

Experiences from the first PAB on “ Streamlining CPRGS into MARD Rural Development Strategy”

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Introduction

This PAB is different from what is the expected outcome of future PABs. It will analyse the outcome of the first PAB on the subject of “ Streamlining CPRGS into MARD Rural Development Strategy”. The general view is that this PAB did not result in the expected outcome. These experiences have however been very useful for the development of the PAB-process.

The PAB is based on a combination of documents (see ref.list) and meetings with some of the MARD departments involved as well as with some representatives of the core donor group (see list of people met).

This PAB will not address the original subject as such, only the experiences from preparing it and provide a brief analysis of the outcome of this first PAB

The Issues

Observations

The source of information for this PAB is based on a questionnaire developed with the intention of being a future standardised format for PAB preparations, regardless of subject. The questionnaire was circulated to 17 MARD Departments, 10 MARD Research institutes, and 3 MARD Centres. The average response rate was low (50%), but varies with type of organisation with response rates of 100 % for Centres, 65% for Departments, and 20 % for Research institutes. The overall response rate is hardly satisfactory though.

For those who answered the questionnaire, the responses address different departments priorities in relation to Vietnamese policies/guidelines and/or the need for special support for this. CPRGS is not even mentioned in any of the answers. The reason for this seem to be

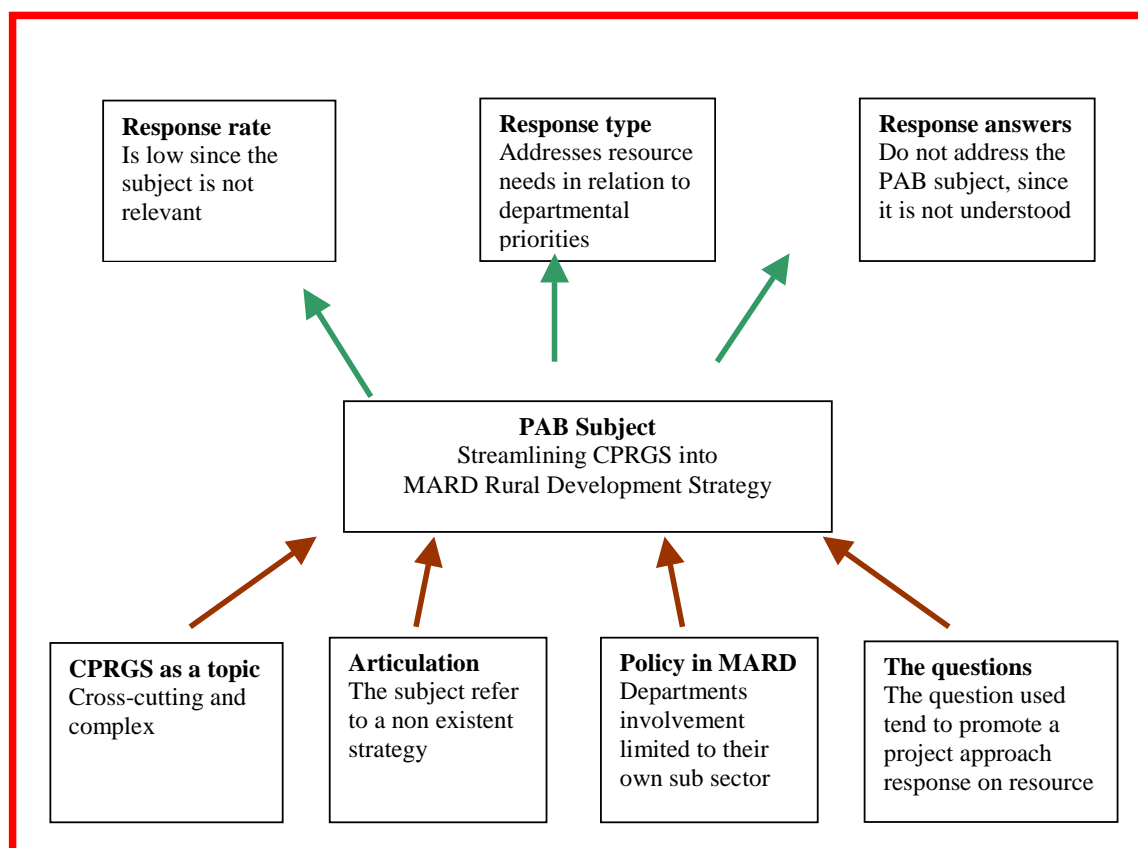
- ⇒ The ambiguity of the subject. As there is no single “MARD rural development strategy” one has to ask how CPRGS should be streamlined into this. If the intention was to streamline CPRGS into any of the rural development planning cycles , why not say so? (e.g. any of the 10 yr, 5 yr or 1 yr plans)
- ⇒ While all departments, centres and most institutions are aware of CPRGS; this poverty strategy is said to be not well understood. Guidelines for CPRGS once expected to be developed by MPI are said to be non-existent. Hence CPRGS has never been internalised in MARD in any operational sense. There are however MARD guidelines on how to address poverty for relevant departments related to e.g. the 5 yr planning cycle

Other reasons suggested for the outcome, that might have implication for other future PABs is that

- ⇒ The questions in the questionnaire tend to follow the general procedures of project preparations i.e. identify issues => identify desirable status => identify problems to be addressed => the resources needed for these problems

- ⇒ MARD departments are occupied with the routine work of their departments and only involved in policy/strategy issues of more immediate relevance for their particular mandate.
- ⇒ Horizontal interactions between departments are rare and crosscutting themes (like CPRGS) may be difficult to address.
- ⇒ Policy in general and different dimensions of this is not always well understood or concepts and definitions are not necessarily shared. This is not confined to MARD only, but possibly also to other ISG partners (read donors).
- ⇒ Hence, the conditions for a more holistic approach and analysis of in particular “cross cutting” policy subjects require more attention for future PABs at least for how line or sector departments and organisations in MARD could be meaningful involved.

The main outcome of the first PAB and the reasons as seen by the author of this PAB are summarised in the box below



If one goes beyond this first PAB and review some available documents and other initiatives of relevance for the subject and the observations made above, a mixed picture emerge. In 2002 a Working Group consisting of 14 MARD representatives (from 7 different departments) and 7 Donor representatives addressed a similar subject. The task were essentially about i/ reviewing a draft version of CPRGS; and ii/ propose how MARD strategies and plans could be integrated in the final version of CPRGS.

This was documented in the report “Rural Dimensions of CPRGS: A Cross-Sectoral Vision”. This report is only partially reflected in the final version CPRGS from 2003 (if at all). While the reasons for this are beyond the purpose of this PAB, there are at least two somewhat speculative observations one may highlight that have some relevance for the outcome of the first PAB. These are that

- ⇒ The familiarity and knowledge of CPRGS in MARD may not have been as low as one is lead to believe from the outcome of the first PAB,

⇒ The potential frustration that may have developed in MARD from seeing so limited impact of the efforts made by the Working Group.

This may have discouraged resource persons in MARD to engage more actively in CPRGS's integration into MARD plans and strategies.

Somewhat contrary to the observation above on the knowledge about CPRGS, are some of the projects that aim at enhancing the understanding of CPRGS in MARD. This refers to both finalised, ongoing and potential pipeline projects¹. Part of the justifications for these projects all seem to suggest that the outcome of the first PAB should not have come as a complete surprise.

The bottom line here is that – whatever conclusion one wish to agree with above – there appears to have been limited considerations for previous initiatives of relevance for the first PAB subject on “Streamlining CPRGS into MARD Rural Development Strategy”. Had this been done the subject could have been formulated differently or abandoned altogether.

Conclusions

The overall purpose of this PAB has been to suggest the issues behind the limitations of the outcome of the first PAB on “Streamlining CPRGS into MARD Rural Development Strategy”. An attempt is here made to categorise them. The most significant issues are

Issues related to CPRGS and MARD rural development strategy

- ⇒ The ambiguous articulation of the subject itself.
- ⇒ Insufficient consideration for previous experiences of relevance for this subject.

Issues related to cross cutting subjects

- ⇒ The special difficulties that characterise crosscutting subjects are particularly evident; when specialised line departments MARD are expected to address them. MARD has no well-developed system for horizontal interaction between departments.

Issues related to the use of the questions in questionnaires

- ⇒ The questions used are in general similar to the approaches used to develop project proposals. This is likely to limit the policy dialogue based on PABs to discussions on support (read projects).

Issues related to lack of experiences and common ground related to policy analysis

- ⇒ While not being immediately revealed from the answers on the questionnaire, the expectation in ISG that a standardised questionnaire can be applied for different policy subjects is overly optimistic. Policy is far too complicated with many different dimensions. Even the understanding of the terminology may not be fully shared among ISG partners.
- ⇒ The partners in ISG needs to ensure that they have a shared understanding of common policy concepts and terms in order to have a meaningful policy dialogue
- ⇒ Different methods may be needed for the preparation of different PAB subjects to reflect these different policy dimensions.

Sources of information

References

Anon (2003) The Comprehensive Poverty and Growth Strategy. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Anon, (2002), Rural Dimension of the CPRGS: A Cross-Sectoral Dimension. MARD CPRGS Working OUP

¹ 1/ FAO supported “Implementation of the CPRGS and Capacity Building in Pipeline Development Project Formulation (completed in 2004)

² 2/ French supported “Information capacity strengthening for agricultural policy formulation (ongoing)

³ 3/ SDC supported project formulation mission in November 2004 on “Rural Policy Support in Implementation of CPRGS” (for potential future support)

People met

Ms	Carole Ly	Information Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development
Mrs.	Chu Thi Hao	Cooperative and Rural Development Department
Dr.	Dang Kim Son	Information Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development
Ms.	Do Hing Chi	ICARD
Dr.	Hoang Kim Giao	Department of Agriculture
Mr.	Le Quang Tuan	Department of Water Resources
Dr.	Nguyen Dinh Ninh	Department of Water Resources
Mr	Nguyen Than Muong	NDM – partnership secretariat
Dr.	Nguyen The Dzung	World Bank
Mr.	Nguyen Xuan Dieu	Dyke Management and Flood Control Department
Mr.	Nico Bakker	Royal NetherlandsEmbassy
Mr.	Ole Pedersen	Agriculture Sector Programme Support
Mr.	Pham Van Tham	Centre for Natural Disaster Mitigation
Mr.	Phu Dung	National Disaster Mitigation Partnership
Mr.	Rob MacGregor	AusAid, Australian Embassy
Mr.	Tran Nam Binh	ISG secretariat
Dr.	Trang Hieu Dzung	Department of Planning