

Recommendations to USAID on its Comprehensive Multi-year Plan for Agent Orange Activities in Vietnam

from the

U.S.- Vietnam Dialogue Group on Agent Orange/Dioxin

Washington & Hanoi

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The Government of Vietnam has set 2020 as the year to complete all major Agent Orange-related work. The next five years will determine if all parties are on a trajectory that can reach that objective. 2012 is a key pivot year. The last five years of progress in finding and pursuing real solutions have brought us to this auspicious time: USAID has set in motion the destruction of the dioxin contaminating the soil at Da Nang airport, after joint scientific and technical review by both governments, and USAID has dramatically increased its commitment to addressing the needs of people with disabilities, without regard to the cause of those disabilities.

Most significantly, the US Congress has directed USAID to consult with the State Department, the Government of Vietnam and other interested parties to develop a comprehensive multi-year plan to address the Agent Orange/dioxin issue. The Dialogue Group believes that the comprehensive plan should cover all aspects of the Agent Orange legacy and be scaled to five years—long enough to show results and contribute to the ambitious goals that the Government of Vietnam has set for itself--and yet short enough to be realistic.

Drawing on the combined expertise and experience of its members and colleagues, the U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group is pleased to present eight key recommendations and a budget, which are drawn from our *Second Year Report*. In that more comprehensive document we offer background research and analysis to substantiate these recommendations.

In the next five years - 2013 to 2017 - the Dialogue Group believes it is possible to substantially address three major objectives:

- 1. Clean up dioxin at all remaining contaminated sites.** As the clean-up of the three major sites moves forward, the remaining locations need to be prioritized and neutralized. In all likelihood, the lower priority sites will be less technologically and financially challenging than the top three. In some, full remedial action will be required and in others, soft measures may complete the job. As additional data become available regarding possible pooling of dioxin in ponds and reservoirs, fresh prioritization may be required. See pages 9-12 of the *Second Year Report* for details.
- 2. Upgrade integrated social services for people with disabilities in prioritized provinces among those targeted by Agent Orange.** Model programs will need to be tested and significantly expanded to reach those families and individuals most in need. Program designs should emphasize comprehensive and integrated service models in which assistance is tailored to individual needs. Case management should ensure that medical, emotional and cultural issues are considered and services rebalanced as needs change. Objectives should include, to the extent possible, the promotion of independence for persons with disabilities. Health care should include prenatal information and services, a system for maternal surveillance

and screening, monitoring of child development, and early-childhood intervention. See pages 13-17 of the *Second Year Report* for details.

- 3. Increase the productivity of damaged landscapes.** Training courses for forest managers, technical staff and farmers should be greatly expanded in areas with severely degraded lands. On the ground experimentation is needed to continually refine knowledge of native species and their reintroduction, the development of related markets for farmers, and appropriate livestock selection. Training and land use planning must fully draw on the knowledge of local farmers. See pages 17-19 of the *Second Year Report* for details.

In addition, the five year period of the plan presents the opportunity to strengthen five complementary capacities to ensure that progress is maintained.

- 4. Advance disability rights.** Vietnam has signed the U.N. Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and approved a national law which confirms basic rights and responsibilities for people with disabilities (PWDs). Emphasis should now be given to implementation of the law and encouragement of the voice and active leadership from PWDs themselves. See pages 19-21 of the *Second Year Report* for details.
- 5. Augment the professional and managerial skills of local partners.** Work of the scale and significance contemplated in this report can only succeed if people have sophisticated and up-to-date skills in technical and managerial areas. Many organizations ready to engage with the response to Agent Orange/dioxin have insufficient staffing, training, physical space and links with peers. Training and creative partnerships that build professions serving PWDs are urgently needed. See pages 21-24 of the *Second Year Report* for details.
- 6. Conduct long term research studies.** Vietnam's new high resolution dioxin laboratory will certainly generate new data and knowledge about dioxin. Priority should be given to developing methods of international scientific cooperation so that this and similar information is widely shared among peers. See page 24 of the *Second Year Report* for details.
- 7. Create new and robust funding mechanisms.** As work and international cooperation to end dioxin exposure has grown over recent years, various models of co-funding and public private partnerships have emerged. Contributions from governments, businesses, foundations and individuals will only continue if programs are well documented and analyzed, financially accountable and transparent, and conducted in a cooperative spirit. Multi-year commitments should be encouraged to ensure sustainable efforts and continuity. See pages 24-28 of the *Second Year Report* for details.
- 8. Enhance public awareness in both countries.** American and Vietnamese publics need to know about steady progress as it is made and significant milestones as they are achieved by cooperative work between the two countries towards the above objectives.

Projected Budget for the Five Year Plan 2013-2017

The Plan of Action released by the U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group on Agent Orange/dioxin in 2010 called for a set of activities with a projected cost of \$300 million over ten years--\$100 million to clean dioxin-contaminated soils and restore the productivity of damaged landscapes and \$200 million to expand services to people with disabilities linked to dioxin, and to people with other forms of disability, and to their families.

Since 2010 cost estimates have become more precise. The costs of a full clean-up are now projected to be as follows: Da Nang- \$43 million; Phu Cat- \$5 million; Bien Hoa- \$85 million; and the lesser hotspots- \$17 million. These costs total \$150 million, 50 percent higher than what the Dialogue Group projected in 2010.

New data and analysis from Dr. Jeanne Stellman about wartime spraying patterns will soon permit more precise mapping of the areas that received higher average dioxin exposure. A table on page 15 of the *Second Year Report* offers preliminary data. Data from the 2009 Census on patterns of disability by province are now available and appear in a table on page 30 of the *Report*. The disability data can be cross-tabbed with the spray pattern data to suggest areas where disabilities might be associated with dioxin exposure. Combined with new experience about the cost of addressing disabilities, this analysis permits us to provide better estimates of the cost of providing comprehensive services to PWDs in areas where dioxin might be a contributing factor.

The Vietnamese government has increased its commitments to restoring damaged ecosystems and to providing services to PWDs. Public expenditures lag behind these commitments. As more becomes known about the needs for expanded social services in areas targeted by Agent Orange, these costs can also be expected to rise. The Group has therefore increased the projected cost of the Plan of Action from \$300 million over ten years to \$450 million over ten years.

\$40 million has been raised during the last two years, leaving \$410 million to be mobilized. This sum could be deployed over a five year period at an average of \$82 million per year. As noted, the Government of Vietnam has called for completion of its National Action Plan by 2020. This implies an estimated annual investment of \$51.25 over eight years.

The \$410 million would be used as follows:

- (i) dioxin clean-up: \$107 million (Bien Hoa \$85 million, Phu Cat \$5 million and lesser hotspots \$17 million); and,
- (ii) social services and the other components described in this report: \$303 million

Of the annual funding target of \$82 million over five years, the Dialogue Group recommends that \$65 million come from the U.S. Government with the balance of \$17 million/ year coming from other bilateral and private for-profit and not-for-profit sources.