

**LIN Center for Community Development**  
**THE “VNPO CAPACITY BUILDINGSYSTEM” PROJECT 2013 - 2014)**

**FINAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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*They all have been sincerely acknowledged by the Evaluation Team. Without their precious and generous inputs the Evaluation is absolutely impossible to be completed.*

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**TABLE OF CONTENT**

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Methodology of the Final Evaluation .....	5
3. Findings and Discussion.....	6
4. Conclusions and Recommendations .....	12

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Final Evaluation of the “VNPO Capacity Building System” Project (VNPO Project) was conducted from Oct. 25 to Dec. 12, 2014 by a team of two external consultants. The Evaluation collected information from 101 people responding to its semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, online questionnaires and direct observation. The key findings and recommendations of the Evaluation are summarized as follows:

1. The VNPO Project is rated as Highly Satisfactory for its Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency; and Satisfactory for its Sustainability, Impact and Replicability.
2. For Relevance, the VNPO Project addressed real problems and needs of VNPOs; contributed to Objective 1 of Irish Aid’s Country Strategy for Vietnam, 2011-2015 and the three policy Objectives of the Vietnam Civil Society Facility, the Objectives of the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Vietnam, 2011 – 2020 and the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of HCMC, 2011 – 2020.
3. For Effectiveness, 91.5% of the respondents agreed that the VNPO Project achieved its Objectives at the Expected level or higher.
4. For Efficiency, 81.5% of the respondents agreed that the use of resources in the VNPO Project was reasonable and efficient or higher.
5. For Sustainability, 81.3 % of the respondents agreed that the improved capacity of participating VNPOs, resulting from the VNPO Project is sustainable at Average to High and Very High extents.
6. For Impact, the VNPO Project positively impacted on VNPOs as a whole (gaining respect/support/collaboration), on local authorities (changing their attitudes towards NPOs), on other CSOs (increasing social capital, strengthening their connection and cooperation), beneficiaries (improving their living conditions, their understanding and skills, etc.) and on the society (changing the society’s attitudes towards people with disability, people living with HIV/AIDs, LGBT community, etc.; therefore reducing stigma and discrimination)
7. For Replicability, the Capacity Building System (CBS) that was developed and piloted by the VNPO Project is considered highly replicable because it is not too complicated to use, it mainly relies on self-action with limited external support while a pool of Volunteer experts has been established to offer technical support; and there are opportunities to apply the CBS.

Some important lessons learned from the VNPO Project include:

1. The approach of LIN to combine supporting of organizational capacity self-development and bridging grassroots VNPOs with donors has been proved effective and creative. The self-development process is effective and sustainable. The bridging may help to prevent exclusion of grassroots VNPOs out of donor’s assistance, because they usually don’t meet some criteria to receive directly the donor’s funding.
2. The VNPO Project supported organizational capacity self-development through inspiration and nurturing rather than conventional training, which contributes to the project’s sustainability.
3. By encouraging partners and stakeholders to contribute to project implementation, the VNPO Project increased not only the project’s efficiency but also the partners’ and stakeholders’ ownership of the project activities and commitment to implement them.
4. The modular toolkits developed by LIN for VNPOs are flexible in their application. It allows each VNPO to select and use specific tools for their own needs in organizational capacity development. Besides, the VNPO Project uses “micro-consulting sessions” and “one-to-one consultations”. All these have made the VNPO Project assistance “tailor made”, not “one size for all”

The Evaluation Team recommends the following points for follow-up by LIN and/or LIN partners:

1. In line with the Objectives 1 of the Phase Two, the 10 areas covered by the toolkits are recommended to be re-structured into 7 areas: 1) Governance, 2) Organizational management, 3) Administration management, 4) Human resources management 5) Financial management, 6) Project management and 7) Resource mobilization.
2. Good practice in using of the toolkits among the 27 participating VNPO in the Phase One should be documented as "case study" and upload into the e-learning platform. Capable individuals from the participating VNPO should be selected and used as resource persons to provide online technical support in using the toolkits in the platform.
3. Under the Objectives 3 of the Phase Two, the expertise on Organizational Development and Institutional Strengthening (ODIS) should be promote in LIN and Live&Learn to make them become two resource centres on ODIS and coordinate activities of the Pool of volunteer experts.
4. Under the Objectives 2 of the Phase Two, leverage local resource and enhance VNPO access to those resources, a Cascading model (or Pyramid model) is recommended in provision of technical assistance.
5. To achieve the Objectives 2 of the Phase Two, it is essential to have appropriate legal corridor. So it is recommended to include activities on institutional strengthening including policy advocacy, legal framework improvement in parallel with the designed settings such as VietnamCauses, BlueBees websites, "LIN oi, minh di dau", etc.
6. In the Phase Two, LIN will partner with VietNet Information Technology and Communication Centre (VietNet-ICT), which should promote online and web-based tools for surveys, learning, reporting, etc. in order to reduce paper work for participating VNPOs and increase interactive and two way communication between the Project and stakeholders.
7. The VNPOs exhibiting great achievements in Phase I of the VNPO Project should receive continuous support in order to consolidate and enhance their results. They may also be used for the Cascading model to disseminate the VNPO Project impact.

# 1. Introduction

The LIN Center for Community Development (LIN) is a Vietnamese not-for-profit organization to support grassroots not-for-profit organizations (NPOs), and individual and corporate philanthropists located in and around Ho Chi Minh City.

The “VNPO Capacity Building System” Project (VNPO Project) is funded by Irish Aid and implemented by the LIN Center in partnership with the Social Development Training Centre (SDTC) and Gail Nordheim Consulting to build the capacity of Vietnamese Not-for-Profit Organizations (VNPOs) in and near Ho Chi Minh City.

The Project Objectives are to strengthen the capacity of VNPOs through the development of a standardized VNPO capacity building system - offering comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable support designed to help VNPOs achieve their organizational goals. The system was designed to be clear, practical, and readily applied in HCMC and throughout Vietnam.

The key components of the project include:

- 27 VNPOs volunteered to participate in the project and help develop the system.
- 10 toolkits were developed to help VNPOs understand and self-assess their capacity development needs in each of the following areas: Governance, Financial Management, Fundraising, Human Resources, Volunteer Management, Strategic Planning, Action Planning, Program Evaluation, Risk Management and Communications.
- Workshops on each capacity area, led by a subject area expert.
- One-on-one expert consultations were provided as requested.
- Peer roundtables and a moderated, online discussion forum for VNPO staff.
- Small grants and targeted volunteer support to help VNPOs build their own capacity.
- Use of Internet and social media to connect VNPOs to available resources and to promote communication among VNPOs.

The Project was implemented from January 2013 to December 2014 in two phases. Phase 1 (18 months) included the project launch, development of the VNPO Capacity Building Guides and Self-Assessment Tools and a VNPO network. Phase 2 (6 months) focused on the recognition of VNPOs completing the Self-Assessment, strengthening and rebranding the “HCMC Community Grant” (Narrow the Gap), setting up a pool of Vietnam-based consultants to help VNPOs address their capacity building needs and the development of a Manual of Project Operational Policies and Procedures.

For accountability and learning purposes, the Final Evaluation for the VNPO Project was organized, Oct. 27 – Dec. 12, 2014, to inform Project stakeholders, including Irish Aid (the donor), the implementing organizations (LIN, GNC and SDTC), LIN’s partners and others on the Project’s achievements, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact and replicability as well as follow-up steps. The Evaluation was conducted by a team of two consultants, Mr. Nguyen Duc Tam, an External Evaluator and the Team leader and Mr. Tran Ngoc Duong, Consultant to support data collection in HCMC. The main findings of the Evaluation are presented in this Report

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Objectives of the Final Evaluation

The Overall Objectives of the Final Evaluation is for accountability and learning to all relevant stakeholders of the VNPO Project, including the donor (IA), LIN, GNC, SDTC, implementing VNPOs and their beneficiaries, other NGOs and the public.

The Specific Objectives of the Evaluation are to evaluate the Project Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Impact and Replicability to explain to Irish Aid, LIN and its partners, and the Project key stakeholders the extent to which the VNPO project succeeded or failed and why, the lessons learned and recommendations on project follow-ups (improved, expanded and/or replicated).

### 2.2. Expected Results of the Final Evaluation

The Evaluation Criteria of the Final Evaluation include Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Impact and Replicability.

The expected result of the Final Evaluation is this report, including an Executive summary, Evaluation methodology, Conclusions, Lessons learned, Recommendations and Annex documents containing all supporting information. The Final Report is submitted by soft copy addressing opinions and feedback from LIN and LIN's partners

### 2.3. Approach and Method of the Final Evaluation

The approach and method used for the Final Evaluation is participatory and results-based as described in the Handbook "Ten steps to a Result-based Monitoring and Evaluation", Jody Zall Kusek and Ray C. Rist, World Bank, 2004 as well as in the "Monitoring and Evaluation Manual for Vietnam", AusAID - 2007. Perceptions of project performance and achievements of different stakeholders including target beneficiaries (VNPOs), project partners (LIN, SDTC, Gail Nordheim), the donor (Irish Aid), skilled volunteers and peer organizations (VNPO capacity builders) were collected and considered.

Based on the Evaluation criteria and evaluation questions, the evaluation team developed a set of SMART indicators. The methods and tools designed to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data for those indicators included:

- Document review
- Semi-structured interviews (SSI)
- Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
- Online Questionnaires (OQ)
- Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)
- Direct Observations

### 2.4. Scope of Data Collection

The Final Evaluation has actually received information from 101 persons, including 72 females occupying 71.3% and 29 males (see Table below)

**Table 1: Categories of informants**

	<b>SSI</b>	<b>FGD</b>	<b>GAS</b>	<b>OQ</b>
Number of persons	39	41	75	28
Percentage	38.6%	40.6%	74.3%	27.7%

### 3. Findings and Discussion

As described in the TOR, the Final Evaluation must focus on six criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Impact and Replicability, consolidating lessons learned and including specific recommendations for how the Project could be improved. In this Evaluation each of the criteria has been evaluated and rated in three levels as follows:

<i>Highly Satisfactory</i>	The Project has achieved all of its planned results as schedule with high quality
<i>Satisfactory</i>	The Project has achieved most of its planned results as schedule with acceptable quality
<i>Unsatisfactory</i>	The Project has achieved some of its planned results but behind schedule or with poor quality

#### 3.1. Relevance: Rated as Highly Satisfactory

##### ***VNPO Project addressed real problems and needs of VNPOs***

VNPOs in and around HCMC, particularly community-based ones are usually established for charity purposes and have a small number of staff, mainly part-time and volunteers with modest physical conditions. They are facing a lot of challenges and difficulties as shown in the figure below:

**Figure 1: VNPO's Challenges and Difficulties**



The VNPO Project aims at improving VNPO organizational capacity. It means to improve their fundraising capacity, human resource management, financial management, networking, etc. Therefore the Project has addressed VNPO problems and met their needs.

##### ***VNPO Project contributed to the objectives of Irish Aid's Country Strategy, 2011-2015 and the Vietnam Civil Society Facility.***

The Objective 1 of the Irish Aid Country Strategy, 2011-2015 is "To improve local ability to plan and adapt public investment resources to the needs of marginalized groups". To materialize this Objective, the Vietnam Civil Society Facility (VCSF) has been established at the Embassy of Ireland in Vietnam with three policy objectives as below:

1. *“To strengthen the voice of poor communities and community-based organizations in local governance and accountability, oversight of public investment programmes and increased economic integration. Particular attention will be paid to ethnic minority populations;*
2. *To promote acceptance and empowerment of people with disability by increasing their social and economic integration;*
3. *To promote the development of the civil society sector in Vietnam through capacity building and networking and collective action in research and advocacy and public education”*

Inclusion and Innovation are the two themes that run through the Strategy and the VCSF objectives. The VNPO Project has involved community-based VNPOs in and around HCMC, which usually implement projects with budgets smaller than the Irish Aid policy (i.e. 50,000 euros). Through LIN and the VNPO Project, these VNPO were included in the Development assistance programs of Irish Aid.

The VNPO Project objectives are to improve the capacity of VNPOs at the grassroots level to support vulnerable populations including people with disability, then it has contributed to the Objectives 1 of the Irish Aid Country Strategy, 2011-2015 and the three policy objectives of VCSF.

### ***VNPO Project fits well the priorities and policies of Vietnam***

The Overall Objectives of the Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the 2011 – 2020 period of Vietnam include *“Social welfare and social security will be ensured while material and spiritual life of the people continue to be improved”*. The Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the 2011 – 2020 period of HCMC has set targets of *“55% labour force is trained, poverty rate reduces 2%/year, household income increase 3.5 times in comparison with 2010, income gaps between population groups reduced, social welfare and health care ensured”*.

LIN and the 27 participating VNPOs are working to support vulnerable populations in and near HCMC, including poor households, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDs, unemployed youth, etc. The VNPO Project aims to improve the quality of services provided to those groups through improved VNPO capacity; therefore the VNPO Project contributed to the Objectives of the Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the 2011 – 2020 period of the country as well as the City.

### **3.2. Effectiveness: Rated as Highly Satisfactory**

The VNPO Project set its Project Objective as *“Strengthening the capacity of VNPOs through the development of a standardized VNPO capacity building system offering comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable supports designed to help VNPOs achieve their organizational goals”* and three Outcome Indicators to measure its achievement by the end of the Project. Based on LIN Progress Reports up to Dec 2014, the results of these three Outcomes are as follows:

**Table 2: Progress of the Outcomes Indicators, by Dec. 2014**

<b>Planned Outcomes Indicators</b>	<b>Actual Achievement</b>
1: 80% participating VNPOs reach their OD goals in at least four capacity areas	41% of participating VNPOs achieved their OD goals in at least four capacity areas (*)
2: At least 50% participating VNPOs implement a beneficiary survey	30% of participating VNPOs included beneficiary information/surveys/notes
3: At least 20% participating VNPOs report number of donors have increased	14.5% participating VNPOs report number of donors have increased

In order to measure the extent to which the Project Objectives were achieved, a Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) Questionnaire was designed to elicit perceptions of participating VNPOs with the following five levels:

- The Best** In comparison with 2012, VNPO’s capacity has been improved unbelievably; number of projects, project scope and budget, direct beneficiary population has increased up to 100% with very high quality
- Better than Expected** In comparison with 2012, VNPO’s capacity has been improved enormously; number of projects, project scope and budget, direct beneficiary population has increased up to 50% with higher quality
- The Expected** In comparison with 2012, VNPO’s capacity has been improved significantly; number of projects, project scope and budget, direct beneficiary population has increased at least 20% with higher quality
- Worse than The Expected** In comparison with 2012, VNPO’s capacity has been unchanged or improved insignificantly; number of projects, project scope and budget, direct beneficiary population has been similar before with the same quality
- The Worst** In comparison with 2012, VNPO’s capacity has been decreased; the organization has implemented less projects with smaller scope and budget to serve smaller target groups with lower quality

The GAS Questionnaire was sent to staff and clients of all 27 participating VNPOs, who were asked to select the level that corresponded most closely to their own perception. The GAS was anonymous. Analysis of the responses is presented in the following table:

**Table 3: VNPO’s Perception on Project Effectiveness**

The Best	Better than Expected	The Expected	Worse than Expected	The Worst
17.1%	36.6%	37.8%	7.3%	1.2%

According to these data, 91.5% of the respondents agreed that the VNPO Project achieved its Objectives at the Expected level or higher. These results are illustrated in the figure on the right.

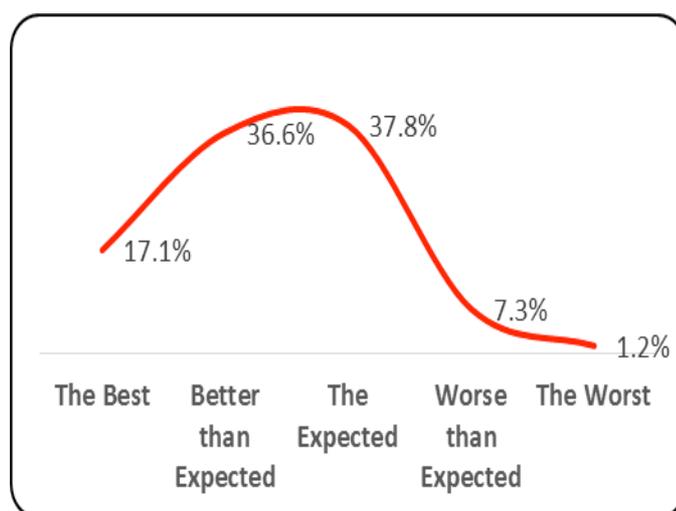
In comparison with before joining the VNPO Project, some participating VNPOs made significant improvement, particularly at newly established VNPOs.

*“At my organization, the number of served children has increased from 20 in 2012 to 50 in 2014 and the mobilized fund from 365 million VND in 2012 to 700 million in 2013 and one billion VND in 2014” (CEPORER Hoc Mon).*

*“Compared to the period before joining the VNPO Project, our total mobilized funds has increased some 40%” (Social Program for Integration).*

*“Our funding increased from 200 – 300 million VND per year (before the VNPO Project) to some 2 billion VND per year in 2014” (Thien Tam Huong Vocational Training for Disabled People).*

**Figure 2: VNPO perception on Project Effectiveness**



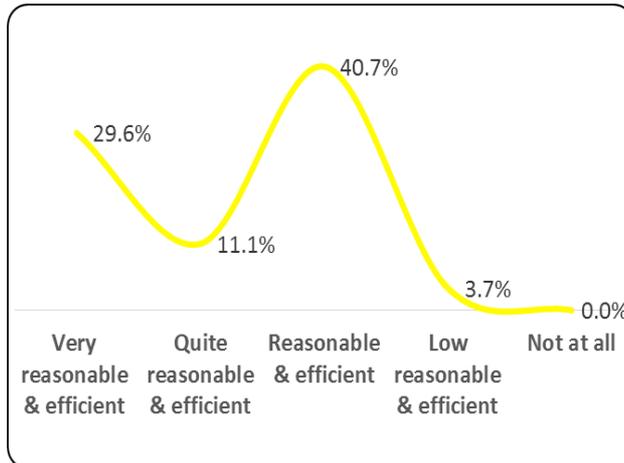
“The responding rate from donors receiving our proposals has increased from less than 5% in the 2010 – 2012 period up to 15% in 2014“ (Nghiem Minh Charity Organization).

“Thanks to support from the VNPO Project we have developed our second Strategic Plan (2014 – 2017)“ (Thao Dan Social Protection Centre).

“Before joining the VNPO Project the average working duration of volunteers was 2 – 3 months, now it has increased up to 2 years“ (Tinh Than Program).

### 3.3. Efficiency: Rated as Highly Satisfactory

**Figure 3: VNPO Perception on Project Efficiency**



81.5% of respondents agreed that the use of resources in the VNPO Project was reasonable and efficient or higher.

Below are the main reasons why stakeholders felt the VNPO Project was efficient:

- The participating VNPOs have made contributions in kind (office, staff, etc.) for operation and management. By sharing project costs, the VNPO Project increased not only the project

efficiency but also the stakeholder's ownership and commitment.

- LIN and the VNPO Project developed and engaged a growing pool of organizational development experts who provided free technical support/coaching to the VNPOs in using the Toolkits for organizational capacity development.
- LIN and the VNPO Project made effective use of existing facilities such as LIN office, meeting rooms, equipment, not only for VNPO Project activities but also for the activities of the participating VNPOs and the broader VNPO Network. By doing so, the VNPO Project saved resources and set-up a platform for networking among VNPOs.
- The VNPO Project involved few staff that worked efficiently and professionally. Five staff members of LIN, including part-time and full-time staff, have covered all of the activities of the VNPO Project and the LIN Center maintaining a network of 143 VNPOs and 111 active volunteers. Participating VNPOs, experts, consultants and volunteer highly appreciated the efficiency of the Project team. This is in large part due to LIN's approach to network and bridge relevant stakeholders and individuals and timely recognition of contributions from participating VNPOs, experts, consultants, volunteers and staff.

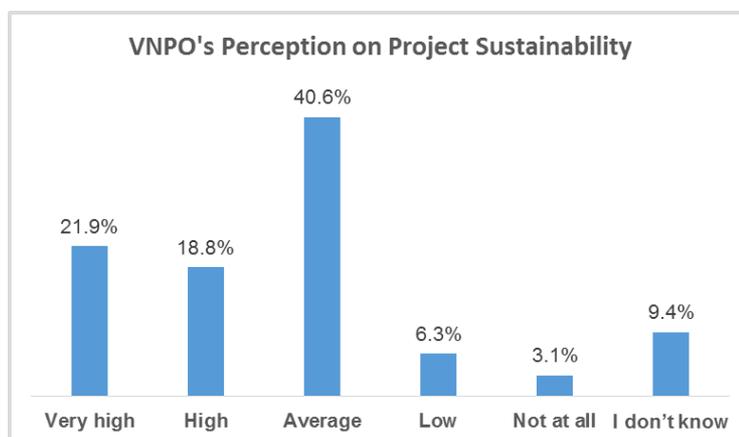
### 3.4. Sustainability: Rated as Satisfactory

81.3 % of respondents agree that improved capacity of the participating VNPOs, as a result of the VNPO Project is sustainable at Average to High and Very High extents. (See Figure 4 below.)

The Capacity Building System (CBS) developed and operated by the VNPO Project, like any other system, needs some essential factors for sustainable operations. The VNPO Project met these factors.

Firstly, the Toolkits for Organizational Capacity Assessment in 10 areas developed by the VNPO Project was shared and discussed with members of the Capacity Development Working Group (CDWG, Hanoi), uploaded to LIN’s website and disseminated broadly, via email, to donors and NGOs engaged in VNPO capacity development activities in Vietnam. All VNPO Project component results have been planned to be documented and shared among capacity building practitioners and organizations.

**Figure 4: VNPO’s Perception on Project Sustainability**



Secondly, participating VNPOs recognized the CBS and integrated it as a crucial part of their organizational structure. The interviews and discussion with managers of the participating have revealed that having understood the importance of organizational capacity building they had planned to allocate staff and financial resources to implement it regularly.

*“Thanks to the VNPO Project we have recognized the organizational capacity as a crucial part to make an organization more professional”* (Green Future of Children - GFOC)

Thirdly, the organizational settings of VNPO in Vietnam such as VUFO NGO Resource Centre, Capacity Development Working Group (CDWG), Disability Working Group, Climate Change Working Group, etc. have been informed with the VNPO achievements. They are channels to disseminate the Project results and then promote application of the CBS.

Last, but not least, is the Pool of volunteer experts and consultants, put together as part of the VNPO Project, who are interested to support NPOs through the provision of *pro bono* and/or paid technical assistance.

The VNPO Project’s sustainability also depends on other institutional settings such as the policy environment and legal framework in which VNPOs are existing and operating as well as the connections between VNPO and communities and public and private sectors. The VNPO Project has had activities in this area such as Narrow the Gap Community Fund, the Community Partnership Initiative, BlueBees, “LIN oi, minh di dau“, etc. However, more activities on policy advocacy, social capital development, etc. should be considered in the Phase Two of the Project in order to improve Project sustainability as well as to consolidate and enhance the achieved results.

### **3.5. Impact: Rated as Satisfactory**

The VNPO Project strengthened the capacity of VNPOs through the development of a standardized VNPO capacity building system offering comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable supports designed to help VNPOs achieve their organizational goals and support the development of dynamic and effective this sector in Vietnam, which garners respect and attracts support and collaboration from individuals, corporations and government agencies in

the communities where they work. So it is the VNPO Project intended positive impact on the Project beneficiaries. The VNPO Project has also had positive impacts on local authorities. They initially recognized the VNPO contribution and trusted in them more and then facilitated their operation. This is an important step to help VNPOs obtain legal status. It can also help to change VNPO attitudes towards local authorities, and encourage cooperation with local authorities instead of ignoring them because they do not expect to receive their support.

*“Since our group has supported effectively disadvantaged families, the Ward People’s Committee has recognized our contribution, paid more attention to us and facilitated our actions”* (Smile Group).

*“Thanks to the VNPO Project, our group capacity has been improved and our supporting activities at hospitals have been more effective. Then the hospital leaders have changed their attitudes to us and had more positive look at what we are doing”* (Happier Volunteer Group – Hospital Social Work Program)

The VNPO Project had an impact on the broader, philanthropic community and strengthened the linkages between NPOs and donor community through various activities such as VietnamCause.org, BlueBees.org, “LIN oi, minh di dau”, etc. As a result, more resources have been mobilized.

*“Since January 2013, the Narrow the Gap Community Fund has mobilized over 2.2 billion VND from 314 individuals and 25 institutions; the Community Partnership Initiative (CPI) in 2014 helped seven VNPOs to craft a fundraising strategy and four of them raised over 212 million VND in cash over 250 million VND in-kind”* (VNPO Project Progress Report Year 2, Nov. 2014)

To other civil society organizations, the VNPO Project’s impact focused on bridging, networking and strengthening the connection between themselves. According to the VNPO reports, up to Nov. 2014 the Project has networked 143 VNPOs and 111 active volunteers. By this way the VNPO Project has increased the social capital of VNPOs and civil society organizations in Vietnam.

The VNPO Project had a significant impact on the beneficiaries of participating VNPOs. Participating VNPOs engaged in environmental issues stated that *“The VNPO Project improved the quality of their programs, which helped to improve the environment in Thu Thua District, Long An province”* (CEPORER Hoc Mon). The NPOs working with disadvantaged children, people living with HIV/AIDs, people with disabilities, etc. said that *“Our clients have been equipped with better understanding and skills for their lives, then they can self-protect better”* (Association for Children Protection of HCMC).

To the society, the VNPO Project contributed to changing the attitudes about people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDs, the LGBT community, etc. by reducing stigma and discrimination. According to ICS Centre during the Community Partnership Initiative 2014 (CPI 2014), people at the MASH Company said that *“they has no longer discrimination to the Lesbian - Gay - Bisexual –Transgender (LGBT) community thanks to having a better understanding about this community”*

### **3.6. Replicability: Rated as Satisfactory**

The possibility to replicate the CBS is considered high because of the following factors:

The CBS is not too complicated to use. In fact the toolkits for Organizational Capacity Self-assessment are much simpler than the tools introduced by other development institutions,

such as the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) from USAID or the Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) by McKinsey on Society, the OCD of FHI 360, etc.

The CBS and its toolkits, guidelines, templates, etc. are available for download from the LIN website. The VNPO Project developed, piloted, documented and uploaded the Toolkit, Guidelines and other relevant documents on the LIN website. They are readily accessible to VNPOs with Internet access.

The CBS and its toolkits, guidelines, etc. are flexible. It includes 10 separate modules for 10 different Organizational Capacity Development areas: Human Resources, Volunteer Management, Strategic Planning, Action Planning, Program Evaluation, Communications, Fundraising, Financial Management, Risk Management, Governance with Legal Compliance. After conducting their own self-assessment, VNPOs can identify gaps in their organizational capacity, and prioritize the ones they would like to address in the near and long-term. Based on their available resources, time, etc. the VNPOs can develop and implement an Action Plan by tackling the prioritized issues first.

The CBS mainly relied on self-action of each VNPO. LIN offered access to external support, as needed and introduced programs to help VNPOs addressing similar challenges, such as fundraising, evaluation and communications. A list of organizational development experts, who are willing to contribute to VNPOs on a paid or pro bono basis, was established in order to help them access to technical experts whenever that may be needed.

The factors mentioned above make the CBS replicable. As a matter of fact, the VNPO Project introduced the CBS at a July 2014 CDWG meeting in Hanoi. Many NGOs attending that meeting expressed interest in the CBS and the VNPO Project. For example, Towards Transparency found the Toolkits to be useful. SRD was also interested to use the toolkits with funds from Winrock International to improve their organizational capacity. Meanwhile, USAID's "Vietnam Forest and Delta" Project (2012 – 2017) is investing in organizational capacity development for Vietnamese NGOs including Sustainable Rural Development (SRD), the Centre of Research and Development in Upland Areas (CERDA), the Center of Marine life Conservation and Community Development (MCD), PanNature, Live & Learn, etc. Obviously there are opportunities for replication of the CBS developed by the VNPO Project.

## **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **4.1. Conclusions**

1. The VNPO Project is rated as Highly Satisfactory for its Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency; and as Satisfactory for its Sustainability, Impact and Replicability.
2. For Relevance, the VNPO Project addressed real problems and needs of VNPOs; contributed to the Objective 1 of Irish Aid Country Strategy for Vietnam, 2011-2015 and the three policy Objectives of the Vietnam Civil Society Facility; and contributed to the Objectives of the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Vietnam for the 2011 – 2020 period and the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of HCMC for the 2011 – 2020 period.
3. For Effectiveness, 91.5% of the respondents agreed that the VNPO Project achieved its Objectives at the Expected level or higher. Thanks to improved capacity, participating VNPOs reported increased funds (Hoc Mon up 250%, SPI up 40%, Thien Tam Huong up 6 times) compared with funds raised before the VNPO Project started; an increase in the number of clients served (Hoc Mon is serving 50 clients compared with 20 before joining

the VNPO Project); or increased commitment of volunteers (Tinh Than used to have volunteers that worked 2 to 3 months, now their volunteers serve up to 2 years).

4. For Efficiency, 81.5% of respondents agreed that the use of resources in the VNPO Project was reasonable and efficient or higher. The participating VNPOs have made contributions in kind (office, staff, etc.) to project operation and management costs, therefore increased not only the project efficiency but also the stakeholder's ownership and commitment. The VNPO Project used existing facilities such as LIN's office, meeting rooms, equipment, etc. not only for Project activities but also for activities of VNPOs and the VNPO Network. The Project has set up a Pool of Experts to provide free or highly discounted technical support to VNPOs. The Narrow the Gap Community Fund has mobilized over 2.2 billion VND from 314 individuals and 25 institutions since Jan. 2013. In 2014 the Community Partnership Initiative (CPI) helped seven VNPOs to craft a fundraising strategy and four of them raised over 212 million VND in cash over 250 million VND in-kind. The VNPO Project staff worked efficiently, managing all activities of the VNPO Project, setting-up and maintaining a network of 143 VNPOs and 111 active volunteers in and around HCMC.
5. For Sustainability, 81.3 % of the respondents agreed that the improved capacity of the participating VNPOs, as credited to the VNPO Project, is sustainable at Average to High and Very High extents. The Toolkits developed by the VNPO Project are easily accessible via the LIN website (as well as other NGO and donor websites). The Project components and results are documented and will be shared broadly amongst capacity building practitioners and organizations. VNPOs recognized the value of the CBS and integrated it as a crucial part of their organizational structure, by allocating their staff and financial resources to operate it regularly. The organizational settings of VNPO in Vietnam such as VUFO NGO Resource Centre, Capacity Development Working Group (CDWG), Disability Working Group, Climate Change Working Group, etc. have been informed about the CBS and then had contributions to dissemination of the CBS and among local NGOs. A pool of OD experts committed to supporting VNPO capacity development was created and will be shared on LIN's website before the end of December 2014. However, there remain areas for improvement such as guidance for VNPOs in the area of policy advocacy, social capital development, etc. in order to improve the Project's sustainability as well as to consolidate and enhance the achieved results.
6. For Impact, the VNPO Project positively impacted VNPOs as a whole (gaining respect/support/collaboration), on local authorities (changing their attitudes towards NPOs), on other CSOs (increasing social capital, strengthening their connection and cooperation), on beneficiaries (improving their living conditions, their understanding and skills, etc.) and on the society (changing the society's attitudes towards people with disability, people living with HIV/AIDs, LGBT community, etc.; therefore reducing stigma and discrimination)
7. For Replicability, the CBS is considered highly replicable because it is not too complicated to use the toolkits, guidelines, etc.; the CBS mainly relied upon the self-action of each VNPO, accessible technical support from a pool of volunteer experts and through involvement in programs that were designed to help NPOs gain support in areas of common need. The international donor community in Vietnam has paid attention on organizational capacity building for VNPO such as the USAID Organizational Capacity Building via Winrock International and the Vietnam Forestry and Delta Development Program (VFD). Therefore, at the moment there have been opportunities to apply the CBS.

## 4.2. Lessons learned

A lot of lessons learned from the VNPO Project regarding the design and implementation were drawn from the Project partners and stakeholders. Below are the most important ones:

1. The approach LIN applied in the VNPO Project is a combination of supporting of organizational capacity self-development and bridging grassroots VNPOs with donors and volunteers. With this approach, on the one hand LIN acts as an “Incubation Centre” (according to Mr. Phan Dang Cuong, Social Development Advisor for Irish Aid) to support the self-development process of organizational capacity of VNPOs. On the other hand, LIN acts as a bridge to connect donors with grassroots VNPOs that typically fall short of meeting donor criteria for funding.
2. LIN and the VNPO Project supported organizational capacity self-development through inspiration rather than conventional training. After undertaking a self-assessment of one’s organizational capacity, VNPOs themselves identify their issues and gaps, prioritize them and develop their own Action Plans to address prioritized needs. This approach has made important contributions to the Project’s sustainability.
3. Through encouraging various partners and stakeholders to contribute to the project’s implementation, LIN and the VNPO Project increased not only the project efficiency but also the partners and stakeholder’s ownership of the project activities and their commitment to implement them.
4. Tailor made approach. Understanding that VNPOs are diversified in terms of legal status, history, scale, organization and scope of work, etc. LIN and its partners, GNC and SDTC, applied a “tailor made” approach to meet the specific need of VNPOs in their specific situations. This approach produced modular toolkits that are flexible in their application.

## 4.3. Recommendations

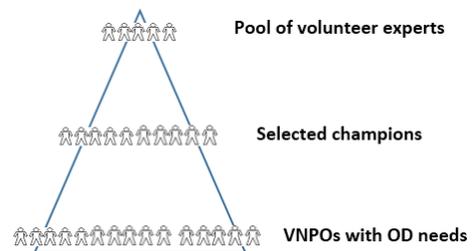
Based on the findings identified and discussed above as well as key points of the Phase Two of the VNPO Project which has been approved by Irish Aid recently, the Evaluation Team would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Under the Objectives 1 of the Phase Two, the 10 Capacity Development Toolkits will be improved and converted into an e-learning platform. It is recommendable to re-structure the 10 areas covered by the toolkits. Some areas with overlaps should be combined such as HRM and Volunteer management, Strategic planning and Action planning. Some important areas missing should be added such as Administration, Project management, etc. Totally there are 7 areas to be recommended as follows:
  - Governance (including Legal Status)
  - Organizational management covers Strategy planning, Work plans, Change management, Communication, Stakeholders and Knowledge management.
  - Administration management.
  - Human resources management including Volunteer management
  - Financial management
  - Project management covers M&E and Risk management
  - Resource mobilization including Fundraising
2. Good practice in using of the toolkits among the 27 participating VNPO in the Phase One should be documented as “case study” and upload into the e-learning platform. Capable

individuals from the participating VNPO should be selected and used as resource persons to provide online technical support in using the toolkits in the platform.

3. Under the Objectives 3 of the Phase Two, the expertise on Organizational Development and Institutional Strengthening (ODIS) should be promote in LIN and Live&Learn to make them become two resource centre on ODIS at the two end of the country to support technically the Phase Two. They also coordinate activities of the Pool of volunteer experts on ODIS. They may be in charge to provide basic understanding on ODIS to create a common foundation among relevant stakeholders of the VNPO Project. The expertise on ODIS in LIN may contribute to the potential process to make LIN become an "Accreditation Centre" on ODIS for VNPO in the future. The Evaluation Team leader, Mr. Nguyen Duc Tam would be happy to provide volunteer technical support to the process to develop this expertise.

4. Under the Objectives 2 of the Phase Two, leverage local resource and enhance VNPO access to those resources, a Cascading model (or Pyramid model) is recommended in provision of technical assistance. In this model, at the top of the Pyramid is the Pool of volunteer experts, at the middle level are Facilitators or Champions, who are individuals, selected from good practice cases among the participating VNPOs of the Phase One. At the ground of the Pyramid are NPOs that have OD needs. The experts may support the Champions and then the Champions in their



turn provide technical support to needy NPOs. By this way the technical assistance will be used efficiently and effectively.

5. To achieve the Objectives 2 of the Phase Two, it is essential to have appropriate legal corridor. So it is recommended to include activities on institutional strengthening including policy advocacy, legal framework improvement in parallel with the designed settings such as VietnamCauses, BlueBees websites, "LIN oi, minh di dau", etc.
6. In the Phase Two, LIN will partner with VietNet Information Technology and Communication Centre (VietNet-ICT), which should promote online and web-based tools for surveys, learning, reporting, etc. in order to reduce paper work for participating VNPOs and increase interactive and two way communication between the Project and stakeholders.
7. The VNPOs exhibiting great achievements in Phase I of the VNPO Project should receive continuous support in order to consolidate and enhance their results. They may also be used for the Cascading model to disseminate the VNPO Project impact.