CIVICUS CIVIL SOCIETY INDEX SHORTENED ASSESSMENT TOOL
CSI-SAT Vietnam

THE EMERGING CIVIL SOCIETY

AN INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN VIETNAM

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FOREWORD

Globally, civil society organisations are playing a crucial role in the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The significant contribution of civil society to poverty reduction, the empowerment of women, increasing accountability and transparency, and not least to promoting people's participation in policy and decision-making is broadly accepted by political leaders around the world. In most countries, civil society organisations and governments work side by side in such endeavours.

The role of people's participation is an issue of increasing debate in Vietnam. As the reform process moves forward, unique opportunities are created for Vietnamese policy and lawmakers to promote an enabling environment for the establishment and growth of non-state organisations.

The analysis presented in this report reflects the perceptions and views of a national assessment group, consisting of representatives from a wide range of non-state organisations in Vietnam. It provides a unique insight into the current conditions and future prospects for civil society in Vietnam and serves as a valuable source of information for all who have an interest in people's participation and civil society in the country and beyond.

Prof. Dang Huu
President of VIDS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT) has been implemented by the Vietnam Institute of Development Studies (VIDS), a member of the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA), in cooperation with eight researchers from various institutes and organisations and an International Civil Society Expert. The project approach and methodology were developed by the international non-governmental organisation (INGO) CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. The study was supported financially by UNDP and the non-governmental organisation SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) in Vietnam.

The Stakeholder Assessment Group (SAG), composed of 12 members from civil society, government organisations and research institutions, represented broad sections of Vietnamese society; with two thirds of the members representing civil society (see Annex 1 for a list of SAG members). The SAG was established early on during the project, and the members played an active role in initially identifying the forces of civil society in Vietnam at the first SAG meeting in May 2005. In September, the draft CSI scoring report was prepared and the SAG took the time to read and score all 74 indicators in accordance with the methodology. A full day was committed to discussing the report. When the draft country report was completed in November, the SAG met again to provide consolidated comments, analyse the findings and make suggestions for further future activities. The National Implementation Team (NIT) would like to express its sincere thanks to all of the members for their concern, contributions and interest in this pioneering project.

Seven researchers collected material and information for the study during the early stages of the project. With the exception of the environment dimension, two researchers prepared sub-reports on each of the four dimensions of civil society: Chu Dung (Centre for Social Work in Ho Chi Minh City) and MA Tang The Cuong (NISTPASS in Hanoi) were responsible for the "structure" dimension; Dr. Nguyen Manh Cuong (VUSTA, Hanoi) worked on the socio-economic "environment" dimension; Dang Ngoc Quang (Rural Development Service Centre, Hanoi) and Do Bich Diem (Centre for Social Work in Ho Chi Minh City) worked on the "values" dimension; and finally, Dr. Bach Tan Sinh (NISTPASS) and MA Vu Chi Mai (MARD, Hanoi) worked on the "impact" dimension. The research group met regularly while preparing the various sub-reports to discuss problems with the research and writing, and to keep track of each other's progress. All of them deserve to be thanked warmly for their efforts and contributions, a most challenging process concerning a subject that had not been discussed previously in Vietnam.

The project also commissioned a number of people with inside knowledge of Vietnamese legislation and policy to write papers on that subject. The NIT would like to convey their thanks to everyone involved in those efforts, including VIDS, where Prof. Dang Huu was interested and encouraged the topic, Dr. Vo Duy Phu and Dr. Nguyen Van Thu for their active contribution to the SAG meetings, and Nguyen Ngoc Lam (Ministry of Home Affairs) and Nguyen Vi Khai (Prime Minister's Research Commission). A special thanks to Dr. Bui The Cuong from the Institute of Sociology, who not only wrote a special paper for the project, but also participated in many of the research meetings and contributed many ideas and comments based on his in-depth knowledge of Vietnamese civic organisations. Finally, the project has benefited very much from the support from VUSTA.

Dr. Dang Ngoc Dinh, the National Coordinator of CSI-SAT and Director of VIDS, took on the very large challenge of organising the project from the start. Without his enthusiasm, long experience

and profound knowledge of Vietnamese society and personalities, as well as his excellent organisational skills, the project would not have gotten off the ground. VIDS organised three seminars for the SAG and the researchers and we wish to thank the VIDS staff, Ms. Dinh Phuong Mai and Ms. Huynh Kim Lien, who were the daily backbone of the project, as well as Ms. Bui To Tam, who handled the scoring results and "diamond" with great professionalism.

Thank you also to the donors, UNDP and SNV. Jonas Lövkrona, Head of the Governance Cluster and Katrine R. Pedersen, Programme Officer in the Governance Cluster, UNDP and Harm Duiker, Programme Co-ordinator SNV and Nguyen Duc Thien, Senior Advisor to SVN, were among the initiators of the project and they have followed the process closely all the way. We would also like to especially thank Katrine Pedersen, who took part and provided special comments and input with great and encouraging enthusiasm to each phase of the project and the project report. We would like to thank the CIVICUS team in South Africa, particularly Navin Vasudev and Volkhart Finn Heinrich for their most useful and timely comments, particularly during the process of writing the report.

The National Coordinator and the International Civil Society Expert have cooperated closely as the National Implementation Team (NIT) throughout the project. The final report was edited and compiled by the International Expert and reflects national perceptions of civil society in Vietnam, as well as internal disagreements in the source material, as much as possible given the space available. The international perceptions of Vietnam are also included often in contrast to the national ideas. It is presented with the aim of encouraging a public dialogue.

Finally, we would like to thank David Lehman, a volunteer with the UN's Online Volunteering service, who did a thorough and painstaking job editing the language in the English version of the report.

Irene Norlund
International Coordinator
Hanoi
March 2006

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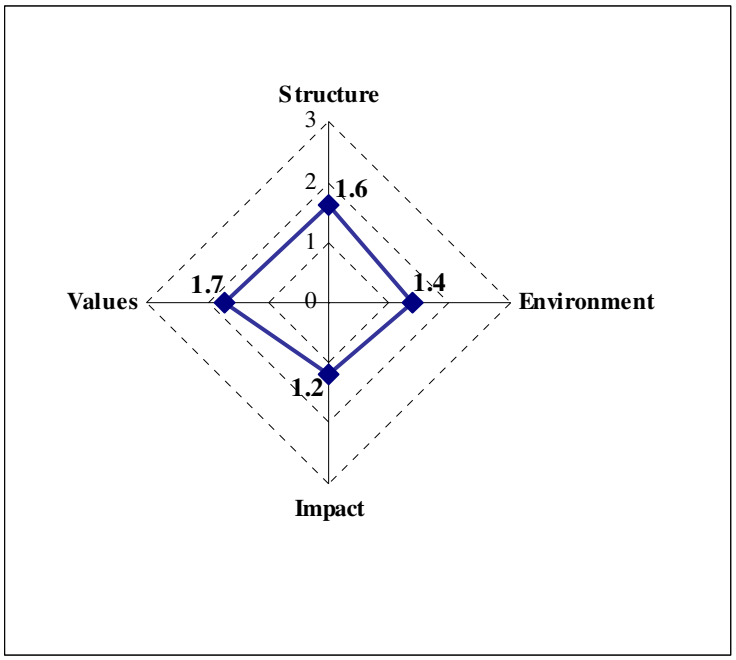
LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CGFED	Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development
CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (PRSP)
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
CRD	Centre for Rural Development in Central Vietnam
CRES	Centre for Research on Environment and Sustainability
CSI	Civil Society Index
CSI-SAT	Civil Society Index-Shortened Assessment Tool
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ENV	Education for Nature
GDD	Grassroots Democracy Decree
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDR	Human Development Report
HEPR	Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LERES	Centre for Legal Research and Services
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MO	Mass Organisation
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NCFAW	National Committee for the Advancement of Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NISTPASS	National Institute for Science and Technology Policy and Strategy Studies
NIT	National Implementation Team
PACCOM	Peoples' Aid Coordinating Committee
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PPP	Purchasing Parity Prices
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RDSC	Rural Development Services Centre
SAG	Stakeholder Assessment Group of the CSI-SAT in Vietnam
SDMA	Centre for Sustainable Development in the Mountainous Areas
SDRC	Centre for Social Work and Community Development Research and Consultancy
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
SRV	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
VACVINA	Centre for Training and Transferring VAC Technology
VGCL	Vietnam General Confederation of Labour
VIDS	Vietnam Institute for Development Studies
VND	Vietnam dong (15,800 dong to 1 USD, 2005)
VNGO	Vietnamese Non-Governmental Organisation
VUFO	Vietnam Union for Friendship Organisation
VUPSFO	Vietnam Union for Peace, Solidarity and Friendship Associations (later changed to VUFO)
VUSTA	Vietnam Union for Science and Technology Associations
VWAA	Vietnam Writers and Artists Associations
WVS	World Values Survey
WVSV	World Values Survey Vietnam

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From April to December 2005, the CIVICUS Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT) was implemented to assess the state of civil society in Vietnam. The methodology for the project is based on a framework of 74 indicators, divided into four dimensions of civil society: structure, environment, values and impact. The National Implementation Team (NIT), consisting of the National Coordinator and the International Civil Society Expert, together with a group of eight researchers (civil society experts), collected the data, drew up sub-reports on the four dimensions and wrote a consolidated report which was submitted to the members of a Stakeholder Assessment Group (SAG) who discussed and scored the various indicators. The results were summarised in a graph referred to as the "Civil Society Diamond." The diamond graph is based on the viewpoints of the SAG, but the report also presents data and information from many other secondary sources. The Vietnam civil society diamond visually summarises the assessment's findings (using scores between 0 and 3) and indicates that civil society is operating in a slightly disabling **environment** (1.4) and has a **structure** of limited strength (1.6). Civil society practices and promotes positive **values** to a moderate extent (1.7) and its **impact** on society at large is relatively limited (1.2). Notably, the values dimension of civil society is the strongest and the impact dimension the weakest dimension (figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Civil Society Diamond forVietnam



The Civil Society Index (CSI) report for Vietnam highlights a number of features of civil society not previously investigated and a range of new insights. In brief, civil society can be characterised as being very broad-based through numerous civil society organisations (CSOs). However, not all organisations are deeply anchored in civil society, for example some members of the mass

organisations are automatically members in the public sector.[1]Another characteristic is that civil society is segmented into various organisations with different functions. On the one hand, the "old" mass organisations and professional associations, which are broadly accepted as an integrated part of society, and on the other, a "new type" of organisation that developed in the 1990s, but is not fully recognised by society, such as NGOs, CBOs and other types of informal organisations. The report focuses on four main types of organisation: mass organisations (MOs), professional associations, Vietnamese NGOs (VNGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs).[2] All organisations are seen together as part of the Vietnamese civil society, collectively called civil society organisations (CSOs). The core activities of most CSOs are directed towards poverty reduction, humanitarian relief, self-organisation and professional development, but little CSO effort is directed towards advocacy. On the whole, civil society is an important area of activity for citizens in Vietnam, but it lacks vitality in some respects and areas, among which advocacy is one of the weakest. The environment for civil society is one of the main factors for its relative lack of vitality as the conditions for forming organisations are not enabling.

Civil society in Vietnam was limited and weak before the *doi moi* period ('renovation') which put in place the first reforms towards a marked-oriented society. This was done by the Communist Party in 1986, which was under pressure to address acute poverty and liberalise the collective landholdings. As the society opened up, the private sector was permitted to operate together with encouragement from foreign investments. After the collapse of Eastern European regimes in the late 1980s, Vietnam had to reorient the country's foreign relations. When the USA and Vietnam, after the 20 years embargo that followed the American war, normalised relations the door opened up for closer relations to close allies of the USA in Asia and Europe. Consequently, European and Japanese development agencies and the multilateral banks increased development cooperation during the early and mid-1990s. Organisational life changed during this period with an increasing number of international NGOs (INGOs) setting up offices in Vietnam and the number of small local NGOs multiplying. The space for local initiatives broadened both for grassroots organisations and mass organisations, often serving the role as partners for development projects at the community level, as well as for new professional organisations and Community Based Organisations (CBOs).

Examining the current **structure** of civil society in Vietnam reveals that it is broad-based and comprises a large number of groups, organisations and associations. The breadth of civil society is particularly large due to the large membership of the mass organisations. Among Vietnamese citizens, 74% are members of at least one organisation; 62% are members of more than one CSO and, on average, each citizen is a member of 2.3 organisations.[3] The groups with the largest membership include mass organisations, women's groups, social welfare groups, local community groups, sports and recreation groups, groups for education, arts and music and professional associations. Some of the groups are government, or party-sponsored, a fact which causes debate over whether or not they should be included as part of civil society. However, they have become more independent since the *doi moi* reforms of 1986 and, given their considerable expansion at the grassroots level during the 1990s, they constitute an important arena for citizens' activity in many communities. The mass organisations are sometimes less participatory, in the sense that people may be members without being actively involved. Nevertheless, they provide an important connection between the centre and the communities which can be used in different ways, according to the

[1] Mass organisations denominate the originally state sponsored organisations with broad popular base like Women's Union, Farmers' Association, Labour Organisation, Youth Organisation.
[2] VNGOs are organisations set up in the 1990s by individuals or groups with a humanitarian or development purpose.
[3] According to World Values Survey Vietnam (WVSV) 2001.

needs and interests of each community. Another type of organisation, the VNGO, has been appearing since 1990. Mainly active in the cities, VNGOs have added a new dimension to organisational life. They have a narrow membership base, but provide services to disadvantaged groups that were previously excluded (eg. ethnic minorities, HIV/AIDS sufferers, invalids and Agent Orange victims).[4] In recent years, community groups have begun to flourish in the rural areas, mainly in support of essential services, though cultural and recreational groups have also expanded considerably. Volunteering is widespread, but the depth of citizens' participation varies greatly from organisation to organisation.

In terms of their structure, many organisations belong to various umbrella organisations. However, these do not always function well. They are sometimes bureaucratic and do not always coordinate the activities of their member-organisations. The VNGO networks are particularly weak, having only been established in recent years. In general, CSOs lack financial resources. Some mass organisations therefore receive support from central or provincial governments for their core expenses. Many CSOs receive support from foreign donors and INGOs to implement projects and conduct research. Professional organisations are more dependent on membership and local resources than the VNGOs, and CBOs are often sustainable on their own resources, but foreign donors and NGOs are beginning to support this type of informal groups as well.

The **environment** for civil society in Vietnam presents quite a mixed picture of conducive and less conducive factors. Poverty reduction has progressed at a spectacularly rapid pace since the 1990s, with the number of people living in poverty falling from two-thirds to about one-quarter from 1990 to 2005. The socio-economic conditions have fundamentally changed with the diversification of the economy, the establishment of a market economy and the increasing small-scale private sector. In the last decade Vietnam has experienced an active integration into the world economy and a multiplication of organisations within all fields of activity. The SAG assessed state effectiveness as high given Vietnam's level of development. However, the general level of corruption is also deemed very high and causes problems even within organisations that handle large budgets.

Whereas political competition and some political rights are limited, leaving room for considerable improvement, the government takes social rights very seriously and during the 1990s worked in collaboration with CSOs to improve social conditions. With respect to political rights, the results of the CSI-SAT on rule of law and corruption in society are not positive, reasons for this include the restrictive and complicated laws for establishing an organisation, and advocacy activities not being encouraged. These factors create obstacles for the further development of civil society. Basic freedoms, such as the freedom of expression, are limited and international sources rate Vietnam's press freedoms as very low; however, the SAG found that room to manoeuvre is considerably greater than the international sources suggest.

Socio-cultural factors are fairly conducive for cooperation, with the family being the core unit and the party as another organising factor. Level of trust is fairly high in Vietnam, with 41% of citizens saying they trust their fellow citizens. Surprisingly, the level of trust is not much higher among those who are members of a CSO compared to those who are not, indicating that civil society may not in itself strengthen the level of trust. Trust in a society with Confucian norms and strong family values might be generated in other ways than through civil society and this result points to a special

[4] Agent Orange was spread during the American War in Vietnam (1964-73) to destroy the forest. Today many children are born with genetic defects.

type of civil society in Vietnam, due to the strong influence of political institutions. Citizens not only trust each other, but also have a high level of trust in the state and its institutions, quite unlike many countries in Eastern Europe, where the level of trust is low. There is close cooperation between the state and mass organisations, whereas relations between professional organisations and the state are less direct and relations between the state and VNGOs are generally cooperative. However, this is mainly because of good personal relations between state officials and the leaders of organisations. Some VNGOs find they have greater difficulty cooperating with the state (more so in Hanoi than Ho Chi Minh City), which somewhat limits their autonomy. Finally, the SAG does not consider the private sector very important for civil society, as it does not often engage with CSOs or charity.

The SAG assessed civil society's **values** as positive and at a fairly high level, with the highest score among the four dimensions. The CSI-SAT methodology divides this dimension into two factors: 1) values practised within civil society and 2) values that are promoted in larger society. The promotion of values, such as poverty reduction, non-violence and gender equity are particularly strong. According to the SAG, all CSOs promote these values, but to a more limited degree than practising certain internal values. Exceptions include tolerance, gender equity and transparency, which are promoted more in society than actually practised by organisations internally. Statistical data shows that the share of female leaders is considerably higher in CSOs than in the public sector, but it is still not equitable.

The values of democracy, tolerance and environmental sustainability promoted by civil society were seen as less strong by the SAG, and were viewed at a lower medium level. Environmental organisations have begun to emerge and an understanding of the importance of the environment is being taken more seriously by both people and the state, though until recently only a few organisations pursued this goal. The most problematic area is transparency, which the SAG rates as low. The rules of transparency are generally not applied in either society or within CSOs. There is no general evidence about the level of corruption within CSOs, but large-scale corruption seems to be not widespread. A culture of petty corruption has penetrated society, and also exists in CSOs. However, it is believed to be lower than in society overall. CSOs have mainly taken on the role of service delivery organisations and have not strongly pursued advocacy. Still, the participatory principles introduced in recent years, with support from INGOs and donors, have been broadly accepted in governmental projects. The Grassroots Democracy Decree of 1998 opened the space for more active participation in decisions at the commune and village levels, where informal groups are playing a more active role.

The **impact** of civil society in Vietnam was the most difficult dimension to assess. Objective data is limited, especially because, with respect to many activities, the impacts of CSOs and of the various levels of government cannot be clearly separated. Due to their focus on service delivery, various CSO activities often supplement each other, work in parallel or even overlap. However, it was found that CSOs of all types reach down to the grassroots level better than similar government programmes and policies. In that regard, CSOs have had an impact ensuring that disadvantaged people and the poor have been included in policies, such as those for HIV/AIDS, children's rights, Agent Orange victims and gender issues.[5] However, one exception must be noted, few organizations reach the most remote areas, such as the regions inhabited by ethnic minorities in the

[5] People exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange during the American war in Vietnam give birth to a high rate of handicapped children.

Northern Mountains and the Central Highlands. Mass organisations, and others, may even have a limiting effect on the development of indigenous knowledge, due to their policies of "mainstreaming" development thinking and activities.

Mass organisations have more direct impact on national policies than other types of CSOs, though some of the large professional associations have recently been permitted to comment on laws passed by parliament.[6] VNGOs use other channels, such as lobbying and pressuring individual members of the National Assembly, usually through personal connections. CSOs do not consider their main purpose to be holding the state or state-owned enterprises accountable (and even less private corporations) because they do not pursue advocacy in the usual sense of the word. Nevertheless, there are examples of communities and workers raising their voices in response to unfair or unethical treatment of people or the environment. At the community level, mass organisations constitute a very important organic link between the various administrative levels, from the centre to the communes and villages. This is particularly the case for the Women's Union and the Old Aged Association, which serve as means to promote activities, initiatives, funding and ideas at the grassroots level. Furthermore, VNGOs and INGOs support projects all over the country for disadvantaged groups and communities. The fairly high level of trust and the rich associational life have played a key role in leading to the rapid reduction of poverty in Vietnam.

This first assessment of civil society in Vietnam has shown that there is considerable potential within civil society for further participation by individuals organised to work towards a better society. Currently the fragmentation of civil society may appear to be a disadvantage, but could turn into an advantage if society opens up further and if the various groups and organisations connect more strongly and improve the division of labour so that each one can focus on what it does best. Simultaneously, organisations should work on deepening the involvement and responsibilities of their members.

The purpose of the CSI-SAT project in Vietnam was to describe civil society in Vietnam and provide a first analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, and of the opportunities and threats to it, as part of an action-oriented learning process. This was done with the hope of providing a basis for enhancing people's participation in decision-making at all levels, through a dialogue with the organisations and the public administration. The other purpose of this study was to initiate a broader discussion in Vietnam about civil society. Such a discussion should lead to further activities which can contribute to strengthening Vietnam's civil society through dialogue between CSOs, the government and society at large. There is a clear need for further studies on the situation of civil society in the provinces and communities, as well as on the role and performance of umbrella organisations. There is also a clear need to improve the environment and support for CSOs so that they can develop into stronger organisations advancing the living conditions of Vietnamese people.

[6] Vietnam Union for Science and Technology Association (VUSTA) recommended the Law of Education to be postponed in 2005. It also suggests changes to the draft Law on Associations planned to be passed by the National Assembly in 2006.

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the results of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT) in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It was carried out from April to December 2005 as part of the international CSI project coordinated by CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation and implemented in more than 50 countries around the world. CIVICUS has been working on the Civil Society Index (CSI) project since 1999. The CSI is a comprehensive participatory needs assessment and action-planning tool for civil society actors at the country level.

In 2004, CIVICUS developed the CIVICUS Civil Society Index – Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT), a shorter, less comprehensive and less resource-intensive process for assessing the state of civil society based on the original CSI design. The CSI-SAT aims to: 1) generate relevant knowledge on the state of civil society at the country level and 2) provide an assessment by civil society stakeholders of civil society's current status.

In each country, the CSI-SAT is implemented by a National Implementation Team (NIT), guided by a Stakeholder Assessment Group (SAG) and the CSI project team at CIVICUS. The NIT in Vietnam collected and synthesized data and information on civil society from a variety of secondary sources, supported by a number of Vietnamese scholars (Civil Society Experts). This information was employed by the SAG to score the 74 CSI indicators, which together provide a comprehensive assessment of the state of civil society. The findings were then finalized and a final report is being published to present the CSI-SAT at the national level. The international CSI project team at CIVICUS provided technical assistance and quality control to the NIT throughout the project's implementation.

The CSI is an international comparative project conceived with two specific objectives: 1) providing useful knowledge on civil society and 2) increasing stakeholders' level of commitment in order to strengthen civil society. The first objective involves a certain tension between country-specific knowledge and knowledge comparable cross-nationally on a global scale. CIVICUS sought to resolve this tension by making it possible to adapt the methodology and the set of more than 70 indicators to each country's specific circumstances. The CSI team in Vietnam made use of this option to some extent, but generally kept to the overall project framework. As the terminology of civil society is not familiar in Vietnam, but increasingly recognised to be a useful approach, the team found the broad and inclusive definitions suggested by CIVICUS helpful in facilitating the first broad study.

The interest in a closer assessment of civil society – usually called civic organisations - has increased in recent years among Vietnamese scholars, professional organisations, VNGOs and government representatives. In other countries, the international community of donors, scholars and INGOs have examined this topic for some time, but in Vietnam the conditions within which civil society exists has not been thoroughly researched, as the government is a partner in most development activities. The CSI-SAT was a good opportunity to assess civil society using the tools of the CIVICUS CSI to investigate the situation in Vietnam and see it in an international comparative perspective.

Structure of the Publication

This report is divided into a summary and five sections. The first section presents the background of the CSI-SAT project, the conditions of its implementation in Vietnam, its methodology and major results. The second section outlines a brief context of civil society in Vietnam and provides a detailed mapping of Vietnamese civil society based on the discussions of the SAG and other sources on civil society. The third section presents the main analyses of the four dimensions and 74 indicators. Finally, section four provides strengths and weaknesses of civil society and section five conclusions.

I CIVIL SOCIETY INDEX PROJECT AND APPROACH

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The idea of a Civil Society Index originated in 1997, when the international non-governmental organisation CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation published the *New Civic Atlas* (CIVICUS 1997). To improve the comparability and quality of information contained in the *New Civic Atlas*, CIVICUS decided to embark on the development of a comprehensive assessment tool for civil society (Heinrich and Naidoo 2001; Holloway 2001). In 1999, Helmut Anheier, the director of the Centre for Civil Society at the London School of Economics, played a significant role in the creation of the CSI concept (Anheier 2004). The concept was tested in 14 countries during a pilot phase lasting from 2000 to 2002.

This report presents the results of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT), implemented in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Vietnam). It was carried out from April to December 2005, as part of the larger process started by CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. In 2004, CIVICUS developed the Shortened Assessment Tool (CSI-SAT), which (compared to the full CSI) is a shorter, less comprehensive and less resource-intensive process for assessing the state of civil society. The CSI-SAT is applied in circumstances where, for example, civil society is still in the early stages of development and where knowledge generation and initial assessments are pertinent. The CSI-SAT is substantially shorter than the full CIVICUS CSI. Unlike the full version, the CSI-SAT relies on existing data only and does not include consultative and action-planning stages.

TABLE I.1.1: Countries participating in the CSI implementation phase 2003-05[7]

1. Argentina	18. Gambia	36. Northern Ireland
2. Armenia	19. Georgia*	37. Orissa (India)
3. Azerbaijan	20. Germany	38. Palestine
4. Bolivia	21. Ghana	39. Poland
5. Bulgaria	22. Greece*	40. Romania
6. Burkina Faso	23. Guatemala	41. Russia*
7. Chile*	24. Honduras	42. Scotland
8. China	25. Hong Kong (VR China)	43. Serbia
9. Costa Rica	26. Indonesia	44. Sierra Leone
10. Croatia	27. Italy	45. Slovenia
11. southern part of Cyprus	28. Jamaica	46. South Korea
12. northern part of Cyprus	29. Lebanon	47. Taiwan*
13. Czech Republic	30. Macedonia	48. Togo*
14. East Timor	31. Mauritius	49. Turkey
15. Ecuador	32. Mongolia	50. Uganda
16. Egypt	33. Montenegro*	51. Ukraine
17. Fiji	34. Nepal	52. Uruguay
	35. Nigeria	53. Vietnam*
		54. Wales*

* Represents the nine countries implementing the CSI-SAT

[7] This list encompasses independent countries as well as other territories in which the CSI has been or is being conducted as of March 2006.

In the current implementation phase (2003-06), CIVICUS and its country partners are implementing the project with either the full CSI or the shortened version in the about 50 countries (table I.1.1). The CSI-SAT may serve as preparation for a full CSI implementation, but it can also be seen as a complete assessment in itself. It includes several components of the full CSI, including: 1) generation of an overall report and 2) an assessment of civil society based on existing data through a group process.

2. CSI-SAT IN VIETNAM

2.1 Initiating the Project

CIVICUS has been in contact with various institutions in Vietnam for a couple of years, investigating possibilities for a study in Vietnam, but new ideas like civil society could not be widely discussed until recently. In early 2005, a contact between UNDP and CIVICUS was renewed and the two organisations agreed to explore the idea of initiating a CSI-SAT-based study in Vietnam. UNDP, SNV (Netherlands Development Organization, a Dutch INGO) and the Vietnam Union for Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA), an umbrella organisation for several hundred scientific organisations and VNGOs, began a dialogue about implementing the project. The Vietnam Institute of Development Studies (VIDS), a research NGO under the VUSTA umbrella, was interested and willing to take on the task and the project was launched in April 2005.

2.2 Special Challenges for the CSI-SAT

A number of special challenges to implementing the CSI project in Vietnam should be mentioned at the outset. First, the lack of familiarity with the concept of civil society in Vietnam gives the exercise a more exploratory character than in many other countries. This exercise is the first of its kind in Vietnam and can be seen as the fist step in identifying civil society in Vietnam.

Second, the rural character of the society, with 70% of the population living in the countryside, makes rural conditions and organisations just as important as urban ones. Rural areas are important for the Vietnam study and are a playground for new civic organisations. Grassroots organisations in rural areas, even those under the auspices of the State or Party's mass organisations, have to be taken into consideration as well. They cannot be separated from civil society or the state sphere, as their activities are interrelated with both.

Third, due to the segmented character of civil society, the project has to some extent the character of a learning process on how to define civil society itself. The mapping began with the broadest possible approach, including: mass organisations, professional associations, new civic organisations, development NGOS and community based NGOs. Mass organisations (Women's Union, General Federation of Trade Unions, Youth Union, Veterans Union and Farmers' Union) have a broad base of organisations in the communities and are linked to the Party at the central level, but play a semi-independent role in the localities and considerable activity is carried out through these organisations at the grassroots level. Professional associations are also established throughout most of the country, but are in general more city-oriented than mass organisations and have a smaller membership base. New civic organisations and development NGOs are mainly based in the cities, but often implement projects in the rural areas. Finally, new community-based organisations (CBOs) are currently developing as informal groups primarily located in rural areas.

Fourth, there are large variations within the country, notably between the North and South (particularly Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City), which have significantly different histories. Likewise, there are important differences between the lowlands and the highlands, the latter of which were originally inhabited by ethnic minorities. Civic organisations are few in the highlands, though some (but not all) of the ethnic minorities have developed their own civic organisations.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that organisations are unequally distributed across the country and work and function differently from place to place, often depending on the local leadership.

Besides the development-oriented groups, civil society embraces many different types of organisations, both formal and informal in character, such as education, sports or religious organisations. In this initial study of civil society in Vietnam, the broad array of CSOs are merely touched on and the research was limited to analysing only some of the key ones, as the secondary sources on the others are limited and scattered, and analysis of them would require more in-depth research.

3. PROJECT APPROACH

The CSI-SAT uses a comprehensive project implementation approach and a structured framework to collect data on the state of civil society at the national level. At the core of the CSI lies a broad and encompassing definition of civil society, as well as detailed suggestions for the overall project implementation process. To assess the state of civil society in a given country, the CSI examines four key dimensions of civil society: its structure, its external environment, its values and its impact on society at large. Each of these four dimensions is composed of a set of subdimensions, each of which in turn comprises a set of individual indicators. These indicators form the basis for the CSI-SAT data collection process. The indicators also inform the assessment exercise undertaken by a Stakeholder Assessment Group (SAG), whose members score the 74 indicators as part of a pre-developed questionnaire, when an initial report was outlined by the research team and the National Implementation Team. The CSI-SAT project approach, conceptual framework and research and assessment methodology are described in more detail in the remainder of this section.[8]

3.1 Conceptual Framework

3.1.1. How to define civil society?

The concept of civil society is obviously at the heart of the CIVICUS CSI conceptual framework. CIVICUS defines civil society as: *"the arena between the family, state and the market, where people associate to advance common interests*" (CIVICUS 2005). This definition has a number of interesting features that differentiate it from most other concepts of civil society. First, it aims to go beyond the usual focus on formal and institutionalised CSOs and takes account of informal coalitions and groups. Second, civil society is seen as an "arena", a space where people come together and seek to influence the larger society. Moreover, it is recognised that the boundaries between civil society, the market, the state and family are "fuzzy". This is important in countries with dominating state structures and even more so when state and civil society are entangled – as is the case in several Asian countries, but also in countries that have developed under social-democratic governance, such as the Nordic countries. Third, the CSI concept defines "membership" in civil society according to "functional" rather than organisational "form". For example, a firm can

[8] For a detailed description of the CSI approach, see Heinrich (2004).

engage in profit-making activities, but it can also undertake philanthropic activities. In the Vietnamese context, this approach is useful to distinguish between, on the one hand, the role of mass organisations in implementing Party policies and, on the other hand, their grassroots activities, through which people support each other in terms of both livelihood and culture. Finally, the openness of the CIVICUS definition leaves room for local variations. It focuses on what civil society is *not*, rather than what it *is*, making it less Western-centric than most other definitions and less confrontational than some definitions in terms of the relationship between civil society and the state. With this approach, local constituencies are responsible for determining a stricter definition based on local conditions. In Vietnam, the State is more important for CSOs than in many other countries. The boundaries between civil society and the state are certainly not clear, and civil society's boundaries with family and the market are also blurred or fuzzy. Nevertheless, there is still room for movement between the three major institutions –state, family and market. Identifying this room was a challenge for the CSI-SAT project in Vietnam.

3.1.2. How to conceptualise the state of civil society?

To assess the state of civil society, the CSI methodology examines civil society along four main dimensions, which have very distinct perspectives, but which also have overlapping features. The dimensions are as follows:

- The ***structure*** of and within civil society (e.g. number of members, extent of giving and volunteering, number and features of umbrella organisations, quality of civil society infrastructure and of human and financial resources);
- The external ***environment*** in which civil society operates (e.g. the legislative, political, cultural and economic context and the relationship between civil society and the state and between civil society and the private sector);
- The ***values*** practiced and promoted by the civil society arena (e.g. democracy, tolerance, protection of the environment) and
- The ***impact*** of civil society actors (e.g. affecting public policy, empowering people, meeting societal needs).

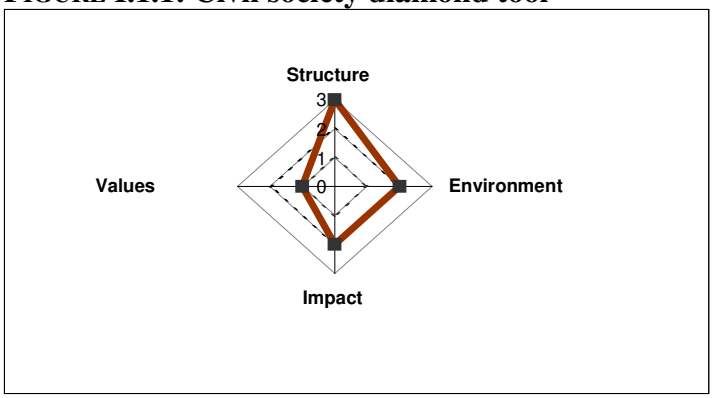
Each of the four *dimensions* is divided into a set of *subdimensions*, which are supported by a total of 74 *indicators*.[9] These indicators are at the heart of the CSI and form the basis of the data presented in this report. The indicators, – subdimensions – dimensions framework underpinned the entire CSI-SAT process, from collecting the data, to writing the research report, to the SAG's assessing Vietnamese civil society by scoring the indicators. The same framework is also used to structure the main part of this report.

To visually present the scores of the four main dimensions, the CSI makes use of the Civil Society Diamond tool (see figure I.1.1).[10] The Civil Society Diamond graph, with its four axes, visually summarises the strengths and weaknesses of a given civil society. The diagram is the result of the individual indicator scores aggregated into subdimension and then dimension scores. As it captures the essence of the status of civil society across its key dimensions, the Civil Society Diamond can provide a useful starting point for interpretations and discussions of how civil society looks like in a given country. As the Diamond does not aggregate the dimension scores into a single score, it cannot, and should not, be used to rank countries. Such an approach was deemed inappropriate for a

[9] See Annex 6 for the full matrix and indicators.
[10] The Civil Society Diamond was developed for CIVICUS by Helmut Anheier (Anheier 2004).

civil society assessment, with so many multi-faceted dimensions, contributing factors and actors. The Diamond also depicts civil society at a certain point in time and therefore lacks a dynamic perspective. However, if applied iteratively, it can be used to chart the development of civil society over time, as well as to compare the state of civil societies across countries (Anheier 2004). Section II presents a broader and more dynamic picture of the changes in Vietnamese society and the context of Vietnamese civil society.

FIGURE I.1.1: Civil society diamond tool



3.2 Project Methodology

This sub-section describes the methods used to collect and aggregate the various data used by the CSI-SAT (shortened methodology) project in Vietnam. It provides a tool and a methodology to identify, discuss and analyse civil society in an action-oriented and participatory way, which was found appropriate to implement in Vietnam, where there is an on-going search to understand the concept of civil society.

One of the most disputed issues is how to analyse the role of mass organisations vis-à-vis civil society, as they have by far the largest memberships of any kind of organisation, but are also closely entangled with the State and Party. Moreover, the Stakeholder Assessment Group (SAG) – the core of the CSI-SAT project in Vietnam – had very different opinions regarding civil society. Quite surprisingly, the major disagreements did not reflect solely political disagreements, as might be expected. The viewpoints of members from the centre of governance and from large organisations differed from those of members with experiences at the grassroots level. From the political and administrative authority, legislative control and political leadership are seen as major barriers to the development of civil society. In contrast, the grassroots organisations and people working in the rural communities (or in local areas within the cities), see the central control as much weaker and the space for independent groups as considerably larger. For the mass organisations, the central-local dichotomy is important; many of the mass organisations' grassroots clubs work with substantial autonomy, while the administration higher up in the system often serves as a career ladder, tending to make the organisations function more bureaucratically and follow the policy of the State and Party.

Of course, the SAG also included different viewpoints regarding the appropriateness of applying the civil society concept to the Vietnamese context, with some members arguing that the Communist Party and the mass organisations represent the genuine interest of the workers and farmers and that therefore there is little need for other organisations. The other extreme said that new NGO-like, city-based organisations constitute the core of civil society, representing a new trend in a society

searching for a larger space in which to operate. Some would see the greatest potential in the expansion of informal urban and rural organisations and the de facto room to manoeuvre available to them. Nonetheless, under the influence of globalisation, the Party is undertaking reforms and is opening up to the concept of civic organisations as a means to tackle the increasing social and environmental problems being generated alongside rapid economic development and social transformation. The need for support from the international community is broadly accepted and encouraged by the Party. However, the philosophical and conceptual issues arising from these changes have not yet been resolved.

In some respects, the CSI-SAT approach does not suit the structures and conditions of Vietnamese society, and Vietnamese stakeholders' perceptions of society differ substantially from the CSI approach.[11] The basic issue is that no accepted concept of civil society, or what its existence might imply, exists and many people think that a civil society might be a threat to society. Certain issues raised by the methodology are considered politically "sensitive" and difficult to discuss. Some Western sources recommended by the methodology are not considered objective and accordingly are not acceptable in Vietnam. Some SAG members felt that space was needed to more deeply analyse the differences in thinking between Vietnam and foreign countries, such as in the case of human rights. However, such a space was not available during the civil society mapping exercise.

On the other hand, the methodology helps bring to light a number of strengths, weaknesses and new aspects of civil society that have not been previously discussed in Vietnam and demonstrates that the time is ripe for further investigations. The CSI-SAT tool includes an approach and a methodology that have been applied in many countries. Its major advantage is that it provides space for local constituencies to determine who belongs to civil society, based on the society's own experiences and helps to encourage further discussion.

3.2.1 Organisation of the project

The project was organised by a National Project Coordinator from VIDS, supported by an International Civil Society Expert, constituting the National Implementation Team (NIT). A group of National Civil Society Experts (four senior experts and three junior experts), with specialisations in various fields aligned with the four dimensions of the CSI methodology, worked in pairs to outline background material on each of the four dimensions for the SAG report.[12] Together with the NIT, this was the Project Team.

3.2.2 The role of the SAG

The SAG played a core role in the project. According to the CSI-SAT methodology, the SAG shall be composed of eight members from various parts of civil society, plus four members from institutions outside of civil society, such as government, business, donor agencies or research institutions. It assessed the conceptual framework and methodology and served as the "jury" with respect to the findings of the Project Team. Members of the Vietnamese SAG included representatives from different parts of the country, although the majority were based in Hanoi.[13] The first SAG meeting was arranged with the Project Team in the early phase of the project (May 2005) to identify the main issues of concern for the analysis of Vietnamese civil society. The CSI-SAT approach and methodology were presented and the SAG discussed pertinent problems and

[11] The concept of civil society in Vietnam is discussed further in section II.5. For other references see Salemink 2006 and Hannah 2005.

[12] The exception to this pairing was the environment dimension which was outlined by one expert.

[13] For a list of SAG members see Annex 1.

made recommendations to the Project Team. As there was no unanimously accepted concept of civil society, the SAG agreed to use the broad definition suggested by CIVICUS. Two mapping exercises were carried out during the meeting: first, to map the important social forces in society at large and, second, to identify the major forces within civil society. With respect to the difficult issue of how to classify the six major mass organisations, it was agreed that in spite of their close connection with the State and Party, they should be seen as part of civil society due to their organisation into semi-independent groups at the grassroots level. During the following months, sub-reports were prepared for each dimension by the National Civil Society Experts, which were then used for input into the SAG report outlined by the NIT. The SAG received the first report (August 2005), which presented the mapping and identified the 74 indicators under the four dimensions. The members of the SAG assessed each indicator, assigned it a score according to the methodology and returned their scorings to the NIT for analysis. Each indicator has four possible scores (numbered from 0 to 3).

At the second SAG meeting (September 2005), which took place four months after the first one, the SAG report was discussed, as were the SAG's aggregated scores. The scores were calculated and the four-dimensional civil society diamond for Vietnam was presented. The aggregated scoring revealed a quite optimistic picture of Vietnamese civil society. A number of issues were discussed regarding the most contentious indicators and some of the indicators were rescored in light of the discussions. These first discussions did not change the diamond substantially. When the draft report, reflecting more documented research, combined with the scores of the SAG, was outlined, the review by CIVCUS staff pointed to a number of inconsistencies between the text and scorings. It was decided to call for a final meeting where the SAG could see the final draft country report and reconsider some of the scores. It was also clear that the SAG members scored the indicators very differently on the basis of a broad range of opinions, which are obscured in the aggregated scoring. The final scoring exercise succeeded in achieving a somewhat more unified opinion than the first scoring and the diamond better reflects the real issues in the various dimensions. The discussions of the SAG's views are included below, whenever possible, in the analysis presented in Section III. The scoring matrix and the full scoring are included in Annex 6 and 7.

3.3 Data Sources

Globally, there has been an abundance of literature published on civil society in recent years. However, there is no clear analytical framework with which to organise and systematise this information into a comprehensive picture on the state of civil society at the country level.

The CSI-SAT report from Vietnam uses a combination of international and national sources. By and large, the sources recommended by CIVICUS were consulted to ensure a comparative perspective. They include multinational surveys and rankings of a number of issues, which are useful for comparison, but are not always very transparent in terms of their methodologies. These include information from World Value Surveys (WVSs), Freedom House publications and indicators, Transparency International and publications from human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Even if these types of sources might be useful for comparing countries, they do not always provide thorough analyses. From a Vietnamese perspective, such sources are not considered objective and are believed to be based on false evidence or as representing subversive foreign forces. For other comparative information, the UNDP's Human Development Reports, the World Bank's governance indicators and numerous other reports were consulted.

These international sources were combined with Vietnamese sources, such as official reports, statistical data and information from the government, various organisations, donor reports and assessments and reports from INGOs. Insufficient information exists on a number of issues related to the various types of CSOs, whereas reports on social and economic issues are quite abundant. Media analyses and opinion polls are generally unavailable, even if the media are rich in information about specific issues.

A third category of sources includes scholarly books and articles about civil society in Vietnam and Asia, and other literature on civil society in general. Foreign scholars have discussed the emerging civil society for more than a decade. Specifically in the case of Vietnam, the literature has multiplied over the last few years, although it is still in its infancy. A few analyses were used more frequently in the preparation of this report and deserve to be specially mentioned. One large sociological survey of civic organisations in Vietnam was carried out by Dr. Jörg Wischermann, Humboldt University in Berlin, together with Prof. Nguyen Quang Vinh and Dr. Bui The Cuong from the Institutes of Sociology under the Academy of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi respectively. Dr. Bach Tan Sinh from NISTPASS is another Vietnamese scholar who has written extensively about civil society, usually for an international audience and he also contributed to the background studies for the CSI study. The project commissioned a number of Vietnamese scholars and government representatives in charge of policy and legislation related to civic organisations to write papers on Vietnamese civil society, which provided other important sources of information.

Finally, the World Values Survey (WVS) should be mentioned, as it is frequently referred to in the report. Vietnam was included in the WVS for the first time in 2001. The survey is based on a common methodology and questionnaire in all countries and it was the first survey in Vietnam. The WVS is based on a statistically random selection of interviewees representing the whole country. The Institute of Human Studies in Hanoi, headed by Prof. Pham Minh Hac, was the national coordinator of the survey. In general, CIVICUS finds the WVS to be one of the best sources of quantitative opinion data on issues related to organisational membership, voluntarism, trust and spiritedness. However, in a number of cases, the SAG did not fully agree with the outcomes of the WVS in Vietnam. It should be noted that this was the first survey of its kind in Vietnam and that there might be cultural biases preventing the interviewees from giving fully objective answers. Indeed, this problem is to some extent acknowledged by the authors involved in the Survey (Dalton and Ong 2003). Despite these obstacles, however, the WVS has a number of interesting findings and cannot be fully replaced by other sources; accordingly, it will be referred in several indicators, when recommended by CIVICUS. Whenever possible, other sources are also utilised or, in some cases, WVS data is complemented by a review of the discussion that took place in the SAG.

3.4 Project Output

It must be emphasised that CSI studies are not initiated as strictly academic investigations, but also as participatory stakeholder assessments. The processes and discussions in the SAG, together with the NIT, are an important component in the final report. A major goal is to present a knowledge-based assessment by stakeholders on the state of civil society to enable further discussion and possible action. Finally, the report aims to encourage discussions regarding insiders' versus outsiders' views on the present state of civil society in Vietnam, presented in the four dimensions.

The report will be published in both Vietnamese and English for circulation in both Vietnam and abroad. Seminars, conferences, papers and articles will be published based on the report.

II CIVIL SOCIETY IN VIETNAM

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Vietnamese historians and scholars emphasise the democratic traditions of Vietnam's village communities (Pham Bich Son 1997; Pham Van Bich 1999; Le Bach Duong et al 2002; Dau Hoan Do 1999). Due to the country's history of frequent foreign invasions, rulers were part of the suppressed population and therefore did not attempt to destroy the democratic village traditions. (Kleinen 1999; Grossheim 1997, 2004). Central powers, particularly foreign rulers, often feared a strong power base in the villages and tried to split people, but the leaders in Vietnam had to use villages as their basis for power under foreign occupations, which to some extent supported the continuation of democratic village traditions.

The August revolution of 1945 saw the Communist Party allied with many popular organisations in the Viet Minh front, which took power in Hanoi and continued the resistance against French colonialism until 1954. Particularly after the 1954 Geneva Agreements and the internationally recognised independence, socialist reform got underway in North Vietnam, including the introduction of a centrally planned economy and the establishment of agricultural cooperatives in rural areas and state-owned companies in the manufacturing and commercial sectors. Civil society was integrated into the Party-State. In the South, socialist reform started after the end of the American War and reunification of the country in 1976. As in the North, civil society was transformed in the South into a number of mass organisations (Women's Union, trade unions (General Federation of Labour), Youth Union and Farmers' Association), in addition to various professional and cultural organisations that served to support the ruling Party.

Towards the end of the 1970s, Vietnam faced severe economic and political difficulties and in some areas peasants started to cultivate private plots of land to face the food shortage (Ben Kerkvliet 2005). The *doi moi* reforms, which endorsed the beginnings of a transformation towards a market economy, were officially approved in 1986 and are a milestone in Vietnamese history. The reforms were deepened towards the end of the 1980s and the collapse of the regimes of the Eastern European bloc put pressure on Vietnam to hasten its reform and seek out new international allies. The economy thus began to open up near the end of the 1980s, beginning with reforms of the cooperative sector. The government encouraged individual household economies besides the cooperative sector, thereby opening the economy for private and foreign investments, reforming the country's economic and financial structure and, in the early 1990s, increasing its cooperation with foreign countries. During this period, civil society began to grow again. The reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the USA in 1994 also encouraged many other Western countries to cooperate with Vietnam and the donor community and foreign companies became more active in the country.

The 1990s saw a virtual boom in the Vietnamese economy – in spite of starting at a very low level. Simultaneously, a large legislative reform project took form, particularly once the new constitution of 1992 approved the new path for reform, which is usually described as "a market economy with socialist orientation". Vietnam embarked on the road towards integration into the global world, with increased emphasis on market forces, legal rules and regulations, poverty reduction and reform of the administrative system.

With the quickly changing economic (and to some extent political) conditions in Vietnam, since the introduction of the *doi moi* reforms in the mid-1980s and particularly during the last decade, social structures have changed considerably and the space for civic organisations has increased tremendously. Previously, they barely existed at all, apart from the mass organisations. The number of civic organisations – generally called Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in this study – has multiplied many times since 1990. However, the government has only in recent years begun to adapt its laws and policies to the changing realities. The legal framework for organisations was promulgated by a decree from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) in 2003, replacing a decree from 1957. The Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) of 2002, a document formulated by the government in close cooperation with the large international donor community, was one of the first official development documents to mention the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local organisations.[14] As of 2005, the CPRGS is being integrated into the government's upcoming five-year socio-economic plan, to be endorsed at the 2006 Party congress. For the first time, the government will mention the role of NGOs as an integrated part of the core development plan for the country.

The government and Party are engaged in discussions to define the nature and role of civil society. Currently, the leading slogan is, "Party leadership, State management and people's self-mastery" (Đảng lãnh đạo, Nhà nước quản lý, Nhân dân làm chủ), and the "people" is seen as an entity to be led by the Party (Nguyen Vi Khai 2005).[15] With today's changing realities, "civic organisations" (tổ chức xã hội) is the usual concept used to discuss organisational life. Collectively, they constitute a "civil society" (Bui The Cuong 2005a). However, they are increasingly being called "NGOs" (tổ chức phi chính phủ), a translation of the foreign term (Nguyen Vi Khai 2005). A broader understanding of civil society is not yet fully part of mainstream political thinking. However, new ideas are being formulated about civil society and its organisations are increasingly perceived as equal partners (rather than just passive followers) of the State. NGOs are usually conceived as non-profit organisations committed to the common cause of national development (Nguyen Vi Khai 2005).[16]

2. THE REVIVAL AND EXPANSION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Prior to 1986, mass organisations (usually called "socio-political organisations" in Vietnam) were the main popular organisations. These included VGCL – the trade unions, the Women's Union, the Farmers' Association and the Youth Union, all of which were established in the 1930s in close coordination with the Party under the umbrella of the Fatherland Front. In the early 1980s, three professional unions were established to bring together people with similar professional interests in science, culture and solidarity. These were the Vietnam Union for Science and Technology Association (VUSTA); Vietnam Writers and Artists Association (VWAA) and the Vietnam Union for Peace, Solidarity and Friendship Association (VUPSFO – later called VUFO – Vietnam Union for Friendship Organisations). In the early 1990s, the social opening for different types of economic activity also granted more space for civic organisations and a revival of many traditional and religious customs (Malarney 2002). A broader civil society was appearing and new organisations mushroomed.

[14] This is the Vietnamese version of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), a document to be concluded by developing countries as a condition for receiving loans from the World Bank and the IMF.
[15] Both the English and the Vietnamese term are the officially used terms.
[16] Nguyen Vi Khac is working in the Prime Minister's Research Commission.

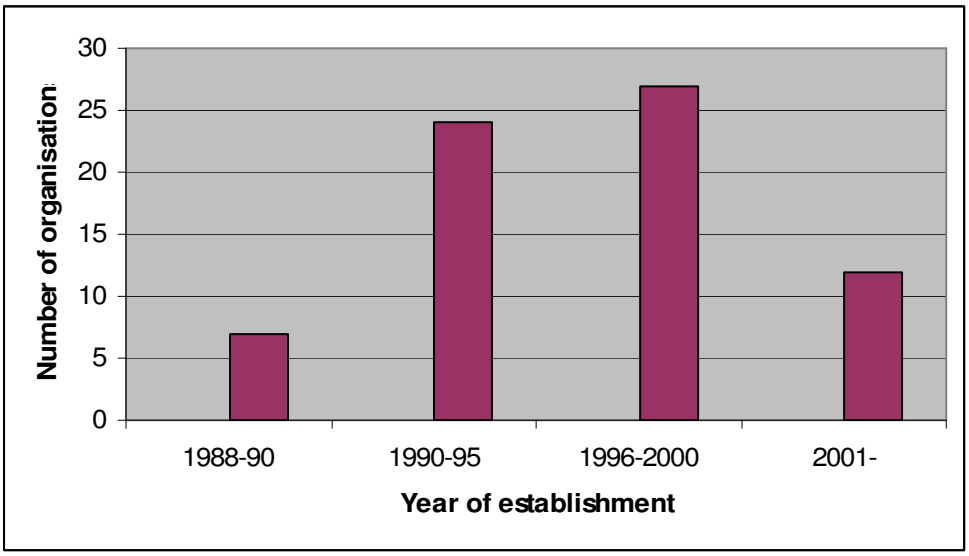
One of the first assessments of civil society was carried out in the mid-1990s. It classified organisational life according to five categories: 1) mass organisations; 2) national socio-professional associations; 3) local associations; 4) science and technology development and research organisations and 5) informal groups (Helvetas 1996). At that time, it was not possible to discuss "NGOs", which were instead called S&T development and research organisations. Nevertheless, aside from group three above, which was merged with group two, this original approach is similar to the categorisation used in the present study.[17] It should be noted, however, that since that time, many of the organisations have changed form and become more independent of the State (see Annex 4 for further details).

Under the heading of Non-Profit Science and Technology Organisations, new types of organisations began to emerge in the 1990s. They have been called "civic organisations", "issue-oriented organisations" and "local" or (more recently) "Vietnamese NGOs" (VNGOs) (Kerkvliet 2003a). Most are focussed on development. Few appeared prior to 1988, but the 1992 decree on the establishment of non-profit science and technology organisations created new possibilities and the majority of them were established between 1992 and 2000. By the early 2000s, the number increased to around 300 (Wischermann 2003) (figure II.2.1).[18] A number of centres with similar purposes were set up under the same legal framework. They are usually smaller and less complex than associations. Local centres could be established in the localities with the approval of the provincial People's Committee, if the person establishing the centre worked at a university, national institute or local association, or was a retired government employee. Prior to 1992, a number of centres were set up with government support, but after 1992, they had to operate more independently (Helvetas 1996).

By the mid-1990s, informal groups also began to appear on the organisational landscape, but they were still limited in scale. At that time, it was possible to establish a grassroots organisation only if it was related to an officially recognised organisation. These local groups were known and accepted by the local authorities, usually sponsored by an official organisation such as the Red Cross (also a member of the Fatherland Front) and included, for example, old age groups, cultural groups, educational groups, teaching groups and groups to help street children or the disabled. In the rural areas, they also included interest groups, such as water-user groups, extension groups or credit groups based on formal or informal credits. They could also be neighbourhood groups, family clans or faith–based groups. Informal groups are self-administered, membership-based and self-financed (Helvetas 1996). Although they are officially recognised, strictly speaking they are still "illegal", because they do not function under a legal framework and it was not considered appropriate for donors or international NGOs to support them until about the year 2000.

[17] About the same time, Mark Sidel wrote a short article about the emergence of a non-profit sector with a more detailed classification, which has been used quite widely since (Sidel 1995; see Annex 5 for reference in Bui The Cuong's paper).
[18] 35/HDTB, Council of Ministers, 28 January 1992.

FIGURE II.2.1. Establishment of VNGOs by year



Source: Vietnamese Non-governmental Organisation Network (2002); Directory of Vietnamese Non-government Organisations (2002). Based on 70 organisations.

3. ESTABLISHING A LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VNGOS AND INFORMAL GROUPS

Since the mid-1990s, a number of decrees, regulations and even laws have been passed to establish a legal framework for informal groups. This goal has not been fully achieved, yet in 2005-06 there were continued attempts to improve the framework, even though the government only tolerates, rather than actively encourages, most such groups.

In keeping with the government's preference for formal cooperation in the agricultural sector, a new Law on Cooperatives was passed in 1996 (and revised in 2001) to promote this type of cooperation among newly reformed and voluntarily established cooperatives. As of 2005, 10,000-15,000 new cooperatives have been established around the country. This represents only a partial success, as can be seen by comparing the number of Rural Collaborative Groups, which are concerned with issues such as irrigation, extension, production and credits. The latter have grown to between 100,000 and 200,000 groups nationally (Seminar on "Legal Framework for Rural Collaborative Groups", Hanoi, 2005).

The rapidly changing situation in Vietnam since the mid-1990s, with the transformation from a centrally planned to a market economy, has created a demand for improved legislation to solve local problems and encourage local initiatives for solving such problems. The first step in this direction was the institution of the Civil Code, which was passed in 1995. However, this still left the status of informal groups unclear. In 1997, the situation worsened in the Thai Binh province, in the Red River Delta region, to the extent that local farmers occupied the provincial headquarters in protest of official corruption, particularly with regard to land issues. The following year, 1998, a new Decree on Grassroots Democracy (Decree 29) was promulgated, ensuring the right of the rural population "to be informed, to discuss, to carry out and to monitor" (*dân biết, dân bàn, dân làm, dân kiểm tra*) decisions of importance for their communities. In 2003, this Decree was improved and the revised version also mentioned the role of mass organisations and professional associations

(Decree 79). The Civil Code was then revised in 2005, in an attempt to improve legislation on local organisations. The latter are now supposed to register with the local People's Committee either as social or socio-professional associations, or as social and charitable funds (Nguyen Ngoc Lam 2005; Chu Tien Quang 2005).

The VNGOs, which have expanded since the mid-1990s, have also called for better legislation. Decree 35, on the establishment of non-profit science and technology organisations, was the most important step for VNGOs. Under it, many groups registered as Science and Technology organisations.[19] In 1998, the Party Politburo passed a series of new regulations on the operation of professional organisations. Then in 1999, the Prime Minister promulgated new legislation regarding social and charitable funds. The Law on Science and Technology was passed by the National Assembly in 2000, and was particularly important for many development and training VNGOs, which register with VUSTA as S&T organisations. However, the most important decision was the Prime Minister's Decree 88 of 2003 concerning the Organisation, Operation and Management of Associations (drafted by MOHA). This included the first attempt to define the legal status of local organisations and also aimed to clarify state management (and control) vis-à-vis associations and NGOs. This document is intended to be used as a trial run for the Law on Associations. The draft Law on Association was under renewed debate since 2005, to replace the Law from 1957. It is due to be presented to the National Assembly in 2006 after more than a decade's discussion (Nguyen Ngoc Lam 2003).[20]

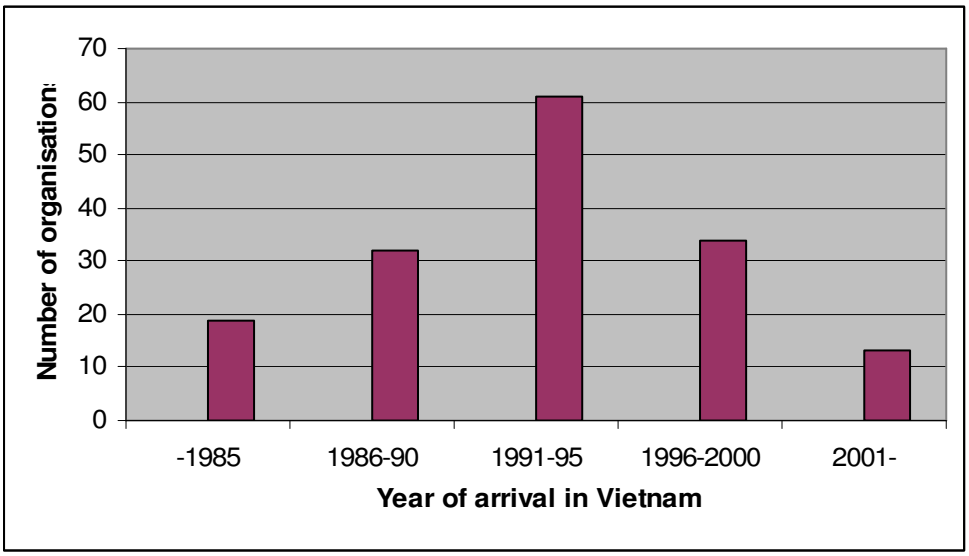
4. THE APPEARANCE OF INTERNATIONAL NGOS

A particular feature of Vietnam's present development path is that growth and successful poverty reduction has taken place with significant help from international donors and organisations. Vietnam has a spectacular record on poverty reduction. In 1992, 58% of the population lived under the international poverty line, which came down to 29% in 2002 and 19% in 2004 (World Bank 2005b).

Since the late-1990s, the level of foreign investment and multilateral and bilateral pledges has amounted annually to more than 3 billion USD. Among the donors are INGOs, which have contributed 80 to 85 million USD annually to development since the end of the 1990s, with the sum tending upwards each year (UNDP 2002; Payne 2004). Originally, they mainly supported humanitarian activities, but following the socio-political changes in Vietnam and particularly since the end of the 1990s, they increasingly provide support to civil society and CSOs. For development activities at the commune and village level, the Women's Union is one of the main partners for many INGOs, though other organisations are increasingly receiving support as well. The number of INGOs operating in Vietnam increased from around 30 in the beginning of the 1990s to 400 by the end of the 1990s and by mid-2000s there were approximately 540 (INGO directory, various years). They began operating in Vietnam earlier than the VNGOs and have acquired considerable experience there (figure II.4.1). The People's Aid Coordination Committee (PACCOM) was established in 1989 under the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations (VUFO) to coordinate INGO activities.

[19] Decree 35/HDBT, 28 January 1992, Council of Ministers: On the establishment of non-profit Science and Technology organisations.
[20] For a complete list of relevant legal documents related to organisations, see Annex 3.

FIGURE II.4.1: Arrival of INGOs in Vietnam by Year



Source: INGO Directory, 2004-05. Information from 159 INGOs, primarily older organisations. This table does not fully reflect the number of newly established organisations.

In this report, INGOs are not considered part of civil society in Vietnam, as they are foreign entities without a membership base in Vietnam. However, INGOs are increasingly staffed by Vietnamese nationals, even at the director level. Two new tendencies appeared recently. Some INGOs, such as Oxfam and Save the Children, are creating larger consortiums, while others are in a process of becoming Vietnamese NGOs either in whole or in part, as are CIDSE and ActionAid. In this way, the distinction between INGOs and VNGOs is becoming more and more blurred.

From a historical perspective, INGOs are important because they were able to gain the confidence of the authorities by cooperating with Vietnam's government institutions. They have never been very critical of government policy in Vietnam, partly due to the legacy of the American war and they have also served to introduce new approaches and methodologies for local projects. INGOs support new initiatives through local organisations and have fostered the infant NGO sector in Vietnam, within the given regulatory limitations. A number of analysts pointed to the fact that INGOs occupy the space which should be used by VNGOs (Salemink 2006) - or at least occupy the space that in other countries is occupied by local NGOs. However, this report does not find any evidence to support this conclusion (Sabharval and Tran Thi Thien Huong 2005). INGOs are active in all 62 of the country's provinces and only a few remote provinces have fewer than five INGO-supported projects (INGO Directory 2004-05).

5. CIVIL SOCIETY IN VIETNAM TODAY

Since the concept of civil society barely exists in Vietnam (and the existence of a clear definition even less so), the ever-more-frequent activities of groups and organisations are usually thought of as reflecting a growth of new organisations rather than a change in society. The term "Civil society" has a negative connotation and until recently was considered a "sensitive" term, which is to say that it could not be discussed very openly. A major reason for this sensitivity was the role that civil society played at the end of the 1980s in the transitions in Eastern Europe. Instead, researchers, engaged in the field, talk about civic organisations or people's organisations (Bui The Cuong

2005a).[21] The development-oriented civic organisations in Vietnam began to describe themselves as NGOs in the early 2000s, although it is debated whether that label actually applies, given their close connections with the government through personal relations, lack of a popular base and questions about their non-profit orientation (Helvetas 1996; Pedersen 2002; Khanh Tran-Than 2003).

Legal documents, such as the 2003 Decree 88 on Associations, distinguish mass organisations under the Fatherland Front from civic organisations or NGOs. One reason is that mass organisations are considered *political*, whereas other organisations are seen as *social* organisations operating in the humanitarian sphere, with the aim of improving social welfare. Religious organisations are also treated separately. Decree 88 defines associations as:

> "Voluntary organisations of citizens, organisations of Vietnamese of the same professions, the same hobbies, the same gender for the common purposes of gathering and uniting members, regular activities, non-self-seeking, aiming to protect members' legitimate rights and interests, to support one another for efficient activities, contribute to the country's socio-economic development, which are organised and operate according to this Decree and other relevant legal documents." (Decree 88/2003, Official Gazette no. 10, 2003 (quoted in English))

There are two expressions used for civil society, *xã hội công dân* and *xã hội dân sự*. *Xã hội công dân* means "citizens", *Xã hội* means society, công means "public", as opposed to "family" and "private"; *dân* means "people". *Xã hội dân sự* literally translated means "civil society". The problem though is that "civil" is not a very clear term in Vietnam; it indicates what it is *not* (i.e. it is not related to military activities, but it does not say much about what it *is)*. Both expressions are used. However, *xã hội dân sự* is more common, probably because it is a translation of the English term, as has happened in other countries. It can also be argued that civil society is not the same as "citizens", which include all persons legally belonging to a state. As for "NGO", *tổ chức phi chính phủ* means an organisation external to the state. This term was (at least until recently) difficult to use in Vietnam, as the dominant political conception has for a long time associated activities outside the state with anti-state activity or anarchy, rather than as something positive or necessary. Nevertheless, the term is now being generally accepted as an imported term to designate certain types of organisations.

An idiom often mentioned in official Vietnamese publications is *dân giàu, nước mạnh, xã hội công bằng, dân chủ và văn minh* (meaning "wealthy people, strong State, just/equal society, democratic and civilized society").[22] This points to another term, "civilization", which, though it should not be confused with civil society, is an important part of development thinking in Vietnam, with wide-ranging impacts beyond just an official slogan. Civilization is understood as a linear process along which society develops, not only in terms of economic development, but also in terms of cultural development and the development of knowledge and technology. The better a society's education, particularly in terms of the scholarly ability to access and understand modern science and knowledge, the higher cultural level a people has achieved.

[21] Bui The Cuong wrote a paper for this project about various terminologies for civic organisations in Vietnam, which is attached in Annex 5.

[22] This is one of the public slogans in Vietnam. The three first fragments all indicate economic interpretations of rich, strong and equal. Công bằng can be translated literally 'equal' but the connotation can as well be 'just'. Civilized indicate developed, with reforming institutions and living style, and even integration in the global world (author's note).

This notion of development is also embedded in the thinking about charitable giving and the means to escape poverty. Poor and marginalised people should progress to a more civilized level in order to improve their lives using access to education as one of the main means. People in the cities, who have better access to education, knowledge, health and other facilities, are considered more civilized than people in the rural areas. Disadvantaged, sick, and handicapped people should benefit from philanthropic empathy and the financial support, particularly from the State which is considered responsible for people's well-being. In addition, charity of individuals should support the poor and the disadvantaged. Assistance should also extend to ethnic minorities. One of the most difficult issues facing Vietnam today is to help ethnic minorities develop and achieve a higher level of civilization, which should lead to better living standards. Views of development in Vietnam coincide to some extent with Western economic development thinking that increased investments, modern technology and monetary circulation will help improve living standards. On the other hand, particularly with regard to philanthropy, Vietnamese views clash with more egalitarian and culturally sensitive viewpoints (also found in the West), which see all people as "equally good", whether educated or not, and which asserts the right of everyone to live according to one's own wishes, customs and traditions. The philosophy in Vietnam is rather that people fare better because they are educated, industrious, have good connections and - not least - have a lucky fate. These differences between the East and the West have certain bearings on cross-cultural understandings of "civil society" and "civilized society".

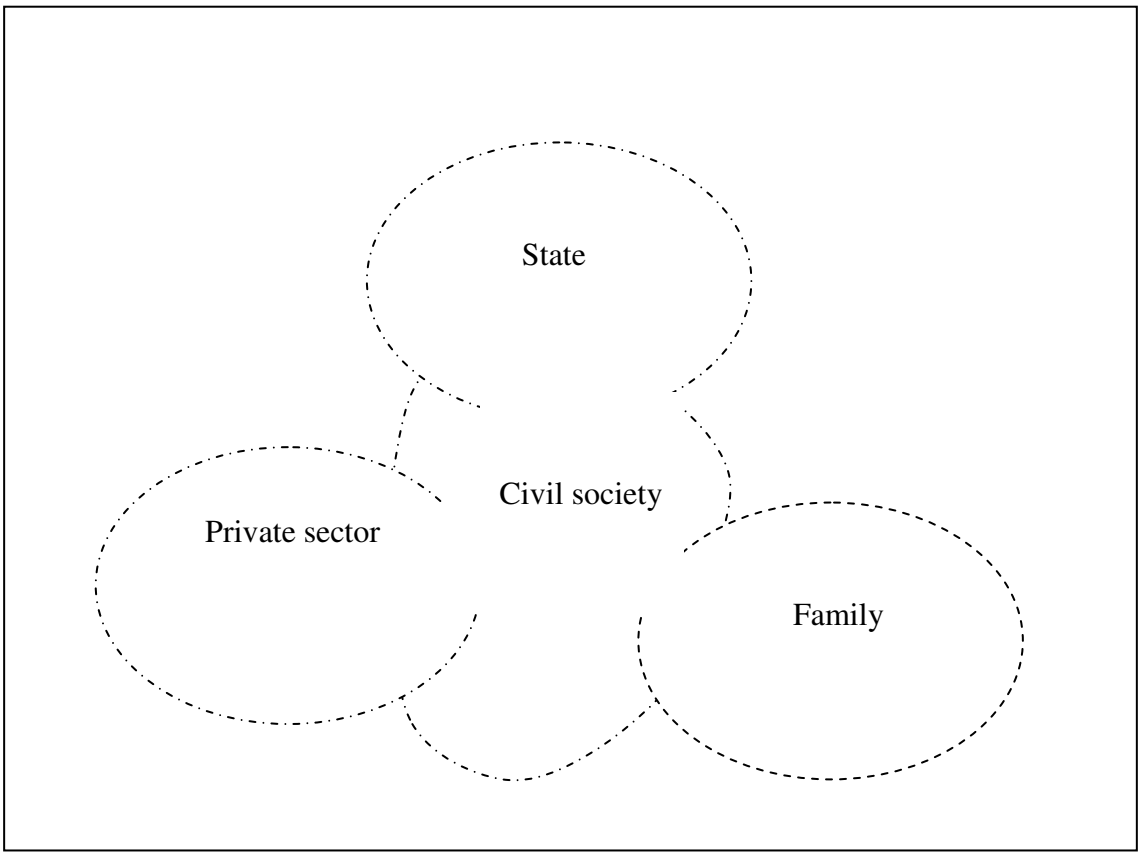
5.1. Applying the CSI Civil Society Concept in Vietnam

The CIVICUS CSI definition of civil society differs in a number of important ways from the most common definitions of civil society in Vietnam. For example, its inclusion of various types of organisations which are not necessarily seen as part of civil society in Vietnam. According to CIVICUS, civil society should be seen more broadly as "the arena outside the family, the state and the market where people associate to advance common interests". An arena that is wider than just the sum of a particular set of organisations and associations.

As this is an open and flexible definition, it can be used creatively in Vietnam. CIVICUS sees civil society as a complex arena where diverse values and interests interact, including both positive and negative forces. It includes all kinds of activities through which people meet, debate, discuss, associate and seek to influence the broader society. CIVICUS sees civil society as a political term rather than as a synonym of the non-profit sector and pays particular attention to power relations within civil society, as well as between civil society actors and the institutions of the state. This leads us to look more at the *functions* of civil society members and organisations and less at the organisational *forms*. Moreover, the boundaries are fuzzy between civil society, the state, the market and families. In some other definitions, civil society is perceived more strictly as activity "outside the state" and as more confrontational vis-à-vis the state (Edwards 2004). In Vietnam, as in other Asian and Northern European countries, the State cannot be wholly separated from civil society easily, since most organisations receive economic contributions from the state. The situation is more accurately described in terms of "fuzzy" boundaries (figure II.5.1).

In spite of the many advantages of the CSI approach to civil society, there are also some limits to the application of the CSI-SAT definition to Vietnam. First, as mentioned above, the state is more entangled with civil society than in most other countries and civil society is segmented into different groups, which have different ways of functioning and affecting society. Second, sources on the situation of civil society are still limited, as important segments of it comprise very informal groups that have not yet been thoroughly researched.

FIGURE II.5.1: Fuzzy boundaries of the civil society arena



The CSI-SAT team in Vietnam discussed the definition of civil society at the first SAG meeting and data, concerning as many of the identified organisations as possible, was collected to map civil society in quantitative terms (table II.5.1). The number of organisations and informal groups in civil society demonstrates that social life is rich, broad and diversified in Vietnam. The mapping shows that the number of people engaged in various activities is from 65 to 70 million within a population of 82 million. Moreover, faith-based organisations have 15 to 20 million supporters. There is no precise figure for the total number of informal groups at the community level, but the qualitative case studies suggest a large number. To take just one example, credit groups are known to involve about 12 million people.

Seven major groupings were identified in order to get a perspective on civil society:

1. Mass organisations under (and including) the Fatherland Front;
2. Umbrella organisations under the Fatherland Front;
3. Professional associations;
4. VNGOs (also called Science & Technology organisations if they register under VUSTA);
5. Informal groups;
6. Faith-based organisations and
7. INGOs.

The shortened categorisation used in the report focuses on four categories (1, 3, 4 and 5). Categories 2 and 3 are merged and category 6 (faith-based organisations) is not significantly dealt with,

because of the lack of information available about them. The term CSOs is used when all of the organisations are mentioned as a category. INGOs are important as facilitators for the CSOs in Vietnam, but are not considered part of civil society.

TABLE II.5.1: CSOs: Relation to the state, level of organisation and membership

Organisation	Type or Relation to the State	Level: Central/ Local	Membership
1. Mass Organisations			
Fatherland Front[x]	Socio-political	All	Umbrella for 29 organisations
Women's Union	Socio-political Fatherland Front	All	12 million (Women's Union)
Farmers' Association	Socio-political Fatherland Front	All	8 million (Farmers' Association)
Trade Union – VGCL	Socio-political	All	4.25 million (VCGL 2003)
HCMC Communist Youth Union	Socio-political Fatherland Front	All	5.1 million (HCM Youth Union)
Veteran's Association	Socio-political Fatherland Front	All	1.92 million (People's Army, 17 March 2005)
2. Umbrella organisations			
Red Cross	Fatherland Front	All	4.85 million members 3.5 million Red Cross youths and pioneers 14,800 Red Cross ward and commune organisations 12,700 schools have Red Cross organisations 1,900 offices and enterprises have Red Cross organisations (Chu Dung 2005)
VUSTA-Union for Science and Technology	Umbrella for Professional Associations and VNGOs Fatherland Front	Mainly cities, but some organisations working also in rural Areas	Central associations: 56 in various disciplines Cities and provinces: 37 local VUSTA associations with 540 membership organisations and 350,000 members. Total 1.15 million members across the country (VUSTA)
Business Associations	Chamber of Commerce, which is under the Fatherland Front	Mainly city-based	200 associations 6,700 members (Stromseth 2003)
VUALL-Union of Arts and Literature	Fatherland Front	Mainly cities	10 central associations and 60 at provincial level (Philanthropy in Vietnam 2001)
Old Age Association	Fatherland Front	Communities – whole country	6.4 million (BTCuong 2005b)
VUFU - Union of Friendship Associations	Fatherland Front	Cities	47 member associations (Philanthropy in Vietnam 2001)
Vietnam Cooperative Alliance	Fatherland Front	All levels, but mainly based in rural areas	300,000 cooperative groups; 17,000 cooperatives. Total: 10.5 million members (TTCuong 2005)
3. Professional Associations, VNGOs (Science & Technology)			

Professional Associations; Professional and Business Organisations (this category overlaps with some of the others)	Ministries, VUSTA and People's Committees	Different levels	320 national and 2,150 local associations (Nguyen Ngoc Lam, MOHA 2005)
Student Unions, e.g. "Summer culture light" in Ho Chi Minh City		Cities	Approx. 400,000 volunteers work in the countryside each summer (Vietnam News 10 July 2005)
4. VNGOS			
VNGOs or Issues-Based Organisations; Funds to support the poor, sick or handicapped (this category overlaps some of the others)	VUSTA, Ministries, Provincial People's Committees	City-based, but many work in rural areas	322 organisations identified in survey in Hanoi and HCMC (Wischermann, NQ Vinh, BTCuong. 2000) 200 social funds (Philanthropy in Vietnam 2001) 800 Science and Technology organisations (Nguyen Ngoc Lam, MOHA 2005)
5. Informal Groups			
Micro-Credits, Credit Cooperatives, Credit and Saving's Groups	Various organisations; Women's and Farmers' Unions; Contributions from abroad; Banks	Rural areas	About 100,000 credit cooperatives (Vietnam News 8 July 2005-09-19) 11.6 million borrowers from all credit schemes (Danida 2005)
Informal groupings (agricultural activities, neighbourhood, dancing, sports, festivals and celebrations)	Not-registered, but known to the administration	Locality-based all across the country	Millions – no data
6. Faith-Based Organisations			
Faith-Based Organisations	Fatherland Front Some not registered	All, but mainly in provinces and localities	Buddhist: approx. 9 million Catholic: 6-8 million Hoa Hao: 1.5 million Cao Dai: 1.1 million Protestant: 600,000 (Data on Population 2005)
6. International NGOs			
INGOs through PACCOM	Funded from abroad; providing support to government and CSOs		530 INGOs operating in Vietnam; 150 have offices (INGO Directory 2003-05, Payne 2004)

Note: .See Annex 3.

The list reveals a considerable number of organisations with large memberships (mass organisations, cooperatives, credit groups and faith-based organisations) and other types of organisations that are not large in terms of membership, but that might have a significant voice in other ways (professional associations, business associations and VNGOs). It is impossible to provide precise information on how many people such organisations reach through their activities.

6. MAPPING CIVIL SOCIETY IN VIETNAM

6.1 Analysis of Social Forces

The project began, in line with the CSI-SAT methodology, with the selection of a SAG group to represent Vietnamese society, including civil society, government and researchers.[23] At the first SAG meeting, held over two sessions, the members identified the major forces: 1) in society at large and 2) within civil society.

The table below (table II.6.1) lists the major social forces identified by SAG members, their sector (state, market or civil society) and their level of influence in society, as ranked by the SAG.

TABLE II.6.1: Social forces in Vietnam according to level of influence (from 2 to 5) and sector (state, market or civil society)

Most Influential (5)	Influential (4)	Somewhat Influential (3)	Least Influential (2)
• Communist Party (State) • Politburo (State)	• Organisational Department (Central Committee of the CPV) (State) • Government (State) • National Assembly (State) • State-owned enterprises (Market) • Foreign Direct Investments (Market) • Local government (State) • Private Sector (Market) • Press, Mass media (CS)	• Fatherland Front (CS) • Court (State) • Army (State) • Security (police) (State) • Ministry of Planning and Investments (State) • Ministry of Trade (State) • Mass Organisations (CS) • Women's Union (CS) • Former high-ranking revolutionaries (CS) • International organisations in Vietnam (CS) • Religious organisations (CS) • Minority groups (CS) • Corruption/Mafia (CS)	• Trade Unions (CS) • VNGOs (CS) • Vietnam War Veterans Association (CS)

The outcome of the exercise reflects a consensus that the Party and its central organs in the country are the most influential force. They are therefore listed in the first column. In the second column the Government and National Assembly are considered important, but so is the market sector, including both state-owned companies and, the more recently arrived, foreign companies, which invest a considerable amount of capital in Vietnam. The private sector is also included more broadly, showing that it has become an important part of daily life in Vietnam. Finally, local authorities and the mass media are also considered important. The third column includes a mixture of state institutions, such as the court, police, military and core ministries; mass organisations and former revolutionary personalities, as well as international organisations, religious organisations and ethnic minority groups. Finally, this third tier also includes clearly negative forces like corruption and the mafia, which are gathered under the heading of "social evils". Among the important but least influential forces (the fourth column) are trade unions, war veterans and VNGOs. SAG members

[23] A list of SAG members can be found in Annex 1.

were surprised, but agreed, on the low ranking of formerly important forces, such as workers and war veterans. Less surprising is the low ranking of VNGOs, which are not largely acknowledged within society. VNGO representatives in the SAG did not dispute this conclusion.

The second round of mapping was aimed at placing the various forces into the different sectors of society: State, market and civil society. Divided into sectors, the importance of the State sector is apparent, with the Party at the top, followed by the government, security and ministries. Interestingly, corruption and the mafia are included in both the State sector and the private sector and are assigned quite high scores by the SAG. In the market sector, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are placed (surprisingly) alongside foreign investment and the private sector, an indication that SOEs are no longer seen only in terms of their connection to the state, but also as a factor in their own right. Under the civil society heading, the media is placed as the most important force. Mass organisations are listed at the second level of importance, together with INGOs, VNGOs, religious organisations and ethnic minorities. Revolutionary personalities are listed under civil society because they have the freedom to make more open and critical speeches and statements than ordinary people. International organisations are also ranked among this group, but it was not finally agreed upon whether this included all international organisations or just INGOs. Corruption and the mafia are also considered a problem for civil society. It is worth noting that ethnic minorities' and religious organisations receive a significant amount of attention, demonstrating the recently increased prominence of these two forces. However, it is also worth mentioning that farmers were not included among the forces mentioned and are considered to have little influence.

The CSI team and the SAG in Vietnam concluded that it is reasonable to include Vietnam's socio-political mass organisations as part of civil society, in spite of their entanglement with the State and the Party. That differs from some of the conventional definitions of CSOs in Western countries, where CSOs are considered distinct from the State and constituting the base for a democratic culture (Diamond 1994; Rueschemeyer et al. 1998; Heng 2004; see discussions in Dalton 2006). Nevertheless, most authors interested in organisational life in Vietnam assert the importance of mass organisations, such as the Women's Union and Farmers' Association (Fforde and Porter 1995; Vorphal 2002; Wischermann 2003; Wischermann and Vinh 2003; Fritzen 2003; Norlund, Tran, Nguyen 2003; Le Bach Duong et al. 2003; Vasavakul 2003; Cuong 2005a; McElwee 2005). They are important organisations in society, have vertical networks that connect the centre with the localities and have established broad networks among people at the community level. Even if at the top level they are close to the Party and State, the grassroots level enjoys a considerable degree of autonomy.[24] Moreover, it is important for the CSI-SAT study in Vietnam to look broadly and inclusively at the arena of civil society, where not only the mass organisations, but virtually all organisations in Vietnam are entangled with the state and each other one way or another. Thus, it must also be emphasised that some CSOs are less entangled with the state than the socio-political organisations, such as Vietnamese NGOs and community-based organisations which developed during the *doi moi* reform period in the 1990s. However, as the report will show, even they are not completely independent of the state.

[24] Many commentators have noted the large discrepancy between the services and level of activity of organisations from one locality to another. There were an equal number of comments to the effect that the Women's Union is much more flexible than the Farmer's Association at the grassroots level.

6.2 Civil Society Mapping

The second session concerned mapping civil society. Following the discussions, a number of forces were agreed upon as being the most important.

The mapping of the social forces of civil society identified the same forces as during the previous societal mapping, but some new forces were also added: the intelligentsia, research institutes and youth. When ranked according to influence, the media were still at the top and the workers were still ranked very low. The picture presented by the SAG shows that many forces are having an impact today that would not have been considered important previously, such as the media, which are more open and critical than before. Intellectuals, who enjoyed a kind of renaissance during the reform period, youth, minorities and religious groups are also taken seriously as forces affecting society. At the same time, the older structures of the mass organisations and the Fatherland Front are still considered very influential. It is noteworthy that the former "core" groups of society – namely farmers and, particularly, workers – are not considered to have much influence (table II.6.2). Business associations are also not very important, according to the SAG.

TABLE II.6.2: Civil society forces according to influence (from 2 to 5)

Most influential	Influential	Somewhat influential	Least influential
(5)	**(4)**	**(3)**	**(2)**
Press, media	Intelligentsia	Minority groups	Workers
	Women's Union	Religious organisations	
	Fatherland Front	INGOs in VN	
		Mass organisation	
		Professional associations	
		Youths	
		Farmers	
		Women	
		Monks and priests	
		Student leagues	
		Universities, institutes	

7. SAG SCORING MEETINGS

The goal of the second SAG meeting in September 2005 was to review and discuss the outcome of the scoring, based on the first draft report, and to review some of the findings. It became clear in the meeting that a major reason for the relatively positive aggregated score is the inclusion of mass organisations as part of civil society. This issue led to lengthy discussions and, with the scoring outcome at hand and the report available, the disagreements were stronger than at the first SAG meeting. It was pointed out that membership in mass organisations is sometimes more formal than real and that donations for volunteer work are not always voluntary either, but are deducted directly from workers' paycheques.

Some SAG members explained that they did not score according to the report's suggestions when they felt that is was incorrect. In other cases, it was not clear to the SAG members which score to assign, because they felt the first report prepared for the SAG was based on fairly superficial quantitative information, without sufficiently deep analysis. Still in other cases, there was not enough evidence – as, for instance, with regard to the financial transparency of CSOs. A common problem was that the jump from one scoring point to the next was sometimes too big. For example, a zero might be too low, while a score of 1 too high. In most cases, SAG members found that the

score of 0 was not appropriate for describing the situation in Vietnam. One other concern that was raised vis-à-vis the methodology was that, although the SAG discussions provided a broad range of feedback from people representing a wide spectrum of society, it was an informal group and did not directly include representatives from the grassroots.

The full country report was prepared after the SAG meeting in September 2005 and consecutively circulated for comments by the Civil Society Experts, UNDP, SNV and CIVICUS. A substantial number of comments were made and the country report was revised several times. Core problems were identified, including the need to improve the documentation and a certain imbalance between the findings in the report and the scoring of the SAG. As the report evolved through the process, it was decided to organise another SAG meeting in December 2005 to discuss the full country report and to eventually adjust the scoring. The adjusted scoring is taken as the final outcome of the discussion and is more moderate than the initial scoring (see Annex 6 for the scoring matrix and Annex 7 for the full scores.)

The analytical section, Section III, presents the final version of the four dimensions, 25 subdimensions and 74 indicators. It also includes the SAG scoring and discussions so as to present the numerous contentious issues, which can also be interpreted as a reflection of the diverse opinions of members of society at large.

III ANALYSIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The CSI-SAT analysis in Vietnam was based on existing sources. It distinguishes four types of civil society organisations: 1) mass organisations, 2) professional associations (both central and local), 3) Vietnamese NGOs and 4) grassroots organisations or community-based organisations. These four groups have different characteristics, which make it difficult to treat them in a unified manner and many informal groups are not treated thoroughly. Furthermore, in some cases, different types of groups are not equally well documented; therefore, it was not always possible to include all of them in each part of the analysis. The media, which the SAG considered of high importance, is not centrally placed in the CSI-SAT methodology and is therefore included mainly in special, dedicated sections.

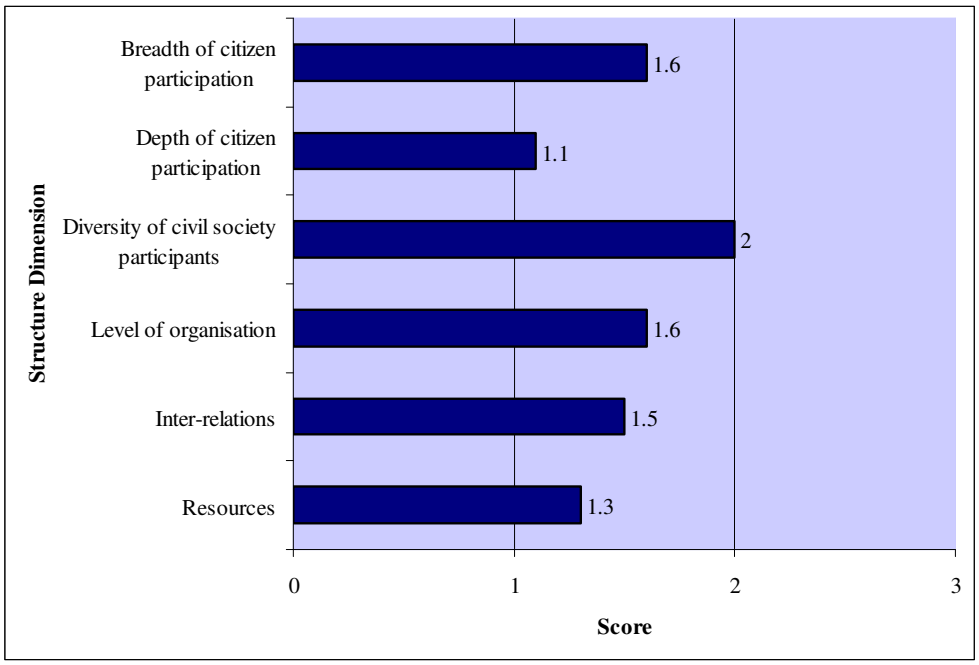
In this section, the main information collected while preparing the report for the SAG is presented, together with accounts of the discussions that took place at the second SAG meeting. The section is structured according to the CSI-SAT format suggested by CIVICUS. The four dimensions are presented consecutively: the *structure* of civil society; the *environment* for civil society; the *values* within civil society and how they are transmitted to the society at large and, finally, the *impact* of civil society's activities on the larger society. To introduce each dimension, a graph provides the aggregated scoring for the corresponding subdimensions and a table lists the scores for the individual indicators.

The sources used follow the CIVICUS guidelines for international data references (which are developed for comparative purposes), complemented by information and data from Vietnam (for more details, see Section I.3.3 on data sources). Whenever these data conflict, the differences are spelled out in the report, as are the contentious issues that arose during the SAG scoring meetings.

1. STRUCTURE

The purpose of this section is to describe and analyse the overall size, strength and vitality of Vietnamese civil society in human, organisational and economic terms. The overall score for the dimension is 1.6 on a scale of 0 to 3, which indicates a civil society of medium size, but on the low end of the medium range. This dimension includes six subdimensions: 1) breadth and extent of people's participation; 2) depth of people's participation, 3) diversity of civil society participants; 4) level of organisation; 5) inter-relations among civil society actors and 6) resources available for civil society. Each subdimension will be analysed in the following sub-sections.

FIGURE III.1.1: Subdimension scores in structure dimension



This subdimension looks at the extent and breadth of various forms of citizen participation in Vietnamese civil society. The SAG scoring is summarised in table III.1.1.

TABLE III.1.1: Indicators assessing the extent of citizen participation

Ref#	Indicators	Score
1.1.1	Non-partisan political action	0
1.1.2	Charitable giving	2
1.1.3	CSO membership	2
1.1.4	Volunteer work	2
1.1.5	Community action	2

1.1.1 *Non-partisan political action.* This indicator concerns the percentage of people involved in non-partisan political action, such as writing a letter to a newspaper, signing a petition or attending a demonstration. Vietnam is a consensus-oriented society and most political and non-partisan activity is expressed non-violently through newspapers or petitions to the government, which have been numerous in recent years. Non-partisan actions are increasing in number, although this may not be the best indicator to measure non-partisan actions in Vietnam.

The *World Values Survey (WVS)* for Vietnam, conducted in 2001, focused on the values of the Vietnamese people and is one of the few nation-wide sources on public opinion. The results, as would be expected, show a low level of participation in political activity, such as demonstrating, occupying buildings or signing petitions. CIVICUS suggests analysing the participation indicator by examining three factors: signing petitions, participating in demonstrations and participating in boycotts. Taken together, these three types of action received a score of just 8%, which indicates a very low rate of participation (figure III.1.2).

TABLE III.1.2: Frequency of non-partisan actions

Type of action	% of people who participated
Signed a petition	5.6%
Joined a demonstration	1.9%
Joined a boycott	0.5%
Joined a strike	0.3%
Other actions such as occupying a building	1%

Source: World Value Survey Vietnam 2001

The responses in the WVS differed according to age and geographic setting. Youth under the age of 29 are, for example, the least active in "signing petitions" and the tendency to sign was a little higher in the South than in the North and centre of Vietnam. "Attending lawful demonstrations" on the contrary had greater appeal in the centre than in the North or South (3.9% in the centre, against 1.4 in the North and 0.9 in the South). "Occupying a building" was more common in the North (1.6%) and centre (1.4%) than in the South (0.3%). People belonging to the middle class and workers are more active than peasants in signing petitions and attending demonstrations, whereas all three groups are equally represented in actions like occupying buildings (1%), according to the WVS in Vietnam. The extent of participation in political actions is fairly limited, but it does occur. Land disputes, for instance, have been increasing in recent years and are one of the causes of demonstrations and occupations of administrative buildings. Worker strikes occur regularly and are increasing, though there are still fewer than 100 strikes annually (VGCL 2004).

On average, the SAG gave this indicator a score of 0.3 on a scale of 0 to 3, which indicates that a "minority" participate in these kinds of activities.

1.1.2 Charitable giving. National data or survey information on the percentage of people regularly donating to charity in Vietnam is not available, but the level is relatively high and on the increase, with numerous collections and campaigns to support people in need. Traditionally, Vietnamese help each other in times of difficulty and are eager to make contributions for emergency relief. There are even stories of street children donating from their shoe polishing earnings to people suffering from floods (Chu Dung 2005). Religious people donate to churches or pagodas and, while part of their donations goes to church or pagoda activities, a portion is also used for charitable activities. Large funds were collected for the victims of the Southeast Asian Tsunami in 2004 and for victims of the flood that destroyed New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (vnnews-l, 12.09.05).

Within the Fatherland Front, an umbrella organisation for 29 large organisations in Vietnam, the Vietnam Red Cross and other mass organisations are the most active in collecting charity funds for movements such as "Day for the Poor", "Fund for the Poor" and the "Open Arms Programme" (Tang The Cuong 2005). There are also many personal initiatives to help poor children and other people with problems. For example, the Lao Dong Newspaper has a daily column on charitable activities.

The SAG found that "a significant proportion of 31-65%" of the population donates to charity, assigning this indicator a score near 2 (1.8).[25] However, SAG members diverged on the issue, with scores ranging from 0 to 2. One issue raised was that charity is not always voluntary. In the state

[25] The quotation is from the formulation in the scoring matrix suggested by CIVICUS.

sector, particularly within the public administration, donations are automatically deducted as "a daily wage" for poor and disadvantaged people. There are also other involuntary donations to charity deducted by the state system. At the same time, many people also donate voluntarily. At the grassroots level, automatic deductions are not possible; collections take place in neighbourhoods, in villages and workplaces. Charitable giving is socially expected and widespread, with substantial amounts collected.

1.1.3 CSO membership. As for the percentage of people who belong to at least one CSO, the *WVS* for Vietnam shows that the density of membership in CSOs is very high in Vietnam. On average, each person is a member of 2.33 organisations, much higher than in other Asian countries, like China (0.39) or Singapore (0.86) (table III.1.2). According to the survey, 73.5% of people belong to at least one organisation. Comparatively speaking, this is a very high share.

The WVS has a very inclusive approach regarding membership. The result shows a high membership rate for almost all types of organisations and groups, including informal groups, about which it is difficult to obtain information from other sources, such as health, education, sports and local community groups (table III.1.2). It also includes "political groups", which in this case mean the Party, but also socio-political organisations/mass organisations.[26]

TABLE III.1.3: Membership in various organisations and social groups in Vietnam, China and Singapore, by percentage.

Group/association/org.	Vietnam	China	Singapore
Development/human rights	1.5	0.4	0.5
Conservation/environment	7.6	1.2	0.9
Peace group	9.2	0.9	0.9
Religious organisation	10.4	3.6	19.8
Trade Union	11.3	6.9	4.3
Professional association	13.3	1.2	4.4
Health group	14.8	2.7	3.6
Youth work	15.4	1.1	8.3
Education/arts/music	17.3	2.2	14.0
Sports/recreation	19.2	3.2	15.1
Local community group	26.2	1.5	2.4
Social welfare	26.5	2.9	7.1
Women's group	28.4	0.9	1.2
Political group/organisation	28.5	8.3	0.4
Other	3.7	--	3.6
Mean membership number	2.33	0.39	0.86

Source: R. Dalton (2006) and World Values Surveys 1999-2002.

There are some striking differences between Vietnam and China and Singapore. The socio-political groups (mass organisations) are probably not included in the China survey, based on the very low percentage listed under women's and political groups. However, membership in local community groups, social welfare groups, professional associations and even trade unions, is strikingly higher in Vietnam than in China or Singapore. The main reasons are the strong tradition in Vietnam of membership in associations and state encouragement of citizen participation in organisations. Furthermore, the results may also be due to the considerable economic and organisational support

[26] The public survey does not detail which groups belong to each category. Party members include 2-3% of the population in Vietnam, which indicates that mass organisations must be included as well, since 28.5% say that they belong to political organisations.

from INGOs and bilateral development organisations, which have also supported community participation and development over the last few years.

When data on organisational membership is assessed quantitatively, including formal membership as in section II.5 (table II.5.1), it can be seen that membership surpasses 65 million. In addition, there are a large number of informal groups at the grassroots level, including education, sports, old age groups, spiritual groups and groups related to agriculture or credit. Moreover, roughly 18 million people belong to various religious or faith-based groups. If mass organisations and informal groups are included, the measure of 2.3 groups per person, as suggested by the WVS, might well be realistic. Of equal importance is the trend, observed during the 1990s, of the establishment of an increasing number of organisations, including mass organisations' grassroots-level clubs, Vietnamese and international NGOs and community-based organisations (see Section II, figures II.2.1 and II.4.1).

Despite the WVS results indicating a very high level of organisational membership, the SAG ranking for this indicator was only moderately positive, with an aggregated score of 2.2, with individual members' scores ranging from 1 to 3. The discussions concerned the quality of membership. Some SAG members pointed out that membership in mass organisations often happens automatically, not voluntarily, particularly within the state sector. At the grassroots level, the situation is different; in general, there is more actual commitment to grassroots organisations (Norlund 2000, Vorphal 2002). In spite of these caveats on the quality of membership and level of organisational activity is high in Vietnam and is encouraged by the Vietnamese state more than in neighbouring countries (Dalton 2006).

1.1.4 Volunteering. This issue concerns the percentage of people who undertook voluntary work during the last year. Traditions of volunteering are widespread in Vietnamese society, but how people participate in and contribute to various organisations depends heavily on the type of organisation. The WVS asks if respondents are currently doing unpaid voluntary work. The majority of CSO activities are accomplished, according to the WVS data, through citizens' voluntary efforts (table III.1.3). The percentage of people who volunteer is calculated at 71.2%.

TABLE III.1.4: Membership and voluntary activity in various social groups in Vietnam

Group/association/org.	Membership, percentage of sample (%)	Voluntary activity, percentage of sample (%)
Development/human rights	1.5	1.3
Conservation/environment	7.6	7.9
Peace group	9.2	6.8
Religious organisation	10.4	9.6
Trade union	11.3	9.8
Professional association	13.3	10.4
Health group	14.8	15.1
Youth work	15.4	13.9
Education/arts/music	17.3	15.8
Sports/recreation	19.2	18.1
Local community group	26.2	25.8
Social welfare	26.5	28.7
Women's group	28.4	24.9
Political group/organisation	28.5	23.8
Other	3.7	-
Mean membership number	2.33	

Source: R. Dalton and Nhu-Ngoc T. Ong (2005); World Values Survey Vietnam 2001.

The SAG was again hesitant to accept the results of the WVS and believed the results were higher than in reality. The core question is how "voluntary" is defined, or how voluntary the "voluntary work" actually is. There was significant disagreement within the SAG on this matter, with scores ranging from 1 to 3. The aggregated score was 2.1, or "51 to 65%". There are different types of voluntarism, including volunteering due to social pressure and volunteering from a purely humanitarian motive. Nevertheless, based on all the available sources, the level of volunteering seems to be quite high.

1.1.5 Community action. Community action is defined quite broadly as participation in community meetings, community events or a collective effort to solve a community problem. No survey of the matter is available, but it is obvious from the organisational membership mapping that a large majority of people take part in some kind of organisational activity (see table II.5.1), even if the level of engagement might differ. People involved, for instance, in the Women's Union or in a trade union usually report that they participate in activities once a month, but the trade union might also arrange sports and cultural events. More informal CSOs may meet more often if they are engaged in a specific task; others might meet less regularly.

Since the introduction of the Grassroots Democracy Decree in 1998, villagers in rural areas are meeting regularly and have the right to be informed of, discuss, carry out and monitor government plans in the localities. It is, however, noteworthy that they are not involved in outlining the plans. Some years have now passed since the decree and community meetings and activities implementing it are taking place in some areas, whereas they are still unheard of in others (Pam McElwee et al. 2005). On the other hand, much "voluntary work" is also requested of villagers to construct roads and other common facilities for the community (Norlund 2003a).

The aggregated SAG score for this indicator was 1.5 on a scale from 0 to 3, with a score of 1 representing "30-50%" and a score of 2 equal to "51 to 65%". Again, it reflected a highly contentious scoring. In this case, the representatives from the central institutions and organisations were conservative in their assessments, while some of the VNGO and mass organisation representatives argued that the majority does in fact take part in community actions.

1.2 Depth of Citizen Participation in Civil Society

This subdimension looks at the extent to which people participate more deeply in civil society through how they contribute money or work. Table III.1.4 summarises the three indicators.

TABLE III.1.5: Indicators assessing depth of citizen participation

Ref#	Indicators	Score
1.2.1	Charitable giving	1
1.2.2	Volunteering	1
1.2.3	CSO membership	2

1.2.1 Charitable giving. This indicator concerns the average percentage of income people who regularly donate give per year. Charitable contributions are part of organisational life in Vietnam and have intensified since the 1990s, along with improved communications through media and improved living standards, although the amounts are still small per capita. Peoples' Committees at the ward and commune level call for contributions to the local social funds for poverty alleviation and hunger eradication, scholarships for poor children and compensation for families that suffered during the revolution. According to a study in a ward in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC 2005),

contributions to poverty alleviation and hunger eradication, scholarships for poor children and support to veterans' families amounted to 32,000 VND/year (2 USD). Furthermore, during emergencies (i.e. natural disasters, floods, fires, funerals), each family contributes an average of 10,000 VND. In 2004, Group 26 in Ward 15 launched three campaigns and the contribution per household amounted to 62,000 Dong. A household dependent on one worker's salary, of about 850,000 Dong a month, giving 62,000 dong a year to charity, contributes a total of 0.6% of their income annually (Chu Dung 2005). Other examples suggest that about 1% of personal income is donated to charity.

The amount of money given per person to charity might not be large, but the contribution is organised in most workplaces and socially expected. Indeed, for a poor county, the level of 1-2% is high. The SAG agreed that in Vietnam there is a low level of "contributions to charity activities of 1-2% of income." Its aggregated score was 1, with complete agreement among the SAG.

1.2.2. Volunteering. There have been no studies of the time devoted to volunteer work in Vietnam, so it is difficult to say how many hours volunteers work. In general, youth organisations send many young people as volunteers into localities to support ethnic communities, such as the "Green Summer" campaign. Students also take part in "Volunteer Saturdays" or "Green Sundays". From 1998 to 2003, 3.5 million students participated in these campaigns (Student Union's Central Executive Board 2002; Vietnam Youth Union, 2002, 2004). Environmental concerns, like rubbish clearing or tree planting are common activities. Recently, the provision of safe urban transport has also become common (Chu Dung 2005). Mass organisations, particularly the trade unions and Women's Unions, send representatives to visit old and sickly persons in their area and spend time solving problems for families, or organising sports and cultural activities. The leaders at various levels are paid a modest amount, but members work without payment (Norlund 2000).

Street committees in the cities carry out unpaid work in their areas. Rural grassroots organisations spend considerable time on activities to support the livelihoods of their communities and households. The elderly will usually arrange festivals and activities in the local pagoda (Kleinen 1999; Vorphal 2002). Religious organisations teach others and help the ill in many communities.

Vietnamese NGOs carry out many programmes, usually with paid staffs; however, 27% in Ho Chi Minh City and 13% in Hanoi work without pay (Wischermann, Bui The Cuong and Nguyen Quang Vinh 2002).

There is a tradition of volunteering in Vietnamese society for almost all aspects of life. The level of volunteering may be higher in the South than in the North, because "social work" is traditionally more widespread there than in other parts of the country. The mass organisations' volunteer work is more organised than that of other organisations. The number of hours of volunteer work per month is estimated by the SAG to be at the low-to-medium level of "2-5 hours per month", with an aggregated score of 0.7 (assessments varied substantially, with scores from 0 to 2).

1.2.3. CSO membership. According to the WVS, the percentage of CSO members belonging to more than one CSO is 61.8 %.

A case study from Ky Tho village in the central province of Ha Tinh illustrates the myriad groups and organisations present in one community, with a mixture of mass organisations, professional associations, informal groups and CBOs. The VNGOs and INGOs are not present in the village, but they give advice and economic support (table III.1.5).

TABLE III.1.6: Groups and membership in Ky Tho commune, Ha Tinh province

Type of groups	Number of groups	Number of members
Savings and credit groups	58	692
Harmonious development groups	24	228
Mutual assistance clubs	6	87
Agricultural youth clubs	6	120
Professional clubs	4	35

Source: Nguyen Din 1999.

In Ky Tho commune, many individuals belong to 2 or 3 of the types of groups listed in table III.1.5, but even more groups exist in the villages. A villager may belong, for instance, to the Youth Union, a mushroom cultivation club and a harmonious development group. The latter type of group helps poor households achieve a better life. Besides the groups mentioned, the Women's Union, Farmers' Association and Youth Union, as well as several other organisations, are well established in the villages. In total, it is calculated that 87% of the households participate in community groups (Nguyen Din 2001).

SAG members were not universally in agreement, with respect to this indicator, and assigned scores varying from 0 to 3. Only half followed the WVS assessment, which suggested a score of 2, meaning a "majority" or "51-65% are members of more than one CSO", as many did not consider the membership in many types of CSOs to be voluntary. The average score was 1.5.

1.3 Diversity of Civil Society Participants

This subdimension examines the diversity and inclusiveness of civil society from the perspective of its distribution across the country and among different social groups, including women, rural dwellers, the poor and minorities. Are particular groups or regions excluded? Table III.1.6 summarises the indicator scores.

TABLE III.1.7: Indicators assessing diversity of civil society participants

Ref#	Indicators	Score
1.3.1	Representation of social groups among CSO members	2
1.3.2	Representation of social groups among CSO leaders	2
1.3.3	Distribution of CSOs around the country	2

1.3.1. Representation of social groups among CSO members. Members of CSOs can be found all over the country. CSOs represent a wide variety of people, poor as well as rich, women and men and different religious groups. CSOs expanded greatly during the 1990s and are diversified by type and function: mass organisations have broad memberships from all types of social groups; professional associations are often city-based; while most local NGOs have very small memberships, but work on more targeted issues (VNGO directories). Informal groups or CBOs include various social groups depending on their specific purpose. Most informal groups or CBOs are based in rural areas. The Women's Union has only women members, but a broad representation of various other kinds of groups, as illustrated by the composition detailed in table III.1.7.

TABLE III.1.8: Member composition in Women's Union

Components	Members	Percentage
Total number of members	11,985,437	100%
Members employed by the State or as workers	1,963,126	16.4%
Members from ethnic minorities	1,226,732	10.3%
Religious members	1,580,116	13.2%

Source: Central Committee of Vietnam Women's Union, 2004.

Vietnamese NGOs have diverse areas of focus: business development, agricultural development, reproductive health and children with difficulties. They are usually not membership organisations, and their primary concerns are poverty reduction, community development, gender issues, health, capacity building and research. Ethnic minorities are less represented in CSOs than other groups; however, various types of social organisations exist among the ethnic minorities (Norlund 2003a).

The SAG scored this indicator a 2.1, with a fairly high level of consensus. This score represents a medium level of representation for all groups, but still points to the fact that "significant social groups are under-represented in CSOs". Ethnic minorities are one of the prominent groups missing from among the CSOs.

1.3.2 Representation of social groups among CSO leadership. This question focuses on diversity within CSO leadership and whether the leadership represents all significant social groups (women, rural dwellers, the poor, minorities). Leadership differs considerably among the three major types of CSOs. Aside from the informal rural groups, there is a tendency in Vietnam to let persons with higher levels of education take the lead in organisational life.

Among mass organisations, people with higher education levels are often elected to represent the locality. However, a share of the leadership is often reserved for minority groups. The fourth national congress of the Farmers' Association had 860 delegates, of whom the majority had high levels of education (table III.1.8). More than other organisations, the mass organisations are a platform for career development.

TABLE III.1.9: Representation at the Farmers' Association Congress, various criteria

Components	Percentage (%)
Members with university and college diplomas	80.0
Members having taken political courses with diplomas	62.0
Members from ethnic minorities	18.0
Religious members	2.9
Male	80.2
Female	19.8

Source: Farmers' Association, Vietnam Fatherland Front website.

Among the VNGOs, most leaders are former government employees or academics. They are primarily either retired or young but with a (foreign) university education (Pedersen 2002). Leadership of informal groups and CBOs depends on the specific purpose of the group in question. Women often lead credit groups, but are rarer at the higher levels; farmers, poor people and minorities may have leadership roles in the localities, and in the various issue-oriented organisations at the grassroots level, but assume leadership positions less often at higher levels.

The SAG scored this indicator with an average of 1.5, or a low–to-medium level, indicating that there are social groups that are not represented significantly in the leadership such as the less educated and often the poor.

1.3.3. Distribution of CSOs in the country. Mass organisations, particularly the Women's Union and Farmers' Association, have grassroots organisations in almost every part of the country, with the exception of the most remote areas (Table III.1.8). The Women's Union has 12,362 sub-organisations and there are only 27 communes (out of 9,000) and 116 villages in the whole country without a branch. Members include women, poor people and ethnic minorities (Women's Union 2004). There are fewer organisations in remote areas inhabited by ethnic minorities in the north, centre and central highland, as illustrated by the distribution of Women's Union members given in table III.1.9. Professional associations, like VUSTA, have local unions in 37 out of 64 provinces. CBOs and agricultural cooperatives are spread unequally across the country, with the highest concentration in the southern provinces.

TABLE III.1.10: Regional distribution of Women's Union members

Components	Members	Percentage
Total number of members	**11,985,437**	**100%**
– Hanoi, HCMC, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Can Tho Cities	1,738,757	14.5%
– *Northern mountains*: Ha Giang, Cao Bang, Lao Cai, Bac Kan, Lang Son, Lai Chau, Son La, Dien Bien, Quang Ninh provinces	724,209	6.0%
– *Northern mountains and midland*: Tuyen Quang, Yen Bai, Hoa Binh provinces	298,049	2.5%
– *Northern delta*: Ha Tay, Hung Yen, Ha Nam, Nam Dinh, Thai Binh, Ninh Binh, Thai Nguyen, Phu Tho, Vinh Phuc, Bac Giang, Bac Ninh, Hai Duong provinces	2,968,737	24.8%
– *Central region*: Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, TT.Hue provinces	1,753,845	14.6%
– *South Central region*: Quang Nam, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Quang Ngai provinces	880,024	7.4%
– *Central Highlands*: Kon Tum, Gia Lai, Dac Lac, Lam Dong, Dac Nong provinces	541,739	4.5%
– *Upper southern delta*: Ninh Thuan, Binh Phuoc, Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, Binh Thuan, Ba Ria-Vung Tau provinces	1,041,542	8.7%
– *Southern delta*: Long An, Dong Thap, An Giang, Tien Giang, Vinh Long, Ben Tre, Kien Giang, Tra Vinh, Soc Trang, Bac Lieu, Ca Mau, Hau Giang provinces	1,946,285	16.2%
– Ministry of Public Security & Defence	92,250	0.8%

Source: Database of the Vietnam Women's Union - Personnel Department (2004).

Vietnamese NGOs are primarily based in large cities, such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, where it is easier to access information and funding from foreign, government or private sources. A considerable number of them have programmes in the rural and remote areas (VNGO directory for 45 organisations).

The SAG scores were fairly consistent, with an average of 2.1, which indicates that CSOs are represented in all but the most remote areas.

1.4 Level of Organisation

This subdimension looks at the extent of the infrastructure available for CSOs and internal organisation of Vietnamese civil society. Table III.1.10 lists the average SAG scores for the indicators, which deal with umbrella bodies, self-regulation, support infrastructure and international linkages.

TABLE III.1.11: Indicators assessing level of organisation

Ref#	Indicators	Score
1.4.1	Existence of umbrella bodies	2
1.4.2	Effectiveness of umbrella bodies	2
1.4.3	Self-regulation within civil society	2
1.4.4	Support infrastructure	1
1.4.5	International linkages	1

1.4.1. Existence of umbrella bodies. A significant portion of CSOs are members of a federation or umbrella body. The more independent VNGOs register under umbrella bodies (like VUSTA, Red Cross or university institutes), but more practically-oriented grassroots organisations are usually not members of such bodies. Umbrella organisations offer different kinds of support to various types of organisations.

Mass organisations and other organisations of the Fatherland Front, such as VUSTA, the Union of Art and Literature, VUFO, the Chamber of Commerce and the Cooperative Alliance (see Annex 3 for the full list) have tight networks linking the central and local levels. These organisations also have close relations with the Communist Party, which provides guidance. The professional associations affiliated with or registered under VUSTA and other umbrella structures have looser connections to the Party. In principle, the Party aims to establish Party cells to ensure its role in the 80 national associations and in the 1,800 province-based associations, though this is not always implemented in practice (Party Civil Affairs Committee 2004).

A number of informal networks have been established between development-oriented NGOs, health organisations and organisations concerned with natural resources. Networks outside the Party-led networks are not encouraged, but while their status is unclear, they are not discouraged by the state (Heng 2004). It is questionable whether VUSTA and other umbrella organisations really play much of a role for these organisations. The Party is less involved in VNGOs, provided they abide by national law.

CBOs network through mass organisations and local Party cells, and they also often have contacts with VNGOs or INGOs, which provide support for training, as well as funding for more targeted activities. However, they do not belong directly to any umbrella organisations.

The government outlines policies for INGOs through the Working Committee on International Non-Governmental Organisations, under the Prime Minister, and most INGOs coordinate with Vietnam Union of Friendship Associations (VUFO) and People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM). INGOs also cooperate through the VUFO-INGO Resource Centre, a network for INGOs in Vietnam. VNGOs are not allowed to be members, but they can gain inspiration from the networking of the INGOs.

Mass organisations' umbrella organisations are the most established support organisations. The question, however, is whether they nurture an emerging civil society, or merely provide a substitute for one in the form of state-oriented ideas. A possible answer is that the mass organisations both promote ideas compatible with the State and Party, but also provide capacity at the grassroots level alongside the VNGOs.

The SAG scores ranged from 1 to 3, with an average of 2.1, indicating that a majority of CSOs belong to an umbrella organisation.

1.4.2. Effectiveness of umbrella bodies. This indicator focuses on the stakeholders' judgements of the existing federations' and umbrella bodies' abilities to achieve their defined goals. The Fatherland Front has been strengthened as part of a reorientation of government policy, according to which the Party will outline policies, while the administration is responsible for the implementation of the policy. With this process, a larger space is emerging for CSOs, because of the policy of handing over basic social services to "people-funded and private establishments", according to the Prime Minister (Phan Van Khai 26 July 2005). The mass organisations and umbrella organisations under the Fatherland Front have existed for a long time and have an established structure, but their effectiveness is in some cases debatable.

The informal networks found among development-oriented VNGOs have so far operated at a low level. There is no traditional basis for this type of network in Vietnam and many VNGOs do not feel the need for such networks. So far, there is no official encouragement for them. Thus, these networks are quite weak and aimed mainly at sharing information (interviews with VNGOs).

The INGO network is stronger and supports information sharing and a degree of coordination. Based on a 2003 survey of 130 INGOs in Vietnam, the VUFO-NGO Resource Centre has worked to strengthen cooperation among INGOs, PACCOM, the government, People's organisations and local NGOs and donors (INGO Directory; David Paine 2004).

In achieving their *defined* goals, the umbrella organisations are fairly effective, but their goals are modest. The SAG assigned scores between 1 and 2, with an average of 1.7, indicating that the networks are less than "somewhat effective". The stronger networks of the mass organisations and VUSTA compensate for the VNGOs' and CBOs' weak umbrella organisations.

1.4.3 Self-regulation within civil society. This issue concerns efforts among CSOs to self-regulate, how effective those mechanisms are and the percentage of CSOs that abide by a collective code of conduct. Self-regulation is limited with respect to general codes of conduct. Particularly informal groups have no clear regulations, but will usually follow the format of similar organisations. However, both the mass organisations and the VNGOs have certain basic codes of conduct within their own umbrellas and networks. Above all, organisations are requested to abide by the law, which ensures the basic mechanisms of operation.

All socio-political mass organisations and professional associations have their own charters. An association's charter is validated and comes into effect once it is passed by the organisation's congress (Chu Dung 2005). VNGOs do not have a collective code of conduct, but one network, the Cooperation and Development Group, has introduced common rules for new organisations to become members. Some individual organisations have self-regulatory mechanisms, like in professional associations of scientists.

Community organisations are established according to people's needs in various forms. As a result, no single regulation applies to all cases. How the groups function is determined by the members, depending on the particular context and conditions. In the case of the Ky Tho Commune: "The people there discuss how to set up the groups and action clubs. They compile their own regulations and operate what they set up by themselves" (Nguyen Thi Oanh 2004). These clubs are formed

according to a voluntary principle. The members elect the leadership team. Regular club activities are flexible, varying from time to time, place to place and according to particular conditions. They are not subject to any rigid regulations. Meetings may be held every month, two months or three months. Fundraising for the group is also regulated by the group itself.

The SAG's opinions were divided on this issue, with scores from 1 to 3. The average score was 1.6, which indicates that efforts have been made to self-regulate, but only a small minority of CSOs are involved and impact is extremely limited.

1.4.4. Support infrastructure. This indicator concerns the level of support infrastructure for civil society and how extensive and effective that support is. Support structures for CSOs differ considerably, depending on the type of organisation. Most mass organisations have connections to the Party and at least one line agency (usually a ministry), which provides institutional support. The Fatherland Front also supports the mass organisations, though more in form than reality.

VUSTA is the umbrella for professional associations and a number of local research NGOs. In recent years, it has been increasing its support by providing more information on legislation related to organisations' operations (VUSTA 2004).

As for the VNGOs, informal groups and CBOs, the support infrastructure is weak and they are often dependent on support from INGOs and donor organisations, which help with capacity building.

International non-governmental organisations have a better support infrastructure through PACCOM and VUFO, which are responsible for facilitating INGO activities in Vietnam and for helping local partners build relationships with INGOs (INGO Directory 2004-05). The VUFO-NGO Resource Centre supports INGOs in Vietnam with coordination and advice and has established a number of sub-networks. In these regards, the centre is very efficient. However, in principle at least, it is not supposed to give support to VNGOs, which can make it difficult for INGOs and VNGOs to coordinate; this is a major weakness in the support structure.

In summary, the support structures are segmented and operate in isolation from each other, reflecting a fragmented civil society. Moreover, some support structures for mass organisations and professional associations are highly bureaucratic, with many different levels, a situation which is not conducive to strengthening coordination. The SAG was in agreement on this issue and assigned scores of approximately 1 to 2, with an average of 1.3, indicating that there is a very limited infrastructure for civil society.

1.4.5. International linkages. CSOs' international ties increased considerably in the 1990s, but, when compared to other countries, contacts with the world of international NGOs are still limited. Mass organisations traditionally have very active linkages to international organisations at the global level, which were altered and renewed following the end of the Cold War. Women's organisations (Women's Union, CEPAW and VNGOs) participated in the World Women's Forum in Beijing in 1995 and follow-up conferences. Several types of CSOs participated in the 2004 World Social Forum in India. Also in that year, PACCOM arranged the first ever international NGO convention in Vietnam, the fifth Asia-Europe People's Forum in Hanoi, with about 800 international participants, held in connection with the ASEM meeting hosted by the government. Both mass organisations and VNGOs now participate in international NGO forums. However,

since this participation began only in the 1990s, it is still fairly limited compared to countries such as Thailand or the Philippines.

VNGOs, particularly the development-oriented groups, have good contacts with donor agencies and INGOs from various countries, whereas the grassroots organisations have fewer international connections. The number of INGOs with offices in Vietnam is about 130, a fairly high level.

According to a membership density index developed by Global Civil Society, which measures the membership of INGOs per 100,000 people, Vietnam rates low at 7.5, below other comparable countries in Asia. Indonesia and East Timor each score 7.5; Cambodia, 10.9; the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, 10.8; Thailand and the Philippines, 23 and Mongolia, 69.2 (Global Civil Society 2004). However, this indicator does not accurately reflect the current situation, because INGOs are not considered part of Vietnamese society and do not aim to recruit members in Vietnam.

The SAG assigned scores of 1 and 2, with an average of 1.3, indicating that a limited number of mainly national-level CSOs have international linkages. In contrast, one SAG member contended that international involvement is in fact substantial.

1.5 Interrelations among Civil Society Actors

This subdimension analyses the communication and cooperation between civil society actors in Vietnam. Table III.1.11 shows the SAG scores for the 2 indicators.

TABLE III.1.12: Indicators assessing interrelations within civil society

Ref#	Indicators	Score
1.5.1	Communication between CSOs	2
1.5.2	Cooperation between CSOs	1

1.5.1. Communication among civil society organisations. This question concerns the extent of communication between CSOs. The sharing of information between organisations is not part of the conventional culture in Vietnam, as access to information is a key to power. However, a new culture has been developing since the 1990s and particularly in the 2000s. This new culture places more emphasis on interaction and sharing information. A popular means of sharing information among mass organisations, professional associations and VNGOS is via internal bulletins, briefings and specialized workshops. The Internet is increasingly important and many organisations have websites.

Most CSOs publish magazines, or even newspapers, but direct communication between organisations in their daily activities is not generally very substantial. The scientific CSOs are more focussed on meetings and conferences. For instance, the Ho Chi Minh City Union of Science and Technology Associations organised 163 specialised symposia between 1977 and 2002 (Chu Dung 2005). VNGOs and research institutions share information through their networks.

Foreign NGOs organise both official and unofficial meetings to share information among themselves, with the public and other organisations. INGOs meet regularly, once a month at the VUFO-NGO Resource Centre (INGO Directory 2004-05).

Communication occurs between various CSO actors, but it is segmented and not highly organised. The SAG scored this issue quite unanimously between 1 and 2, with an average of 1.5, indicating a moderate level of communication.

1.5.2. Cooperation among CSOs. Mass organisations occasionally cooperate, if a given subject is of common concern, and they often cooperate with government agencies. VUSTA is increasingly organising meetings on issues of common concern for all types of CSO, such as a meeting on "Partnership among Donors and NGOs in Vietnam's Poverty Alleviation in 2005". The VNGOs organise meetings for national programmes and for projects implemented at the community level, as well as for training courses and for sharing experiences (Tang The Cuong 2005).

The most common form of cooperation is between VNGOs and INGOs and regards government programmes for poverty reduction, international issues, such as global poverty reduction, new legislation for organisations, or issues related to organisational capacity building. One example is a training seminar on "Institution Strengthening" which took place in 2005 and discussed issues like organisational development, structure and management, network sharing and financial management. Health-related VNGOs organise meetings including donor organisations. Women's organisations have a network which links groups focussed on poverty reduction with donors, the government and NGOs. Some competition can, however, be seen among VNGOs in their search for project funding from INGOs and international donor agencies.

The VUFO-NGO Resource Centre has established a number of thematic sub-groups for organisations involved in special areas, including: Disability Forum, Disaster Management, Ethnic Minorities, HIV/AIDS, INGO Discussion Group – Ho Chi Minh City, International Volunteers, Landmines, Microfinance, Reproductive Health, Small and Medium Enterprises, Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, Water Supply and Sanitation and Wildlife Trade (INGO Directory 2004-05). In spite of the large number of groups, they are not all very active and INGOs do not generally actively cooperate, except for some of the advocacy-trained development organisations. VNGOs are in principle not members of the INGO networks, but sub-groups are occasionally organised to ensure VNGO-INGO cooperation. For example, the Ethnic Minority Working group is supporting a Southeast Asian network of local organisations concerned with indigenous knowledge (IKAP – Indigenous Knowledge and People).

Stakeholder Assessment Group members are generally in agreement, scoring a little above 1 (1.3 on average), which indicates that CSO actors rarely cooperate with each other on issues of common concern.

1.6 Resources

This subdimension examines the extent to which resources are available for achieving CSO goals. Resources are divided into three types: financial, human and technical.

TABLE III.1.13: Indicators assessing civil society resources

Ref#	Indicators	Score
1.6.1	Financial resources	2
1.6.2	Human resources	1
1.6.3	Technical and infrastructural resources	1

1.6.1. Financial resources. Whether the level of financial resources for CSOs is adequate is a relative question. CSOs are financed from many different sources, and it is not possible to obtain a full overview of their funding. The CSI research team's assessment is that the largest share of funding probably comes from the state, supplied by private and foreign donor funds. Whether they are financed adequately to achieve their goals cannot be assessed objectively based on the available information. CSOs, both mass organisations and VNGOs, typically assert that they need more funding (interviews with VGCL, CGFED). Furthermore, poverty reduction, which is one of the common goals of many CSOs, is an area where resources are always needed in a poor country. However, much funding is available in the country from large donor funds, even if it might not be evenly distributed.

The mass organisations receive support from the state for the basic facilities and wage for employees of their central organisations, as well as at lower levels in the provinces and districts. At commune level the head of Women's Union receives a modest allowance. Much activity is based on income from membership fees and at the grassroots level, clubs rely fully on membership fees and, sometimes, alliances with an external donor. Foreign funding matters to varying degrees. The Women's Union in particular receives much foreign funding, as it has been a favourite partner on rural projects for both INGOs and international development agencies for over a decade. More than 30 partners were already supporting the WU in 1996 (Helvetas 1996). Other mass organisations and professional associations have more difficulty attracting funds.

Some examples can illustrate the diverse composition of the financial resources available to various types of CSOs and agencies (tables III.1.14-16). A survey conducted in 2000 of 322 "issue-oriented" CSOs in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City shows that their budgets included four major sources of funding (service fees, foreign funding, government and private sources), but the composition differs quite dramatically in the two cities. Service fees made up the largest portion in Hanoi, followed by foreign funds, while in Ho Chi Minh City, finances are more equally derived from the various sources. The share of foreign funding is around 25% in both cities (table III.1.14).

TABLE III.1.14: Incomes of issue-oriented CSOs in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City by source (2000)

Source of income	Hanoi	HCMC
Service fees	53.3%	17.4%
Funding from foreign partner	26.1%	24.6%
Sponsorship from government agency	8.7%	14.5%
Membership fees	6.5%	nd
Donation from private domestic source	2.2%	22.7%
Other sources	3.2%	20.8%
Total	100	100

Source: Wischermann 2003.

The recent census of establishments in Ho Chi Minh City included a survey of non-profit organisations.[27] According to this study, CSOs, including mass organisations, received 42% of their revenue from service charges and 29% from the state, while foreign funding was very small, at only 3% (table III.1.15).

TABLE III.1.15: Total revenue of various types of public service units in Ho Chi Minh City, first 6 months of 2002

Revenues	State Agencies, Public Service units, Semi-Public Service units, Non-State Public Service Units, Political Organisations	Socio-Political, State and Non-State Social Organisations
State budget accounts	55%	29%
Foreign project accounts	1%	3%
Service charges	41%	42%
Other	3%	26%
Total	100	100

Source: Overall Survey on Economic and Public Service Entities, 2002. Ho Chi Minh City Statistical Bureau, 2004.
Explanations: *Public service units* are founded by the State authorities, political organisations, socio-political organisations or individuals in the fields of: health, education, culture, sports, science and media.
*Semi-public service unit*s are units created from an association between the State and a non-State organisation.
Non-state social organisations are mainly funded by membership contributions.

A third investigation included 26 development VNGOs in Hanoi in 2001 (table III.1.16). The VNGOs generally had more foreign funding than the mass organisations (with the likely exception of the Women's Union). Of their funding, 52% was from foreign sources, though commercial services and government projects were also important (at 19% and 17% respectively).

TABLE III.1.16: Income from various sources, development-oriented VNGOs in Hanoi, 2001

Sources of Income	Hanoi
Commercial services	19%
Government-funded projects	17%
International aid agencies	52%
Other	12%

Source: Katrine R. Pedersen, Study of emerging NGOs, 2002.

[27] General Statistical Office: Results of Establishment Census of Vietnam 2002, Vol 3. – Non-Profit Establishments. The census includes all establishments (defined as a fixed location with some kind of economic activities with engagement of staff more than three months per year) in the non-profit sector, in government agencies, political organisations, socio-political organisations, socio-professional associations, socio-religious organisations, public or civil services (education, health, culture, social, sport, science and research, technology, environment). Even if this statistical source is valuable, it is difficult to compare its definitions with the ones used elsewhere in this report because of its highly specialised categorisations.

INGOs contribute 80 to 90 million USD annually to development projects in Vietnam, both to government and CSO projects. Until the mid-1990s, they worked almost exclusively through the government or the mass organisations; since then, the VNGOs have begun to benefit from this type of funding as well (Payne 2004; UNDP 2002).

The diverse picture of CSO revenues shows substantial differentiation among CSOs and considerable flexibility with regard to finding financial resources. The large role of service fees in VNGO budgets indicates that market-based incomes are increasingly important, while at the same time, VNGOs are quite dependent on foreign funding. The SAG scored this indicator from 1 to 2 (with one member assigning a score of 3). The average score was a 1.5, indicating that CSOs' financial resources are not adequate.

1.6.2. Human resources. There is no general data on the level of human resources available for CSOs in Vietnam, although there is information from individual case studies, since donors often assess the capacity of the organisations they support. Foreign funding has supported the development of human resources for CSOs, including both mass organisations and VNGOS. This has been important for organisations receiving foreign support, and has given them a comparative advantage. Volunteers with mass organisations have also benefited, particularly through credit programmes. Again, through its capacity-building activities, the Women's Union provides a good example of an organisation that has benefited from foreign funding with respect to its human development. Nevertheless, one donor has concluded that the human resources are still inadequate for running such a large number of credit programmes (Danida 2005).

VNGOs are still small organisations. The 322 issue-oriented organisations studied by Wischermann, Vinh and Cuong have on average nine employees in Ho Chi Minh City and 15 in Hanoi. They also have volunteers. In the South, 30% of the staff are volunteers, as are 10% in the North (Wischermann 2003). The staffs of these CSOs are increasingly being professionalized, along with the increasing number of projects. Still, there are many bottlenecks to overcome.

Statistical data from Ho Chi Minh City about the level of education of public and non-state service unit managers shows that *professional associations* (including VUSTA, the Journalists' Association, Red Cross, etc.) and *non-state socio-professional associations* (VNGOs or issue-oriented organisations) have the highest rate of well educated managers (i.e. those with a PhD or Master's degree—22% and 24% respectively). In contrast, state agencies and *mass organisations* have a small share of highly educated managers (only 3% and 1% respectively). However, the state has a large share of managers with mid-level educations, including college and bachelor's degrees (71%), while the *mass organisations'* have a considerably lower share of managers with college or bachelor's degrees (29%). Most managers within the mass organisations have other types of education (52%) (Overall Survey on Economic and Public Service Units 2002).

The trend is for highly educated individuals to work for VNGOs rather than in mass organisations. These typically include retired state employees, researchers who cannot get jobs at universities or young people with educations from a foreign country (Pedersen 2002; Norlund, Tran, Nguyen 2003). Young staffs may have much less experience, but can use the local NGO as a launch pad for better-paid employment, either in an INGO or with an international donor organisation. As a result, it is becoming difficult for VNGOs to attract stable staffs (Interviews with VNGOs 2005).

The SAG was divided over the issue of human resources, with scores ranging from 0 to 2, indicating that some find the human resources inadequate, while others find that CSOs have most of the human resources they require. The average score is 1.2, suggesting "that the resources are inadequate for the CSOs to reach their goals".

1.6.3. Technological and infrastructural resources. Technological and infrastructural resources have been upgraded considerably in recent years, as computers, email and the Internet have become a daily means of communication. Computerisation began in the foreign-supported CSOs earlier than in the state sector, but the state is now catching up. This does not mean that the technological level is adequate, as the technology is often not maintained or upgraded. It must be recognized that Vietnamese organisations worked for a long period with very limited resources.

According to a survey from Ho Chi Minh City, the socio-professional associations (i.e. VUSTA) have computers in 96% of their offices, whereas the issue-oriented groups (VNGOs) have them in only 52% of their offices (Overall Survey on Economic and Public Service Units 2002). This result is surprising, but reflects the extent to which state-supported units are increasingly being upgraded, while VNGOs are still short of infrastructural resources.

The SAG was again divided on this issue, with scores ranging from 0 to 3. Nevertheless, with an average score of 1.3, the majority found that CSOs have inadequate technological and infrastructural resources to achieve their goals.

Summary

Overall, the SAG assessed the "structure" of civil society to be of limited strength, with an aggregate score of 1.6. The segmented nature of civil society poses an analytical challenge. Being broad-based and diversified gives civil society certain strength, but the depth of civil society is weaker and it is not clear for what purpose this strength is or can be used.

The analysis of civil society's "structure" shows that after more than a decade of development and organisational transformation, there is a rather large civil society in Vietnam. However, while it is rather large it has less depth or vibrancy. Non-partisan political actions are limited and are not a normal way for civil society to express its opinions in Vietnam. However, charity is widespread in society, with contributions coming from 30% to 65% of the population. Civil society is characterised by a large number of organisations divided into several segments, with different characteristics, and most CSOs are interrelated in implementing projects and entangled with the state. CSOs have an aggregated membership of at least 65 million, out of a population of 82 million, not including a large number of informal groups at the community level. The WVS for Vietnam concludes that individuals on average belong to 2.3 organisations, a much higher figure than in some neighbouring countries. Volunteerism is widespread and people are fairly active in community life.

The SAG clearly judged participation in civil society as having less depth than breadth. Charitable giving is low per capita, calculated to be about 1%. The time devoted to volunteering was estimated to be at a medium level of 2 to 5 hours on average per month. The WVS for Vietnam showed that 62% of CSO members belong to more than one organisation, but the SAG believed this result was too high. One of the objections was that the quality of membership in the mass organisations is low.

With respect to the *diversity of civil society*, in the SAG assessment, CSO membership includes most social groups. However, among CSO leaders, some social groups such as the less educated and poor people are significantly underrepresented, which is clearly an effect of the general social importance of education in Vietnamese society, and more specifically for leadership positions. The distribution of CSOs across the country is fairly equal and they can be found in all provinces, though the density is low in the highlands and the most remote areas.

Civil society organisations' *organisation* is characterised by a large number of umbrella organisations, but the umbrella organisations for mass organisations and professional associations are the most important, whereas they are weak for VNGOs and CBOs. On the other hand, the effectiveness of umbrella organisations is questionable and not considered very high by the SAG. The issue of self-regulation is not so clear in Vietnam. According to law, organisations must have a charter, but there are few common regulations that apply to more than one individual organisation. The support infrastructure for civil society is limited and such organisations operate in isolation from each other, and some are highly bureaucratic. International linkages have traditionally been strong, but were altered by the post-Cold War transition. As a result, Vietnamese CSOs are fairly new to international NGO networks.

Communication between civil society actors in Vietnam takes place at a moderate level. Even if almost all organisations publish information about their activities, communication between organisations is not well developed. Cooperation between CSOs does take place with respect to issues of common concern. The SAG assessed cooperation to be at a slightly higher level than communication, but both can still be said to be at a medium level.

CSO *resources* are separated into three major types. First, financial resources for CSOs are available from many different sources. The state is important for the mass organisations, but they also receive funds from foreign donors, especially the Women's Union. Professional associations may receive some support from the state, but they also have to rely on fees and project funding. Service fees are important to the VNGOs, together with foreign funding, private sources and some government funding. Second, the level of human resources available to the CSOs is difficult to assess, which also makes the SAG's score very contentious. In general, this indicator was judged to be below the medium level. VNGOs, overall, have better-skilled human resources, because many are research NGOs and most of them are headed by former state employees and persons with university educations. Third, the SAG considered the available technological resources to be rather inadequate.

Discussion

The most significant point about the "structure" of civil society in Vietnam is that, with little attention from the state, it developed from a low level to a considerable size during the changes of the 1990s. Still, the CSI assessment does not consider civil society to be more than of medium strength. The question is: How much does civil society introduce new ideas into society, given that it is linked so closely to the State and Party? It is easy to denounce the long-established mass organisations, and to some extent professional associations, as bureaucratic, top-down organisations that are, at the top, linked too closely to the Party-State. On the other hand, mass organisations have played an important role. They were the only organisations with connections to the rural communities in the period leading up to the mid- and late 1990s and their organisations were further revived during this period. Since that time, new ideas have been introduced, such as member participation in projects, credit schemes and the Grassroots Democracy Decree, to support

members' livelihoods. Until recently, mass organisations were the main partners in development and poverty reduction for foreign INGOs and donors. With the emergence of VNGOs in the cities and recently of CBOs in the communities, the question is whether these new organisations will take over that role from the mass organisations, or whether the two types of organisations will cooperate. The latter option is more likely. In sum, it seems unreasonable to denounce the mass organisations as simply conservative forces. To a considerable extent, they have been able to renew themselves, though there is still much progress to be made and it can be observed that some mass organisations have been more successful than others.

VNGOs are the organisations most like NGOs in other countries, but they are still limited in number and influence. One reason for this is because of restrictions in the political and institutional environment. Moreover, most VNGOs have special characteristics due to their being led by retired government employees or scholars. Networking is weak, both because of a lack of a networking tradition and because of limitations in the environment. The VNGOs are still in an early stage of development from leadership-based organisations to membership-based ones and some may not even want to change. They are fairly dependent on support from international sources, particularly those working on development issues and they often work as consultants for donor or government projects. The support structures are inadequate, as civil society is still new and developing in Vietnam; similarly, financing and human resources could be improved. Some authors do not see the VNGOs as constituting a true part of civil society, but rather as mere "translators" of the discourse between the government and donors (Shanks et al. 2004) or as small consultancy firms, in effect, a part of the private sector. For both mass organisations and VNGOs the need for capcity building and networking is quite obvious.

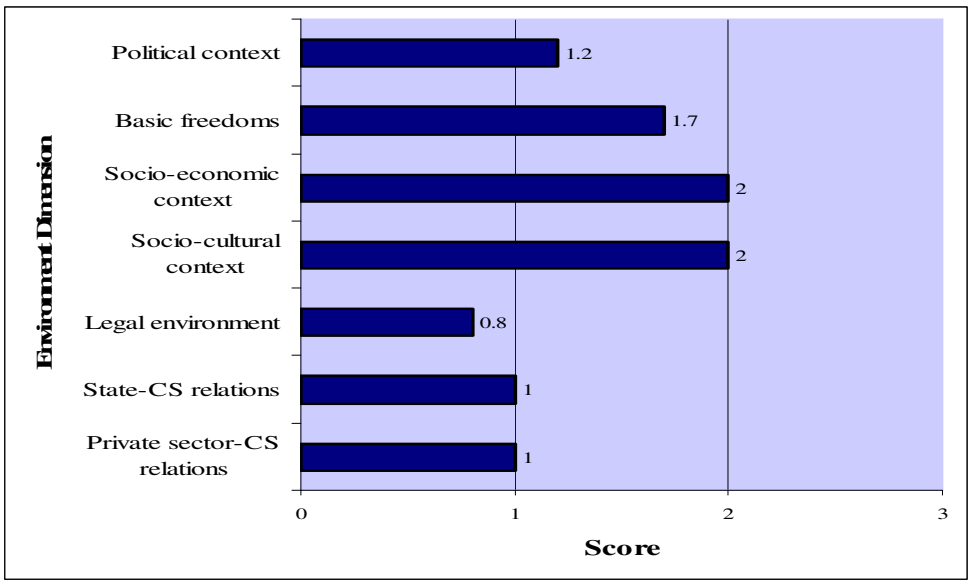
It should be stressed that there are a large number of other organisations at the community level that do not act as development partners, including both collaborative rural groups improving citizens' livelihoods and groups to preserve traditions, festivals, spirits, temples, pagodas or churches. These informal community groups are also part of civil society, even if this study only touches on them peripherally. They are important in other ways to the creation of coherence and exercise power within communities. There is still a lack of knowledge about smaller, faith-based community and neighbourhood groups.

The dichotomy between the state and civil society is obviously not the main characteristic of civil society in Vietnam and as a result it seems not to be the most important criteria for defining it. The agents of change seem to have many poles and many ways of expressing themselves, but civil society is still weak and relatively incapable of expressing its interests and needs to the state and society. To improve the situation it is important to strengthen the networks and capacity of CSOs, both in the cities and the countryside. The VNGOs are in a better position to bring new ideas to the attention of the higher political levels, but better cooperation not only between VNGOs, but also between mass organisations and VNGOs, may be required.

2. ENVIRONMENT

This section presents and analyses the overall political, social, economic, cultural and legal environment for civil society in Vietnam. The score of the environment dimension is 1.4, which indicates that the environment is not particularly conducive for civil society. The seven subdimensions are presented in figure III.2.1, including: 1) political context; 2) basic freedoms and rights; 3) socio-economic context; 4) socio-cultural context; 5) legal environment; 6) state-civil society relations and 7) private sector-civil society relations. Aside from the socio-economic and socio-cultural subdimensions, all of these subdimensions received fairly low scores from the SAG. These results imply a restrictive environment.

FIGURE III.2.1: Subdimension scores in environment dimension



2.1 Political Context

This subdimension examines the political situation in Vietnam and its impact on civil society. Table III.2.1 summarises the respective indicator scores.

TABLE III.2.1: Indicators assessing the political context

Ref#	Indicators	Score
2.1.1	Political rights	1
2.1.2	Political competition	0
2.1.3	Rule of law	1
2.1.4	Corruption	1
2.1.5	State effectiveness	2
2.1.6	Decentralisation	2

2.1.1 Political rights. This indicator concerns citizens' political rights (including free participation in political processes, election of political leaders through free and fair elections and the free organisation of political parties.) Vietnamese citizens have the right to vote and stand for election to the National Assembly according to the Constitution of 1992 (§ 54). However, candidates have to be approved by the Fatherland Front and not all candidates are approved. Citizens enjoy freedom of

opinion and speech, freedom of the press, the right to be informed, to assemble, form associations and hold demonstrations according to the provisions of the Constitution (§69). In reality, there are some limitations on these various rights. Nevertheless, the 1992 Constitution confirmed the introduction of greater liberty within the country to accommodate a more open, market-oriented economy and, in effect, opened up a larger space for civic activities, including organisational activities, such as the right to form associations.

In an internationally comparative index on the level of political rights, Vietnam is placed in the lowest category of "not free" countries.[28] On the other hand, the same report credits Vietnam for increasing openness and strong public criticism of corruption. People can send complaints to the government and the grassroots voices its concerns daily, notably regarding land conflicts. Still, the report also finds many limitations on political rights. In one calculation by the Freedom House Political Rights Index, Vietnam scores 6.5 on a scale ranging from 0 to 7, where 7 is the most restrictive.[29] This political rights rating did not change between 1992 and 2005.

This presentation of political rights is not fully in line with either official or popular understandings in Vietnam. The state holds that the area of political rights has improved considerably over the years since *doi moi* and that, as a result of the legislative process (which has involved public participation), citizens' rights today basically reflect all the fundamental and universal human rights provided for by the relevant United Nations conventions. The State is disturbed by (foreign) accusations of rights violations in Vietnam, and in August 2005 published a *White Book on Human Rights in Vietnam*. Among the evidence presented against such accusations was the rapid development of organisations in Vietnam, with reference to mass organisations, professional associations and grassroots level clubs (SRV 2005). The issue of political and human rights is obviously one area of difference between different political systems.

Stakeholder Assessment Group members strongly differed on this issue, with scores falling on every level from 0 to 3, with an average of 1.3. SAG members did not agree that the political situation is as restrained as foreign sources suggest, but agreed that there are some limitations. A key point for them was that people are free to nominate themselves as candidates for elections. Furthermore, even if candidates must be approved by the Fatherland Front, citizens have the right to go to the polls and vote freely, which was seen as a fundamental condition for political freedom by most SAG members. In short, the conclusion was that a score of 0 would be too low, while 2 would be too high.

2.1.2 Political competition. This issue deals with characteristics of the Party system and institutionalised political competition. Only one party is permitted in elections for the National Assembly and the elected administrative organs at district and commune level, People's Councils. Political dynamics are an important part of politics, but in Vietnam they primarily occur within the Party and the bureaucracy, while civil society's influence on policymaking is mostly indirect (Shanks et al. 2004; Koh 2004; Norlund, Tran Ngoc Ca and Nguyen Dinh Tuyen 2003).

A vibrant civil society is often supposed to be integral part of the development of a "Western" democratic regime, including competition between political parties (Dalton 2006; Diamond 1994). Likewise, if there is no political competition, then a system of checks and balances to provide a

[28] http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2004/countryratings/vietnam.htm (visited 15 August 2005).
[29] www.freedomhouse.org/research/crossroads/cac.htm, comparative data and report by Zachary Abuza, "Vietnam"; and *Freedom in the World 2005*, ibid.

voice to interest groups is certainly not in place (Fforde and Porter 1995). However, in Vietnam, the vast majority of the population considers the regime legitimate (Abuza 2004; World Values Survey 2001). Moreover, most people question the advantage of multi-party systems, partly because Vietnam is more stable than many countries with multi-party systems. Public support for the government has even increased in the last 10 years, from 84% to 96% of the population, according to the *World Values Survey Vietnam*, a much higher percentage than in other countries (e.g. Taiwan: 33%; Japan: 19%; USA: 35%)(Dalton and Ong 2003).[30]

The SAG members were in full agreement about the limitations on party competition and assigned a nearly unanimous score of 0 (0.2).

2.1.3. Rule of law. To what extent is the rule of law entrenched in the country? Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the governing principle has basically changed from rule *by* law towards rule *of* law, with numerous legal documents passed by the National Assembly, the Prime Minister's Office and the Government. However, implementation and enforcement of the new laws and decrees is happening only slowly and personal relationships are still very important for interactions in society. The basic rights and new structures in the legal and administrative fields are still not well known to the broader population, particularly among rural dwellers and the poor (UNDP 2004).

Before *doi moi*, the functions of the Party and the State overlapped, but over the course of the 1990s, legislative power was increasingly transferred to the National Assembly, though 90% of the deputies are Party members (Shanks 2004). The reforms are, moreover, increasingly consultative. In 2002, the laws were revised to ensure that the public participates in the process of drafting legislation (Ibid).

The Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) identifies a number of weaknesses in the institutional framework for legal development. Laws are still weak and of inconsistent quality; the process of preparing legal documents fails to encourage active participation by relevant state organs, experts or public organisations such as VNGOs; laws at lower levels are not written consistently with higher level laws; local authorities sometimes issue too many legal documents, which leads to the fragmentation of legal power; and many administrative procedures are cumbersome and excessively regulated, which eventually leads to abuses of power and corruption (CPRGS 2002).

The international comparative "Freedom in the World" index, established by Freedom House, places Vietnam at a low ranking of 2.36 for the "rule of law" and considers the judiciary to be simply an arm of the State.[31] However, it is also mentioned that "Vietnam is genuinely trying to move towards becoming a law-governed society" (Abuza 2004).[32] Another index developed by the World Bank assessed the level of the "rule of law" at -0.59 in 2004, up from -0.81 in 1998.[33] In the legal field, many new laws have been promulgated, such as the Civil Code, Labour Code and

[30] The very high percentage of consent with government institutions in Vietnam might indicate certain problems with the methodology or the means of responding to the Vietnam survey. However, the WVS is used in this report because it is the only survey of its kind in Vietnam.
[31] On a scale of 0-7, with 7 as the highest.
[32] The documents can be found at: www.freedomhouse.org/research/crossroads/2004/Vietnam2004.pdf. The review of Vietnam is dated in some respects as it refers to the situation the end of the 1990s.
[33] On a scale from -2.50 to + 2.50 (GRICS: Governance Research Indicator Country Snapshot: http;//info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2004/country_report.asp?countryid=234, visited 19 May 2005).

Criminal Code, which to some extent secure and protect people in their daily lives. The Criminal Code includes a reform of the judicial processes towards increased transparency and justice.

The SAG was mostly in agreement on this issue, assigning scores between 1 and 2, with an average of 1.2.

2.1.4. Corruption in the public sector. The international ratings are very critical of widespread public sector corruption in Vietnam. The country ranks 102 out of 146 countries in a Corruption Perception Index, with a score of 2.6 out of 7 (Transparency International).[34] The score for anti-corruption and transparency is 2.45, also out of 7 (Freedom House 2004). From a comparative perspective, Vietnam ranks poorly, though still above some of its neighbours (table III.2.2).

TABLE III.2.2: Corruption index, comparative data from Asia

Country	Corruption index (Scale: 0-10) 2002	Control of corruption percentage (0-100) 2004
Singapore	9.5	99
Japan	7.1	nd
Thailand	3.2	49
China	3.5	40
Vietnam	2.4	27
Indonesia	1.9	18
Cambodia	nd	13
Laos	nd	7

Sources: Transparency International 2002; Kaufmann, Mastruzzi 2005.

Lack of transparency is a genuine problem in the public sector. In 2004, the government declared an active fight against corruption as one of its highest priorities, since it is increasingly acknowledged to have a negative impact on the country's development. In 2005, an Anti-Corruption Law was prepared and approved in the National Assembly. Legal measures have been introduced, such as a requirement that candidates for elected positions declare their assets and stricter regulations of independent auditors. A number of high-level corruption cases in the bureaucracy have been brought to court concerning the misuse of resources and the convicted have received severe penalties. The problems are partly due to increased economic development and transfers of large funds (including internationally donated or borrowed funds) which are handled by leaders and businessmen who secure a portion for their personal benefit. The ongoing financial management and public investment management reforms both intend to improve the transparency of the public administration (Vietnam Development Report 2004; World Bank, Taking Stock 2005a).

Petty corruption is a different phenomenon from large-scale corruption and it is widespread in all sectors today. Public administration reform (PAR), introduced in 1992, has speeded up since 2000, but still has a long way to go. It has encountered resistance in the provinces and at other levels, due to a tradition of redistributing incomes in the form of legitimate extra benefits. In the long run, however, governance is heading towards more accountability and meritocracy (Koh 2004). Public opinion condemns corruption (Abuza 2004; WVS for Vietnam), and in some localities local villagers have attacked officials, as in the most well-known cases in Thai Binh in 1997 and Ha Tay in 2005 (Tien Phong; AFP 27.1.2005). The Grassroots Democracy Decree (Decree 29/1998 and Decree 77/2003) also aimed at increasing the accountability of local authorities, even if its measures are unevenly implemented across the country (McElwee et al. 2005).

[34] On a scale 0-7 with 7 as the best performance.

The SAG mostly agreed that the level of corruption is "high", with scores between 0 and 1, 0.7 on average.

2.1.5. State effectiveness. This concerns the ability of the state to fulfil its defined functions. The State in Vietnam functions fairly well, but is not always very responsive. Many improvements have been made to make the bureaucracy more efficient and accessible to the public, like the successful introduction of one-stop-shops for citizens to manage a number of administrative issues to do with land registration and social support (MPI SEDP 2005). E-government is also starting to develop, increasing access to websites and government documents, which were almost inaccessible in the past. Nevertheless, the administration still has many problems, including the limited links between various ministries, departments and institutions. Moreover, the seniority-based salary system does not encourage efficiency. International donors substantially support reforming the central government, but civil society organisations and the media have not felt they have the mandate to push directly for quicker reforms and more accountability; although in 2005 a few INGOs began looking at improving governance at the provincial level (for instance, SNV's support for local governance 2006-10).

International comparative assessments of state effectiveness rate Vietnam a little below medium, with a score of -0.31 in 2004 (on a scale from -2.5 to +2.5) on the World Bank's Governance and Anti-Corruption listing. In that study, the rating actually *fell* from -0.17 since 1998. In another study of government effectiveness (based on 12 different indexes), Vietnam scores 44.2 on a percentile ranking from 0 to 100, which also represents a fall in the quality of governance – from 57% in 1996, to 49.2 in 1998, to 44.2 in 2004 (Kaufmann, Kraay, Mastruzzi 2005). The main reason for the decline may be increased corruption and ineffectiveness at providing social services.

In comparison with other countries, Vietnam rates fairly low, only slightly higher than Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos, the countries with greatest problems in the region (table III.2.3).

TABLE III.2.3: Level of government effectiveness in Asia, 2004.

Country	Government effectiveness, 2004 from -2.50 to +2.50
Singapore	+2.25
Japan	+1.21
Thailand	+0.38
China	+0.11
Vietnam	-0.31
Indonesia	-0.36
Cambodia	-0.87
Laos	-1.02

Source: World Bank, Governance& anti-corruption, 2004.[35]

The SAG was somewhat positive and in broad agreement with regard to this measure. Most members gave the country a 2, for an average of 1.7, indicating that the bureaucracy is between an "extremely limited" capacity and "functional but perceived as incompetent and non-responsive".

[35] http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2004/mc_chart.asp.> [Visited 5 July and 15 November 2005]

2.1.6. Decentralisation. To what extent are government expenditures devolved to sub-national authorities? A protracted debate has taken place over whether government in Vietnam is centralised or decentralised and how the level of decentralisation affects the country's management. Over the years, its governance has been both extremely decentralised (in the late 1970s) and very centralised (mid-80s). The debate today is focussed on the Party-administration relationship, in which the Party increasingly serves to steer rather than implement policies. In reality, Vietnam combines both centralised and decentralised features and tendencies, but the decentralisation of financial resources has been the major trend for the last decade, and was particularly solidified by the 1996 Law on the State Budget, which increased the provinces' role in management, socio-economic development plans and budgeting (Shanks 2004, 20-21). The budget has been decentralised substantially over the last 15 years; in 1992, 26% of government expenditure went to the provincial level, rising to 44% in 2004 (Vietnam Development Report 2004; Fritzen 2002). Vietnam can, with respect to financial management, be seen as a highly decentralised country. Provinces are fairly autonomous, but one negative consequence is that the poor provinces have few resources of their own and less direct access to other resources because they depend so much on hand outs from the centre. Additionally, control of the budget is largely decentralised and decided at the province and district levels, while the communes' access to resources is more limited.

Viewpoints still differ concerning the level and type of decentralisation beyond the question of financial resources. Some argue that centralised tendencies are maintained partly due to the central administration's former system of command-and-control (Nguyen Manh Cuong 2005); others argue that when the system is decentralised financially, and the role of the state transformed to handle planning rather than implementation, certain types of *centralisation* are necessary (Fforde and Porter 1995). The policy process is widely seen as comprising a double dynamic of both top-down and bottom-up mechanisms, with the balance between the two changing over time with respect to both economic sectors and regions (Shanks et al. 2004).

The SAG was close to full agreement on a score of 2 for this measure. The average score was 1.8. Several government programmes aim at higher decentralisation and strengthening of provincial authorities which are considered fairly successful.

2.2 Basic Freedoms and Rights

This subdimension examines to what extent basic freedoms are ensured by law and in practice, looking at three indicators: civil liberties, information rights and press freedom. Table III.2.4 summarises the scores.

TABLE III.2.4: Indicators assessing basic rights and freedoms

Ref#	Indicators	Score
2.2.1	Civil liberties	2
2.2.2	Information rights	1
2.2.3	Press freedoms	2

2.1.1. Civil liberties. The extent of civil liberties in Vietnam (freedom of expression, association and assembly) is debatable. Civil liberties are guaranteed by the 1992 Constitution. However, in reality, there are some limitations on freedom of expression, association and assembly and many activities have to be approved by the government, though the details are not always clear. The government argues that religious liberties have been improved through the "Ordinance on Religions and Belief" of 18 June 2004. Economic support for ethnic areas increased considerably in 2004

because the ethnic minorities are poorer on average than the majority Kinh people. 33.5% of the country's total development investment goes in recent years to improve the situation in the poorest regions (SRV White Paper 2005). Such investment may improve social rights, but not necessarily other basic rights.

The death penalty is still in effect for cases of criminality such as drug-related and economic crimes. People accused of breaking the rules regarding expression have received prison sentences in a number of cases (Montesano 2005; vnnews-l 24.3 2005). Citizens may establish CSOs, but they must register, for instance, with an organisation such as VUSTA. The regulations pertaining to civil society illustrate that organisations cannot register easily. Rather, it is a fairly complicated process to obtain approval. It is possible to organise international meetings and workshops in Vietnam, but again approval must be granted by the authorities and in some cases it is necessary to negotiate with the authorities to obtain their approval.

International sources classify Vietnam as not being a "free country". Freedom House gives the level of civil liberty in Vietnam a low ranking of 2.8 points on a scale from 0 to 7, with 7 being the highest.[36] In another study, Vietnam scored a 7 until 1999 – but the scale was reversed, with 7 as the lowest! Since 2000, the country's civil liberty rating made a moderate improvement to a score of 6 on the same scale.[37]

The majority of the SAG's members gave this indicator scores between 1 and 2. The aggregated score was 1.4, indicating that there are more than occasional violations of civil liberties.

2.2.2 Information rights. This indicator focuses on legal guarantees of public access to information, and how accessible government documents are to the public. Access to government information has been difficult for ordinary people, but major laws and decrees have been published in Vietnamese and English language editions of the *Official Gazette* (*Cong Bao*) and in books since the early 1990s. The situation has improved in several respects: TV has started to transmit the biannual sessions of the National Assembly, and the press is increasingly writing about the legislative debates and laws passed by the NA. The introduction of e-governance and government websites has facilitated access to more government documents on the Internet. In recent years, the state budget has been published in part and made accessible, a change from before, when it was unavailable. However, use of the Internet mainly benefits the urban, computer-literate population. Vietnam was connected to the global network in 1997 and access has expanded quickly in the cities and, more recently, in major towns, as well as at post offices in smaller villages. Internet service is available in all 64 provinces (SRV 2005). There are 5,000 Internet cafes across the country (BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific 26.7.2005/vnnews-l 28.7.2005).

The average SAG score for this indicator was 1.5, between "access to government documents is expanding" (1) and "the legislation regarding public access is in place, but in practice it is difficult to obtain government documents" (2). However, SAG scores ranged from 0 to 3.

2.2.3. Press freedoms. To what extent are press freedoms ensured by law and in practice? The media are numerous in Vietnam, with a large variety of newspapers, magazines, and journals. TV

[36] <www.freedomhouse.org/research/crossroads/2004/vietnam2004.pdf> Other countries in the same category include: Belarus, China, Haiti, Laos, Somalia, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe, www.freedomhouse.org 2005.
[37] <www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2003/countryratings/vietnam.htm> [Visited 16.5.2005].

has spread and developed in the last decade, now with one national television channel, four regional and 64 provincial channels. There is also one national radio station and 600 district radio stations, and Internet service is expanding quickly. The number of newspapers has increased from 258 in 1990 to 553 in 2005, and there are 200 electronic newspapers (SRV 2005). Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the Constitution of Vietnam, but it is illegal to disseminate "State secrets" or information threatening the "security of the State". The press and other media are controlled by the State under the Publication Law and the Press Law. The Central Committee on Ideology and Cultural Affairs issues guidelines and directives to editors and publishing houses. General Secretary of the Communist Party Nong Duc Manh stressed at the 8th Congress of Vietnam Journalist's Association in August 2005 that the media is a bridge between Party, State and people. Journalists are supposed to help improve political awareness, heighten social responsibility and build national patriotism. At the same time, they should "stamp out information that negatively affects the country's economic, political and cultural life" (Nong Duc Manh 2005). The State controls the Internet, has the ability to block certain websites and prohibits Internet use if it threatens the security of the State or for sites that are considered unethical, such as pornography sites (Human Rights Watch). In spite of the various ways the State can make itself felt, the most important form of censorship is in fact self-censorship (Abuza 2004).

The limitation of press freedom leads to a low rating for Vietnam in international "accountability and public voice" indexes: 1.3 on a scale of 7 (Abuza 2004), one of the lowest scores in Asia. A different calculation of freedom of expression ranked Vietnam 177th out of 194 countries (up from 179th in 2003), with a score of 82 out of 100 in 2004, indicating that Vietnam does not have a free press (Freedom House: Freedom of the Press 2005).[38] Some SAG members found this rating unreasonably low and not convincing as the censorship is limited and opined that these sources represent hostile attitudes towards the country.

There is limited understanding in Vietnam as to why the country is rated so low in international comparisons. Even if there are some violations of press freedoms, they are not frequent and, at the same time, there are critical newspapers like Lao Dong and Tuoi Tre, which are published by the trade and youth unions. Other publications also raise issues of corruption and social problems. The challenge for the press is often how to express criticism and find a balance without crossing any unwritten boundaries.

The SAG members were fairly well agreed on this issue, with the scores ranging from 1 to 2. The average score was 1.58, which points to the occurrence of violations, but not so frequently.

2.3 Socio-Economic Context

This subdimension describes the socio-economic situation in Vietnam, analysed according to 8 sub-indicators. Table III.2.5 shows the final score, which is rated according to how many of the socio-economic criteria characterise the situation in the country. Vietnam does not fulfil two of the criteria.

[38] 1 indicating total press freedom 100 indicating absolute lack of press freedom.

TABLE III.2.5: Indicators assessing socio-economic context

Ref#	Indicators	Score
2.3.1	Socio-economic context	2

2.3.1. Socio-economic context. One of the genuinely important factors of the developments and changes that have taken place in Vietnam over the last 15 years has been the high growth rate, which accompanied reforms made towards a market economy and which has lifted a large part of the population out of severe poverty. This is also an important factor behind the considerable level of popular support for the present government.

The sub-indicators are selected to give a glimpse of the overall socio-economic situation. Each one provides a benchmark representing a socio-economic barrier to the development of civil society. In brief, the sub-indicators are as follows: 1) poverty; 2) civil war; 3) severe ethnic or religious conflicts; 4) severe economic crisis; 5) severe social crisis; 6) serious socio-economic crisis; 7) illiteracy; 8) lack of IT infrastructure.

1. *Widespread poverty (are more than 40% of people living on $2 a day?)* Poverty has been reduced from a level of 70% in the 1980s prior to the *doi moi* reforms, to 58% in 1992, 35% in 1998, 29% in 2002, to 23% in 2004. This is based on a converted level of parity prices to 1 USD per day (Vietnam Development Report 2003; UNDP 2005). A new poverty line was introduced in 2005 based on 2 USD per day (converted into the national context). The data indicate that the percentage of the population living under the adjusted 2 USD a day level was 63.7% in 2002 (UNDP HDR 2003). The level of poverty is decreasing, but it is still higher than the 40% that CIVICUS suggests represents a critical line. Vietnam is one of the poorest countries in the region, with a GNP per capita of around 550 USD (Statistical Yearbook 2004) and 2,490 USD in GDP per capita in PPP values (HDR 2005). (This criteria is not meeting the standard suggested)
2. *Civil war (armed conflict in the last 5 years?)* The country has not experienced any armed conflicts in the last 5 years with the exception of the demonstrations in the central highlands in 2001 and 2004 and the riot in Thai Binh in 1997. All conflicts have been of short duration, but potential exists for further conflict. There have not been armed conflicts in the last 5 years.
3. *Severe ethnic and religious conflicts*. Some conflicts regarding land and religion have taken place. The reasons behind the conflicts are complicated and have historical roots, but are also due to the increasing pressure on land and a large migration of Viet people from the lowland to the Central Highlands (SRV White Book 2005). In 2004, a group of citizens took refuge in Cambodia, but were returned in mid-2005 after an intervention by the UNHCR (vnnews-l 26 July 2005). The country experiences some disputes between the State and some religious congregations, but these do not represent "severe ethnic and religious conflicts".
4. *Severe economic crisis (e.g. external debt is more than GNP).* No severe crisis has happened, but a number of difficulties have occurred regularly. Vietnam was affected by the Asian financial crisis in 1997, though not severely and it recovered quickly within a few years. In 2002, SARS created a crisis for several months, and bird flu has returned several times with effects on poultry farmers and related businesses. Every year, regions are devastated by floods and droughts. Increasing oil prices in 2005, along with the other problems, is influencing the price level. However, Vietnam benefits at the national level from being a net oil exporter. Even if the debt is increasing, the debt service in relation to

GDP ratio is low, because the economy and exports are growing quite quickly. It was calculated to be 3.5% of GDP as of 2002 (UNDP HDR 2003; World Bank 2004; CIEM 2005).

5. *Severe social crisis (over the last 2 years).* Social crises follow disasters and other crises. While HIV/AIDS is spreading in the country, more prophylaxis and support are starting to be provided to victims and this need not be considered a social crisis.
6. *Severe socio-economic inequities (Gini coefficient > 0.4).* In spite of the rapid economic growth, inequalities have remained fairly limited, though they are beginning to widen. The Gini coefficient for expenditures has increased from 0.34 in 1993 to 0.35 in 2002 and will probably increase further in the years to come (Vietnam Development Report 2003). The level is nevertheless lower than 0.40, which CIVICUS suggests as a benchmark.
7. *Pervasive adult illiteracy (over 40%).* Large-scale "education for all" campaigns have been implemented in the country within the last 5 years and literacy, which had been at a relatively high level already, has increased to 89% for women and 95% for men (over the age of 10)(Vietnam Gender Statistics 2005).
8. *Lack of IT infrastructure (i.e. fewer than 5 hosts per 10,000 inhabitants).* IT was severely lagging behind some years ago, but has been catching up in the early 2000s, particularly in the cities. CIVICUS uses the indicator of hosts per 10,000 inhabitants. According to the International Telecommunication Union database (2003), there were 0.04 hosts per 10,000 inhabitants in Vietnam, much lower than the benchmark suggested by CIVICUS of 5. This number is, however, also much lower than other sources indicate (SRV White Book 2005; UNDP HDR 2003). (This criteria is lower than the suggested line)

Vietnam's socio-economic situation is characterised by stability with high growth beginning from a low level of development. The main problems facing the country from among the abovementioned issues are the still widespread poverty, increasing inequality and some internal conflicts. The SAG assigned an average score of 1.9, indicating that the social and economic conditions somewhat limit the effective functioning of civil society. Among the sub-indicators, Vietnam does not meet the benchmarks for poverty and the IT infrastructure. Many poor farmers tend to be more interested in the daily livelihood than in political and civic rights. However, it was mentioned in the SAG that the rapid and steady improvements made over the last 15 years contributed to members' relatively positive assessments.

2.4 Socio-Cultural Context

This subdimension examines the extent to which existing socio-cultural norms and attitudes are conducive or detrimental to civil society. Table III.2.6 summarises the scores of the three indicators: trust, tolerance and public spiritedness.

TABLE III.2.6: Indicators assessing socio-cultural context

Ref#	Indicators	Score
2.4.1	Trust	2
2.4.2	Tolerance	2
2.4.3	Public spiritedness	2

2.4.1. Trust. Trust among people is sometimes considered as the most important feature of civil society's external environment. Our analysis of trust is based largely on the data and figures from the *World Values Survey Vietnam*, in which 41% of participants say that most people are

trustworthy.[39] The national level of trust is fairly high and is similar to some other Asian countries: 42% in Japan, 41% in Taiwan, 52% in China. However, it is much higher than the level in the Philippines, where only 6% of interviewees say people are trustworthy. "Trust" is, according to international theories, supposed to increase in societies with a higher level of civic culture (indicating democratic values) (Putnam 2002; Dalton et al. 2002). Traditional values, however, are still deeply rooted in Vietnam; these values are often prevalent in countries with traditional agricultural, Buddhist and Confucian values. Vietnam is still deeply immersed in ancestor worship. Traditional culture and Confucianism teach people to trust a relatively narrow circle of family, relatives and close friends, or a bit broader group within one's village, and to be cautious of strangers. Communist culture, once a key factor of social trust thanks to the ideal of "comrade unity" and important during wartime, has been fading rapidly since the war and since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Surveys conducted in East European nations in the 1990s, indicate the level of social trust is low, but that it differs substantially from country to country (Dalton et al. 2002).

However, it might be that the trust level changes differently during the transition from a rural-based Confucian/Buddhist society to a more modern, urban one, and trust may even fall for a period before increasing again. In this case, traditional "trust" or "social capital" is transformed into new types of trust which do not just reflect civic culture, but also social networks in a broader sense (Norlund 2005). The fairly high level of trust in Vietnam does not reflect "social capital" formation in a traditional sense, with increased "democratic values". For instance, members of political groups do not advocate (liberal) democratic governance to a greater extent than others; rather, they adhere more to the dominant political ideas (WVSV; Dalton et al. 2002; Dalton and Ong 2005; see Hannah 2005 for some Vietnamese viewpoints).

The SAG almost unanimously gave this indicator a score of 2 (1.9 average), representing a moderate level of trust, 31% to 50% on the WVS trust indicator.

2.4.2. Tolerance. Whereas a traditional culture of tolerance is still strong among Vietnam's citizens, negative attitudes toward new phenomena like prostitution, homosexuals, abortion and even divorce is fairly high and is even high in comparison with other Asian countries: 92% of Vietnamese say they are disgusted by prostitution, 82% oppose homosexuality, 61% oppose abortion and 50% do not think divorce is a good idea (WVSV 2001). These figures reflect the changes in Vietnamese society, as well as the differences between generations, a phenomenon which some call "ethical degradation" and the spread of "social evils". For example, in 1995 the average age of a Vietnamese's first sexual experience was 19; in a 2005 survey, it was 14.2 (Tuoi Tre 2005).

Tolerance toward a number of groups that differ in important aspects from the majority is rather low and there are particularly negative attitudes toward drug addicts, alcoholics, criminals and homosexuals. On the other hand, attitudes toward people with other beliefs and origins and of those with AIDS, are more positive (table III.2.7). All together, the data indicate a fairly low level of tolerance. However, based on an index of tolerance including five criteria suggested by CIVICUS (other races, other religions, foreign workers, AIDS sufferers, homosexuals) and using the WVS data, the result is a 1.6 (on a WVS scale from 0 to 3 with 0 as the highest level of tolerance equal to 2 on the CSI-scale), indicating a low-to-moderate level of tolerance in comparison with other countries.

[39] The question posed in the WVSV is: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you need to be careful in dealing with people?"

TABLE III.2.7: Tolerance: "Who would you not like to have as a neighbour?"

Category	Percentage
Drug addicts	54%
Heavy drinkers	44%
People with criminal record	43%
Homosexuals	39%
Emotionally unstable people	38%
Immigrant/foreign workers	33%
People with AIDS	31%
People with different ethnicity	32%
Muslims	27%
Christians	25%

Source: WVS Vietnam 2001.

The sources on tolerance are limited and SAG largely agreed with one another, assigning an average score of 1.8, indicating a "moderate level of tolerance", similar to the WVSV findings.

2.4.3. Public spiritedness. This indicator is defined as the extent to which citizens disapprove of violations of public norms, such as tax evasion and free-riding. The World Values Survey finds that the sense of public-spiritedness among members of society is very strong. 94% of interviewees say that bribery is never justified. Nearly nine out of ten Vietnamese say avoidance of taxes (88%) and fares (87%) is unjustified and three-fourths (73%) say that claiming illegitimate government benefits is unacceptable (table III.2.8). These opinions create a good environment for the fight against corruption (Dalton and Ong 2003, WVS Vietnam 2001).

An index established for comparison based on the three indicators gives a score of 1.6 (equal to a low end of score 2 on the CSI-scale), indicating a moderately high level of public spiritedness. Nonetheless, the results of the WVSV contrast the widespread "social evil" of corruption and bribery in Vietnam. The high level of corruption seen today demonstrates that people are not acting in accordance with their moral values.

TABLE III.2.8: Spiritedness: "Non-justifiable acts"

Non-justifiable acts	Percentage agree with statements
Bribery	94%
Falsifying taxes	88%
Avoiding fares on public transportation	86%
Illegally claiming government benefit	73%

Source: WVS Vietnam and Dalton & T. Ong, Vietnam's Public in Transition, 2003.

The SAG gave an aggregated score of 2, a "moderate level of spiritedness" in line with the WVS results, but with a range from 1 to 3. In other words, although the SAG members did not agree with each other, the aggregated score matches the WVS findings.

2.5 Legal Environment

This subdimension examines to what extent the existing legal environment enables or inhibits civil society. Table III.2.9 summarises the 4 indicator scores: CSO registration, freedom to criticise the government, tax laws and tax benefits for CSOs.

TABLE III.2.9: Indicators assessing legal environment

Ref#	Indicators	Score
2.5.1	CSO registration	1
2.5.2	Allowable advocacy activities	1
2.5.3	Tax laws favourable to CSOs	1
2.5.4	Tax benefits for philanthropy	0

2.5.1 CSO registration. With respect to the registration process (simple, quick, inexpensive, following legal provisions and applied consistently) there is a marked difference between the main types of organisations. The mass organisations have been established and registered for a long time and set up many new groups at the grassroots level in the 1990s. The new VNGOs have considerable difficulties registering. Many small VNGOs used to register under Decree 35/HTBT of 1992 on the establishment of non-profit and science and technology organisations. Today, they may also register under Decree 88 of 2003 on the operations of associations, provided they obtain permission from a government agency such as a ministry, usually MOHA, or VUSTA, and the appropriate level of government. However, the decree demands a considerable number of members' signatures for a group to be established, preventing small organisations from registering under it (Le Van Sang 2005).[40] Registration is often legally complicated and time consuming. In general, it takes around 3-6 months for a VNGO to be registered. The registration time depends heavily on personal connections and often involves monetary payments.[41] In fact, many VNGOs have been accepted mainly because they are led by retired state employees with good connections to the government and Party. The informal user groups (CBOs) that have spread quickly since the end of the 1990s may register under the Civil Code, an agricultural cooperative or with one of the mass organisations, such as the Red Cross, Farmers Association or an extension service (Care 2005). As of 2005, new regulations for micro-credit institutions allow VNGOs to form non-government, free standing credit institutions (communication from World Vision). Yet, the legal framework is not clear in many respects, particularly at the grassroots level.[42]

The procedures for setting up an INGO exemplify the environment for foreign organisations operating in close cooperation with CSOs. They must apply and present documents to obtain permission from PACCOM to work in Vietnam, including documents about their organisational profile, financial status and resources, an action plan, project, program of operation in Vietnam, the organisation's regulations and a document certifying the legal status of the organisation where it was originally founded. Many organisations complain that the latter certificate is not available in their home country and accordingly cannot submit it. The explanation for this cumbersome process is that Vietnam's government still feels a need to monitor INGOs carefully, so that their operations do not create negative attitudes among the public towards the government. In the mid-1990s, it took an INGO in Hue several years to achieve legal status (Norlund, Thu Nhung Mlo Duong Du, Ngo Huu Toan 2004). Even if it is easier now, it is still time consuming to wait for a license – from 30 to 90 days after the receipt of proper documents by an authorised agency, depending on the kind of license. After receiving a license, the organisation must register at the Provincial People's Committee (Decision 340/TTg, 1996).

[40] For an association operating at the national level, 100 signatures are the minimum; at the provincial level, 50 signatures; district level, 20 and commune level, 10 signatures (Circular no 01/2004TT-BNV, Jan 2004).
[41] Interviews of various VNGO directors 2005.
[42] For a list of laws and decrees relevant to civil society, see Annex 3.

The SAG members had differing opinions, scoring this indicator from 0 to 2, with an average of 1.1. It was commented that before Decree 88 (2003), the registration process was very complicated; The Garment Association spent, for instance, three years registering. After Decree 88 it has become easier, it was argued, but the score should still be low according to SAG members, since it is still a complicated and time-consuming process.

2.5.2. Allowable advocacy activities. Are the CSOs free to engage in advocacy and criticize the government? CSOs have no direct political objectives, but focus on social improvements. However, certain types of advocacy are now allowed and are increasingly being taken up by the VNGOs and INGOs, such as providing information about rights and about ways of participating in village decisions. As long as it is related to development and social programmes or humanitarian relief programmes, such advocacy is accepted by the authorities.

Recently, the government formally allowed Vietnam's Union of Science and Technology (VUSTA) to assess and criticise government policies (Decision 22/2002/TTg). VUSTA can directly submit policy recommendations to the Communist Party, National Assembly and government. For instance, VUSTA proposed that the National Assembly postpone an education law submitted by the Ministry of Education. This shows that the government is gradually recognising the importance of allowing CSOs and umbrella organisations such as VUSTA to criticise and make policy recommendations to the government. The smaller CSOs often have to make their voices heard through connections with parliamentarians or donor agencies.

After 10 years of cooperation between the government and INGOs, there is quite a good understanding between the two parties. INGOs have brought considerable funds into Vietnam, as well as new ideas to develop the country and reduce poverty, without interfering much in its internal affairs. The activities of INGOs are restricted to areas of development and humanitarian programmes and projects in accordance with the government's socio-economic development policies. The government allows INGOs to implement these programmes; without government sanction, the INGOs' activities would not be considered legal (Nguyen Manh Cuong 2005).

The SAG members assigned scores of 1 to 2, on average 1.2. It was argued that organisations actually do criticise the government and accordingly the score of 0 would be too low, even if the score should still be on the low side.

2.5.3. Tax laws favourable to CSOs. At present, CSOs are supposed to be non-profit organisations, are not considered business entities and have no tax code. That includes mass organisations as well as VNGOs. However, those organisations registered under Decree 88 that generate revenues from business activities are required to pay tax (US International Grantmaking 2005).

For INGOs, the tax preference system is more clearly indicated. All goods and services expenditures of money from foreign donors are tax exempt from all kinds of indirect taxes. To be repaid for import tax and special consumption tax, INGOs can file documentation certified by the Ministry of Planning and Investment to the General Customs Department for imported goods and services purchased with money from foreign donors as a form of international aid. Similarly, goods and services purchased domestically can have the value added tax and special consumption tax deducted if the necessary documents are filed. The procedure is in fact quite simple and most INGOs benefit from this opportunity (Ministry of Finance 2004-5).

The SAG gave an aggregated score of 1.2. However, scores from 0 to 2 were given, reflecting a lack of knowledge about the detailed procedures.

2.5.4 Tax benefit for philanthropy. This indicator concerns tax deductions or other benefits to encourage individual or corporate support for charity. No tax exemption is available for charity in Vietnam. On the one hand, the government encourages companies and individuals to contribute to charity. On the other hand, individuals and business organisations still have to pay income tax on such donations (Ministry of Finance 2005b; Ministry of Finance 2004). The SAG considered this to be one of the main reasons that the business sector and individuals do not participate more actively in charitable activities.

The SAG agreed broadly that there are no tax benefits, assigning an aggregated score of 0.2.

2.6 State-Civil Society Relations

This subdimension describes and assesses the nature and quality of relations between civil society and the state, looking at three indicators: the autonomy of CSOs, the dialogue with the State and state support for CSOs.

TABLE III.2.10: Indicators assessing state-civil society relations

Ref#	Indicators	Score
2.6.1	Autonomy of CSOs	1
2.6.2	Dialogue between CSOs and the State	1
2.6.3	Support for CSOs on the part of the State	1

2.6.1. Autonomy. To what extent does civil society exist and function independently of the State? Can CSOs operate without excessive government interference? And does government protect legitimate public interests? Vietnam's Communist Party dominates the economic and political system in the country. In fact, CSOs in Vietnam are not conceived of as existing or functioning independently of the State, according to the dominant political theory in Vietnam (Nguyen Manh Cuong 2005).

The mass organisations are considered part of the political system, as mediators between the grassroots and the political centre, but they are gaining increasingly independent roles. VNGOs must be approved by a ministry or other state agency. Although the control is in most cases a question of formality, it nevertheless restricts the freedom of NGOs. There are several channels by which certain government agencies can control domestic NGOs. To organise an international workshop or an international visit by a foreign or domestic expert, a VNGO must obtain official approval. Likewise, financial contributions and development projects financed by foreign donors also must be approved by government agencies (Prime Minister 1996; Ministry of Finance 2005a; Ministry of Finance 2005; Government Office 2003).

In spite of the many restrictions, VNGOs do not actually find them totally discouraging. Usually, fairly good connections between VNGOs and government/Party agencies help them to overcome bureaucratic processes. In a survey of 322 civic organisations, 60% in Ho Chi Minh City indicated that it was easy to work with government organisations, while only 37% in Hanoi said the same (Wischermann 2003). VNGOs are in fact not subject to excessive intervention by government agencies.

Informal organisations at the grassroots level can be considered both independent from and dependent on government, as they have close relations with other organisations at the local level that are officially registered (mass organisations, Red Cross, cooperatives, etc.). The increasing number of informal groups is also raising the government's interest in setting up a legal framework for grassroots organisations (Chu Tien Quang 2005).

The SAG gave this sub-indicator a low aggregate score of 1.2, indicating that CSOs are subject to "frequent unwarranted interference in their operations". However, the SAG opinions ranged from 0 to 2, depending on members' individual perspectives on whether the state strictly controls civil society, or whether its capacity is actually too weak to have any real control. The discussion also raised the idea that state interference should not be seen as only negative – it also protects organisations' legal rights and in that way helps them operate.

2.6.2. Dialogue. To what extent does the State dialogue with civil society and how inclusive and institutionalised are the rules of engagement? The interactions and communications between the CSOs and the government are diversified. Only the mass organisations have direct formal dialogue with the government and direct influence in the National Assembly. (For instance they may comment on laws that pertain to their fields of interest.) As for VNGOs and informal groups (CBOs), the situation is different. They are not considered part of the organisational configuration of the country and can only make their voices heard in public meetings or through local politicians.

The process that started with the outlining of the Vietnamese CPRGS in the late 1990s, opened up a new forum for dialogue between the government, international donors and INGOs.[43] At first, the VNGOs were not invited, but on the initiative of the donors and INGOs, a limited number of VNGOs joined the forum and their participation has to some extent continued in the bi-annual government-donor meetings, the Consultative Group Meetings (Norlund, Tran Ngoc Ca, Nguyen Dinh Tuyen 2003). About 20 partnership groups have been established to discuss specific issues of relevance for donors, such as forestry, fisheries, the environment, aid effectiveness, equalisation of state companies, gender, participation, etc. This process is helping create better relations between the government and VNGOs, but INGOs still have more influence on the government than VNGOs (Vietnam 2002).

The SAG scoring was contentious on the dialogue issue, ranging from 0 to 2, with an average score of 1.2. According to the SAG discussions, however, there are indications that state interference is diminishing and that the state is taking a more cooperative approach to VNGOs, as the conditions change and legislation develops. However, it was noted that the improved State-CSO dialogue might also lead to more interference.

2.6.3. Cooperation and support. What is the range of CSOs receiving state resources? No overall data are available concerning economic support or contracts from the government granted to CSOs. Originally, the mass organisations received a large budget from the state, but in the early 1990s, the State wanted the mass organisations to become more economically independent and the support was reduced. Today, they receive some funding from the state, but less than before and they have to seek out donors and other funds. It has not been possible to access specific figures about the proportions (see also section 1.6.1 for examples regarding resource mobilisation).

[43] As mentioned above, it is a PRSP in Vietnam. It was approved by the Government in March 2002.

VNGOs mainly play the role of service organisations and fulfil a needed gap in the delivery of social services to the poor. The survey, of 322 civil organisations, reveals that 10-15% of their budgets derive from the state (Wischermann 2003), a figure supported by government sources (Ministry of Finance 2005b). Actually, the VNGOs feel discriminated against because they cannot access government support for basic facilities like the mass organisations and professional associations, an issue the VNGOS have raised in regard to Decree 88/2003 and the upcoming Law on Associations. In principle, the VNGOs and professional associations are considered to be self-financing and they will only receive support for joint projects with the state.

Financially, VNGOs receive only limited financial support from the government. Even VUSTA, the umbrella organisations of many VNGOs, has only a limited operating budget from the government. Most of their budgets come from private sources, membership fees and international donor support (interviews with VUSTA member organisations).

The SAG score this sub-indicator from 1 to 2, with an aggregated score of 1.3, indicating a "limited range of CSOs receive support form the State".

2.7 Private Sector-Civil Society Relations

This subdimension describes and examines the nature and quality of relations between civil society and the private sector. Table III.2.11 summarises the scores of three sub-indications: the private sector's attitude to civil society, corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy.

TABLE III.2.11: Indicators assessing private sector-civil society relations

Ref#	Indicators	Score
2.7.1	Private sector attitude to civil society	1
2.7.2	Corporate social responsibility	1
2.7.3	Corporate philanthropy	1

2.7.1. Private sector attitude. What is the general attitude of the private sector towards civil society actors? During the time of the planned economy, all companies were part of the State sector; the private sector only developed during the 1990s, with the legal opening that occurred at that time for the growth of a local private sector and foreign investment. Since the introduction of the Enterprise Law in 2000, the number of private enterprises has doubled. However, there are often overlaps between the private and public sector in Vietnam. The General Federation of Trade Unions has been the most important CSO, working in factories and companies, but now about 200 business associations have been established as well, which are also part of civil society in Vietnam (Nguyen and Stromseth 2002).

The private sector has not been very active with respect to civil society at large; it has mainly sought to organise and improve its own situation vis-à-vis the State. However, there are contacts with organisations like the Women's Union, which operates a large-scale programme to support women entrepreneurs and the private sector and its business associations do, for instance, participate in social and humanitarian activities with donations to the handicapped, families of war martyrs, Heroic Mothers of Vietnam, or by training women micro-entrepreneurs (Nguyen and Stromseth 2002). The government has traditionally encouraged state-owned companies to support charitable activities and some of these attitudes spill over into private companies, often joint-ventures with state involvement. Foreign companies have different attitudes to civil society actors, from the South Korean companies, which are generally hostile to organisations such as trade

unions, to some of the US and Nordic companies, which have a more cooperative attitude towards unions and charity.

The SAG gave an aggregated score of 1.4 with a fair degree of agreement among the members. This score puts the attitude of the private sector between "generally indifferent" and "generally positive". The private sector is still considered less important than the public sector by SAG with respect to charity and civil society.

2.7.2. Corporate social responsibility. The question here is how developed concepts and acts of corporate responsibility are in Vietnam. The notion of corporate social responsibility has come to Vietnam, but it began mainly in the mid-1990s as the large multinational companies started investing in local factory facilities and labour. International civil society has brought companies such as Nike, Adidas, Hennes & Mouritz, Ikea and others to account and several companies have introduced codes of conduct. National companies are beginning to become more conscious of the negative impact of their production activities as well and the civil society in Vietnam has in a number of cases also managed to change planned construction sites by means of local protests (Bach Tan Sinh 2005). Some of the multinational companies, like Coca Cola and Nike, support the local trade unions, whereas many of the Korean and Taiwanese companies avoid supporting trade union activities.

The SAG's average score was 1.3. Individual members' scores ranged from 0 to 2.

2.7.3. Corporate philanthropy. No data is available for private sector support of CSOs. Supposedly, it is not large, but there are examples of cooperation with mass organisations, VNGOs or INGOs and there is an increasing desire for progress in this field. Examples of corporate philanthropy include private sector companies that give support to flood victims, like the state-owned companies used to do. This practice continues partly as a tradition taken over from the state sector where donations and collections for people suffering from natural calamities and other problems take place every year.

The SAG's score for this sub-indicator was 0.6, with broad agreement among the members, indicating that the level of support from private sector is limited.

Summary

Overall, the "environment" for civil society in Vietnam is not considered to be particularly conducive, but there are some contradictory tendencies. The aggregated SAG scoring for this dimension was 1.4, which is below the medium level between "somewhat disabling" and "somewhat enabling" for civil society. The environment is clearly considered the most restrictive dimension among the four dimensions of the civil society diamond, with limitations in legal and political space.

The analysis of the "environment" dimension includes seven subdimensions. The *political context* is overall assessed to be below a medium level and slightly disabling. Political rights are not rated highly by foreign sources, whereas the SAG was split on the issue. SAG members agreed that some limitations on political rights exist, but find that basic civic rights do exist in Vietnam. Political competition is not taking place, but yet popular support for the government is very high, according to the WVS for Vietnam. Rule of law has been gradually introduced since *doi moi*, however, the SAG members disagreed on how much it is implemented. All SAG members considered corruption

high, nonetheless state effectiveness is assessed at a medium level and decentralisation of financial budgets to the provinces is considerable, according to both World Bank information and the SAG.

The SAG rated *civil liberties* at a medium level. The viewpoints differed widely within the SAG and the average assessment at medium level stands in contrast to the foreign assessments placing Vietnam at a low level. Access to public information used to be very difficult, but it has improved with the modernisation of the administration and the advent of e-access. It was assessed by SAG to be at a medium-level, but with several dissenting views. Press freedoms were also assessed to be at a medium level, though a little above the other two sub-indicators, as it is possible for the press to discuss most issues openly.

The SAG judged the *legal environment* for CSOs to be non-conducive in terms of the procedures for registering organisations. However, civil society's inability to criticise the government is not seen as a big problem. In terms of freedom of expression, there is a grey zone with unclear limits. The tax laws are fairly favourable to mass organisations and small organisations, whereas those registered under Decree 88 of 2003 must pay taxes for business-oriented activities. INGOs are tax exempted for goods and services, but there is no tax benefit for philanthropy in general.

The issue of *state-civil society relations* reveals considerable disagreements within the SAG. Autonomy of CSOs and their dialogue with the State are rated fairly low. Less contentious is the issue of the range of state cooperation and support for CSOs, but it reflects the different access to state resources by the various organisations. With respect to relations between the *private sector and civil society*, the SAG assessed the private sector's attitude towards civil society to be at a medium level and the development of corporate responsibility is rated lower, but lowest is the assessment of corporate philanthropy, which is deemed to be very insignificant.

The *socio-economic context* is one of the brighter points in the Vietnamese environment, because poverty has been reduced from an extremely high level to a moderate one, though Vietnam still belongs to the poorest group of countries in the world. The country has experienced no severe economic, political or social crises in recent years and inequalities are below the benchmark Gini coefficient of 0.4. The IT infrastructure is still not very developed, but is rapidly improving.

The *socio-cultural context* is another positive point in the SAG assessment. It shows medium levels of trust, tolerance and spiritedness, which are generally considered to be conducive to civil society. The WVS for Vietnam analysis concludes that all three factors are at a moderate level, whereas the SAG finds that the WVS for Vietnam is too positive with regard to tolerance and public spiritedness, because of the high level of corruption.

Discussion

Before *doi moi* (1986), the State maintained the idea that associations should be an organic part of the State and that problems in society should be solved within this framework. It had little understanding of CSOs outside the State sphere, which created considerable obstacles to the emergence of a civil society. Since *doi moi*, the government has struggled to find a new balance between the market, State control and social liberties.

The space for civil society in Vietnam is quite limited, but broadened in the 1990s in spite of the continuation of the political system. This points to the special political configuration in Vietnam, where the space for civil society is on the one hand dependent on what the Party-State grants civic

organisations and, on the other hand, on organisations' ability to shift the boundaries of their space within, as well as outside, of the state sphere.

In recent years, the government has undergone a reorientation towards a structure in which the Party increasingly takes the role of formulating policy, while the administration takes responsibility for implementing that policy. A larger space for CSOs emerges because of the State's policy of encouraging "people funded" and "private establishments" to perform basic social services (Phan Van Khai 26 July 2005; Draft Socio-economic Development Plan 2006-10). CSOs are encouraged to engage in social issues that the state has limited means to handle and the role of CSOs is recognised as more important than before (Party Civil Affairs Committee 2004; Nguyen Vi Khai 2005).

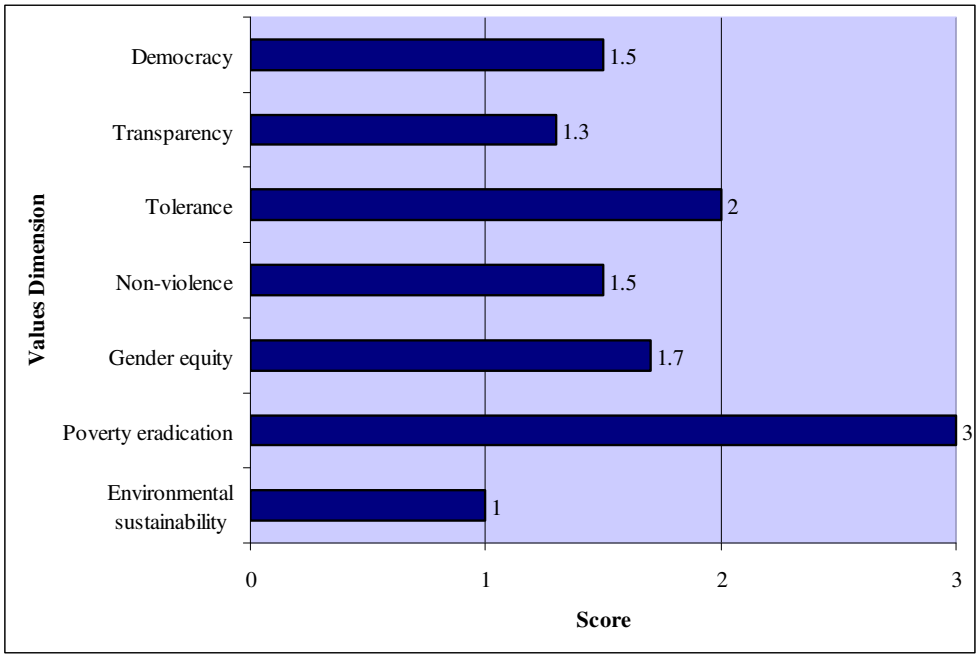
The socio-cultural conditions in Vietnam, with a relatively high level of trust and "social capital", suggest that Vietnam does not fully comply with the dominant theories that see trust as a key element in developing a civic culture and (liberal) democracy. They also seem to deviate from the pattern of several Eastern European "post-communist" countries, where the level of trust in most cases is fairly low. However, the relatively high level of trust might be supportive of civil society, albeit of a somewhat different kind, one that mainly manoeuvres within the space granted to it, but that continues to push its limits to gain ever more room.

One of the core areas to improve is the legislation for CSOs, both in terms of setting up and operating of organisations and to ensure that the state facilitates the work of CSOs and charity through tax legislation and support structures. Also, CSOs might be able to support the fight against corruption by showing good examples and broadening the public discussion, but the state has to realise and fully accept the CSOs' potential in this regard.

3. VALUES

The "values" dimension comprises seven subdimensions with a total of 14 indicators regarding Vietnamese civil society's practice of social values, including how they are practiced within organisations and in the larger society. Figure III.3.1 present the scores for the seven subdimensions, including: 1) democracy, 2) transparency of CSOs, 3) tolerance in civil society, 4) non-violence, 5) gender equity, 6) poverty eradication and 7) environmental sustainability. The aggregated scores result in a values score of 1.7, a little above medium. A low score on transparency indicates that this is a particularly difficult issue for Vietnamese CSOs. Democracy and environmental sustainability are also areas of weakness, whereas almost all CSOs are engaged in poverty eradication.

FIGURE III.3.1: Subdimension scores in values dimension



3.1 Democracy

This subdimension examines to what extent civil society practices and promotes democracy in Vietnam. Table III.3.1 summarises the relevant indicators: democratic practices within CSOs and civil society actions to promote democracy.

TABLE III.3.1: Indicators assessing democracy

Ref#	Indicators	Score
3.1.1	Democratic practices within CSOs	2
3.1.2	Civil Society actions to promote democracy	1

3.1.1. Democratic practices within CSOs. The focus on this indicator is to understand the extent to which civil society actors practice and promote democracy. CSOs' internal rules and regulations for electing leaders are taken as indications of their level of internal democracy. In general, the

organisational culture in Vietnam is fairly top-down and leadership-oriented. This applies to the mass organisations as well as the VNGOs. Most of the 29 socio-political or professional associations under the Fatherland Front follow specified regulations of democratic centralism at each of their four levels of organisation: centre, province, district and commune. Leaders are democratically elected at each level.[44] However, the candidates must be approved by the higher levels, according to the principles of democratic centralism. Decision-making on the overarching policy takes place at the central level, but grassroots units do have a certain space for their own activities. The chairperson of the commune is elected by its members and the Women's Union chairperson is usually someone respected by the local villagers. She does not have to be a Party member, but she often is.

VNGOs are often established by strong individuals and a certain amount of patronage is prevalent among a number of the organisations. This is often important for creating unity within small organisations that do not have a large base of support. There has been no general study of VNGOs' internal practices in Vietnam, but many particular cases are known. Some organisations have established a management board, while others have not. As there are no general regulations for the internal structure of small civic organisations, some work like non-profit organisations and others like small consultancy companies.

At the village level, informal groups like credit organisations, friendship groups and old age associations usually elect a chairperson and an accountant from among their members. Usually, such groups function according to democratic principles (Norlund, Thu Nhung Mlo Duon Du, Ngo Huu Toan 2004). In the South of Vietnam, cooperatives are now being set up voluntarily with charters and regulations; informal rural groups have no formal regulations, some have registered under the Civil Code (Chu Tien Quang 2005; Fforde and Huan 2001).

INGOs in Vietnam are often structured as branches of international NGOs and most of them practice democratic principles. The VUFO-NGO Resource Centre is managed by a co-directorship, including both a VUFO director and a director hired by the INGOs to support INGO activities. A steering committee ensures democratic management of the VUFO-NGO membership organisation.

The SAG members disagreed widely in the scoring to this indicator. There were several scores of both 0 and 3. The aggregated result is 1.5, The disagreements in the SAG not only reflect the fact that major segments of civil society are guided by different rules from one another, but also that there is disagreement on the definition of democracy. For instance, some see the democratic centralism as democratic, but others do not.

3.1.2. CS actions to promote democracy. Democracy has been part of the political terminology in Vietnam since the time of Ho Chi Minh and the anti-French resistance of the 1930s. It has nonetheless taken on a different meaning in Vietnam than in Western society. One of the small VNGO leaders expressed it thus: "Democracy is natural for us, so it is not discussed so much. It is guaranteed by the Constitution". Sometimes democracy is called "Dân chủ trong khuôn khổ" (democracy inside a frame). Accordingly, the State grants some room for democracy, but it is not itself elected in a Western sense because of pre-screening of candidates. Nevertheless, space for democracy in a more Western sense appeared in the 1990s, as mentioned in the introduction. As for

[44] The leadership is elected by members according to democratic rules; lower levels shall follow the decisions of higher levels and the minority should follow the majority's decisions.

mass organisations and professional associations, they formally accept the democracy of the Party-State. Even the VNGOs, which make use of the increasing social space to engage in wider operations, are also living with the Party-State fairly harmoniously and do not publicly challenge the authorities (Bui The Cuong and Nguyen Quang Vinh 2001).

The promotion of public participation is probably the best way of understanding how civil society promotes new values and practices democracy. Local authorities and communities have increasingly accepted popular participation as a method to engage people in community development. This thinking goes hand-in-hand with the Grassroots Democracy Decree of 1998 (updated by Decree 79/2003). Participatory ideas have also been introduced through INGOs and international development agencies and, to a considerable degree, have been successfully accepted and absorbed by the local communities, organisations and authorities (Norlund et al. 2004). However, an important limitation of the Grassroots Democracy Decree (GDD) is that it only applies to the commune and village levels, despite the fact that many policies and projects are decided on by the administration on higher levels, i.e. district or province. Nevertheless, there are instances of people objecting to the mismanagement of such projects and receiving support from the authorities (Do Bich Diem 2005). However, the GDD is not yet applied consistently (McElwee et al. 2005). Actions to promote participatory democracy at higher levels are not taking place, however INGOs are about to start activities to enhance local participation and capacity for local governments, CSO and private sector (SNV information on local governance activity 2005).

The SAG's aggregated score was 1.3 (with a reasonable level of agreement among the members), indicating that only a few civil society activities can be detected.

3.2 Transparency

This subdimension examines to what extent the civil society practices and promotes transparency. Table III.3.2 summarises the respective indicators: Democracy within CSOs, financial transparency and actions to promote transparency.

TABLE III.3.2: Indicators assessing transparency

Ref#	Indicators	Score
3.2.1	Corruption within CSOs	2
3.2.2	Financial transparency of CSOs	1
3.2.3	Civil society actions to promote transparency	1

3.2.1. Corruption within civil society. There is not much evidence of how widespread corruption is within CSOs in Vietnam. Funds supplied by the State, INGOs or other donors are quite strictly supervised and audited, but this does not exclude graft in such forms as double payments or the production of fake receipts. The budgets of small VNGOs or the lower levels of mass organisations are generally fairly limited and are usually under the control of the director and accountant. By tradition, funders must trust in people's sincerity. The "rule of law" is still under-developed and CSOs are not well acquainted with the full process of budgeting, accounting and auditing. Funding creates opportunities for corruption and cases of the misuse of funds are reported, but donors cannot always determine whether the problem is due to corruption or simply accounting negligence (Interview with donor development agency and INGO). The mass organisations have rules for the collection and distribution of funds, but at the grassroots levels, budgeting is seldom done and there is little control over funds. Money is spent when it is available (Norlund 2000). Even the mass organisations have occasionally been accused of corruption, though it is difficult to verify

(Interview with donor agency). Foreign funds help create animosity and competition among CSOs in Vietnam.

The SAG was broadly agreed on this topic, with a fairly positive aggregated score of 1.9, indicating that "there are instances of corruption in CSOs". There was no consensus whether donor funding was more accountable than other funds. Some SAG members believed this was the case because of the presence of strict regulations, but others argued that accounting can be manipulated, including for donor funds. It was furthermore pointed out that corruption is a matter of definition and that the petty corruption of gift-giving is widely accepted.

3.2.2. Financial transparency of CSOs. Information on the share of CSOs practicing financial transparency in Vietnam, or of what percentage of CSOs make their financial accounts public, is not available. There is no tradition of public accounting and transparency, so the number is certainly limited. However, when foreign donors or INGOs provide funds, they usually demand more openness. Since the early 2000s, there has also been a public call for more financial transparency and this seems to have intensified since 2004, including in regard to the CSOs (Party Civil Affairs Committee 2004).

The mass organisations do not provide free access to their budgets and accounting; only a few of the VNGOs practice transparency in their financial accounting (Dang Ngoc Quang 2005); and INGOs in Vietnam are not very public about their accounting either, even if their overall budgets are made available on request. One problem for financial transparency is the organisations' lack of practice and skills at using budgets as a planning tool or balancing spending in relation to budgets. Funds are usually spent for specific purposes when they are available, a practice that can be noted in many organisations and which also causes problems for the quickly expanding micro-credit programmes (Dang Ngoc Quang 2005). VNGOs, INGOs and VUSTA have in recent years organised a number of workshops to promote greater financial transparency in the organisations.

The SAG scored this indicator in two directions. Two thirds of the members gave it a score of 0, "a small minority of CSOs, less than 30%, make their financial accounts publicly available". The others gave scores of 2 or 3, "a majority, more than 51%, make it available". The average score was 0.7, indicating that "a minority, 30-50 percent, makes the financial account public".

3.2.3. Civil Society actions to promote transparency. As corruption in general has become recognised as a national problem, the National Assembly has started taking stronger action to denounce it. Civil society has a role to play at the lower levels, but denouncing corruption and demanding transparency at the national level has not been a major concern for CSOs, with the exception of the media. The mass organisations have the role of supervisor at the grassroots level, but the petty culture of corruption has become almost institutionalised. On the other hand, in a few cases at lower levels, civil society has taken strong action against local leaders who were accused of corruption and abuses of power, as in the case of Thai Binh in 1997 and some other provinces (Shank et al. 2004).

The SAG was almost totally agreed on a score of 1, with the aggregated result equal to 1.0.

3.3 Tolerance

This subdimension examines to what extent the Vietnamese civil society actors and organisations practice and promote tolerance. Table III.3.3 summarises the respective indicators: tolerance within civil society and civil society actions to promote tolerance.

TABLE III.3.3: Indicators assessing tolerance

Ref#	Indicators	Score
3.3.1	Tolerance within the civil society arena	2
3.3.2	Civil society activities to promote tolerance	2

3.3.1 Tolerance within the CS arena. To what extent is civil society a tolerant arena? Generally speaking, CSOs are tolerant groups. Almost all of them try to help promote development and poverty reduction, to improve culture or to give humanitarian aid to a particular group of disadvantaged people, such as the poor, farmers, women, children, the elderly, ethnic minorities, the sick, the handicapped, Agent Orange victims, HIV/AIDS victims, drug addicts, homosexuals or prostitutes (VNGO Directories and pamphlets; VUSTA brochure). Not all CSOs are tolerant in all areas, however. Each group has its own focus and they may not be as tolerant of issues outside their own spheres. Moreover, there are also less tolerant forces in civil society, like drug smuggling rings and large-scale corruption. It is, however, problematic to try to define what these kinds of "mafia" and "social evils" are, even if they are counted as less tolerant forces.

The SAG scored this indicator from 0 to 2, with an aggregated score of 1.6.

3.3.2 CS actions to promote tolerance. In general, CSOs in Vietnam promote tolerance quite forcefully with respect to the poor, women, children, ethnic minorities, etc. HIV/AIDS-positive persons have been stigmatised and excluded, but recently the area of HIV/AIDS has been recognised as a priority area and new alliances of CSOs and donors have been established to both help the victims and promote a general understanding of the situation. Examples of their work include a new network to promote the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS which was initiated in 2005 by CARE and Cisdoma, as well as a large workshop organised in fall 2005 on "VNGOs - community health care", organised by a VNGO network, VUSTA and the Central Committee for Education and Science and supported by INGOs such as ICCO and BROT.

Groups such as drug addicts, homosexuals and prostitutes, are generally perceived negatively by Vietnamese society (see 2.4.2 and table III.2.6) and are commonly denounced as "social evils". However, there are CSOs supporting these groups. Intolerant forces like drug smuggling, corruption and crime are denounced by civil society, whereas challenging certain other issues is more difficult because certain perceptions are deeply embedded, such as perceptions of ethnic minorities as less civilised and developed, or of women as inferior to men.

The average SAG score was fairly high at 1.9. However, there was considerable disagreement among SAG members and scores varied from 1 to 3.

3.4 Non-violence

This subdimension describes and assesses to what extent the Vietnamese civil society actors practice and promote non-violence. Table III.3.4 summarises the indicators: non-violence within the civil society area and civil society actions to promote non-violence.

TABLE III.3.4: Indicators assessing non-violence

Ref#	Indicators	Score
3.4.1	Non-violence within the civil society arena	2
3.4.2	Civil society actions to promote non-violence	1

3.4.1. Non-violence in the civil society arena. The issue here is how widespread the use of violence is among civil society actors to express their interests, including damaging property and personal violence. Almost all CSOs adhere to principles of non-violence and it is not really considered an "issue". Violent actions have taken place in recent years on some occasions. Land speculation is a very profitable business and land grabbing has led to protests from those who have lost their land or feel under-compensated. One of the more well-known cases took place in December 2004 when 400 people clashed with security guards at the groundbreaking ceremony for a new golf course built with foreign funds in a province near Hanoi. The protestors were dissatisfied with the compensation they had received for the expropriated land (vnnews-l). Demonstrations in the Central Highlands in 2004 led to confrontations with the police. Among the negative forces in civil society can be mentioned mafia-like drug rings, organised prostitution and trafficking of women. Violence and criminality among youth groups are on the rise, often related to drugs.

The SAG scores were quite high, with an average of 2.1, yet the scores varied form 1 to 3.

3.4.2 CS actions to promote non-violence and peace. How much does civil society actively promote a non-violent society, including non-violent resolutions of social conflicts, or rejecting violence against women, child abuse and youth violence? Having been involved in many protracted wars, the Vietnamese feel strongly about the values of peace and non-violence. The long-established peace movement is still active and larger scale incidents of violence are rare and are usually condemned by civil society. Nonetheless, the level of conflict is on rise as society becomes increasingly complicated. Land issues are one of the growing problems that often lead to conflicts across the country. Generational differences are also more and more evident and the youth culture has led to new problems such as drug-addiction and drug-smuggling and certain types of youth violence have appeared, such as racing haphazardly on motorbikes and street crimes.

Social conflicts, like land conflicts, are not recognised as problems that can be treated as issues of violence, but rather are seen as legal problems. For instance, a new Land Law was promulgated in July 2004 to facilitate the resolution of some pressing land problems. The government sent teams all over the country in 2005 to look at problems related to the implementation of the law. CSOs are involved in peace and friendship organisations and (at the local level) mass organisations are usually active in dispute-resolution committees. A few training courses have been conducted on "conflict solutions" by VNGOs; however, there are few CSOs working in this field, except with regard to stopping "domestic violence", an issue that is gaining momentum (Dang Ngoc Quang 2005; ADB 2002; Vu Manh Loi et al. 1999).

SAG members generally agreed with one another on the issue of the promotion of non-violence, assigning scores of 1 to 2. The aggregated score is quite low at 1.4.

3.5 Gender Equity

This subdimension examines the extent to which civil society actors in Vietnam practice and promote gender equity. Table III.3.5 summarises the respective indicators: gender equity within the

civil society arena, gender equity practices within the CSOs and civil society actions to promote gender equity.

TABLE III.3.5: Indicators assessing gender equity

Ref#	Indicators	Score
3.5.1	Gender equity within the civil society arena	1
3.5.2	Gender equity practices within the CSOs	2
3.5.3	Civil society actions to promote gender equity	2

3.5.1. Gender equity within the CS arena. This indicator is concerned with the extent to which civil society in Vietnam is a gender-equitable zone in terms of its leadership. Gender representation in CSO leadership varies among the different types of organisations. However, women occupy a fairly high share of leadership positions in CSOs, significantly more than within State agencies. Some examples will illustrate the variety of women's representation in leadership among different types of institutions.[45] The share of women managers in semi-public, non-state service units and public service units in Ho Chi Minh City is very high (56-64%), whereas the share of women managers in state socio-professional associations, state agencies and state social organisations is substantially lower than that of men (9-29%) (table III.3.6). The share of female leaders is consistently higher in CSOs than in state organisations, with the exception of the socio-political groups (mass organisations), which have a lower share of female leaders (32%). One reason for the high proportion of female leaders in the "service units" is the fairly high number of health and social services organisations, a domain where women are traditionally in the majority.

TABLE III.3.6: Managers of civil service units in Ho Chi Minh City and share of women, 2002

Organisation	Total no of managers	Female	Percentage of female
State agencies (State)	721	191	27%
Public service units (semi State/CS)	2,145	1,201	56%
Semi-public service units (CS)	107	68	64%
Non-state service units (CS)	304	182	60%
Political organisations (Party) (State)	359	87	24%
Socio-political organisation (CS)	435	140	32%
State socio-professional organisation (CS)	23	2	9%
Non-state socio-professional units (CS)	21	9	43%
State social organisation (State)	63	18	29%
Non-state social organisation (CS)	1,400	444	32%
Total	5,578	2,342	42%

Source: Survey on Economic and Public Service Units in Ho Chi Minh City 2002, 2004. Quoted in Chu Dung 2005.
Explanations: *Public service units* are founded by the State authorities, political organisations, socio-political organisations or individuals in the fields of: health, education, culture, sports, science and media.
*Semi-public service unit*s are units created from an association between the State and a non-State organisation.
Non-state social organisations are mainly funded by membership contributions.

Other sources reveal that female directors can be found in 10 out of 31 VNGOs (32 percent) in one of the NGO-networks in Hanoi, a figure which is similar to that for non-state social organisations in Ho Chi Minh City (32 percent).

Women make up a higher share of leaders in VNGOs than in the state sector, mass and socio-professional associations. The staffs also consist of a higher share of women than men. Women tend

[45] See explanation of Table III.3.6 and footnote 27 for definition of "establishment".

to be attracted to work in CSOs. One reason might be that feminine and humanitarian values are stronger among the CSOs than in other types of employment. It might also be due to the fact that the civil society arena has less regulated working conditions than in the state sector, including more flexible working hours, which is attractive for women who are the primary caregivers for children. Nevertheless, women are not equally represented with men in leadership positions.

The SAG agreed on a fairly low score (1-2) on the issue of gender equity in CSOs. The aggregate score was 1.4.

3.5.2. Gender equitable practices within CSOs. The second indicator concerns how much CSOs practice gender equity internally and to what extent CSOs apply policies to ensure gender equity. General information about gender equity in CSOs is not available. As many CSOs focus on women as a group, it could be expected that gender is also a concern within the organisations. However, in organisations with strong, senior leadership that might not necessarily be the case.

This was a contentious issue in the SAG, with scores ranging from 1 to 3. Interestingly, the female SAG members assigned lower scores than the males and younger members gave lower scores than older ones. Representatives of VNGOs and INGOs scored this indicator lower than the other representatives. The field of gender equity is obviously a contested area and young females working in the CSOs are the most critical of the existing state of affairs within their organisations. The average score in the SAG was 1.6.

3.5.3. CS actions to promote gender equity. CSOs are quite strong in promoting gender and women's issues. The Women's Union has been successful promoting equality for women in society, partly in cooperation with the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW). The law promotes equality between the sexes. There have been many achievements over the last few decades; women have obtained more rights and opportunities in Vietnamese society than in many other societies in developing countries. This should, however, not obscure the continuing inequalities in society, like the fact that women are not on equal standing with men with respect to the right to inherit land, they are still much less active in politics and they are supposed to be the primary caretakers of children and the family. In the last decade, CSOs, particularly the smaller VNGOs (and INGOs), have increasingly promoted a focus on *gender* rather than on *equality of women* per se, i.e. the focus should not be solely on women, but rather on both women and men and the relations between them. This perspective is now increasingly accepted also by the Women's Union, though it is not easy to put into practice (ADB 2002; NCFAW 2004). The tradition of regarding women as socially inferior is still widespread, particularly in rural areas.

Besides the Women Union's activities, NCFAW, a semi-government organisation sponsored by the Women's Union, is especially concerned about women and gender issues in national polices and has helped outline the equity strategies at international UN Women's conferences. Since the early 2000s, NCFAW has worked on "gender in public policy". In 2004, they published a manual on gender mainstreaming in public policy, demonstrating that gender has become a major concern (NCFAW 2004). The project was carried out with support form the UNDP and the Dutch embassy. NCFAW also coordinates a forum of international donors, INGOs, mass organisations and VNGOs working on gender issues (ADB 2002).

Several INGOs and other foreign donors, have very strong gender policies that have had an impact on the gender-oriented CSOs in Vietnam through programmes for capacity building and gender

training for both men and women. VNGOs are often innovative, taking on new issues; for instance, they got an early start on reproductive health projects, women's counselling and radio programmes dealing with the problems of youth and urban women. In addition, the printed media have many counselling columns, which are very popular. Prevention of "sexual harassment at work" has also been introduced as a new theme in CSO's gender-related work. Trafficking of women has been an increasing problem in recent years. There is also a new focus on the migration of female workers to foreign countries and their mistreatment by employers in the host countries. This kind of problem is often taken up by small organisations, which act as a vanguard to support the victims.

The SAG members were almost unanimous in scoring this indicator quite highly, resulting in an aggregate score of 2.3.

3.6 Poverty Alleviation

This subdimension examines the extent to which the Vietnamese civil society promotes poverty alleviation. Table III.3.7 summarises the only indicator, namely civil society's actions to eradicate poverty.

TABLE III.3.7: Indicators assessing poverty eradication

Ref#	Indicators	Score
3.6.1	Civil society actions to eradicate poverty	3

3.6.1 CS actions to eradicate poverty. Eradication of poverty might be too farfetched a goal in a poor country like Vietnam, but development and poverty alleviation have been among the main focus of the CSOs. The government has since the early 1990s been working on poverty reduction schemes and it is an area within the State's development goals where CSOs are encouraged to work. The mass organisations, particularly the Women's Union and Farmers' Association, work actively all over the country on extension, credit and training. Credit schemes have in the last 5 to 6 years been one of the most important instruments to support the poor, who earlier did not have access to formal credit. Eighty-six trillion VN dong (5.5 billion USD) have been distributed, reaching up to 12 million farmers. The Women's Union is especially active with micro-finance schemes to reach the poorest Vietnamese. It has provided funds, either directly or indirectly by providing access to the Social Policy Bank, to 4 million women for a total of 786 billion VND, an average of 700,000 VND (55 USD) per household (Danida 2005; Dang Ngoc Quang 2005).

Most of the development-oriented VNGOs belonging to independent networks and a number of the VNGOs under VUSTA, have specifically stated that they work for poverty reduction. VACVINA, the largest of the VNGOs, has a broad network of farmers, whom it trains to implement VAC agriculture, a method combining gardening, establishment of fishponds and the use of pig manure. This method diversifies farmers' income and improves their livelihoods. VACVINA has branches in all provinces, a number of centres and some companies, in an almost countrywide movement and it works for various ministries and for local clients in the communities (Vasavakul 2003). Informal community groups have been set up to improve agricultural and commercial activities and to support poverty reduction efforts.

Today, INGOs are focusing their programmes increasingly on poverty alleviation and capacity building, a change from before, when they focussed on humanitarian aid or relief programmes. They support the local MOs, VNGOs or informal groups in capacity building and often aim at the grassroots level. The importance of these programmes is that they can reach areas and groups that

government programmes cannot, including the poorest and most vulnerable (INGO Directory; INGO materials and presentations at meetings). VNGOs supported by INGOs tend to be more innovative and specific in their methods and ideas on poverty alleviation and they introduce these to the communities, whereas the mass organisations have experience in mobilisation of the local people, but do not always have the programmes (INGO, VNGO and donor publications).

Advocacy has started to happen, although it is still limited and mainly involves informing people at the grassroots about new opportunities arising due to new policies. A few conferences have been organised by VNGOs and INGOs. One of the first, organised in 1999, was on "The role of the multilateral development banks". VUSTA has organised a number of conferences for CSOs, such as one on "Poverty Alleviation in Ethnic Minority Areas" (2001) and another on "Micro-Finance for Poverty Alleviation" (2003), which had an impact on the 2005 decree on Micro-Finance Institutions (Dang Ngoc Quang 2005). In 2004-5, conferences organised by VNGOs and VUSTA took place more regularly. VNGOs have made a considerable effort to distribute information about the Grassroots Democracy Decree, particularly among women and the poor.

The SAG was in agreement on this indicator, assigning it one of the highest scores in the investigation, 2.5, indicating that civil society is among the driving forces in the struggle to eradicate poverty and enjoys broad-based support and visibility. Some members gave a score of 2, however, because they found that CSOs are important, but not a driving force by themselves.

3.7 Environmental Sustainability

This subdimension focuses on to what extent civil society actors in Vietnam practice and promote environmental sustainability. There is only one indicator, civil society actions to sustain the environment, which is presented in table III.3.8.

TABLE III.3.8: Indicators assessing environmental sustainability

Ref#	Indicators	Score
3.7.1	Civil society actions to sustain the environment	1

3.7.1. CS actions to sustain the environment. Pollution of air and water and degradation of the natural environment are major issues threatening the livelihoods of people in Vietnam. Modernisation and the growing population put substantial pressure on the environment and the balance between development and the environment and between human concerns and environmental ones, are important but are difficult to handle in a poor country undergoing rapid development. The environment has not traditionally been a priority area; for quite a long time, only a handful of smaller VNGOs and INGOs were concerned about it. It was also easier to launch projects in this field because it was not considered sensitive. Now, there is a government policy in place aiming to (re)plant 5 million hectares of forest. This policy has helped to increase the shrinking forests, but in an inflexible way. For instance, it has caused problems for poor ethnic minority farmers in the remote regions, who used to gain their livelihoods from the forest.

VACVINA, EcoEco, Centre for Research on Environment and Sustainability (CRES) and Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV) have been some of the leading VNGOs promoting environmental issues for quite a long time and they have gained considerable experience in the area. Perhaps typically, they have received strong support from INGOs and donors which has made them more visible and helped them achieve a larger impact. The ENV network distributes information through educational programmes, government agencies and research communities. Around 2003, it

also opened a Wildlife Trade Hotline to help deal with the large illegal trade of endangered wildlife to China, an issue attracting much attention (Dang Ngoc Quang 2005). Environmental problems of all kinds are increasingly obvious and people, CSOs and the government have been getting more involved in recent years.

The impact of Agent Orange is a special concern for some of the VNGOs and INGOs. In this regard, the scars of the American War are still felt, both by the environment and people. In the 1990s, Prof. Vo Quy from CRES made films about the impact of Agent Orange spread during the Vietnam War, which helped alert a broader public about these problems. Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development has done much research on the effects of chemical weapons on women's reproductive health and reproductive rights (CGFED 2000). Only in the 2000s, however, has this issue been taken up by a broad movement with support from organisations in foreign countries, and a lawsuit is being prepared against the US.

The SAG was in agreement on this indicator, assigning scores of 1 to 2, with an aggregated score of 1.2.

Summary

The "values" dimension received the most positive score, a 1.7, from the SAG among the four dimensions of civil society indicating that civil society in Vietnam practices and promotes positive social values to a moderate extent. This fairly positive assessment should be seen in light of the fact that CSOs have been developing quickly and their space for action has become much larger in recent years, creating a great deal of optimism among CSOs. However, the fact that the overlap between the state and civil society is considerable should also be taken into account, making it difficult to separate the sectors as clearly as this methodology requires and to some extent blurring the difference between the practice and promotion of values of the CSOs.

The analysis of the values dimension concerns both the values within civil society and the extent to which civil society introduces those values into the larger society. The assessment showed that CSOs are generally better at practicing these values internally than at promoting them externally.

The SAG judged that CSOs in Vietnam practice *democratic principles* internally, but this was a highly contentious issue within the SAG. The mass organisations practice democratic centralism, whereas there are fewer regulations regarding VNGOs' operations and practices among them range from patronage to more democratic forms. Promotion of democratic values and participation scored a little lower and opinions differed less among the SAG members on this issue, but it is noteworthy that members had different concepts of democracy.

Transparency was the subdimension that received the lowest score among the subdimensions of the values dimension. Corruption in civil society is found to be considerably lower than in society at large. However, financial transparency is observed to be very low among CSOs. The ability of civil society to promote transparency is also considered to be below a medium level. The two latter issues exposed much disagreement within the SAG. On the other hand, all SAG members agreed that the value of *non-violence* is at a high level within CSOs, though the ability to promote it was rated somewhat lower.

Tolerance is practiced by CSOs, according to the SAG, but the score is actually higher for the promotion of tolerance in society than for the practice of tolerance. Nevertheless, both indicators received fairly high scores.

According to studies and to the SAG's assessment, CSOs practice *gender equity* with regard to their internal leadership and promote it as a value in society at a medium level. Gender equity in CSO staffing is also rated medium, but this last issue was contentious within the SAG. However, CSOs actively promote gender equity in society. CSOs are also generally very active on *poverty alleviation* and the SAG also scored this indicator high with a high degree of consensus. Most CSOs in Vietnam consider this to be one of their main goals. With respect to *environmental sustainability*, until recently only a few VNGOs promoted it, but today it has been taken up by a larger number of CSOs.

Vietnamese civil society is generally characterised by positive values and norms. The SAG judged the value of poverty alleviation to be at the highest level, followed by non-violence (peace) and gender equity. Democracy and tolerance rank lower and tolerance is not a concept discussed much in public. Buddhism, one of the most widespread religions, puts much emphasis on tolerance. According to the SAG, however, the other values (transparency and environmental sustainability) are not strongly practiced or promoted by CSOs in Vietnam.

Discussion

The government places a high priority on fast-paced development and poverty reduction in Vietnam. Consequently room for social organisations has mainly been granted in the area of social and humanitarian development and poverty alleviation and social development are some of the main long-term goals for most CSOs, whatever field they are engaged in and the CSOs are strong and creative in this regard. Overall, CSOs in Vietnam are service providers.

Democracy and human rights, which are important issues for civil society in many countries, are considered "sensitive" in Vietnam. Even if democratic values and human rights are practiced and promoted, to a certain extent, it is not done explicitly and people's understandings of the terms are more in accordance with their cultural traditions and socialist definitions than with a liberal definition of democracy. Broadly speaking, Vietnamese see their society as democratic, because they elect their leaders at regular intervals. CSOs generally consider themselves democratic as well. Moreover, individuals, called "revolutionary personalities" were included in the SAG mapping of social forces. These individuals call for more democracy in a broader sense and use the opportunities granted to them more actively. However, such activities are still in their infancy.

Gender equity is seen by CSOs as a very important issue, mainly in terms of women's equality with men and as a problem which can be resolved through legislation and participation in politics. In recent years, the focus has been on gender more broadly and the role of both men and women in society. This idea is increasingly promoted by women's organisations and most other CSOs. However, there is still a long way to go to achieving a general understanding of gender differences and its implications within society at large.

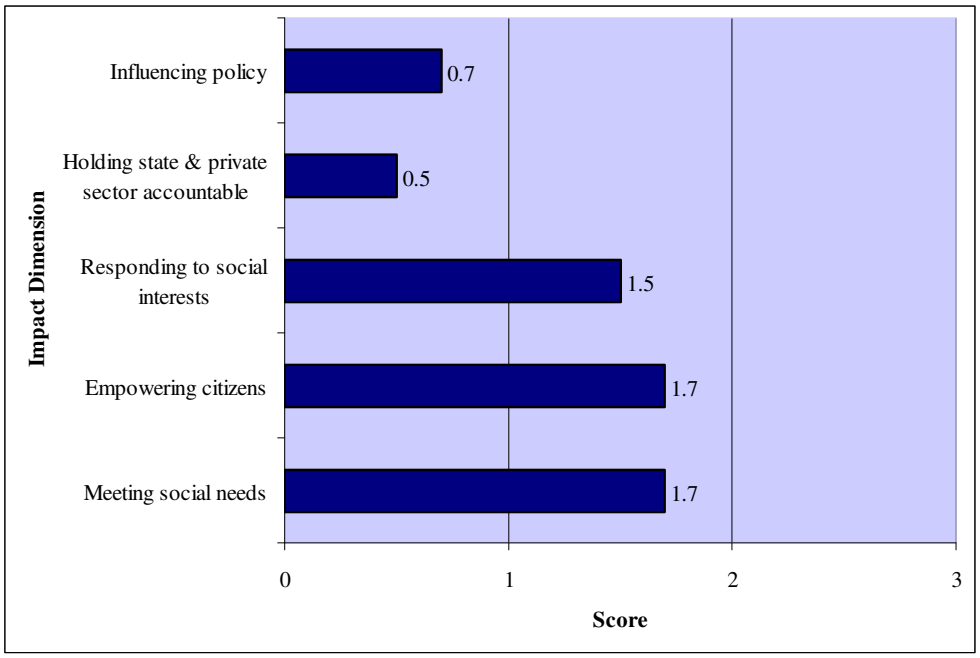
The values practiced and promoted by civil society are characterised by peace and tolerance, as well as new ideas on how to reduce poverty, improve livelihoods and social conditions and increase participation, rather than transparency and democracy as such. Thus, the concept of participation is helping bring about more voluntary engagement in civil society activities.

To conclude, as can be seen from the lower score for internal practice than external promotion of values, many CSOs, in order to bring about a stronger foundation for the promotion of positive values in society, should review their internal organisation operations and the values within the organisations.

4. IMPACT

This chapter describes and analyses the extent to which civil society is active and successful in fulfilling essential functions within Vietnamese society. The total score for the impact dimension is 1.2, which is lower than average and should be understood as representing quite a moderate impact. Figure III.4.1 presents the scores for the five subdimensions, comprising 16 indicators. The subdimensions include: 1) influencing policy, 2) holding the state and private sectors responsible, 3) responding to social interests, 4) empowering citizens and 5) meeting social needs. The strongest impacts – still judged to be only at a medium level – concern responding to social interests, meeting social needs and empowering people. The scores for civil society holding the state and private sectors responsible and influencing policy are low, and these goals are not the most central to civil society in Vietnam. Civil society's impact on policy also received a low score from the SAG.

FIGURE III.4.1: Subdimension scores in impact dimension



4.1 Influencing Public Policy

This subdimension reflects to what extent civil society is active and successful in influencing public policy. The scores are summarised in table III.4.1 for the three indicators: impact on human rights, on social policy and on national budgeting.

TABLE III.4.1: Indicators assessing influence on public policy

Ref#	Indicators	Score
4.1.1	Human rights policy impact	1
4.1.2	Social policy impact	1
4.1.3	Impact on national budgeting process	0

4.1.1. Human rights policy impact. How active and successful is civil society at influencing human rights policy and practice? According to international human rights organisations, the records for Vietnam in 2004 are positive in the field of economic and social rights, but rather negative in terms of civic and political rights.

However, the VNGOs and mass organisations are active on other rights-related issues, including human trafficking, people's rights, children's rights and gender equity. The rights-based approach is fairly new to Vietnam and mainly INGOs and some of the multilateral and bilateral donors, such as UNICEF and Sida (Sweden) are actively promoting the rights-based approach. The new ideas promoted by rights-based approaches are interpreted in the Vietnamese context by emphasising the rights of individuals, but placed in the broader societal context of how each group can be helped to voice its own concerns in concrete situations. Mass organisations and VNGOs are mainly service providers, but rights-based approaches and advocacy/information are gaining some ground among the CSOs. Nevertheless, societal values in Vietnam are still family and authority-oriented, which present obstacles to the rights-based approaches, including for human rights (see also section 2.4.1. on trust and values). One legacy of the socialist ideas of the revolutionary period is the contemporary emphasis on social rights over political rights. CSOs' main influence on public policy is in terms of social rights.

The SAG spent some time discussing this indicator, which deals with an issue that is "sensitive" in Vietnam. It was argued that the Vietnamese concept of human rights differs from that of Western countries. There was broad agreement that a score of 0 would be too low and most members assigned a 1, resulting in an average score of 1.1, indicating that "civil society activity is very limited and has no discernible impact."

4.1.2. Social policy impact. How active and successful is civil society at influencing social policy? Social policies are being restructured and reformed in Vietnam, and the State is an important actor developing a new framework for social policies. At the same time, the State is withdrawing from a number of areas to allow individual and private initiatives to play a more important role. Interestingly, this policy is called "socialisation" (xã hội hóa), because the State wants to play a smaller role than at present and it does not have adequate funds to upgrade the whole social field Thus, "social" is seen as the opposite of "State" and "socialisation" is used where "privatisation" is used in other countries. (Phan Van Khai 2005; SEDP 2005-10)

The CSO impact on social policy may often be indirect and fairly limited. However, there are examples of policy impact. HIV/AIDS is one of the success stories of CSOs' affecting policy through channels into the National Assembly. From being a non-issue or even a sensitive issue, the government has accepted the importance of preventing the spread of the disease. On the issue of the disabled, practices have fundamentally changed. Some years ago, the disabled were not seen in public and would often have limited access to public goods. Today, this group has obtained much more attention, including: receiving special treatments and special classes, performing in television programmes and participating in Paralympics games. Other areas of CSO influence on the government can be found in the policies towards children, especially street children and disabled children. Organisations, like Plan International, started the first street children projects in Hanoi and it has now expanded its programmes to other big cities. The government has also changed its policies in this area with more direct support for street children. Save the Children started a project on inclusive education in the early 1990s together with UNESCO, UNICEF and other INGOs. The outcomes include input into a new government education strategy (2001-10) which integrates

learning from the project with a new curriculum and new books, as well as changes in the management system and new teaching methods (Lindskog and Nguyen Xuan Hai 2002). The INGOs have easier access to the government and ministries than the VNGOs, but will occasionally join forces with local CSOs.

The SAG almost unanimously gave this indicator a low score. The average score was 1.2, indicating that civil society activity in this area is very limited.

4.1.3. Impact on national budgeting process. Until recently, the national budget was closed to CSOs and the public and CSOs' impact was accordingly almost nil. However, the Budget Law of 2004 opens the process up for more public hearings on budgets at both the national and provincial level and the VNGOs and other local organisations can take part. The Budget Law is still so new that it is not yet known how much use is made of these opportunities. The impact is still very limited, but some new possibilities have been opened up.

The SAG largely agreed on a score of 0 for this indicator, with an aggregate score of 0.1, indicating that "no civil society activity of any consequence in this area can be detected".

4.2 Holding the State & the Private Corporations Accountable

This subdimension examines how active and successful Vietnamese civil society is at holding the state and private corporations accountable. Table III.4.2 summarises the two indicators, holding the state accountable and holding private corporations accountable.

TABLE III.4.2: Indicators assessing holding the state & private sectors accountable

Ref#	Indicators	Score
4.2.1	Holding the State accountable	1
4.2.2	Holding private corporations accountable	0

4.2.1. Holding the State accountable. Mass organisations and VNGOs have not seen it as their main objective to hold the government accountable. This new area of work is still in its infancy, apart from certain specific areas, including women's and children's rights. Most interactions between CSOs and the State are characterised by cooperation, in spite of differences between them. At the national level, mass organisations have more direct access to the government and Party than VNGOs and other CSOs. However, in recent years, the VNGOs have been invited to some of the donor-government-INGO meetings, which is an important channel for communication. At the provincial level, the mass organisations, professional associations and VNGOs have opportunities to influence the local government through various channels and more space is opening, though it is not yet being exploited. All together, the impact of CSOs is fairly limited.

VNGOs and professional associations ally with well-known intellectuals more frequently, particularly with regard to historical and cultural monuments and environmental protection. One well-known case happened when the state-owned coal company, Vinacoal, wanted to expand its operations into Yen Tu Mountain, one of the historical centres of Vietnamese Buddhism. The move was stopped by an intervention of the Historian's Association and a leading professor (Bach Tan Sinh 2002; Duong Trung Quoc 2001). The plan was ultimately reconsidered by the People's Committee and Vinacoal. Another well-known case related to the planning of a new National Assembly hall in central Hanoi in 2002. During the digging of the foundation, the old citadel of Hanoi was discovered and after long debates with the Archaeologists' Association and other

professional associations, the government decided to move the new assembly hall to a site in suburban Hanoi.

Infrastructural development projects are gradually beginning to carry out Participatory Assessments like many INGO and bilateral donor projects have introduced years ago. "Popular participation" during the planning stages takes place for local roads all over the country today. Water user groups are involved in irrigation plans at the community level. However, it is also true that for the large-scale construction of dams and roads, which require thousands of people to move from their land and community, neither the mass organisations nor the VNGOs are able to hold the State accountable. Overall, the impact of CSOs is fairly limited in this field. Informal groups and other grassroots organisations might in the future come to play a more active role by getting involved when they see infrastructural development plans as harmful to their communities.

The SAG was very much in agreement on the low impact of CSOs. The aggregate score for this indicator is 0.6, where a score of 1 would indicate that "the activities are very limited and there is no discernible impact". As one SAG member pointed out, one way to hold the State accountable is to raise questions in the National Assembly, which is today a common procedure for large CSOs.

4.2.2. Holding private corporations accountable. The role of CSOs in holding enterprises and corporations, both state-owned and private, accountable in terms of their ecological impacts has been more evident recently. Informal groups in local residential communities have successfully forced businesses to improve the quality of the nearby environment. Local residents' complaints against corporate pollution have resulted in the improvement of corporations' environmental behaviour. For instance, one factory had to install air filters its emissions; another factory had to relocate. These cases illustrate the possibility for local communities to challenge the political legitimacy of the government and thereby create social and political pressure on business (O'Rourke 2000). Similarly, pressure has been mounting for a better way of managing solid waste in large cities such as Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and Hai Phong and there have been protests by residents who do not want to have the waste dumped nearby their living quarters.

The number of wild-cat strikes at companies, particularly foreign funded ones, but also at state-owned companies, increased during the 1990s to around 100 per year. In most cases, workers complain about the companies breaking the Labour Code or mistreating workers. In May 2005, 10,000 workers staged for instance one of the largest strikes in recent years at a McDonalds subsidiary producing toys for "Happy Meals". The company's labour conditions were below the Labour Code with respect to the treatment of workers, working hours and wages. McDonalds' head office objected that it had followed its Code of Conduct and the strike was settled after some days through the involvement of the local trade union. The result was improved conditions and income for the workers (Lao Dong Newspaper 10-12.5.2005).

The SAG was in agreement on this indicator as well, giving it a low rating. The aggregate score was 0.4, indicating that no civil society activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.

4.3 Responding to Social Interests

This subdimension analyses to what extent civil society actors respond to social interests. Table III.4.3 summarises the two indicators: responsiveness and public trust in CSOs.

TABLE III.4.3: Indicators assessing responsiveness to social interests

Ref#	Indicators	Score
4.3.1	Responsiveness	1
4.3.2	Public trust in CSOs	2

4.3.1 Responsiveness. How effectively do civil society actors respond to high priority social concerns? Vietnam, like other developing countries, faces substantial social challenges. In cooperation with the Vietnamese government, mass organisations and VNGOs pay a great deal of attention to issues such as employment, education, health and crime. Furthermore, their contribution to national poverty alleviation is considerable in the communities. These issues are considered the most important, but there are differences of opinion over priorities between national CSOs and foreign INGOs. Gender approaches, ethnic minority rights and human rights are issues that INGOs see as high priority concerns (Directories for INGOs and VNGOs). In recent years, VNGOs have been working more and more with ethnic groups, helping to give them a voice. Mass organisations, in contrast, are an integrated part of the communities and follow government policies more closely with regard to ethnic minorities. When INGOs and VNGOs began working in ethnic areas, they were not welcome and perceived as "outsiders". Today, cooperation between INGOs/VNGOs, the authorities and local communities is positive in most areas, and villagers are quite enthusiastic about the support. CSOs do not in general work on issues that are considered "sensitive".

SAG members were not fully in agreement on the issue of "responsiveness"; scores ranged from 0 to 2. The average score was below medium at 1.2, indicating that "there are frequent examples of crucial social concerns that did not find a voice among existing civil society actors".

4.3.2. Public trust. What percentage of the population trusts civil society actors? From table III.4.4, it can be seen that trust in CSOs is relatively high. The high level of trust expressed for two mass organisations (the women's movement and trade unions), as well as for the more VNGO-based environmental movement, compares with the very high level of trust in government and television and contrasts with the low level of trust in big private businesses (table III.4.4). People's trust in the environmental movement falls mainly in the "quite a lot of trust" category (50%) and less under "a great deal of trust" (29.3%). Combined, however, it reaches the same level as the trade unions, but still a little below the women's movement. This can be considered quite a good result for a movement concerned with a fairly new issue, but it is still lower than the public institutions. While the mass organisations are well known in every locality, VNGOs are still not widely known in Vietnam. Some people are even suspicious of VNGOs because they are "outside" government, a fact which has caused problems in a number of communes (Nguyen Vi Khai 2005).

TABLE III.4.4: Trust in various institutions

Institution/organisation	(a) "A great deal of trust"	(b) "Quite a lot of trust"	(a)+(b)
Labour unions	32.2	47.0	**79.2**
Environment protection movement	29.3	50.0	**79.3**
Women's movement	33.9	50.7	**84.6**
Government	76.8	21.1	**97.9**
Police	54.2	39.0	**93.2**
Press	34.1	50.2	**83.3**
Television	41.2	51.5	**92.7**
Large, private companies	11.3	35.5	**46.8**

Source: World Values Survey Vietnam 2001.

Vietnamese NGOs have gained more public trust by playing an important role in the management of natural resources, such as land, water and forests through CBOs at the community level. The State's decentralisation policy under the Public Administration Reform further reinforces this role. A number of successful cases of rural water resource management, in which water users' groups own, operate and maintain local irrigation systems, have been documented (Bach Tan Sinh and Nguyen Xuan Tiep 2002).

SAG members did not agree with one another about how to assess this indicator. Scores ranged from 1 to 3, which shows that the outcome of the WVS is not fully convincing and that information is fairly scarce. The average score was 1.9, indicating that "a small majority of the population (51-75%) has trust in civil society actors".

4.4 Empowering Citizens

This subdimension examines how active and successful civil society in Vietnam is at empowering citizens (especially traditionally marginalised groups) to shape decisions that affect their lives. Table III.4.5 summarises the scores of the six indicators.

TABLE III.4.5: Indicators assessing citizen empowerment

Ref#	Indicators	Score
4.4.1	Informing/educating citizens	2
4.4.2	Building capacity for collective action and resolving joint problems	2
4.4.3	Empowering marginalised people	1
4.4.4	Empowering women	2
4.4.5	Building social capital	1
4.4.6	Supporting/creating livelihoods	2

4.4.1. Informing/educating citizens. How active and successful is civil society at informing and educating citizens in public issues? Cooperation between the Women's Union, Youth Union and INGOs at the local level provides good and successful examples of citizen education. Information concerning health, HIV/AIDS, family and health concerns, credit programmes and the environment is spreading. Many projects run by VNGOs, or by bilateral donor organisations in collaboration with the Farmers' Association and agriculture extension centres, provide people with agricultural information, knowledge and technologies. At the local level, they act as service providers in this regard, but with a less top-down attitude than the government-run extension network.

Additionally, there are projects focusing on strengthening community support for the health and education of children with disabilities (projects supported by, for instance, Plan Vietnam, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Save the Children and ActionAid). They focus on integrating school, home and community support to meet the needs of each child through activities such as disability screenings by health workers, advocacy work by teachers and community leaders, planning for educational inclusion and providing teachers with the necessary training and skills to support children with disabilities in the classroom. People are also learning about the Grassroots Democracy Decree (CARE, LERES, Centre for Promoting Development for Women and Children) and the Labour Code (Oxfam).

The media frequently reports on successful projects. In general, the media has an important role in citizen education. There are many TV programmes on agriculture and new technologies, as well as many other informational programmes. In rural and remote areas, TV has been spreading since the end of the 1990s. Some impact can certainly be seen in the fact that many communities are experimenting with new crops and production for the market. The impact of the CSOs' activities is the outcome of direct cooperation with the villagers, whereas the public media provide information for the community at large.

SAG members generally agreed on this indicator, scoring it close to 2, with an average of 2.2, indicating that civil society is active in the area, but the impact is limited.

4.4.2. Building capacity for collective action. How active and successful is civil society in building the people's capacity to organise themselves, mobilise resources and work together to solve common problems? One of the main tasks of mass organisations and VNGOS (as well as the INGOs) is to help achieve poverty reduction and capacity building. Since the late 1990s, capacity building is increasingly used to help communities help themselves, through training courses in agriculture, accounting, gender, health, environment, micro-credit management and business.

Numerous stories can be told about capacity building as a major factor enabling villagers to improve their lives through group and individual action. One of the early projects was called Farmers' Action for Resources Management (FARM) and was supported by CARE. Capacity building and village funds have been among the methods used to support villagers since 1994. Based on past experiences, one project with significant potential is the CARE-supported participatory planning project in Son La, which served as a pilot project for a large programme for six Northern Mountain Provinces. These are ongoing, having started in 2002 and being expected to finish in 2007 after having benefited 1 million households. This is a government programme supported by the World Bank (CARE 2003). Another example is Nordic Assistance to Vietnam (NAV), an organisation that began working in Central Vietnam in 1994 on an Integrated Rural Development Programme. The project focussed on rural development through agricultural improvements and credits, but slowly it came to support self-organisation in the villages of Thua Thien-Hue province. In the phasing out period of 2003-05, the project focussed above all else on building the capacity of self-help groups (NAV 2005). The Women's Union and Farmers' Association are often involved in training programmes.

New approaches include "participatory planning" (now supported by many development agencies) and, more recently, "village development plans" and "commune development plans", first supported by the bilateral donors (such as, German GTZ and Swedish Sida) and INGOs. The government is beginning to adopt these concepts, which are spreading into new provinces (Interviews in Quang Tri and Thua Thien-Hue 2005). Village development plans represent new types of cooperation between the government and all types of CSOs and demonstrate increasing acceptance of civil society values and participation of local people in planning. A VNGO, Advancement of Community Empowerment and Partnership, initiated a new type of activity, beginning with organisation at the community level. Step by step, the community groups have been making more demands of local governments at the commune level and, more recently, at the district level as well.

The SAG members were generally in agreement on the scoring of this indicator, with an average of 1.9, indicating that "civil society is active but impact limited".

4.4.3. Empowering marginalised people. There is a wide variety of marginalised groups in Vietnam: ethnic minorities (14% of the population), women, children, the disabled, the elderly, Amerasians, drug addicts and the sick. Most development VNGOs focus on poor and marginalised people, but there are many other types of interest groups in society, such as cultural and religious groups with different focus. The VNGOs, INGOs and religious organisations are the most active with all types of marginalised people, but it if often difficult for these CSOs to reach their target groups. Mass organisations are also organised in ethnic minority areas, but the majority Kinh-people are more involved in the mass organisations than the minorities even in minority-dominated areas (fieldwork in Dak Lak and Son La).

Advocacy on behalf of indigenous people has been an important concern for some Vietnamese NGOs. One of the most active local NGOs advocating for ethnic minority groups is Towards Ethnic Women (TEW), founded by Ms. Tran Thi Lanh in 1994. Its mandate is to help ethnic minority women build their capacity in the sustainable management of their natural resources. This has been taking place through the introduction of sloping agricultural land technologies, forest protection through revised animal husbandry techniques and improved water sanitation. Through its activities, with projects conducted in remote areas such as Nghe An, Yen Bai, Ha Tay, Ba Vi, TEW has helped empower ethnic minority women to take the lead in their own development process by enhancing access to existing knowledge, facilitating the creation of new knowledge and linking knowledge to practice to improve their livelihoods and income (Gray 1999; Gray 2003).

The Centre for Sustainable Development in Mountainous Areas is another VNGO focusing on ethnic minorities. It was established in 2000 and now works in three upland provinces. In April 2005, the centre was among the organisers of the fourth conference on "Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Poverty Dialogue in Mainland Montane Southeast Asia", an international conference of researchers and VNGOs focusing on the indigenous knowledge of the upland people. The conference was organised in the northern town Sapa with about 300 participants. It was the first time such a conference was organised in Vietnam, with field trips and exchanges of learning among Vietnamese and foreign organisations from Southeast Asia (Ethnic Minority Working Group 2005). The arrangements required difficult negotiations with the local authorities, who are not familiar with such meetings.

VNGOs are increasingly supporting marginalised people; they have achieved some success and are leading in the field, but they do not have the resources to make a large impact. Marginalised ethnic groups are difficult to reach physically and the work requires special approaches to ensure that indigenous knowledge is respected and that it is not mainly an attempt to integrate minorities into the mainstream development, as is usually the objective with government programmes. Other marginalised groups, like women, the elderly and the disabled are easier to reach and these groups are also easier to empower than ethnic minorities. Drug addicts, prostitutes and criminals represent a challenge and CSOs are working to empower them, but the results are more limited and the goals more long term.

Most SAG members assigned this indicator a score of 1, but there were a few higher scores. The aggregated score was 1.4.

4.4.4. Empowering women. How active and successful is civil society at empowering women, i.e. to give them real choice and control over their lives? Gender is increasingly an area of conflicting

ideas, including the traditional Confucian subordination of women to male authority (Vu Manh Loi et al. 1999), the socialist value of gender equality in breadwinning and policy creation and the newer approaches to gender that promote active, knowledgeable, independent women sharing work with men both in and out of the home.

Perceptions of gender are nevertheless changing in Vietnam as several rounds of empowerment have taken place. The Women's Union and the National Committee for the Advancement of Women have taken the lead on legislation concerning gender issues. One of the recent achievements is the fairly high proportion of women (26%) elected to the current National Assembly, one of the highest percentages in the region. However, only three out of 30 ministers are women (UNICEF 2004; Do Bich Diem 2005; Tang The Cuong 2005).

The share of women members increased a little in another kind of representative organisation, the People's Councils, in the recent election for the period of 2004-2009 compared to the earlier period 1999-2004. The change was most dramatic at the commune level, where it increased from 17 to 20 percent. A positive change can also be seen in the recent composition of the People's Committees, which are selected at each level by the People's Councils and the administration's daily operating unit. Previously, the share of women was extremely low at the commune level, at just 5 percent. It has now increased to 20 percent. At the district level, it has increased from 5 to 23% (table III.4.6). However, the share of women in the influential Communist Party is much lower, with a clear under-representation of women in the provinces of between 11 to 13 percent and even as low as 8.6 at central level.

TABLE III.4.6: Percentage of women in People's Committees, People's Councils and the Party at various levels 1999-2004 and 2004-09

	Province		**District**		**Commune**	
	1999-2004	2004-09	1999-2004	2004-09	1999-2004	2004-09
People's Council	22.3	23.8	20.1	23.2	16.6	20.1
People's Committee	6.4	23.9	4.9	23.0	4.5	19.5
Communist Party[a]	11.3%		12.9%		11.9%	

[a]2001-06

Sources: UNDP 2005/NCFAW 2004; SRV White Book 2005.

Gender awareness for both men and women has been promoted in recent years at the community level by a number of VNGOs supported by INGOs and donor organisations, often using the Women's Union as a training institution. This has not resulted in gender equality, but general sensitivity to the issues has risen, the traditional role of women is being questioned and women are beginning to obtain more responsibility in community affairs (Interviews Thua Thien-Hue 2004). The role of women has changed much during the reform period (Long et al. 2000), but with respect to any greater equality in political life, in land rights and in housework, inequalities still prevail.

The SAG members were split on the issue of empowering women, scoring it from 1 to 3. The average was 1.9, indicating that "civil society is active, but the impact is limited".

4.4.5. Building social capital. To what extent does civil society build social capital among its members? How do the levels of trust, tolerance and public spiritedness of CS members compare to those of non-members? Developing civil society has been seen as a way to generate "social capital".

The increasing level of public trust in CSOs indicates an empowerment of citizens. The involvement of the Women's Union, especially at the commune level, in setting up and operating its own credit groups not only helps generate monetary capital, but also "social capital" through building networks and informal relations. The Women's Union has helped a total of 4 million women obtain bank loans, 1.4 million of which came through before 2003 (Women's Union; Danida 2005).

Various informal credit groups have been established to start small-scale income generating activities. In Vietnam, micro-economic support constitutes one of the most important kinds of activity for those organisations seeking to respond to the immediate demands of grassroots groups. At present, the number of organisations that provide credit and financial support for production and commercialisation of agricultural products is exploding. The groups receiving the support also contribute to the creation of "social capital". Water user groups are yet another way of generating social capital. Members share common resources in the commune created by the water user group.

TABLE III.4.7: Membership and percentage of high level of trust

Group/association/org.	Membership, percentage out of sample %	People who find that "most people can be trusted", percentage of each group
Development/human rights	1.4	42.9
Conservation/environment	7.3	32.9
Peace group	9.0	31.1
Religious organisation	9.7	21.6
Trade union	11.0	44.5
Professional association	12.9	40.3
Health group	14.4	54.0
Youth group	15.0	40.0
Education/arts/music	16.9	29.0
Sports/recreation	18.5	33.5
Local community groups	25.2	30.0
Social welfare	25.7	38.5
Women's group	27.6	40.2
Political group/organisation	27.4	37.2
Other	3.3	-

Source: World Values Survey Vietnam 2001.

CIVICUS compares the levels of trust, tolerance and spiritedness between civil society groups and people not part of any group, as well as non-civil society groups and uses the difference as an indicator of the extent to which civil society creates "social capital". The WVS, for Vietnam, shows that almost a quarter of the Vietnamese population do not belong to a CSO. If one compares the trust level for members (41.8) versus non-members (39.8), the difference is negligible (table III.4.7). Thus, it does not indicate that CSOs in Vietnam generate "social capital" among the citizens through membership. A similar conclusion was reached by Dalton et al. that a family-oriented society with Confucian traditions might not generate the same type of "social capital" as in a Western society (Dalton et al. 2002; Dalton and Ong 2005; Dalton 2006). It has also been pointed out that, particularly in Vietnam, the State mobilises social groups to address community and other issues in the spirit of the State. One explanation may be that the large civil society in Vietnam has a different role than in societies with different kinds of governance. However, this study has indicated that although, on the one hand, high-level connections between State-led organisations and the State and Party may be very close, at the grassroots level, the groups play a different role and are able to

mobilise people at the community level for their specific needs. In spite of the close relationship with the State and Party, the grassroots organisations have certain autonomy to support and empower people at the community level according to specific circumstances, particularly if they can mobilise local funds or receive support from outside sources. This kind of autonomy or semi-autonomy does not lead to any change of governance, but it might lead to long-term changes in authority relations and self-confidence.

A different explanation of the limited difference in trust levels between civil society members and non-members may be that the trust level is high because of traditional close family and friend connections. However, this level of trust may break down through the process of modernisation, if new types of trust do not emerge. This seems to be the case in Vietnam, but it is not necessarily creating the civic culture assumed by the WVSV (Norlund 2005). This process could lead to a more unclear picture, as can be seen happening in Vietnam, based on the survey results.

The SAG assigned scores of 1 to 2 for this indicator, with an average score of 1.3; civil society does not contribute to build social capital.

4.4.6. Supporting livelihoods. How active and successful is civil society at creating/supporting employment and/or income-generating opportunities (especially for poor people and women)? The government's poverty reduction programmes (HEPR and program 135 for disadvantaged communes) contribute primarily to the construction of infrastructure and the creation of an enabling environment and little to targeted livelihood improvements (UNDP 2004). All CSOs – MOs, VNGOs and informal CBOs – are in various ways engaged in poverty reduction by helping to improve people's livelihoods. In all different ways, poverty reduction is the CSO's main activity, through income-generating activities and the creation of jobs in the family or private sectors that the State is unable to provide. Vietnam's rapid poverty reduction is a result of the efforts of many different organisations, among which the CSOs working among the grassroots are the best situated to reach special target groups like women and the poor. The Women's Union and Farmers' Association are the two most prominent organisations with the largest programmes for poverty reduction and the improvement of livelihoods. Micro-credit programmes have benefited more than 8 million farmers and the Farmers' Association has organised 235,000 training courses on agricultural techniques (Dang Ngoc Quang 2005). VACVINA is carrying out 18 programmes of training in VAC methods (gardening, fish ponds and husbandry). Many VNGOs have credit programmes and work on community development. At the community level, CBOs are engaged on improving people's livelihoods in agriculture, handicraft production and commercial activities.

The SAG scores ranged from 1 to 3, with an average of 2.0, quite a high score, indicating that "civil society is active but its impact is limited".

4.5 Meeting Societal Needs

This subdimension examines the extent to which Vietnamese civil society is active and successful at meeting societal needs, especially the needs of the poor and other marginalised groups. Table III.4.8 summarises the indicators: lobbying for State services, meeting social needs directly and meeting the need of marginalised groups.

TABLE III.4.8: Indicators assessing meeting societal needs

Ref#	Indicators	Score
4.5.1	Lobbying for State service provision	2
4.5.2	Meeting societal needs directly	1
4.5.3	Meeting the needs of marginalised groups	2

4.5.1. *Lobbying for State service provisions*. The current public administration reform (PAR) has addressed the issue of, to what extent the State should provide public services to people and how CSOs and the market can play a more active and complementary role in providing services. In line with the PAR, the approach of "socialisation" (see also section 4.1.2) of public services has begun, starting first with the public health sector, and then spreading into education. For instance, a number of private schools and universities have been established by teachers, professors and researchers. This development creates more opportunities for interest groups to lobby the government for resources.

CSOs are actively lobbying local authorities to support their involvement in the provision of services pertaining to the development of rural infrastructure (irrigation, water resources, road construction), including implementing and monitoring development work in line with the government policy of "socialising" rural water supply services. However, the tradition of lobbying is still new and weak.

The SAG gave scores of 1 to 2 for this indicator, with an average of 1.5, indicating that "the civil society is active but its impact is limited".

4.5.2. *Meeting societal needs directly*. How active and successful is civil society at meeting pressing societal needs? The State is outlining a framework for social policies. But the State's ability to secure social services in general is limited. As for poor areas, the State has introduced special programmes for poverty alleviation, such as programme 135 for the 2000-odd most disadvantaged communes. However, these programmes do not target the conditions of the poorest households. Programme 135 invests first of all in infrastructure, such as roads, health clinics and schools (UNDP 2004).

Some CSOs provide alternative services to groups that have fallen through the cracks of the state services. One successful form of service is the micro-credits provided by the Women's Union at the commune level. These target poor women who need credit to generate income. The credit services provided and managed by the WU complement the services of the commercial banks and had reached around 10% of the 11.5 million household borrowers in Vietnam by end of 2003 with focus on the poor women who might be rejected by the banks. Other VNGOs and INGOs support similar projects at the grassroots level, but they cover the country less densely than the Women's Union and are more targeted in terms of geography and social groups. All in all, the CSOs play a significant role meeting social needs, even though their capabilities are limited.

CSOs of all types contributed to Vietnam's rapid reduction of poverty in the 1990s and 2000s and the government appreciates their efforts, but CSOs have not been a driving force of poverty reduction in general. Increasingly, poverty reduction is the focus of the combined efforts of government, donors and CSOs. The mass organisations, Women's Union and Farmers' Association have actively participated in the implementation of poverty reduction plans at the local level and

have been particularly active at the community level. At the same time, the existence of more independent VNGOs and INGOs has put pressure on the government to increase its focus on the poor, also during the process to outline the poverty strategy (CPRGS) and these organisations have moreover introduced new methodologies and ideas into the localities where they work.

There was not much disagreement in the SAG on this issue. Members assigned scores of 1 and 2, with an average of 1.2, indicating that the civil society activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.

4.5.3. Meeting the needs of marginalized groups. How effective are CSOs at delivering services to marginalised groups in comparison to the state? There are many kinds of marginalised groups. Some include the poorest in the rural areas, among them ethnic minorities, others concern special groups like the disabled, the HIV/AIDS positive, children with disabilities, prostitutes and drug addicts, migrants in the cities, street children and trafficked women. Many of these groups are socially excluded and need special support from charity groups, which the state is unable to provide. Every problem has to be tackled in its own way. Smaller organisations are often better able to reach out to marginalised groups and in that sense are more effective than the public sector, but they often lack funds. The more general poverty reduction plans outlined by the State have increasingly focussed on larger infrastructure to enable remote regions to connect closer with the national development objectives: reaching a broader market, gaining education and improving health facilities. Thus far, this policy has brought limited results. Even CSOs have difficulty reaching the most remote areas, particular in the Northern Mountains and Central Highland. Nevertheless, however, quite a number of VNGOs, INGOs and some bilateral and multilateral donors have programmes in such areas.

Hand in hand with the social development taking place, marginalised groups in Vietnam are receiving more attention from both Government and CSOs (Youth Union, Women's Union, VNGOs). There are an increasing number of projects working to alleviate poverty and develop human resources among ethnic minorities, women and children, as well as to help the HIV positive and groups at risk for HIV. These projects focus on rural development, HIV/AIDS prevention, water, food security, education and emergency preparedness. CSOs' projects have a positive influence on marginalised groups.

One quality of CSOs is their ability to implement social policies for the poor and marginalised groups, where State programmes do not reach. The CSOs' strength is their specialisation and ability to introduce new ideas and methods. However, even if civil society is playing a more active and innovative role than before, it is not safe to say that its impact is anything but a limited one.

The SAG scores were highly contentious, with considerable disagreement over whether CSOs are more or less effective than the state in service delivery. Scores ranged all the way from 0 to 3, with an average of 1.5, indicating that CSOs are slightly more effective than the state. This was one of the indicators that increased following discussion at the SAG meeting, where SAG members pointed at a number of examples of CSOs that reach the poor and disadvantaged groups more directly than the general government programmes.

Summary

The impact of civil society on governance and society is determined to be "limited", with the SAG giving it a score of 1.2. Mass organisations and to some extent professional associations, may have

the largest overall impact, because they reach a broader segment of society, whereas the VNGOs reach more specific groups more deeply, but usually in more limited areas. Informal groups are unequally distributed in the country, but initiatives of self-organisation at the grassroots level are present. CSOs have an impact where they work in the communities, but the impact on public policy, budgeting or holding the government accountable is quite limited.

The analysis of the "impact" dimension includes five subdimensions. CSOs' influence on *public policy* issues, such as human rights, is considered by the SAG to occur at a low level. The SAG was almost unanimous on this issue. On social policies, the impact of CSO activities on government is higher, as social policy is an urgent concern for all CSOs at all administrative levels. CSO impact on the state budgeting process is, on the contrary, virtually non-existent. Vietnamese CSOs are not very active either in *holding the state or private companies accountable*, even if some exceptions can be found, such as the increased number of labour and environmental protests. Thus, civil society does not perform any significant "watch-dog" function towards the state and private sector.

CSOs' *responsiveness to social interests*, in terms of high priority social issues, is below a medium level. Public trust in CSOs was a contentious issue among the SAG members, who felt it was difficult to assess, despite the WVS conclusion that there is a high level of trust in CSOs in Vietnam. The overall assessment of trust was fairly positive. It received much higher scores than civil society's responsiveness did, but lower than the WVS for Vietnam's very high percentage would indicate.

The outcome of the SAG's assessment, with regard to *empowering citizens*, which comprises six indicators, was quite positive. On informing and educating citizens, civil society's impact is assessed to be quite high; on building capacity for collective actions and resolving joint problems, the rating is a little lower and at the same level as empowering women. Civil society's impact on building social capital is below medium, as is its effectiveness at empowering marginalised people.

CSOs' ability to *meet social needs* was judged to be a little below medium. CSOs' lobbying activities for state service provision and their activities in meeting the needs of marginalised groups were assessed as average. CSOs are considered slightly more effective that the state at delivering services to marginalised groups.

Discussion

Impact must be seen in terms of the different levels of society. At the national level, mass organisations have more direct access to the government and Party than VNGOs do, even though their impact is limited. At the provincial level, mass organisations, professional associations and VNGOs can influence the local government through various channels and more opportunities are opening up as the public administration changes, though these are not yet being exploited. At the grassroots level, both mass organisations and VNGOs are working actively: the mass organisations as part of society and the VNGOs as external support. Moreover, informal CBOs are a newly emerging type of organisation at the grassroots level; however, it is difficult to assess their impact at this point. At the community level there are also traditional and new types of informal groups with cultural, spiritual or recreational purposes, which have not been discussed in this study. Again, INGOs can be seen as catalysts, often introducing new approaches in support of local organisations at the community, provincial or national level. Mass organisations can function as a mobilising framework for the grassroots, a framework which has to be filled by special initiatives supported by INGOs or other organisations/programmes. In turn, VNGOs can implement special projects directly

in the communities (though not without the consent of the authorities). However, such projects often occur in cooperation with local mass organisations or local authorities.

At the community level, the most visible impact by CSOs includes informing, building capacity, empowering women and supporting livelihoods. CSOs are more effective than the state in these areas. In contrast, CSOs are poor at holding the state accountable, lobbying and ensuring people's political rights. This reflects the inherent weakness of civil society regarding its advocacy function and the lack of opportunity for open discussions at this level.

Public trust in CSOs is fairly high, but the public trusts mass organisations more than the VNGOs. Mass organisations are well known in almost every village, whereas VNGOs are mainly known in communities in which they work. Members of organisations are also building trust and "social capital". CSO members express a high level of trust in others, though the difference from non-members is not very large. This is an indication that organisations are not creating a liberal civic culture or fostering liberal democratic values, but are rather maintaining some features of the traditional, family-centred culture and/or creating new types of trust-relations mixed with the values of the political system.

IV STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The current social and political situation in Vietnam is characterized by a number of positive and negative features and trends, which are both facilitating as well as inhibiting the development of civil society. The values of society, such as a high level of trust, honesty and dislike of corruption, are positive for strengthening civil society; trust in government and public institutions is also very high. However, the level of corruption is seen as high in society and the culture of small corruption is widespread and to some extent also exists within CSOs. The conduciveness of the political environment for the CSOs depends on the type of organisations. Mass organisations have long been accepted as part of the country's structure, whereas new organisations face some difficulties vis-à-vis the government at lower levels.

There are several significant environmental factors, which are seen as inhibiting the development of a stronger civil society. Only when the larger society and the state fully accepts CSOs and facilitates their activities, by means of reform, legislation and increased comprehension will the environment become more enabling. The lack of transparency and existence of corruption are problems that should be addressed within society at large as well as within civil society. To some extent it has been addressed more recently by the government, private sector and CSOs, but it has not yet been fully solved.

With respect to CSOS in Vietnam, the *strengths* can be summarised through the bullet points below, representing the main findings of the study:

General observations

- Civil society is broad and diversified. There are many organisations in Vietnam with diverse forms, ranging from a dozen very broad-based mass organisations, a considerable number of medium sized organisations at city and provincial levels, VNGOs with links to the provinces and a myriad of small formal or semi-formal groups in the villages and wards. The ethnic communities might not be so actively involved in the centrally based organisations; however, they have their own type of organisation based on ethnic and clan connections.

- Civil society exists throughout most of the country, in the cities, at provincial level and in the communities. Networks of organisations can be found in almost any type of community.

- All social groups are involved in civil society because of the breadth of society and the multiple informal and semi-informal groups at grassroots level where common people with lower positions, less training and education are also active.

- CSOs have many types of objectives, from poverty alleviation, charity, self-help purposes to professional training and education, sports, enjoyment and worship.

- Charity is part of the values of Vietnamese society. Family-oriented values are still strong and ensure support for relatives with problems, just like Confucian and Buddhist values promote charity to poor and disadvantaged people.

- Voluntarism is fairly strong and promoted by society and CSOs.

- Society has a fairly high level of trust, which facilitates the work of civil society organisations.

Special characteristics of some organisations

- Mass organisations and VNGOs are strong on social and humanitarian issues. From the beginning of their establishment mass organisations have had the function of caretaker of social issues. The more recently established VNGOs have taken up the mainly humanitarian burden to support the most disadvantaged groups.

- Mass organisations provide a very broad organisational network ranging from the central government level, to the provinces, districts, communes and villages. They have a very solid membership base and can channel information and campaigns to all parts of the country.

- Mass organisations have fairly close contacts to government and the ruling party and can feed back information and suggestions for policy.

- Professional organisations are organised in many fields and are strong at both central and province levels.

- VNGOs and mass organisations have an advantage as service providers, vis-à-vis the state, because they reach disadvantaged groups more directly, while the state runs more general programmes.

- VNGOs are innovative in the projects they undertake and in their implementation. They are more targeted towards special vulnerable groups than the mass organisations.

- The leaders of VNGOs are well educated and in general have good, often informal, contacts with the government.

- CBOs are being established in many localities as "self-organisations" of livelihood-oriented activities, eventually with some commercial possibilities. Agricultural cooperatives are more formal entities serving the same purpose, but more encouraged by the state.

The *weaknesses* of civil society, based on the findings, are summarised in the bullet points below:

General observations

- The political framework for voluntary organisations in Vietnam is quite narrow and restrictive, in spite of improvement throughout the last 10 to 15 years. In principle, all organisations have to register in order to be legal entities and to receive funding. Registration is a long and complicated process.

- The legal framework is not facilitating the formation of organisations, and at this stage the upcoming Law on Associations does not appear more liberal, in fact it may be less liberal.

- Public space for discussions is limited, as certain issues are sensitive, and the boundaries for this space are not clear.

- Advocacy is only promoted by a small number of CSOs, mainly VNGOs and professional associations. Few organisations have formulated clear goals and they are not familiar with developing strategies or visions for social change.

- The private sector does not focus on CSOs. Many companies, particularly foreign ones, attempt to avoid trade unions and do not contribute to charity.

- Umbrella organisations are not fully based on the needs of the grassroots organisations, but rather are based on personal interests for career advancement and political influence.

- CSOs are segmented and the networks between various organisations are weak. In general, they are also weak within various segments. There is a fairly weak interest among CSOs for closer cooperation across sectors and segments of civil society.

- Ethnic minority groups are rarely included in mass organisations. Ethnic leaders, when they are members of mass organisations, sometimes distance themselves from the needs of the poor within the ethnic minority groups.

- There is a lack of transparency within CSOs. Very few organisations allow open access to the budgets and accounting practices. A tradition for transparency has not yet been established.

- There is a lack of internal democracy in many CSOs. The mass organisations have democratic centralism, where leaders are elected by their constituency, but they are habitually first approved those highter up in the CSO. VNGOs have diversified leadership, often characterised by patron-client relations.

- There is lack of resources for CSOs. Almost all CBOs are short of resources. Some mass organisations are better funded at the central level, but they still have minimal funds for activities at the lower and grassroots level.

- CSO staff need more training and equipment. Some leaders and staff are well-educated and have received training for organisations, but at lower level there is still a strong need for further qualification of staff.

- Funding for civil society networks and networking is limited. Since organisations tends to apply for project implementation grants, it is difficult to find funding and contribution for networking and information sharing.

Special characteristics of specific segments of civil society:

- Mass organisations are not very innovative in their programmes, and mostly run state-initiated and sponsored programmes. They are bureaucratic organisations, not very effective in promoting grassroots organising, if not supported from the outside.

- VNGOs are often characterised by patron-client relations and their operations are based on personal contacts, both at central level and in the localities.

- VNGOs are often more profit-oriented than non-profit-oriented. The purposes of the organisations are diversified, and a considerable number aim to contribute to improvements of people's material and spiritual life. In the context of a large donor community the trend is that VNGOs are established to implement donor programmes. This leads to the non-profit purpose and spirit vanishing, even if the organisations may still have socially-oriented ideals.

- VNGOs are not always fully accepted by society. Most have a narrow membership base and are based in the cities. When implementing programmes in the rural areas they have to ally with the mass organisations, or local groups. In some regions and localities, the authorities are not familiar with VNGOs or INGOs.

- VNGOs might serve as a career ladder for professionals. Consequently, staff will often leave for better jobs when they are trained and qualified.

- Some professional associations focus on professional improvements and general development. They are therefore not oriented towards societal goals, such as poverty reduction, equity or gender improvements.

- CBOs aim to improve livelihoods, spiritual or cultural life, but they have no broader goals or channels to air their concerns.

Civil society organisations need to establish better ways of cooperating, setting up networks and using umbrella-organisations and support networks, all of which could make their organisations stronger. They also need to reform themselves and become transparent in order to gain the trust of the people they work for. Moreover, they must improve their professionalism and develop their skills to address the challenge of engaging in advocacy. These recommendations present substantive challenges to CSOs and not all organisations will approve, let alone support them,

Since the 1990s, civil society organisations have been quite successful getting established and slowly expanding their work. Now they need to take the next step towards consolidation. However, this can only be done in cooperation with the state, INGOs and other donors. The next step is to further develop Vietnamese civil society without becoming too dependent on any one source, neither the state nor a single donor. Civil society needs to take up the challenge of supplementing the limited state service provision to the poor and marginalised, to help society progress further and advocate more clearly and strongly for the improvement of the well-being of people in Vietnam.

V CONCLUSION

1. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

This conclusion to the CSI-SAT report on civil society in Vietnam will review some of the major findings and raise some points of discussion related to the findings.

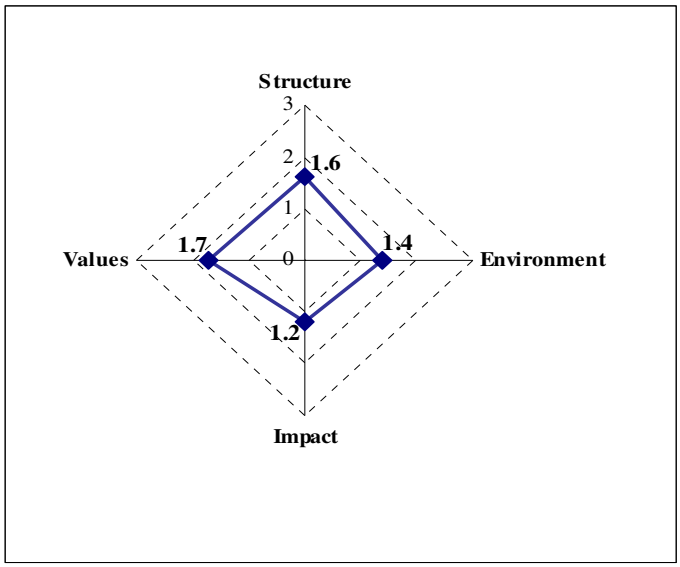
The study and the discussions reveal both strengths and weaknesses of civil society in Vietnam. Civil society's strengths include its broad-based nature, with numerous organisations active at all levels throughout most of the country. CSOs invest a significant amount of energy and effort in poverty reduction and support for the poor and disadvantaged. Vietnamese society has a considerably high level of public spiritedness and trust. Since the introduction of the *doi moi* reforms 20 years ago, society has undergone fundamental changes. From the early and mid-1990s civil society has slowly increased in strength and organisation. Mass organisations have broadened their activities, particularly in the rural areas, and new organisations have appeared, including both VNGOs and community-based groups. Many new ideas have been introduced, especially via the VNGOs and the practice of self-help has expanded thanks to the CBOs.

Cooperation between civil society and the state has been fairly positive, especially with respect to mass organisations and professional associations under the Fatherland Front. However, this cooperation differs depending on the segment of civil society involved. Nevertheless, one of the major problems for civil society in Vietnam is the socio-political environment, which still does not sufficiently enable CSOs to develop and grow as much as necessary, for CSOs to play a stronger role in development and governance. CSOs still operate in an outdated legal environment and the Law on Associations presently under discussion looks to be undecided on a number of issues that could lead to an improved environment. The State and Party continue to play the lead role in decision-making and only by cooperating with them can CSOs have an impact. Obviously, civil society in Vietnam is still entangled with the State and Party and many policies and social services are not being implemented effectively by the administration.

2. CSI DIAMOND

The diamond representing the four dimensions of Vietnam's civil society is of rather moderate size and fairly well-balanced (figure IV.1.1). The diamond reflects a fairly optimistic perspective on the situation in Vietnam, compared to the views of some of the foreign sources that were consulted for this project. Nonetheless, Vietnam's civil society diamond reflects the situation of civil society in Vietnam and how stakeholders perceive the situation quite accurately. Vietnamese stakeholders scored comparatively low on the impact and environment dimensions as compared to the slightly higher scores for structure and values dimensions.

Figure IV.1.1: The civil society diamond for Vietnam



The "structure" of civil society has both strengths and weaknesses (score: 1.6). The CSI project in Vietnam attempted to examine all possible organisations and groups that could be said to belong to civil society, but that are distinct from the family, market or state. The criterion is not whether they are separate from the state, since few if any organisations can be considered truly independent in Vietnam. Their form and function are considered more important than whether they are independent. Each organisation is a potential agent of change, because of their popular, humanitarian or social activities. In fact, the report had to limit the focus to a select number of groups considered to be the most important groups, these included: mass organisations, professional associations, Vietnamese NGOs and community based organisations. Some groups (e.g. religious communities, educational organisations) were mentioned only briefly because of a lack of available information. Civil society in Vietnam is nevertheless defined by the activities of all CSOs, with the largest role being played by mass organisations, professional associations, VNGOs, CBOs and informal grassroots organisations. International NGOs and bilateral and multilateral donors play important roles as facilitators and financial backers for every type of organisation, but most CSOs receive some support from the state.

According to this definition, civil society is very broad in Vietnam, but it is segmented into a number of different organisations and groups, each with different conditions, structures and funding. Even if civil society is broad, it is of limited depth. Organisations with the largest memberships, the mass organisations, do not have as many actively participating members as their total numbers might suggest. For example, the Women's Union has 12 million members and the Farmer's Association has 8 million members, while the population of the country is 83 million. Moreover, they are closely connected with the party under the umbrella of the Fatherland Front. Professional associations are organised both at the central level and in the provinces. They organise people in similar profession, but carry out training, research and community development as well. Many are organised under VUSTA or Vietnam Union of Literature and Arts Association. As for the VNGOs, in most cases, they do not have a membership base at all (or have only a narrow one) and they are not so numerous, about 1-2,000 organisations have been identified. Although the term

VNGO is used, such organisations are to some extent different from NGOs in many other countries, as they are usually centred around individuals with ties to the government bureaucracy, rather than people pursuing alternative goals or guided by non-profit motives (Gita Sabharwal and Than Thi Thien Huong 2005; Khanh Tranh-Thanh 2003). CBOs are flourishing today in Vietnam at the grassroots level and amount to 100-200,000 groups. On average, people are a member of 2.3 organisations, a high organisational rate compared with other countries in the region. Even if the lack of active members might limit civil society's strength, it is still broad-based and reaches out into the provinces, with remote areas, inhabited mainly by ethnic minorities, being a notable exception.

One of civil society's weaknesses is the segmentation of CSOs. This is due both to the historical weak horizontal linkages within Vietnamese society and to the fact that various types of CSOs have different origins and fill different niches. This segmentation results in weak coordination and cooperation among organisations at the various levels, from the umbrella groups at the centre, to organisations at the provincial, district and commune levels. On the other hand, segmentation can also be viewed as a strength of civil society, with many different organisations reaching out to almost all parts of the country at all levels and all social groups.

The second weakest of the four dimensions is the "environment" within which civil society operates (score: 1.4), which is still characterised by restrictions on advocacy and civil liberties, in addition to the lack of regulations and the opaque procedures for the establishment and operation of CSOs. The last decade has seen a number of improvements and the space for civil society is opening up in a positive way. However, there still is a long way to go before one can talk about an enabling environment for CSOs in Vietnam. Some organisations have taken advantage of the new possibilities and increased funding available from the donor community. Nevertheless, the overlap between State, Party and CSOs is considerable and some of the achievements of CSOs should be seen not primarily in terms of the state versus civil society, but rather as part of a contested area within the state sphere. The environment has nevertheless opened up considerably in the 1990s, with market reforms, an improved economic situation and the introduction of the government's open door policy. Poverty has been drastically reduced with the very active support of the CSOs. The socio-cultural environment is conducive, with fairly high levels of trust and tolerance in society and strong family-oriented values, values that are often transferred into civil society.

The strengthening of the Fatherland Front in recent years is part of the reorientation of government policy, by which the Party is increasingly retreating to the role of outlining policies, leaving the administration responsible for implementing them. CSOs are encouraged to take care of social issues which the administration cannot handle. Thus, the role of CSOs is recognised as being more important than before and their activities have increased considerably within their newly enlarged space (Party Civil Affairs Committee 2004; Nguyen Vi Khai 2005). If CSOs are to engage society further, as service providers, it will be important to ensure they operate in a better socio-political environment. It is also important for CSOs to become more able to actively advocate regarding their needs and concerns towards the state, as well as the private sector.

The strongest of the dimensions is the "value" dimension (score: 1.7), which was still assessed to be at a moderate level. Unlike the first two dimensions, there is less evidence and there are fewer studies by which to examine this dimension. In Vietnam, like in many transitional societies in Eastern Europe, civil society's values rate higher than the other dimensions (Anheier 2004; Vajdova 2005). This is usually interpreted as a surplus of energy and commitment to developing civil society

before the structures of and environment for civil society can catch up. Poverty reduction and improving gender equity rank very high among CSOs' most important and successful activities. Tolerance, non-violence and gender equity are among the stronger characteristics of CSOs. The extent of democratic practices within organisations rates fairly low and democracy is also not promoted much in society at large. Moreover, CSOs' finances are often not transparent and they do not (and cannot) serve as good examples in that respect, in order to hold the state and corporations accountable.

The SAG's assessment is that civil society is weakest on the "impact" dimension (score: 1.2). This is the most difficult dimension to assess, because there have been so few studies on the impact of CSO activities that it is often difficult to measure, particularly in a case like Vietnam, where CSOs often act together with other organisations or the administration and receive support from various sources. The low score is likely to be a consequence of the widespread belief that the state is the best provider of public goods and CSOs are weak in making an overall impact. Civil society is assessed to be quite strong in empowering citizens, particularly in the field of informing and educating citizens, supporting livelihoods and empowering women. Second, CSOs are moderately good at responding to social needs and meeting social needs, such as the needs of marginalised groups. They are however not very active or successful in influencing policy or the budgeting processes, nor are they trying very hard to hold the state and private sector accountable, as their mandate is not supposed to fulfil that role yet.

If the mass organisations were not included as part of civil society in the study, the impact score would clearly have been even lower. Yet, there have been some collective actions with considerable impact on government policy, and cases where the State was responsive to pressure from civil society. For example, even in the 1980s, the State gradually retreated from collective agriculture, resulting in the Land Laws and the Grassroots Democracy Decree. Since the 1990s, there have been many policy changes in Vietnam. Civil society may not have a strong voice directly at the policy level, but some impact can be observed. However, one might argue that civil society's strength can be seen as one of the factors leading to changes in the government's overall direction. Examples include: CSO actions that encouraged the advent of the Grassroots Democracy Decree, the spread of participatory planning and the implementation of large-scale development projects, the decentralisation of the budget and programmes to reduce poverty.

FURTHER STEPS

Together with UNDP and SNV, VIDS will publicise the results of the CSI-SAT report in Vietnam, in both Vietnamese and English, in order to encourage discussions of Vietnamese civil society among CSOs and the government, as well as among international donors and INGOs. The report is intended to provide information about different perspectives on civil society and examples of how it is structured, its environment, its values and its impact.

However, the concept of civil society is very new and this report is only a first step towards identifing it in Vietnam. VIDS intends to initiate scientific seminars to discuss civil society in Vietnam, including its concepts, the organisations that constitute it, its role and its importance, as well as how to improve its situation. Moreover, there is a continuing need for more studies on civil society. This report provided a broad view of civil society in Vietnam, but it also pointed out many gaps in the knowledge. How are CSOs organised? What are the results of their activities in the various fields? How do networks function? How can the environment be improved for CSOs? There

are many issues for further investigation and all CSOs and research institutes are invited to participate in this process.

This report is a result of the shortened assessment tool developed by CIVICUS and it will be considered and investigated if it is possible to carry out a full version of the CSI in Vietnam. If so, that study will produce more thorough research and involve more extensive consultations in various parts of Vietnam. CIVICUS is also planning an international workshop for June of 2006 in Glasgow, Scotland, for the teams that have participated in the CSI around the world. This will be an excellent opportunity to compare the results from Vietnam with results from other countries.

The English and Vietnamese versions will be submitted to CIVICUS and made available on the Internet. Moreover, a report with summaries from each of the more than 50 countries involved in the CSI project is planned for publication in 2006.

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ANNEX 1. MEMBERS OF SAG (STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT GROUP)

1. Mr. Nguyen Huu Tang, Vice-President Vietnam Union for Science and Technology (VUSTA)
2. Ms. Pham Chi Lan, Senior Expert, the Prime Minister's Research Commission
3. Ms. Cao Thi Hong Van, Department Director, Vietnam's Women Union
4. Mr. Nguyen Manh Huan, Department, Vietnam Fatherland Front
5. Mr. Nguyen Quang Vinh, Institute of Sociology, Southern Institute of Social Sciences (SISS), Ho Chi Minh City.
6. Mr. Pham Dang Quyet, Senior Expert, Ministry for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA)
7. Mr. Bui Duc Hai, Department Director and Institute of Economics, SISS, Ho Chi Minh City.
8. Mr. Hoang Ngoc Giao, Vice-director, Centre for Legal Research and Services (LERES), Hanoi National University
9. Ms. Tran Thi Thu Ha, Senior Expert, Centre for Rural Development in Central Vietnam (CRDCV), Hue University
10. Ms. Tran Thi Chung, Programme Manager, CIDSE, (now transforming to a local NGO, Friends)
11. Mr. Nguyen The Chien, Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (CGFED)
12. Ms. Nguyen Thi Le Hoa, Programme Coordinator, Oxfam Great Britain, Hanoi and Ms. Truong Thu Huyen, Project Officer, Oxfam GB, Hanoi

ANNEX 2. LEGISLATION FOR CSOS

Overview of the Regulations for Civil Society in Vietnam

- The 1992 Constitution, amended in 2000;
- The 1995 Civil Code, revised in 2005;
- Decree-Law 102/SL, 20 May 1957; of the President; Regulations on the Right to Set up Associations
- Decree 258 14 June 1957; on detailed regulations guiding the implementation of Law 102/SL 1957;
- Circular 07, 6 January 1989; of the Government Committee for Organisation; guiding the implementation of Directive 01 1989 on the management of the organisation and activities of mass-organisations;
- Directive 01, 5 February 1989; of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers; on the management of the organisation and activities of mass-organisations;
- Resolution number 08/NQ-TW, 27 March 1990, of the Politburo, on renovating public mobilisation policy of the Party, strengthening relations between the Party and people's community;
- Directive 202, 5 June 1990; of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers; on the implementation of State regulation concerning the establishment of associations;
- Decree 35/HDBT, 28 January 1992; of the Council of Ministers; on the establishment of non-profit scientific and technological organisations;
- Joint Circular 195-LB, November 1992; of the Ministry of Science and Technology and Environment and the Government Committee for Organisation and Personnel; promulgating the implementation of regulations for registration and activities of scientific research and technology development organisations;
- Decree 47 L/CTN, 3 April 1996, promulgating the Law on Cooperatives, 20 March 1996. Revised in 2003: Law 18/QH11, 26 November 2003; of the National Assembly; on Cooperatives;
- Circular 143/TB-TW of 5 June 1998; on Comments from the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau on Organisation, operation and administration of Professional Associations;
- Decree 177/ND-CP, 22 December 1999, of the Prime Minister; Regulation on Organisation and Operation of Social Funds and Charity Funds;
- Law 21/QH10, 9 June 2000, of the National Assembly; on Science and Technology;
- Decree 81/ND-CP 17 October 2002, of the Prime Minister; Detailing the Implementation of a number of Articles of the Science and Technology Law 21/QH10 2000;
- Decree 25/ND-CP, 30 May 2001, of the Prime Minister, on Regulations of organisation and operation of support centres;
- Decision 21/QD-TTg, 29 January 2003, of the Prime Minister; on State funds for socio-political professional associations, social organisations and professional associations concerning activities linking with State duties;
- Decree 88/ND-CP, 30 July 2003; of the Prime Minister; Providing for the Organisation, Operation and Management of Associations;
- Circular 01/TT-BNV, 15 January 2004; of the Minister of Home Affairs; Guiding the implementation of Decree 88;
- Decree 28/ND-CP, 9 March 2005, of the Prime Minister; on Organisation and Operation of Small-sized Financial Institutions in Vietnam.

Source: Katrine Pedersen (2005) *Changing State-Society Relations – A Study of Civil Society Law in Vietnam,* Hanoi.

ANNEX 3. MAIN NATIONAL UNIONS AND THE ORGANISATIONS UNDER FATHERLAND FRONT

320 associations/unions/societies with nation-wide operations

- Vietnam Federation of Science Associations comprises 56 associations operating nation-wide, including Vietnam General Association of Medicine, which consists of 50 professional associations operating nation-wide and 38 provincial ones (out of 64 provinces).

- Vietnam Union of Arts and Literature Associations are composed of 10 national professional associations and 63 provincial ones (out of 64 provinces).

- Vietnam Union of Friendship Associations has 60 friendship associations operating nation-wide and 38 provincial ones (out of 64 provinces).

Other associations include the following, based on the field of activity:

- 19 sports associations and federations

- 70 unions of economic organisations

- 30 associations working in the fields of charity and humanitarian aid

- 28 unions of foreign businesses

Source: Nguyen Ngoc Lam, MOHA, 2005.

29 membership organisations under the Fatherland Front

1. Vietnam's Communist Party
2. Vietnam General Federtion of Labour
3. Vietnam Farmers' Union
4. Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union
5. Vietnam Women's Union
6. Vietnam Veteran Association
7. Vietnam Army Forces
8. Vietnam Union of Science and Technology
9. Vietnam Association of Literature and Ars
10. Vietnam Union of Peace, Solidarity and Frendship Organisations
11. Vietnam Union of Cooperatives
12. Vietnam Youth Federation

13. Vietnam Laywers Association
14. Vietnam Journalists Association
15. Vietnam Red Cross Society
16. Vietnam Traditional Medicine asociation
17. Vietnam General Association of Medicine and Pharmacy
18. Vietnam History Association
19. Vietnam Gardening Association
20. Vietnam Nature and Traditional Beauty Association
21. Vientam Buddhist Association
22. Vietnam Religion Solidarity Committee
23. Vietnam Protestant Association
23. Vietnam Associatio for Blind People
24. Association for the Support of Vietnamese Handicapped and Orphans
25. Family Planning and Birth Control Association
26. Vietnam Study Promotion Association
27. Vietnam Association of Elderly People
28. Acupuncture Association
29. Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry

ANNEX 4. BRIEF HISTORY OF CIVIC ORGANISATIONS IN THE MID-1990S

Towards the end of the 1980s, after the introduction of *doi moi*, *mass organisations* were encouraged under the Fatherland Front to function more independently from the State and Party and encouraged to look for resources outside of the State-supplied budget (Le Bach Duong 2002; Helvetas 1996). Legislation from early 1989 laid the foundation of a legal framework.[46] At the village level, they gained importance as the cooperative organisations disintegrated (Vorphal 2002) and in the enterprises, trade unions had new tasks to perform, both because of better regulations of labour conditions as a result of the Labour Code of 1994 and because of the appearance of new types of economic organisations, such as joint ventures, private enterprises and foreign-owned enterprises. The War Veterans' Association was created more recently than other mass organisations, established after the American War. The Farmer's Association was fundamentally reorganised in the wake of the cooperatives' reforms of 1988 and the Land Law of 1993 and had to construct a new network of farmers' clubs. The Women's Union became one of the preferred partners for foreign donor organisations, bilateral development agencies and international NGOs, which rapidly increased their presence from the mid-1990s and has established thousands of new grassroots level Women's Clubs all over the country. The General Federation of Labour experienced more difficult changes than the other organisations and had limited foreign partners to support its transformation into organisations for workers in the expanding private sector, but it has been successful in terms of recruiting new members.

The *Socio-Professional Associations*, referred to in this study as simply "professional associations" operate on a national scale and are usually related to one of the unions, like VUSTA or the Vietnam Union of Writers and Artists Association. By 1995, approximately 143 national associations were identified. They specialise in various fields of social, professional and technical interest. They were operating according to the Decree-law on Associations of 20 May 1957 and new regulations from 1989.[47] One of VUSTA's oldest and best well-known sub-organisations is VACVINA, which aims to introduce better eco-production systems at community levels. It was established in 1986 in three provinces. In 1995 it reached a voluntary membership of 210,000 and had spread into 17 provinces by around the year 2000 (Helvatas 1996; Vasavakul 2003). In 2001, the official figure for associations operating at the national level was 240 (Le Bach Duong et al. 2003). As of 2005, the number has increased to 320 national associations (Nguyen Ngoc Lam 2005). The expansion of informal organisations seems to be continuing unabated (Annex 3 outlines the national associations).

Local associations are social or socio-professional associations registered with provincial local authorities and which operate within a limited area. In mid-1995, the exact number was not known but was estimated to be from 600 to 1,000, not including grassroots organisations (Helvetas 1996). In 2001, 1,400 associations were operating at the local level and by 2005 the number had increased to 2,150 local associations (Nguyen Ngoc Lam 2005).

[46] Directive 01, 5 February 1989, Council of Ministers: On the organisations and activities of Mass Organisations.
[47] Instruction 01/CT, 5 January 1989 and regulations by Government Commission for Organisation and Personnel – today Ministry of Home Affairs.

ANNEX 5. BUI THE CUONG: CIVIC ORGANISATIONS IN VIETNAM

1. CONCEPT "CIVIC ORGANISATION"
2. RESEARCH IN VIETNAMESE CIVIC ORGANISATIONS
3. SOCIAL TYPE AND CIVIC ORGANISATION
4. SOCIAL CHANGE, POLICIES AND NEW CIVIC ORGANISATIONS
5. CLASSIFICATIONS OF CIVIC ORGANISATIONS
6. A CASE STUDY: VIETNAM ELDERLY ASSOCIATION

Tables:
1. Social organisations in different societal types
2. A sample of significant legal and policy actions towards civic organisations in Vietnam
3. Types of collective action and initiator
4. Characteristics of three types of collective efforts and social movements
5. Characteristics of civic organisations in Vietnam

1. CONCEPT "CIVIC ORGANISATION"

Social (civil) sector is the field where collective efforts, social movements, activities of civic organisations and social networks take place. This is also the field where non-profitable activities, policy advocacy, welfare and charity activities are seen. The civil sector may target economic, educational, healthcare, welfare and sporting activities. This sector is an entity that rallies the collective efforts of organisations, movements and networks. It is a component of the greater social system.

Although as of yet there are no complete statistics, it is estimated that officially- registered associations and civic organisations in Vietnam at present number in the thousands. In 2001, the COHH-survey listed more than 700 official civic organisations (registered) in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City (COHH: "Civic Organisations in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City". See: Wischermann, 2002a and 2002b).

The term civic organisation is used here is to speak about a heterogeneous set (in a broad sense) of social organisations which are non-State, voluntary and non-profitable. They are also called non-governmental organisations (NGOs), or non-profitable organisations (NPOs).

2. RESEARCH IN VIETNAMESE CIVIC ORGANISATIONS

Some would still suppose that there are very few or even no studies on Vietnamese civic organisations to date. To some degree there are truly not many studies on this topic, but it cannot be considered an inception.

First, let us review the situation during the 1990s. The Sociological Review No. 1/1993 was a special issue of the social work in which there were some articles dealing with civic organisations. Nguyen Van Thanh has published papers on international NGOs, in which he discussed their operations in Vietnam (Van Thanh, 1993. Nguyen Van Thanh, 1998). In the middle of the 1990s, two other works drew public attention. Published in 1994, the book " People's Organisations in Market Economy" presented the results of the project KX.05.10 entitled "Position and Operational Characteristics of the Mass and Social Organisations in the Political System" (Editor: Nguyen Viet Vuong). In 1996, Nguyen Khac Mai published the book "Position and Role of People's Associations in Our Country". If the former book dealt with socio-political organisations, the latter broadly examined people's associations.

Many foreign authors have also been interested in this topic during their Vietnamese studies. In 1994, C. Beaulieu wrote about the emergence of new civic organisations in the early 1990s, social origins of the founders and reasons leading them to the establishment of such organisations. In 1995, M. Sidel presented a classification of civic organisations. In 1997, M. Gray analyzed "the emergence of NGOs in Vietnam". Gray considered an "NGO" to be an organisation with

membership (in its widest sense), established by the people and non-profitable and development-oriented. Among foreign scholars who have studied Vietnam, there are different points of view on the issue.

Entering the new millennium, new studies have been witnessed. In his 2001 paper entitled "Civil Society and NGOs in Vietnam", Bach Tan Sinh reviewed the developments of and constraints facing Vietnamese civic organisations. In 2002, Thang Van Phuc edited the book "Role of Associations in Doi Moi and National Development". The book provided an overview of theoretical issues of civic organisations and a picture of Vietnamese people's associations as well as international NGOs operating in Vietnam. In the paper "Civil Society in Vietnam" (2003), Le Bach Duong and associates described the characteristics of the types of civic organisations and some case studies on civic organisations.

During the early 2000s, the Institute of Sociology (IOS) conducted some studies relating to the topic. The 2001 Survey "Grassroots Political System – View from the People" collected data about rural people's understanding and opinions on the political system at the village and commune levels, including socio-political organisations (Trinh Duy Luan, 2002). Started in 1999 and ended in 2002, an international group of researchers, in a collaboration between the IOS, the University of Freiburg and the Free University of Berlin, conducted research combining quantitative and qualitative techniques on civic organisations in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City (COHH Project). If most of the studies used the methods of analysis of literature, secondary data and case studies with qualitative techniques, COHH would be the only one so far to apply quantitative survey (social survey) of civic organisations (Wischermann et al., 2002). In 2002-2003, the IOS conducted two projects on collective efforts and social movements, in which a number of socio-political organisations, associations and non-governmental centres were studied (Bui The Cuong and associates, 2002 and 2003a).

3. SOCIAL TYPE AND CIVIC ORGANISATION

Social type determines the establishment and nature of civic organisations. Table 1 outlines different types of civic organisations with certain characteristics corresponding to the three social types. In the period of planning the economy and the war (1960s-1970s), as the theoretical framework shows, the State played the key and comprehensive role in social welfare. In this framework, the welfare role of economic units, first of all state-owned and agricultural cooperatives, is given a remarkable position. The establishment of civic organisations is selected by the State and most of them mainly operate in the political sector, rather than social welfare sector. A characteristic feature of *Doi Moi* is that many civic organisations which used to undertake political operations have been expanding to the area of welfare. An example of this is the successful change of the Women's Union, which had a number of social programs to help women during the 1990s. Another characteristic feature of *Doi Moi* is the democratization and diversification of the socio-political sector, including the permission of the establishment of other types of civic organisations.

4. SOCIAL CHANGE, POLICIES AND NEW CIVIC ORGANISATIONS

The establishment and development of civic organisations in Vietnam have been closely related to the change in basic social structure since the middle of the 1980s. The societal change is related to the social differentiation. The social diversification brought about new social needs and poses new social problems. This leads to the demand for new types of civic organisations, and old-style civic organisations have to change themselves to meet the new requirements. At the same time, the State-society relations have also changed, creating a larger space for civic organisations. On this basis, the State has established a policy framework for the operations of civic organisations (Table 2).

The Lawyers' Association is a case in point. Prior to *Doi Moi*, the Lawyers' Association was under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and was established mainly to carry out the international activities (Nguyen Khac Mai, 1996). The emergence of the market economy-based society has posed new requirements for such civic organisation. As a result, the Lawyers' Association has rapidly expanded in almost of provinces and cities.

As indicated in studies, many civic organisations operate in the social welfare area, either for their membership or for targeted groups. For organisations which are not directly involved in social welfare, in spite of their objectives, many of them more or less have activities for social welfare. For example, the Lawyers' Association does not directly targeted social welfare, yet its branches have legal support for the poor or defence activities for vulnerable groups who are unable for self- defence in case of conflicts and disputes.

5. CLASSIFICATIONS OF CIVIC ORGANISATIONS

While the diversity of civic organisations is increasing, some classification is needed for researchers and policy-makers in understanding and administration. This part reviews some classifications related to civic organisations. Different classifications are related to the research objectives of the authors. In addition, each author uses different or the same terminologies for the same or different contents.

Classification by Nguyen Khac Mai

Nguyen Khac Mai (1996) distinguishes two main types of people's organisations in the context of Vietnam. They are mass organisations (well organized, close to the State, socio-political) and people's associations. The latter one he divides into seven categories: scientific and technological associations, literature and arts associations; humanitarian and charity associations; sport confederations; cultural associations and other professional associations; peace and friendship associations; and religious associations. Additionally, although it is not listed above, the author mentions informal (non-registered) people's associations. These can be considered another type to be added to the above-mentioned classifications.

Then he identifies four factors determining the nature of a people's organisation. They are: social demographic factor, role and position factor, functional factor and legal factor. These four factors determine four characteristics of people's organisations: non-governmental civil, political, fraternity and community and professional union (nghiep doan). Nguyen Khac Mai holds that people's organisations have four general roles: involvement in social protection and development, care for their membership's interests, self-education and social regulation (social appraisal and control, social consultancy and critics and social agreement).

Classification by Mark Sidel

M. Sidel provides a classification comprising nine types: first are research and development groups (example: CRES, CGFED); second are social work groups in the South (example: SDRC); third are educational institutions – private and semi-public; fourth are social services groups established by prestigious figures; fifth are professional and business associations; sixth are farmers' groups (official cooperatives and spontaneous cooperatives); seventh are religious groups; eighth are official mass organisations and ninth are politically active groups (Sidel, 1995).

Classification of COHH Project

The aim of the COHH Project (1999) is to survey formal civic organisations in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City. The Project team categorizes three types of civic organisations: mass organisations (socio-political organisations), professional associations and issue-oriented organisations (the author of this paper prefers to call them "small centres"). This classification is based on some criteria relating characteristics such as socio-political status, the nature of the organisation, funding sources, umbrella agencies and the difference in State administration. (Wischermann, 2002a and 2002b).

Classification by Thang Van Phuc and associates

The book by Thang Van Phuc and associates (2002) focuses on people's associations. Although it does not clearly present any classification, it is noted in a paragraph that there were three types of people's organisations over time (Thang Van Phuc, 2002, pp. 47-51). The first type is the political mass organisations, initiated and established by the Party to rally the social groups (i.e Vietnam Fatherland Front, General Confederation of Labor, Farmers' Association,). The second type is socio-political associations (such as the Union of Scientific and Technological Associations and the Union of Literature and Arts Associations). The third type is the associations established during the d*oi moi* process, thanks to the initiatives of groups. The authors of the book spent much effort identifying the natures, functions and positions of associations in the political system and their role in social development.

Classification by Le Bach Duong and associates

In the paper "Civic Society in Vietnam", Le Bach Duong and associates classify the organisations which are so-called the mediating organisations into five categories. The first one is mass organisations, such as the Women's Union, the Youth Union and the Farmers' Association. The second one is professional associations, such as the Association of Physics and the Association of Chemistry. The third one is community-based organisations (CBO) and service groups (Water Users' Group, Credit and Savings Group). The fourth one is charity funds established under Decree 177/ND-CP (1999) and support centres operating under the regulations of Decree 25/ND-CP (2001). The fifth one consists of the other organisations which do not belong to the previous four categories, most of them are unofficial and without registration (i.e. clubs, parents' associations, chess associations).

Classification by Bui The Cuong based on three forms of social movements

In the article "Collective Efforts and Social Movements in the Period of Industrialization and Modernization: a Research Inception" (Sociological Review, No. 1.2003), I sketch two typologies for mapping the diversity of collective actions. The first one lists the name of the popular collective actions and describes the types of collective actions and actor of initiative. The second one identifies the characteristics of three forms of collective efforts and social movements, including structure, organisational characteristic and type of organisation. Each form of social movement will create conditions and requirements for the establishment of certain types of civic organisations (Bui The Cuong, 2003b) (Table 3 and 4).

Classification based on operational areas or umbrella agencies

In this paper I suggest another classification distinguished by name reflecting the nature of organisation, operation sector, umbrella agency and social characteristics of founder (Table 5).

6. A CASE STUDY: VIETNAM ELDERLY ASSOCIATION

This part introduces some findings of the Vietnamese Elderly Qualitative Research Project (VEQR) conducted by the IOS in 2000-2001 and funded by the UNFPA in Vietnam (Bui The Cuong, 2005).

Rapid expansion

On the basis of a profound and broad movement, which emerged during the early 1980s named "Hoi Bao tho" (Longevity Association), the Vietnam Elderly Association (VEA) was established in 1995. Today, the Association has 6.4 million members and an organisational system from the central to village and residential quarter levels. The Association's branches have been established in 10,257 of the total number of 10,592 grassroots administrative units (rural commune and urban ward) and nearly 90,000 grassroots points (rural village, residential quarter) (Thanh Nien Newspaper, 2005). "When the Association was established, the elderly were very happy. In the first five years, the Association developed rapidly. No such rapid growth has been seen in other mass organisations" (a staff, Provincial Town Elderly Association, Binh Thuan province).

Why does the VEA develop rapidly and get close relations with its members? The following quotations from the interviews conducted under the VEQR-Project show that it is because the VEA meets the basic needs of the elderly people. It provides the elderly with *a group identity.* Through their Association, the elderly see themselves as members of an organized group and the Association contributes to improving the status and the role of the elderly in the community and society. The Association serves as a place for communication of the group during its activities and meetings.

Feeling to belong to a group

"On appointment, the Association invited me to attend a longevity wishing ceremony. And there were presents. Although the presents were not very much valuable, we felt moved receiving them. I attended the ceremony and was presented with a gift and I ate some porridge there. I ate porridge with great appetite. I felt pervaded with warm feelings. I felt moved. I ate very good porridge, full of sentiments. After eating, I received a present – a piece of cloth, not much. If I would buy, I won't buy that piece of fabric. But because it was a present, I liked it very much. After returning home, I asked my children to have it tailored for me. Then when the dress is made, I telephoned leaders of the

Association, informing them the dress, a present of the Association is ready for me to wear. I think this is a warm sentiment and a great care. Whenever I have free time, I often think of it. I feel that warm sentiment in my heart and my mind " (KThHL, 65, female, provincial town).

Having a social status

"We need to join the Association to identify each other. Whenever we fall ill, the Association members visit us. For example, if we are hospitalized, we are visited by the Association members and other people in the hospital would say aha he has these visitors, those visitors. That is a consolation for us" (LVT, 66, male, rural).

"For example, a member of the Association dies, so I join the funeral. Then an oration of the Association, I was moved and tears ran off my eyes " (BTD, 75, female, rural).

Equality and connection

"There is a growing gap between the elderly. Some of them are richer and have more favourable conditions than others. And those who are disadvantaged feel very sad. For this very reason, the establishment of the Association has met the urgent need of the elderly who considered it very useful. In meetings of the Association, they can exchange issues relating to the country, society and their village. At the same time, they are able to have mutual help in their lives and encourage each other in resolving their family problems and other things" (a staff, Provincial Fatherland Front Committee).

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Table 1. Social organisations in different societal types

Societal type	Types of civic organisations	Characteristics
Traditional society	Religious organisation. Ward (phuong hoi). Social network.	Highly hierarchical Loose networking
Society based on socialistic planning economy (later 1950s in Northern, later 1970s in the whole country to later 1980s)	Mass organisation. Professional association. Religious association.	Democratic centralism with more emphasizing on centralism. Selective associations. Emphasizing on political functions of organisation.
Society based on socialistic-oriented market economy (later 1980s to now)	Mass organisation. Professional association. Semi-government organisation. NGO. Non-profitable organisation. Religious association. Business association. Informal network.	Democratic centralism with considering the expansion of bottom up participation. Diversity of types of civic organisation. Diversity of action areas with emphasizing the development and welfare work.

Table 2. A sample of significant legal and policy actions towards civic organisations in Vietnam

Date	Act	Content
5/1/1989	CT 01/CT	Administrating the organisation and activities of people's associations.
7/7/1990	40/LCT-HDNN8	Trade Union Law.
28/1/1992	ND 35-HDBT	Organisation, administration, development of science and technology activities.
24/5/1996	QD 340/TTg	Regulation on activities of international NGOs in Vietnam.
21/8/1997	NQ 90/CP	Direction and orientation policy on socializing the education, health care, cultural activities.
11/5/1998	29/1998/ND-CP	Regulation on implementation of commune democracy.
8/9/1998	71/1998/ND-CP	Regulation on implementation of democracy in Government agencies.
13/2/1999	07/1999/ND-CP	Regulation on implementation of democracy in State-owned enterprises.
26/6/1999	05/L-CTN	Law on Vietnam Fatherland Front.
19/8/1999	73/1999/ND-CP	Policy on encouraging the socialization of activities in education, health care, cultural, sport sector.
9/6/2000	21/2000/QH10	Law on science and technology.
29/1/2003	21/2003/QD-TTg	On State budget supporting for professional socio-political organisations, social organisations, socio-professional organisations doing the activities related to State tasks.
7/3/2003	19/2003/ND-CP	Regulation on responsibilities of State agencies at all level in ensuring the Women's Union at all level to participate in State

		administration.
7/7/2003	79/2003/ND-CP	Regulation on implementation of commune democracy.
30/7/2003	88/2003/ND-CP	Regulation on organizing, activities and administration of associations.

Table 3. Types of collective action and initiator

Movements since the 1990s	Initiator	Typologies
Longevity (bao tho) Strikes, industrial disputes Environment protection Capacity building of Party (chinh don, xay dung Dang) Disaster relief Young entrepreneur (doanh nhan tre) Small and medium enterprise (doanh nhan nho va vua) Charity blood (hien mau nhan dao) Education support (khuyen hoc) Thankfulness of meritious people (den on dap nghia) Day for the poor Good persons good things (nguoi tot viec tot) Regulation of grassroots democracy (quy che dan chu co so) Youth with Career (thanh nien lap nghiep) Emulation (thi dua) All people united to build cultural life in residence (toan dan doan ket xay dung doi song van hoa o khu dan cu) All people participate in ensuring traffic security (toan dan tham gia bao dam an toan trat tu giao thong) All people participate in national security (toan dan xay dung phong trao bao ve an ninh To Quoc) Poor children overcome difficulties (tre ngheo vuot kho) Back to tradition (tro ve truyen thong) Drinking water remember root (uong nuoc nho nguon) Poverty reduction	Party agency. State agency. Socio-political organisation. Civic organisation (association, NGO) Religious organisation. Research institute. Primary, secondary group. Kinship. Collective. Community. Individual.	Collective behaviour vs. social movement. Mobilization/ Campaign/ Collective efforts/ Social movement. Official vs. unofficial (top down vs. bottom up). Revolution/ Reform/ Resistance. Typology by sector/ issue (economy, extension, technology transfer, charity, social, culture).

Table 4. Characteristics of three types of collective efforts and social movements

	Type 1: Orthodox movements	**Type 2: Organized interests groups**	**Type 3: Collectives**
Type	Mobilization Movement	Collective efforts Movement	Collective efforts
Sector of activities	Impacting policy Environment Economy Welfare Charity	Impacting policy Environment Economy Welfare Charity Religious activity	Economy Welfare Impacting policy Charity Religious activity
Features of structure	Large-scale, hierarchical administrative organisation Top-down approach Theatre style	Elite group, active group Medium- or small-scale organisation	Loose
Mode of action	Program. plan of action Conference Recommendation Lobby Mobilization	Conference Workshop Recommendation Lobby Mobilization	Pressure of small group
Organisation	Having organisation	Having organisation Informal	Informal
Type of organisation	Association Foundation Centre	Association Foundation Institutes College Centre Religious unit/ organisation	Small group Collective
Level of funding	High	Limited	No
Main funding source	State Foreign donor	State Foreign donor Private	People

Table 5. Characteristics of civic organisations in Vietnam

Typology	Description
By name reflecting the nature of organisation	Collective and private universities, colleges, schools, kindergartens. Socio-political, semi-socio-political, professional socio-political organisations (full or partly funding of State). Associations, Unions of associations, Unions, Confederations (full, partly or not funding of State). Institutes and centres under ministries, public universities, socio-political organisations (full, partly or not funding by umbrella organisation). Institutes and centres under central or local associations. Institutes and centres established by formal decisions of the Ministry or Provincial Department of Science and Technology. Consultant companies. Committees, Councils (State, semi-State, Non-Government or under associations). Foundations (State, semi-State, Non-Government or under associations). Clubs. Programs, projects. Informal groups, networks (groups of persons with the same birthplace, school, army unit, parent's association, club.).
By sectors of activities	Business, industry, tourism. Legal sector. Rural development, forest development. Education, training. Health, sport, medicine, pharmacy, HIV/AIDs. Ethnic minorities, women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, etc. Environment. Religion.
By umbrella agency	Central or local Government. Socio-political organisation. Association. Company. Non-registered.
Characteristics of founder	Persons with high social status. Entrepreneurs. Officials, intelligentsia (working or retired). Others.
Funding source	State. Projects funded by State or international donors. Fees of services. Contributions of founders, members, staffs.

ANNEX 6. THE CSI SCORING MATRIX

1. STRUCTURE

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
1. 1. Breadth of citizen participation	**How widespread is citizen involvement in civil society? What proportion of citizens engage in civil society activities?**				
1.1.1. Non-partisan political action	What percentage of people have ever undertaken any form of non-partisan political action (e.g. written a letter to a newspaper, signed a petition, attended a demonstration)?	A very small minority (less than 10%).	A minority (10% to 30%).	A significant proportion (31% to 65%).	A large majority (more than 65%).
1.1.2 Charitable giving	What percentage of people donate to charity on a regular basis?	A very small minority (less than 10%).	A minority (10% to 30%).	A significant proportion (31% to 65%).	A large majority (more than 65%).
1.1.3 CSO membership	What percentage of people belong to at least one CSO?	A small minority (less than 30%).	A minority (30% to 50%).	A majority (51% to 65%).	A large majority (more than 65%).
1.1.4 Volunteering	What percentage of people undertake volunteer work on a regular basis (at least once a year)?	A very small minority (less than 10%).	A small minority (10% to 30%).	A minority (31% to 50%).	A majority (more than 50%).
1.1.5 Collective community action	What percentage of people have participated in a collective community action within the last year (e.g. attended a community meeting, participated in a community-organised	A small minority (less than 30%).	A minority (30% - 50%)	A majority (51% to 65%).	A large majority (more than 65%)

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
	event or a collective effort to solve a community problem)?				
1. 2. Depth of citizen participation	**How deep/meaningful is citizen participation in CS? How frequently/extensively do people engage in CS activities?**				
1 2.1 Charitable giving	How much (i.e. what percentage of personal income) do people who give to charity on a regular basis donate, on average, per year?	Less than 1%	1% to 2%	2.1% to 3%	More than 3%
1.2.2 Volunteering	How many hours per month, on average, do volunteers devote to volunteer work?	Less than 2 hours	2 to 5 hours	5.1 to 8 hours	More than 8 hours.
1.2.3 CSO membership	What percentage of CSO members belong to more than one CSO?	A small minority (less than 30%)	A minority (30% to 50%)	A majority (51% to 65%)	A large majority (more than 65%)
1.3. Diversity of civil society participants	**How diverse/representative is the civil society arena? Do all social groups participate equitably in civil society? Are any groups dominant or excluded?**				
1.3.1 CSO membership	To what extent do CSOs represent all significant social groups (e.g. women, rural dwellers, poor people and minorities)?	Significant social groups are absent / excluded from CSOs.	Significant social groups are largely absent from CSOs	Significant social groups are under-represented in CSOs.	CSOs equitably represent all social groups. No group is noticeably under-represented.
1.3.2 CSO leadership	To what extent is there diversity in CSO leadership? To what extent does CSO leadership represent all significant social groups (e.g. women,	Significant social groups are absent / excluded from CSO leadership roles.	Significant social groups are largely absent from CSO leadership roles	Significant social groups are under-represented in CSO leadership roles.	CSO leadership equitably represents all social groups. No group is noticeably under-represented.

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
	rural dwellers, poor people and minorities)?				
1.3.3 Distribution of CSOs	How are CSOs distributed throughout the country?	CSOs are highly concentrated in the major urban centres.	CSOs are largely concentrated in urban areas.	CSOs are present in all but the most remote areas of the country.	CSOs are present in all areas of the country.
1.4. Level of organisation	**How well-organised is civil society? What kind of infrastructure exists for civil society?**				
1.4.1 Existence of CSO umbrella bodies	What percentage of CSOs belong to a federation or umbrella body of related organisations?	A small minority (less than 30%)	A minority (30% to 50%)	A majority (51% to 70%)	A large majority (more than 70%)
1.4.2 Effectiveness of CSO umbrella bodies	How effective do CSO stakeholders judge existing federations or umbrella bodies to be in achieving their defined goals?	Completely ineffective (or non-existent).	Largely ineffective.	Somewhat effective.	Effective.
1.4.3 Self-regulation	Are there efforts among CSOs to self-regulate? How effective and enforceable are existing self-regulatory mechanisms? What percentage of CSOs abide by a collective code of conduct (or some other form of self-regulation)?	There are no efforts among CSOs to self-regulate.	Preliminary efforts have been to self-regulate but only a small minority of CSOs are involved and impact is extremely limited.	Some mechanisms for CSO self-regulation are in place but only some sectors of CSOs are involved and there is no effective method of enforcement. As a result, impact is limited.	Mechanisms for CSO self-regulation are in place and function quite effectively. A discernible impact on CSO behaviour can be detected.
1.4.4 Support infrastructure	What is the level of support infrastructure for civil society? How many civil society support	There is no support infrastructure for civil society.	There is very limited infrastructure for civil society.	Support infrastructure exists for some sectors of civil society and is	There is a well-developed support infrastructure for civil society.

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
	organisations exist in the country? Are they effective?			expanding.	
1.4.5 International linkages	What proportion of CSOs have international linkages (e.g. are members of international networks, participate in global events)?	Only a handful of "elite" CSOs have international linkages.	A limited number of (mainly national-level) CSOs have international linkages.	A moderate number of (mainly national-level) CSOs have international linkages.	A significant number of CSOs from different sectors and different levels (grassroots to national) have international linkages.
1.5. Inter-relations	**How strong / productive are relations among civil society actors?**				
1.5.1 Communication	What is the extent of communication between CS actors?	Very little	Limited	Moderate	Significant
1.5.2 Cooperation	How much do CS actors cooperate with each other on issues of common concern? Can examples of cross-sectoral CSO alliances/coalitions (around a specific issue or common concern) be identified?	CS actors do not cooperate with each other on issues of common concern. No examples of cross-sectoral CSO alliances/coalitions can be identified / detected.	It is very rare that CS actors cooperate with each other on issues of common concern. Very few examples of cross-sectoral CSO alliances / coalitions can be identified / detected.	CS actors on occasion cooperate with each other on issues of common concern. Some examples of cross-sectoral CSO alliances / coalitions can be identified / detected.	CS actors regularly cooperate with each other on issues of common concern. Numerous examples of cross-sectoral CSO alliances / coalitions can be identified / detected.
1.6. Resources	**To what extent do CSOs have adequate resources to achieve their goals?**				
1.6.1 Financial resources	How adequate is the level of financial resources for CSOs?	On average, CSOs suffer from a serious financial resource problem.	On average, CSOs have inadequate financial resources to achieve their goals.	On average, CSOs have most of the financial resources they require to achieve their defined goals.	On average, CSOs have an adequate and secure financial resource base.
1.6.2 Human resources	How adequate is the level of human resources for	On average, CSOs suffer from a serious	On average, CSOs have inadequate	On average, CSOs have most of the	On average, CSOs have an adequate and

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
	CSOs?	human resource problem.	human resources to achieve their goals.	human resources they require to achieve their defined goals.	secure human resource base.
1.6.3 Technological and infrastructural resources	How adequate is the level of technological and infrastructural resources for CSOs?	On average, CSOs suffer from a serious technological and infrastructural resource problem.	On average, CSOs have inadequate technological and infrastructural resources to achieve their goals.	On average, CSOs have most of the technological and infrastructural resources they require to achieve their defined goals.	On average, CSOs have an adequate and secure technological and infrastructural resource base.

2. ENVIRONMENT

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
2.1. Political context	**What is the political situation in the country and its impact on civil society?**				
2.1.1. Political rights	How strong are the restrictions on citizens' political rights (e.g. to participate freely in political processes, elect political leaders through free and fair elections, freely organise in political parties)?	There are severe restrictions on the political rights of citizens. Citizens cannot participate in political processes.	There are some restrictions on the political rights of citizens and their participation in political processes.	Citizens are endowed with substantial political rights and meaningful opportunities for political participation. There are minor and isolated restrictions on the full freedom of citizens' political rights and their participation in political processes.	People have the full freedom and choice to exercise their political rights and meaningfully participate in political processes.
2.1.2 Political competition	What are the main characteristics of the party system in terms of number of parties, ideological spectrum, institutionalisation and party competition?	Single party system.	Small number of parties based on personalism, clientelism or appealing to identity politics.	Multiple parties, but weakly institutionalised and / or lacking ideological distinction	Robust, multi-party competition with well-institutionalised and ideologically diverse parties.
2.1.3. Rule of law	To what extent is the rule of law entrenched in the country?	There is general disregard for the law by citizens and the state.	There is low confidence in and frequent violations of the law by citizens and the state.	There is a moderate level of confidence in the law. Violations of the law by citizens and the state are not uncommon.	Society is governed by fair and predictable rules, which are generally abided by.
2.1.4. Corruption	What is the level of perceived corruption in the public sector?	High	Substantial	Moderate	Low

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
2.1.5. State effectiveness	To what extent is the state able to fulfil its defined functions?	The state bureaucracy has collapsed or is entirely ineffective (e.g. due to political, economic or social crisis).	The capacity of the state bureaucracy is extremely limited.	State bureaucracy is functional but perceived as incompetent and / or non-responsive.	State bureaucracy is fully functional and perceived to work in the public's interests.
2.1.6. Decentralisation	To what extent is government expenditure devolved to sub-national authorities?	Sub-national share of government expenditure is less than 20.0%.	Sub-national share of government expenditure is between 20.0% and 34.9%.	Sub-national share of government expenditure is between 35.0% than 49.9%.	Sub-national share of government expenditure is more than 49.9%.
2.2. Basic freedoms & rights	**To what extent are basic freedoms ensured by law and in practice?**				
2.2.1. Civil liberties	To what extent are civil liberties (e.g. freedom of expression, association, assembly) ensured by law and in practice*?*	Civil liberties are systematically violated.	There are frequent violations of civil liberties.	There are isolated or occasional violations of civil liberties.	Civil liberties are fully ensured by law and in practice.
2.2.2. Information rights	To what extent is public access to information guaranteed by law? How accessible are government documents to the public?	No laws guarantee information rights. Citizen access to government documents is extremely limited.	Citizen access to government documents is limited but expanding.	Legislation regarding public access to information is in place, but in practice, it is difficult to obtain government documents.	Government documents are broadly and easily accessible to the public.
2.2.3. Press freedoms	To what extent are press freedoms ensured by law and in practice*?*	Press freedoms are systematically violated.	There are frequent violations of press freedoms.	There are isolated violations of press freedoms.	Freedom of the press is fully ensured by law and in practice.

2.3. Socio-economic context	**What is the socio-economic situation in the country and its impact on civil society?**			
Description	**Score 0**	**Score 1**	**Score 2**	**Score 3**
2.3.1. Socio-economic context How much do socio-economic conditions in the country represent a barrier to the effective functioning of civil society?	Social & economic conditions represent a serious barrier to the effective functioning of civil society. More than five of the following conditions are present: 1. Widespread poverty (e.g. more than 40% of people live on $2 per day) 2. Civil war (armed conflict in last 5 years) 3. Severe ethnic and/or religious conflict 4. Severe economic crisis (e.g. external debt is more than GNP) 5. Severe social crisis (over last 2 years) 6. Severe socio-economic inequities (Gini coefficient > 0.4) 7. Pervasive adult illiteracy (over 40%) 8. Lack of IT infrastructure (i.e. less than 5 hosts per 10.000 inhabitants)	Social & economic conditions significantly limit the effective functioning of civil society. Three, four or five of the conditions indicated are present.	Social & economic conditions somewhat limit the effective functioning of civil society. One or two of the conditions indicated are present.	Social & economic conditions do not represent a barrier to the effective functioning of civil society. None of the conditions indicated is present.
2.4. Socio-cultural context	**To what extent are socio-cultural norms and attitudes conducive or detrimental to civil society?**			
2.4.1. Trust	How much do members of society trust one another?	Relationships among members of society	There is widespread mistrust among	There is a moderate level of trust among	There is a high level of trust among

		are characterised by mistrust (e.g. less than 10% of people score on the World Value Survey (WVS) trust indicator).	members of society. (e.g. 10% to 30% of people score on the WVS trust indicator).	members of society. (e.g. 31% to 50% of people score on the WVS trust indicator).	members of society (e.g. more than 50% of people score on the WVS trust indicator).
2.4.2. Tolerance	How tolerant are members of society?	Society is characterised by widespread intolerance (e.g. average score on WVS-derived tolerance indicator is 3.0 or higher).	Society is characterised by a low level of tolerance (e.g. indicator between 2.0 and 2.9).	Society is characterised by a moderate level of tolerance (e.g. indicator between 1.0 and 1.9).	Society is characterised by a high level of tolerance (e.g. indicator less than 1.0).
2.4.3. Public spiritedness	How strong is the sense of public spiritedness among members of society?	Very low level of public spiritedness in society (e.g. average score on WVS-derived public spiritedness indicator is more than 3.5)	Low level of public spiritedness (e.g. indicator between 2.6 and 3.5)	Moderate level of public spiritedness (e.g. indicator between 1.5 and 2.5)	High level of public spiritedness. (e.g. indicator less than 1.5)
2.5. Legal environment	**To what extent is the existing legal environment enabling or disabling to civil society?**				
2.5.1. CSO registration	How supportive is the CSO registration process? Is the process (1) simple, (2) quick, (3) inexpensive, (4) Following legal provisions (5) consistently applied?	The CSO registration process is not supportive at all. Four or five of the quality characteristics are absent.	The CSO registration is not very supportive Two or three quality characteristics are absent	The CSO registration process can be judged as relatively supportive. One quality characteristic is absent.	The CSO registration process is supportive. None of the quality characteristics is absent.
2.5.2. Allowable advocacy activities	To what extent are CSOs free to engage in advocacy / criticize government?	CSOs are not allowed to engage in advocacy or criticise the government.	There are excessive and / or vaguely defined constraints on advocacy activities.	Constraints on CSOs' advocacy activities are minimal and clearly defined, such	CSOs are permitted to freely engage in advocacy and criticism of

				as prohibitions on political campaigning.	government.
2.5.3. Tax laws favourable to CSOs	How favourable is the tax system to CSOs? How narrow/broad is the range of CSOs that are eligible for tax exemptions, if any? How significant are these exemptions?	The tax system impedes CSOs. No tax exemption or preference of any kind is available for CSOs.	The tax system is burdensome to CSOs. Tax exemptions or preferences are available only for a narrow range of CSOs (e.g. humanitarian organisations) or for limited sources of income (e.g., grants or donations).	The tax system contains some incentives favouring CSOs. Only a narrow range of CSOs is excluded from tax exemptions or preferences and/or. exemptions or preferences are available from some taxes and some activities.	The tax system provides favourable treatment for CSOs. Exemptions or preferences are available from a range of taxes and for a range of activities, limited only in appropriate circumstances.
2.5.4. Tax benefits for philanthropy	How broadly available are tax deductions or credits, or other tax benefits, to encourage individual and corporate giving?	No tax benefits are available (to individuals or corporations) for charitable giving.	Tax benefits are available for a very limited set of purposes or types of organisations.	Tax benefits are available for a fairly broad set of purposes or types of organisations.	Significant tax benefits are available for a broad set of purposes or types of organisations.
2.6. State-civil society relations	**What is the nature and quality of relations between civil society and the state?**				
2.6.1. Autonomy	To what extent can civil society exist and function independently of the state? To what extent are CSOs free to operate without excessive government interference? Is government oversight reasonably designed and limited to protect legitimate public interests?	The state controls civil society.	CSOs are subject to frequent unwarranted interference in their operations.	The state accepts the existence of an independent civil society but CSOs are subject to occasional unwarranted government interference.	CSOs operate freely. They are subject only to reasonable oversight linked to clear and legitimate public interests.

2.6.2. Dialogue	To what extent does the state dialogue with civil society? How inclusive and institutionalized are the terms and rules of engagement, if they exist?	There is no meaningful dialogue between civil society and the state.	The state only seeks to dialogue with a small sub-set of CSOs on an ad hoc basis.	The state dialogues with a relatively broad range of CSOs but on a largely ad hoc basis.	Mechanisms are in place to facilitate systematic dialogue between the state and a broad and diverse range of CSOs.
2.6.3 Cooperation / support	How narrow/broad is the range of CSOs that receive state resources (in the form of grants, contracts, etc.)?	The level of state resources channelled through CSOs is insignificant.	Only a very limited range of CSOs receives state resources.	A moderate range of CSOs receives state resources.	The state channels significant resources to a large range of CSOs.
2.7. Private sector-civil society relations	**What is the nature and quality of relations between civil society and the private sector?**				
2.7.1. Private sector attitude	What is the general attitude of the private sector towards civil society actors?	Generally hostile	Generally indifferent	Generally positive	Generally supportive
2.7.2 Corporate social responsibility	How developed are notions and actions of corporate social responsibility?	Major companies show no concern about the social and environmental impacts of their operations.	Major companies pay lip service to notions of corporate social responsibility. However, in their operations they frequently disregard negative social and environmental impacts.	Major companies are beginning to take the potential negative social and environmental impacts of their operations into account.	Major companies take effective measures to protect against negative social and environmental impacts.
2.7.3. Corporate philanthropy	How narrow/broad is the range of CSOs that receive support from the private sector?	Corporate philanthropy is insignificant.	Only a very limited range of CSOs receives funding from the private sector.	A moderate range of CSOs receives funding from the private sector.	The private sector channels resources to a large range of CSOs.

3. VALUES

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
3.1. Democracy	**To what extent do civil society actors practice and promote democracy?**				
3.1.1 Democratic practices within CSOs	To what extent do CSOs practice internal democracy? How much control do members have over decision-making? Are leaders selected through democratic elections?	A large majority (i.e. more than 75%) of CSOs do not practice internal democracy (e.g. members have little / no control over decision-making, CSOs are characterised by patronage, nepotism).	A majority of CSOs (i.e. more than 50%) do not practice internal democracy (e.g. members have little/no control over decision-making, CSOs are characterised by patronage, nepotism).	A majority of CSOs (i.e. more than 50%) practice internal democracy (e.g. members have significant control over decision-making; leaders are selected through democratic elections).	A large majority of CSOs (i.e. more than 75%) practice internal democracy (e.g. members have significant control over decision-making; leaders are selected through democratic elections).
3.1.2 CS actions to promote democracy	How much does CS actively promote democracy at a societal level?	No active role. No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	Only a few CS activities in this area can be detected. Their visibility is low and these issues are not attributed much importance by CS as a whole.	A number of CS activities can be detected. Broad-based support and / or public visibility of such initiatives, however, are lacking.	CS is a driving force in promoting a democratic society. CS activities in this area enjoy broad-based support and / or strong public visibility.
3.2. Transparency	**To what extent do civil society actors practice and promote transparency?**				
3.2.1 Corruption within civil society	How widespread is corruption within CS?	Instances of corrupt behaviour within CS are very frequent.	Instances of corrupt behaviour within CS are frequent.	There are occasional instances of corrupt behaviour within CS.	Instances of corrupt behaviour within CS are very rare.
3.2.2 Financial transparency of CSOs	How many CSOs are financially transparent? What percentage of CSOs make their financial accounts publicly	A small minority of CSOs (less than 30%) make their financial accounts publicly available.	A minority of CSOs (30% -50%) make their financial accounts publicly available.	A small majority of CSOs (51% -65%) make their financial accounts publicly available.	A large majority of CSOs (more than 65%) make their financial accounts publicly available.

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
	available?				
3.2.3 CS actions to promote transparency	How much does CS actively promote government and corporate transparency?	No active role. No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	Only a few CS activities in this area can be detected. Their visibility is low and these issues are not attributed much importance by CS as a whole.	A number of CS activities in this area can be detected. Broad-based support and/or public visibility of such initiatives, however, are lacking.	CS is a driving force in demanding government and corporate transparency. CS activities in this area enjoy broad-based support and / or strong public visibility.
3.3. Tolerance	**To what extent do civil society actors and organisations practice and promote tolerance?**				
3.3.1 Tolerance within the CS arena	To what extent is CS a tolerant arena?	CS is dominated by intolerant forces. The expression of only a narrow sub-set of views is tolerated.	Significant forces within civil society do not tolerate others' views without encountering protest from civil society at large.	There are some intolerant forces within civil society, but they are isolated from civil society at large.	Civil society is an open arena where the expression of *all* viewpoints is actively encouraged. Intolerant behaviour are strongly denounced by civil society at large.
3.3.2 CS actions to promote tolerance	How much does CS actively promote tolerance at a societal level?	No active role. No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	Only a few CS activities in this area can be detected. Their visibility is low and these issues are not attributed much importance by CS as a whole.	A number of CS activities in this area can be detected. Broad-based support and/or public visibility of such initiatives, however, are lacking.	CS is a driving force in promoting a tolerant society. CS activities in this area enjoy broad-based support and / or strong public visibility.
3.4. Non-violence	**To what extent do civil society actors practice and promote non-violence?**				
3.4.1 Non-violence within the CS arena	How widespread is the use of violent means (such as damage to	Significant mass-based groups within CS use violence as	Some isolated groups within CS regularly use violence to	Some isolated groups within CS occasionally resort to	There is a high level of consensus within CS regarding the

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
	property or personal violence) among CS actors to express their interests in the public sphere?	the primary means of expressing their interests.	express their interests without encountering protest from civil society at large.	violent actions, but are broadly denounced by CS at large.	principle of non-violence. Acts of violence by CS actors are extremely rare and strongly denounced.
3.4.2 CS actions to promote non-violence and peace	How much does CS actively promote a non-violent society? For example, how much does civil society support the non-violent resolution of social conflicts and peace? Address issues of violence against women, child abuse, violence among youths etc.?	No active role. No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected. Some CS actions actually contribute to societal violence.	Only a few CS activities in this area can be detected. Their visibility is low and these issues are not attributed much importance by CS as a whole.	A number of CS activities in this area can be detected. Broad-based support and / or public visibility of such initiatives, however, are lacking.	CS is a driving force in promoting a non-violent society. CS actions in this area enjoy broad-based support and / or strong public visibility
3.5. Gender equity	**To what extent do civil society actors practice and promote gender equity?**				
3.5.1 Gender equity within the CS arena	To what extent is civil society a gender equitable arena?	Women are excluded from civil society leadership roles.	Women are largely absent from civil society leadership roles.	Women are under-represented in civil society leadership positions.	Women are equitably represented as leaders and members of CS. .
3.5.2 Gender equitable practices within CSOs	How much do CSOs practice gender equity? What percentage of CSOs with paid employees have policies in place to ensure gender equity?	A small minority (less than 20%).	A minority (20%-50%)	A small majority (51% - 65%)	A large majority (more than 65%)
3.5.3 CS actions to promote gender equity	How much does CS actively promote gender equity at the societal	No active role. No CS activity of any consequence in this	Only a few CS activities in this area can be detected. Their	A number of CS activities in this area can be detected.	CS is a driving force in promoting a gender equitable society. CS

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
	level?	area can be detected. Some CS actions actually contribute to gender inequity.	visibility is low and these issues are not attributed much importance by CS as a whole.	Broad-based support and / or public visibility of such initiatives, however, are lacking.	activities in this area enjoy broad-based support and / or strong public visibility.
3.6. Poverty eradication	To what extent do civil society actors promote poverty eradication?				
3.6.1 CS actions to eradicate poverty	To what extent does CS actively seek to eradicate poverty?	No active role. No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected. Some CS actions serve to sustain existing economic inequities.	Only a few CS activities in this area can be detected. Their visibility is low and these issues are not attributed much importance by CS as a whole.	A number of CS activities in this area can be detected. Broad-based support and / or public visibility of such initiatives, however, are lacking.	CS is a driving force in the struggle to eradicate poverty. CS activities in this area enjoy broad-based support and / or strong public visibility.
3.7. Environmental sustainability	**To what extent do civil society actors practice and promote environmental sustainability?**				
3.7.1 CS actions to sustain the environment	How much does CS actively seek to sustain the environment?	No active role. No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected. Some CS actions serve to reinforce unsustainable practices.	Only a few CS activities in this area can be detected. Their visibility is low and these issues are not attributed much importance by CS as a whole.	A number of CS activities in this area can be detected. Broad-based support and / or public visibility of such initiatives, however, are lacking.	CS is a driving force in protecting the environment. CS activities in this area enjoy broad-based support and / or strong public visibility.

4. IMPACT

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
4.1. Influencing public policy	**How active and successful is civil society in influencing public policy?**				
4.1.1. – 4.1.2. Civil Society's Impact on Human Rights Policy & Practice	How active and successful is civil society in influencing human rights policy & practice?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area, but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.
4.1.2. Civil Society's Impact on Social Policy	How active and successful is civil society in influencing social policy?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area, but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.
4.1.3. Civil Society's Impact on National Budgeting process Case Study	How active and successful is civil society in influencing the overall national budgeting process?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and focused only on specific budget components.	Civil society is active in the overall budgeting process, but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role in the overall budgeting process. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.
4.2. Holding state & private corporations accountable	**How active and successful is civil society in holding the state and private corporations accountable**?				
4.2.1. Holding state accountable	How active and successful is civil society in monitoring state performance and holding the state accountable?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area, but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
4.2.2. Holding private corporations accountable	How active and successful is civil society in holding private corporations accountable?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area, but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.
4.3. Responding to social interests	**How much are civil society actors responding to social interests?**				
4.3.1 Responsiveness	How effectively do civil society actors respond to priority social concerns?	Civil society actors are out of touch with the crucial concerns of the population.	There are frequent examples of crucial social concerns that did not find a voice among existing civil society actors.	There are isolated examples of crucial social concerns that did not find a voice among existing civil society actors.	Civil society actors are very effective in taking up the crucial concerns of the population.
4.3.2 Public Trust	What percentage of the population has trust in civil society actors?	A small minority (< 25%)	A large minority (25% - 50%)	A small majority (51% – 75%)	A large majority (> 75%)
4.4. Empower-ing citizens	**How active and successful is civil society in empowering citizens, especially traditionally marginalised groups, to shape decisions that affect their lives?**				
4.4.1 Informing/ educating citizens	How active and successful is civil society in informing and educating citizens on public issues?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.
4.4.2 Building capacity for collective action	How active and successful is civil society in building the capacity of people to organise themselves, mobilise resources and work together to solve common problems?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
4.4.3 Empowering marginalized people	How active and successful is civil society in empowering marginalized people?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.
4.4.4. Empowering women	How active and successful is civil society in empowering women, i.e. to give them real choice and control over their lives?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area, but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.
4.4.5. Building social capital	To what extent does civil society build social capital among its members? How do levels of trust, tolerance and public spiritedness of members of CS compare to those of non-members?	Civil society diminishes the stock of social capital in society.	Civil society does not contribute to building social capital in society.	Civil society does contribute moderately to building social capital in society.	Civil Society does contribute strongly to building social capital in society.
4.4.6 Supporting livelihoods	How active and successful is civil society in creating / supporting employment and/or income-generating opportunities (especially for poor people and women)?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area, but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.
4.5. Meeting societal needs	How active and successful is civil society in meeting societal needs, especially those of poor people and other marginalised groups?				
4.5.1 Lobbying for state service provision	How active and successful is civil society in lobbying the government to meet pressing societal needs?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area, but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be

Indicator	Description	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
					detected.
4.5.2 Meeting pressing societal needs directly	How active and successful is civil society in directly meeting pressing societal needs (through service delivery or the promotion of self-help initiatives)?	No CS activity of any consequence in this area can be detected.	CS activity in this area is very limited and there is no discernible impact.	Civil society is active in this area, but impact is limited.	Civil society plays an important role. Examples of significant success / impact can be detected.
4.5.3 Meeting needs of marginalised groups	To what extent are CSOs more or less effective than the state in delivering services to marginalised groups?	CSOs are less effective than the state.	CSOs are as effective as the state.	CSOs are slightly more effective than the state.	CSOs are significantly more effective than the state.

ANNEX 7. STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT GROUP'S AGGREGATED SCORING

Indicators	Score
STRUCTURE	**1.5**
1. 1. Breadth of citizen participation	**1.6**
1.1.1. Non-partisan political action	0.3
1.1.2 Charitable giving	1.8
1.1.3 CSO membership	2.2
1.1.4 Volunteering	2.1
1.1.5 Collective community action	1.5
1. 2. Depth of citizen participation	**1.1**
1 2.1 Charitable giving	1.0
1.2.2 Volunteering	0.7
1.2.3 CSO membership	1.5
1.3. Diversity of civil society participants	**1.9**
1.3.1 CSO membership	2.1
1.3.2 CSO leadership	1.5
1.3.3 Distribution of CSOs	2.1
1.4. Level of organisation	**1.6**
1.4.1 Existence of CSO umbrella bodies	2.1
1.4.2 Effectiveness of CSO umbrella bodies	1.7
1.4.3 Self-regulation	1.6
1.4.4 Support infrastructure	1.3
1.4.5 International linkages	1.3
1.5. Inter-relations	**1.4**
1.5.1 Communication	1.5
1.5.2 Cooperation	1.3
1.6. Resources	**1.3**
1.6.1 Financial resources	1.5
1.6.2 Human resources	1.2
1.6.3 Technological and infrastructural resources	1.3
ENVIRONMENT	**1.4**
2.1. Political context	1.2
2.1.1. Political rights	1.3
2.1.2 Political competition	0.2
2.1.3. Rule of law	1.2
2.1.4. Corruption	0.7
2.1.5. State effectiveness	1.7
2.1.6. Decentralisation	1.8
2.2. Basic freedoms & rights	**1.5**
2.2.1. Civil liberties	1.4

2.2.2. Information rights	1.5
2.2.3. Press freedoms	1.6
2.3. Socio-economic context	**1.9**
2.3.1. Socio-economic context	1.9
2.4. Socio-cultural context	**1.9**
2.4.1. Trust	1.9
2.4.2. Tolerance	1.8
2.4.3. Public spiritedness	2.0
2.5. Legal environment	**0.9**
2.5.1. CSO registration	1.1
2.5.2. Allowable advocacy activities	1.2
2.5.3. Tax laws favourable to CSOs	1.2
2.5.4. Tax benefits for philanthropy	0.2
2.6. State-civil society relations	**1.2**
2.6.1. Autonomy	1.2
2.6.2. Dialogue	1.2
2.6.3 Cooperation / support	1.3
2.7. Private sector-civil society relations	**1.1**
2.7.1. Private sector attitude	1.4
2.7.2 Corporate social responsibility	1.3
2.7.3. Corporate philanthropy	0.6
VALUES	**1.7**
3.1. Democracy	**1.4**
3.1.1 Democratic practices within CSOs	1.5
3.1.2 CS actions to promote democracy	1.3
3.2. Transparency	**1.2**
3.2.1 Corruption within civil society	1.9
3.2.2 Financial transparency of CSOs	0.7
3.2.3 CS actions to promote transparency	1.0
3.3. Tolerance	**1.8**
3.3.1 Tolerance within the CS arena	1.6
3.3.2 CS actions to promote tolerance	1.9
3.4. Non-violence	**1.8**
3.4.1 Non-violence within the CS arena	2.1
3.4.2 CS actions to promote non-violence and peace	1.4
3.5. Gender equity	**1.8**
3.5.1 Gender equity within the CS arena	1.4
3.5.2 Gender equitable practices within CSOs	1.6
3.5.3 CS actions to promote gender equity	2.3
3.6. Poverty eradication	**2.5**
3.6.1 CS actions to eradicate poverty	2.5
3.7. Environmental sustainability	**1.2**
3.7.1 CS actions to sustain the environment	1.2

IMPACT	1.2
4.1. Influencing public policy	**0.8**
4.1.1. Human Rights	1.1
4.1.2. Social Policy Impact Case Studies	1.2
4.1.3. Civil Society's Impact on National Budgeting process Case Study	0.1
4.2. Holding state & private corporations accountable	**0.5**
4.2.1. Holding state accountable	0.6
4.2.2. Holding private corporations accountable	0.4
4.3. Responding to social interests	**1.6**
4.3.1 Responsiveness	1.2
4.3.2 Public Trust	1.9
4.4. Empowering citizens	**1.8**
4.4.1 Informing/ educating citizens	2.2
4.4.2 Building capacity for collective action	1.9
4.4.3 Empowering marginalized people	1.4
4.4.4. Empowering women	1.9
4.4.5. Building social capital	1.3
4.4.6 Supporting livelihoods	2.0
4.5. Meeting societal needs	**1.4**
4.5.1 Lobbying for state service provision	1.5
4.5.2 Meeting pressing societal needs directly	1.2
4.5.3 Meeting needs of marginalised groups	1.5

ANNEX 8. ASSESSMENT OF THE CSI-SAT METHODOLOGY

At the outset of the project, most of the representatives in the SAG claimed that they did not know what civil society in Vietnam was or what it looked like because they were unfamiliar with the concept. At the second SAG meeting, the participants felt they were better equipped to understand civil society and reported that they found the project useful and informative, but they recommended that more work be done to provide clearer definitions and carry out more research on a number of aspects, in order to substantiate the information presented to them. Finally, at the last SAG meeting, the scoring was reconsidered in conjunction with the expanded report and some adjustments were settled on in order to bring the assessment more in line with the actual situation. Moreover, since the project's launch, interest in the concept of civil society has increased in Vietnam and it is now being discussed more widely among members of the government, donors and NGOs.

The methodology applied with the SAG group as a project stakeholder, in dialogue with the NIT, provides insight into the understanding of civil society in Vietnam and the different perceptions of CSOs. It also makes it possible to start a dialogue with more stakeholders in Vietnam, based on perceptions and opinions already accepted within the country.

The CSI methodology includes, besides the SAG assessment, data from the international research community and comparative datasets. The international research community specialised on Vietnam has, by and large, a better understanding of the specific conditions in Vietnam than the international human rights organisations and international comparative datasets, which uses a generic approach for all countries (McElwee et al. (2005) elaborates on the methodologies of these sources). The CSI methodology insists on including the comparative data for a comparative purpose and to challenge the local constituencies to consider viewpoints from different sources. Human rights organisations and comparative data sources on governance and human rights are particularly critical of civil rights in Vietnam. The dialogue between the two opinions – internal and external – presented in the CSI report led to useful discussions in the SAG, but did not result in approval of the international comparative assessments, as they are using concepts and criteria that are not particularly sensitive to the socio-cultural conditions.

The CSI methodology has in general been useful in providing a broad general assessment of civil society in Vietnam, demonstrating that there are many shortcomings in the available information, due to a lack of general studies of CSOs. The knowledge drawn on for this report is in some cases based on information and experiences of the research group, as well as on SAG representatives' knowledge about the country's situation.

The SAG's scoring

One of the special features of the CSI methodology is the involvement of a SAG in the civil society assessment. The group played an important role reaching the conclusions of this report. There are many challenges for such an assessment. The topic is new in Vietnam and there are widely differing opinions in Vietnam about how to analyse civil society. Furthermore, the CSI-SAT methodology builds mainly on secondary sources, but a number of issues are not yet thoroughly researched and information is scattered. In this situation, the SAG provided a reality check on how civil society is perceived in Vietnam, through a dialogue with the NIT. The SAG was carefully selected to

represent civil society first and foremost, but it also engaged representatives from the government and the research community. One of the weaknesses of the selection was the inability to include grassroots representatives in the SAG; this was due to the fact that it is not possible to judge who could directly represent the grassroots. The best that can be done is to identify organisations working with the grassroots. This can be seen as a weakness of the methodology in general, not just in the particular case of Vietnam. The SAG may not substitute for a broad and comprehensive survey and the methodology does not pretend to do that. The methodology is qualitative in nature. The advantage of such a methodology is the opportunity it provides for dialogue. In the SAG meetings and the first participatory identification of social forces in society at large and in civil society, the methodology attempts to create as much consensus as possible within the SAG. When it comes to scoring the indicators based on the information provided in the report according to the CSI methodology, it is more difficult to create a consensus, because the members rate the indicators individually.

The SAG members' individual assessments differed widely at the first scoring meeting. No clear pattern could be found to explain these differences. For example, the differences between members' views of civil society in Vietnam did not clearly reflect differences in their constituencies or the types of organisation they represented.

By looking at the issues that were most contentious in the SAG (i.e. where the scores differed most), some controversies could be clearly identified, though in other cases, the differences merely represent a lack of sufficient information.

The most contentious indicators for the SAG (Table IV.1.1) mainly reflect different "political" perceptions of the character of the CSOs and their place in society. The issues about which there was the most consensus included some general perceptions about the state of affairs in society, such as political competition, or the levels of corruption, trust and tolerance. Furthermore, there was also a high level of agreement on facts, such as the depth of civil society and the extent of political activity being limited. On the other hand, there was also agreement that CSOs have a certain influence on social policies, but not on the national budgeting process. Members also agreed that there is some space for advocacy.

Table 1: Contentious and non-contentious issues in SAG

	Most contentious indicators (average score of indicator)	**Indicators with broad agreement (average score of indicator)**
1	Breadth of charitable giving (1.8)	Political actions (0.3)
2	Collective community action (1.5)	Depth of charitable giving (1.0)
3	Political rights (1.3)	Political competition (lack of) (0.2)
4	Decentralisation (1.8)	Corruption in general (0.7)
5	Information rights (1.5)	Trust (1.9)
6	Autonomy of CSOs (1.2)	Tolerance (1.8)
7	Democratic practices within CSOs (1.5)	Allowable advocacy activities (1.2)
8	Financial transparency (0.7)	Tax benefits for philanthropy (0.5)
9	Meeting needs of marginalised groups (1.5)	CS action to sustain the environment (1.2)
10		Influencing social policy (1.2)
11		Influencing national budget process (0.1)

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