



Piteå and An Giang Sustainable municipalities Evaluation report

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Summary

Action plan for utilization of rice waste is a bilateral project between Piteå (Sweden) and An Giang (Vietnam) funded by ICLD (Swedish international Centre for local Democracy). Project number 2014-0065 and project period 2014-2017. The project is addressed on development of An Giang as a sustainable community with the green rice and rice communities and sustainable agriculture production based on grass root democracy. The project involved different collaborative activities including meetings, visits, workshops, training and “demonstration projects”. This report is focusing on how the project has turned out in general with a special focus on local democracy and gender equality. The methodology that has been used is interviews with steering and working group members and with other stakeholders. After that, the results have been processed in small workshops. The results show that the long and short objectives have been accomplished in general and that the project has had a positive impact on the daily life of farmers in An Giang province. In the long run the new methods that have been implemented will facilitate the transformation for An Giang being a sustainable province. Therefore it is very important to increase the effort of spreading the results and the methods to other parts of the province.

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Introduction

Background information

An Giang and Piteå started their cooperation 2011 and this is the second project that the partners are working together in. They have developed a mutual friendship and trust for each other which has been important for the work, for the quality and for the results of the projects. This evaluation report will focus on the project in general and on some selected indicators that were determined in the project proposal, focusing on local democracy and gender equality.

Aims and objectives

The aim of this evaluation is to support the final report of the whole project, so this report do not evaluate if the project has reach all the objectives that has been stated, this focus on how local democracy and gender equality have developed during this project. So even if the evaluation handles the overall goals in the project it is just complementary to the final report. The result from this evaluation will also be important and taken into consideration when it comes to implementation of the *“Action plan for utilization of rice waste”*.

Methodology

Methodologies for the evaluation have been interviews and questionnaire. The interviews have been carried out individually with stakeholders and with members of the steering group and working groups in Sweden and in Vietnam. Some of the interviews have been made by telephone and some of them face to face. A questionnaire has also been handed out to the Swedish participants. The results of the interviews have been processed in a workshop with the steering group and working group and other stakeholders in An Giang. The results from the workshop has been taken in consideration in this report.

Timeline for evaluation

- August - September.
Preparations
- October
Questionnaire and the interviews in Sweden and Vietnam. Mr. Göran Dahlén is responsible for this on the Swedish side and Dr. Binh Ho on the Vietnamese side. Information is shared between each other's.
- November
Work with the evaluation report
Workshop in Vietnam with participants in steering and working group
- December - January
Work with the evaluation report
Report ready

Objectives

Objectives for the project

- Overall objectives of the project:
The project is addressed on development of An Giang as a sustainable community with the green rice and rice communities and sustainable agriculture production based on grass root democracy.
- Project objectives:
There is an action plan on turning rice by-products to energy and increasing their chain values developed a strategy program for waste to energy
- Indicators of the project objectives:
Demonstration programs help to increase the chain values of rice by-product.
An action plan is approved by An Giang People's committee.
- Immediate Objectives
Awareness and know-how on potential biomass energy achieved from the project.
On-going activities from the implementation of action plan done by the project associations and organizations through the demonstration programs.
An activity plan is produced.

Objectives for the evaluation

This evaluation is focusing on the activities of implementation of the action plan and if those activities have improved local democracy and gender equality. The report also handles how to improve and develop the aims of the project.

- Objective
The activities for implementation have improved the participation of stakeholders and the gender equality of the stakeholders.

Results

The results is presented in four groups. Goran Dahlén has done the interviews of the Swedish working and steering group and he has also lead the workshop in An Giang. Dr. Binh Ho has done the interviews with the working and steering group in An Giang and also the interviews with the other stakeholders.

Swedish working and steering group

Five persons have participated in a written questionnaire. The results have then been supplemented with three interviews.

Has the project, and if so, how has the project contributed to the development of local democracy?

- The project is enshrined with the stakeholders grassroots and that is very important for the quality of the project
- Many questions/discussions about local democracy have taken place. This is very important for the development of the project.
- Interesting and deep discussions about the differences and similarities in the political systems have taken place and contributed to the development of knowledge.
- Personal relations have been important for deepening the discussions in this matter, and that is why it is very essential to have a “core” of people in the project.
- The demonstration project has been crucial for the development of local democracy.
Participation and “learning by doing” a winning concept that contributed to trust for the project.

How have the women participated in the project?

- The women have had a big influence in the steering- and working group and that means that they have had a big impact on the design and the outcome of the project.
- The presence of women in the project have contributed to high legitimacy of women participation and that has been inspiring for the project and for other women.
- Women have spoken up and stepped out in a positive way

Other benefits in the project

- The environmental advantages are substantial. (awareness)
- Better living condition for stakeholders who have participated actively in the project.
- The project has raised an interest from students, researchers and local politicians.
- Supporting An Giang being a “green region”
- Supporting a better environment globally.
- Competence development for staff.
- Understanding of each other’s.
- A learning process for all involved.

Possibilities for development

- Support to carry out the Action plan.
- Support for the demonstration project
- Stimulation for other projects in the same field
- “Network building” Example Bio tech centre – Grans and other green industries.

- Small scale production of electricity.
- Development of business relations.
- Possibilities for research and development.

Vietnam Working and steering group

Selected members of the working and steering group have been interviewed.

Do you think that the project has given you more international experiences?

- The project helps to improve international experiences such as communication skills, discussion, group working, culture, social sciences experiences.
- They gained research skills and project management.
- Participants also improve English language (speaking, writing...)

What did you learn? - How do you think these lessons are useful for your work or life in general?

- Participants learned knowledge on pollution from rice wastes and how to reduce pollution from rice wastes
- They learned ways to use rice wastes for making energy and agricultural purposes.

What (knowledge, experiences...) did you share during the collaboration?

- They share information and knowledge on improving rice wastes values;
- Share with Swedish partners business opportunities in Vietnam and also developing countries.

Overall

- The project has contributed to reduce environmental pollution and improve the value of rice wastes in An Giang and Vietnam. Improve knowledge, awareness and international experiences of An Giang staff.

Suggestion

- The next stage should be to expand in order to reach out to more people and more communities in An Giang and other provinces the Mekong delta of Vietnam on rice wastes utilization.
- Policy on energy price should be prepared for energy from rice wastes.
- The next stage should also consider agricultural wastes other than rice;

- For training in Sweden, technical and managing staff should be trained in different groups to improve the effectiveness of the trainings.

Other stakeholders

Selected farmers and other stakeholders have been interviewed.

Did you know why you joined the project?

- For mushroom, farmers are invited to join the training in Thoai Son for making mushroom.
- For incubated straw, the project help farmers improve household capacity on feeding cow; Incubated feed from rice straw is more nutritious than plain straw for cow
- For rolling straw, rice straw could be used for other purposes (cow, making mushroom...).

Did they know the significance of the training?

- Good to improve knowledge and experiences in making value –added products such as mushroom, incubated straw and straw rolling.
- The project help to avoid environmental problems from straw burning.

What were they taught during the training?

- Processing for making mushroom: incubating the straw, how to circulate straw during the incubation; harvesting mushroom
- For incubated straw, the training taught theory and practice of making incubated rice straw. How to make incubated straw (Straw preparation, Chamber for straw incubation, Steps for incubating straw using water and urea fertilizer), visiting and practice.
- Rolling straw: Values of rice straw for other purposes could be higher than those of burning to ash. Straw could be rolled by hand, machine...

How did they use the knowledge for the project or the society?

- Useful to apply in making mushroom
- Useful to apply in making incubated straw at home; Happy to help neighbor for straw incubation
- Inform neighbors, relatives on value of straw rolling and limitation of straw burning.

Suggestions

- Credit for capital investment; for making mushroom, the project should consider using ready-to-use compost to improve quality and price.
- Project could continue to help farmers; improve technical procedures such as reduction of urea fertilizer content during the straw incubation.

- Suggestions: diversify to larger community and farmers. Technical helps on mushroom making or straw rolling.

Workshop

A dissemination conference was held in Long Xuyén, An Giang province 21 of October 2017. Participating in the conference was the steering and working group from Sweden and Vietnam as well as stakeholders (farmers) from An Giang province. During this conference a workshop about the evaluation was held.

Summary from the workshop:

The participants agreed on that the project has had a significant impact to the better on the life of farmers that have participated in the project. Many stakeholders agreed, that they did have the opportunity to take an active part in the project, especially in the demonstration project. This also included women's participation. Some did say that it would be interesting to measure if the emissions of greenhouse gases decreased, and if so, how much? The communication between farmers and officials have been good but could be strengthened in the future. It would benefit the development of local democracy and for making sure that the implementation of the project goals are working. Involving more young people in a future project and cooperation among students from An Giang and Piteå was one of the suggestions from participants.

Discussion and conclusions

It is clear when listening to all participants that the project is very successful in reaching the overall goal that was stated in the beginning. The project has improved the life of the farmers that have participated in the project. This is indicated in all interview groups and in the workshops. So you can clearly say that this project has made a difference in people's life and that this is a way of fighting poverty and improving the environment in the region.

So what has been the success in the project, why has the project been carried out so well? As this is the second project that An Giang and Piteå are working together with, trust has been built between participants and that is very important for the progress of the project. When there is trust problems are easier to solve, discussions/dialogs goes deeper and arises more easily. And when people feel safer they work in a better way. So the safe environment has contributed to the good results of the project. There is also a common opinion that the implemented technique is widely spread and used, this especially because of demonstration project, which has been very appreciated by the farmers. This is one of the key factors for the results of the project. "*Learning by doing*" is a winning concept.

The overall project goal was expressed as "*The project is addressed on development of An Giang as a sustainable community with the green rice and rice communities and sustainable agriculture production based on grass root democracy*". So when looking at the results we could say that An Giang is on its way becoming a sustainable community. Is this based on a grass root democracy? Measuring this is not an easy thing to do. However, if you look at the participation of the farmers and the things that they have learned during the project and that they are recommending the

project to spread to other farmers, the answer is yes. You can say that this project has increased the civil influence in the area of farming. This is also the opinion from the Swedish working and steering group. Has it increased the participation of women and by that, made a difference on gender equality? This is even more difficult to measure. There are some voices saying that this is the case, especially if you are looking at the working and steering group. So right now you can say that there are indications that gender equality has increased for the people that have participated in the working and steering group. If looking at the amount of women participating in the project, over 50% and comparing this with the answers of the interviewed

Recommendation

The recommendations is based on the results and the ideas that has been presented in the report above.

- **Next stage**
The next stage should also consider agricultural wastes other than rice.
Increase the project to a larger group of farmers.
Try to involve more young people. Maybe a new project?
Improve the techniques even more.
- **Demonstration project**
As the demonstration project has been a success try to use the same method when spreading the methods.
- **Trust**
Try to keep a “core” of people in the new project, as that will contribute for trust between participants.
- **Economy**
Credit for capital investment; small funding for farmers.
- **Training and education**
For training in Sweden, technical and managing staff should be trained in different groups to improve the effectiveness of the trainings.
- **Network building**
For a more sustainable cooperation in the future, try to build network in different areas.

