideas to hamlet/ commune authorities so that their needs were heard by them.

Outcome 3.3.: Through policy advocacy initiatives, project has had impacts on agriculture and aquaculture extension policies. In order to get more poor people, especially women to participate in agriculture and aquaculture extension training courses, the Province included a gender indicator in the list of provincial indicators. In addition, the project had influenced reviewing methods and change the ways of organizing local level agriculture and aquaculture extension training classes.

1.4 Outcomes that failed to achieve

Apart from enhancing capacity of WU & FA staff and raising awareness of people on grassroots democracy, the project failed at achieve a number of expected outcomes especially the outcomes related to policy improvement. The outcomes that the project failed to achieve include

- **Outcome 2.2.:** Poor men and poor women have exerted impact on local authorities either directly or through mass organizations.
- **Outcome 2.3.:** Poor men and poor women have been able to bring into full play their rights and obligations, as well as their poverty policy monitoring and evaluating capacity in order to get easier access to different resources.

- **Outcome 3.2.:** Improvement of policies on training and employment to meet poor people's needs. Specifically, the provincial authorities organized vocational training courses, providing more opportunities for poor people to get a job in the community right after they finish training courses.
- **Outcome 3.4.:** Improvement of policies on access to basic social services to meet poor people's needs.
- **Outcome 3.5.:** Improvements in policies to allocate resources in support of HEPR to meet poor people's needs. Specifically, socio-economic development plans at different levels clearly defined different HEPR measures, ways of supporting and monitoring and evaluating poor households to enable them get rid of poverty. A considerable part of the annual budget is spared for implementing pro-poor policies. Furthermore, the provincial authorities have put in place policies towards HEPR full-time staff appointment at the grassroots level.
- **Outcome 3.6.:** Improvements in the provincial policies on Grassroots Democratic Decree enforcement to meet the poor people's needs. Specifically, policies and measures are developed to create favourable conditions for mass organizations (women's union, farmers' association...) to involve their members especially the poor in raising their voices in decision-making.
- **Outcome 3.7.:** Improvements in the provincial policies on capacity enhancement in poverty policy monitoring and evaluating to meet poor people's needs. Specifically, a due proportion of budget are devoted for enhancing capacity of local staff and poor people so that they can participate and monitor and evaluate effectively socio-economic development and HEPR activities. There are plans to effectively disseminate policies, plans, budget related to HEPR to people to enable them to get access to those information. The provincial authorities inform local authorities and mass organizations about construction projects implemented by the provincial authorities.

The reasons that led to the failure of achievement of the above outcomes include: Delay in implementation of capacity enhancement related activities for farmers, thin coverage of the training activities for the poor groups, and participating farmers did not devote much time to participate in the communication sessions as they were busy to earn their living. In addition, investments in policy advocacy initiatives were limited and did not follow the logical framework.

4. Issues that influenced project progress & achievement of the outcomes

2.1. Lack of experience in implementing similar project activities combining with the competing agenda for implementation of WU & FA's regular functions:

At the beginning of the project, WU and FA both agreed that the project goals, outcomes and outputs have to be compatible to their organizational objectives and functions. However, neither the Women's Union nor the Farmers' Association owned the project rather it was considered as an "outsider" to the programme and movement assigned by the top-down line management. It was considered as additional work on top of what they already had on their plate. In other words, enhancing poverty monitoring and evaluation capacity of WU and FA on HEPR policies was not being considered as a priority task by the WU and FA to improve their functions and responsibilities. As a result, WU and FA did not provide adequate resources to the project such as deploying staff in a timely fashion or prioritizing these activities over other. A number of commune/district staff did not participate in training courses with a lame excuse of busyness.

2.2. Difficulties caused by targeting wrong priorities and necessities to help enhance capacity of people.

- Project themes (especially communication themes) were not being identified strategically to match the goal to strengthen capacity of local staff and farmers. A number of themes that were selected did not really contribute to the achievement of the project objectives. Selected communication themes on Marriage Law, Land Law, HIV, Assets Law,...etc failed to play an active role in strengthening monitoring and evaluating capacity on HEPR policies, even though these knowledge helped farmers *"to live and work in accordance with the law"*. The important strategy could be to help farmers to understand their rights and obligations to participate in monitoring hamlet affairs, and decision making processes that have influences on their livelihood, and enhance knowledge to ask hamlet authorities to re-examine inappropriate decisions.

2.3. Issues related to human resources

- Project staff did not work full-time for the project. Each of the organisations (WU and FA) nominated four staff to work in the Project Team. These staff were not freed from their organizational responsibilities hence their participation in the Project Team was poor because of the competing agenda.

- Frequent staff turnover at district level and all four project communes in the project duration led to discontinuation of the capacity development process. Newly joined staff received insufficient training and the commitment of staff was poor. The changes are presented below.

Organisation	FA	WU
Cang Long District	No change	Change
Huyen Hoi commune	Project staff moved	No change
Tra Cu District	Project staff moved at the middle of project duration	Project staff moved at the middle of project duration
Ham Giang Commune	No change	Project staff moved at the middle of project duration
Tieu Can District	Project staff moved at the middle of project duration	New staff are trained
Phu Can Commune	No change	Project staff moved at the middle of project duration
Duyen Hai District	Project staff moved at the middle of project duration	New staff are trained
Truong Long Hoa Commune	No change	Project staff moved at the middle of project duration

2.4. Issues related to management mechanism

- WU and FA staff at district level were not members of the PMB. They did not have enough opportunities to participate in discussions on project activities, hence information exchanged between PMB and District WU & FA were limited. Therefore, district level staff were less active and less committed to the project.
- WU and FA were implementing the project that was assigned by the top-down management system and the project was managed parallel to the regular responsibilities of WU and FA. As a result, in managing “Enhancing Capacity in Monitoring and Evaluation of Poverty Policies Project”, staff at commune and district level played a weaker role in the decision making process. This was also affected the self initiative and sense of commitment of communes and districts to the project.

2.5. Issues related to the local authorities.

- In general there was not much difficulty faced by the project management in implementing the project except lack of real support from a few commune

authorities. Despite of the great efforts made by the project in clarifying its objectives and goals, the project staff failed to internalize the project. The staff were not convinced that the project activities could contribute to the grassroots democracy.

- Even though the Decree No.79 on the democracy performance at grassroots level was approved, the implementation of the Decree was still remained as an issue. Level of implementation significantly varied by commune but it is fair to conclude that it was partially implemented. As a result, farmers were uncomfortable to communicate ideas and aspirations to the local authorities related to poverty policies.

2.6. Issues related to the farmers

- Project was designed to target poor men and women groups in four communes, but it was difficult for poor farmers to afford the time that were required to attend the meetings and training sessions. They were busy to earn living. The poor have low education so they “*understand slowly, and forget easily*”. People in the poor male group in Ham Giang commune said: “*We were trained on grassroots democratic rights, but we were too busy to earn living hence cannot remember all*”. This attitude directly affected their awareness on poverty policies.
- The poor normally feels that they are inferior, especially Khme poor groups. Moreover, they did not get opportunities to use their democratic rights for a long time rather they were used to accept passively what was given to them by local authorities. Therefore, they were found to be reluctant to use their rights that they learned from the project. One farmer at Phu Can commune said: “*If the government does not give us anything, we have to accept*”.

5. Project impacts

Based on the project logframe, the evaluation was focused on impacts on the following aspects:

- Enhancing capacity of WU & FA staff
- Enhancing farmers’ awareness and participatory monitoring and evaluation skills on poverty policy.
- Amendment of policies to meet the poor’ needs.
- Gender mainstreaming

3.1. Project impact on enhancing capacity of WU and FA staff

Enhancing the capacity of staff working for the two organizations more specifically capacities related to policy monitoring, policy advocacy, awareness raising, and project management.

3.1.1 Implementation of Poverty Policy Survey

- **Results**

Staff were trained on data collection using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools. The evaluation shows that there was significant improvement in data collection capacity of WU and FA staff on local level implementation of poverty policy. In the past, data were summarized based on reports from bottom level of the management tier. Recently, staff at all three levels (provincial, district and commune) can use participatory tools such as focus group discussions, semi structured interviews and wealth ranking tools to generate information from the poor. More importantly the staff now believe that the participatory tools helped them better understand implementation of poverty policies.

Data collection skills using PRA tools were also applied in collection of project data in some aspects. TOT on PRA was provided to the Project Team members responsible for participatory poverty policy monitoring. Staff that received the training eventually used their skills to understand the needs of the poor households on some areas.

- **Issues:**

Staff who received the TOT did not apply the skills on a regular basis in many WU & FA activities hence the use of skills was fairly limited. One of the reasons could be as staff failed to link these skills with regular project activities as a result the skills remained underutilized.

3.1.2 Capacity of WU and FA staff on poverty policy monitoring and evaluation at hamlet level.

- **Results**

Provincial and District level WU & FA staff were able to monitor and evaluate poverty policies. At the beginning, the process of identifying appropriate indicators and to design data collection methods to monitor certain policies was demonstrated to the Project Team members. Trainer Group was able to train hamlet/commune level

staff and poor households in monitoring and evaluation of policies including wealth ranking, loan approving, and implementation of grassroots democratic regulations.

- **Issues:**

Capacity of Commune level staff in monitoring poverty policy found to be inadequate. Interviews show that Commune level staff can only monitor and evaluate policies that they were trained on. They were not being able to adapt the methodology to monitor other policies. Although, they received the training but they did not perform monitoring and evaluation activities to monitor the poverty policies actively, particularly when they worked with poor groups. One possible reason could be lack of self confidence because of lack of practicing opportunities. The Commune level staff were trained on HEPR policy monitoring and evaluation and used PRA tools once. Moreover, some Commune level staff did not attend all of the project training courses.

Monitoring and evaluation of poverty policies outside the project framework were not being actively carried out. Besides monitoring and evaluation of policies related to science and technology transfer and small-credit support that were implemented through the Policy Bank, monitoring and evaluation of other policies by WU and FA were unnoticeable. It was confirmed that WU and FA staff kept track of HEPR policies in provincial level through their monitoring activities, but none of these activities were officially set as routine task with clear plan of actions.

3.1.3 Enhanced awareness of farmers on poverty policies.

- **Results**

Trainer group acquired necessary skills to train farmers on PRA, and gained practical field experiences. In the past, training courses were mostly confined to the classrooms where participants were acted as passive learners. In this project, the Trainer Group developed three curriculums on gender mainstreaming, grassroots democracy and family planning with detailed modules. Farmers, who participated in training courses, reported that they did raise their voices and discussed issues during the training. Based on the experience from the first training, the trainers adjusted the curriculum and modules to make the training more appropriate and effective.

Communication methods used by the Provincial staff during Focus Group Discussions with the poor households created a new style of working in the project communes. Poor households participated in communication training felt happier and realized that they can speak out better. Considering the progress of one communication session during the Focus Group Discussion, it was revealed that in

the communes (covered by the project), there are more opportunities for farmers to actively participate in organized communication activities instead of being passive listeners during policy dissemination meetings. One poor woman said: *“I saw women were discussing in the meetings, this was new to me”*. Commune/ district level staff who participated in these activities also said *“the project brought new working style”* and believed that all of WU & FA staff at grassroots level should acquire these skills.

Law Forum organized by the project met the demand of the people hence warmly welcomed by all levels. According to the district/ commune level staff, local people have number of pressing problems while they lack in understanding of existing laws. Law Forum was able to meet their long demand. In the forum, the atmosphere of interpreting the Land Law, Family and Marriage Law and Grassroots Democratic Law was exciting. Staff from Department of Justice and Law Consultative Centre was invited to collaborate with the project also appreciated the selection of themes, contents of the discussions, and explanation of rules, that are often difficult to understand. The Forum invited farmers to handle certain situations during the discussion hence farmers found more opportunities to participate in.

- **Issues**

District/Commune staff lack in capacity to carry out training and communication activities. Only Provincial staff were able to carry out the training as their capacity to provide the training were enhanced. This was a major limitation of the project. At every project training course, the district/commune staff played only the role of learners or training coordinators because they did not receive the TOT. As a result, training skills of district/commune staff did not improve. The situation was quite similar also for communication sessions. One Commune staff said: *“Commune staff are only responsible for inviting people to attend the communication sessions, all other works are done by provincial staff, thus, if being asked to do the work, we are unable to do so”*.

WU and FA staff were not being professional enough to act as law consultants. Interviews showed that knowledge in law of WU and FA staff is quite limited. They do not have the confidence to answer people’s questions about laws *“because it is not their speciality”*. One FA staff said: *“We are not able to organize the Law Consultative Forum because we ourselves do not clearly understand the regulations”*. In recent past, these staff only acted as organiser to mobilize farmers to participate in the forum. According to them, the Law Consultative Forum needs the collaboration of Department of Justice and Law Consultative Centre. At some point, it can be said that WU and FA staff are assisting Justice Sector to perform its duties.

The Law Forum failed to create an interpellating atmosphere. Evaluation shows that this activity attracted only people who were interested in or having “problems” with laws and wished to find the solutions. Some people participated in with a passive attitude. On the other hand, there was a limitation of the forum, which is, most people raised questions and wished to hear the solutions, and there were few discussions between farmers. Therefore, mostly it was the Department of Justice and Law Consultative Centre’ staff who were the speakers at the forum and rest of the members just listened to them.

3.1.4 Capacity in research and advocacy in poverty policy monitoring in Tra Vinh Province enhanced

- **Results**

Capacity of provincial staff in designing research proposal, data collection tools, and analysis of qualitative research was significantly enhanced. All provincial staff recognized that their research skills have improved. They said “*When talking about research, we thought that it was too difficult to do*”, but after being trained and practised “*we think we can do the job relatively well*”. Initially, WU and FA worked together with a consultant on a research proposal. Although there were some errors in designing the study and data collection, the staff themselves designed the study and tools and administered the questionnaire to study the status of poor women in accessing loan. Data were collected from four communes. Quality of data was significantly improved. Even though district and provincial staff had no prior experience with qualitative data collection and they did not receive any training but they performed real well and familiarized themselves with the qualitative research techniques in a short period of time.

WU & FA staff learned how to design and plan for policy advocacy initiatives based on results of policy research. WU & FA staff acquired adequate knowledge and research skills on poverty policies. Knowledge on qualitative research helped them to understand the background of HEPR policies. They learned how to identify “problems” through research and to whom to advocate to for policy changes. They can develop advocacy plans. It is important to highlight the fact that development of an active well designed policy advocacy initiative is still a relatively new skill to WU & FA staff. After the first practical training course on policy research, the Project Team designed strategies and planned detailed activities to advocate for policy changes on science and technology transfer to farmers.

Issues

Data analysis and report writing skills were improved to some extent but still needs significant improvement for a research. Even though staff learned how to systematically generate data and cross-check with different sources, still they need to learn how to investigate the fact. One staff mentioned *“I see them all reasonable so I don’t know what should be addressed”*. On the other hand, they do not have adequate skills in expressing their ideas coherently and logically while writing report. The major weakness identified was the ability in writing precise and short sentences to narrate the main ideas in the paragraph. Therefore, the research report produced for the study entitled ‘Status of the poor households that have a loan in the Policy Bank’ had to be revised repeatedly.

Policy advocacy initiatives found to be limited and inadequate as approached by PMB and Project Team. Even though the objective of the policy advocacy initiative was to enhance the advocacy skills of the staff but it was expected that there will also be improvements in policies on credit and accessing basic social services to meet people’s demand. This was stated as the third goal of the project. The Project Team did not follow the advocacy plan as they were supposed to follow as part of the training on policy advocacy on science and technology transfer to farmers. In the second study, policy advocacy plan for poor women who were found to be capable to access a loan was not developed by the Project Team, even though the research results were made available to them in time. According to the Project Team, they did not feel capable enough to promote policy changes. One mentioned that *“We have no chance to meet the Leader to influence policies”*

3.1.5 Enhanced capacity in project management

- **Results**

Capacity of provincial staff was enhanced in developing annual and quarterly plans for project activities. Members of the Project Team reported that, they did not have any idea about the implementation strategies of this particular project at the beginning of the project cycle. From the second year, they could list activities to be done annually based on the outputs and activities outlined in the project framework. The quarterly plan was developed based on the annual plan of the project. They found that activities were recorded in detail compared to what they used to do traditionally. Gantt chart was developed and used in the whole project duration to manage activities in time.

Planning capacity of commune/district level staff was marginally improved. Commune and District level staff still follow the traditional process to develop plans hence their plans are not detail and difficult to manage. It is likely that they did not develop quarterly plan, so they were not taking advantage of the opportunities that

was made available to them. Moreover, districts and communes only follow instructions from the province; hence they do not see the value of a work plan to manage activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation system was established. The project communicated the concept of monitoring and evaluation to WU & FA staff. After participating in the training on project management, data collection system was set up to monitor and evaluate project progress based on a list of given indicators. Project Team members developed a list of indicators and planned for monitoring and evaluation.

- **Issues**

Capacity to use monitoring and evaluation system for project management is enhanced however significant improvements are needed to make the system functional. It was evident that the capacity of data collection and processing at commune and district level has yet to be improved. So far collection of data and reporting was not done in systematic fashions. The communes were responding to the request of provincial authorities for reports on adhoc basis instead of taking this as a regular responsibility. Moreover, the Project Team did not assign staff to analyse data and use these information to better manage the project. Data to be used for monitoring and evaluation was collected by data collection team but the database was not regularly updated timely and sufficiently. As the database were not regularly updated Project Team lost opportunities to use the information to improve the project performance/ management.

3.2. Impacts on enhancement of peoples' awareness and participatory monitoring and evaluation of poverty policies.

- **Results**

Poor groups living in project communes were trained and provided with more information than before. Commune and District staff reported that training, communication and forum sessions *“helped farmers to increase awareness level”* and wished that such activities to be expanded to other hamlets. Poor households reported that they acquired *“more knowledge, and better understanding”*. A large number of poor women felt that their knowledge was enhanced because of the training. One said *“thanks to the training that enhanced our knowledge, hence we will never miss any training class if invited.”*

- **Issues**

Enhancement of knowledge of poor households was not remarkable and level of knowledge varied significantly. It was found that not all farmers who participated in the training, and communication sessions were able to enhance their knowledge. In the same training course, the mid level households (in wealth) comprehend better and retained better information. Similar situation was also noticed in all of the group discussion sessions, where the poor households were unable to express what they learned on gender and rights that are recognised by the grassroots democratic policies and regulations. On the issue of gender equity, the common message that most of the farmers understood was the inequality in behaviour between men and women, mainly in family life. On the area of the grassroots democracy there were only a handful of people who said: *“people are owner”*. In addition, few participants could tell grassroots democracy is *“people know, people discuss, people do, and people investigate”*, but majority of them completely misunderstood the concept and gave odd explanations. Most of the poor households could not answer the question about farmers’ rights in decision making, except a few who did mention *“building roads and electricity”*. Majority of the poor could not express clearly what they should do to know whether the poverty policies were implemented rightly or not.

There is no sign of change in attitude of poor households in monitoring and evaluation of poverty policies and the change in behaviour on this particular area is still very minimum. A number of poor household did mention that the training helped them to better understand their rights and said *“we expect that the Government will formulate policies that are good for poor people and implement rightly”*. Unfortunately most of the poor groups did not show any interest to provide feedback about the policies. Being asked about willingness to fight for their rights, commune staff thanked to the project as they think *“farmers are more self-confident to express their needs and desires than they were before”*. However, it was evident from the group discussions that most of the farmers did not have concrete plan to monitor the policy implementation. Several people even mentioned that *“if Government does not work for my interest, what should we do? I would rather work for my living than sit down and complain”*. This is important to understand that if farmers do not really understand their rights, they can not monitor and evaluate the policies that concern them.

The project coverage was not evenly spread over the region so a greater number of poor people did not get opportunity to participate in the training and communication sessions. There are two factors contributing to the situation. Firstly, the numbers of communication sessions were fewer than what it was required to adequately cover the project area. Male and female groups at Nha Dai Hamlet,

Truong Long Hoa Commune said that they could not participate in Law Forum Sessions because *“Law Forums were organised in one end of the hamlet that is too far for the people living in the other end”*. Discussions with poor households showed that a number of poor households did not participate at all in project activities, and another group of people participated irregularly. Secondly, commune and hamlet staff implemented the activities before identifying the target groups. This led to a situation where some non poor households participated in training and communication sessions while poor households left behind. The organizers selected households from the members of the organization rather than identifying poor households and inviting them to join. In a number of occasions hamlet staff *“tried to invite 30 people”* without identifying which households belong to project target groups.

Only few people consider FA, WU and People’s Council are the organisations that will fight for their rights. When being asked *“if you have a problem because of a specific policy, who do you talk to?”* most of the interviewees answered that they would talk to the head of the hamlet. They asked *“who should I meet? I know only the head of the hamlet”*. If the hamlet head cannot answer or do not solve the problem I would go to the Chairman of Commune People’s Committee or Commune Policemen. No one mentioned about People’s Council, except one exception at Dai Truong who did mention about Farmers Association. He said: *“Farmers Association wanted to act as a guarantor if I decide to borrow, so if I can not get a loan, I will meet FA”*.

3.3. The impact of the project on policy amendments was remarkable based on the desires and aspirations of poor people.

- **Results**

The project was able to make clear impact on the training policy of the science and technology transfer to the farmers. As mentioned above, not many policy advocacy initiatives were successful, so the influence of the project on amending the policy is remarkable. After getting the results of the study on science and technology transfer to the farmers, several advocacy initiatives in the form of workshops, dissemination of the findings of the study, and recommendation to the Provincial People’s Committee were taken place that led to the inclusion of an indicator to assess women’s participation in science and technology transfer training courses in Tra Vinh Province. In theory, once the Provincial Government includes an indicator, the respective authorities, sectors and associations of the district and commune are obligated to use that in their work.

- **Issues**

The project did not have any influence on other poverty policies. The project carried out a study entitled ‘Status of the poor women that has a loan in the Policy Bank’ but did not set up any policy advocacy plan so there was no impact as a result of the study. Besides that, the project did not take any action to promote other poverty policies. In addition, no changes were noticed in the implementation of poverty policies at the commune and district levels as a result of the influence of FA and WU. To a large extent this was due to the absence of plans for policy advocacy (There was only one plan for policy advocacy that was made available).

3.4. The impacts of the project on gender mainstreaming.

- **Results**

The communication activities on gender equity were able to strongly promote gender equity. Firstly, the project team complied, used and adjusted curriculum of the training on gender equity designed for the local staff and local people. These curriculum have not only been used by the project itself but also for the operation of the WU and FA. The training courses on gender equity were updated for staff at provincial, district, commune and hamlet level. The communication sessions on gender equity were opened to local people in the project areas. When being asked about the training on gender equity issues, all staff at commune and hamlet level spoke about gender training courses.

The project helped staff at all level (province, district, commune and hamlet) in four selected communes to enhance awareness on gender equity and gender mainstreaming. Before the project, even staff of the association at provincial and district level did not have clear understanding about gender equity. At the end of the project the staff at provincial level learned more about gender issues and gender equity because of the training. Almost all of the districts and communes provided training to the staff as a result staff gave proper answers on gender to the evaluation team. Staff in commune or hamlet mentioned that although few of them heard about gender issues occasionally being participated in other training, but they did not quite understood. One said that *"this time the training by the project on gender equity was so intensive that all participants got a clear idea about gender equity issues"*. They also talked about the unequal status of women in the family and in the society. In addition to enhanced awareness of people, the project may have influenced the communes to consider gender equity in their regular affairs however this requires longer time and favourable conditions to realize gender mainstreaming in commune affairs.

People had opportunities to learn basic concepts of gender equity in the family life. Almost all participants of the communication sessions understood that gender equity meaning '*no discrimination between men and women at all affairs of the family life*'. Previously, gender inequity was not considered as a serious matter. Now many people feel that "*in the family, the husband should work hard. The husband is bad if he plays and drinks all day without working*" or "*family affairs should be discussed jointly by husband and wife*".

- **Issues**

According to the staff, the impact of the project on gender equity is only limited to the awareness enhancement of people on gender issues. Except the activities of the WU, no improvements were observed in the real context of life. Ordinary people only relate gender equity in the context of domestic violence, "*drunken husband and bitten wife and children*". Not many people figured out the gender inequity that exists in the social life, for example, there is only one woman staff among ten staff that work for Hamlet People's Committee. In action, there are no clear changes. Most of the people think that "*admonish*" is the common way of implementing gender equity.

6. **The conformity of the project idea**

- **Improvements in monitoring and evaluation skills of staff from both of the organizations and the ordinary people in Tra Vinh Province to monitor poverty policies was a necessary and appropriate intervention.** The evaluation carried out by the central Government on the implementation of the regulations in line with the policies on Grassroots Democracy shows that these regulations did not perform well and was ineffective. The study on HEPR in Mekong Delta highlights the fact that some of the policies did not bring anticipated results. The understanding and the implementation of the policies significantly varied between the areas. In the provinces that has higher rates of poor households like Tra Vinh, the enhancement of monitoring and evaluation capacity of staff of WU and FA and local people on HEPR policies found to be more effective particularly in a time when the Government has been implementing the policies to promote hunger eradication and poverty reduction movement. Based on the information to be generated by the monitoring events, the leaders will get opportunities to adjust the implementation plan and methodologies to promote HEPR movement.
- **Several objectives of the project appeared to be too ambitious to fulfil in three year life of the project.** First of all, the capacity enhancement of poor groups to make them able to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the HEPR policies in the 3 year of the project seems to be ambitious. There were

several constraints including low level of education, ignorance, inferiority complex, habit of resignation, being afraid to show face, not having access to television at home and difficulty in expressing the ideas because of language barrier (of the Khme Group) hindered the enhancement of awareness on rights and obligations of poor. Hence, it was difficult to enhance the capacity of people in monitoring and evaluating policies when people attended only a handful of meetings that were held at the third year of the project cycle.

The goal of improving poverty policies seems to be ambitious too. To attain this goal, a proper policy advocacy strategy, a patient and visionary PPMB, and the courage to influence the policy makers were critical needs. The 3 year time span of the project seems to be too short given the policy advocacy activities only started at the later part of the second year of project cycle. In addition, the project targeted to influence the policies that were formulated at the central level such as 'regulations of increasing loan at the Policy Bank,' hence it was difficult to make great influence on the policy makers at the central level while the project was working at the provincial level.

- **The project did not take into account 'top-down bureaucratic mechanism' as a basic constraint.** It requires a bottom-up approach to establish a functional democracy at the grassroots level and to create favourable conditions for the local people to involve in poverty policy monitoring and evaluation. In the present context, almost all of the policies and programmes are formulated and implemented using a top-down bureaucratic process. This is common at all sectors including FA and WU. Even the project "Enhancing HEPR Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity for Women's Union and Farmers' Association" used a "top down" approach in implementation. The training classes and communication sessions were organized and implemented in such a way that the participants were "invited" to join. It was not based on whether they were "willing" to join with a motivation of acquiring knowledge on their rights and obligations.

It requires time to change the attitude of local officers to listen to different ideas and open to the concept that ordinary people monitor and evaluate HEPR policies. It also needs time to make poor households understand and use their democratic rights mentioned in the Decree No. 79. Precisely democracy is the consequence of the continuous exercise of people's rights.

7. The sustainability of the project

Favourable factors

- **In organizing structure and mechanism:** As the objectives and activities of the project matched with the functions and tasks of both of the associations, it is likely that these associations will carry on these activities even after the end of the project. Moreover, as the project contributed to the implementation of HEPR policies and promotion of democracy at the grassroots level of Tra Vinh Province, it was easy for the associations to take advantage of the support of the local authorities. In addition, the organisational structures of the two associations are capable to continue the activities after the termination of the project. In recent past, the PMB and Project team included staff from the two associations or in other words the two associations used its present organisational structure to monitor the project, so it is assumed that in future both of the associations can still use this structure to continue project activities without many problems.
- **The behaviour of the people:** One important factor that will contribute to the sustainability of the project activities is the positive attitude of people towards the project. The project activities were well received by most of the local people. The groups interviewed for this evaluation anonymously expressed their interest in the project and wanted to provide information related to HEPR policies. According to them, *"it is important to receive training to understand policies better"* particularly the policies that concerned their livelihood. Hence it is likely that the ordinary people continue to support if staff of these two associations continue activities to enhance capacity of local people.
- **The capacity of staff:** The capacity of the provincial staff from both of the associations was enhanced however the capacity of district and commune level staff still needs major improvement. It was expected that with the enhanced capacity, staff of the two associations will be able to monitor and evaluate the policies. In fact, the staff at provincial level are well trained and it is assumed that at the end of the project they will be able to perform activities such as data collection, training in district or commune, developing communication tools and strategies, conducting research, and policy advocacy. This will really help to improve the sustainability of the project. The real issue is the poor capacity of staff at district and commune level hence they are not in a position to continue these activities without necessary training.

- **The financial situation:** The project can be sustainable financially, as these types of activities do not require big budget. However, it would be difficult to access to the state fund to continue project activities. But if the capacity of local staff enhanced and people are also subscribe to the activities and tasks of the two associations, allocation of budget for these activities is possible, although the level of budget would not be the same as it was during the project.

Unfavourable factors

- **Sustainability of project promoted activities was affected by the commitment level of hamlet/commune authorities.** A number of Commune People's Committee staff did not have a positive attitude towards the project's goal and activities. Their commitment level was not as high as it was expected because they considered the project activities as add-on to their regular responsibilities and also these were not assigned by the higher level of authority (district level). This had an effect on the sustainability of project promoted activities. There were also the cases where staff from Commune Authorities did not subscribe to the entire notion of implementation of grassroots democratic regulations.
- The sustainability of project promoted interventions was also affected by a number of WU and FA district and commune level staff who did not feel ownership of the project and their commitment was also questionable. There were number of evidences that showed that some WU and FA staff at district and commune level did not demonstrate any commitment towards the project. They did not consider the project as an opportunity to build reputation and an opportunity to learn lessons that can complement the responsibilities of the association. The reason for a lower level of commitment could be explained by frequent staff turnover resulting newer staff who had limited experience to systematically apply capacity enhancement projects. The other reason could be as they were assigned to implement the project activities without participating in planning exercises. In addition, due to hierarchical management system, staff at the lower level wait for guidance from the superior level. This did not take into account the situation that there are few people working for the project. Many district and commune level WU & FA staff did not spend much time for the project.

8. Lessons-learned

6.1. *Project design*

- Logframe of the project was developed after one year of project implementation. Provincial/district/commune staff and the representatives of poor households participated in project development process and identified the training needs on capacity enhancement for monitoring and evaluation of policies. In addition, a series of interventions were carried out in the first year. Provincial staff participated in project reported that they initially did not understand project stages and did not have idea on project implementation methodologies and strategies. After the workshop on LFA (Logical Framework Analysis) that was held in June 2006, the logframe of the project was developed. This has significantly helped to develop action plans for the second year. Logframe played an important role in project management in general and project implementation in particular.
- **A number of indicators for monitoring and evaluation found to be inappropriate.** Firstly, it is important to mention that the concept of monitoring the indicators were relatively new not only to Tra Vinh Provincial staff, but also to other project staff. Therefore, indicators selected to monitor and evaluate the project appeared to be quantitative rather than qualitative. Moreover, it lacked a number of indicators that could have captured the coverage of the project. If appropriate indicators could have been developed by PMB during the project life, the results of the monitoring and evaluation could have been favourable and improved.

6.2. **Project management**

6.2.1. *Project organization structure*

- **The organizational structure of the project could have been more logical and reasonable, avoiding two executive boards existed at the same time.** In the first year of the project, there were two PMBs existed at the same time. This was contrary to management principles as there were two leaders giving decisions while it was essentially one project. Collapsing two PMBs into one in the second year of the project was found to be the right and necessary direction. Although having some difficulties in staffing of the two associations in project implementation particularly when there were vacant positions, but in fact the project operated smoothly since the collapse of the management into one PMB.

- **The organizational structure of the project should have created convenient opportunities for participation of district staff in the project.** The lesson learned was the district staff had fewer opportunities to actively participate in the project, and therefore their commitment to the project was not high. If the district staff had been participated in PMB or Project Team, they would have active in project implementation instead of passively waiting for the decisions from the provincial authorities. In addition, PMB missed opportunities in creating more options for district / commune level staff to participate in decision making for project implementation by providing better information and giving authorities.
- Change in staffing is always risky that affects the success of a capacity enhancement project. Staff were changed in almost all project districts and or communes. Too frequent and too many staff turnover seriously affected the capacity enhancement interventions on monitoring and evaluation of HEPR policy. In addition, it affected the commitment of staff. As the project did not have any control over the social-political system, the risk should have been analysed and the project design should have considered plans to respond to the changes in assumptions.

6.2.2. Implementation methodology and progress

- The terminologies and technical jargons used by the project made it difficult for ordinary people and farmers to understand the concept. The project could have used “popular words” or at least could have tried to “popularize” the terminologies to make farmers familiar with them. During the evaluation, it was found that farmers are still unfamiliar with a few of the terminologies used by the project like “mysterious” or “gender equity” or “grassroots democracy”. When the evaluation team clarified using simple words like “male-female equality”, it was easier for the farmers to understand. However, one Khmer farmer in Phu Can commune understood that “the meaning of male-female equality is to walk together”. As typically husband walks in front of wife and he thought that the project was suggesting to walk next to each other. Farmers do not care and remember ambiguous concepts that they cannot relate to. For example, they do not care about the difference between “gender” and “sex”, but they do care about husband bits wife, as this is something that they know of and can relate to.
- **It was necessary to carefully select and limit the number of policies and rights that poor groups were able to monitor and evaluate.** Number of poverty policies that were being enacted and executed, of which many could hardly be monitored by the farmers. Too many stipulations on democratic rights were

written in the Decree No 79 however, majority of them are too good to be true in real life. Therefore, during the implementation, it was needed to confine and focus on the topics that were appropriate to farmers based on their education level and socio-political context of rural areas in Tra Vinh Province.

6.2.3. Project monitoring and evaluation

- It was critical to have terms of references for each of the positions that refer to monitoring and evaluation job, however, every project member should have taken some M&E responsibilities. It appeared to the evaluation team that monitoring and evaluation was only the responsibilities of certain members of the Project Team. District and Commune staff did not shoulder any responsibilities in the implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities. This was a reflection of their sense of ownership, commitment and attitude towards the project.
- It was important to review and adjust the implementation plan based on the results from the monitoring and evaluation events. At the beginning of the third year, the project anticipated that the project would not be able to achieve a number of outcomes and objectives unless the project speeds up the implementation of interventions. However, the Project Management Board did not make necessary adjustments to speed up the process through allocating more resources or review the outcomes and objectives together with the Oxfam experts.

6.3. Participation of poor in project activities

- **WU & FA staff that participated in the project should have had defined the target groups at the beginning of the project.** There were number of poor people who never got opportunity to participate in the project activities. This was mainly because WU & FA staff only invited members of their own associations to the training or forum, and tried their best to get as many as participants with paying any attention to their socio-economic status. As a consequence, the project ended up working with members of associations not with the poor households. Enhancing capacity of people at Commune level in general were important, but as far as the impact of the project is concerned, the project should have had worked with the target households to bring the anticipated changes.
- The decision to pay incentives to the farmers for participating in the training or forums needs to be reviewed. Despite of the fact that farmers leave their work hence loss income, but it is the interest of the farmers to participate in the training or forum as they get benefit from the training or participating in the forum. Offering incentives in the form of cash attracts more people but it is difficult to

measure what was the main benefit that the people were after. Moreover, this approach has significant negative effect on the sustainability of the project promoted activities. This also has the potential for staff to be biased in selection of participants. One poor farmer said: *“If project continues to pay incentives in the form of cash I will never get my turn”*.

Part IV: CONCLUSIONS

1. The successes of the project

- “Enhancing poverty policy monitoring and evaluation capacity of WU and FA in Tra Vinh Province” project matched with the requirements of HEPR movements and Democratization efforts of Tra Vinh Province. The project also in line with the functions and tasks of the two associations. Given the current capacity of the two associations and the poor households, this type of project would benefit the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction efforts and the grassroots level democratization process in the Province.
- The project has a higher likelihood of sustainability because of the appropriateness in of the implementing associations, the capacity of the provincial staff, the project has the potential to access to regular funding sources and positive attitude of people towards the project promoted activities.
- The project was able to keep up with the planned schedule in achieving most of the expected results. The activities were carried out as planned. It has enhanced the capacity of WU and FA staff on poverty policy monitoring and evaluation.
- The project was able to create a new environment in the democratization process in project Communes. People living in the commune participated in the training, communication sessions, forums where they could speak out freely with the staff of the two associations and the judiciary. The awareness and the capacity of the people in the project areas on their roles in monitoring Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction policies have improved to a limited extend.
- The project helped the two organizations to set up the policy advocacy plan based on the research results. Because of the time constraints and the insufficient efforts in policy advocacy, the improvements in the policies were marginal.

2. The failures

- *In terms of project design, when the feasibility of the project was assessed the designers should have considered the following areas:*
 - The current organization capacity; and
 - The capacity to organize poor groups at the hamlets.

The project designers did not carefully consider the policies that are appropriate to monitor given the capacity of staff and ordinary people in policy monitoring in poor hamlets. They were too ambitious and targeted a large number of policies within the project timeframe. In addition, they did not consider the following factors that are relevant and important in assessing the feasibility of the project.

- The current top-down approach of management that dominates the socio-political system. This has negative influence on the anticipated changes in the lifestyle of people in the hamlets and communes.
- The time frame was too short for a project at this nature. A longer timeframe was needed to bring the anticipated changes on the people as well as on the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction policies of the localities.
- ***Sustainability:*** The project contains some factors that may challenge the sustainability of the project promoted activities. This factors include a) the activities, outcomes and the goals of the project were not considered as an important part of the functions and tasks of the two organizations; b) the staff of the two organizations at the commune and district level do not have the required capacity to continue the project activities; c) the commitments of the staff at commune and district level of two organizations are not high; and d) the frequent turn over of staff in all communes and districts.
- ***Achievement of the project compared to stated goals and outcomes:*** The project only achieved the goal of enhancing capacity of staff in monitoring and evaluation of the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction policies and part of the goals of enhancing capacity of ordinary people; and improving Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction policies. The under achievement was partly because of the ambitious design of the project; poor representation of district level staff; and lack of targeting strategy that. Finally, if the management could have reviewed the project progress in line with the time and plan and adjusted the targets accordingly with the OXFAM representatives, this situation could have been avoided.
- ***Monitoring and evaluation capacity of the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction policies of the commune and district-level staff:*** Capacity of commune and district level staff did not improve to the level as it was expected. Frequent staff turnover, inadequate training, and proximity to training venue were the contributing factors to the poor achievement in this goal. The capacity of several staff at commune and district level has a significant impact on the sustainability of project promoted activities.

- ***Effects of the project on the capacity of the poor groups:*** The coverage of the project in capacity enhancing activities was too thin. Only three hamlets were covered by the project. Although the methodologies used in training, communication sessions and forums were improved, a majority of the poor groups did not seem to understand their rights and obligations that was the main objectives of these sessions. This questions the quality of the training and other similar sessions. One possible explanation could be the technical jargons and the complex content of the training was too difficult to understand to the ordinary people especially the poor groups. The evaluation team did not find any sign of changes in people's attitude in monitoring of Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction policies. It could be too early to evaluate the changes in people's attitude and behaviour as these take longer time to realize.

Part V: Recommendations:

1. To OXFAM

1.1. Be cautious in designing similar projects:

1.1.1 The feasibility of the project:

- The level of anticipated outcomes must correspond to the project time frame; ambitious objectives should be avoided.
- The level of changes in the policy must match with the level of influence of the implementing organizations.
- The changes in the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction policies must match with the policy monitoring and evaluation capabilities of the two organizations and the capacity of poor groups.

- 1.1.2 Adequate investment should be made to develop a logical framework of the project and the focus should be on enhancing project management capacity of both of the associations. Concentration on a few key policies that concern the poor groups is critical to the success of policy advocacy initiatives.
- 1.2 In terms of project management, the Board of Management should be noticed in advance to use indicators to monitor and evaluate the project. They should be able to make necessary adjustments to the indicators.
- 1.3 The project in Tra Vinh Province should be continued at least for one more year to help to have a smooth transition. The objectives of the transition period are to help both associations in the following:
 - 1.3.1 Continue to invest in enhancing the capacity of public servants in districts and communes on evaluation and supervision capacity of hunger eradication and poverty reduction policies through training and communication sessions before the actual transfer of the project.
 - 1.3.2 Continue to consolidate the outcomes related to enhancement of the evaluation and supervision capacity of poverty policies in the three hamlets of the commune where the project was implemented. If favourable conditions are met, it should be expanded to other hamlets

2 For the People's Council and the Women Association of Tra Vinh Province

2.1 Regarding the enhancement of capacity for districts and communes

- 2.1.1 The monitoring and evaluation capacity of public servants working for the two associations on HEPR policies was improved to the minimum extent. During the transition period of the project, it is necessary to implement the following activities to enhance the monitoring and evaluation capacity of staff (including the staff that took part in the project from the beginning and the recently joined staff) at district and commune level to monitor HEPR policies:
 - Organize a 3-4 day workshop to enhance monitoring and evaluation capacity of staff at district and commune level on HEPR policies. The workshop should take two or three specific HEPR policies to analyze and develop a supervision framework for one or two selected policies. This will provide an opportunity for the newly joined staff to improve their capacity on policy evaluation and supervision.

- Provide opportunities to the staff work for the two associations at districts and communes to engage in monitoring and evaluation of HEPR policies in the three hamlets where project worked and/or new hamlets. It is possible to carry out the monitoring activities twice a year. Additionally, it is necessary to establish a monitoring and evaluation system for implementation of new policies that may start right from the beginning to help the poor groups and commune and district level staff of the two associations. Quarterly meetings can be organized to analyze data and review the implementation progress of HEPR policies in communes.
- 2.1.2 The communication ability of provincial staff was improved remarkably. To strengthen monitoring and evaluation capacity of ordinary people, it is critical for the provincial staff to select practical communication topics and strategies relevant to HEPR policies. Moreover, the provincial staff should play the role of legal advisers to help ordinary people to understand policies related to HEPR instead of asking judicial bodies to take that role.
- 2.1.3 During the transition period, it is necessary for the district and commune staff (including staff that took part in the project and staff who joined recently) to carry out the following activities to improve the communication strategies in promoting gender equity and grassroots democracy:
- Organize a 4-5 day workshop for district and commune staff to enhance communication ability on gender equity and grassroots democracy. The workshop should create opportunities for the district and commune staff to develop outlines for proposal based on their experiences.
 - Provide opportunities to the district and commune level FA and WU staff to facilitate communication sessions at hamlets under the supervision and assistance from the Project Team. This activity should be considered as a preparatory step for transferring the responsibilities of capacity enhancement on gender equity and grassroots democracy. In the long-term, the staff in districts and communes work for the two associations should play the key role to continue the capacity strengthening activities for the poor groups, while those at provincial level should only be the organizers and coordinators and should not take over the responsibilities of the grassroots level.

2.2 Organization of the activities and implementation in the next phase

- 2.2.1 In the bridging stage, the focus of the project should not be extended to other policies. The focus should be limited to HEPR policies only, that people are able to monitor and evaluate. The project coverage should not be expanded to new communes. If necessary, the project should cover the rest of the project communes.
- 2.2.2 It is necessary to help commune staff to define target groups of the project that include poor households and marginally poor households. Number of poor and marginally poor households should be estimated by hamlet to plan the number of communication sessions. The capacity enhancement on policy monitoring and evaluation activities should focus on these groups before extending to other groups.
- 2.2.3 The knowledge of people was improved but still is not to the level as was expected, especially the awareness on rights and obligations that stipulated in the regulation of grassroots democracy. In order to improve the effectiveness of the communication strategies to raise awareness of people, project staff and commune staff should meet and discuss on a regular fashion:
- Select the policies that are in line with the monitoring and evaluation capacity of poor groups and the policies that concern them. In near future focus should be given to the policies on HEPR loan, ranking of poor households, performance of social welfare activities within the communes, and implementation of the grassroots democracy. In all of these policies, the most essential part is how the policy is related to people's livelihoods? and the capacity of people to monitor and evaluate the policies should be identified.
 - Review and adjust the training curriculum and communication plans that correspond to the most essential parts of the policies identified. It is suggested to skip the unnecessary concepts and go straight to what people can do in daily life. In every dissemination workshops, attempt should be made to find out what poor people should do to ensure the proper enforcement of the policies.
 - Allow districts and communes to make plans for communication sessions. At every session, limit the number of participants to 25.

- The communication methods must ensure interactive conversation, to create an environment for open dialogue, especially for poor people who tend to think that they are inferior.
 - Request the two associations at commune level to make plan of actions to supervise the awareness raising practice sessions.
- 1.3.3 Continue to develop policy advocacy plans for poor people to access loans from Policy Bank. The plan should include areas that may need to be adjusted to avoid contradiction to the regulation of the central policy bank to match with the context of the local area (province).
- 2.2.4 The provincial and district staff of the two associations should shift their role from organizers and guiders in law forums to legal advisers. At the beginning, the quality of the law forums may not be as high as it could be, but in the long term, staff of the associations should be able to advise and protect local people based on their firm understanding in law. The association staff will need the following to implement this:
- Assess the needs of the majority of people in enhancing knowledge in law.
 - Make session agenda for Law forums considering the level of understanding and knowledge of people.
 - Raise awareness on law and the solutions of certain types of cases by studying materials related to law, consulting legal documents, studying local level common cases and consult judicial staff from Judicial Department or law advice centres.
- 2.2.5 Seriously monitor the project activities and make timely decisions to better manage the project. In the bridging period, the following activities should be done to help district and commune people in taking part in monitoring and evaluation in the project:
- Identify appropriate indicators that are easy to collect and to be used to monitor the project in the extended phase.
 - Standardize the reporting formats to be used by the commune and district staff and decide the reporting frequency.
 - Assign provincial staff to process data and inform the current status and progress to district and inform the plan for the next month and quarterly plan.

Additionally, after conducting series of training, communication sessions and law forums, the management board of the project team should consider measuring the impacts on the poor groups in the project area

2.3 The project structure

- 2.3.1 In the past, the project structure was centralized and failed to promote participatory decision making process in the district. In the bridging stage, the current project management board may be separated into two sub-project management boards; each will be responsible for the implementation of the project within one association. Both FA and WA will carry-out the project activities at the same time.
- 2.3.2 Regardless the structure of the project management board district staff should be included in the management board to ensure district level participation in decision making process.

2.4 Dissemination of the experience gained by the project

- 2.4.1. The two participating associations should include activities related to capacity enhancement on policy monitoring and evaluation in their respective annual plans as a core programme component.
- 2.4.2. The two associations should disseminate the experience gained through monitoring and evaluation of policies and M&E capacity enhancement experience in districts and communes through organizing regular meetings or send qualified staff as consultants to other districts and communes.

Annex

Annex 1

List of information provider for the evaluation

[Annex Removed]

Annex 2

Indicators to evaluate project outcomes

Outcomes	Indicators
Outcome 1.1. Trained WU and FA staff are able to apply well skills in poverty policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring system of the two associations developed at provincial, district, commune, and hamlet level.

monitoring and evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained staff are able to monitor and meet requirements of the core team in enhancing monitoring capacity.
Outcome 1.2. WU and FA staff are able to train other staff and people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainer group are able to develop training programmes to meet requirements of standadized barem bảng chuẩn Trainer group are able to develop training cirriculumns to meet requirements of standadized barem Trainer group are able to guide trainees following the participatory methods, that meet requirements of core table bảng kiểm???
Outcome 1.3. WU and FA staff are fully capable of ensuring the effective reflection of the aspirations and thoughts of poor people to Provincial People's Council and other departments concerned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory monitoring activities at the field level implemented as planed. People's aspirations reflected in number of cases where they were heard by Provincial Peoples Council, Department of Labour-Invalid-Society, and Department of Planning and Investment.
Outcome 2.1. Poor men and women well understood their rights and obligations and used them in putting Grassroots Democratic Decree into effect as well as in the decision-making process of the hamlet / commune, thus exerting impact on local authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor men and women are able to talk about their rights and obligations in monitoring poverty policies' implementation. Number of poor people participates in dialogues to reflect their aspirations and desires on poverty policies. Number of poor people raised their voices on issues related to concerned policies to staff work for WU and FA.

Outcome 2.2. Poor men and women exerted impact on district and provincial authorities either directly or through mass organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of issues that commune staff received from poor men and women are communicated to local authorities and provincial and district staff work for the two associations.
Outcome 2.3. Poor men and women made use of their capacity in policy monitoring and evaluation, and used their rights and obligations to get easier access to resources related to HEPR.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of poverty policies/themes implemented at commune level in which poor men and women participated in policy monitoring and evaluation.
Outcome 3.1. Credit policies in province are improved to meet poor people's needs for loans. Poor people are not required to have Red Book with names of both husband and wife while just credibility and poverty certificates are needed; both husband and wife's name are written on the Red Book.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor men and women access loan without collateral. • Both husband and wife's name are written on Red Book.

Outcome 3.2. Training and employment policies improved: Increased number of vocational training at local level and more opportunities for poor people to get a job after training; more "complementary education" and "universal primary education" classes for the poor people, especially for poor women are organized; enhanced financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training are made available at local (commune/district) level. • Poor people have jobs after the training. • "Complementary education" and "universal primary education" classes are open to poor, especially poor women. • Trainees received funding support. • Traditional handicraft developed.
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<p>support, increased number of vocational training, and increased access to market traditional crafts are in place.</p>	
<p>Outcome 3.3.</p> <p>Agriculture and aquaculture extension policies improved to meet poor people's needs. Specifically the participation of poor women in agriculture and aquaculture extension training classes is increased; poor people's risks in investment, production, and marketing minimized; capacity of agriculture and aquaculture extension workers at hamlet and commune level strengthened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of poor people, especially women's participation in agriculture extension training classes. • Level of support received by poor people in reducing risks in investment, production, and marketing. • Agriculture extension staff are assigned at commune level.
<p>Outcome 3.4.</p> <p>Policies on access to basic social services in province improved: better policies to categorize poor household; better policies in identifying households that slipped down to poverty; poor households received poverty certificates in time; improved quality of health services; increased number of schools at grassroots level; pro-poor policies envisaged by the provincial authorities that considered the sustainability factors into account; and better cooperation and coordination among the concerned departments, organizations and bodies to help the poor to improve livelihoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manuals to categorize poor household, and to identify poor households who slipped down to poverty are available. • Poor households received Poor Household Book in time. • Quality of Health Service at commune level improved. • Number of schools built in remote hamlets • Provincial support on pro-poor policies that takes sustainability into account and documented officially.

<p>Outcome 3.5.</p> <p>Improved policies in allocating resources in support of HEPR in the province: socio-economic development plans by authorities at every level clearly define HEPR measures; define ways of supporting, monitoring and evaluating poor households to enable them to improve livelihoods;</p> <p>A considerable part of the annual budget is allocated for direct support to poor households; policies on full time staff appointment towards HEPR at all levels (especially at commune level).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic development plans by local authorities at all level defined alternative HEPR measures. • A supportive closely monitoring and evaluating system is available to help poor households to improve their livelihoods. • An appropriate annual budget is allocated to offer direct support to poor households • Special HEPR staff at commune level is appointed and assigned
<p>Outcome 3.6.</p> <p>Enforcement of provincial policies related to grassroots democracy is improved: policies and measures to create favorable conditions for associations to involve their members especially the poor in raising their voices in decision making are available.</p>	<p>Official documentation of policies and measures in creating favorable conditions for associations to involve poor people to raise their voices in decision making are available.</p>
<p>Outcome 3.7.</p> <p>Improved provincial policies on improving poverty policy monitoring and evaluating capacity to meet poor people's need: Appropriate budget for training and capacity enhancement activities for local staff and farmers to participate in monitoring and evaluation of socio-economic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate budget for training and capacity enhancement activities for local staff and farmers especially poor farmers to participate in monitoring and evaluation of socio-economic development and HEPR activities is allocated. • Dissemination plans on policies, plans, and budgets related to HEPR to people are available. • Local authorities and associations are

<p>development and HEPR activities.</p> <p>Dissemination plans on policies, plans, and budgets related to HEPR to people are available; information on construction projects implemented by provincial authorities made available to local authorities, and associations.</p>	<p>informed about construction projects implemented by provincial authorities.</p>
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