

**Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
General Department of Land Administration**

**Social Assessment for
Vietnam Improved Land Governance and
Database Project**

March 2016

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|---|
| CPC | Commune's People's Committee |
| DivRE | Division of Natural Resources and the Environment |
| DoNRE | Department of Natural Resources and the Environment |
| DPC | District's People's Committee |
| EM | Ethnic minorities |
| FGD | Focus group discussion |
| GDLA | General Department of Land Administration |
| IT | Information technology |
| LRO | Land registration office |
| LURC | Land-use right certificate |
| MoNRE | Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment |
| MPLIS | Multi-purpose land information system |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| OP | Operational Policy |
| PC | Personal computer |
| PPC | Provincial People's Committee |
| SA | Social assessment |
| ToT | Training of Trainers |
| VILG | Vietnam Improved Land Governance |
| WB | World Bank |

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Abbreviations | 2 |
| Acknowledgement | 5 |
| Executive summary | 6 |
| I. Project description | 8 |
| II. The legal framework and its main implications | 9 |
| 2.1. The underlying principle of the framework | 9 |
| 2.2. The Land Law 2013 | 9 |
| 2.3. Customary land tenure | 10 |
| 2.4. An inventory of the related legislation and policies | 11 |
| III. Description of consultation in the project areas | 12 |
| 3.1. Methods of consultation | 12 |
| 3.2. Selection of sites and information on respondents | 12 |
| 3.3. Some characteristics of EM groups in the study sites | 15 |
| IV. Main findings | 16 |
| 4.1. Demonstrated support for VILG | 16 |
| The quality of public service in the land sector | 17 |
| 4.2. The existing service delivery in land use and land management | 17 |
| Demand for land information | 17 |
| 4.3. A brief stakeholder analysis | 17 |
| 4.4. Current Interests in and access to land information | 21 |
| 4.5. Aspects of Land Information of Most Interest to Land Users | 23 |
| Supply and administration of land information | 23 |
| 4.6. Sources of land information | 24 |
| 4.7. Access to and ability to use the Internet | 26 |
| 4.8. Gender issues | 27 |
| Concerns for MPLIS | 28 |
| 4.9. Concerns about the unintended impacts of the project | 28 |
| 4.10. Some lessons learnt from VLAP regarding social issues | 30 |
| 4.11. Some issues relating to environmental impacts and OP4.12 | 31 |
| V. Recommendations | 32 |
| Strengthening the quality of public service in the land sector | 32 |
| 5.1. Improving Service Delivery | 32 |
| Capacity building | 33 |
| 5.2. Capacity building | 33 |
| Communication | 34 |
| 5.3. Communication and awareness raising | 34 |
| Strengthening M&E in land use and land administration | 37 |
| 5.4. Enhancing transparency and accountability through localised responses | 37 |
| 5.5. Analytical work and monitoring indicators | 37 |
| Delivery of MPLIS and establishment of a national land database | 38 |
| 5.6. Facilitating access to and use online land information | 38 |
| 5.7. Regular mobile support in deep, remote and difficult areas | 40 |
| 5.8. Ensuring confidentiality of some land information | 42 |
| 5.9. A grievance redressal mechanism | 42 |
| Strengthening public participation | 42 |
| 5.10. Consideration of gender sensitivity | 42 |
| 5.11. Consideration of sensitivity to EM groups | 43 |

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 5.12. | Free, prior and informed consultation..... | 44 |
| | Effective linkage with other sectors | 46 |
| 5.13. | Coordination with the existing projects related | 46 |

Acknowledgement

This report was prepared by a team from the General Department of Land Administration under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), led by Anh Thi Van Hoang, with significant contributions from Vu Tuan Hoang and DinhQuangTran from the Legislation Department of the General Department of Land Administration (GDLA), under the overall guidance of Giang Tam Nguyen (Social Development Specialist), Hoa Thi Mong Pham (Senior Social Development Specialist) and Dzung The Nguyen (Senior Rural Development Specialist). The preparation of the fieldwork and production of the report benefited considerably from comments from various reviewers from MoNRE and the World Bank (WB).

This report would not have been possible without the support from various Department of Natural Resources and the Environment (DoNRE) from Bac Ninh, Quang Binh, An Giang, Ha Tinh, Ninh Binh and Thai Nguyen provinces, and the local authorities from the municipal to the ward levels where the fieldwork for this report took place. They acted as both informants and reviewers while helping the team to formulate and review their arguments throughout the research process.

Last but not least, thanks go to all interviewees and group discussants in the research sites, including those from various ethnic minorities groups, who took the time to share experiences and views with the team and thus enriched their understanding of the issues to which this report addresses itself.

Executive summary

'Vietnam: Improved Land Governance and Data-base' Project (VILG) would comprise three components. Component 1 will strengthen quality of land service delivery. This component will support (a) modernizing and strengthening Land Registration Offices (LROs) to provide better land services; (b) training and providing communication systems and awareness raising for stakeholders, including implementation of ethnic minority development plans; and (c) establishing and operating a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for land-use management. Component 2 will support establishment of the Multi-Purpose Land Information System (MPLIS). This component will support the development of the software by funding the IT Expert Panel and implementation of software for the MPLIS; the development and implementation of the national land database through digitizing existing maps and property rights records; verification, updating and integration of cadastral data (both cadastral maps users and land use information), land price data, land use plan data, land disputes and complaints resolution information, and key land resources thematic information. It will also finance limited cadastre surveying and mapping to improve the completeness and accuracy of the existing cadastral information (about 20% of the total project costs); and the enhancement of public engagement in land information services, including the establishment of an MPLIS land portal to facilitate public access to land information based on market demands. Component 3 on project management will support overall project management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of activities and targets.

These components will be implemented at both national and sub-national levels. The beneficiaries of the project would be: (a) the public, land users, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, who will have increased and better access to land information and better services with integrated digital data; (b) government institutions at central and sub-national levels, which will be able to access and share spatial data more easily for their improved planning and operations; and (c) the business community, which will be provided with more efficient services and increased access to information. The fieldwork was conducted in eight provinces out of the 12 first-year provinces as selected by GDLA. These provinces are located across the country, namely Thai Nguyen, Bac Ninh, Ninh Binh, Quang Binh, Ha Tinh, Khanh Hoa, Vinh Long and An Giang.

Generally, respondents expressed their support for the project from their own perspectives, depending on their working positions or interests in land information. They acknowledge three important benefits from the project, including reduced time and efforts for land users, improved business environment, and improved administration process for public services and household land users. However, some respondents from the related organisations, including businesses, notary offices and lawyers offices, expressed their concern about some potential negative impacts and risks from the project given their extensive experience in dealing with a variety of sensitive and complicated cases concerning land information. The concerns that they raised in this study include asymmetry of land information; confidentiality of information in MPLIS; encroachment of the existing laws and sub-laws related; unfair competition; accuracy and reliability of information; accountability, criminal responsibility and compensation related; updating of information in MPLIS; inconsistent improvement of LROs' services; and the legal framework and communication activities.

The recommendation section highlights strong messages to address constraints to minimize potential negative impacts as well as optimise beneficiary utilization of land information services provided by VILG. They include enhancing transparency and accountability through localised responses; improving service delivery, especially of land registration officers (LROs); facilitating access to and use of online land information; regular mobile support in deep, remote and difficult areas; ensuring confidentiality of some land information; communication and awareness raising; outreach communication capacity building for local

facilitators and LROs' staff, local officials, and household land users; consideration of gender sensitivity; consideration of sensitivity to ethnic minorities (EM) group. Coordination with the existing projects related to land is another important aspect as administrators and land user organisations in the visited provinces call for VILG's review and synergy with the existing projects at the national and sub-national levels which are related to activities under VILG to save resources and promote synergy. In addition, it is necessary to develop an enabling and effective grievance redressal mechanism through improving the flows of information, downward and upward alike, to create more favorable conditions for the vulnerable groups to be engaged in the feedback mechanism to avoid exclusion of them from the project and its benefits and to maximize the positive impacts on and satisfaction of project beneficiaries. The grievance redress mechanism should be adapted to the needs of specific EM groups in terms of language and cultural norms on complaints. Regarding the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, a balanced approach to promote information dissemination channels, with careful monitoring of internet access and use of LROs amongst targeted land users, is important to ensure that benefits provided by VILG are equitably distributed. M & E evaluation arrangements should include indicators related to EMs' accessibility, which should allow analysis disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and poor/near-poor status. A community satisfaction survey should be planned in an adequate time during the implementation period to understand emerging constraints and make timely necessary adjustments to avoid exclusion of the vulnerable groups from the project's benefits. Last but not least, it is required to periodically evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy and document lessons learned for the project to be revised and scaled up.

I. Project description

The project development objective (PDO) is to improve efficiency and transparency in land administration services in selected provinces of Vietnam. The PDO will be achieved through the development and implementation of the national MPLIS, an unified system of LROs, and a system to monitor and evaluation of land use and management, both at national and sub-national levels.

'Vietnam: Improved Land Governance and Data-bases' Project would comprise three components, as follows:

- **Component 1: Strengthening Quality of Land Service Delivery.** This component will support (a) modernizing and strengthening LROs to provide better land services; (b) training and providing communication systems and awareness raising for stakeholders, including implementation of ethnic minority development plans; and (c) establishing and operating a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for land-use management. The investments under this component will support quality enhancement of land service delivery by streamlining service procedures and standards, renovating facilities, and building up the capacity of personnel working in LROs in project provinces. The component will also help monitor the implementation of land use management in accordance with Land Law 2013 and progressively respond to current and emerging economic and social demands for better access to land information and better land services. The component will support unification of business standards and LRO working infrastructure at provincial and district levels. In addition, it will also enhance the participation of the public, corporates, and other stakeholders through communication and awareness campaigns. The activities under this component will facilitate and operationalize the technological advances that will have been brought about in Component 2 of the project and ensure better community participation.
- **Component 2: Establishment of MPLIS.** This component will support the development of the software by funding the IT Expert Panel and implementation of software for the MPLIS; the development and implementation of the national land database through digitizing existing maps and property rights records; verification, updating and integration of cadastral data (both cadastral maps users and land use information), land price data, land use plan data, land disputes and complaints resolution information, and key land resources thematic information. It will also finance limited cadastre surveying and mapping to improve the completeness and accuracy of the existing cadastral information (about 20% of the total project costs); and the enhancement of public engagement in land information services, including the establishment of an MPLIS land portal to facilitate public access to land information based on market demands.
- **Component 3: Project Management** will support overall project management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of activities and targets.

The beneficiaries of the project would be: (a) the public, land users, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, who will have increased and better access to land information and better services with integrated digital data; (b) government institutions at central and sub-national levels, which will be able to access and share spatial data more easily for their improved planning and operations; and (c) the business community, which will be provided with more efficient services and increased access to information.

II. The legal framework and its main implications

2.1. The underlying principle of the framework

Land issues are of political nature and can make impacts on socio-economic development in many country, especially developing ones. Land policies have a critical role in sustainable development, good governance, well-being and economic opportunities for the people in both rural and urban areas, especially the poor.

Reflecting **Article 53 from the Constitution, Article 4 of the Land Law 2013** defines land ownership as follows: “Land is owned by the entire people, represented by the State as the sole owner and manager. The State gives land-use rights to land users according to this Law”. According to this article, land is owned by the entire people. The State which acts as the representative of ownership and manages land shall give land-use rights to land using entities (land users) in the form of the State assigning land, renting out land and recognising land use rights according to the land legislation.

The existing legal framework has reflected that the Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam has always placed the issue of ethnicities and ethnic affairs at a position of strategic importance. Citizens from all ethnicities in Vietnam enjoy full citizenship and are protected through equally enforced provisions according to the Constitution and laws, as listed in the framework. The underlying principle of the framework is 'equality, unity, and mutual support for common development', with priorities given to 'ensuring sustainable development in ethnic minorities and mountainous areas'.

In particular, **Article 5 of the Constitution**, amended in 2013, acknowledges the right to equality amongst ethnic groups in Vietnam, including the use of ethnic languages and writings, preservation of ethnic identities, customs, traditions and cultures, and prohibition against any behaviour of discrimination and ethnic division. The article confirms that the State shall pursue a policy on comprehensive development and create conditions for ethnic minorities to display their internal strengths in tandem with the national development.

This fundamental principle has been institutionalised in laws, Government decrees and resolutions and the Prime Minister's decisions, which can be divided into three following categories by: (i) ethnicities and ethnic groups; (ii) by geographical areas (for socio-economic development); and (iii) by sectors and industries (for socio-economic development), such as support for production, poverty reduction, vocational training and job creation, protection of the eco-environment, preservation and promotion of culture and tourism, communication, and awareness raising in legal issues and legal aid.

2.2. The Land Law 2013

The **Land Law 2013** has included many important implications regarding ethnic minorities and their land arrangements. In particular, **Article 27** stipulates that the State shall issue policies on residential land and land for community activities for ethnic minorities in accordance with customs, traditions, cultural identities and actual conditions in each region. The State shall issue policies to create conditions for ethnic minorities people who are directly involved in agricultural production in rural areas to have land for agricultural production. In addition, **Article 28** stipulates that the State shall be responsible for developing and managing the land information system and ensure organisations and individuals' rights to access to this system. The State will timely and publicly disclose information to organisations, individuals, and state agencies. The authorised people in the management and use of land shall be responsible for creating favourable conditions and

providing land information organisations and individuals, as stipulated. Furthermore, **Article 110** stipulates waiver and exemption of land use charges and land rentals in cases of using land for implementing policies on housing and residential land for ethnic minorities households and individuals in areas with especially difficult socio-economic conditions, border and sea islands areas; and in cases of using agricultural land for ethnic minorities households and individuals.

According to the Land Law 2013, a residential community refers to a community of Vietnamese residents living in the same village, residential quarter or residential unit, who share customs and traditions, or the extended family. A resident community that uses land with such structures as shrines, temples, worship venues or ancestral houses or agricultural land, as stipulated in **Provision 3 of Article 131** in the Land Law 2013, which are not under any disputes and verified by the Commune's People's Committee in the land location as land for community use will be granted LURC, ownership of housing and other properties attached to the land (**Article 100**). Also, the State shall allocate land to and recognise land use rights of these resident communities in order to preserve national identities as attached to ethnic customs and traditions (**Article 131**). At the same time, in the allocation and rental of land, priorities should be given to ethnic minorities households and individuals that have no or insufficient productive land in a local area (**Article 133**).

Article 43 in the Land Law 2013 on "collecting views on land use plans and land use planning" stipulates "The agency tasked with land use plans and land use planning, as stipulated in Provisions 1 and 2 under Article 42 of this Law, shall be responsible for collecting views from the people regarding land use plans and land use planning". The collection of the people's views should be conducted through publicity of information on contents of land use plans and planning, conferences and direct consultation.

In addition, the Government has implemented many policies to provide assistance in residential and productive land, allocate land and forests to ethnic minorities people and poor households. This has contributed to improving ethnic minorities beneficiaries' living conditions, thus motivating them in afforestation and protection of forests. In particular, some major programmes for ethnic minorities include Programme 135 (to build infrastructure in poor, remote and deep areas), and Programme 134 (to eradicate temporary houses).

2.3. Customary land tenure in EM areas

The customary law is not recognised in the country. However, collective property rights are recognised regarding EM's use and management right, special ownership rights allocated under specific policies or regulations that carry watertight set of conditions. However, implementation is reportedly slow. The community is not recognized as a legal unit in the Vietnamese Civil Code, while its Land Law 2013 provided a generic definition of the term community. Tenurial rights of EMs and local communities have been recognized through certain legislations. EM and local communities are granted various forms of collective rights as "use rights."

Constitution recognizes citizens/individual use rights, including transfer, exchange, mortgage, and inheritance. Some of these rights are renewable. Forest tenure transfers continue in Vietnam, where communities also hold better rights to most of the forest land in their possession. Forest and Land Law recognize community forestry but civil code does not recognize legal personality and needs to be updated to recognize legality of community.

Vietnam introduced State-ownership of all land areas but are progressively attuning towards a market based-economic practices. Still the policy and legal instruments maintain primacy of the State while customary practices generally prevail. The country has embraced customary rights but maintained State's supremacy to acquire land for 'public purposes'.

Public purpose was broadly defined as the interest of the nation, the State, and all people. Broad discretionary powers were granted to State administrators to define public purpose.

2.4. An inventory of the related legislation and policies

Below in an inventory of some legal documents relating to the issues of land and ethnic minorities:

| | |
|------|--|
| 2013 | The Land Law (amended) |
| 2013 | The Prime Minister's Decision 29/2013/QĐ-TTg on some policies to provide residential land and employment for ethnic minorities people in poor and difficult living conditions in the Mekong Delta between 2013-2015. |
| 2013 | The Commission for Ethnicities' Decision 582/QĐ-UBND to approve the list of especially difficult villages in ethnic minorities and mountainous areas for benefiting from investment of Programme 135. |
| 2012 | The Prime Minister's Decision 59/2012/QĐ-TTg on the legal aid policy for poor people and ethnic minorities people in poor communes between 2013-2020. |
| 2011 | The Prime Minister's Decision 18/2011/QĐ-TTg on the policy for respectful people from ethnic minorities people in poor communes between 2013-2020. |
| 2010 | Decision 2331/QĐ-TTg, dated December 20, 2010 on the National Targeted Programme on bringing information to mountainous, deep, remote, border and sea islands areas in 2011. |
| 2010 | Government Decree 82/2010/NĐ-CP, dated July 20, 2010 on teaching and learning ethnic minorities' spoken and written languages in general education schools and continuous learning centres. |
| 2009 | Government Decree 69/2009/NĐ-CP, dated August 13, 2009 on some supplemental regulations on land use planning, land prices, land acquisition, compensation and resettlement. |
| 2008 | Government Decree 30a/2008/NQ-CP, dated December 27, 2008 on the programme to support fast and sustainable poverty reduction for 61 poor districts. |
| 2008 | The Prime Minister's Decision 74/2008/QĐ-TTg, dated June 9, 2008 on some policies to provide assistance in residential and productive land and employment for ethnic minorities people in poor and difficult conditions in the Mekong Delta. |
| 2007 | The Prime Minister's Decision 33/2007/QĐ-TTg, dated March 5, 2007 on the policy to support migration for resettlement and sedentary cultivation among ethnic minorities groups between 2007 and 2010. |
| 2007 | The Commission for Ethnicities' Circular 06/2007/TT-UBND, dated September 20, 2007 providing guidance on benefit levels for services and improvement of the people's living conditions, and legal aid to raise legal awareness according to Decision 112/2007/QĐ-TTg |
| 2007 | Government Decree 84/2007/NĐ-CP, dated May 25, 2007 on supplemental regulations on granting LURCs, land acquisition, enforcement of land use rights, the process and procedures of compensation, assistance and resettlement in case of land acquisition by the State, and redressal of land-related grievances. |
| 2001 | Decree 70/2001/NĐ-CP stipulating that all documents to register household assets and land use rights have names of both husband and wife. |

| | |
|------|---|
| 1998 | Decree 59/1998/NĐ-CP, dated August 13, 1998 on the functions, tasks, mandates and organisational structure of the Commission for Ethnicities. |
|------|---|

III. Description of consultation in the project areas

3.1. Methods of consultation

A team of five researchers, including one lead researcher, and four team members, have been employed for this assessment. A number of conventional qualitative research instruments are employed, including focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, note-taking, and photographing, and non-participant observation.

- **Focus group discussions:** Each FGD usually includes 6-8 participants who are recommended and invited by local guides following the requirements of the research team. Gender-disaggregated data are paid attention through the establishment of gender sensitive FGDs. Local guides are the chiefs of the selected residential units who have a very good understanding of the community. In order to understand likely different impacts and their responses to the project, a variety of respondent groups are selected, including land administrators, land user organisations, and land user householders, including local poor/near-poor and representatives from local ethnic minorities groups.
- **In-depth interviews:** The team plans to explore some case studies with more in-depth information. The informants for such in-depth interviews may be selected from the FGDs (researchers may find some discussants who have more interesting details to provide so have him/her for a separate in-depth interview). Also, the interviewees may be recommended directly by local guides after researchers have fully explained the assessment objectives.
- **Triangulation:** A few extra interviews with local officials and land administrators are added under a technique known as 'triangulation' to validate the information we have obtained from local residents/factory workers. They are an additional source rather than a proper sub-group. Also, there are some issues the latter may raise but do not understand why, given their positions. In such cases, the extra interviews would help clarify or supplement what local residents have stated. These interviews serve to validate and, in some cases, supplement the information provided by local residents.

3.2. Selection of sites and information on respondents

Information on respondents:

The fieldwork was conducted in eight provinces out of the 12 first-year provinces as selected by GDLA. These provinces are located across the country, namely Thai Nguyen, Bac Ninh, Ninh Binh, Quang Binh, Ha Tinh, Khanh Hoa, Vinh Long, and An Giang. Out of the eight first-year provinces, Thai Nguyen, Ninh Binh, Quang Binh, Ha Tinh, Khanh Hoa, Vinh Long, and An Giang have EM resident groups. However, the Muong group in Ninh Binh is found as having a very high level of assimilation with the Kinh group (the majority). Based on criteria for defining characteristics under OP4.10, the Muong group in Ninh Binh Province are not covered by OP 4.10. The consultation showed that citizens from this group (i) no longer

identify themselves as members of a distinct indigenous cultural group; (ii) they live in a mixed pattern with the Kinh people, without any collective attachment to geographically distinct habitats or ancestral territories in the project area and to the natural resources in these habitats and territories; (iii) the respondents said that they no longer maintain strong customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are separate from those of the Kinh group's society and culture; and (iv) members of this social group use Vietnamese as their main language, and their only one in many cases, in daily communication. Therefore, an EMDP is not required for Ninh Binh.

For each study province, two districts/towns were selected, and for each district/town, a commune selected for consultation. At the provincial, district and commune levels, the study team held consultative meetings and group discussions with various land administrators and land-user organisations. In each province, the team organised eight meetings and group discussions. In total, the team held 64 meetings and group discussions with nearly 400 respondents. The respondents include:

- **Land administrators:** are officials from the Departments of Natural Resources and the Environment (DoNREs), the Divisions of Natural Resources and the Environment (DivNRE), and commune officials (leaders of the people's committees, cadastral officers and leaders of commune's mass organizations. They are directly or indirectly involved in land administration.
- **Representatives from the related sub-national agencies:** include those from the Departments of Information and Communication, the Departments of Justice, the Tax Administration, the Farmers' Association, the Women's Union, the Commission for Ethnicities, and the Youth's Unions.
- **Economic and other organisations:** include land user organisations, commercial banks, law firms, notary offices and real estates companies.
- **The public:** include non-poor, poor and EM people in the study sites. The EM groups include the Tay and Nung in Thai Nguyen, the Muong in Ninh Binh, the Bru Van Kieu and Chut in Quang Binh, the Chut in Ha Tinh, and the Khmer in An Giang. Usually, many of the EM respondents are also poor or non-poor, who live in difficult areas and have poor education.

Below is the breakdown of respondents (in numbers) by gender, wealth, residence and ethnicities.

| Stakeholders | Organisations | | | | The public | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|---|---------------------------|------------|-----|-------|------|----|------|
| | Total | Land administrators | Rep from economic and other organisations | Rep from related agencies | Total | Men | Women | Kinh | EM | Poor |
| Thai Nguyen | 18 | | | | 18 | | | | | |
| Provincial respondents | 14 | 06 | 03 | 05 | | | | | | |
| Vinh Sơn commune, Song Cong city | 02 | 02 | | | 08 | 05 | 03 | 06 | 0 | |
| Động Đạt commune, Phu Luong district | 02 | 02 | | | 10 | 07 | 03 | 0 | 10 | |
| Bắc Ninh | 30 | | | | 5 | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Provincial respondents | 21 | 8 | 11 | 02 | | | | | | |
| Khắc Niệm ward, Bac Ninh city | 05 | | | 05 | | | | | | |
| Trung Nghĩa commune, Yen Phong district | 4 | 4 | | | 05 | 01 | 04 | 05 | | |
| Ninh Binh | 25 | | | | 15 | | | | | |
| Provincial respondents | 14 | 6 | 1 | 7 | | | | | | |
| Phuc Thanh ward, Tam Diep town | 5 | 5 | | | 8 | 2 | 6 | 6 | | |
| Thach Binh commune, Nho Quan district | 6 | 6 | | | 7 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 2 | |
| Ha Tinh | 37 | | | | 108 | | | | | |
| Provincial respondents | 23 | 8 | 8 | 7 | | | | | | |
| Thanh Linh Ward, Ha Tinh city | 8 | 8 | | | 55 | 25 | 30 | 55 | | |
| Huong Lien commune, Huong Khe district | 6 | 6 | | | 53 | 27 | 26 | 46 | 7 | |
| Quảng Bình | 31 | | | | 27 | | | | | |
| Provincial respondents | 15 | 05 | 02 | 08 | | | | | | |
| Phú Hải ward, Dong Hoi City | 10 | 10 | | | 07 | 03 | 04 | 07 | | |
| Dân Hóa commune, Minh Hoa district | 06 | 02 | | 04 | 20 | 12 | 08 | | 20 | 20 |
| Khanh Hoa | 4 | | | | 16 | | | | | |
| Provincial respondents | | 03 | 03 | 05 | | | | | | |
| Suối Tiên commune, Diên Khánh district | 02 | 02 | | | 08 | 05 | 03 | 04 | 04 | 03 |
| Ninh Sim commune, Ninh Hòa town | 02 | 02 | | | 08 | 05 | 03 | 03 | 05 | 04 |
| An Giang | 46 | | | | 11 | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|----|----|
| Provincial respondents | 25 | 09 | 11 | 05 | | | | | | |
| Mỹ Khánh commune, Long Xuyen City | 12 | 12 | | | 06 | 01 | 05 | | | 06 |
| An cù commune, Tinh Bien | 09 | 02 | | 07 | 05 | 04 | 01 | | 01 | |

3.3. Some characteristics of EM groups in the study sites

The Tay: The social unit of the Tay is village with a male Village head that has great authority. Tay property regimes are divided into public ownership of the village and into ownership of private, household property. The public ownership includes all land, forests, rivers and natural resources within the village. Added to these, roads, bridges, temples and shrines are classified as public property. Private ownership in its turn encompasses all production land that is owned, cultivated or reclaimed by each family. In addition, assets such as houses, agricultural products, household items, handicrafts and other items produced by household members are private property of the family. Each village has regulations concerning protection of forests and water resources as well as land and production activities. Social relations between relatives and neighbors in the village are demonstrated in all aspects of life, both in production, spiritual life and religious beliefs.

The Nung: The Nung are closely related to the Tay and have the same kind of social and village structure as the Tay. They share the same language and they often live in the same villages with the Tay. The Nung follow the male line and have a tradition of giving all inheritance to sons only. Nung houses with clay walls and tiled roof are usually built flat on the ground with some sections raised on stilts. Houses are usually divided into two parts. One part is for living quarters and the other part is for working and for ancestor worship. The Nung are mostly Buddhists with influence of Confucianism, and they worship their ancestors. They are recognised for their weaving and bamboo handicrafts, for producing curved roof tiles of clay, for making furniture, baskets, silverworks and paper. The Nung are often considered as the best horticulturists and blacksmiths in Vietnam. Like the Tay, the Nung have a long tradition of wet rice cultivation and well-developed irrigation systems. They also grow vegetables, groundnuts, different fruits, spices and bamboo, and they terrace lower hill slopes to provide land for the farming activities.

The Dao: Most of the Dao follow Taoism as their religion, and some of them still retain the Chinese writing system and literary tradition. Their tradition of ancestor worship is symbolized by use of five colours. Ancient practices are maintained for funerals. Dao's social unit is the village with a male Village head. Families follow patrilineal inheritance and men have a strong position. Each village has its own regulations concerning protection of forests and water resources as well as concerning land and production activities. Houses are built on stilts, or with one part built on the ground combined with another part of stilts. Most of the Dao people are petty farmers with slash-and-burn farming on hill field, some families also have wet rice fields. Their staple food is rice, maize, vegetables and bamboo shoots. They cultivate and sell maize, beans and other vegetables and also raise buffaloes, cows, pigs and chicken for selling. Many Dao households are skilled in weaving, blacksmithing, silverwork, carpentry and traditional papermaking. Handicrafts selling on available markets therefore add to household income of the Dao.

The Khmer group: The Khmer people chiefly live by conventional rice cultivation. Members of landless households work for other households, also chiefly in agriculture. Vinh Long has 5,935 Khmer households, with 5,529 having land. On average, each household uses 4,850

square metres of land. The Khmer group manages and uses 2,879 hectares of land, which is divided in 13,626 lots. As many as 10,080 lots have been granted LURCs, representing 74 percent of the total number of lots. The remainder with LURCs are used as collateral for bank loans or in the state of lacking necessary papers.

The group's conventional social organisation is closely linked to Buddhist pagodas which are seen as community centres for cultural and social activities. Buddhist pagodas have been granted LURCs, although there is no concept of communal land in the group. Young Khmer can understand Vietnamese well. Experience from VLAP shows that enforcement of land-use rights among the Khmer people is not driven by any ethnic conventions or practices.

The Cham group: An Giang has 3,273 Cham households, with 15,197 people, accounting 0.67 percent of the provincial population. They live in nine Chăm villages in eight communes in five districts and townships, but concentrate more in An Phú and Tân Châu districts. They live chiefly by agriculture, handicrafts, small industries, and petty trade. They practice Islam. Each Chăm village has a mosque or sub-mosque led by a head practitioner elected by the Cham group. A provincial representative panel for the Islam community was established in 2004. Through the panel at the provincial level and mosques at the lower level, the role and voice of the Cham group has been improved, especially in the relationship with the administration. Members of the mosque management organise summer courses on the Cham language in Châu Phong commune (Tân Châu township) and Khánh Hòa commune (Châu Phú district).

The Chut group: The Chut group live in Rào Tre village, Huong Liên commune and Giàng II village, Huong Vĩnh commune in Huong Son district, Ha Tinh, face many hardships in living conditions. They live chiefly on the margins forests with limited cultivable land and outdated cultivation methods. They still encounter food shortage, and many depend on state benefits. They stay within their isolated community, which therefore results in intra-family and premature marriages.

IV. Main findings

This section highlights main findings from various consultative activities in the project sites, regarding assessment of specific potential risks and impacts of project activities in relation to its components and sub-components, with a focus on vulnerable groups and communities. The main findings confirm general support for VILG, and then are presented on a basis of their linkages with various components, sub-components and activities under the project.

4.1. Demonstrated support for VILG

Generally, when explained, respondents expressed their support for the project from their own perspectives, depending on their working positions or interest in land information. They acknowledge three important benefits from the project:

- **Reduced time and efforts for land users:** All land users welcome the transparency of land information in the Internet respondents which they acknowledge would considerably save their time and efforts to approach state offices and officials. Thanks to the administrative reform activities, costs of travelling and paperwork and problems of bureaucracy and harassment would be mitigated;
- **Improved business environment:** With the transparency of land information in a convenient manner, investors can obtain much of their needed information on their target land lots (status of the land, contractual requirements and procedures without the need to come to the very location of land lots); and
- **Improved administration process for public services and household land users:** Thanks to the sharing of land information amongst the related public services,

such as the notary, the laws enforcement and tax services, representatives from these services see considerable improvement in their work. In particular, the notary service sees benefits in the linkages amongst notary offices which does not exist at the moment. They believed this would result in avoiding overlapped notary services as notary offices can check whether the land was notarized elsewhere before they conduct their own notary service. This would result in reduced costs of checking and verifying documents which would be available in MPLIS. Household land users can benefit from the linkage amongst the notary offices as it minimises their risks and associated costs.

The quality of public service in the land sector

4.2. The existing service delivery in land use and land management

Across the visited sites, respondents provided a variety of difficulties and constraints that they faced in accessing the existing service delivery in land use and land management in accordance with the 2013 Land Law. They complained that the process and procedures are very time-consuming and rather complicated, especially for people with limited education and EM groups living in mountainous areas. In some cases, the respondents said that they had to spend considerable money as both official and unofficial costs to conduct land transactions. Consumption of substantial time and costs are especially serious for businesspeople in accessing land-related services or simply obtaining information that they need, such as status of the land, contractual requirements and procedures without the need to come to the very location of land lots.

Many constraints remain exist in the administration process for public services and household land users. Representatives from such public services as the notary, the laws enforcement and tax services, face difficulties in obtaining land-related information for their work and clients as land information has not been shared amongst these public services and within their own sectors, which cause overlapped and conflicting verification, especially in notary services, and higher service costs for clients. Household land users face a variety of risks and associated costs in land transactions when they cannot check the legality of the related land lots, i.e. whether the land is in the project area, or any designed area planned for new development or under dispute.

In addition, the respondents across the visited sites provided some stories on the existing formal ineffective grievance redressal mechanism. Some said that they did not have information on where and how to lodge their complaints, if any. Others were not aware of the procedures to settle grievances nor did they believe that their complaints would be addressed satisfactorily.

Demand for land information

4.3. A brief stakeholder analysis

The table below provides a brief analysis of project stakeholders, namely land administrators, land-user organisations, and land users which are broken down into the general public, the ethnic minorities groups and the near-poor/poor in the project sites. The analytical domains are those most related to the project design and implementation, including stakeholders' areas of interests and areas of concerns in project activities, current constraints that they face in accessing land information and relevant actions recommended.

| Stakeholders | Areas of interest in project interventions | Areas of concerns in project activities | Current constraints in accessing land information | Actions recommended |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Land administrators | <p>Continued and timely public awareness campaigns to educate beneficiaries on land rights and the uses to ensure sustainability of the LAS in the long run;</p> <p>Capacity building, especially on the application and maintenance of MPLIS.</p> | <p>Asymmetry of land information: improvements in the availability and accessibility of land data and information services may result in the disparity in access to land information as a consequence of the gap in terms of education levels, capacity and accessibility to IT devices.</p> | <p>Insufficient human resources to provide effective assistance to clients in their accessing land information;</p> <p>Lack of effective communication activities to raise public awareness.</p> | <p>Effective and practical communication strategies for VILG;</p> <p>Engage Local Facilitators (as in VLAP) to support information dissemination and mobilize communities as part of VILG in priority areas;</p> <p>Develop a specific training strategy for local facilitators and LROs' staff so that their engagement with communities is effective.</p> <p>Identify specific gaps through an assessment of training needs and develop an appropriate training strategy and materials.</p> <p>Periodical meetings for exchange of experience and sharing of information between the related project provinces on the implementation of communication activities with vulnerable groups</p> |
| Land-use organisations <i>(notary offices, property companies, commercial banks, lawyers</i> | <p>Information on land use planning and particular plots of land in addition to basis information on legal documents and policies.</p> <p>Commercial banks have not seen many benefits of MPLIS on their jobs</p> | <p>Confidentiality of information: Provision of personal land information may result in leakage of personal wealth and privacy, especially when it is not clearly stipulated which stakeholders can access to which type of information and with whose authorization.</p> | <p>Lack of satisfactory information required for business;</p> | <p>Review of the related legislation;</p> <p>Prudential regulation on authorised decentralisation of access to information is needed.</p> <p>Prepare specific regulations on the roles and</p> |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <i>office)</i> | (In An Giang and Quang Binh). | Encroachment of the existing laws and sub-laws related: In connection with the issue of confidentiality, some respondents fear that the project may encroach on the existing related laws on protecting personal and corporate information and security, such as the Land Law (2013), the Civil Code, the Criminal Law and the draft Law on Access to Information; | | responsibilities of agencies at various levels which are authorised to provide information in MPLIS; |
| Land users (<i>general public</i>) | <p>Procedures of granting LURCs and use of land as collateral for household businesspeople with a great demand for bank loans (Bac Ninh);</p> <p>Reliable and accessible information on land administration processes, particularly laws and regulations, and required procedures and processes to solve land-related issues, history and legality of land lots, reference land prices, transfer, donation, heritage and registration of land-related changes, as well as to tax information, the main direction of a land lot, as shown on a cadastral map, LURCS in case of separated households, new LURCs, change of LURCs, and land use planning;</p> <p>Official websites provide major information on planning but not on individual plots of land.</p> | <p>Unfair competition: amongst businesses when they can obtain information on competitors' assets and mortgages;</p> <p>Accuracy and reliability of information: may cause loss to buyers;</p> <p>Accountability, criminal responsibility and compensation related: concern about accountability, criminal responsibility and compensation relating to economic losses caused by inaccurate and unreliable information that clients received from the database;</p> <p>Updating: Local land administrators may not have sufficient resources and capacity to update information in MPLIS, including timely updating on the latest changes of legal documents and policies regarding land issues to avoid potential losses for the people in their transactions.</p> | <p>Lack of knowledge of the Internet and LROs;</p> <p>No access to computers;</p> <p>Access to limited satisfactory land information;</p> | <p>It is important to hold a stakeholder responsible for updating MPLIS in case of policy changes which take place rather fast;</p> <p>Greater attention should have been paid to public relations, awareness and campaigns, and interactions with local mass media and local associations to avoid misunderstandings about the project's scope and mandate.</p> |
| | <p>Land transactions related to enforcement of land use rights are not common in local areas (Quang Binh) - very limited interest in land information, which only hovered around LURCs for separated households.</p> <p>Extracts from cadastral maps, information on the plots of land, and</p> | <p>Limited awareness and knowledge of the project information, including its accessibility and benefits;</p> <p>Inability to access and understand disclosed information due to lack of required support.</p> | <p>Poor awareness of benefits of land information;</p> <p>Language barriers: The Bru Van Kieu, Chut in Quang Binh and Ha Tinh, and the Khmer (chiefly the elderly in An Giang);</p> | <p>More effective communication work. Limited literacy of their own writings. In particular, not many Khmer people can read the Khmer language fluently. This has some implication for a communication strategy of the project.</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Land users (EM)</p> | <p>use of land for bank loans (Tinh Bien, An Giang)</p> <p>The need for information on laws and regulations, and required procedures and processes is particularly pronounced amongst some EM groups.</p> <p>Limited demand as in the real estate market and legal commercial services have not been developed (Bru and Chut groups in Quang Binh)</p> | | <p>No writings;</p> <p>Limited literacy of their own writings;</p> <p>Poor literacy;</p> <p>Lack of knowledge of the Internet and LROs; and</p> <p>No access to computers.</p> | <p>Site-specific work plans are required to mobilize participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups from the very beginning. Such efforts build public confidence and trust in the LAS too.</p> |
| <p>Other vulnerable land users (poor/near-poor)</p> | <p>Land administration process and procedures, such as those relating to separation of households, application for LURC, and donation of land to children.</p> <p>No land, thus no interest in land information (An Giang);</p> | | <p>No knowledge of availability of online information;</p> <p>Lack of skills to access the web;</p> <p>Poor literacy; inability to interpret land information;</p> | <p>Illiterate people may be provided with assistance from literate neighbors or village cadres.</p> <p>Impacts of information meetings/events or mobile service can be consolidated by the use of hand-held tablets to facilitate public access to transparent information on specific areas relating to land administration.</p> |

4.4. Current Interests in and access to land information

Currently, at the provincial level, two state agencies under DONRE that are responsible for providing land information i.e., LROs and information centers. All land administrators from the three provinces who participated in the FGDs acknowledged that the land database under their DONREs have not met various requirements for land information as expected by land users and stakeholders.

Household-level land users who participated in the consultation in all study sites were asked about their interest in different elements of land information but also their perception of their access to such information. Findings reveal that the information regarding procedures and processes of LURC and cadastral maps can be obtained rather easily from one-stop services and local cadastral officers. However, the findings also reflect how currently the interest expressed by household land users in receiving information is not being met. In rural areas, **reliable and accessible information on land administration processes, particularly laws and regulations, and required procedures and processes to solve land-related issues, history and legality of landlots** are the areas in which many household respondents felt inadequately informed (i.e., general information on laws and regulations; procedures for land transactions like inheritance or sales or purchases; guidelines for resolution of land related disputes; ways and means to find land history of a particular parcel). In particular, the information on legality means whether the land is under disputes and its owner has all necessary documents as legal evidence while land history refers not only to origins of land lots but also to whether the land used to be a lake and a pond, and geological information so that potential buyers can estimate whether how good the land foundation is and how much they need to invest to strengthen it. In Dong Hoi city, more than 90 percent of household land users have been granted LURCs. The remainder do not have sufficient documents required to identify the origins of land plots for various reasons. In addition, information on a legal process refers to how to change out-of-date LURCs, how to shift from agricultural to residential land, and to transfer, donation, heritage and registration of land-related changes, as well as to tax information (to avoid illegal transfers).

The need for information on **laws and regulations, and required procedures and processes** is particularly pronounced amongst, as expressed by the Khmer group in An Giang, among the poor people living in both urban and rural areas in Bac Ninh, the Bru Van Kieu, Chut and the poor in Quang Binh. Meanwhile, in more developed, especially fast urbanising, areas in Bac Ninh, the people have better understanding on the enforcement of their land-use rights, particularly the use of land for bank loans.

In urban areas, the people have **better access to and therefore more informed of land use plans and land use planning**. In the three cities in the three project provinces, namely Long Xuyen, Bac Ninh and Dong Hoi, the people can request such information from their ward cadastral officers. They also say that land use plans were consulted with the local people and later posted in the office of the ward's people. However, in some cases, especially for the urban poor, they do not know how to read the land use plans so need to seek help from local cadastral officers. In Dong Hoi city, local people also want to know the main direction of a land lot, as shown on a cadastral map, which the respondents consider important for estimating the value and price of a land lot according to the local culture.

DONREs have provided to requesters legal documents and some master land use plans on the maps but a small number of people use this information. Those who use it are lawyers, notary services, property companies, some business people, and those who are involved in agriculture. In Dong Hoi city, those people who need land information often find it from written documents at the ward's people's committee and the Internet.

Other groups of urban dwellers do not have access to it due to:

- (i) no knowledge of the availability of the online information;
- (ii) lack of skills to access the web; and
- (iii) inability to interpret the information despite its availability. Many people responded that legal land documents are usually released in full, with complex vocabulary and expression, hence being too difficult for them to digest, especially regarding how to apply to their own queries and cases.

No clear indication has emerged that the urban poor are any less able to access information than the non-poor in the same vicinity, except perhaps in the case of land use plans and land use planning. To avoid association of the project with the risk of any negative impact of land use planning on the urban poor it is therefore advisable that particular attention is paid to actual access of the poor to information in the LUP processes.

Also, the official websites provide major information on planning but not on **individual plots of land** which many land users, both institutional and household, need. In some urbanising areas in Long Xuyen, Bac Ninh and Dong Hoi, the people were also interested in how to estimate market land prices for compensation in land acquisition and resettlement projects for public works.

In Quang Binh, the demand for land information seems the least amongst the three study provinces. No broker service in Quang Binh due to the land market has not been developed and there have not been many changes relating to land. In Quang Binh, the respondents agreed that it is not common for land users to access land information from state agencies for the following reasons: (i) many people remain unaware of this service provided by DONRE; (ii) limited land information that have not met requirements from land users. In Dong Hoi City, Quang Binh, the least developed among the three study provinces, most of the respondents who are household land users are interested in LURCS in case of separated households, new LURCs, change of LURCs, and land use planning.

In Dân Hóa commune, Minh Hóa district, Quang Binh, with a high population of Bru Van Kieu and Chut, most of the respondents have not been aware of benefits of land information, which might result from ineffective communication work. Also, land transactions which are related to the enforcement of the people's land use rights are not common in local areas. Therefore, they showed very limited interest in land information, which only hovered around LURCs for separated households.

Despite the extent of the situation may vary between the Khmer group in An Giang and the groups of Bru and Chut in Quang Binh, generally the EM groups in the visited site face the following major constraints in accessing land information:

- Language barriers: The Bru Van Kieu in Quang Binh, the Chut in Quang Binh and Ha Tinh, and the Khmer (chiefly the elderly) in communities in An Giang, face language barriers in communication. However, the Tay and Nung in Thai Nguyen, the Muong in Ninh Binh, and the younger Khmer in An Giang and Vinh Long can speak and write Vietnamese fluently so face no language barriers;
- No script of the specific dialect is available (for instance, the Chut and Bru Van Kieu groups in Quang Binh);
- Limited literacy of their own writings. In particular, not many Khmer people can read the Khmer language fluently. This has some implication for a communication strategy of the project;

- Poor literacy: The urban poor and EM groups have low literacy, hence encountering difficulties in accessing legal documents to gain land information;
- Limited demand: In Quang Binh, many respondents are not interested in the real estate market and legal commercial services which, they said, have not been developed in their areas (in particular, in the areas inhabited by the Bru and Chut groups in Quang Binh);
- Lack of knowledge of the Internet and LROs; and
- No access to computers. Young respondents from the Bru and Chut groups in Quang Binh have never had access to a computer.

4.5. Aspects of Land Information of Most Interest to Land Users

Land user organisations

In An Giang and Bac Ninh, the respondents from notary offices, property companies, commercial banks and lawyers office are more interested in information on **land use planning and particular plots of land** in addition to **basis information on legal documents and policies**. Although they are charged 10,000 VND per request by LRO, they do not feel their interests have been met adequately.

However, in some study sites, such as An Giang and Quang Binh, representatives from commercial banks have not seen many benefits of MPLIS on their jobs. Usually, They need to check legal status of a land lot (disputed or not) when they have a borrower. However, only a small percentage of land lots are under any disputes. Also, they can provide loans to land under dispute or debt-related which should be settled at the court. They provide loans as long as they see LURCs as collateral which guarantee the bank's security. Therefore, they do not think their benefits are substantial. In addition, poor people who have no land in My Khanh ward, Long Xuyen city(An Giang)demonstrate no interest.

Household land users

Urban areas: In An Giang, all urban poor respondents have no land, they now live on a land plot rented from the ward's people's committee, therefore having no interest in land information. Also, they say even if they have any queries on land issues, they would come to the heads of the neighbourhoods rather than to the authorities for fear of the latter. In the city of Bac Ninh, the people are usually interested in **land administration process and procedures**, such as those relating to separation of households, application for LURC, and donation of land to children.

Rural areas: In Trung Nghia commune, Yen Phong district (Bac Ninh), the respondents are most interested in **procedures of granting LURCs and use of land as collateral** as most of them are household businesspeople with a great demand for bank loans. LURCs are a critical condition for their bank mortgages.

Ethnic minorities: The Khmer respondents in Tinh Bien district(An Giang) show their interest in **extracts from cadastral maps, information on the plots of land, and use of land for bank loans**. Charges per request are imposed in some cases. Usually, their demand for information on the history of land plots have not been met.

Supply and administration of land information

4.6. Sources of land information

In the study sites, various sources of land information have been used. The use of the existing means of communication on land information depends on the place of residence, the range of age and ethnicity. The following section lists the use of particular means to communicate and receive land information as described by the respondents. In particular,

- **LROs:** At the study sites in the three provinces, most of the respondents from land administrators and land user organisations, such as commercial banks, law firms, notary offices and real estates companies, whether they are from the public or private sectors, are aware of the roles and mandates of LROs but most of the respondents from household land users are not. A few may know that LROs are responsible for granting LURCs. The respondents who know about and have experience with LROs are usually men. Among household land users in urban areas, some have heard of LROs but never come there. They do not know where LROs are located. Nor are they not fully aware of the roles and functions of LROs. Some are referred to LROs for document appraisal and found its service slow. The processing time may amount to six to twelve months due to overload of documents to be appraised and approved. In the three study cities, computers are available to check the status of applications but only at the one-stop service at the Municipal People's Committee. But some people who are familiar with the PC-based service find it very convenient as they can be informed of the status of their application immediately without staying in a long queue to wait. It saves considerable time. No problems were reported with the service attitude at the one-stop service. However, rural people, especially those from EM groups, have never heard of LROs. They only use the one-stop service at the wards/commune's people's committee and cadastral officers to obtain information and conduct land procedures. The information that land users can obtain from the land administrators(LROs) include extracts of cadastral maps. However, this has not met their needs for land information, which are described in details in the section below.
- **One-stop service:** In some study sites, such as Khac Niem ward in Bac Ninh city (Bac Ninh) and Trung Nghia commune in Long Xuyen city (An Giang), despite available one-stop services, the people prefer contacting the ward's cadastral officer directly for information. Even in a more developed urban area like Bac Ninh city, it was reported that many people do not come to state offices to request for land information, despite their needs, as a result of the pre-conceived gap between the people and the authorities, and of no knowledge of legal land documents. Meanwhile, in Phu Hai ward, Dong Hoi city, Quang Binh, the one-stop service was found useful in providing land information but not so efficient in enforcing the people's land use rights, especially regarding the change and revision of LURCs, due to time-consuming paperwork. Similarly, in Bac Ninh province, the respondents complained about the time-consuming bureaucracy system in land information service and land transactions. Meanwhile, the people do not have good knowledge of land administration processes and procedures. Therefore, many people prefer using broker services for faster and more convenient service despite higher costs. They believed that they can save opportunity costs for other work. A respondent even shared his case of applying for a LURC, in which the relevant state agency responded that his case could not be handled as a result of a lack of policy guidance, but it was then handled successfully through the informal broker service.
- **Local cadastral officers:** At present, those who are involved in business seek information from local cadastral officers and relatives and friends. In Trung Nghia commune, Yen Phong district, Bac Ninh, and in Phu Hai ward in Dong Hoi city (Quang Binh), household land users often contact cadastral officers, village heads or experienced acquaintances. The interviewed respondents were unaware of local

land use plans although the plans were said to be posted in the commune's people's committees. An Cu commune, Tinh Bien district (An Giang), has one-stop service for land issues. However, the people still prefer communicating directly with the commune's cadastral officers. They often request for information on the use of land as collateral for bank loans.

- **Village meetings organised by village chiefs and representatives of mass organisations:** Generally, in An Giang, the people prefer communication through the heads of neighbourhoods in urban areas or the heads of villages in rural areas. However, in Khac Niem Ward in Bac Ninh, the respondents do not reach the heads of neighborhood for land information.
- **Loudspeakers:** In rural areas in An Giang and Bac Ninh provinces, the loudspeaker system functions as a common source of land information. Loudspeakers in wards households who live hear the loudspeakers would listen and share the information with others but is not feasible in rural EM areas as houses are scattered, as with the EM communities in Quang Binh. In An Cu commune, Tinh Bien district (An Giang), land issues are now communicated in Vietnamese in community meetings and through communal loudspeakers as households are located in a concentrated manner.
- **Word of mouth:** Relatives/friends/neighbors;
- **Informal land brokers** (in cities and townships): In Bac Ninh, land users from the private sector obtain basic information such as regulations and policies from the Internet and information from land lots and land use planning from their connections or brokers, usually with higher costs than what is stipulated by the land administrators. However, rarely do they come to the local administrators to request land information. They prefer informal channels which they believed are quicker and more convenient.
- **The mass media:** The respondents in the three visited cities can have access to central and provincial radios, TV and newspapers. In Quang Binh, the provincial TV runs three sessions per week on land and resettlement issues.
- **The internet:** The people are not aware of the information available on the national and provincial websites. Often, land administrators and businesspeople can use it and believe that the general public do not have the required skills to access it. A few respondents who are household land users know the availability and how to download information from the official websites. Those who know but still combine it with asking for interpretation from officials.
- **Leaflets:** In urban areas, the people do not like leaflets because they receive so many advertisements leaflets that they feel fed up and do not want to read them anymore. In EM areas, the people have poor literacy, especially with the Vietnamese language. Some ethnic groups in Quang Binh, such as Bru Van Kieu and Chut, do not have their own writings. Furthermore, not many Khmer people in An Giang can read their own written languages.
- **Home contact visits:** in Dân Hóa commune, Minh Hóa district, Quang Binh, with a high population of Bru Van Kieu and Chut, in many cases, commune officials visited households for communication on and support in LURC procedures. According to the local officials, very few household land users are active in this process as they do not see benefits so show no interest.



Photo 1: One-stop service in My Khanh commune, Long Xuyen city (An Giang) includes a land service cabin supported by a Khmer cadastral officer.

4.7. Access to and ability to use the Internet

Those living in the three visited cities have no problems with connection with the Internet. Even if their households do not have it, they can ask for help from neighbors who have, or ask their children to find access somewhere nearby, if they want to seek any information from the Internet. In this study, those who cannot access the Internet in the visited sites include:

- **senior citizens** although the age range may vary across the sites. In the cities of Long Xuyen, Bac Ninh and Dong Hoi, senior citizens are defined as those aged 50 or more. Meanwhile, amongst the Bru Van Kieu, they are those who are aged 35 or more. These people did not have a chance to go to schools, so cannot read. They prefer community meetings, TV and radios as means of communication.
- **all EM groups.** The Khmer residents in An Cu commune, Tinh Bien district (An Giang) seem to have better awareness of this tool as all of the respondents have heard of the Internet and know what it means. However, they do not know how to access and use IT devices. Meanwhile, the respondents from the Bru Van Kieu in Quang Binh, those most of them being in the 20s or early 30s, have never heard of the Internet. They only know typing a text as the most basic function of a computer.
- **poor households:** They cannot afford facilities and time to access the Internet. Many are too busy to meet both ends meet. It is noted that Bac Ninh will not face a big problem as the poverty rates in the province is very low.
- **household land users who do not have access to the Internet.** In the visited village in An Giang, around 30 percent of the households have connectivity to the Internet. They can help each other to access online information when needed. Meanwhile, none of the households in the visited village in Dan Hoa commune, Minh Hoa district (Quang Binh), has connection to the Internet although the commune's people's committee, which is not

very far from them, has connectivity to the Internet, and local officials can have access to and use it.

- **household land users who have low level of education:** In Dan Hoa commune, Minh Hoa district (Quang Binh), most of the residents in the visited commune have very basic literacy as some have completed primary education and others have not. Some are illiterate.
- **household land users with disabilities.**



Photo 2: Although most of the local people cannot have access to computers, the Internet can be accessed at CPC office in Dan Hoa commune, Minh Hoa district (Quang Binh).

4.8. Gender issues

Across the sites, in most cases, men are common household heads and are noted as household registration booklets, thus being more involved in conducting administrative procedures for household land transactions and having greater interest in information on paperwork processes and procedures. However, in an occupational village in Bac Ninh, as land is an important asset to be used as bank collateral for loans to do business, both male and female show their interest in legal information relating to land issues. The female respondents said that with their names on LURCs, they can be involved in paperwork regarding land transactions, especially in applying for bank loans which they found most useful. Women in other study sites are also aware of their rights to use titles for bank loans but have never used their titles for this purpose. All the consulted women whose households have land said that their names are in LURCs in the same position as their husbands. No difficulty was reported regarding registration of joint titles for couples in the visited sites. Usually, women in urban areas are better aware of benefits of these joint titles. In Bac Ninh, some said that with their names on LURCs, they feel more empowered within their households as their husbands need to consult them before they want to use LURCs for any purpose. Therefore, they felt more confident with higher self-esteem. In Thai Nguyen, the consulted women felt that they now have the same status as their husbands in making a decision on the most valuable possession within their households. They also said that they felt being more respected and secure with a stronger sense of ownership within their households once their names are on LURCs. No constraints or inconvenience regarding joint titles for couples were reported during the consultations in the study sites.

Despite no language barriers, women from the Khmer community in An Giang have very limited interest in land issues as they perceived that it is 'men's business' and they are burdened with work and domestic responsibilities. In all the study sites in the three provinces, most of the female respondents are not aware of or have no experience in land administration processes and procedures. Their husbands or children take this responsibility. They also showed neither knowledge nor interest in land regulations and policies.

Concerns for MPLIS

4.9. Concerns about the unintended impacts of the project

Under the project, MPLIS will be established to record all the existing cadastral data on land use, land use plan data, land price data and key land resource information. It will not create or change any land rights of any individuals, households or organisations. It will digitalise all the existing information to put into a national unified land database to give better access to land information to all land users and the public as a whole. Where the existing mapping is not consistent with land use data, re-surveying and re-mapping will be conducted to ensure consistency with the stored land use data. Where land users have not been registered with the administration, they will have to register as actual land users, and this information will be recorded in MPLIS without changing or judgment of land use rights. Where there are disputes on land use rights, the system will record the land as under dispute and dispute resolution will be conducted under the project. It means that the project will only digitize all the existing information into the system and there will be no change of land use rights of all land users under the project.

Therefore, the respondents anticipated no adverse impacts, direct and indirect alike, on EM groups with customary land holdings or customary land use rights, including restrictions of access to land and resources, unintended changes and disruptions to the social organization, and intensification of external pressures for land and forest resources. Some respondents from land user organisations, including businesses, notary offices and lawyers offices, expressed their concern about some risks given their extensive experience in dealing with a variety of sensitive and complicated cases concerning land information. The concerns that they raised in this study include:

- **Asymmetry of land information:** Some respondents from different group discussions in all the study sites perceive that improvements in the availability and accessibility of land data and information services may favour urban populations in more developed areas. This may result in the disparity in access to land information as a consequence of the gap between the poor and the non-poor, men and women (especially in rural areas, including in a more developed province like Bac Ninh), as well as the majority and the EM groups in terms of education levels, capacity and accessibility to IT devices such as computers, smart phones and the Internet. This may be a considerable disadvantage given land is commonly considered one of the most valuable assets which may lead to economic and social inequalities.
- **Confidentiality of information:** it is concerned that the provision of personal land information may result in leakage of personal wealth and privacy, especially when it is not clearly stipulated which stakeholders can access to which type of information and with whose authorization.
- **Encroachment of the existing laws and sub-laws related:** In connection with the issue of confidentiality, some respondents fear that the project may encroach on the existing related laws on protecting personal and corporate information and security, such as the Land Law (2013), the Civil Code, the Criminal Law, the draft Law on

Access to Information, the Law on Electronic Transactions, and Circular 34 (2014) on Disclosure of Information. In particular, they are concerned that the process and procedures to collect and disclosure data in MPLIS, and land data relating to personal assets or corporate liabilities which may cause loss to individuals and businesses may be not allowed under other existing legislation. Some express their concern about the conflict between the national laws and sub-laws relating to confidentiality. Therefore, it is important to carefully review the existing legislation related to avoid any conflicts between the project activities and the existing legislation, as well as between the national laws and sub-laws relating to confidentiality.

- **Unfair competition:** Also in connection with the issue of confidentiality, it is concerned that unfair competition may happen amongst businesses when they can obtain information on their competitors' assets and mortgages.
- **Accuracy and reliability of information:** The accuracy and reliability of information, especially regarding the existing owners of the land and assets attached to the land, are considered very important as respondents believed that inaccurate and unreliable information provided in the database may cause loss to buyers. The respondents believed that in many cases, citizens now provide inaccurate information to avoid complicated paperwork and taxes. As a result of limited awareness of the law, they have not fully understood risks associated with such transactions. The respondents found it not easy to update this information. For instance, to avoid paperwork and taxes, many hidden transactions have been conducted with no official paper. In addition, a great number of authorised transactions have gone through the notary service) to avoid paperwork for LURC and tax while the law allows these transactions. Also, a considerable number of households cannot be granted LURCs for various reasons, such as lack of a signatory who lives abroad, lacks of proof of their land-use rights over a land lot, which means information on these plots of land cannot be updated in the database under VILG. In Dong Hoi city, it was said that fake LURCs are common. In addition, the people from informal services obtain LURCs skipping some steps in the process. When these LURCs are used as collateral, they would be checked by commercial banks. All these existing issues have raised the people's concerns about the reliability of land information in the official system, wondering which sources of land information are considered more legitimate: information on LURCs or from MPLIS, and who will be held responsible for legality of such information.
- **Accountability, criminal responsibility and compensation related:** with regards to the issue of accuracy and reliability in VILG, some respondents expressed their concern about accountability, criminal responsibility and compensation relating to economic losses caused by inaccurate and unreliable information that clients received from the database. In particular, they wondered where there are any legal documents that would underpin operations of VILG in general and MPLIS in particular in order to ensure the legitimacy of its information provided; and which parties would be held responsible for these losses.
- **Updating:** Some respondents are concerned that local land administrators may not have sufficient resources and capacity to update information in MPLIS, including timely updating on the latest changes of legal documents and policies regarding land issues to avoid potential losses for the people in their transactions. Therefore, it is important to hold a stakeholder responsible for updating MPLIS in case of policy changes which take place rather fast. This also raises the question about the sustainability of the project as a whole and MPLIS in particular.
- **Inconsistent enforcement of LROs, the legal framework and communication activities:** The respondents in Bac Ninh are concerned that the project may not achieve its expected objectives if an appropriate legal framework on operations of

LROs is not developed in line with strengthened LROs, and benefits of the project are not communicated properly to the public.

4.10. Some lessons learnt from VLAP regarding social issues

VLAP, the previous land administration project in Vietnam, provides some useful lessons for the design and implementation of VIGL, especially those regarding public awareness raising and community participation, employment of local facilitators, poverty reduction, social inclusion and gender issues. Some of these lessons might help inform the recommendations below in this SA. In particular:

Public awareness raising and community participation: VLAP design included a specific sub-component on public awareness-raising and community participation, which confronted several challenges at the start of implementation. A CPMU review conducted between July and September 2010 found that land offices across all nine provinces relied on bureaucratic approaches to information dissemination. This proved to be a weak link in TS contracts and implementation. Work gained momentum after 2010 with the PPMUs undertaking proactive measures to disseminate information on land registration and service delivery. Foremost was the preparation of an information board (posters) on service standards and procedures for registering land rights or resolving land disputes, although in simple language. These were displayed at all DLROs with details disseminated to local authorities. This was in response to a review that noted that local offices were missing the opportunity for local diplomacy (people-to-people local networking) to support sustainable land administration and management. Between mid-2010 and 2011, CPMU introduced the sub-component on PACP through numerous field visits, workshops, and consultations. This gradually helped convince provinces and districts that appropriate mechanisms for an open and continued dialogue with local communities was essential and that timely dissemination of information was important in upholding people's use rights. By 2011, VLAP decided to engage local civil society organizations (CSOs) as LFs for public awareness building and to help spread the message at the local level.

Local facilitators: The project developed and successfully piloted the LF approach for community outreach. Under this approach, VLAP contracted a local mass organization with district coverage to assist in information dissemination and field monitoring. The LF was responsible for informing land users and village and commune officials on project procedures, processes, and work. LFs had to conduct community-driven land profiling (advance preparation work at registration locations) with local authorities as drivers of data mobilization and other specified tasks. An independent, locally based group disseminating information made follow-up easier. It also helped local groups gain an understanding of the long-term requirements of land administration and management. This arrangement was inexpensive. Information dissemination and field monitoring were thus outsourced and the responsibility for community participation, outreach, and services was formalized within the structure of the project teams. LFs were trained on social safeguards in field monitoring and on monitoring "soft" indicators for reporting. A set of field-relevant social indicators (including the participation of ethnic minorities) was prepared for reference and provided to the LF cadre as part of the draft manual and training courses. Although LFs were provided meager resources and funds, they performed their tasks quite effectively through door-to-door contact campaigns, advance preparation of land profiles and documentation, and support in convening community meetings. The LF experiment helped the project reach various actors, within and beyond the project's main stakeholders, and in the process, fostered public support and built confidence in the LAS. The transformation wrought by the LF model was truly significant for a political-administrative system that generally relies on a top-down approach to governance. IMAs and supervision missions found that in areas where LFs were used, public awareness was generally high and well sustained.

Poverty reduction, social inclusion and gender. VLAP allowed for considerable focus on poverty alleviation and benefits for women in the form of project objectives, design, indicators, and specific actions or analysis related to poverty and gender issues. Social specialists were part of the implementation team throughout the project life. Until 2012, VLAP reports carry information and analysis on work related to social inclusion and gender concerns. Largely due to the work in earlier years (2010-12), VLAP's focus on women and awareness-raising programs went beyond simple information distribution. It included special meetings and training for women on their rights before land registration commenced and special procedures to ensure their participation during the process. However, EMAPs prepared and implemented in districts/communes in the project area saw no follow-up activities.

4.11. Some issues relating to environmental impacts and OP4.12

Environmental impacts

There are no environmental impacts caused by the project proposed activities. However, there might be potential downstream environmental and social impacts. Related activities to be financed by the project will include mainly technical assistances (TA) and goods to support the establishment of the national land databases and services provision as well as on land use management monitoring. Project activities aim to support the strengthening of institutional environment for land management, including improving access to land information, and strengthening land information system and land governance. Thus, the project will mostly have positive environmental and social impacts by improving the quality, quantity and access to social and environment-related information in the land information system. Under VILG, mapping, surveying, and land use plan recording would not take place in areas with any implications for natural habitats, e.g. national parks, natural reserves, wetlands of biodiversity preservation, natural rivers and lakes; forests, e.g. primary, protection and production forests; and physical cultural resources, e.g. religious works, historical relics, archaeological sites, and cemeteries. Screening process would also be conducted for all project activities during implementation and project activities that are envisaged to have impacts or implications on natural habitats, forests, and physical cultural resources would be excluded. As such, the project would not trigger OP 4.04, OP 4.36 and OP 4.11. Given the nature of the project, it is envisaged that potential environmental impacts may be mainstreamed in the project activities during implementation, which would require MONRE to take account of proper measures to manage environmental impacts in line with the Bank's Interim Guidelines on the Application of Safeguard Policies to TA Activities in Bank-Financed Project.

OP 4.12 on Involuntary Resettlement

Under the project, MPLIS will be established to record all the existing cadastral data on land use, land use plan data, land price data and key land resource information. It will not create or change any land rights of any individuals, households or organisations. It

will digitalise all the existing information to put into a national unified land database to give better access to land information to all land users and the public as a whole. Where the existing mapping is not consistent with land use data, re-surveying and re-mapping will be conducted to ensure consistency with the stored land use data.

No civil works have been proposed for this project; so land acquisition will not take place. Restrictions on access to and exploitation of natural resources will also not be affected. As mentioned above, there will not be any new land rights adjudicated or amended, and there will be no land acquisition policy supported. In view of this, OP 4.12 would not be triggered for this project.

V. Recommendations

This section highlights strong messages to address the above-mentioned constraints to minimize potential negative impacts as well as optimise beneficiary utilization of land information services provided by VILG. The recommendations are presented on a basis of their linkages to various components, sub-components and activities under the project. They include:

Strengthening the quality of public service in the land sector

5.1. Improving Service Delivery

- **Clear, transparent and simplified service delivery procedures:** Given land users' identification of the constraining bureaucracy of current procedures and other problems in accessing information, it is necessary to review service delivery procedures which are followed at provincial, district and commune levels in relation to land transactions to identify key areas and inconsistencies which are impeding efficiency. Procedures should be clarified and revised where necessary and specific service standards approved (e.g. time required to complete land transactions, documentation required from land users, fees required for different administrative services). The information on these processes and procedures should be transparent to the public, especially vulnerable groups. Procedures to request for land-related services at LROs should be simplified. The land users also requested for transparency of each step in the land administration process so that they can monitor and evaluate performance of state agencies and officials related.
- **Clear concepts and definitions:** It is important to clearly define some fundamental concepts of land-related information in the most accessible manner to the public, especially semi-literate people in order to avoid confusion or misunderstanding of land information provided under VILG.
- **Paid service for land information:** In Bac Ninh, the respondents expressed their willingness to pay for land information that meet their needs in a convenient manner.
- **Help-desk service:** LROs should have a help-desk to provide general guidance for the people who do not have good knowledge of legal land documents.
- **Diversity of services:** LROs should provide and maintain a variety of land-related services in addition to supplying land information through the Internet-based MPLIS. As the needs from various groups of land users may vary, it is recommended to make the service types more relevant to specific groups of land users (e.g. normal vs express service for businesspeople, home service for the lonely elderly and the people with disabilities, with a greater variety of land information).

- **More grassroots services:** LROs may send their staff to commune land information points, such as one-stop service, at a fixed week day. Weekly notices are made on duty days and staff so that the people can know and come. This flexible way could directly help the people solve their problems quickly despite their long distance from home and extremely difficult travel. However, limited human resources of LROs could be a constraint to provide this service.

Capacity building

5.2. Capacity building

Below are some suggestions to build capacity for various stakeholders, as recommended by respondents themselves from various study sites, to enable them to effectively utilise and disseminate benefits of the project:

- **For local facilitators and LROs' staff:** The near future will see the increasing demand for land information as a result of the project activities. Therefore, it is essential to develop a specific training strategy for local facilitators and LROs' staff so that they can meet work requirements. At the same time, it helps improve their status in land service activities. The training provided to local land administrators and facilitators as well as project staff should take into account cultural relevance and gender sensitivity. VILG should identify specific gaps through an assessment of training needs and develop an appropriate training strategy and materials to ensure that the project activities are undertaken in an inclusive and culturally suitable manner. Periodical meetings for exchange of experience and sharing of information between the related project provinces on the implementation of communication activities with vulnerable groups is needed as this remains a difficult issue that require further learning for stakeholders throughout the implementation period. This is also an opportunity for project staff, whether they be at the central or local level, to learn about local conditions where they or their colleagues work on an on-going basis.
- **For local officials:** It is important to build capacity for commune officials who will be involved in VILG as a way of strengthening local organizational capacity to participate in the project. As a precursor to community-based information activities, targeted training of key information persons for households, including cadastral officers and other representatives of Commune People's Committees, village cadres and other stakeholders is advisable to ensure that these individuals have clear understanding of the issues to be presented and discussed and the purposes of eliciting feedback. They will therefore be able to continue to act as important sources of information in updating local communities about project progress and developments, and facilitating further participation and feedback. Also, it may be necessary to hold some ToT courses on IT skills to gradually equip village cadres and the people with relevant IT skills to access MPLIS. In Thai Nguyen, respondents suggested different IT courses regarding the use of land database for different categories of target learners, such as LRO staff related, DoNRE staff related, DivRE staff, commune staff, and village heads.
- **For household land users:** It is important to organise public training courses to provide household land users with some basic IT skills and how to read cadastral maps and land use plans when they are made public; It is important to build land users' capacity in monitoring and evaluating the timeliness, reliability, accuracy and quality of land information provided through VILG activities. It is not advisable to integrate VILG's training contents into other community or events or other training activities with many various contents, as with many other projects as the integration experiences have shown considerable dilution, confusion and distraction

Although this recommendation from the respondents may be valid, cost effectiveness during implementation may be a barrier to take it up.

Communication

5.3. Communication and awareness raising

The success of VILG can be greatly influenced by making sure that relevant stakeholders and participant groups are informed and then involved at every stage of the process. To obtain consensus and support from various stakeholders, it is important to prepare documents that specify project benefits for each category of potential beneficiaries. Otherwise, some of them may not be fully aware of what and how they can benefit from the project and do not want to be involved at all, whether in consultation, planning or implementation which may be in fact related to their work, for example, incomplete awareness of bankers on the project's benefits as shown in the consultation in An Giang.

The communication strategy:

It is important to develop an adequate communication strategy to boost both demand from vulnerable groups and advocacy for stronger commitment from the local authorities in addressing constraints in supplying adequate land information services. Lessons learnt from VLAP will also feed into developing this strategy. The communication strategy and the Operations Manual under VILG should take into account the constraints and emerging requirements that have been reflected in the local consultations to avoid exclusion of the vulnerable groups from the project and its benefits. The communication strategy should facilitate two-way dialogues – it is not only about telling people information of the programme, but about listening to and responding to their concerns. Therefore, it is important to design and implement a comprehensive communication strategy to support the project. The current draft communication strategy prepared by the consulting firm to support VILG should address following areas:

With the supply side

- How to obtain and increase commitment from national and sub-national authorities and implementers for the reform of the current land information system. This is a process known as social mobilization to build trust of land users. As a result of the process, land administrators should create a favorable environment in support of VILG; engage with land users on a regular basis for raising questions and concerns regarding their rights to land use and access to land information; and provide reliable local land information. In addition, local facilitators should improve communication skills; know how to create and facilitate platforms and forums for community participation to provide feedback on the VILG implementation process.
- How to develop a platform for community participation to discuss and dialogue with land administrators regarding various issues, including their concerns and claim for their land-use rights, as a result of the land information that they receive from the project system;
- How to develop communication platforms at different levels (e.g., village meetings and other community and communication events) to receive feedback on the functioning of the supply side sector and its ability to cope with the increasing demand for land information services as a result of VILG. The procedures on the feedback mechanism should be clear and transparent, especially to the vulnerable groups, e.g. regarding which channels to receive feedback and which stakeholders should be held accountable for responding to feedback, and how long. Timely guidance and responses to land users' concerns and

recommendations should be provided via these communication platforms, and the progress monitored.

With the demand side

- How to raise demand for and then maintain practices of utilising land information services for land users, especially the vulnerable groups;
- What should be planned for behavior change communication (BCC), especially amongst various EM groups in the project sites. The communication strategy and IEC materials should be designed taking into account cultural differences in behaviours among different EM groups and specific behavioural changes to be addressed.
- How to customise VILG's communication activities and local information campaigns to address specific needs of different EM groups in terms of language and cultural relevance. The strategy should take into account differences in how information is disseminated among different EM groups and leverage the presence of credible traditional institutional structures and formal and informal EM organizations in the project areas for dissemination, allowing support and counseling to EM land users in their language and culturally appropriate way. Local facilitators will be actively encouraged to support hard-to-reach groups; and
- To plan how to address bottlenecks, barriers and fears caused by socio-cultural practices and belief and answer questions from stakeholders;

Outreach communication

- **Appropriate IEC materials for dissemination:** Development and dissemination of a package set of printed and audio-visual IEC materials (booklets, leaflets, posters, short documentary films, edu-taining programmes, TV spots, radio, etc with the relevant logos, IEC messages, and slogans) to relevant groups of target audiences as identified in the communication strategy, are essential to ensure key messages and knowledge to be delivered to VILG's stakeholders, including the vulnerable groups. The work will contribute to raise awareness for land users, change their attitude and behaviour in seeking land information and in the long term, contribute to change and maintain behaviours recommended by the project. The design of these IEC materials should be suitable (socially and culturally accepted) to target groups following the standards of IEC material development (Clear; Concise; Courteous; Call for actions etc). Materials need to be carefully developed in order to effectively disseminate information to both literate and semi-literate householders and to householders for whom Kinh is a second language, hence a minimal amount of non-technical text and the use of drawings and graphic representations wherever possible will be critical. These materials should be pre-tested with target communities in some of the project provinces to assess their comprehensibility and possible effectiveness. Last but not least, it is important to conduct orientation/training to stakeholders, as identified in the communication strategy, on how to use the IEC materials effectively.
- **Media campaigns:** Mass media campaigns may also be appropriate for one-way information dissemination. But given the variability of situations between provinces (and, indeed, even districts within provinces) and land users' interest in information which relates to their own situation, it is advisable that the focus of such campaigns should be predominantly on location-specific information, which can be broadcast through local TV and radio networks. The use of commune loudspeakers may be an effective means of reaching a large number of people at a relatively low cost, but it should be recognised that information broadcast through this medium is not always well retained, and cannot

be used in areas where the people live in a scattered manner. Where appropriate, the development of memorable soundbites or slogans may counter this problem to some extent. Public displays of information such as maps, plans and procedures (in an accessible form) at both district and commune level may also be beneficial. Prior to the launch of MPLIS, information campaigns should be conducted amongst land users which outline benefits and knowledge of how to access and use land information from MPLIS and associated fees (if any, where relevant). These campaigns should be conducted via meetings, mass media and the dissemination of printed or audio-visual IEC materials, depending on specific local social contexts.

- **Engagement of local information points:** Local authorities are encouraged to use and bring into play the role of village cadres, especially those from community mass organizations/unions. Information contact points should also be village chiefs, given many advantages of this post as identified in many studies. These people and organizations are mainly EM people who are living in EM areas; therefore, they have been active in communicating and popularizing relevant policies/programmes to local people. The final decision on the most relevant and effective information points should be left for each project province, depending on their current contexts.
- **Counselling:** As the assessment indicates that many respondents are unaware of the land legislation and how it is applied in practice (interpreting the law), it may be necessary to provide counselling in parallel to MPLIS in some communities.
- **Regular local meetings:** Regular ward/commune meetings, including scheduled question-and-answer sessions, may be one of the most effective ways to update local communities on project interventions and receive their comments and feedback. In urban areas, this will also provide residents with an opportunity to engage more closely with their local land administrators than they do at present. However, information for the poor should be provided during a home visit or a meeting for poor people as they usually do not attend common meetings.



Photo 3: Households of the Bru Van Kieu are scattered in Dan Hoa commune, Minh Hoa district (Quang Binh).

Strengthening M&E in land use and land administration

These recommendations are related to activities under Component 1 of the project, including those to strengthen the monitoring of compliance with the land use and land management in accordance with the provisions of Land Law 2013 by piloting and rolling out a sustainable monitoring system in project provinces and conducting a national comprehensive land governance assessment. The stakeholders would comprise, among others, government institutions at national and sub-national levels, the public, business community, and land users in general.

5.4. Enhancing transparency and accountability through localised responses

Enhanced transparency of land information to the general public, including the vulnerable groups, is one of the initiatives to support social demand for accountability from land administrators and the government as a whole, as the public's knowledge and capacity would therefore be enhanced. Other measures and initiatives, some of which have been mentioned elsewhere in this report, include support from LROs and mobile services; a more effective feedback mechanism; and capacity building for local officials, village cadres and LROs. Below are some more measures:

- **Incentives for Government officials for participation and inclusion:** To incentivize land administrators to participate more actively in the process, it is essential to use certain indicators of access to land information amongst vulnerable groups as measurement of their performance. It is encouraged to develop local EM land administrators as some studies have demonstrated the value of EM officials from the local community in terms of promoting participation from and inclusion of EMs in local initiatives/activities. As the studies point out, EM officials serve as active agents who can effectively link the local government and the people in different domains, including the land sector, and can provide assistance for Kinh colleagues in policy implementation. The communication strategy should bring this issue to attention. Other incentives include various training opportunities and field visits to learn useful experiences from other provinces.
- **Promotion of activities by local mass organisations**(such as the youths' unions and women's unions, which involve EM communities in their work) and civil society organisations. These organisations can add value to information transparency efforts in EM communities through introduction of more participatory planning processes, and capacity development, among other areas. Especially, local facilitators may be encouraged to be recruited from local mass organisations, especially the women's unions.

Various measures and initiatives should apply depending on local socio-cultural conditions. As administrative capacity, access to information, information needs and levels of engagement in the formal land administration system amongst household and other land users are highly variable across locations, attention should be focused on developing local information activities aimed at addressing identified problems. These should be planned down to the district and commune levels. Localised surveys, combining the collation of administrative data and the strategic collection of information from a range of stakeholders, may be useful to prepare these activities effectively.

5.5. Analytical work and monitoring indicators

- **Additional analytical work:** As part of the Gov. program, GDLA is preparing a survey to collect data on residential and productive land for individual EM groups, documenting the actual situation, problems and constraints. These data would be important to address the gaps between the national legislation, including the Land Law 2013, and the actual EM's land tenure (per group) and to analyze potential risks and impacts on EM groups, if any. Therefore, GDLA would share these data with the CPMU for further analysis and actions, if needed, to mitigate impacts and enhance culturally appropriate benefits to EM groups in the project sites. In addition, all the existing cadastral data recorded in MPLIS regarding land use, land use plan data, and key land resource information would be very useful for the management of land arrangements amongst EM groups.
- **Disaggregation of data:** A balanced approach to promote information dissemination channels, with careful monitoring of internet access and use of LROs amongst targeted land users, is important to ensure that benefits provided by VILG are equitably distributed. M & E evaluation arrangements should include indicators related to EMs' accessibility, which should allow analysis disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and poor/near-poor status.
- **MPLIS:** Important indicators that may need recording and monitoring include the number of institutions accessing MPLIS, average time to register a land transfer, the share of beneficiaries (general public, business and professionals) who report using good access to the land geoportal, and the share of beneficiaries (general public, business and professionals) reporting satisfaction with the land geoportal. A community satisfaction survey should be planned in an adequate time during the implementation period to understand emerging constraints and make timely necessary adjustments to avoid exclusion of the vulnerable groups from the project's benefits.
- **The communication strategy:** It is required to periodically evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy and document lessons learned for the project to be revised and scaled up.

Delivery of MPLIS and establishment of a national land database

The following recommendations are related to activities to develop and implement the national land database and enabling public engagement in land information under Component 2 of the project.

5.6. Facilitating access to and use online land information

This section discusses appropriate measures and mechanisms to ensure accessibility of different social groups, including the vulnerable, ethnic minority and women, to the land information system to be developed under VILG:

- **Taking advantage of a land geoportal and IT to optimise utilization of information, especially for hard-to-reach groups:** The design of MPLIS should pay attention to measures to enable analysis of specific data relating to land use by vulnerable groups, such as women, ethnic minorities and poor people. The implementation of VILG would provide update information on administration and use of land among the vulnerable groups. As a result, the authorities and policy makers can have some basis to develop adequate measures to mitigate negative impacts of the project and bring practical benefits to them. During the implementation of VLAP, face-to-face interaction was constrained by a lack of standardised information as the people in charge might communicate in a different way, and the people might receive it in different ways, too. The use of IT in communication could thus provide standardised information across regions and areas and improve the transparency of information services. Illiterate people may be provided with assistance from literate neighbors or village cadres.

Depending on particular activities planned by VILG in each location, impacts of information meetings/events or mobile service can be consolidated by the use of hand-held tablets to facilitate public access to transparent information on specific areas relating to land administration. This will gradually replace conventional methods of distributing leaflets which many respondents may not find useful whenever they need as their needed information is very specific and tailored to their own situation. Lessons learnt from other projects indicate that leaflet information is usually too general and limited to be of any use in specific cases. In particular, in Minh Hoa district (Quang Binh), the district land official believed that tablets can be kept by the commune's cadastral officers who may help the people in need to access the Internet in the initial stage. Most of local EM households are located near the CPC. The most remote village is 18 km away. Many commune officials are from local EM groups so can speak their language fluently. These officials can also help with communication activities, training and support to local EM people to access MPLIS.

- **Phasing the implementation of VILG within a province** to learn lessons and avoid waste of resources. It is suggested that the project will be implemented in more developed communities in the initial stage and in less developed communities in a later stage, given limited resources and poor IT skills in rural areas which requires supply of equipment and training of skills. For cost-effectiveness, additional resources and services (tablets, training, tailored guidance and communication activities) may be provided for a cluster of communes or a cluster of villages, depending on specific distances and conditions in each area, for public access in more difficult communities with high rates of poor and/or EM people. This should be coupled with local communication activities and on-the-spot supporting staff to ensure that facilities should be used and used according to the project's intended objectives.
- **Location of public venues for access to the Internet for land information:** In a city and more developed areas, such venues may be community learning centres. In An Giang, provincial officials said that each commune has at least one centre, and some communes may have more. The province plans to develop these centers at the village level in the 2016-2020 period. The elderly prefer visiting village cultural houses or community centres to be developed under the New-type Rural Development Programme.



Photo 4: The community learning centre in Vinh Son commune, Phu Luong district, Thai Nguyen

5.7. Regular mobile support in deep, remote and difficult areas

To address the issues of language barriers and poor literacy amongst the vulnerable groups, it is important to consider regular mobile services to provide tailored support to enable these groups to access land information. Analysis of lessons learnt from legal aid mobile services which have functioned effectively for the vulnerable groups, including the poor/near-poor, EM groups and women, across the country for more than a decade could be useful for VILG. Furthermore, PPMUs may coordinate with legal aid offices to learn their long-term experiences. Generally, mobile service may address the following issues:

- **Raising awareness:** It is essential to effectively raise public awareness in hard-to-reach areas, especially the vulnerable groups who otherwise do not have more limited chance to obtain land information, and thus may be less likely to participate in the decision-making process relating to land issues. The people may have a better chance to raise more questions and go into more specific details of their interest.
- **Raising demand:** With such advantages, mobile service may engage more 'clients' from the vulnerable groups, thus raising the demand for land information in general and in different aspects of land information from them, which remains very limited at the moment.
- **Improving trust:** The service will improve public trust in hard-to-reach communities in reliability and benefits of land information through a close and effective communication channel to them and, concurrently, improve delivery service in the land sector. This, in turn, leads to their higher demand for better service standards from the land administrators;
- **Addressing barriers against accessibility:** The service will effectively address some major constraints that the vulnerable groups have been facing, as indicated in this social

assessment, such as distance to information points, language barriers, time constraints, access to IT device, and workload on women.

- **Building capacity for local cadres:** Effective support may be provided to commune cadastral officers and other staff from local mass organizations (particularly at the commune and village levels) to improve their capacity and skills to provide assistance to the local people, especially the vulnerably groups, with localised land issues.
- **Providing extra support to solve land-related problems:** In a long term, if conditions allow, this service may offer added support to help the vulnerable groups to solve their problems which may directly or indirectly result from their lack of adequate land information, such as land disputes, family property, family conflicts, and policy benefits. The assistance may be provided through training of basic IT skills to access and search land information at important contact points where the vulnerable groups often seek information, such as commune supervision boards, mediation panels, women's unions, resettlement boards, and village heads. Where information cannot be made in ethnic languages for certain reasons, these contacts points could act as bridges to relay the needed information to local EM groups.

Given limited resources, in the initial period of delivery, mobile service may target the general public in hard-to-reach areas and then specifically target the vulnerably groups as the latter's demand will have increased. A mobile team may include a district LRO officer, a commune's cadastral officer, a representative from a mass organisation, and a village head. Ideally, a member of the team should be female to address issues that require gender sensitivity. For instance, some female clients may not feel comfortable in seeking information and advice from male staff as a result of certain cultural and customary barriers. According to the head of the land division in Minh Hoa district (Quang Binh), a district LRO can conduct such a trip once a month. Depending on a focus of each trip, the team may engage specialised collaborators or experts to solve the people's problems, through counseling and assistance. They may offer the following services:

- **Awareness raising:** Mobile service can be combined with awareness-raising campaigns and events as the study indicates that in some areas, EM people still have limited demand for land information due to their lack of knowledge of laws, or lack of land market activities in local areas. Awareness-raising activities, such as disseminating legal documents through presentations, leaflets and audio-visual clips, would raise their demand. During a session, team members may introduce and explain some legal documents relating to the existing local issues, followed by Q&A sessions. While disseminating or explaining legal documents, they may discuss some issues on culture and behaviors within communities as well as policies for ethnic groups.
- **Providing direct counseling:** At a session, those who need counseling will be sent to a counseling section. It is learnt from the legal aid mobile service that verbal counseling is better and more accessible to the people during mobile service.
- **Providing guidance on availability, use of, and access to digitalised land information through tablets.**

The team may be expected to address both individual problems and local community issues. Plans and activities should be prepared on a basis of local needs. The team should conduct information needs assessments amongst targeted beneficiaries as a basis to develop their action plans every month, quarter and year. Ideally, fairly detailed plans should specify the numbers of sessions, venues and staff involved in mobile service per month. Mobile service should be regular but also irregular whenever needs be. Another way to understand needs is to rely on district and commune cadastral officers and local facilitators. Every month, district land administration sections should work with commune cadastral officers on local situations and then inform LROs to develop their service plans. Before a mobile trip, LROs develop a

detailed work plan and send official letters to inform communes of contents and programs for coordination. Priority should be given to areas with higher demand for information service (e.g. more land disputes, or under the process of urbanisation with many resettlement activities).

5.8. Ensuring confidentiality of some land information

The findings from the consultation have indicated strong concerns, especially from local land administrators and land user organisations, about confidentiality of information from and allowing access to MPLIS only to legitimate users. They also provide some common suggestions, some of which are presented below:

- **Review of the related legislation:** It is important to check laws and sub-laws which have been existing or in the pipeline and which may be related to the issue of confidentiality under VILG, such as the Civil Code, the Criminal Code, the Land Law, the Law on Access to Information.
- **Regulations on accessibility:** Provincial regulation on authorised decentralisation of access to information is needed, e.g. which agency or individuals and at which level can access to which information. These should be consulted with the related stakeholders carefully to mitigate the risks mentioned.
- **Clear roles and responsibilities:** it is important to prepare specific regulations on the roles and responsibilities of agencies at various levels which are authorised to provide information in MPLIS, e.g. which agencies are authorised to supply which information, methods, forms and types of supplying land information as well as legal responsibilities associated, and on types of information to be provided by each of them. Also, there should be a clear and practical mechanism on institutional and individual rights and obligations in using land information from MPLIS and LROs.

5.9. A grievance redressal mechanism

It is necessary to improve the flows of information, downward and upward alike, to create more favorable conditions for the vulnerable groups to be engaged in the feedback mechanism to avoid exclusion of them from the project and its benefits and maximize the positive impacts on and satisfaction of project beneficiaries. The grievance redress mechanism should be adapted to the needs of specific EM groups in terms of language and cultural norms on complaints. In doing so, VILG should enable EM groups, including those with weak political connections, to register complaints on land issues.

Also, it is encouraged that land-related grievances will be settled through informal institutions that are available in communities, such as heads of villages, extended family networks, mediation panels, chief monks (in Khmer pagodas). During the implementation of VILG, a local official should be assigned to monitor land-related grievance redressal at various levels of authorities, and capacity should be built for cadastral officers and members of mediation teams.

Strengthening public participation

5.10. Consideration of gender sensitivity

It is essential to increase the participation of women, especially in the EM groups in the project sites, in various project activities and interventions, such as information dissemination and training, local facilitator work, and commune working groups. It is

important to raise awareness for women of their rights and benefits in joint husband-and-wife titling and use of LURCs for bank loans, lease and contributions to joint business, their rights to access to the GRM system and how to lodge their complaints when needs arise. It is important to include names and basic information of both husband and wives under their joint titling in MPLIS. Women will be encouraged to become local facilitators under VILG.

It should be recognised that engagement of and awareness raising for women, especially EM ones, is a time-consuming process which should be planned and phased effectively with clear and practical short-, medium- and long-term objectives to make various steps feasible, with lessons reviewed and learnt as well as plans revised after each phase. Importantly, women from various groups should be consulted in good faith throughout the project cycle, from the design to the evaluation steps to ensure their voices to be heard and paid due attention to.

There is a risk that attendance of women, especially EM ones, at information workshops and meetings may be low. Specific measures may therefore be necessary to enhance women's current access to information and their associated engagement in VILG. Efforts will be needed to arrange a location and time suitable for the participation of women, and additional promotional activities may also be necessary to maximise attendance by female householders. For meetings with ethnic minority female groups, it will be necessary to identify individuals with proficiency in EM languages who can act as interpreters and provide these resource-persons with a careful briefing to ensure that the issues and terms to be used in Kinh language are clearly understood and well communicated.

It is important to take into account some gender differences in availability for communication events. For example, the respondents in Bac Ninh suggested that communication for women should be integrated in women's union's meetings while that for men should be conducted outside working hours. Furthermore, during a regular mobile service trip, women can be mobilised to come at a fixed time to be familiarized with this activity and then they are expected to seek such information proactively whenever they need. In more difficult areas, especially in EM areas, women can visit commune information points to seek online land information. On-job guidance and support should be made available to them to use and learn IT applications as required by the project.

Training provided to local land administrators, community leaders and Local Facilitators as well as project staff should take into account cultural relevance and gender sensitivity. The composition of a mobile support team, as suggested earlier in this report, may ideally include a female member to address issues that require gender sensitivity. For instance, some female clients may not feel comfortable in seeking information and advice from male staff as a result of certain cultural and customary barriers. M & E evaluation arrangements should include indicators that should allow analysis disaggregated by gender.

5.11. Consideration of sensitivity to EM groups

Specific measures will be required to ensure that some of the most vulnerable ethnic minority communities in upland areas are not disadvantaged by VILG. The Ethnic Minority Development Plan, prepared in conjunction with the social survey findings, is a vital tool in this regard.

Land information, whether it be from IEC printed or audio-visual materials, or from the geoland portal, should be communicated in a manner fully accessible to EM people, especially in terms of language and culture. For instance, in An Giang, some household land users, especially in rural and Khmer areas, prefer communication through village loudspeakers and in Khmer language (for the Khmer group). Amongst EM communities, the

broadcasting of information in indigenous languages may have immediate, positive impacts, at least in the short-term. Media broadcasts could be complemented by the dissemination of leaflets and posters, which may contribute to the retention of information.

While Kinh people themselves often face problems in understanding technical information and documentation relating to land, EM groups are at a double disadvantage. To address this problem, and the risk that EM groups will become further disadvantaged by the dissemination of increasingly topical information about land administration, land administration processes and procedures, particular efforts will need to be made to ensure that any new information is made available in languages, forms and via channels which are highly accessible to EM populations. Short video clips or films in EM languages may be produced, especially for those EM groups that do not have their own writing, such as Bru Van Kieu and Chut in Quang Binh.

Amongst the ethnic minority populations (and perhaps even rural Khmer communities and less literate Kinh communities), wherever possible written forms of information should be minimised, while greater attention should be paid to capacity building amongst heads of villages and local cadre to ensure that these individuals fulfil their current role as key disseminators of information more effectively. As ethnic minorities appear to be heavily dependent on village leaders and cadre as sources of land information, capacity should be built at this level to ensure householders are regularly updated, and their potential involvement. For the Khmer group in An Giang, it is important to communicate land regulations and policies to village heads, leaders of women's unions, and chief monks who are considered closer to their community and can make a substantial impact on the Khmer household land users.

5.12. Free, prior and informed consultation

During project implementation, as a principle of ensuring inclusion, participation and cultural suitability, the project should hold continuous consultations including soliciting feedback from all communities so that remedial actions can be taken to support improved participation and provision of benefits to households including those of EMs. In particular, households, including EM ones, which have registered their land in the information system and have any complaints or denunciation on their registered land can lodge these grievances through the existing GRM to be handled according to the existing laws. Meanwhile, free, prior and informed consultation will be conducted with households, including EM ones, which have not registered their land, before registering their land in the information system.

The consultation methods to be used will be appropriate to social and cultural traits of EM groups, with particular attention given to land administrators, household land users, village leaders and other service providers related. The methods should also be gender and inter-generationally inclusive, voluntary, free of interference and non-manipulative.

The process of consultation should be two way, i.e., both informing and discussing as well as both listening and responding. All consultations should be conducted in good faith and in an atmosphere free of intimidation or coercion, i.e. without the presence of those people who may be intimidating to respondents. It should also be implemented with gender inclusive and responsive approaches, tailored to the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, enabling incorporation of all relevant views of affected people and other stakeholders into decision making. In particular, land users from EM groups will be provided with relevant information about the project as much as possible in a culturally appropriate manner during project implementation, monitoring and evaluation to promote their meaningful participation and inclusion. The information may include but not be confined to conceptualization, design, proposal, safeguards, execution, and monitoring and evaluation. In particular, all relevant

information for consultation will be provided through two channels. Firstly, information will be disseminated to village leaders at their monthly meeting with leaders of commune's people's committees in order to be relayed to villagers in a culturally appropriate manner and an accessible language. Secondly, notices in an accessible language will be posted at the commune's people's committee at least a week ahead of a planned consultative meeting. Such early notices ensure sufficient time to understand, assess and analyze information on the proposed activities.

In addition, as the respondents from group discussions and in-depth interviews pointed out, community leaders usually play a very important role not only in the local decision making process but also in mobilisation of local people and in the grassroots mediation process, especially in EM areas. Therefore, the respondents recommended that the project activities and interventions draw the active participation and guidance of local leaders that are available in communities, such as heads of EM villages and extended family networks, members of mediation panels, and chief Buddhist monks (in the case of the Khmer group in An Giang). These community leaders should be engaged as members of community supervision boards at the commune level to closely monitor the participation standards of local institutions and officials in various project activities and interventions during the implementation of VILG, especially in EM areas. Information used for monitoring and evaluation may include EM's access to the land information system established by the project, their benefits from the received information etc.). By enabling participation of relevant EM stakeholders during project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, the project can ensure that EM people receive social and economic benefits that are culturally appropriate to them. In doing so, the land information established by VILG can contribute to transparency and efficiency efforts and development outcomes as a whole among EM groups. Capacity should be built for those stakeholders to avoid the existing constraints in conducting local consultations, such as one-way consultation; lack of information; rush time; and coercion.



Photo 5: The isolated Chut community Huong Son district, Ha Tinh.

Effective linkage with other sectors

5.13. Coordination with the existing projects related

Land administrators and land user organisations in the visited provinces call for VILG's review and synergy with the existing projects at the national and sub-national levels which are related to activities under VILG to save resources and promote synergy. Below are some of the existing projects as mentioned by the interviewed land administrators:

- **The Bill Gates Fund project:** The Ministry of Information and Communication received and implemented the project on "Enhancing capacity to use computers and public access of the Internet in Vietnam" between 2011 and 2016. The project is expected to be carried out in nearly 2,000 public Internet points, which are libraries and cultural postal offices in 40 provinces nationwide. The project aims to create opportunities, in addition to other national targeted programmes funded by the Vietnamese government, for rural people to benefit from IT and communication services, thus narrowing the digital gap between urban and rural areas. The selected information points have been equipped with computers and other specialised facilities for access to the broad-band Internet. The project has also provided training for administrators and skills to use computers and access the Internet for rural people. The beneficiary provinces include Quang Binh.
- **The Koika-funded project:** The South Korea-funded project has supported some provinces, including Bac Ninh, to develop some land administration software, which, however, has been used by land administrators only, not yet by the public. Some lessons can be learnt from this project.
- **The New-type Rural Programme:** In some provinces, such as An Giang, the programme aims to cover communes and even villages with community learning centers in the 2016-2020. These centers can be considered being used as public Internet points under VILG.
- **VN-Post's project on commune's cultural post offices:** Circular 17/2013/TT-BTTTT, issued by the Ministry of Information and Communication on August 02, 2013 has stipulated operations of commune's cultural postal offices, turning them into foundation for information, communication and telecommunication projects in rural areas. Many communes now have cultural postal offices except those in difficult areas, such as in Minh Hoa district in Quang Binh. The project has been implemented for 15 years. However, it is noted that this project is considered unsuccessful for various reasons in some areas (for example in Bac Ninh). Therefore, the project need to assess actual local conditions before a decision on taking advantage of commune's cultural postal offices is made.
- **Inter-departmental linkages for better service:** in some provinces, initiatives have been developed for inter-linked services among some related departments to facilitate administrative processes for the people, such as those land administration processes and procedures between the Department of Justice, LROs, the tax administration, and notary service.