

Briefing:

Provincial Dialogue Platform – a tool in support of CPRGS implementation

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I. Context

1. The establishment of several dialogue platforms at provincial level was originally initiated by ISG Secretariat early 2003. The ISG Work Plan 2004 – 2006 describes the system of the dialogues platforms as a strategic effort in “vertical coordination” in the agriculture and rural development sector. Over the past year, ISG Secretariat made several consultations to some provinces, relevant ministries, many donors and international organizations, some donor-funded projects ongoing in localities to get comments, studied their interest and commitment to get involved in the dialogue platforms. CECI closely coordinated with ISG Secretariat to formulate a work plan to work with several selected provinces. So far, there have been 5 provinces (Thái Nguyên, Thanh Hoá, Trà Vinh, Sóc Trăng, and An Giang) officially joined the system by appointing appropriate staff to be focal points.
2. What’s important is that MARD and localities have agreed to select the topic “**Support for the CPRGS implementation in agriculture and rural areas**” to be **the first for dialogue**. The issue of CPRGS implementation in agriculture and rural areas was firstly introduced by MARD in a report to the mid-term CG meeting 2004 in the Central City of Vinh, and was greatly supported by the donor community. The rolling out of CPRGS to the provinces will be supported by activities within the ISG TAG 3, sector partnerships as FSSP and NDM, as well as ongoing and pipelined projects in local areas.
3. CPRGS implementation and operation of provincial dialogue platforms have been done in the context of “planning reform”. **CPRGS and Results-based planning** is a completely new approach in planning in Vietnam. The Ministry of Planning and Investment issued a Letter (*No. 2215 BKH/TH dated 14 April 2004, guiding the formulation of local socio-economic plan with consideration of poverty reduction*) introducing the new planning method to DPIs for preparation of Plan 2005, and 5-year Plan 2006 – 2010.
4. To join efforts from different directions, two training workshops titled “**CPRGS and Results-based planning**” were held, one in Sóc Trăng (10– 11 Aug 2004) for 29 representatives from An Giang, Sóc Trăng, Trà Vinh, and one in Thanh Hoá (24 – 25 Aug 2004) for 19 representatives from Thái Nguyên và Thanh Hoá. This is the first activity of the dialogue platform system, and MARD has been the first Ministry to carry out such comprehensive activities. Of course, organizing workshops is not the only activity of the system.

II. Organization of workshops with 5 provinces

1. Objectives of the two workshops:

- i. To increase the awareness of officers of the local agriculture and rural development sector on CPRGS and Results-based planning;
- ii. To study the advantages, disadvantages and needs of the provinces regarding CPRGS and Results-based planning in order to formulate a procedures for planning and drafting a plan format for the year 2005 of the 5 selected DARDs: An Giang, Sóc Trăng, Trà Vinh, Thái Nguyên và Thanh Hoá);
- iii. To prepare a draft action plan of each provincial platform.

2. **Programming.** The workshops in Sóc Trăng and Thái Nguyên had the same contents, with two main sections:

- i. Overview of CPRGS, results-based planning skills, development orientations of the agriculture and rural development sector.
- ii. Facilitated group discussions with two exercises: (i) to convert basic contents of the DARD Plan 2003 formulated in a traditional way into a brief log-frame with consideration of problems tree and objectives tree, at the same time to discuss and withdraw lessons in planning of DARDs; (ii) to develop a log-frame for the five work plans of the five provincial dialogue platforms.

3. **Composition.** Mainly DARDs, Extension Centres, DPIs, PPCs, Farmer Association, and Women Association. Highest rank official is a Deputy Chairman of Tra Vinh PPC. Observer: JICA.

4. **Presenters.** Main contents regarding CPRGS, result-based planning skills, development orientations and planning of the agriculture and rural development sector were shown through presentations and guidance of the representatives of MPI, MARD, CIDA, and WB. Participants also had time to discuss, made questions to presenters and made comparison of important issues.

5. **Facilitators.** ISG staff, CECI, WB, CIDA, Department of National Economic Issues of MPI, Planning Department of MARD with close collaboration to support participants to discuss in plenary session and group discussions. Participatory skills were applied to minimise the impacts of facilitators in the contents of discussions. That's why the results of group discussions and practices almost reflected opinions of provincial representatives.

6. **Logistics.** ISG, CECI, CIDA, WB, MARD Planning Department, Department of National Economic Issues of MPI. CECI, CDEEP project and ILMC project in Sóc Trăng and Thanh Hoá funded local participants. ISG funded central participants. International participants covered their own costs.

III. Some remarks through the consultation process to prepare for the establishment of policy dialogue focal point and workshop with 5 provinces

1. **Provincial policy dialogue focal point can bring about a better cooperation mechanism** not only vertically between the central and provincial level but also strengthen the horizontal cooperation between the agriculture and rural development sector and other ministries, agencies as well as international donors at both central and local level. Especially, DARDs can improve their activeness in cooperation with other sectors, central agencies and donors to develop and carry out their tasks. This is of great benefit in the context of higher decentralization.
2. **Provinces clearly show their interest and commitment to CPRGS and result-based planning** with their partners at all levels. Most of provinces, however, have not yet had complete data/information and evidence-based analysis to make the basis for dialogue. Moreover, policy dialogue skills (especially foreign language and access approach) are being obstacles, which need to be overcome with the support from international donor community.
3. **Cooperation between sectors and localities has not been complete and consistent.** This is partly due to the lack of specific guidance on how to integrate CPRGS and combine vertical development orientation from the central and bottom-up planning; there is a shortage of integrated coordination between decentralize planning and budgeting, and in strengthening capacity for local levels.
4. **Participatory and result-based planning approach has not been introduced in a standard way in guidance documents.** Especially, use of the result of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), public expenditure review (PER), public investment program (PIP) and mid-term expenditure framework (MTEF) has not been coherently described in planning sat all levels.
5. **Local agriculture and rural development sectors lack of information regarding CPRGS and planning reform.** There is a common think that CPRGS is a separate activity from local socio-economic development plan, and regular budget planning and allocation at each level. Additionally, the conjunction between “growth” and “poverty reduction” needs to be clarified both conceptually and practically in guidance documents of agencies since these concepts will be represented in strategies, policies and priorities which are being developed by localities.
6. Although MPI is providing guidance on CPRGS-based planning for localities but line ministries have not been prepared for cooperation. Whereas, centrally oriented sectoral planning mechanism still exist. Vertical mechanism and relations in plan development: **Ministry of Planning and Investment – Provincials Department of Planning and Investment, line ministries – line provincial departments** should be supplemented with a horizontal mechanism.

IV. Some recommendations

1. MARD to hold a **“National Workshop on CPRGS result-base oriented planning in agriculture and rural development sector”** to strengthen the coordination with concerned Ministries and provinces. The workshop needs the coordination with MPI, GSO, concerned Ministries and donor community.
2. Developing **official guidelines on planning** for Government agencies and **a standard set of training documents** for both levels: trainers and trainees who participate in similar training workshops in other localities. 5 provinces participating in the Soc Trang and Thanh Hoa workshops believed that after training, they could apply the standard training documents to train other colleagues including the ones at district level. This proposal was submitted to WB office in Hanoi by ISG Secretariat and received a positive response.
3. **Support should be provided for provinces** in training and giving guidelines to integrate poverty reduction with result based planning, with reference to the standard training documents and learning-by-doing method. In addition, it is needed to assist provinces in poverty data collection and analysis. In the long-term, with the direct support from donor community, it is also needed to **enhance skills in support of policy dialogue and policy dialogue preparation.**
4. **Coordinating resources** is a key factor in the context when there is a need for unified methodologies as well commitments of stakeholders. As found at many internal meetings between ISG members, the system of provincial policy dialogue platforms should take full use of existing resources from donor-funded projects and from on-going donors’ activities in their provinces; the existing line system of MPI and MARD as well as FSSP, NDM, VNWP, and TAGs of ISG. At present, similar activities as participatory poverty assessment of 8 donors to be carried out in 20 provinces, or training courses by MPI being held under Poverty Reduction Task Force with a leading role of WB should be combined to ensure systematization and maximization of resources.
5. Continuously discussing on other topics. MARD’s report presented in the mid term CG meeting 2004 held in Vinh City “Implementation of CPRGS in Agriculture and Rural Development” proposed 4 topics for discussion. These 4 topics were stressed as giving comments by an informal group of donors on the ISG Briefing Advisory on agriculture and rural development.
 - i. Priority areas and actions of implementing CPRGS in agriculture and rural sector;
 - ii. Role of MARD and provincial DARDs in CPRGS implementation;
 - iii. Cross-sectoral coordination between MARD and related GoV agencies;
 - iv. How the international donors and NGOs can coordinate and support the best for CPRGS implementation in agriculture and rural development sector;In fact, 4 mentioned above topics are still valid for activities of the provincial policy dialogue platforms and the framework of TAGs.

References:

- MARD, 2004: *Implementation of Comprehensive on Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) in Agriculture and Rural Development* (report in CG-midterm Meeting 2004 in Vinh)
- Poverty Reduction Task Force, 2003: a series of reports on *Poverty Assessment with Community Participatory*
- ISG, 2004: *ISG Work plan 2004 - 2006*
- ISG and CECI, 2004: *Action plan with Policy Dialogue Platfroms* (Draft)
- ISG and CECI, 2004: Workshop documents “*CPRGS and result based planning*” for 5 provinces including An Giang, Soc Trang, Tra Vinh, Thai Nguyen và Thanh Hoa
- ISG, 2003: *Proposal for establishment of Policy Dialogue Platfroms* (draft)