

## FCO SPF PROJECT EVALUATION

### 1. Project Details

Project Number	GB-3- 111301- VNM
Project Title	NGO-led initiative to enhance protection of journalists and promote media freedom in Vietnam
Project Cost (total cost / cost to FCO if different)	£122,394
Project Start/End Dates	01/08/12 – 31/03/13
Programme	Human Rights and Democracy Programme
Country/Countries	Vietnam
Official Development Assistance Y/N	Y

### 2. Project Purpose (from proposal form)

Bring together NGOs, the media and government to implement legislation relating to protection of journalists and create a more enabling environment for the operation of media in Vietnam.

### 3. Project Background / Context including what the project set out to achieve (150 words max)

According to research conducted in 2011, more than 80% of journalists in Vietnam have experienced some form of obstruction, from refusal to provide information to physical attack. Legislation to protect journalists and enable them to access information exists, but enforcement is extremely weak due to: 1) low awareness of relevant laws and policies by both government officials and journalists, 2) unclear guidance for implementation, and 3) weak capacity of the relevant government agencies.

The project seeks to tackle attacks on journalists at the provincial level through a comprehensive set of solutions across the different stakeholder groups (local government officials, NGOs, local police and journalists). The key outputs being:

- i. A model piloted in Dak Lak province, in which legislations on protection of journalists and access to information are implemented effectively
- ii. An increase in journalists' awareness of their legitimate rights and skills to effectively deal with obstructive behaviours (through training)
- iii. Set-up and maintenance of informal media networks (through regular thematic workshops)

Dak Lak province was selected for this pilot because it has been identified as one of the riskiest areas for journalists to operate in Vietnam.

### 4. Evaluation summary (150 words max)

Given the challenging environment described above, selecting an approach that has impact on media freedom and safety of journalists, but that maintains and retains government buy-in can be

difficult. The implementer therefore took an innovative approach, seeking to have impact at the provincial level rather than targeting central government, and capitalising on interest from Dak Lak province. Extensive preparations to obtain central and local government buy-in were carried out, which proved crucial in ensuring that the project had real impact.

The project activities were well-conducted and the project purpose achieved. There are also some indications that the project has contributed to a much higher interest of the media in the safety of journalists, and that journalists are more willing to raise their concerns in Dak Lak province. However, the sustainability of the project may prove to be difficult as there is a lack of evidence yet of wider take-up amongst other provinces.

Overall, the project acts as a pioneer model that, while currently limited to one province, represents a progressive advance towards FOE in Vietnam.

### 5. Questions

Did the project achieve the project purpose?	Yes
Did the project come in on budget? (Y/N) If no, why and what was the difference in cost?	N - There was an under spend of £3,187 due to exchange rate fluctuations. The Programme Team was notified of this in January 2013.
Was the project completed on time? (Y/N) If not, why not?	Yes
Were the Project benefits sustained after project completion?	Yes

### 6. Overall Red / Amber / Green rating for project

Overall Rating for project (put X in relevant box)	
Red	
Red	Amber
Amber	Green
Green	X

#### Guide to overall rating:

Green- project performed well under each of the evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and management

Green/Amber – project performed well under most criteria and adequately in others

Amber/Red – project performed adequately under some criteria but poorly in others

Red – project performed poorly under most criteria

### 7. Top 5 Lessons learned

1. **Working with local government can have impact.** We found that there are instances when the government is willing to participate in projects that work with NGOs, policy work and cooperate with

journalists if it is at a local level. We should do more with local government in identifying where there is political will to change and impact policy.

**2. Project teams in Embassies/High Commissions should form a close, collaborative relationship with implementers.** The success of this project owed much to the excellent working relationship between the project team at Post and the implementer – allowing for collaboration and constructive feedback to enhance the project (see also point 3).

**3. Robust project design and preparation before a project begins pays off; especially for projects that have multiple stakeholders and/or work in potentially controversial areas.** The project was implemented with minimal problems. The project team at Post were actively involved in designing the project, ensured that the implementer had completed all pre-contract checks as required and ensured that government buy-in was in place. This resulted in very few problems during project implementation, despite the project's inherent risks and the difficult operating environment.

**4) Capacity building for NGOs can be an important element of the project.** The Human Rights and Democracy Programme (HRDP) often views activities such as “capacity building for NGO implementers” with concern, as there are doubts over whether such activities are always adequately impactful or relevant to the FCO fund. However, in this project, the evidence showed that there was initially a *lack* of knowledge and skills in this area amongst civil society; therefore the capacity-building activity was very important to the delivery of the project, and should also help with the project's long-term impact.

**5) Research should inform the project aim and design.** This project was based on good initial research that was able to demonstrate that this particular issue was a problem. The research was used by the implementer to define the problem and the project that would tackle it. This meant that the project had a clear focus from the beginning. It will also make the assessment of longer-term project impact easier in the future, as data can be compared.

## **8. Recommendations for future projects**

1. That work continues on freedom of expression (FOE) and freedom of media issues in Vietnam.
2. Post should consider continuing working with local provinces – particularly where the will exists to implement the media laws.
3. Future projects should be targeted at journalists outside Dak Lak and the wider work on FOE in Vietnam. However, Post should continue to monitor the work in Dak Lak province and should consider a follow-up assessment to see/ensure that gains are maintained and ingrained.
4. For any new pilot project, a clear assessment and recommendation should be made in the completion report of whether it is highly replicable; or if not, a clear description of the reasons and challenges should be described. This is to help the evaluation process and inform future work both in country and in that thematic area (in this instance, freedom of expression)
5. Post should ensure that the best practice from this project (see lessons learnt) is replicated in future projects. In particular, the building of a close relationship with a trusted implementer and the significant pre-project work put in to reduce the potential for problems later on.
6. Post should pay particular attention to the sustainability of future projects. In an environment such as Vietnam, this will be one of the more difficult areas and needs special consideration.