

**The Emerging
Communications Strategy:
Engaging and Connecting People**

January 2005

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Contact:

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
Viet Nam Resident Mission
Unit 701-706, Sun Red River Building
23 Phan Chu Trinh Str., Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Tel: +(844) 933 1374
Fax: +(844) 933 1373
Website: www.markets4poor.org

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ACRONYMS

CIEM	Central Institute for Economic Management
GoV+	Government of Vietnam plus other Vietnamese institutions such as the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI)
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MMWB4P	"Making Markets Work Better for the Poor" project
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MPDF	Mekong Private Development Forum
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
PC	People's Committee
PO	Project Office of the MMWB4P
Project partners	Donors, funded research institutes, and their funded mentors, associated with the MMWB4P
Research partners	Research institutes funded by the MMWB4P
ToC	Theory-of-change. A theory of what will happen. The vertical logic in a Logical Framework
VCCI	Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry

1. Objectives of the Communications Strategy*

1. The communications strategy has three objectives, as follows:

- To outline how the project outputs will achieve the project Purpose and Goal, as summarily expressed in the project Logical Framework:
 - Goal: Poverty reduction in Vietnam (accelerated, sustainable, equitable)
 - Purpose: Influence policies and programs of government, donors,
- To provide a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress in achieving the project Purpose and Goal
- To make the lessons learned from this type of research funding project available to other researchers and donors who may become involved in the design and management of similar projects.

2. The expected outputs of the project are not immediately apparent from the current version of the project Logical Framework¹. They have been interpreted as follows:

- Analytical studies on operational and policy issues linked to markets and their interactions for poverty reduction
- Public dissemination of information about those studies, and the issues surrounding them
- Capacity building assistance to local research institutions to undertake such analysis and apply the outcomes in policy dialogue with the respective governments

2. Background

3. Communications activities have been underway since the project was first conceived. This document is not the beginning of the project's communications activities. It is however the first explicit statement of the project's communication strategy. It is built on the project's experience to date, but also makes use of recent reviews of research on the relationship between research and policy processes.

4. This communications strategy has been developed on the assumption that the resources available for communications activities within the MMWB4P will remain limited to those currently available. The project office has:


- Four professional staff and one administrator. The professional staff include one Communications Specialist, two Economists and a Project Coordinator.

* This paper is prepared by Rick Davies, www.mande.co.uk, Cambridge, U.K., December 2004

¹ There is some confusion between over the meaning of Activities versus Outputs versus Purpose. An Output can be defined as a project activity that is available for others to use. A Purpose level change is a change in the user of those Outputs, resulting from their use.

- A portfolio of 12 research projects, most of which will not last longer than 12 months but some of which will be renewed and their ambit (See Annex E for a listing of projects, mentors and champions)

3. A theory of (policy) change: A tool and output

5. In an early draft of this communications strategy it was noted that there is a need for "*a better understanding of the processes of policy formulation...*" The expectation is that if the project knows more about the policy process then it should be in a better position to make its communications more effective, and have more effect on policy.
6. Therefore, one of the intermediate outcomes of this communications strategy will be a refined understanding of the policy process. This theory-of-change (ToC) will be both a tool and output of the project that will be of value others beyond the project itself. It will be a continuing development, not a once-off product. 
7. The expectations about the nature of the improved understanding need to be realistic and appropriate. It is expected that:
 - The improved understanding will be specific to the institution(s) being prioritised by the project (see below).
 - It will address all stages in the policy process, not just policy *making*. I.e. including agenda setting before hand, policy implementation, and policy review. This broader view of the policy process will provide a wider opportunity for project research results to have an impact.
 - It will be jointly developed through the participation of the Project Office and research partners
8. A conceptual framework will be useful for analysing and representing what is known about policy processes. Some work has been done in this area by ODI's Research and Policy Development (RAPID) project, which is available online². They propose use of three broad categories to describe the policy process: (a) The political context, (b) The evidence and how it is communicated, (c) The links between the actors involved.
9. Because of some concerns about the practicability of the ODI framework, this communications strategy proposes the use of an adaptation, which makes use of the RAPID structure, but merges some categories and includes one additional one. This revised framework involves the description of:
 - The sequence of policy processes (formal and informal, planned and actual)
 - Networks of actors (organisations and individuals, formal and informal), who are linked to and involved in these policy processes
 - Information contents and media used to communicate those contents to the actors involved.
10. The literature on policy processes and influences tends to downgrade the significance of formal policy making procedures (versus informal and political processes), yet in governments formal processes, such as the construction of an annual budget, remain very important. So do the timely linkages of other policy processes into the budget making process. The practical consequences are not the

² See <http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Index.html> This large website includes an accessible summary of 31 different theories of policy influencing, and an associated bibliography

only concern, the development and reinforcement of norms about policy processes is also very important.

11. Formal policy processes can be represented through business process maps (emphasising links between activities), workflow diagrams (emphasising links between people involved in those activities), and modified Gantt charts (emphasising timing and synchronisation of processes). The latter is the most likely to be useful for informing policy-influencing activities. Simplified examples are given in Annex F.
12. Networks of actors can be represented using diagrams and matrices, as is shown in section 5 below. These can include relationships between institutions as well as relationships between individuals. Network data in matrix form can be easily stored and retrieved from databases. A network of actors perspective can address two of the three RAPID areas: (a) The links between the actors involved, (c) The political context. There is also an emerging literature on the role of networks in policy change that has recently been reviewed by ODI (Stone and Maxwell, 2004).
13. The third area of focus, on information contents and media used to communicate those contents, corresponds closely to the third RAPID category: "The evidence and how it is communicated". Section 6 below introduces and uses one framework for thinking about the objectives of various communications activities and how they can be seen as part of a single coherent overall approach. Unlike some communications strategies this document has not gone into detail about approaches to the packaging of information and testing the effectiveness of different media

4. The project strategy and focus

14. This section looks at the focus of project activities and what it is that the project is trying to change. This interpretation has implications for the project's communications activities

Policies

15. The project has funded a diversity of research activities. It has funded more than twelve separate studies in five main topic areas in 2004, and a further nine potential areas for research in 2005 have been identified. Much of this research is exploratory, although each proposal is required to present a research problem and testable hypotheses to help focus the research. Typically the hypotheses will refer to processes that materially affect the interaction of the poor with markets. The specific policy implications are likely to focus on systemic or institutional changes that improve market outcomes for the poor. Aside from this broad direction, the project is not a blueprint project. It is not being driven by a pre-defined view of what specific GOV+ policies need to be developed or changed. It is more appropriate to see its design in evolutionary terms. Most of the research activities will last for one year only. Being implemented by a range of national research institutions with varying capacities, not all will be successful. Of those that are, a small proportion are likely to be continued and their ambit extended. Examples of this include the work on the participation of the poor in agriculture value chains and the work on land market processes. In this context the challenge for the communication strategy is to

identify how to the best some fit between the research products and the needs of the surrounding institutions and the actors within them.

16. Another metaphor for the project strategy is that of an investment portfolio. The project is not only investing in specific pieces of research but in relationships with specific national and other institutions that are hosting and managing the research. Risk of failure is being managed through diversification, a well-tested strategy. The project's research budget is spread across 10 institutions. Risk is also being hedged by funding mentor relationships with the research institutions. The project investment is not simply on specific research institutes. Those institutions have in turn invested in their own network of relationships within and outside of the GoV. These are important alternate and complementary channels through which the project's policy influencing may take place.

Institutions

17. Institutions are holders of policies and have both formal and informal rights over areas of policy making. The project has already prioritised a small number of GoV+* institutions that it wants to see make use of project research findings. They are listed below, along with their rationale.

Institutions]	Reasons for prioritising
PMRC/CIEM	PMRC and CIEM were identified in the project design period as potential project partners and implementers. Many of the interests of CIEM and PMRC overlapped with the project's objectives. Each group has its own influential position and networks
MARD	Most of Vietnam's poor live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. Shared interest in the process of agriculture commercialisation and poverty reduction via the development of global value chains.
VCCI	Shared interest in enterprise development and its links with poverty reduction
MONRE	Shared interests in the operation of land markets and the implications for the poor (only a subset of the overall MONRE agenda)
MPI	Shared interest in structural reform of the economy and the growing role of markets
MOLISA	Shared interests in the operation of labour markets and their implications for the poor (a different approach to the mainstream welfarist and subsidy-based programmes run by MOLISA)
Da Nang PC	Interest in poverty reduction and the interaction between the poor and markets

18. The Project Office also sees its donors as users of the project research findings who could influence the adoption of research findings by others. ADB disburses

* This group includes one private sector association, the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI)

over \$300m per year in Vietnam, and DFID expects to reach \$100m per year in Vietnam. Both donors have their own linkages back into the GoV+ and further afield within their own organisation and on to others (see below). Up to now the project has had relatively little influence over its donor's own concerns and lobby agenda, but it is proposed that influencing these will be given higher priority during the remainder of the project period. Each of the donors have specific opportunities for influencing. In the case of ADB, the new country strategy will be developed for Vietnam. There are good opportunities for the project outputs to feed into the strategy development process. Similarly, with DFID Vietnam, a "sub strategy" is being developed to put into operation one of the "pillars" in the DFID Country Assistance Plan that covers support to Vietnam's transition.

People within institutions

19. All the project's interactions with GoV+ institutions will be through individual people. The project has already begun thinking about identifying specific people in the targeted GoV+ institutions who could be considered as "champions". Champions have already been identified within PMRC, MARD, MONRE and CIEM, largely through their own expressed interest in the project subjects. These unofficial "champions" include Acting Minister Cao Duc Phat, and Director Dang Kim Son of MARD; Vice Minister Vo at MONRE and Madam Pham Chi Lan at the Prime Minister's Research Commission. Champions have been defined as *"someone who is involved in the policy making process and who is also a reformer and interested in promoting change. They would therefore have an incentive to both use the "knowledge products" from our research to back up their own arguments for change as well as help us set the research agenda. As they are already involved in the policy process they are pretty senior and therefore do not have the time for detailed involvement in our work. They will, however, need good summaries of the main messages"*
20. In choosing to focus communications activities on specific people, as well as a range of policies the project is taking a longer term and more sustainable approach to policy change. People within GOV+ bureaucracies will be around longer than most policy documents. Champions, with their insider views, are more likely to be able to see multiple opportunities for the use of particular research findings, within different stages of policy cycles and across different policies. They may also be able to act as good localised models of evidence-based policy making, thus promoting a wider framework (of evidence-based policy making) within which other relevant research findings can find acceptance.

You have to keep talking to policy makers, even where this is frustrating at times. You have to keep looking for the window of opportunity. You can be banging on about an issue for years and years and no one seems to listen and then the right configuration of factors will emerge and all of a sudden it will be the issue and there will be a readiness.

David Halpern, Evidence Based Policy: Build on' or 'Spray on'? in "Does Evidence Matter", ODI, September, 2004

21. Given the Project Office's description of champions, it is quite likely that many of the champions will often be at one remove from the project's planning and dissemination activities, such as workshops and seminars. It is more likely that there will be others from the same ministry or department who will be attending, who the champions may or may not have significant contact with. One challenge for the project will be to identify, or encourage the development of, linkages between event

participants and the identified champions. This will apply to champions within the donors still to be identified as well as those within the GoV.

5. Establishing connections

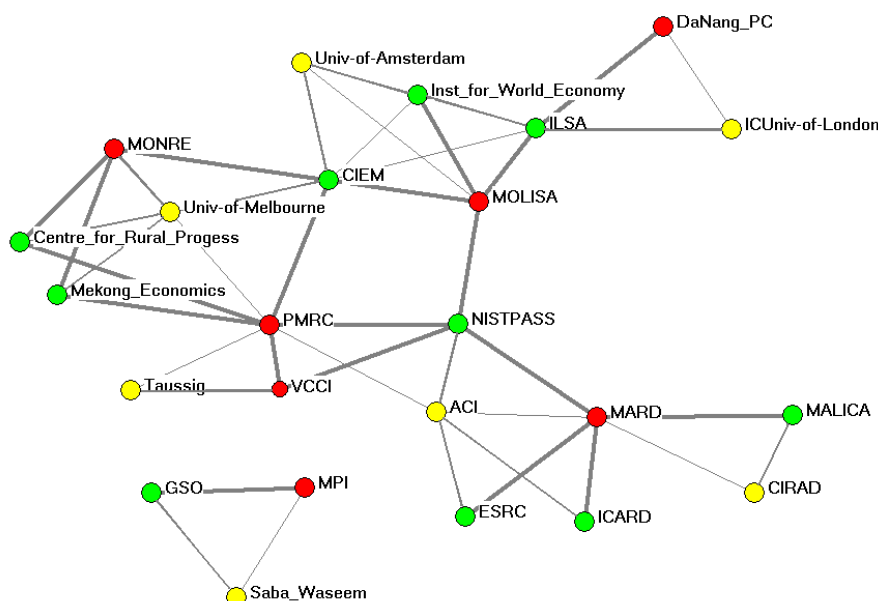
22. The Project Office will use multiple means of identifying and working with champions within the prioritised institutions. These will include two main groups of actors:

- *Project partners*, including the funded research institutes, their funded mentors, and the project donors
- *Other interested parties* as identified by the Project Office and who have participated in the Project Office organised workshops and seminars. These include other research institutes, universities, NGOs and CSOs, private companies, the media and other sections of the GoV.

Project partners

23. Through its funding activities the Project Office has already created some connections between specific, research institutes, mentors and GOV+ institutions. While these are based on overlapping interests in the topic of research involved, many build upon pre-existing relationships. e.g. ILSA had already worked with the Da Nang PC on poverty analysis. The consulting firm ACI has extensive previous experience working with MARD and ICARD. Some of these relationships are formalised. Three research institutes are part of a ministry (ILSA-MOLISA; ICARD-MARD, GSO-MPI).

24. These relationships are shown diagrammatically below. Red nodes are GOV+ institutions, green nodes are project funded research institutes and yellow nodes are funded mentors working with research institutes. Light and dark grey links indicated active versus less active connections. The weakest links are those between mentors and the GOV+ institutions. A notable exception is the personal relationship between the mentor (Melbourne University) and vice-minister Vo of MONRE that pre-dates the project. This diagram is an initial simplified representation. It has yet to be refined in detail, building in views of which linkages are more and less likely to be used.



See Annex G for a matrix version of this network

25. The contents of this diagram immediately suggest the need for attention to coordination of any efforts being made by different research institutes to engage with the relevant GOV+ institutions. There are multiple cases where more than one research institute will be relating to the same GOV+ institution. Some mentors' such as ACI, may be in a position to act as bridges, helping research institutes share their experiences of working with different GOV+ institutions.

It will also be important to take a longer-term perspective on the relationships between the research institutes and the GoV+ institutions. The research institutes that are project partners are likely to be around long after the project has run its course. It is possible, and desirable, that participation in the project will have some longer-term effects on the nature of their relationships with GoV+ institutions. For example, through the enhanced credibility of the research institute. New relationships established e.g. between the NGOs and MONRE or between NISTPASS and the various ministries concerned with enterprise development might be sustained, existing ones might be improved and expanded. Or not.

26. Donor's funded projects may provide the project with a wide range of contacts within a ministry. Both of the MMWB4P donors have some existing formal relationships with at least some of the GoV+ institutions that will be the focus of communications activities. The table below shows the indicative unofficial priority given to those institutions by the project's two donors.

Institutions	Project priorities	Donors' priorities	
		ADB	DFID
PMRC	1	6	4
MARD	2	2	3
VCCI	4	5	
MONRE	3	4	
MPI	6	1	1
MOLISA	5	3	2
Da Nang PC	7	7	

27. Also potentially important are inter-ministerial and other committees, which have both donors and relevant GOV+ officials as members. The most important of these, as potential channels of communications, are likely to be the various partnership groups:

- The MPI "Partnership to Assist the Poorest Communes" (PAC)
- The MARD annual meeting of the International Support Group (ISG).
- National Assembly (parliamentary) committees.

Project Office staff have already taken part in the first two meetings.

28. The inclusion of project donors as actors in the communications strategy increases the importance of the coordination work that will need to be done by the Project Office. Coordination of messages, and the focus of those messages, will be needed not only between donors, but also with the relevant research institutes who are also engaging with the same section of the GoV+

Other interested parties

29. Over the last 12 month the Project Office has already organised more than 11 workshops and seminars, focusing on the project and its research. More than 250 participants have been invited from a wide range of organisations, well beyond those listed above as project partners. More than six additional Ministries have participated. Nine additional donors have participated. More than a dozen international NGOs have participated. Other participants have included international and Vietnamese universities, and private sector firms and associations. A total of 95 different organisations have been represented.

30. Accessing this wider set of actors provides the project with two complementary alternatives. One is the development of a critical mass of informed people, who will help speed up the diffusion important views on necessary policy changes. There is a growing literature on the diffusion of innovation, and especially the study of factors that affect the rate of diffusion, including the types of people that are critical to early adoption (Gladwell 2002,, Rogers 2003). This knowledge is now being applied in commercial word-of-mouth marketing campaigns⁵. There are likely to be useful lessons here for the MMWB4P.

31. The other alternative is to use this wider group of participants to support and extend the more targeted approach to communicating with policy makers, already proposed above, through the focus on champions and the establishment of linkages. Information needs to be captured, not just about the wider participants' identities, but also their interests (which will overlap with others) and affiliations (esp. their work related linkages with others). Workshop introduction sessions can be structured such that introduction processes generate this kind of information. In the case of repeat participants more one-to-one follow-up discussions may be possible. The project is already identifying monitoring who the "repeat" visitors are i.e. those who have come to more than one project event, and who are the "heavy users" i.e. who have come to three or more project events

The overall picture

32. As noted above, as well as seven target institutions, there are eleven research institutes, seven mentor organisations, three donors, and a large surrounding cast of other interested players. The density⁶ of connections between these parties is probably already quite high.

⁵ See the interesting recent New Work Times article "The Hidden (in Plain Sight) Persuaders" at <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/05/magazine/05BUZZ.html?oref=regi> See also " Do You Believe in Word-of-Mouth Marketing? at <http://connectedness.blogspot.com/>

⁶ Density = numbers of connections/number of possible connections

33. An emerging challenge for the Project Office will be to identify in more detail its networking strategy for *each* of the prioritised GOV+ institutions. This will need to include both selected project partners, and selected wider participants. In each case there will need to be clarity on the relative importance of the different actors, and their various relationships with each other. And there will need to be agreement amongst these on the champions that should be the focus of communications.
34. To address this challenge the project will need to decentralise the development of more detailed communication strategies, to at least two levels. Firstly, within the project office, to the staff members responsible for managing each of the main research topics⁷. Secondly, further down to the managers of the funded research activities, within each research partner. With the first round of funding proposals were not required to spell out how research findings would be communicated. In future all research proposals will be required to include details of expected audiences for the research findings and the means that will be used to communicate findings to those audiences.

Use intermediaries. Clearly that matters greatly. A good example might be capital endowments and asset-based welfare. Ackerman in the States and Le Grand and others in Britain made the argument quite well about why people should be given a capital endowment at a certain age but they could not really make any progress. Then the Institute of Public Policy Research took it up and ran with it as a 'Baby Bond' and they just got good contacts.
 David Halpern, Evidence Based Policy: Build on' or 'Spray on'? in "Does Evidence Matter", ODI, September, 2004

6. Communications objectives

35. The actors identified above will identified and engaged through a range of communications activities. These can be classified into the types shown in the table below They can each be differentiated by the types of objectives that are involved.

Awareness raising	Capacity Building	Lobbying	Campaigning
	Advocacy		
	Influencing		
All communications activities			

36. The most important differences between these activities are as follows:
- With awareness raising there is no intention to change a specific behaviour or attitude. Simply to provide a more detailed knowledge than existed before
 - With capacity building an agreed understanding is developed about changes in behaviour that are needed.
 - With advocacy work there is persuasion that certain changes are needed.
 - Lobbying involves largely one to one communications with fairly specific and detailed messages, and some availability by the intended audience.

⁷ At present the project co-ordinator is responsible for the work on institutions, value chains and statistical analysis, one of the economists is responsible for labour and the other is responsible for land, enterprise development and the participatory markets assessment in Da Nang.

- Campaigning involves more mass communications with broader and simpler messages, and there may not be any direct contact with the intended audience.

Awareness raising

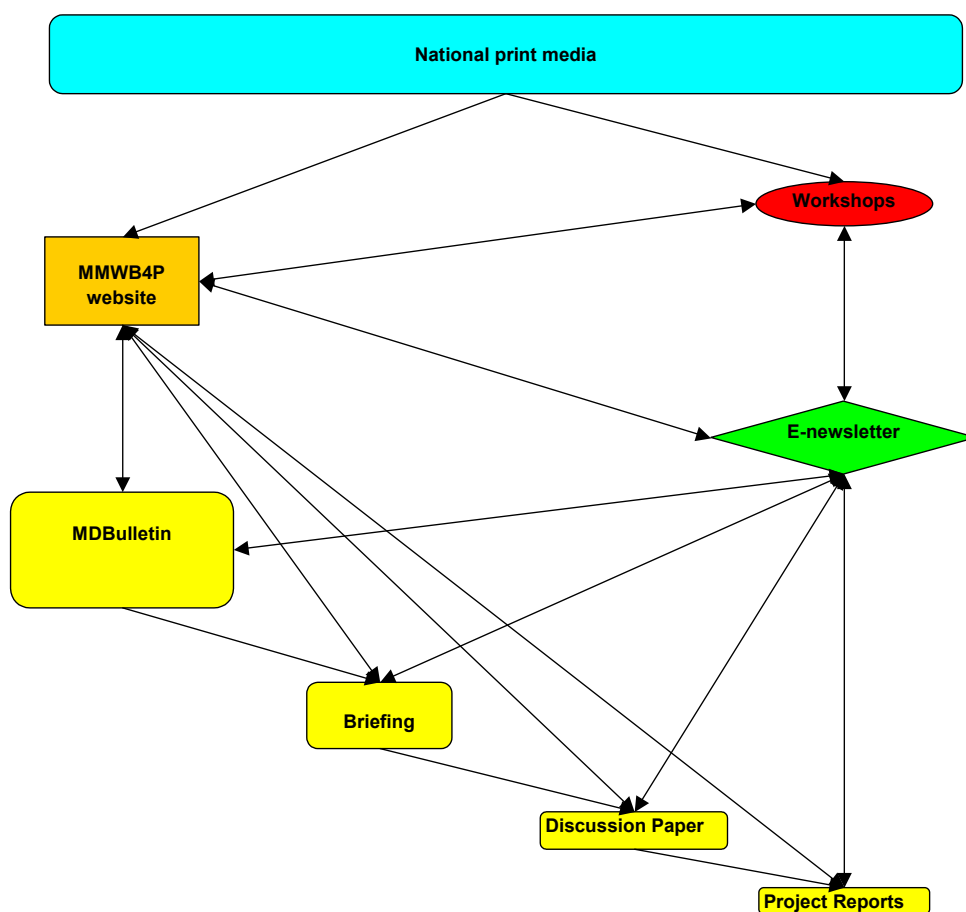
Within the MMWB4P awareness raising is taking place through both *targeted* and *broadcast* communications activities. Broadcast communications have included:

- News paper articles in Vietnam News, Vietnam Economic Times, Financial Times, Vietnam Investment Review, Economics and Urbanization, The Youth, People's Daily, The Pioneer, Labour and Society, Rural Today, The Hanoi new, The labour, Family and Society, Vietnam Net, VN Media, VNStyle . In future MDB's may be reprinted in the Vietnam Economic Times, and Financial Times
- A project website which has been operational since November 2003. It has attracted over 6000 "hits" and now has about 30 documents and articles available for download .

37. More targeted awareness raising has taken place through a series of workshops and seminars organised by the Project Office, and through the use of a mailing list, used to send out the Markets and Development Bulletin, and publications including Briefings papers and Discussion papers, and Project Reports (See Annex E for further details on publications).

38. Wherever possible the project will identify those who are reached through broadcast communications and bring them into reach of targeted communications. This can be aided by ensuring that all communications are cross-referenced (or cross-sold to use more commercial terms). So, for example, the Bulletin will have the project website and email address. Self-invited workshop participants will be added to mailing lists.

39. The project will also seek to channel readers from broad general-purpose communications to more specific and detailed documents. The channels that will be used are shown in the diagram below. Larger nodes have larger numbers of visitors. More generalist publications are at the top, and more specialists publications are at the bottom. This flow of visitors' attention and engagement will not be just one way. Wherever possible there will be some "re-cycling" of readers, by taking them from reading of specific products back to the website and mailing list, whereby they will later be alerted to new products that may interest them.



Campaigning

40. In this project there has not yet been any campaigning activity by the Project Office. The most feasible form of campaigning that could be undertaken would be a series of newspaper articles taking a position on a particular policy issue. NGO involvement in campaigning is more feasible and has already happened. There are two approaches available to the project.

- One is to choose to fund research in areas where there is already some campaigning activity, and thus a constituency of concern, and some actors ready to make use of research findings. This was the case with the Land research where CRP drove the agenda. CRP originally approached the project with a rough research outline focussed on the growing issue of rural landlessness in the Mekong Delta. This original idea later evolved into the rural land market processes study. Similarly we have supported the work of IDE where there is a common interest in an agenda based on enabling the poor to take advantage of market opportunities.
- The other is to seek NGO interest in research that has already been funded. Both Oxfam and SCF have expressed interest in the research on poverty and empowerment issues in the context of the proposed participatory market assessments (“listening to the poor”)

In future, it is likely that the project will put more emphasis on research areas where there already is a local constituency for change.

Lobbying

41. Lobbying, when interpreted as more than one-to-one contact, includes all of the workshops and seminars organised by the project to date. These events will continue to be the most important means of communicating research plans and findings. Their significance is recognised by their inclusion in the project Logical Framework. They are likely to be most effective when they are designed within some knowledge of the network of relationships between the actors, and where prefaced by some publicity about the projects objectives and activities.

"A big part of the success of the literacy strategy was not just that the evidence was put together, but how it was put together. It was about building a certain coalition and consensus amongst many of the stakeholders."

David Halpern, *Evidence Based Policy: Build on' or 'Spray on'?* in "Does Evidence Matter", ODI, September, 2004

42. In addition to events organised by the project there are other important communications opportunities that are part of official planning processes taking place at varying scales and frequencies. These include:

- GoVN (5Yr) planning events
- CPRGS reviews
- Country strategy exercises processes
- End of year CG and private sector forum meetings
- The planned ADB-DFID "learning event" in Manila in Feb 2005 at which experience with the MMW4P project in various settings (Nigeria, South Africa, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam) will be shared.

43. To make full use of these opportunities the project will be developing a modified Gantt chart showing policy processes x time periods, with cell entries showing major events (via acronyms). Special attention will be paid to identifying linkages between events associated with different planning processes, so that any opportunities for convergence and synergy of efforts will be used. The Gantt chart will be developed with the assistance of research partners and shared with them, for use in their own communications activities as well as those of the Project Office.

Capacity building

Capacity building is being directly addressed in this project primarily through the contracting of mentors to work with the funded research institutes. The seven mentor individuals and organisations are listed in Annex F, along with a sample of their Terms of Reference in Annex D. New research projects funded in 2005 will also have supporting mentors. As with the research partners used to date, there will be some selectivity, with only some of the existing mentors being used during the next round of research. Contracts governing their involvement with the research partners' research will be revised, to build on experience with the first round of research. Primary responsibility for managing and completing the research will remain clearly with the research partners. The mentor will be responsible for

reporting on research progress, including the use of their advisory inputs by the research partners. Other developments will include:

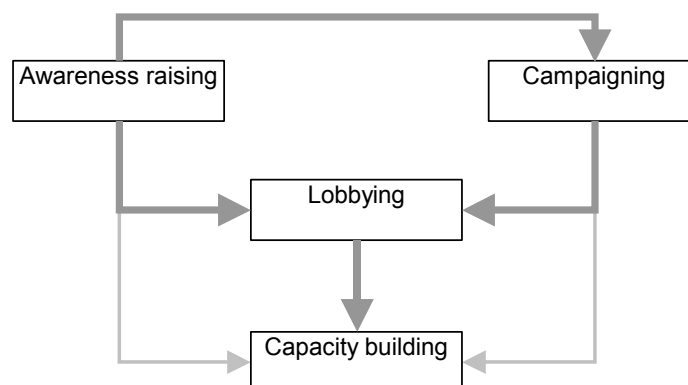
- A mailing list for exchange of information between mentors
- A workshop with mentors to discuss the future of the mentor role in the next round of funding

More ambitiously, it is hoped that one of the outcomes of successful communication of research findings to policy makers will be closer engagement by the research institutes with work of those policy makers, and their organisations, at various stages of relevant policy processes. This approach assumes that policy influencing is not a one shot, one directional process, but an ongoing process, involving interaction between researchers and policy makers. This point has been made in the ODI website on "Research and Policy in Development". *"Literature on the research-policy link is now shifting...towards a more dynamic and complex view that emphasises a two-way process between research and policy, shaped by multiple relations and reservoirs of knowledge"* (ODI, 2004)

44. It should also be possible to envisage policy makers being involved in a reciprocal form of capacity building, through their engagement with the MMWB4P project, influencing research priorities and the dissemination of research results. The project Office already anticipates a much stronger VN advisory committee role in driving the project research agenda. The challenge here will be for the project to identify a range of options for involvement which recognise differences in the way different policy makers want to get involve (both in duration and timing).

Integrating awareness raising, campaigning, lobbying and capacity building

45. The four types of communications activities outlined above should not seen as stand along activities. The diagram below provides a simple model of how they are expected to relate to each other. The overall direction is towards more engagement, but with a focus on those most able to influence policy processes. This model should provide some orientation in the planning of communications activities, and some expectations about trends in relationships that can be referred to in any subsequent review process.



46. This "engagement" oriented model may also help avoid some of the potentially problematic aspects communications strategies that focus on "influencing",

especially where there are foreign organisations involved. With (mutual) capacity building as the final stage here the MMWB4P strategy is aiming towards an outcome that is publicly visible and should therefore be more publicly acceptable. It will also be a more evaluable outcome and one which recognises that significant change is often a long term process

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

47. The project Logical Framework already identifies a number of verifiable indicators that must be tracked. At the Activity and Output level these mainly focus on numbers and types of reports and other communications activities that will be produced, and the numbers of participants using them. These will be monitored. However by themselves they will not be very meaningful, beyond showing that the Project Office has been busy.
48. The most basic monitoring task will be to keep track of all the people and organisations the project is engaging with, and in what way. This is already being done by the Project Office, through a mailing list database that is logging all known participants in Project Office-organised project events, and all recipients of Project Office project communications. The next step will be to involve the participating research institutes in a similar contact monitoring process, recording their own communications activities. And then the exchange of information between databases.
49. The Project Office and research institutes' databases will need periodic analysis. Of special interest will be the organisations (and individuals) who are showing continuing interest and engagement with the project, and especially those within or linked to the targeted institutions. And conversely, those who are showing little or declining interest, but who were hoped to show significant interest. This analysis can be done at macro and micro levels, using organisations and individuals within, as the units of analysis. Much of this information may be already be "common knowledge" within the project but confirming it and checking for less obvious trends would still be of value
50. Behind this proposal is a simple assumption, which may be applicable. That is, the more potentially valuable the research findings are the more likely potential users will invest time in accessing it, or even informing how it is produced and disseminated. This type of symptomatic behaviour will be more available if the project is able to set up a range of opportunities for being involved at different stages of the research process, and which vary in their time cost. The project Office is already moving in this direction by inviting people to participate in different stages of the research project cycle, and by offering research products of varying levels of complexity and detail.
51. Analysis of contacts made will also need to pay attention to the patterns of participation by different actors. To what extent are they more linked into one GOV+ institution versus another? These more aggregate patterns may affect the likelihood of one versus another institution hearing about and taking notice of the research. The results need to be related back to the project's networking strategy for each prioritised GoV+ institution, proposed earlier. This analysis will require some

information collection about which actors are linked into which institutions in what ways. This will be feasible for the immediate project partners, but more of a challenge in the case of other participants who become involved on a less formal as-needed basis. Workshop methods have been proposed above.

52. The project will also need to monitor changes at one remove from the actual participants in the project's communications events. As noted above, many of the important champions may not become directly involved in project activities, but their subordinates or peers may do so. In these circumstances the project may need to do some selective informal interviewing of known intermediaries about any changes in the champions expressed interests, concerns, intentions and activities in the area relating to the research topic in question. Or in some cases a relationship may exist with the champions themselves, which would allow interviewing. It is also likely that a substantial amount of anecdotal informal will also become available on a day-to-day basis. The question then is how to analyse it.
53. It is proposed that the Project Office will make use of the Most Significant Changes (MSC)⁸ method for analysing qualitative information that becomes available about changes in the institutions it is concerned with. This can be used as a periodic reporting tool by the Project Office staff, and less frequently, during special purpose workshops with research institutes and mentors. Instead of indicators, the use of MSC requires the pre-identification of "*domains of change*" that are of special interest to the project (which are like section headings in newspapers). It is possible that these will cover areas such as:
- changes in knowledge of the project by various actors
 - changes in policy making processes, that are relevant to the project
 - Changes in contents of relevant policies both on paper, and as implemented.
- All SC stories will be entered into a Project Office database, not only those selected as most significant of all.
- The most valuable Significant Change stories will be those that are associated with an identifiable chain of actors between the person reporting the MSC event and the actors involved in the reported event. Other criteria for rating the plausibility of SC stories include the amount of verifiable detail and the extent to which the account is available to be made public (making it more contestable)

Stories about other actor's knowledge of the MMWB4P

"I received a fax copy of a page of Hansard covering some parliamentary Q&A dated 29 November. There is a section on Vietnam with Mr Chapman quizzing Mr Alexander of the FCO about what the UK is doing to help Vietnam become a market-based economy. Mr Alexander's reply has a whole para on the MMW4P project ending with "For further information on this intervention, I refer my hon. friend to the Making Markets Work Better for the Poor website:

www.markets4poor.org".

Alan Johnson. December 2004

⁸ See <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MostSignificantChanges/> and www.mande.co.uk/ccdb.htm

Reviews

54. The project will have a mid-term review (output to purpose review) in 2005 and an end-of-project (or final) review in 2006/07.

Goal achievement

55. The focus of M&E efforts will be on the achievement of the project Purpose: influencing policy change. Verifying expected linkages between policy changes and changes in the nature and incidence of poverty would require resources and time that are beyond those available to this project.

56. However, mid-term and final reviews of the project will pay attention to the assumptions that are linking specific policy change proposals and their expected impact on poverty. Most proposed policy changes are likely to require some associated conditions, which are essential if the policy is to have a positive impact. These conditions should be identified during the research and be included in the advocacy of specific policy changes. If policy changes are then made without these associated conditions being met then the assumed effect on poverty should not be acceptable

Purpose achievement

57. Project monitoring activities, including analysis of people's participation, the linkages between them, and the collection of Most Significant Change stories, should provide reviewers with the raw material for identifying Purpose level changes. In the Logical Framework the Purpose level indicators focus on the use of study recommendations in the design of government and donor policies and programs.

58. This information could be complemented by interviews of the identified champions. Where feasible a customised semi-structured interview could be used to identify changes in the champion's knowledge, attitude and practice in areas relating to the project's research and communications activities. It would be preferable if these interviews were based on, and sought to test, the views of the Project Office staff about that champion. The champion could also be asked about their sources of important items of information. The question then would be how this view fitted with the Project Office's own view of the influence process.

59. A more aggregate perspective can be developed by Project Office staff constructing priority, and then success, rankings of their work with all the identified champions (and then the whole institutions). The review team can then audit the arguments and evidence behind the rankings. Outlier cases, where success has exceeded priority and priority has exceeded success, can be investigated in more detail to identify lessons to be learned.

60. The issue of sustainable impacts could be addressed by taking a more macro view of the changes that have taken place during the project period. New relationships may have been established between institutions during the project period. For example, between particular mentors and research institutes, and between particular research institutes and GoV+ institutions. Some of those may be expected to last beyond the project period, and others not. An analysis of the difference

between these would be worthwhile, and could (more ambitiously) be tested via a follow up at a later date, after the completion of the project.

61. Some donors, such as AusAid, have bought into funding of the project after it has begun. Such events are potential indicators of the effectiveness of the project. However, case-by-case inquiries will be needed to establish what aspect of the performance, or perhaps simply the promise, of the project has attracted such donors, and to what extent those perceptions have been supported by the donor's subsequent experience of the project's work. Simple baselines of new donors expectations could be established by careful documentation and archiving of all communications with a new donor, from the time of their first expression of interest.

62. There are already some existing examples of other organisations getting involved in the project and offering real cooperation, in the form of inputs of staff time or money (CIRAD/MALICA (French Government Research Agency), the Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF), IKEA (Swedish home furnishing enterprise) and The Bamboo Factory (a French-owned commercial enterprise). These have been formalised via a MOU or contract. Of these various partners, MPDF are the most significant as the project jointly produces the bi-monthly Markets and Development Bulletin as well as parallel finance the bamboo "business linkage" project with smallholder farmers in Thanh Hoa province.

Lessons learned

63. Reviews may also be used as means of compiling "lessons learned" about the process of communicating research findings and influencing policy processes. Attention should be given to two areas of the policy process, and the relationship between them.

- The formal policy process, as has been documented in Gantt charts, and process maps, etc. as mentioned.
- The actual process, as identifiable from MSC and other qualitative and incident based accounts.

You have to encourage experiments and variability. For evidence-based policy to work, it is not just about hiring some academic and getting them to do a review of the literature, although that might be worthy enough, but in many key areas, the system itself has to generate the evidence, because there has to be variability within it and there has to be analysis of what worked and what did not, in a systematic way. That is absolutely pivotal for creating some sort of learning system.

David Halpern, Evidence Based Policy: Build on' or 'Spray on'? in "Does Evidence Matter", ODI, September, 2004

Annexes

A. References

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Davies, R. (2003) *Network Perspectives in the Evaluation Of Development Interventions: More Than a Metaphor*. See <http://www.enterprise-impact.org.uk/pdf/Davies2.pdf>

Davies, R.J. (2001) *Evaluating the Effectiveness of DFID's Influence with Multilaterals Part A: A Review of NGO Approaches To The Evaluation Of Advocacy Work*. Consultancy Report to DFID. See <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/EEDIMreport.doc>

Gladwell, G. (2002) *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Abacus.

ODI (2004) *Research and Policy in Development* website at <http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/>

Rogers, E. (2003) *Diffusion of Innovations*. Simon and Schuster International.

Stone, D., Maxwell, S. (eds) (2004) *Global Knowledge Networks and International Development*. ODI. London

B. Contact Management

Proposals:

1. The Project Office will have one central contacts management database, which is accessible online by all staff members. This could be in Excel, Access or a specialised Contact Management software.
2. It will have one manager, who is responsible for updating the contents, and ensuring frequent back-ups
3. It will be able to import data in simple common formats such as Excel, which the research institutes may be using.
4. When databases, for any source, are merged the original sources of the names will be entered in as associated information. Ideally all names will have a known point of contact or identification
5. Old entries, of people no longer in contact with the project, will not be deleted. They remain part of the project's history and will remain accessible.
6. Important fields will include:
 - Contact details: phone, email, post address
 - Organisational affiliation: including section and position title
 - Don't delete old entries, allow new entries to be added above. Preserve history
 - Research or policy interests. Possibly split in to researcher identified topics and policy maker identified topics.
 - Links with MSC stories (provider of or actor within)
 - Known links with other actors in the database that are of special note.

C. The MMWB4P website

Recommendations

1. The website will enable the project to reach *audiences it does not know about*. Links to the project website, placed on other cooperating websites can enable the project website to draw in specific types of audiences, such as those using DFID or ADB websites.
2. Visitors to the website will be given the option of joining a moderated emailing that enables receipt of messages about updates to the website (e. new documents, new events) and communications with others on the list about the policy issues being researched by the project. See <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MandENEWS/> for an example of a similar mailing list that is in operation
 - The main advantage of such a mailing list is that it will provide the project with a known audience of people with a known interest in the project's work. The vetted membership approval process can include 2-3 brief questions about the identity and interests of the members.
3. A website with an extensive database of documents is also a means of enabling people to call down information on an as-needed basis. Rather than waiting to be sent information, which may or not be of interest to them.
 - Monitoring of search requests and specific page views will provide the project management with information about what types of information are most in demand. For a simple example, click on "View Recent Usage" on the Open Forum at <http://www.mande.co.uk/cgi-bin/www.mande.co.uk/forum.pl>
4. A Disclosure Policy will be developed for the project, and made available on website. This will clarify what types of information will be made publicly available and which will not (e.g. commercial contracts etc). This information will enable the public at large to know what type of information they can ask for, even if it is not visibly available on the project website.

All communications activities will make cross-references to each other whenever possible. Project publications will make cross-references to the project website and mailing list. The website will make cross-references to publications, and events. Events will cross-reference to the website and mailing list. The intention is that all communication channels will be supporting each other, and increasing the opportunities for more intensive engagement with audiences.

D. MMWB4P Publications

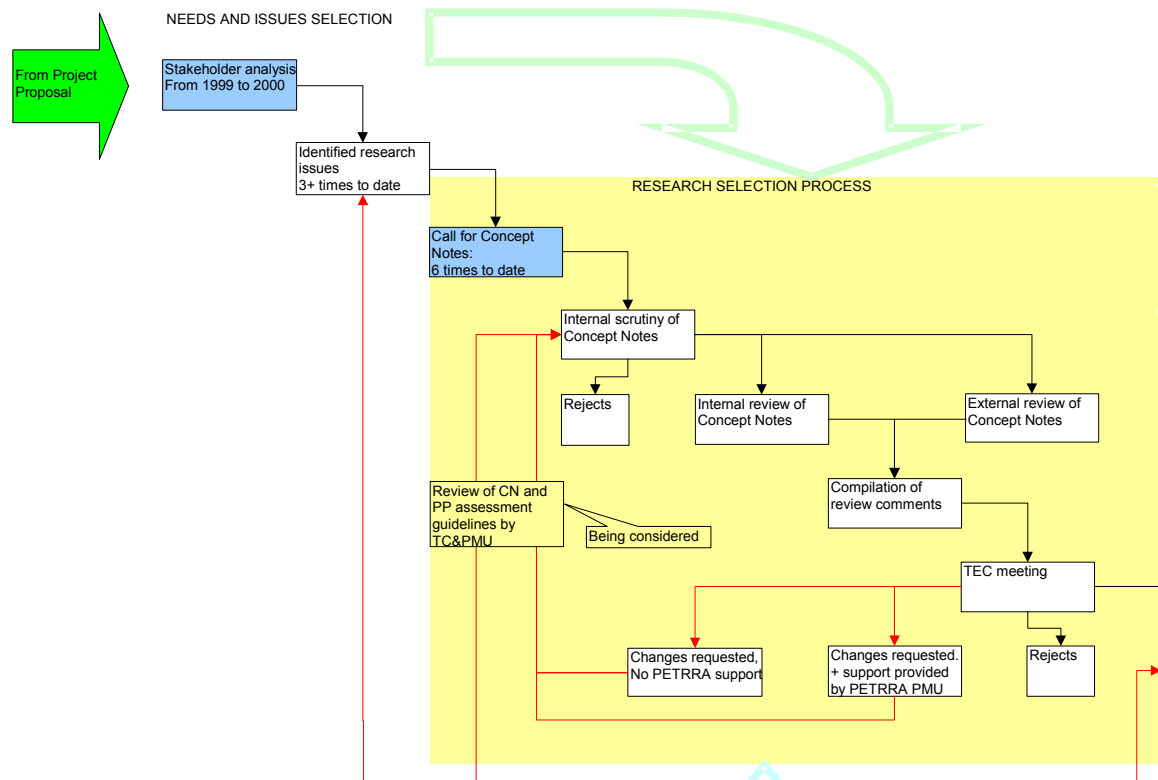
Type	Target Audience	Length	Features	Remarks Planned distribution
e-newsletter	Development Practitioners in GOVN and amongst donors	1 page	News on project activities	Via e-mail distribution
Website	General audience		* news on project activities * research outputs	Easy access for all online readers
Briefing	Development Practitioners in GOVN and amongst donors	4-6 pages	* numbered * based on research work	300 EN copies 300 VN copies
MDB	General Audience	4 pages	* bimonthly * based on research work * 2 pages text * 2 pages talking heads	2000 EN copies 15000 VN copies
Discussion paper	Development Practitioners with a specific interest in the topics	20 – 30 pages	* numbered * Based on main research * More in-depth coverage of the issues	200 EN copies 200 VN copies
Project Reports	Development Practitioners	Various	E.g. - Inception - Thematic - Workshops - Factor markets	various

E. Research Topics, Partners, Mentors, Champions and Research Status

Topic	Sub Topic	Researchers	Mentors	Champions	Status
VHLSS analysis	Quantitative work with GSO	General Statistics Office	Saba Waseem (consultant)	MPI	On going, results workshop due Dec 04 report due Jan 05
Agricultural Value Chains:	Tea	ICARD (Information Centre, Ministry of Agriculture)	ACI (Consultants)	MARD	Final workshop held on 30 Sept 04, report Oct 04 Draft final report available
	Cassava	ESRC (Independent Research Entity)	ACI (Consultants)	MARD	Field work completed
	Rice	ICARD (Information Centre, Ministry of Agriculture) and ACI	ACI (Consultants)	MARD	Final workshop held March 04. Briefing Paper and Markets Bulletin published Nov 04
	Supermarkets	MALICA (French Vietnamese Consortium)	CIRAD (French Government Research Institute)	MARD	Inception workshop held on Oct 04
	50 case studies	NISTPASS	ACI (Consultants)	PMRC	Ongoing, Report due Mar 05
Listening to the Poor:	Danang	ILSA (Institute of Labour Science, Ministry of Labour Invalids and Social Affairs)	Imperial College, University of London	Danang PC	Field work completed Final workshop held on 20 Dec 04
Factor Markets	Land North	Mekong Economics (Private consulting firm)	University of Melbourne	PMRC and MONRE	Field work completed Final workshop held on 4 Nov 04, Draft final report available
	Land Centre	Central Institute of Economic Management (CIEM)			
	Land South	Centre for Rural Progress (CRP) NGO			
	Labour	CIEM	University of Amsterdam	MOLISA	On going, results workshop due March 05
Microenterprise	Formalisation of HH enterprises	Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI)	Markus Taussig (consultant)	VCCI/PMRC	Final workshop held on 1 Oct Draft final report available.

F: Process maps, workflow diagrams and modified Gantt Charts

1. **Process map** (incomplete copy): Events are described in boxes, from top left to bottom right in temporal sequence where possible. Events are linked by feedforward links (top right side) and feedback links (bottom left side). Actors involved in each activity are list to the right side, on the same row. Documents guiding each activity are list at the bottom, in the same column



2. **Alternate version of process map.** This makes explicit use of a matrix. All events are listed in the cells along the diagonal, from top left to bottom right, in temporal sequence if possible. Cells outside the diagonal can contain text describing the relationship between that row event and that column event. Cell on the top right describe feed forward links, cells on the bottom right describe feedback links. Lines can also be draw, as above, showing the connections between events. Actors and documents can be listed on the margins, as explained above.

3. **Workflow diagrams** emphasise the movement of information between actors in an organisation. This uses an actor x actor matrix, with the same two sets of actor being listed on across the top and down the left side. Cell contents describe the relationship *from the row actor to the column actor*: for example, Actor BBB takes part in monthly meets with Actor CCC.

4. **Modified Gantt charts** show Outputs x Units of time, with cell contents showing acronyms describing milestones towards achievement of the outputs. Acronyms are listed and explained under the Gantt chart.

G: Research partners, mentors and GoV matrix

Matrix of relationships between Research Institutes, Mentors & GoV bodies	ACI	Centre for Rural Prog	CIEM	CIRAD	DaNang PC	ESRC	GSO	ICARD	ICUniv-of-London	ILSA	Inst for World Econo	MALICA	MARD	Mekong Economics	MOLISA	MONRE	MPI	NISTPASS	PMRC	Saba Waseem	Taussig	Univ-of-Amsterdam	Univ-of-Melbourne	VCCI
ACI						2	2					1						2	1					
Centre for Rural Proges															3				3				2	
CIEM														3	3				3			2	2	
CIRAD											2	1												
DaNang PC								1	3															
ESRC	2												3											
GSO																	3			2				
ICARD	2												3											
ICUniv-of-London					1				2															
ILSA		2	3					2							3									
Inst for World Economy		2							2						3							2		
MALICA				2									3											
MARD	1		1				3	3					3											
Mekong Economics																3			3				2	
MOLISA			3						3	3									3				1	
MONRE		3	3											3									2	
MPI							3														1			
NISTPASS	2												3	3					3					3
PMRC	1	3												3					3		1		1	3
Saba Waseem							2										1							
Taussig																			1					2
Univ-of-Amsterdam			2							2					1									
Univ-of-Melbourne		2	2											2	1					1				
VCCI																			3	3	2			

3 = strong relationship 2 = medum 3 = weak relationship