

## Lessons from ACCRN in Viet Nam Series

# THE ROLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATION OFFICES IN BUILDING RESILIENCE

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# THE ROLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATION OFFICES IN BUILDING RESILIENCE

## Lessons from the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN)

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### ABSTRACT

*National policy has required provincial governments to plan and prepare for climate change in Vietnam since 2009. But there are a variety of different requirements from different ministries, and there was no local government body in 2010 that had either the mandate or the capacity to guide urban climate resilience planning. ACCCRN provided funding and technical support to create Climate Change Coordination Offices (CCCOs) for Can Tho, Da Nang and Quy Nhon – the latter managed by Binh Dinh province. These offices were intended to serve a coordination function, to collect and interpret climate data to help assess climate risks to the city's development, to develop a multi-sector strategy for climate resilience, to build the capacity of other technical units in climate change planning and resilience building, and to coordinate external funding and climate change projects across all sectors to ensure they were consistent with local priorities. The CCCOs adopted slightly different approaches in the different cities, but became more successful at capacity building, data management, planning and project development than they were at supporting participation of vulnerable groups and implementation of priority resilience building measures. It was difficult for CCCOs to gain legitimacy, even with the support of the provincial People's Committees, when they were not officially recognized by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The assignment of climate change planning responsibilities to DoNRE has not solved the problem of how to manage this task at the local level, because DoNRE has neither the tools nor the mandate to coordinate planning for climate resilience across sectors. In order to do this effectively, some kind of high level staff function is needed to coordinate deliberative, iterative and collaborative processes that engage multiple stakeholders in sharing knowledge and making decisions.*

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### Key words

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Climate Change Coordination Offices

Can Tho, Quy Nhon, Da Nang

Urban Climate Resilience

Climate Change

# INTRODUCTION: VIETNAM'S NATIONAL POLICIES TO RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Government of Vietnam has recognized the country's high vulnerability to the impact of climate change (GoV 2015). These impacts are already beginning to be felt in the frequency and intensity of extreme storms and greater climate variability, and will certainly increase for the rest of this century (IMHEN & UNDP 2015).

Vietnam's key national policy responses include the following key policies, along with many other related decisions and guidelines:

- the National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change (Decision No. 158/2008/QĐ-TTg dated December 2, 2008), and the subsequent National Strategy to implement some its provisions (2139/2011/QĐ-TTg) all updated for the period 2012-2015 in Decision 1183/2012/QĐ-TTg).
- Ministry of Construction, which has requested all provinces to consider the impacts of climate change when planning and approving urban development (Decision 2623/2013/QĐ-TTg dated 31/12/2013)
- Ministry of Planning and Investment, which has prepared guidelines to support prioritization of climate adaptation actions in preparation of SEDP (Decision 1485/2013/QĐ-BKHĐT dated 17/10/2013)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development: DRR policy (GoV Decision 1002/2009/QĐ-TTg on CBDRM dated 13/07/2009) and urban DRR guidelines (which is being drafted)

- MoNRE and the Ministry of Home Affairs updated the mandate and function of provincial DoNRE's through joint Circular 50/2014 / TTLT BTNMT-BNV (28/08/2014), which provides for DoNRE to organize, plan and manage the implementation of programs and projects responding to climate change, including drafting, updating and implementing action plans prepared under the provisions of NTP.

In addition, each national ministry has prepared its own climate action plan to describe how it will modify its activities to respond to climate change. Many of these plans will affect projects and activities in cities<sup>1</sup>, which are the location of most economic investment and population growth.

It is clear that the impacts of climate change are different in different localities and at different times – flash floods, inundation, landslides, drought, storms and erosion all create costly damages within and around cities, threatening economic investment and people's lives. The people who are most at risk will depend on the context. This means that action to respond to climate change must be planned and implemented at the local level in response to the local context. The question we want to explore here, in the face of all these national climate policy initiatives to direct local climate planning and adaptation, is what does the ACCCRN experience tell us about the local government structures needed to strengthen resilience to climate change?

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1 We are focusing on cities because of the concentration of population, investment, economic activities and climate risk there. It is recognized that the provincial government that will have responsibility for the planning and coordination functions discussed in the paper, except for cities directly managed by the central government, where the city government itself has the powers of a province.

## ACCCRN CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATION OFFICES IN VIETNAM

In 2010, the Rockefeller Foundation chose three cities—Can Tho, Da Nang and Quy Nhon—to work with in Vietnam and began their program by supporting ISET to provide technical assistance for the development of a local climate change resilience plan in each city. In each case, the plan was prepared through a series of interactive shared learning dialogues (SLDs) involving multiple local government technical departments and representatives of vulnerable groups and communities. The draft resilience plans were prepared by local government officials, and though they were not official government documents, they helped identify priorities for resilience investments and laid the foundation for the formal Climate Action Plans prepared by all three in accordance with the subsequent requirements of MoNRE under NTP. In the process of developing their plans, both cities and the province of Binh Dinh recognized that it would be impossible for existing local government staff to take on the new role supervising resilience planning and investment activities involving multiple local government departments and agencies. The difficulties included lack of technical capacity in climate planning, limited staff and time, and the difficulty of coordination across multiple agencies. To address these problems, they proposed that Rockefeller Foundation support the establishment of a new local government office for this purpose. ACCCRN would support part of the staff costs, plus capacity building, research and technical assistance for these offices, while the cities themselves contributed some of the staff, along with office space

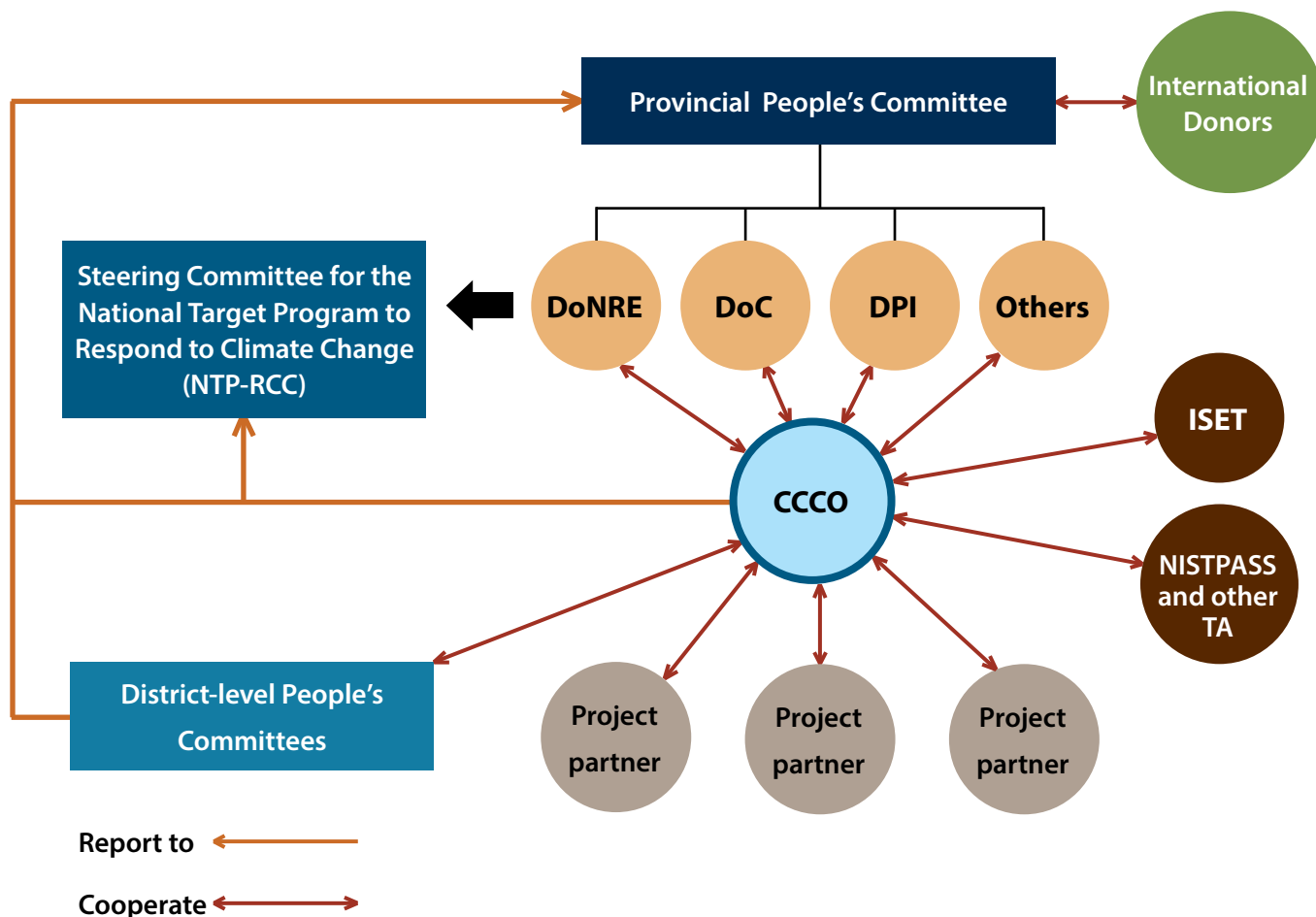
and local expenses. These new offices were to be called Climate Change Coordination Offices (CCCO in English acronym).

As explained in the funding documents approved by the donor, the purpose of the CCCOs was to:

- Explain and interpret climate data for the use of other city departments, to improve knowledge of local impacts and uncertainty associated with climate change.
- Coordinate Climate Action Plans across sectors to ensure consistency in interpreting climate information, identifying climate risks, and integrating these with sector plans.
- Coordinate funding proposals from various sectors to donors and national government to ensure consistency with CAP priorities.
- Build capacity of other provincial government officials to understand and apply resilience concepts, to implement consultative and participatory planning procedures, and to integrate these approaches into CAPs and Socio-economic Development Plans (SEDP).

At the time, there was no existing local government body that could take on any of these tasks. Local government technical departments in Vietnam are basically elements of the relevant national ministries, and are accountable upwards to both the national counterpart ministry, and to the provincial People's Committee. The only cross-sectoral planning responsibilities are in the Department of Planning and Investment, which coordinates socio-economic development plans (SEDP) that guide public investment and development strategy. The proposed

FIGURE 1. RELATIONSHIP OF CCCO TO OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS



CCCO structure created a new body that reported directly to the local government’s Steering Committee for the National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change. Each provincial level government was required to create such a steering committee to prepare their Climate Action Plans, as identified in Decision 3815/BTNMT-KTTVBKDH (Oct 13 2009), but these steering committees had no staff. CCCO took on the role of secretariat, under the direct authority of a Vice-Chairman of the provincial People’s Committee, who chaired the provincial Steering Committee on the NTPRCC (see Figure. 1).

## CHALLENGES FACING CCCOS AND DIFFERENT LOCAL RESPONSES

From their beginnings, the new CCCOs had a number of features that were innovative for local government organizations. All three CCCOs were entirely staffed and managed by the local government:

- **Structure:** by making the new organization responsible to the Steering Committee, rather than situated within the operating hierarchy of a single

technical department, the intent was that it could more easily coordinate and engage in planning and technical support across sectors.

- **Limited authority:** the CCCO would not have a large staff, and it was not expected to control the budgets of large projects. Instead, it would exert its authority through specialized knowledge and skills, and provide services (technical, coordination) to other agencies and to the SC/PPC. In short, it would serve a *staff*, not a *line function* within local government.
- **Project development:** the CCCO would play a leading role in helping other agencies develop climate resilience proposals and projects for donor funding, providing relevant climate data and coordinating with other city level plans (e.g. CAP, Urban Master Plan, SEDP).
- **Networking:** CCCO staff would communicate with colleagues in other cities and share plans, experiences and lessons in a national level network with other practitioners (especially within ACCCRN)
- **Public information:** climate data, impact information, plans and technical studies would be available to the public, including private sector businesses, and accessible on the internet or in other forms.
- **Emphasis on vulnerable communities and participatory planning:** project development, city level plans and donor projects that CCCO coordinated were expected to reflect meaningful participation by vulnerable communities.

In each case, some of the staff were provided by the city or province, while others were hired on contract using project funds. Initially, the ACCCRN support to

the CCCOs was planned for only two years, but as many activities took longer than anticipated, and as city staff members of CCCO often had other responsibilities, the duration (but not the amount) of support was extended to four years. All of the original CCCOs were set up with DoNRE staff, but this led to several challenges:

- DoNRE had good access to climate data but few mechanisms to collaborate on planning or projects with other technical departments in order to adapt to climate impacts. In Vietnam, policy priorities and local workplans are mostly determined on a top-down basis by national ministries with some flexibility for local priorities. It was difficult for the CCCO to influence the priorities of any other work units.
- DoNRE technical staff had limited understanding or tools for coordination, when CCCOs were created. They were accustomed to working on narrowly contained projects following specific direction from above.
- Planners in other city departments and sectors did not recognize CCCO expertise in this area, did not have to consider input from DoNRE in their work, and did not see the need to consider climate change, especially when this issue was assigned to DoNRE.

Over time, each city developed a different solution to these challenges.

- **Can Tho** set up the CCCO as an independent “project”-style office outside DoNRE, with a limited city staff and a number of consultants to implement its activities. It established an emphasis on climate data, research, information

sharing, awareness raising, climate action plans and management of ACCCRN and other donor projects dealing with climate change. In its project management role, CCCO had to collaborate with, and deliver project funding to, other technical units and departments to implement ACCCRN projects. In its capacity building role, the CCCO became a prominent local and regional source of information about climate change and climate impacts in the Mekong Delta.

- In **Quy Nhon**, CCCO eventually became a formal government unit under the Binh Dinh province People's Committee, led on a part-time basis by a deputy director of DoNRE. It took responsibility for planning and coordination of ACCCRN projects, and relied on staff seconded from DoNRE (who typically retained other responsibilities) as well as on contract staff. It became actively engaged at ward and district level participatory planning. The CCCO gradually established good collaborative relationships with DARD, DoC, the provincial Hydrometeorology Center, and the provincial Committee for Flood and Storm Control, as well as at the district level, through collaborative project management that directed funding to these other organizations. This collaboration was enabled by the official recognition CCCO achieved from other departments through its direct relationship to the provincial PC.
- In **Da Nang**, DoNRE managers were unable to provide leadership for this kind of collaborative project management despite strong technical staff, so the CCCO did not get involved in managing projects that were undertaken by other technical units. Eventually the CCCO function was reassigned to the city People's Committee office, along with several of the original DoNRE

staff. However, contrary to earlier concerns, when the CCCO in Da Nang (unlike in Can Tho and Binh Dinh) did not directly manage projects that were delivered through funding to other departments, this left them to focus primarily on strategic resilience planning, coordination between different departments, research and technical analysis, and integration of resilience priorities into SEDP – all tasks which no other agency could competently undertake. What was originally a liability led the CCCO to demonstrate its unique strengths.

## WHAT DID CCCOS ACCOMPLISH?

The results after four years of funding support for the CCCOs in Can Tho, Binh Dinh and Da Nang were mixed. There were some important accomplishments, but also some constraints and limitations, and in some important ways this pilot mechanism failed to generate the intended results. In this section we discuss these results under three categories: a) clear successes; b) partial successes; and c) constraints facing CCCOs.

### CLEAR SUCCESSES

In all three ACCCRN cities, a new office to focus specifically on climate change resilience and action planning at the city level was set up, and provided with technical and administrative staff through official support from the local government. Even where the level of administrative support was the province, as in Binh Dinh, the focus of planning and analysis was on the city level (i.e. Quy Nhon). This was an unique and novel administrative structure, which was not only recognized but also financially supported by the local government.

In all three cases, there were substantial increases in staff capacity within the CCCOs to understand and assess both current and future climate risks, including a better recognition of changing risks from extreme events and climate variability. The technical staff in these offices increased their understanding of these issues and how they are likely to impact the city. Capacity gains included not only climate science, but also resilience concepts, planning methods and tools. They introduced new methods and tools for planning, including vulnerability assessments and climate scenarios. The CCCOs developed skills in engaging and consulting with vulnerable community groups in order to develop vulnerability assessments and participatory plans. They were able to assemble data from a wide range of national and local sources to determine local climate vulnerabilities, and to present their conclusions effectively in reports, plans, and powerpoint presentations to local and national audiences.

CCCOs were responsible for the mandated Climate Action Plans that all provinces were required to prepare in the period 2010-2012. Most of these plans were prepared by consultants (usually national institutes under MoNRE) using funding provided by MoNRE. But in the case of Can Tho, the plan was prepared by the CCCO, and in Binh Dinh and in Da Nang, their official plan was also based in part on research and analysis by CCCO.

CCCOs assembled relevant data from the national and provincial level and made that data widely available to other technical units in the local government. For example, in Da Nang the DoC and the water supply company both have used climate and hydrological projections provided by CCCO or their technical consultants in order to model future flood and water

supply conditions for planning purposes. In Can Tho, a publicly accessible database provides climate and hydrological data for Can Tho and the Mekong Delta, and includes a large volume of international reference materials.

In all three cases, the activities of the CCCO included capacity building for other provincial technical departments about climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation measures. These activities increased the recognition in other departments of the need for climate resilience action and built professional relationships and collaboration between different technical units on this topic. The CCCOs learned to work in a highly flexible, responsive and collaborative way with other technical departments, obtaining and managing contract funding for projects implemented by other technical units. This was an unusual way for local government to operate in Vietnam, and it took some time to develop the skills for building collaborative and supportive relationships, partly because other government units are also not accustomed to working in this way and did not understand it at first. These relationships, and the increasing recognition of CCCO expertise, led to a positive response from the leadership of other departments. For example, in Binh Dinh province DoNRE had tried unsuccessfully for almost a year to schedule a Steering Committee meeting for the NTPRCC, because it had no authority over other departments. But CCCO was able to arrange the meeting in a couple of weeks. In Da Nang, widespread recognition of CCCO enabled it to lead an experimental process of integrating climate adaptation measures into provincial socio-economic development planning.



These accomplishments led to greater recognition from the national government and from other provinces who were interested in the CCCO model. All the CCCOs have hosted multiple exchange visits from other provincial leaders, and provided presentations, training and capacity building in climate resilience coordination for other provincial leaders. They have participated in many national and international workshops, and have supported networking among the three cities, as well as with national ministries in related fields (especially MoC, MARD, MoNRE). All three have also successfully attracted additional project resources from other sources, such as GIZ, World Bank, AFD and other donors, in order to implement resilience projects. However, the CCCOs were not able to build a regular relationship with DPI to integrate climate resilience into the coordination of provincial funding and project investments.

## AREAS OF PARTIAL SUCCESS

In terms of basic function and capacity building, the CCCOs were quite successful, as described above. However, in terms of implementing the key local government mechanisms for climate resilience planning, the results were not quite as positive. One objective was to build on the results of provincial Climate Action Plans (CAP) to integrate resilience building measures into various sector plans in different technical departments. There have been some positive results in Quy Nhon and in Da Nang, where the DoC in particular has responded to increased climate risk from floodplain development, and have modified urban development plans to reduce the scale and modify the location of floodplain development in order to reduce flood risk. In Da Nang, the Women's Union has also been involved in implementing a very successful program for providing technical and financial support

to low-income households to improve the structural integrity of their houses and reduce typhoon losses. This program has expanded in the housing sector in Da Nang, improving or building hundreds of stormproof houses for low income households and leading to big improvements in the resilience of the housing sector there.

In Can Tho, public health programs to prevent dengue fever have been modified in recognition of the increased dengue risk as climate change creates better conditions throughout the year for reproduction of the mosquito that transmits the dengue virus, and a local community has led cost-effective riverbank erosion control measures with the support of CCCO.

In Quy Nhon, the Hydrometeorology Center has established a new SMS text based early warning system using real-time automated monitoring stations that measure upstream precipitation and river levels, transmitting that information to an automated control centre that can then project downstream flood levels with greater accuracy.

But most of these interventions have taken place because of available project funding, rather than through the internal plans and public expenditures of the government itself. Only in Da Nang has the CCCO been able to integrate climate adaptation plans into regular socio-economic development planning, and there only on an experimental basis. That experience demonstrated clearly the importance of CCCO leadership in providing the methodology to develop climate adaptation priorities and then identify specific public funding projects for integration into SEDP. The integration of climate resilience building into regular local government planning processes is crucial to

ensure that these measures become standard practice in Vietnamese cities, and even in the cities with CCCOs this process is just getting underway.

Another practice that met with partial success was the engagement of vulnerable communities in participatory planning for both climate vulnerability assessment and for developing district-level SEDP proposals to strengthen resilience. Participatory planning is more likely to respond to the needs of poor and vulnerable groups, and to recognize their familiarity with local climate risks, but it is more time-consuming and requires different skills and new practices for Vietnamese planners. Such processes have been introduced, and have in several cases in Quy Nhon and Can Tho led to the development of projects relying on the involvement and leadership of community members (Nguyen & Tyler 2016, Tyler & Nghiem 2016).

CCCOs developed climate resilience indicators for three different sectors in each city, as a tool for planning and monitoring changes in resilience over time, but the application of the indicators to local government planning and monitoring was less successful. Some sectors (such as the water supply company in Da Nang) became interested in resilience and have continued to use the indicators, and Da Nang CCCO has collected a lot more information on city-wide resilience for monitoring purposes as part of the 100 Resilient Cities program. But other cities have not kept up with monitoring activity and have not been able to integrate this effectively into regular sectoral planning processes.

An area of weakness has been in sustaining the CCCOs as continuing coordination agencies after the

completion of the ACCCRN funding. In order to do this, the CCCOs had to retain staff and replace leadership or staff positions. In Da Nang, the CCCO has successfully solidified its role, partly supported by funding from the 100 Resilient Cities program. In Quy Nhon, the CCCO continues, but may become a provincial agency specially designed to support the city's expansion and transition to central government management. In this role, it could help oversee urban planning and management for an expanded city, ensuring that coordination and resilience issues are addressed as the city adds industrial and tourism developments and the urban area expands. In Can Tho, the structure of the CCCO as a separate office was not sustainable and it became much quieter when its director retired several months after ACCCRN funding ended.

## CONSTRAINTS FACING CCCOS

The CCCOs faced a number of constraints that limited their effectiveness, particularly in terms of sustainability and formal influence within the local government system. The largest of these was that the offices were not legally supported by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA). All government structures at all levels are regulated by this ministry and while the CCCOs were supported by local government and tolerated by the MOHA, they were not legally sanctioned and remained essentially experimental. Without this legal sanction from the national government, it was difficult for the CCCOs to be recognized by other technical departments. Over time, especially in Quy Nhon and Da Nang, the CCCOs were able to gain support from other departments in part because of their effectiveness in demonstrating the importance of climate risks to these departments, and then providing useful information, data and technical support to help them respond.

However, without MOHA legal support and national government funding, the budget and staffing of CCCOs will remain susceptible, and its mandate may be easily eroded. The continuity of the offices in some form relies heavily on support from local government leaders. Local government relies for its funding on the central government, which provides funds for staffing based on the approved national structural model. In other words, even if CCCOs were to obtain local support, they would not be funded by the central government and so their staff costs would not be covered.

Other constraints to the functioning of CCCOs as originally expected include the nature of the current governance system in Vietnam. With highly centralized power and top-down policy direction and budgeting, there is limited scope for decentralized planning and decision-making at the local government level. In those areas where they do have jurisdiction, such as approval of local urban development projects, local governments have contradictory objectives. On one hand, they are responsible for ensuring public safety, disaster risk reduction, and managing future climate risk. On the other hand, they are keen to increase revenue from land lease sales to private developers. As a result, CCCO's work on climate resilience may not receive consistent policy direction and support in the face of powerful financial and development interests.

One of the constraints that the CCCO in Binh Dinh had to deal with was that it was, by definition, a provincial level organization, but its focus was only on the city of Quy Nhon. Except for the five centrally managed cities, this will be a common problem for

urban climate resilience in Vietnam. The provincial level is mainly responsible for planning, budgeting, and coordination of development in all sectors. There is very limited capacity for analysis and planning below this level. So in order to focus on the particular climate risks facing cities, the provinces must devote attention to the unique requirements of urban areas. This can be difficult, as many provincial government agencies and policies are not structured for differential administration in urban and rural areas. So despite the special risks and infrastructure systems of urban areas, they may not get special planning treatment from provincial agencies who have a province-wide mandate.

There are also constraints built in to the mechanisms that CCCO must use in its work: flexibility, local responsiveness, collaboration and facilitation. These approaches are not typical of local government, which tends to be top-down, and driven by high level targets and standards rather than local analysis. It is also difficult for the current planning system to deal with the uncertainties of climate change and future conditions. Together with the fact that there are few official mechanisms for cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination at the local government level, most of the CCCO's work practices were unfamiliar and inconsistent with the rest of government's operations, and it made their work more difficult to explain.

## **ROLE OF DONRE IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE PLANNING**

The need for local government climate change planning capacity, such as that demonstrated by the CCCO's, has been recognized by the central

government. In 2014, the Ministry of Home Affairs and MoNRE approved joint Circular No. 50/2014/TTLT BTNMT-BNV, which added climate change to the responsibilities and organizational structure of DoNRE in all provinces and centrally administered cities. This regulation authorized DoNRE to develop and update climate action plans and oversee their implementation consistent with national strategies and programs, including proposing measures to reduce climate impacts and to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

This is a positive step, in that it formalizes the provision of such capacity at the provincial level, and creates a dedicated office within the formal structure of government services, which can be staffed and funded from central government budget. This will strengthen the practice of climate planning and the interpretation and application of climate and hydrometeorological data to assess climate impacts, extreme events and uncertainties, and provides clarity about where local government technical capacities on these issues should reside.

However, this circular creates a new barrier to effective coordination of climate action planning and climate resilience at the local level. As we have seen from ACCCRN experience and from CCCO operations, climate resilience planning and implementation requires that analysis and action be taken by many other technical departments. DoNRE has no authority or jurisdiction over the departments that must determine vulnerabilities and take adaptation (and mitigation) measures, so there is no way they can be solely responsible for either developing or implementing climate change plans. Climate resilience measures require analysis and action by DoC, DARD, DoT, DoH, DoET, DPI and others.

On the other hand, climate change measures must involve all sectors, therefore it is not appropriate to assign climate change planning and implementation to a single department. DoNRE has neither the expertise to determine what these measures should be, nor the authority to approve and implement them. Furthermore, DoNRE has no tools or mechanisms for coordination across sectors, as discussed below. In addition, the regulation creates the impression that “climate change projects” will be funded by DoNRE separate from other projects. But all projects are “climate projects” in the sense that activities in all sectors need to consider climate change: if DoT builds roads, they have to modify drainage and location to recognize changing sea level, river flows and overland flooding. Public health programs must recognize that vector-borne disease risks increase because of climate change. DoC must include climate change considerations in its construction standards and building practices. While DoNRE can help to suggest what future climate conditions might be, they cannot tell other departments whether they will be a problem, or how to respond to them. Climate change requires collaborative planning, interaction and coordination between different departments, and no local department can do that on their own.

The new Circular 50 creates the impression that climate change will be addressed by DoNRE. But because that department does not have the technical skills or authority to identify and take actions in other sectors, the measures Vietnamese cities must take to strengthen climate resilience cannot come from DoNRE alone.

# LESSONS FROM ACCCRN

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLIMATE RESILIENCE PLANNING

The experience with CCCOs, as supported by the ACCCRN program, points to several important lessons that are relevant for the Government of Vietnam. The first of these is about planning for climate change action at the local level. The NTPRCC recognizes that local level planning is essential to adapt to climate change in the context of local conditions and risks. That is why national policies require Climate Action Plans (CAP) to be prepared and updated by all provinces. All three of the CCCOs have prepared climate resilience plans or strategies that identify vulnerabilities, compare risks and prioritize actions in different sectors to build resilience. These have been used by provinces as input to their formal CAPs, and through that process the CCCOs have gained considerable experience with the factors needed for effective planning and implementation of climate responses.

These lessons start with an emphasis on the *process*, not the technical content, of climate planning. A technical understanding of climate change is important to determine the likelihood of different kinds of climate impacts. But to assess vulnerability, and to determine appropriate local responses, it is crucial to engage both with vulnerable groups and with a variety of different technical departments, so that their experts can assess risks and determine potential responses. This engagement needs to be *deliberative*: it is not good enough to share information or provide reports, but there has to be ongoing dialogue to validate study results, interpret them, respond to questions and debate solutions openly among different technical

groups. The engagement has to be *iterative*: some steps in the planning need to be repeated as new information becomes available or as other decisions affect planning. And it has to be *collaborative*: no single department or technical group has the required expertise and data to determine solutions, so the process must rely on collaboration between many different technical departments to share data and to interpret the results jointly. All of this requires strong facilitation and procedural skills. It is more difficult and requires more skill than regular sectoral planning because it is more complex and time-consuming. In climate planning, *strong leadership means deliberative, iterative and collaborative processes that engage multiple stakeholders in sharing knowledge and making decisions.*

## THE NEED FOR COORDINATION IN URBAN CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The second lesson from the CCCO experience under ACCCRN is the need for coordination of climate resilience efforts at the local level. Building resilience to climate change requires investment in all sectors of the economy. Under ACCCRN, there have been local level projects in flood planning and management; disaster risk reduction and early warning; urban planning and construction; stormproof housing technology and financing; public health; education; forest conservation and natural resource management; awareness raising and capacity building; governance and public administration. All of these projects contribute to urban resilience, but they are implemented by different technical departments.

In order to ensure that the city effectively manages its changing climate risks, these different sectoral actions must be coordinated. They also must be

coordinated with national level projects such as major dike construction or highway development. If their coordination is poor, then a new highway can be built across a floodplain with inadequate drainage, creating deeper flood inundation upstream. If coordination is poor, investments in new drainage systems will be incompatible with existing drainage networks. If coordination is poor, major private sector investments in new urban development can be built in sites that will become more vulnerable to future flooding, and instead of creating benefits for the city and for local residents, they create future liabilities and costs. If coordination is poor, new urban development increases the flood risk for local residents. These are all situations that can be observed in Vietnamese cities now, due to lack of coordination and collaboration in planning for climate risks.

To prevent these problems in future, as climate change increases these risks, provincial governments need greater local coordination of climate resilience planning. But there is limited experience with coordination in the Vietnamese context, so the meaning of coordinated planning is sometimes misunderstood. Some officials believe that coordination means control, and then it becomes impossible for one government department to control the activities of other sectoral and technical departments who report to different ministries. But coordination does not have to mean control. It can also mean providing resources and support for decision-making across many different sectors, and ultimately developing common procedures and guidelines for decision-making in different sectors so that they are consistent with approved local plans (see Box on the right).

## WHAT DOES “COORDINATION” MEAN?

In Vietnam, government agencies operate on a command-and-control basis within their own jurisdiction. There are few mechanisms for coordination at the political or operational level. For climate resilience planning and implementation, coordination includes the following functions:

- Technical support and capacity building to key stakeholders to ensure shared understanding of concepts of climate change, impacts, vulnerability, adaptation and resilience;
- Convening different government departments and non-government stakeholders for planning;
- Collection and sharing of key climate and other data relevant for planning in all sectors;
- Comparing assumptions, procedures, and priorities between different sectors to ensure consistency;
- Facilitating planning and follow-up processes to be led by other technical departments (e.g. by providing tools, trainings, hosting meetings, process guidance);
- Ensuring good communications between parallel planning efforts in different departments or working groups;
- Reviewing plans and implementation of other sectors and technical groups for consistency with resilience goals;
- Reporting to senior city leaders and heads of departments on climate resilience issues.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE NEEDED FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The lessons described above show the need for a local process of planning and implementation of climate resilience interventions. The experience of CCCOs demonstrates that climate change is not a technical field of its own in which to develop expert plans, but rather a new field of data, analysis and assessment, communications and shared learning, which will affect the plans developed by all technical sectors. Technical analysis of climate and climate impacts is of very little benefit on its own in determining how best to respond. This means that climate resilience planning cannot be undertaken by any single technical agency in local government. To the extent that CCCOs were successful in coordinating climate resilience, they did so by bringing helpful new information to iterative processes of shared learning, dialogue and collaboration with other technical departments.

But this leadership role was essential in resilience planning. Without the high-level support of the provincial People's Committee for the work of the CCCO, it would have been impossible to engage effectively with other departments. And without the leadership of CCCO, it would have been very difficult to undertake the collaborative and iterative learning and planning required to strengthen climate resilience in multiple departments of the city.

We conclude that a coordination role is essential, but that it cannot be assigned to an existing technical unit. The task requires the direct support and oversight of local leaders, and the creation of a high level coordination unit, so that all technical departments recognize its authority to request data, engage technical officers, and to provide input on technical

plans in each sector. Without the deliberate creation of such an office, this kind of coordination will not occur.

CCCO experience demonstrates that such an office need not be large, but it must be competent and well managed. This requires a small number of full-time, dedicated staff. It cannot be isolated from other technical departments to work on its own. It cannot be placed in an existing technical department, because then it has no leverage to collaborate with other departments. It cannot be just a technical consulting group, because technical expertise is a small part of the skill set needed to ensure collaborative and coordinated planning. Resilience building investment priorities have to be determined in collaboration with local government leaders and with DPI to ensure that they are reflected in public spending priorities. There seems to be no option for climate resilience planning other than to create a small, executive level group in each province and centrally managed city that can coordinate the required technical inputs and work with all the key technical departments to establish practical resilience priorities. Ultimately, the goal is to strengthen planning in all sectors so that it includes appropriate consideration of climate resilience, and then a climate change coordination group may no longer be needed.

## CONCLUSIONS

CCCOs were a quite unusual kind of administrative and technical organization in Vietnamese local government. They could not be introduced in a short time frame because of the need for new capacities, skills and tools to manage the new processes involved. This also meant a need for strong local commitment to the types of change this implied.

The challenges of sustaining and replicating this kind of structure are mostly related to the difficulty of accommodating the required operational style within the Vietnamese government system. While the ACCCRN experience shows the value of collaborative and interactive approaches to build capacity and buy-in from other departments, it also demonstrates that this approach is difficult, unfamiliar to all participants, and therefore time-consuming. The CCCOs also struggled to overcome the perception that they were only “projects” rather than opportunities for learning and integration into the existing system, at least at the outset. The CCCOs have provided advice to other provinces on these matters, and some are taking the initiative, in conjunction with existing climate projects, to develop such organizations on their own (e.g. Ben Tre).

The experience of CCCOs seems to show the value of a small coordination office of this type in building awareness and capacity, mobilizing diverse kinds of data, supporting other technical departments to understand and use this information, and then coordinating the various plans and projects that come out of an effective climate action planning process. Without an organization like the CCCO, it is likely to be much more difficult to plan and implement climate resilience measures effectively in Vietnamese cities. This will put the future development of these cities at greater risk due to climate change.

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