



International Support Group (ISG) – Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)

Specific progress made over the past six months:

- It was found that ISG has been very useful for improving coordination between MARD and donors.
- During the ISG Steering Board meeting of 18th December 2002, the members decided to review the Terms of Reference and plans of the MARD ISG and its Thematic Ad-hoc Groups (TAGs). The review was completed. The ToRs have been finalised and will be approved by ISG Steering Board at its meeting tentatively on 12 June 2003. There are now three TAGs, including i) international agro-economic integration and policy, ii) Support to water resources management and iii) the newly-established TAG3 is “Support to implementation of the CPRGS in agriculture and rural areas”. TAG 3, in close collaboration with the CPRGS working team established in ICD MARD, will be responsible for coordinating the activities relevant to CPRGS implementation within the sector.
- ISG has been working closely with the existing partnerships and draws upon their experiences whenever possible. Coordination between MARD, other ministries, donors and other partners should be strengthened due to new challenges and opportunities. Coordination will include review and discussions of on-going and up-coming projects, policies, priorities of GoV and MARD, as well as lessons learned and best practices. Coordination will also include donor priorities, conditions etc.

Main follow-up steps:

- ISG will further strengthen policy dialogue between MARD, other ministries, donors and other partners. The policy dialogue will in particular include donor priorities and conditions, and GoV and MARD’s existing 5 and 10 year plans, other plans, priorities, policies, strategies etc. ISG will also establish dialogue provincial-level platforms between MARD, provinces and donors.
- Regular and structured monitoring of ISG progress, constraints etc. will be carried out. A full review should be undertaken of ISG, including progress, constraints, areas of special attention and recommendations.
- ISG might need to establish one additional TAG to look into how to increase agricultural production and productivity in a sustainable manner. The mandate should include subsistence farmers, smallholders as well as medium and large farming units. The TAG should also review the consequences of globalization and trade integration with particular relevance to subsistence and smallholder and CPRGS.
- TAG1 of ISG is proposed to pay a visit to China to study how China has adjusted to trade integration with global partners.

- ISG will support MARD to define how MARD will address CPRGS. Exact areas of support and operational aspects will be worked out in close collaboration with provinces and donors.
- ISG will invite MONRE to participate in TAG2 as a co-chair. After a short period of time acting as a temporary mechanism to support policy dialogue co-hosted by MARD and MoNRE, TAG2 will be renamed “Support to Hydraulic Works and Rural Water Service”. ISG TAG 2 will also clarify the formal relationship between National Water Resources Council and MARD. MONRE has indicated that it intends to activate and expand its “International Support Group on Environment” (ISGE) to include natural resources such as land, water and minerals. It is expected that like the MARD ISG and the MONRE group will enable better coordination, information exchange and policy dialogue between government ministries and donors. In terms of the water sector, the MARD ISG would likely focus on the investment program in irrigation, drainage, flood control, etc and related policy, whereas the MONRE ISG would likely focus more on the broader, multi-sector water resource management issues such as water allocation, protection and other state management functions.
- Main activities of TAG 3 will be: (i) to establish a clear monitoring framework for measuring progress in implementation of the CPRGS in the rural sector; (ii) to make an analysis of the poverty reduction impact of past investments as well as analysis of the various policy issues identified under the CPRGS.
- **Important event:** The annual ISG Plenary Meeting 2003 is intended to be held on 24 June 2003 in Hanoi. This is the biggest forum for policy dialogue among all stakeholders, including Vietnamese relevant agencies, international donors’ agencies, INGOs, and provinces, who have been involved in the activities in support of the agriculture and rural development sector of Vietnam.