The Sustainability of Aid:  
The Case of the Vi Agroforestry Programme

Razvan Sandru

Uppsala University, Department of Earth Sciences
Master Thesis E, in Sustainable Development, 30 credits
Printed at Department of Earth Sciences,
Geotryckeriet, Uppsala University, Uppsala, 2012.
The Sustainability of Aid: The Case of the Vi Agroforestry Programme

Razvan Sandru

Supervisor: Dr. Fiona Rotberg
Evaluator: Prof. Kjell Havnevik
Contents

1. Introduction ..................................................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Background .............................................................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 Key Concepts ........................................................................................................................................... 1
   1.2.1 Agroforestry ........................................................................................................................................ 1
   1.2.2 The Vi Agroforestry Programme ......................................................................................................... 1
   1.2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation .................................................................................................................... 2
   1.2.4 Sustainability in the Aid Sector ............................................................................................................ 2
   1.3 Aim and Research Question ..................................................................................................................... 2
   1.4 Structure .................................................................................................................................................. 3
2. Literature review ................................................................................................................................................ 3
   2.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................................................. 3
   2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation ....................................................................................................................... 3
   2.3 Accountability and Aid Effectiveness ....................................................................................................... 4
   2.3.1 Accountability .................................................................................................................................... 4
   2.3.2 Aid effectiveness ............................................................................................................................... 5
   2.4 Post-phase-out Evaluation ....................................................................................................................... 5
   2.5 Sustainability of Aid ............................................................................................................................... 6
   2.6 Conclusion .............................................................................................................................................. 7
3. Methodology .................................................................................................................................................... 7
   3.1 Analytic framework ................................................................................................................................. 7
   3.2 Sources and types of data ......................................................................................................................... 8
   3.3 Limitations ............................................................................................................................................. 8
   3.4 Procedure ............................................................................................................................................. 9
4. Phase-out of aid operations .............................................................................................................................. 9
   4.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................................... 9
   4.2 The theoretical model of phase-out ........................................................................................................ 9
   4.3 The implementation of phase-out ........................................................................................................ 10
   4.3.1 When a phase-out is carried out ....................................................................................................... 10
   4.3.2 How a phase-out is carried out ......................................................................................................... 12
   4.4 Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 13
5. Experience during the extensive phase ......................................................................................................... 14
   5.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 14
   5.2 Challenges for farmers during extensive phase .................................................................................... 14
   5.2.1 Organisational capacity .................................................................................................................... 14
   5.2.2 Practical and technical issues ......................................................................................................... 15
   5.2.3 Funding .......................................................................................................................................... 15
   5.2.4 Other challenges ............................................................................................................................ 15
   5.3 Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 16
6. The sustainability of VIAFP operations ....................................................................................................... 16
   6.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 16
   6.2 A sustainability study within VIAFP ................................................................................................... 16
   6.3 Improvements for sustainability ......................................................................................................... 17
   6.3.1 Examples of organisational learning ............................................................................................... 17
   6.3.2 Other beneficial practices .............................................................................................................. 18
   6.4 Points of deliberation on the work of VIAFP ..................................................................................... 18
   6.5 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 21
7. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................. 22
8. References ............................................................................................................................................... 23
9. Appendices ............................................................................................................................................. 26
   9.1 Appendix 1 ........................................................................................................................................ 26
The Sustainability of Aid: The Case of the Vi Agroforestry Programme

SANDRU RAZVAN


Abstract: The poor record of aid operations after the withdrawal of donor support has led to an increasing interest in the topic of sustainability of aid. Making a contribution to this growing topic, the thesis examines the sustainability of the development work carried out by the Vi Agroforestry Programme (VIAFP) around Lake Victoria. By combining an interview study and a policy analysis, the research uses the practice of phasing out support and the experience during the latter (extensive) phase of the Programme as indicators for sustainability.

The results show that (1) the coherent and flexible methodology of phasing out support, (2) the emergence of community-based and non-governmental organisations that take over VIAFP’s work after the withdrawal of its staff, (3) the examples of organisational learning that improved the practice of the Programme, and (4) farmer groups overcoming the challenges during the extensive phase, are strong signs of sustainability.

However, further attention and work from the Programme is required when it comes to its role after terminating support, the financial sustainability of emerging organisations, women’s rights and the lack of carrying out any research after phasing out support to communities. Finally, the thesis highlights the practices within the Programme that increase its sustainability, as well as recommendations for further improvement.

Keywords: Sustainability of Aid; Vi Agroforestry Programme; Phase-out; Sustainable Development; International Development.

Supervisor: Dr. Fiona Roithberg, Department of Government, Uppsala University

Evaluator: Prof. Kjell Havnevik, Nordic Africa Institute

Sandru Razvan, Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University, Villavägen 16, SE- 752 36 Uppsala, Sweden
The Sustainability of Aid: The Case of the Vi Agroforestry Programme

SANDRU RAZVAN


**Summary:** Past evaluations of phased-out aid operations, although few, have shown that only a few projects or project results are sustained after phase-out. To contribute to filling this gap in the literature and ensuring that international development operations contribute to sustainable development, this thesis carries out such a sustainability assessment of the Vi Agroforestry Programme (VIAFP), a Swedish actor in the aid sector.

By combining an interview study and a policy analysis, the research uses the practice of phasing out support and the experience during the latter (extensive) phase of the Programme as indicators for sustainability. The phase-out methodology, which was developed by the Eastern Africa Office of VIAFP, was found to be both flexible and coherent, when it comes to withdrawing staff from the communities. Furthermore, the criteria to phase out and graduate a farmer group are not only based on the timeline of the project, but also on the capabilities of the group and the context that it works in (if there are any other sources of support available, for example). These aspects lead to an increased sustainability of VIAFP’s work, as the Programme makes sure that the farmer groups can cope with a phase-out before terminating support.

During the extensive phase of the Programme in which staff is gradually reduced, farmer groups face a multitude of challenges, which they need to overcome in order to graduate. The fact that all graduated groups overcome these challenges is a sign for their likely ability to overcome future challenges as well. Some of these challenges include aspects of organisational capacity (leadership, accounting, group management), practicalities and technical difficulties (need for specific seeds, means of transport, communication), funding and other challenges like the reluctance to change practices, culture and traditions, a low educational level, the short planning horizon of farmers, and land management and tenure, including women’s rights. Aware of these difficulties, the Vi Agroforestry Programme is actively training farmer groups to increase their capacity of overcoming these challenges.

Although sustainability is an important aspect of their work, the Vi Agroforestry Programme has to date not finalised any sustainability study after phase-out. It worked on the rationale that measuring the progress during the aid operations will tell about its likely sustainability after the end of these operations. There are in fact several signs that lead to the conclusion that VIAFP’s work is sustainable. These signs comprise (1) the examples in which VIAFP learned from the past and improved their procedures (organisational learning), like in the cases of developing a flexible and coherent phase-out methodology and adding new components like lobbying and advocacy, climate change and organisational development; (2) the long-term perspective on support (at least 6 years), which is at odds with the usual short-term project-based development work; (3) the fact that all graduated groups overcome the challenges of the extensive phase; and (4) the emergence of community-based or non-governmental organisations out of these farmer groups that continue the work of VIAFP in their communities.

However, aspects of sustainability within the Programme’s work could be further improved by, first and foremost, carrying out (quantitative) evaluation studies of groups that have been graduated for at least three years. Further, the role of VIAFP after phase-out needs to be reconsidered to move away from being a donor to being a partner. This rethinking should encompass the practice of financing farmer groups after phase-out and the focus on civil society while neglecting a strategic cooperation with government actors. The lack of financial sustainability of emerging community-based or non-governmental organisations and the lack of equal rights by women are also serious challenges for sustainability, which should be addressed by the Programme.

**Keywords:** Sustainability of Aid; Vi Agroforestry Programme; Phase-out; Sustainable Development; International Development.

Sandru Razvan, *Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University, Villavägen 16, SE- 752 36 Uppsala, Sweden*
Acknowledgements

I would like to take this occasion and thank the people that have helped me transform an idea into this Masters thesis. First and foremost I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Kjell Havnevik and the Nordic Africa Institute, for assisting me in developing my research interest and laying the foundations of this project. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Fiona Rotberg for her guidance during the development of the thesis, and the staff of the Vi Agroforestry Programme who have made researching this topic possible in the first place.
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The widely used concept of sustainable development has since its emergence drawn criticism around its elusiveness and definition. Yet in its most common usage, sustainable development stands in short for economic, social and environmental equity between generations (WCED, 1987). On the other hand, the sustainability character implies a temporal dimension to development; development, which is expected to last and be durable. In terms of sustainable international development, this means that not only should aid1 address economic, social and environmental factors holistically, but it should also be durable so that the benefits are sustained after the development projects are closed by the donors (Ika et al., 2012).

One of the main criticisms of sustainable development is the fact that it looks well on paper, but its implementation is not an easy task. Yet this implementation is the very reason why the Vi Agroforestry Programme (VIAFP) exists. The Programme has become one of the main Swedish actors in terms of reducing poverty and moving towards sustainable livelihoods in rural Eastern and Southern Africa. By carrying out development projects in the field of agroforestry, VIAFP has become part of the Swedish aid. Moreover, starting off as an organisation fully supported by donations from individuals, it has now become a major NGO with significant contributions while also receiving direct support from the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) (VIAFP, 2012a). VIAFP has started in 1983 with the aim of preventing desertification in the West Pokot District of the Rift Valley Province in Tanzania by spreading the knowledge about and application of agroforestry techniques (VIAFP, 2005). This approach has then shifted to a more holistic focus on sustainable livelihoods and it currently includes organisational development, financial services, climate change mitigation and market-oriented production, gender equality and HIV-AIDS, besides the traditional tree-planting work (VIAFP, 2010).

In terms of the first definition of sustainability, dealing with economic, social and environmental aspects holistically, VIAFP has been already assessed and it has constantly improved its practices (Havnevik, 2005). It has entered strategic partnerships with other organisations that complement its core work of agroforestry to ensure comprehensive help for its beneficiaries (Swedish Cooperative Centre to help with marketing and farmers cooperation; World Agroforestry Centre to cooperate in terms of research and agroforestry techniques; local governments to improve regional governance; and local NGOs) (VIAFP, 2012a).

In terms of the second definition, an assessment of the long-term sustainability of benefits deriving from the Vi Agroforestry Programme has not been carried out. Furthermore, previous research on the Programme has explicitly called for such an assessment (Johansson, 2007; Johansson & Nylung, 2008). Sustainability of their work is something that the Vi Agroforestry Programme aspires to, as mentioned in the Strategy Report for 2008-2011, “the strengthening of groups in order for them to become sustainable is a priority” (VIAFP, 2007:33). This was different in the past, when VIAFP was assessed in a 1995 capacity study which expressed scepticism about the sustainability of the projects: “Will the knowledge generated by the projects remain somewhere when the extension service is dismantled? (cited by Johansson & Nylund, 2008:29). This master thesis therefore aims to initiate this assessment and highlight potential points of improvement in terms of the sustainability of agroforestry operations carried out by VIAFP.

1.2 Key Concepts

1.2.1 Agroforestry

Agroforestry is a land-use system in which shrubs and trees are grown alongside crops or together with pastures or livestock to achieve better agricultural results, improved soil quality and increase the amount of fuel wood available (Tengnas, 1994). As a result, agroforestry techniques improve the livelihood of the practitioners by providing both food and fuel wood at the same time and on the same plot of land. Due to the gender division of work, rural women are more likely to be involved in agriculture and fuel wood collection (Bukenya et al., 2007; Havnevik, 2005), and thus agroforestry has a greater potential for helping rural women with their work.

1.2.2 The Vi Agroforestry Programme

Due to the well-known status of the Vi Agroforestry Programme among farmers in the covered area, it is always the local community who invites VIAFP to establish operations in their village. This invitation needs to be approved by the higher administrative government (usually at district level) and only then does the Programme start its work (Havnevik, 2005). On the one hand,
this ensures that only willing communities participate in the programme; and on the other, it creates a valuable connection between VIAFP, the local community and the district government. Before working with a new community, VIAFP carries out a socio-economic survey to evaluate the situation of the community, to identify previous conflicts, assess leadership and agro-ecological conditions. Only then can the extension work start. The respective community is involved via a Participatory Rural Appraisal tools and through these exercises, they establish community development plans. The Programme uses a Farmer Enterprise Development methodology, which aims to include farmers in both planning and implementation of the project (VIAFP, 2007). At first, the Programme was working with individual farmers; it has then gradually changed to working with farmer groups and is now currently implementing a new strategy of working in national consortia with farmers organisations or networks (VIAFP, 2012b).

The Programme is usually organised in two phases: the intensive phase involving 500–1,000 households in agroforestry techniques and practices for the first two-three years; followed by an extensive phase of another two-three years covering an area of 5,000–10,000 households and making sure that “sustainable levels of knowledge, practice and organizational strength” (VIAFP, 2007:36) have been reached. These levels mean that at least 80% of the local population have knowledge of correct agroforestry practices, point at which the Programme can withdraw its support (SCC-Vi Eastern Africa, 2009; VIAFP, 2012a). It can then establish another operation in a nearby community, while still being able to help in the previous cases if needed. As a result, after roughly six years of work within a community, farmers should have the knowledge, skills and tools to implement agroforestry practices themselves, as well as to maintain these practices in the long-term (ibid).

1.2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation
The concepts of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) have emerged in the field of international development out of the belief that measuring the performance of an aid project during its life-time as opposed to assessing what went right or wrong at the end, will give the implementers the chance to correct or improve the on-going project (Cracknell, 2000). The two concepts are different, but there is no agreement within the literature on what exactly those differences are (Crawford, 2004; IFAD, 2002; UNDP, 2002).

The concept of organisational learning comes from the idea that, like individuals, organisations can learn and improve their work. The ability to learn for an organisation leads to increased adaptiveness and therefore organisational survival (Britton, 2002; Crawford, 2004). Translated into the field of international development, this means that through organisational learning, aid organisations can improve their work by learning from the past and adapt to the present, consequently increasing aid effectiveness.

1.2.4 Sustainability in the Aid Sector
In the domain of international development, the sustainability of a development project is, simply put, the ability for the project and its benefits to sustain themselves without outside interference or support after donor funding has been withdrawn (Khang & Moe, 2008; Ika et al., 2012). Therefore, sustainable agroforestry operations are those that increase the capacity of the farmers to initiate, maintain and develop agroforestry practices to such an extent, that they can do this without the help of VIAFP. According to current programme practices, this level is expected to be reached within six years of project initiation.

However, in the case of most international development organisations, and in the case of VIAFP, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) takes place at the project level and ceases together with the withdrawal of the donors (Alkenbrack & Shepherd, 2005). This means, there is no assessment of the agroforestry practices within a community in the long-term after donor funding phase-out. Consequently, there is no information about how and if agroforestry practices are being continued in the targeted communities.

1.3 Aim and Research Question
The main question that I address in the thesis is how can the Vi Agroforestry Programme enhance the sustainability of its aid operations? In order to answer this question, the thesis dwells on the following sub-questions:
1. What is the phase-out model that VIAFP is using and how is it implemented? This will lead to an evaluation of the model by looking at both policies and practices within the organisation;
2. What is the experience of VIAFP during the extensive phase, the period of three years in which the Programme can still intervene in the communities and help them overcome their challenges to maintaining agroforestry practices?
3. What evidence is there to suggest that the operations carried out by VIAFP are sustainable or not? Are communities from which the VIAFP has withdrawn its support still practising agroforestry?

This set of questions focuses on the practices and experiences of the organisation, starting from the extensive phase of support, phase-out of direct support in the community and beyond. As a result,
the research will analyse how the Programme is carrying out its projects and particularly how it terminates them; and finally, if there are any signs for the sustainability of the agroforestry operations carried out with the communities.

The study looks at (1) how phase-out has been implemented, and (2) the organisation's experience with the extensive phase as indicators for the sustainability of their operations. This rationale is based on the assumptions that:

- if communities maintain their practice of agroforestry without major challenges during the extensive phase, it is a strong sign of their capacity to do so even after VIAFP completely withdraws from the area.

Resulting from these two sections, the thesis establishes if and to what degree the aid operations are sustainable.

1.4 Structure
This paper will continue by first presenting the existing literature related to the topic of sustainability of aid and the concepts that are critical to conducting an assessment of sustainability: the notions of monitoring and evaluation, accountability and aid effectiveness, post-phase-out evaluation and finally, the very notion of sustainability of aid (Chapter 2). This literature review will be followed by a description of methodology, including the analytical framework that governs this study, the types and sources of data used, as well as the limitations that are inherent to the research (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 will dwell on the topic of phasing out support by first introducing the theoretical recommendations for terminating support and then comparing the reality to these recommendations. This chapter will be followed by an assessment of the experience of the Programme during the extensive phase, while the emphasis will be put on the challenges that farmer groups face during this phase of development operations (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 will draw on the findings of the previous two chapters, as well as other signs of sustainability that have arisen from this research, and result in a thorough discussion on the sustainability of the work of the Vi Agroforestry Programme. The chapter will discuss the prospects of a sustainability study within VIAFP, the positive points that have been incorporated into the work of VIAFP, followed by a reflection on the points that require further attention. Finally, the thesis will conclude by summarising the main findings and arguments of this research and answer the research question by looking at how sustainable the work of VIAFP is and how its sustainability could be improved.

2. Literature review
2.1 Introduction
This chapter will address some of the theoretical concepts around carrying out a sustainability assessment and sustainability of aid itself. By introducing the practice of monitoring and evaluation and then specifically post-phase-out evaluation, the chapter points towards the importance of carrying out such an evaluation; they act as tools in achieving two of the virtues of development work, accountability and effectiveness. Finally, the chapter returns to the concept of sustainability of aid and reveals the discussion around it, both in academia and international fora.

2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation
The first proponent of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in the 1970s, Herb Turner introduced the idea of monitoring the project throughout its life-span instead of only looking at the positives and negatives at the end of the project (Crawford & Bryce, 2003). It was Casley and Lury (1981) who have introduced the concepts within the World Bank, from where they spread to other development actors. M&E is based on the assumption that information about the performance of an organisation will lead to organisational development; and that information about the performance of an on-going aid project will make it possible to improve the project during its life-time (Cracknell, 2000). Aid projects aim to maximise the impact that they are having on their partner communities and thus monitoring and evaluation is at the core of “managing for impact” (IFAD, 2002:2-3). M&E helps in responding and adapting to changing conditions and thus increases the likelihood of achieving the intended impacts (ibid).

While there is general agreement on the importance of monitoring and evaluation (Anbari et al., 2008; Cracknell, 2000; Crawford, 2004; OECD, 2005; 2008; 2011; UNDP, 2002; World Bank, 1996), there is no such clear consensus on what the definition and differences between the two concepts are. Generally, monitoring is the “continuous assessment of the intervention and its environment with regard to the planned objectives, results, activities and means” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 1999). In contrast, evaluation is considered a reflective process that asks “more fundamental questions about the overall progress and direction of a project” (IFAD, 2002:2-3). The World Bank (1996) strikes a difference between monitoring, which it sees as an “ongoing process of data capture and analysis for the purpose of
control”, and evaluation “a periodic process of assessment for the purpose of learning”.

Table 2.1 highlights the differences between monitoring and evaluation in their most distinct form. Consequently, monitoring is concerned with regularly measuring the performance of a project based on indicators, focussing on doing the thing right (efficiency); and it is done internally by the project management for the project management. Evaluation on the other hand is concerned with doing the right thing (effectiveness), a reflective process through which the emphasis is put on how the project and the whole organisation can be improved. Whereas monitoring deals with indicators, inputs and outputs, evaluation involves the results and effects of the project, and is carried out, ideally, together with the stakeholders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitoring</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal focus on management needs</td>
<td>External focus on stakeholder needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned with efficiency</td>
<td>Concerned with effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly scheduled reporting processes</td>
<td>Periodically scheduled investigative processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on decision-making and accountability</td>
<td>Emphasis on organisational learning and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks “are we doing the thing right”?</td>
<td>Asks “are we doing the right thing”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project team accountable to project management</td>
<td>Project management accountable to stakeholders – beneficiaries and donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempts to measure inputs, activities &amp; outputs</td>
<td>Attempts to measure effects and impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 Differences between monitoring and evaluation. Adapted from Crawford (2004)

However clear these differences might seem theoretically, when it comes to implementing monitoring and evaluation, the borders seemed more blurred. The UNDP (2002: 24) considers that “evaluation is an important monitoring tool and monitoring is an important input to evaluation”. Recognising that the differences between the two concepts are fluid, IFAD (2002:2-3) note in their guide on monitoring and evaluation that “There is no consensus about terminology in planning and M&E. This Guide does not make an absolute distinction between “monitoring” and “evaluation” because, in practice, the two processes overlap and are part of a systematic participatory learning process.”

Consequently, evaluation and monitoring are seen as two distinct operations, yet they inform each other and should thus be viewed holistically (Crawford, 2004). The aim of M&E is to enable actors to assess their organisation-wide performance (UNDP, 2002), yet most M&E practice takes place at the project level (Crawford, 2004). This results in a discrepancy which makes critical thinking and reflection on the overall performance of an organisation difficult.

The current section has discussed the various definitions of monitoring and evaluation, and why it is important in development work; it has also briefly touched on the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness and how they are linked to monitoring and evaluation. The next section will go into greater depth on these issues.

2.3 Accountability and Aid Effectiveness

Monitoring and evaluation, as we have seen so far, deal with measuring the performance of an organisation or project, and they answer crucial questions about development operations. The following section will in turn deal with the concepts of accountability and aid effectiveness as some of the topics that M&E aim to address.

2.3.1 Accountability

The majority of aid is financed by actors in the Global North, be them governments, civil society or companies, channelled through implementing agencies and finally aimed at benefiting the Global South. Crawford (2004) points out the use of the term 'implementing agency' - rightly using the word 'agent' as a “person or organisation that performs a particular service; typically one that involves liaising between two other parties” (Crawford, 2004:70). This agent is thus charged with serving both the interests of the donors in the North, as well as the beneficiaries in the South. To ensure trust in the flow of capital that runs between these actors, accountability has become a major prerequisite for sustaining the support of donors. Accordingly, the Accra Agenda for Action of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that “We recognise that greater transparency and accountability for the use of development
resources—domestic as well as external—are powerful drivers of progress” (OECD, 2008:5).

Accountability has been introduced to development to ensure political authorities and the general public that the maximum benefits are achieved through a given operation, i.e. that the resources provided are used efficiently (OECD, 1991). While accountability was initially concerned with efficiency and demonstrating the correct use of resources, it has gradually become concerned with accountability for efficacy, i.e. demonstrate that the correct means for development have been used in the project design. Lastly, the concept has moved further to accountability for effectiveness, which shows how an implementing agency as a whole has positively contributed to sustainable development (Crawford, 2004). Consequently, accountability has become a requirement by which implementing agencies have to demonstrate to their stakeholders that they are doing the right thing (effectiveness), the thing right (efficiency), by using the right means (efficacy).

2.3.2 Aid effectiveness
The question Is aid working? is being often discussed in the media, pointing towards the cases in which aid operations have not achieved the outcomes they intended to have. These outcomes are determined not only by the ecological, social and economical sustainability of the interventions, but also by the performance of the aid organisation.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was one attempt at coordinating the major donor countries in adopting similar standards for aid effectiveness. This comes from the realisation that together with an increase in the amount of aid that is to be delivered to the Global South, there has to be an increase in effectiveness of aid as well. They argue that a partnership approach to development between donors and beneficiaries and ‘managing for results’ will lead to greater aid effectiveness. The latter is described as “managing and implementing aid in a way that focuses on the desired results and uses information to improve decision-making” (OECD, 2005:7). It calls for specific indicators, timetables and targets for achieving aid effectiveness and underlines the importance of monitoring and evaluation in measuring it. This view is echoed by the UNDP, which states that “the focus of monitoring and evaluation is to enhance the effectiveness of UNDP assistance” (UNDP, 2002:31). Bringing accountability, aid effectiveness and M&E together, the Accra Agenda (2008), the follow-up of the Paris Declaration, reads “achieving development results – and openly accounting for them – must be at the heart of all we do” (OECD, 2008:2). Therefore, accountability and aid effectiveness are seen as the virtues of good development, and M&E are the tools that make sure that aid agencies work towards these virtues.

While the Paris Declaration calls for donors to “increase aid effectiveness by strengthening the partner country’s sustainable capacity to develop, implement and account for its policies to its citizens and parliament” (OECD, 2005:4), it fails short of requiring aid to be sustainable. Despite implicitly dealing with the sustainability of aid by aiming for sustainable development, it is not mentioned whatsoever, missing an important opportunity for linking aid effectiveness and aid sustainability. The first notable international meeting that directly dealt with the sustainability of aid was the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation that took place in late 2011. Most countries have declared their support for the Busan Partnership Document, which quite strongly demands for sustainability of development work by stating that “sustainable development results are the end goal of our commitments to effective co-operation” (FHLFAE, 2011:2) and that there is a need to “strengthen our efforts to achieve concrete and sustainable results. This involves better managing for results, monitoring, evaluating and communicating progress” (FHLFAE, 2011:3). Consequently, aid is no longer only required to be accountable and effective in producing results, but these results are required to be sustainable as well; monitoring and evaluation are tools in achieving this goal. While there is no direct call for an assessment of the sustainability of aid operations, the requirement to carry out such assessments is evident.

2.4 Post-phase-out Evaluation
The previous sections have introduced the concepts of monitoring and evaluation, accountability and aid effectiveness. The ways all these concepts link together is that monitoring and evaluation are used to improve a development agent’s accountability and learning with the aim of ultimately increasing aid effectiveness. Therefore accountability and learning are two steps and means of achieving greater aid effectiveness. The current section will explore in more detail how monitoring and evaluation, and in particular post-phaseout evaluation, can directly affect the effectiveness of aid operations. While not discarding the importance of monitoring, this section will mainly dwell on evaluation as a way of understanding the results and impacts of aid operations\(^2\), since “in the development context, evaluation refers to the

\(^2\) A reminder of the distinctions between monitoring and evaluation can be found in Table 2.1 in Section 2.2
Several ways of categorising evaluation have been proposed and Cleland (1985) was among the first to propose a distinction based on the stage of the project: pre-project, ongoing project and post-project evaluations. Post-project evaluation should link the effectiveness of achieving the goals stated at the beginning of the project, the efficiency of using resources and the knowledge obtained by running the project. This evaluation should then be used for future projects and thus increase the project success (Anbari et al., 2008). However, Cleland's understanding of post-project evaluation targets the time immediately after phaseout, implying a reflective view on the whole project as opposed to looking at what happens to the project after phase-out. Consequently, post-project evaluation, according to Cleland, is a review of the project during its lifetime and not an assessment of its sustainability.

Another classification of evaluation is proposed by Crawford et al. (2004), as they describe three evaluation mandates for an aid project system:
- management evaluation (mainly concerned with the efficiency of the implementation, i.e. the inputs to the project and how they have been used);
- intervention evaluation (mainly concerned with assessing the efficacy of the projects by looking at the project design; if the means have been appropriate);
- development impact evaluation (mainly concerned with the effectiveness of the development policies and strategies, i.e. the project's contribution to sustainable development)

By linking development impacts to sustainable development, Crawford et al. make an implicit connection to the sustainability of aid, yet they fall short of explicitly calling for it. By omitting a temporal scale to development impacts, development impact evaluation more likely resembles Cleland's post-project evaluation (a review of the project experience and outputs) as opposed to an assessment of the sustainability of those development impacts in the long-term.

A more nuanced description of post-phaseout evaluation is provided by Khang & Moe (2008), as development operations "should be evaluated at the end of the project by a different set of criteria that are based essentially on the development impacts, the sustainability and the acceptance of the project achievements by the stakeholders and the development community in general". (Khang & Moe 2008:77)

While recognising a need to assess development impacts, Khang & Moe add the need for evaluating the sustainability and acceptance of these development impacts in the long-term. Despite the fact that they neglect the possibility of the beneficiaries taking over the projects from the donors and continuing the projects themselves as opposed to only sustaining the project impacts (the sustainability of project achievements versus the sustainability of the projects themselves), the authors make a valuable contribution by adding sustainability to the set of criteria of post-phaseout evaluation.

An explicit call for an assessment of the sustainability of aid, Stockmann (1997) emphasises that post-phaseout research is critical because only after the withdrawal of aid can there be a real analysis of sustainability. These analyses are important because they offer new possibilities for learning, allowing "for a more detached view, comparative assessments, and the sounding out of fundamental strategies" (Stockmann 1997:1768).

Linking sustainability and organisational effectiveness, he recognises the importance of follow-up support to maintaining organisational effectiveness, by first assessing whether projects are sustainable, and then how the sustainability aspects of the projects can be supported. This goes much further than the current approach to development, which involves nothing beyond phaseout. It is a call for a post-phaseout period of evaluation and support that enhances the sustainability of the operations.

This section has looked at various arguments around the concept of post-phaseout evaluation. Ultimately, it is all linked to assessing and enhancing the sustainability of development operations and their results. The next section will deal more extensively with the concept of sustainability of aid.

2.5 Sustainability of Aid

The 2000 Meltzer Commission established that over 50% of all development projects carried out by the World Bank in Africa until that date are "failed". Most often, organisational reasons are named for this failure such as poor management of stakeholders, faulty project design or a delay between problem identification and project establishment (Ika et al., 2012). Although a worldwide assessment of development projects has not been carried out, the rate of failure among World Bank projects can be an indicator of the success rate of international development projects generally. Similarly, a study by Kean et al. (1988 cited by Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 1992) assessed the sustainability of 212 projects of US development assistance and concluded that only 11% of the projects were considered to have great chances of being sustained after the termination of
support. Furthermore, a study by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (1996) on their own projects in Ghana established that out of the total 448 groups that were involved in the project, 399 (89%) were considered ‘failed groups’ with no regular group meetings or activities after project phase-out. In order to increase the rate of successful projects, Ika et al. (2012) and Khang & Moe (2008) suggest focusing on Critical Success Factors, which in the case of international development, are relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability; similar to the criteria that the OECD Development Assistance Committee uses when assessing projects (Ika et al. 2012).

In its simplest definition, the sustainability of development projects is the ability of said projects to maintain themselves or the outcomes derived from them, after the donors have phased out their support (Ika et al. 2012; Khang & Moe 2008). Early on, Cassen (1986) has pinpointed to the life of the projects after donor phaseout and the need to look at the sustainability of projects, although the author has not explicitly called it so: “A subject requiring much more attention is the life of projects beyond the time of the donors’ involvement. Perhaps one question above all deserves asking more often about most aid: will this help in the long-run to increase the recipients’ self-reliance?” (Cassen, 1986:307)

In spite of the experience of aid operations since the call made by Cassen for looking beyond phase-out, the sustainability of aid has not gained the mainstream status that it deserves in international fora. It is only recently that the topic is slowly growing as a new focus of development discourse (notably the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation). Aspects like success factors of development projects, including sustainability (Ika et al., 2012) and post-phaseout assessments (Stockmann, 1997) have so far not been thoroughly addressed. According to the OECD Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), “achieving development results – and openly accounting for them – must be at the heart of all we do. More than ever, citizens and taxpayers of all countries expect to see the tangible results of development efforts” (OECD 2008:16).

While focussing on achieving results, there is no mentioning of the sustainability of the results throughout the documents, missing an important opportunity for making aid truly effective in the long-term for its beneficiaries. Only in its latest work (2011) does the OECD start to include the sustainability of development interventions, as stated in the specific objectives of evaluation, according to which evaluation should “ascertain results (output, outcome, impact) and assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of a specific development intervention” (OECD 2011:16). One of the potential reasons as to why sustainability has not been more readily included in project evaluation is the difficulty in evaluating the sustainability of a project due to the intangible character of its outcomes, which are mostly “soft” goals (Khang & Moe, 2008).

2.6 Conclusion
This chapter has introduced the existing discourse surrounding the topic of sustainability of aid. By first introducing the concepts of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), the paper has presented the tools that aid workers use to assess the performance of their projects and organisations, while offering them the input for improving the future performance of their operations. Following this, I have dealt with some of the virtues of international development: accountability and effectiveness, in order to explain the current standards of development work.

Identified as a gap in mainstream development discourse, the following section has exposed the relevance of post-phaseout evaluation and the academic arguments supporting it. Assessing the sustainability of development projects can only be done by carrying out a post-phase-out evaluation and thus, this becomes crucial in reaching sustainable international development practices. Lastly, the chapter has dwelt on the topic of sustainability of aid, noting its theoretical importance, its slow emergence in international fora and the generally poor record of development projects so far.

3. Methodology
3.1 Analytic framework
This study is grounded in the field of sustainable development, but besides the conventional three pillars of environmental, social and economic sustainability, this thesis focuses on a particular type of development, and that is aid. As such, the main field of this study is sustainable international development, bridging the academic fields of Sustainable Development and Development Studies, by looking at the sustainability of aid.

Most of the development discourse does not emphasise the sustainability of development assistance (OECD, 1991;2005;2008; UNDP, 2002), or does not call for an assessment of said sustainability (OECD, 2011; Slob & Jerve, 2008). Faced with this gap, this current research emphasises the importance of assessing the
sustainability of aid (Alkenbrack & Shepherd, 2005; FAO, 1996; FHLFAE, 2011; Ika et al., 2012; Khang & Moe, 2008; Stockmann, 1997), and carries out such an assessment. This appraisal is done by looking at issues like phase-out and the experience of the organisation during the extensive phase of support, as indicators for the sustainability of the development work.

The study is an example of exploratory research, as it aims to identify if the development projects carried out by VIAFP can be considered sustainable, and how their sustainability can be improved. Furthermore, the research is based on a qualitative study of the Vi Agroforestry Programme and as such, does not create the possibility of generalising the findings to other development actors. However, the case of VIAFP offers an in-depth assessment of the sustainability of the work of a development NGO and as such can be used as a lesson for other development actors.

3.2 Sources and types of data
To complete the analysis, the study draws on a desktop study of secondary data, mainly international development and project management literature, to create the benchmark according to which the case of the Vi Agroforestry Programme will be assessed. Relevant international agreements and declarations (the OECD Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Change, the Busan Partnership Document), guidelines and evaluations of development agencies (FAO, 1996; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, 1999; Slob & Jerve, 2008) and academic articles (Alkenbrack & Shepherd, 2005; Anbari et al. 2008; Crawford & Bryce, 2003; Ika et al., 2012; Khang & Moe, 2008; Stockmann, 1997) have been used in creating the benchmark.

Additionally, in order to gather data on the practices of the Vi Agroforestry Programme, both primary and secondary data were used, through an interview study and policy analysis respectively. Semi-structured interviews have been carried out in the period June - July 2012 with: (in chronological order)
- Development and Policy Officer at the VIAFP office in Stockholm (Hanna Wetterstrand), in order to discuss the approach that VIAFP has towards development, the evolution of the Programme and its future, the cases of organisational learning and the Programme's internal functioning (face to face interview);
- the Project Managers in Kisumu, Kenya (Wilson Nyariwo), Kagera, Tanzania (Damas Masolojo), and Mara, Tanzania (Bjorn Horvath), discussing the experience of phase-out and extensive phase at their project, the sustainability of their work and monitoring and evaluation within their project. Sample questions of the interview can be found under Appendix 1 (phone interviews);
- the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer in the Kitale Project (Emmanuel Wachiye), who acts as an interim M&E Officer for the whole Programme, discussing monitoring and evaluation within the Programme, the Participatory Impact Assessments and the Octagon tool that are used for M&E, and the follow-up assessments of VIAFP's work (phone interview);
- Programme Director of SCC-Vi Agroforestry Eastern Africa (Bo Lager), talking about internal and external evaluations of the Programme, phaseout and the experience during the extensive phase from the overall Programme perspective;
- field staff from the Mara Project (Murungi Kajumulo), providing further clarifications into the practicalities of Vi Agroforestry Programme's work (email correspondence).

For the policy analysis, I have included the publicly available annual reports and strategy outlines of the organisation, as well as information provided via the organisation's website (VIAFP 2007; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012a; 2012b). These have been complemented by internal documents and reports (SCC-Vi Eastern Africa, 2012; VIAFP, 2005; VIAFP & SCC, 2012) and guidelines (SCC-Vi Agroforestry, 2007; SCC-Vi Eastern Africa, 2009), as well as external evaluations of and research projects on the Vi Agroforestry Programme (Bukenya et al., 2007; Chipeta et al., 2010; Johansson, 2007; Johansson & Nylund, 2008; Havnevik, 2005, 2008; Sida 2000; 2012; Smeds, 2011).

Being a qualitative study, most data employed in this research is qualitative to create a detailed picture of the current situation and the best practices recommended by the literature.

3.3 Limitations
In his analysis of German aid, Stockmann (1997) draws a distinction between internal and external sustainability in terms of organisations and their projects. Internal sustainability is said to deal with financial and organisational management, appropriate use of technologies and skilled personnel, while in contrast, external sustainability is the dissemination of innovations brought forward by the project to the systems it is trying to improve (ibid). In both cases, but especially in the latter, there is a difficulty in evaluating the sustainability of aid operations due to the intangible character of their outcomes, which are mostly “soft” goals (Khang & Moe, 2008). This difficulty of pointing out which outcomes are exclusively due to VIAFP and which are due to broader societal changes like improved education, population growth, improved governance or international affairs, has been
In conducting this research, I have had to deal with several challenges, two of the most significant ones being that:
(1) this research was carried out without a field study, which made it impossible to visit old project sites and assess the sustainability of the aid work myself. Instead, I had to rely on the information provided by the VIAFP staff; use indicators for the likely future sustainability of the projects as opposed to assessing the sustainability directly at phased-out project sites, and complement the primary sources of data (interviews) with secondary sources obtained by other authors (evaluations of and research projects on Vi Agroforestry's work); Due to technical and practical reasons, the research uses the experience of VIAFP staff only and not that of farmers, which leads to a potential bias. As a form of triangulation to limit this trend, interviews were carried out with staff both in Stockholm and in Africa; as well as with different Project Managers in parallel to diversify the responses obtained through the interviews.
(2) my local supervisor and contact person, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for the Programme, passed away shortly after the onset of my research. This made it difficult to obtain certain valuable information about the M&E practices within the Programme and impossible to access information from the M&E database of the organisation. This event also negatively impacted on the quality of the most recent M&E report and hampered the carrying out of a local study into the sustainability of the aid work of the Mara project.

Other notable difficulties in carrying out this research were technical issues regarding the phone interviews and sound quality, and the inherent limitation of phone interviews as opposed to face-to-face interviews. Furthermore, data collection took place during the summer months, which saw many staff out of office or some unable to participate in the study at all.

In spite of these challenges, I believe that enough relevant information was available to conduct this research as the first attempt in assessing the sustainability of the development work carried out by the Vi Agroforestry Programme.

3.4 Procedure
Since the assessment of the actual sustainability of the projects on the ground is impossible, this thesis will employ aspects of (1) phase-out, and (2) the extensive phase as indicators for the likely future sustainability of the projects.

In terms of phaseout, the thesis will first present the theoretical recommendations surrounding it, its relevance for sustainability and then compare and contrast it to the practice of phasing out projects within the Vi Agroforestry Programme. In terms of assessing the organisation's experience with the extensive phase, the thesis will first present this experience, followed by a commentary on how the findings could impact on the sustainability of the projects.

4. Phase-out of aid operations
4.1 Introduction
The current chapter will dwell on the topic of terminating development projects, its relevance for sustainability, what the literature recommends for a successful phaseout and how withdrawing support is carried out within the Vi Agroforestry Programme. Phasing out, withdrawing support or terminating a project all denote the decision of the implementing agent to decrease its presence in and help towards the communities that it has entered with the aim of development, and gradually close or hand over the project that it was working on.

4.2 The theoretical model of phase-out
The sustainability of a development project deals with the experience of the project after phaseout. While building on the whole project, the sustainability can only be assessed once the project or support has been terminated and the beneficiaries and other stakeholders are continuing without the support of the donor. As a result, the phase-out is the first point at which the focus of a sustainability study should rest. For example, in an assessment of aid effectiveness, the lack of an explicit phaseout strategy was named as one of the major hindrances to the sustainability of the work of the UNDP (CIDA, 2012).

In their work, Alkenbrack & Shepherd (2005) postulate recommendations for a successful phaseout, and these include:
- the need to be flexible to be able to respond to changes in the outside environment, including socio-economic, environmental, political or legal changes;
- incorporate several sectors in planning and implementing the phaseout to ensure a coordinated approach;
- the need for consistency during the phaseout and enough time;
- sufficient capacity within the beneficiaries to continue the project and institutionalise skills for supervisory and management positions.

Besides the requirements suggested by the authors above, other aspects that I consider important are:
- the time within a project timeline when the phase-out is planned and designed; phase-out should be planned at the onset of the project, and a project should work towards the aim of phasing out (Havnevik, 2005). This view is echoed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which stresses “the need for a systematic approach to developing explicit project phase-out strategies and sustainability designs that are integrated into the early stages of program development” (CIDA, 2012:42).
- the criteria that are being used to determine if a project is ready to be phased out (Wetterstrand, Stockholm Office). In most cases, the duration of a project (and connected to this, the available funding) is the single most important criterion for phasing out, while in some cases it is the sole criterion for phase-out, disregarding the capacity of the beneficiaries to continue the project or sustain the project results.

Despite the clear requirements for a successful phase-out, the financial, organisational and time constraints on the ground make it sometimes difficult to implement them fully. Within a development project, funding for research ends with the phase-out of the project, making it difficult to evaluate the phase-out process itself (Alkenbrack & Shepherd, 2005). Similarly, the lack of funding also affects the evaluation of the project after phase-out, i.e. carrying out a sustainability study of the project. To counteract this, donors should set aside funding from the start for post-phaseout Monitoring and Evaluation.

4.3 The implementation of phase-out

When the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) assessed the Vi Agroforestry Programme for the first time it concluded that “presently, the implementation of the Program is open-ended. The Team found that insufficient thought has been given to issues related to phasing out” (Sida, 2000:3). VIAFP has taken this comment seriously and included in its Strategy Report for 2004-2007 the aim “to develop a model for phasing-out of subsidies to project areas so that in the long term farmers can, through their own efforts and their own organization, continue to improve their living conditions” (VIAFP, 2007). According to the following Strategy Report, this aim has been met and a phaseout model has been put in place. Additionally, the current structure of the projects has been changed to work towards a phaseout from the beginning of a project (ibid). The entire phase-out model has been developed by the Eastern African Office, as opposed to the Stockholm Office (Wetterstrand, Stockholm Office). This means that the people directly involved with the implementation of the Programme also had the task of devising the phase-out policies, which increases the likelihood of the phase-out to be moulded on the needs of the beneficiaries.

4.3.1 When a phase-out is carried out

When it comes to the criteria that are being used to determine if a phase-out should be implemented, the VIAFP writes:

“We consider the knowledge anchored in the society when almost all households (80% or more) have knowledge about and are practising agroforestry properly. At this time Vi Agroforestry can withdraw the support. This stage should be reached after five years in an A.o.C. We can then withdraw and establish in a nearby area. From that nearby area we can give a less intensive support for another five years.” (VIAFP, 2012a)

Similarly, the Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines of the Lake Victoria Regional Environmental and Sustainable Agricultural Productivity Programme (RESAPP) mention the output objective of “80% of households implementing different agroforestry techniques” (SCC-Vi Eastern Africa, 2009).

Asked about their own project areas, the project managers enumerate the capabilities of the farmers or farmer groups, and the project timeline as criteria for phase-out:

“Complete phaseout [takes place] depending on the capabilities of the groups and the timeline which we have to follow. We are working with this flexibly because groups are dynamic and they mature slower or faster; but after five years we believe that we should not spend more time and resources on these groups“ (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project).
Consequently, phase-out is a process that stretches over time so that “we are gradually thinning out the staff in the areas and we only focus on the groups that still require our support” (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project). The capabilities that need to be present are determined by quantified objectives and output targets (Masologo, Kagera Project). Further, groups are assessed using the Octagon tool that has been developed by Sida and targets (1) the organisational base, the organisation's (2) activities and outputs, (3) capacity development, and (4) relations (SCC-Vi Agroforestry, 2007). All eight aspects that are being analysed through the Octagon tool are described in Figure 4.1. For each aspect there is a score from 1-7, where a result of 6 or 7 means that the target has been fully achieved. However, most groups do not succeed in reaching this high score in all aspects, but rather an intermediary score of 4 or 5. An example of an octagon chart of an actual group can be found in Figure 4.2. When levels of at least 4-5 are reached, the groups are considered able to stand on their own and phase-out is initiated, sometimes differing from the initial schedule (Kajumulo, Mara Project).

The context in which the farmer groups operate is also a criterion for determining the point of phase-out. If there are other non-governmental

---

**Figure 4.1** The octagon tool and the aspects covered by it. Source: Kajumulo, Mara Project. Graphic created by using the open-source XMind Software.

**Figure 4.2** Octagon chart of the Upendo Women’s Group in Masonga, Tanzania. Source: Kajumulo, Mara Project
organisations (NGOs) that can provide services and help the groups, VIAFP is more likely to leave than in areas where there are no other NGOs that do work similar to that of the Vi Agroforestry Programme (Horvath, Mara Project).

In conclusion, the three factors of (1) the capabilities of the groups, (2) the schedule that has been established at phase-in for a phase-out, and (3) the context in which the groups work, are the criteria that the project offices are using for deciding when to phase out.

4.3.2 How a phase-out is carried out

After establishing when a phase-out is initiated, this section will look at how a phase-out of operations is carried out by the Vi Agroforestry Programme. There are a number of preparations that VIAFP is making before terminating support. In terms of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), a baseline is created at phase-in, with yearly reports on the progress of the group (using tools such as Participatory Impact Assessments, the Octagon tool, GIS/GPS tools, recording and reporting). These tools assess the capacity of the farmer groups and ultimately determine when they are ready to be on their own. When there is a decision to phase out, around one year before the termination of actual support, a final evaluation takes place, also referred to as an exit survey (Wachiye, M&E Kitale). This serves both in assessing the impact of the work done so far, as well as a final evaluation of the group. Additionally there are participative meetings in which the groups can have an input on what issues they would like to focus most attention before the final withdrawal of VIAFP staff (Lager, Programme Director).

Starting with the Lake Victoria Development Programme (2005-2008), the topic of phase-out is introduced and planned at phase-in in order for involved groups to know that there are finite resources and time offered by the Programme. One Project Manager summarised it as, “we send the signal that we are not the government, we are not here forever, if you don't join us the years we are there, we will not be there in 5 or 6 years” (Horvath, Mara Project). This is reflected by the Programme Director, who mentions that “phase-out really starts from when you phase in, it is really important that once you move into a new area, you meet with the local leaders, government representatives, so they really know what the project is for and also that this is a time-bound project and that during this time we want to achieve certain targets. […] It is really important for the farmers to know that Now I really have to utilise these guys the best way because they are not going to be here forever”.

Moreover, VIAFP trains farmer groups not only on agroforestry techniques and sustainable land management practices, but also on the topics of gender mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS, funding, organisational management, accounting, lobby and advocacy (VIAFP & SCC, 2012). This holistic approach aims to increase the capacity of groups to deal with the various challenges they will be facing.

Once the groups become stronger, VIAFP gradually reduces the presence of own staff on the ground and links the groups to other stakeholders and service providers in the area so that there is someone who can assist the groups in case they require it. Mr. Wachiye, the M&E Officer in the Kitale Project notes that “Before phaseout, we prepare other stakeholders like the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Forest Department and other private organisations/service providers. We link the groups to those organisations, we provide a forum where they can meet, and these organisations will continue working with those groups. They will continue with capacity building, monitoring and providing other services.”

There are also cases in which the farmers groups have become independent of Vi Agroforestry Programme's direct help and have registered as a community-based organisation (CBO) or a non-governmental organisation (NGO). In this situation, it is the newly formalised farmers’ organisations that continue with extension work and providing services to the local farmers, in effect taking over the role of VIAFP. In areas that have such formalised farmers’ organisations, the Vi Agroforestry Programme does not work with its own staff any longer, but instead cooperates with these newly established CBOs or NGOs on an equal footing (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project). Mr. Horvath, Manager of the Mara Project describes “one example where we have planned to phase out and we have developed a farmers network and they are registered as an NGO. Now, although the Vi [Agroforestry Programme] staff is phasing out, we financially support them to continue work in the area and we give them more extensive capacity building depending on their demands. Although we don't have our own staff there, we support them financially. This is a way for having more sustainability in the areas where we are pulling out.”
There are several good arguments for the Vi Agroforestry Programme to continue working with these newly formalised organisations. Among these arguments is the idea that the biggest challenges have been already overcome in educating, mobilising, organising and empowering these farmers and what is now needed is some final support for these organisations to become fully sustainable and self-sufficient. Nonetheless, the question arises when this support will end. There is a clear strategy on how to deal with phasing out VIAFP staff from the graduating areas and their direct involvement with the local organisations, but when and on what criteria there will be a termination of financial support to these newly established organisations is yet unclear. The recently started Lake Victoria Farmer Organisations’ Agroforestry Programme (FOA) (2012-2016) will directly deal with partner organisations in a consortium model, but these will only include three to five organisations at national level. The application for FOA deals with phase-out by saying “SCC-Vi Agroforestry identifies partner organisations to form part of the consortium and support their development for a limited amount of time. When it is mutually considered that the organisations in the consortium have obtained capacity and relevance to carry on without external support, SCC-Vi Agroforestry support is finalized. It is therefore essential to agree on the collaboration period for the consortium in the initial phase, to foster ownership, commitment and responsibility within the partner organisations. The consortium agreement enables long term sustainability of the cooperation and of the partners in the consortium. It is an “entry-strategy” in the initial phase but is in a way also the “exit-strategy” for SCC-Vi Agroforestry’s support. Agreeing on a limited period for the collaboration also favours the strategic and effective use of the support and collaboration”. (SCC-Vi Eastern Africa, 2012:4)

While this clarifies phasing out the collaboration with the national organisations, it does not deal with terminating financial support to local community-based organisations. Since financial support continues in some cases even after phasing out the direct work with the organisations, it has not been made clear when the financial support will be terminated.

Additionally, community facilitators are trained to be active in their communities when the Vi Agroforestry Programme have removed their own field staff. They will then continue the extension work and provide some services, especially to those groups of farmers that were lagging behind. This approach has been introduced in 2005 and since, community facilitators have created their own organisation and network to share experiences amongst themselves and offer mutual support. The Vi Agroforestry Programme fosters their work and provides them with training on how to access funds beyond the Programme (Masologo, Kagera Project). However, since the introduction of the community facilitators there has been no general assessment of their impact or work in the communities after the phase-out of VIAFP operations. Therefore, it remains unclear what impact these community facilitators have after withdrawing VIAFP staff from the area.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed in detail how the Vi Agroforestry Programme phases out its operations on the ground. After first establishing what the literature recommends for a successful phase-out (Section 4.2), the paper went on to consider how phase-outs are actually carried out on the ground (Section 4.3). Based on internal documents and interviews with members of staff, the most important criteria for initiating a phase-out are the capabilities of the farmers and their farmer groups, the timeline of the project and the context of the community that is involved. The chapter then went on to deal with the preparations for the phase-out that are carried out throughout a project's timeline and the processes that take place once a farmer group is considered strong enough to be on its own. The chapter also points to some issues that have not been clarified fully, like the lack of an assessment of the effectiveness and work of community facilitators after phase-out of operations in the locality, and the continuous financial support and training given to formalised organisations, which goes beyond phase-out of staff and operations in the area.

When comparing the recommendations given by the literature with the situation on the ground, the following points have to be highlighted:

- there is a strong flexibility in the phase-out operations to allow for slower groups to catch up on the faster ones. One Project Manager notes that “we are free to do a judgement on how well the groups are faring, especially when it comes to organisational support. If we feel that the group is emerging, we can stay for a bit longer to support it” (Horvath, Mara Project). By focussing on the capabilities of the groups as opposed to just the timeline of the project, VIAFP increases the chances of a successful phase-out and thus for the sustainability of their work.
- this flexibility also extends to outside circumstances and the context that the farmer groups and organisations work in: groups in areas with no other service providers are more carefully phased out as opposed to groups that can easily access other help besides VIAFP.
- by focussing on issues of capacity building of farmer groups, including aspects of management, funding, accounting, lobbying and advocacy, VIAFP increases the likelihood of the beneficiaries continuing the work by raising their organisational capacity.
- the phase-out model and its implementation are decided by the people directly involved in the phase-out process and this increases the chances that the phase-outs are carried out according to the needs of the beneficiaries.
- several other actors are involved in the phase-out, since VIAFP facilitates a dialogue between farmer groups and other service providers before terminating support.

This chapter aimed to introduce the topic of phase-out of support and analyse how terminating support is handled within the Vi Agroforestry Programme. This track record will be discussed again in chapter 6, particularly bringing together the Programme's experience of terminating support and the sustainability of their development work.

5. Experience during the extensive phase

5.1 Introduction
Vi Agroforestry Programme’s work with farmer groups consists of two phases, an intensive and extensive phase. During the first, great emphasis is put on extension work and direct support of farmer groups; while during the latter, staff is being reduced and support is thinned out and only provided on demand, particularly targeting organisational development. At the end of the extensive phase, operations are terminated and VIAFP phases out direct support in that particular area. Due to the reduction of staff and support, the extensive phase is for farmer groups the part of VIAFP’s work that is closest to the situation after phase-out. Therefore, the experience of farmer groups during this phase is an sign of their likely experience after phase-out.

During the intensive phase, farmer groups are trained in extension work and areas such as land use, environment and climate change; farmer enterprise development; farmer groups and demand-driven advisory services; capacity building and training; and policy and advocacy (VIAFP & SCC, 2012). Following this period of two to three years (maximally extended to four years), the field staff is being reduced and support is offered solely on demand. The transition from one phase to another is based “mainly on the number of households we have been working with and the adoption rate of sustainable agricultural practices and agroforestry in the communities and other interventions” (Lager, Programme Director). The scope of the work of VIAFP remains the same, but its intensity is reduced as is the number of staff working in the area.

5.2 Challenges for farmers during extensive phase
Since the extensive phase is an indication of the time after phase-out, the challenges that farmer groups face during the extensive phase offer an insight into the problems that these groups will face when they are on their own. Consequently, focussing on the difficulties during the extensive phase and assessing the solutions provided by VIAFP to overcome them is part of the sustainability assessment of their work. This section will discuss some of the challenges mentioned by VIAFP staff, clustered under the topics of organisational capacity, practical and technical issues, funding and other challenges.

5.2.1 Organisational capacity
Following a period of intensive work with the farmer groups, the extensive phase offers a type of remote support to those groups who require it. “The help of Vi is still crucial in the extensive phase given that the groups need guidance and advice because they are upcoming organisations. We talk of independence but it is a process, it doesn't come all of a sudden, we need to take them through this process through a gradual and systematic manner.” (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project)

Therefore one of the greatest challenges to these farmer groups is their sometimes limited capacity to work as an organisation. Despite the training that they receive from VIAFP, there are still deficiencies in areas of record keeping, accounting and planning work based on outputs. Internal conflicts within the group or aspects of leadership also negatively affect their work. To overcome these, VIAFP continues with organisational capacity building and trainings in conflict resolution and management (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project).

Due to the slow pace in organisational development, working with the farmer groups takes time, which can ultimately delay phase-out. As a solution, “we bring in other stakeholders and when we phase out, the groups continue to work with those stakeholders” (Wachiye, M&E Kitale).
5.2.2 Practical and technical issues

In spite of the training and capacity building that the farmer groups receive during the intensive phase, there are still difficulties that arise related to practical and technical issues. Example of such issues include the need for specific seeds, which VIAFP provides by cost-sharing with the farmer groups to send the message that it is the group's work and responsibility and that they have to invest their own resources as well (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project); or more seeds in general, which the farmers have been trained to collect and produce themselves yet are at first reluctant to do so since they have been accustomed to the service of receiving seeds from the Vi Agroforestry Programme (Horvath, Mara Project). Therefore a part of the challenge is to clearly communicate the fact that there will be a phase-out, that support is only temporarily and to build the awareness within the groups that they possess the knowledge to overcome future challenges.

5.2.3 Funding

One of the biggest challenges during the extensive phase and an even bigger one after phase-out will be the difficulty of finding enough funds to sustain their work. While the groups are established and might be working well internally, a secure flow of funding will help them overcome the very challenges that I discuss here.

For communication within the group and with other farmer groups and networks, “they need basic things like airtime to talk to each other; they need to meet which costs money because they need to travel. A challenge is always resources, especially if you have not prepared them on this. We gradually introduce cost-sharing, so they realise that it depends on themselves” (Horvath, Mara Project). Additionally, they require linkages to financial services and loans for investments to ensure that they have enough capital for maintaining and developing their work (Lager, Programme Director). Besides introducing cost-sharing, VIAFP trains the groups in how to access funding, introduces them to other service providers and potential donors and acts as a reference for the groups to certify their credibility, so that they can take out loans more easily (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project).

5.2.4 Other challenges

Besides the three types of challenges that have been discussed above, there are those that are linked to culture, government institutions and characteristics of agroforestry work.

There are often aspects of culture and traditions that make it easier or more difficult to adopt certain practices. For example, due to their socialist history, farmers in Tanzania are much slower in aspects of entrepreneurship and accessing the market than their Kenyan counterparts (Horvath, Mara Project); lower levels of education negatively impact on the intake of VIAFP’s trainings; and changing the way of life of people is not an easy task, regardless of their background (Masologo, Kagera Project). Unlike in other development sectors like microfinance, the benefits of agroforestry are not immediate but it takes several years before the farmers can see the results of their work. This means that the planning horizon has to be stretched, that there needs to be a change to think strategically and ahead in time (Horvath, Mara Project; Johansson, 2007). This can prove to be a challenge for farmers who wish to see tangible results quickly, while instead they need to maintain working with agroforestry practices for a longer time before receiving any benefits. To counteract this lack of visible benefits, group extension work is carried out, as this is found to be the most effective technique of disseminating agroforestry technology and practice (Bukenya et al., 2007).

Another challenge that the groups have to deal with arises from issues of land tenure and land use planning. There are many cases in which the use of land is not regulated, i.e. anyone can build, keep livestock and carry out agriculture, access water sources and forests without any supervision. This creates problems with land use management and conflicts take place. While some people plant trees, others graze their livestock in the same place and thus destroy the work of the first ones (Masologo, Kagera Project). VIAFP strives to cooperate with local authorities and community leaders to avoid such situations, but conflicts can arise with VIAFP staff gradually leaving the area.

Although not mentioned by the staff, there are other challenges that arise from land use and tenure.
VIAFP aims to target the poor, but the poorest amongst them do not usually own land or have rights over land, which makes it difficult or even impossible to carry out agroforestry practices. In cases where farmers use degraded or abandoned land, implementing sustainable land management, improving soil quality and fertility, and investing in the terrain might determine the original owner to return and claim the land back. This can then lead to conflicts over land in the community. Furthermore, land tenure has a gendered dimension, as women are the ones who predominantly work as small-scale farmers yet most women do not have rights over the lands they are working on (Englert & Daley, 2008; Mattsson, 2012). This lack of rights is a serious concern for the sustainability of the women’s work, since they cannot protect it legally.

5.3 Conclusion
This chapter aimed to explore the experience of the Vi Agroforestry Programme during the extensive phase of their work, particularly concentrating on the challenges that farmer groups face. This focus is due to the fact that the same challenges met during the extensive phase are likely to be met, sometimes in an even more serious form, after complete phase-out of support.

In spite of these challenges, “agriculture is the main occupation, so farmers do not give up on agroforestry, […] although their interest in agroforestry and sustainable land management might vary over time” (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project). However, when it comes to farmer enterprises, like bee-keeping, making sunflower oil and other processing businesses, some farmer groups have experienced failures and stopped these practices (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project). Based on a monthly field visit, staff can report if groups in their areas have challenges and how they overcome them or to what consequences it leads and this acts as an informal assessment of groups during the extensive phase (ibid). Aware of these challenges, VIAFP tries to prepare the groups and increase their capacity of dealing with these difficulties, “if staff works in a correct way, the groups should have been prepared for this; if not, the change and moving to the extensive phase might be abrupt” (Horvath, Mara Project).

6. The sustainability of VIAFP operations
6.1 Introduction
After exploring how and when VIAFP terminates its operations on the ground, and the experience and challenges during the extensive phase, this chapter aims to draw these two together and carry out a discussion on how they will likely affect the sustainability of the development work. Additionally, this chapter will highlight other issues that have come up during this research that might impact on the capabilities of the farmers and farmer groups to sustain the development results and operations.

6.2 A sustainability study within VIAFP
According to the M&E Guidelines for RESAPP, “In areas that are phased out, the last thing to do is an exit survey and later on (after 3 years) an impact assessment in order to report on the continuation of activities and results in the area where the programme is no longer present. […] Reporting to the programme will be done 3 months after the survey was conducted.” (SCC-Vi Eastern Africa, 2009)

Thus theoretically, three years after phaseout, an impact assessment is to be carried out to assess the continuation of activities and results, i.e. the sustainability of the aid work. However, when asked about any assessments of the work after phaseout, none of the Project Managers or the Programme Manager could point to any finalised assessment. So far there has been one attempt at carrying out such a study with groups that have stopped receiving support in 2010, but the study is still ongoing and therefore no detailed information could be provided, including any reliable quantitative data. The only indication about the possible outcome of the survey came from a field staff saying that

“Various exercises were conducted including PIA [Participatory Impact Assessments], Octagon and Exit survey whereby the report shows that in areas like Shirati sustainability of project activities is on good status due to presence networks of farmer groups and also there are committed community facilitators who facilitate the society on various issues accordingly.” (Kajumolo, Mara Project)

However, this rather general account opens more questions than it answers, for example about the fact that at phase-out field staff use PIA, Octagon and Exit surveys, and according to the information provided, they have used the same assessment in the sustainability study that took place around one year after phase-out. Clearly, assessing the sustainability of the work requires a different set of questions than the exit survey, but there was no reply to requests for further clarification.

There are two issues worth discussing at this point. First, the impact assessment dealing with the
sustainability of the development work is something that is required by RESAPP, which ran between 2009 and 2011. Therefore, technically, it is too early to ask for such assessments since RESAPP ended only recently. However, when working with farmers and farmers groups, VIAFP does not limit itself to the period of one funded programme but works continuously and thus their work is uninterrupted. Funded programmes include the Lake Victoria Development Programme (2005-2008), Lake Victoria Regional Environmental And Sustainable Agriculture Productivity Programme (2009-2011) and the current Lake Victoria Farmer Organisations’ Agroforestry Programme (2012-2016) (Masologo, Kagera Project). Throughout this time, VIAFP worked roughly in the same areas, adding new components to their work like lobbying and advocacy, and changing approaches from working with individuals to working with groups and networks (Masologo, Kagera Project). Therefore, even though RESAPP started in 2009, the work with the individual farmers that were involved in RESAPP started much earlier, yet no sustainability study was ever carried out.

This leads us to the second point that needs to be pointed out and that is the fact that there was no recognised need for assessing the sustainability of VIAFP's work since its inception. There was an assumption that “after 6 years of implementation, we can determine the likelihood of the farmers continuing with the practices. If they maintain these practices for a period of 4-5 years during the project, we regard this as a sign of sustainability” (Lager, Programme Director) and thus no extra assessment of sustainability was suggested. This way of thinking is also reflected in the lack of calling for sustainability assessments of development work in academia on the one hand, and international fora on the other (except for the recent Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation).

6.3 Improvements for sustainability

From its often discussed beginning to the present, the Vi Agroforestry Programme has changed its behaviour according to the feedback and criticisms it has received. Some of these changes have a beneficial impact on the sustainability of their work and thus, should be discussed here.

6.3.1 Examples of organisational learning

The change of approach from working with individual farmers only to working with communities, farmer groups and organisations had several beneficial effects on the sustainability of the work. Not only is group extension work more effective (Bukenya et al., 2007), but it also creates organisational and institutional capacity as “knowledge is planted in the groups and not just in individuals, […] we train farmers in financial literacy, how to organise themselves in cooperatives, and we introduce simple financial service systems” (Lager, Programme Director). In some cases, farmer groups register as community-based organisations or non-governmental organisations and continue VIAFP's work in their communities. If the groups see the need for it, they develop more advanced financial systems like Savings and Credit Co-operatives and even work together with banks (ibid).

In another example in the Kalungu zone of the Masaka district, the citizen committee established during the participatory work of VIAFP remained as a tool to deal with community development in the village even after VIAFP operations have been phased out (Havnevik, 2005). These are all examples in which the work of VIAFP has not only resulted in increased individual capacity, but in groups of like-minded people who share and collaborate to improve their own livelihoods.

The topic of concrete phase-out emerged in the work of the Vi Agroforestry Programme after external evaluators pointed at it: Sida (2000) hinting at the open-ended approach to carrying out projects; and Havnevik (2005) expressing the need for phase-outs to be introduced at phase-in. Faced with these suggestions, the Vi Agroforestry Programme has changed its methodology to respond to both recommendations/criticisms by the external evaluators. This is an example of organisational learning based on input from outside the Programme itself.

Other examples of organisational learning based on input from within the Programme include the lessons learned from negative past experiences. These include instances when the Programme moved to new project areas and had several difficulties, because of the top-down approach (Kitale) or because it neglected existing institutional structures (Masaka). As a result, there is now an increased awareness among project managers to pay attention to these matters when starting in new project areas (Havnevik, 2005).

Moreover, constant addition of new components to their work has ensured a holistic approach to training and capacity building of the beneficiaries. After starting with only agroforestry and sustainable land management practices to increase food security and prevent desertification, quickly came the realisation that this is not enough. Aspects of farmer enterprises, gender mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS, accounting, access to markets and
creating cooperatives were added to the list to complement the fact that not only did farmers need to produce more, but they also needed to be able to sell their products at a fair price. Later on, adaptation to climate change, organisational development, as well as lobbying and advocacy were introduced to help the newly emerging groups to be adaptive to a changing environment, be it natural, economical or socio-political. This gradual expansion of topics ensures that the farmers benefit from a well-rounded approach through their training, which, needless to say, increases their ability to master the difficulties encountered in their everyday work.

6.3.2 Other beneficial practices

One criticism of the development industry in general is the fact that funding is usually available for short-term projects in a domain where a long-term perspective is required. When it comes to the work that the Vi Agroforestry Programme is doing, having a Sida funded project of two to four years is not enough. In order to overcome this problem, the Programme carries over farmers from one funded project to the other, so they can work on their own timeframe of at least six years (Lager, Programme Director). Long-term financial support for VIAFP is needed to be able to make this happen and ensure that their work is effective. Through their strong support among individual donors in Sweden, VIAFP can rely on this long-term funding and thus carry out development work with a long-term perspective in a field where short-term planning is the norm. This advantage has a positive effect on the sustainability of their work, since working with farmers can be done at the farmers’ own pace and phase-outs can be implemented flexibly.

While the Busan Partnership Document (FHLFAE, 2011) calls for the sustainability of development results, Vi Agroforestry Programme’s work goes even further by ensuring that the work itself is carried on and not just its outcomes. By farmer organisations continuing and in effect, taking over, the development work, the Programme not only provides development to the farmers, but actively empowers them to help each other. This is a particularly valuable point taken the international discussion on ownership of development and participatory development. Through the new approach taken with the consortium model, this idea is taken even further since VIAFP will no longer implement development operations, but will be a part of a team dominated by national farmer NGOs.

Furthermore, the emergence of community-based and non-governmental organisations out of the farmer organisations that the Programme has helped strengthen is another sign of sustainability.

These organisations are fully independent, catering to their members and expected to withstand the challenges that they might face. VIAFP staff regularly meets representatives of these emerged organisations on farmers markets, farmers day and other agriculture-related events, as a form of informal updating on their situation (Lager, Programme Director).

6.4 Points of deliberation on the work of VIAFP

Out of the analysis of the phase-out procedure and the experience during the extensive phase, several aspects have emerged that need further thinking and research. These issues will be thoroughly discussed in this section.

Assessment of the work of the community facilitators

Introduced since 2005, community facilitators are supposed to be the early adopters of sustainable land management practices and local experts in their communities. Being trained by VIAFP and demonstrating how successful agroforestry can be, these facilitators are supposed to continue extension work and supporting local farmers after the withdrawal of VIAFP field staff. In spite of the positive idea of having voluntary local experts present after support termination, there has been no assessment into the work of these community facilitators. Therefore one could only guess as to how successful their work is and how their work contributes to the sustainability of VIAFP’s operations. A study of these community facilitators would provide feedback to the Programme, including the quality of their work, their contribution after phase-out, and the challenges the farmer groups are facing.

Transition to new service providers

Together with the decision to phase out support to farmer groups, VIAFP initiates a dialogue between these groups and other service providers in the area. The aim is to bring these two sides together, so that farmer groups can contact someone if they need more training or information in the absence of the Vi Agroforestry Programme. The question arises, how smooth is the transition to the new service providers and how is the experience with these new stakeholders? Since there has been no post-phase-out study of the farmer groups, there is no knowledge about this transition besides anecdotal accounts. A future study should not only assess the transition from services offered by the Vi Agroforestry Programme to those of other service providers, but also how this transition could be improved. These new stakeholders are supposed to be the contacts that farmer groups reach to when they cannot do something on their own and thus,
they are crucial to the sustainability of these groups.

**Ending all support for certain groups, total phase-out**

Currently, VIAFP works with own staff in extension work and capacity building of both farmers and their organisations. Once these groups go through the phases of the Programme, they are graduated and considered strong enough to be on their own. The organisations that emerge out of this process are autonomous in terms of their internal decision-making, but dependent when it comes to financial backing. Even in cases where cost-sharing was introduced, as the name implies, the costs are shared by these organisations, but are not fully covered by them. Finding enough resources to cover expenses is one of the challenges discussed in Section 5.2. and as it emerged from that discussion, this organisation still rely on outside help and funding. This is one major challenge for the sustainability of these organisations, since finding enough resources is paramount to their existence. Some of these community-based organisations have become very strong and apply for their own funding, write proposals and even have their own employees (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project). Others are not in such a strong position and currently VIAFP still supports some of these organisations financially or through cost-sharing for further trainings and capacity building and with information and manuals (Horvath, Mara Project; Wachiye, M&E Kitale). Yet if there were to be a total phase-out of support, what would happen to these organisations? Some will be able to receive government support, some might access other donor funding, while others will most certainly cease to exist. What this means for the Programme’s work is that it successfully works with farmer groups, helps them organise themselves and then facilitates the creation of community-based or non-governmental organisations that are not entirely financially self-sufficient. This is not just a criticism of VIAFP, but rather of the situation of civil society in general, since there are very few organisations that are entirely self-sufficient.

**Balance between phase-out and future cooperation**

As a development NGO, VIAFP's role is to make itself redundant, i.e. work towards a situation in which they are not needed any more. What the Programme does to achieve this is to train and facilitate farmer groups and organisations, which can continue the work VIAFP was doing in the past. Once farmer organisations reach this level, the Programme is supposed to phase out and terminate the support given to these organisations; but at the same time, VIAFP should maintain a fruitful cooperation with the emerged farmers’ organisations. This requires a balancing act between the need to terminate support on the one hand, and initiate cooperation as partners with these local organisations on the other. However, there is only a fine line between supporting and cooperating with a local organisation. Taking into consideration the unequal power, financial and historical relations between VIAFP and local organisation and the role of VIAFP to help, this balancing is not an easy task and should be thus taken seriously so as not to continue the development operations remotely after phase-out.

**Systematic approach to supporting farmer groups post-phase-out**

Following the previous point, VIAFP cooperates with emerging farmer groups and supports some of them financially or on demand even after phase-out of VIAFP staff in that region. In my research I have not come across a systematic way of dealing with this support, but rather the decision seems to be made ad hoc based on the demands of the local organisations. As mentioned before, the new FOA Project entails a phase-out of support to partner organisations within a consortium, but those partner organisations are usually nation-wide farmers networks and not local community-based organisations. The flexibility of this approach is praise-worthy, but I still believe that a systematic way to dealing with this should be introduced to ensure that this process is open and transparent for all farmer groups involved; and that support after phase-out is minimal to ensure that a phase-out remains a phase-out for the farmer groups. Currently, it seems like the only difference between the pre-phase-out and post-phase-out situations in terms of the services provided by VIAFP is the fact that before the phase-out there is still VIAFP staff present in the local communities.

**Working with forms of government and civil society**

In the past, the Programme has been criticised for implementing the projects themselves as opposed to working through local NGOs, “that a deforestation project is broadly based in the hands of the local people is the first condition to secure that the project will be useful for the local communities in the long run” (Johansson & Nylund, 2008:8). Due to the cooperation with local and district governments, these institutions were the ones who took over the role of aiding farmers after VIAFP phase-out (Johansson, 2007). However, the question arises, how sustainable is it to transfer all responsibility to forms of government and not involve civil society in this as well? The answer is unclear since no sustainability study has been carried out on those projects, but the likelihood is rather limited. Since, fuelled by changes in Sida
funding requirements which emphasise the strengthening of civil society organisations, the approach of the Vi Agroforestry Programme has changed as well (Wetterstrand, Stockholm Office). According to the last annual report (2012), 43% of VIAFP’s funding came from Sida. Now, through the new consortium model, the Programme supports and cooperates with local non-governmental organisations, some of which have been established or supported through the prior work of the Programme (Horvath, Mara Project). Consequently, VIAFP will gradually cease to work with own staff on the field and will increasingly rely on its consortium partners.

From an approach of working mainly with different forms of government, the Programme has radically changed course to mainly work with non-governmental organisations. This change, I would argue, is a reflection of the shift in priorities and attitudes within Sida and its requirements for funding. As a result, the application to Sida of the Lake Victoria Farmer Organisations’ Agroforestry Programme (FOA, 2012-2016) presents no indication on the forms of cooperation with the government. The only mentioning of the government is the fact that local organisations will receive training in advocacy and lobbying the government. Of course the Programme will continue with the existing good relationship with local and district governments, but it has removed cooperating with the government from its plan of action. Strategically it has given up collaborating with the government in favour of collaborating with civil society, yet I believe that it should not be a question of focussing on one of them. Moreover, as it was unsustainable to place most responsibility on governments in the past, it is equally unsustainable to place most responsibility on civil society after phase-out. This shortcoming is highlighted by the fact that civil society organisations will not have the financial power to support themselves entirely in a foreseeable future. These organisations will require the help of donors or ideally, the government; and the situation is not different in Sweden, where farmers’ organisations still enjoy governmental help (Horvath, Mara Project). Therefore, an integrated approach is needed in which VIAFP’s focus is directed both at civil society and governments holistically, as opposed to switching emphasis from one to the other.

Humans as rational actors

The Programme is based on the rational actor model according to which humans are rational and always choose what is best for them. Consequently, if agroforestry leads to increased crop productivity or an increase in fuel wood, farmers will maintain agroforestry practices on their own and not return to old practices (Johansson, 2007; Lager, Programme Director). When asked about what they expect when the Programme completely leaves an area, a Project Manager noted:

“Some groups that have formed CBOs [community-based organisations], they will likely continue because they are organised and they are already on their own in terms of funding and activities; and the groups that are currently struggling, they are still holding on because they can see the benefits of these enterprises; so it is obvious that groups will survive even in our absence.” (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project)

However, this approach neglects the fact that humans are not always rational, or what development workers might perceive as rational. Of course, creating cooperatives and farmer enterprises is beneficial for the farmers as it increases their income and security. However, challenges to putting these ideas into practice can lead to farmers giving up on them. Experience during the extensive phase and anecdotal accounts from field staff confirm this (Nyariwo, Kisumu Project). If this is the case with farmer enterprises, why would it be different with agroforestry practices? Until now, there was an assumption that higher productivity will ensure that agroforestry practices are implemented. This should not be taken for granted, but instead should be assessed empirically.

Limits to land rights and gender issues

As described as one of the challenges of the extensive phase, land use planning and land tenure are issues that pose a threat to the sustainability of both the Programme’s and the farmers’ work. While the VIAFP staff pointed to the cases in which land use planning was a challenge during the extensive phase, the fact that not everyone has access to land or has rights over the land has not been mentioned. VIAFP states that “the purpose of the Foundation […] is to contribute to ecological balance and improved livelihood of the poor and most vulnerable” (VIAFP, 2007:7). The most vulnerable people are those who cannot even access land and thus cannot implement agroforestry. Currently, there is no way of including these people into VIAFP’s work.

Moreover, most small-scale farmers and, indeed, farmers involved in the Vi Agroforestry Programme, are women (Havnevik, 2005). Yet “most women on the [African] continent do not hold secure rights to the land from which they derive their own and their family’s livelihood” (Englert & Daley, 2008:1). This is a serious threat to sustainability, since this means that most beneficiaries of VIAFP’s work (women) cannot protect their efforts, as land is held by men (Englert & Daley, 2008; Matsson, 2012). Similarly, gender
roles and customary law play an important part in the distribution of benefits, income and rights to land.

A study targeting the impacts of the Vi Agroforestry Programme on women (Matsson, 2012) found that, in most cases, customary law takes precedence over state legislation, which gives men the right to land and control over the income derived from selling the products on the market. Ensuring continued access to land for women has been identified as an even more crucial aspect by the respondents than the right to land itself (ibid). Moreover, gender roles and social norms generally dictate that men grow the more profitable cash crops, while women grow the less profitable subsistence crops, deepening the gap between the benefits derived from agroforestry for men and women (ibid). Therefore, a whole change in the approach of women's rights is needed, which should be initiated through a better cooperation with and lobbying of African governments on this issue, while furthering the already existing direct work with farmers.

6.5 Conclusion
This chapter aimed to bring together all findings of this research and discuss the sustainability of VIAFP's operations comprehensively. I have summarised the most important points of the discussion in Table 6.1. The openness and flexibility of the Programme in implementing suggestions by outside evaluators has led to a history of organisational learning within the Programme’s methodology. In terms of phase-out, most recommendations by the literature have been met and VIAFP has created both a coherent and flexible phase-out mechanism for its operations. The only point that raises attention is the fact that farmer groups can still request services from VIAFP after phase-out and some of them receive funding for carrying out extension work. This point feeds into the need for a greater discussion on the role of VIAFP after phase-out, the extent of its cooperation and help provided to these groups, all of which need to be clarified.

The challenges that farmer groups face during the extensive phase are numerous and the fact that many of them succeed past this phase is indeed a sign of their likely sustainability as organisations. However, this does not diminish the need to actually assess this sustainability by visiting groups after phaseout. Moreover, this future assessment should have a strong quantitative component to bring statistically significant results about the life of the groups after withdrawal of support. The best way to improve the sustainability of the development operations is to visit failed or struggling groups and analyse not only their experience after phase-out but their challenges as well.

Perhaps one of the greatest hindrances to the ability of emerging organisations to continue their work is the need for a continuous source of funding. Funding is not only an issue for the Vi Agroforestry Programme itself, but also for all the organisations that it helps in emerging. Investing so much into the creation and capacity of organisations without them being able to fully finance themselves is truly a challenge to sustainability. In their reliance on external funding from other international donors or forms of governments, the training they receive in applying for these funds is only part of the solution. VIAFP should redirect part of its attention to this general problem of civil society and cooperate more strategically with national African governments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive factors</th>
<th>Topics requiring more attention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working with groups and organisations</td>
<td>Need to carry out a comprehensive sustainability assessment (quantitative + qualitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalisation of groups</td>
<td>Assess the work of community facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open towards feedback – organisational learning</td>
<td>Assess the transition to new service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General phasing out of support</td>
<td>Deal with the overall funding requirement of emerging organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic approach to topics covered</td>
<td>Clarify approach towards post-phase-out support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term perspective on development</td>
<td>Reconsider strategy to work with both civil society and governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing work as opposed to only outcomes</td>
<td>Change the assumption that humans are only rational actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging CBOs and NGOs</td>
<td>Improve women’s rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.1 Summary of positive factors that lead to sustainability and issues that require more attention*
Finally yet importantly, possessing land rights is a serious issue for the farmers involved in the Programme. This means that a special emphasis is needed to increase women’s rights over land.

7. Conclusion
The aim of this thesis was to carry out an initial and remote study of the sustainability of the Vi Agroforestry Programme by looking at the experience with phase-outs and the extensive phase of the Programme as indicators for sustainability. By carrying out an interview study of staff both in Stockholm and in the local projects, combined with a study of internal and policy documents of the organisation, this research culminated with an analysis of both positive practices and issues that require further attention. Thus, at the end, we should look back at the questions this research was trying to answer: What are the signs for sustainability of the operations carried out by VIAFP? Are the groups where support has been terminated likely to survive on their own? How can the Vi Agroforestry Programme increase the sustainability of its aid operations?

I believe that there are strong signs of sustainability. These comprise (1) instances of organisational learning, including developing a coherent yet flexible phase-out methodology, adding new components to achieve a holistic approach to training, and switching to working with groups as opposed to individuals; (2) the long-term perspective of the Programme in working with farmer groups, which goes beyond the duration of Sida funded projects; (3) the fact that all phased-out groups, so-called graduated groups, have overcome the challenges of the extensive phase; and (4) the emergence of strong community-based and non-governmental organisations (CBOs and NGOs) that take over the work of the Programme in their localities and not just preserve the development that take over the work of the Programme in their communities.

Additionally, due to the often mentioned examples of farmer groups developing into CBOs and NGOs, I am confident that many farmer groups that have started working with VIAFP also have the capacity to continue the work after the withdrawal of VIAFP field staff from their areas. However, since active and successful organisations are easier to point out than failed or struggling groups, a thorough quantitative study should be carried out to explore the degree to which the work of VIAFP is in fact successful after phase-out.

In spite of the apparently positive experience of the Vi Agroforestry Programme, there are still issues that need further deliberation and which will improve the sustainability of their aid work if implemented correctly. Reflecting on my entire research on the Vi Agroforestry Programme, I summarise my recommendations to the Programme:
- acknowledge the importance of post-phase-out evaluation and the valuable lessons that can be drawn from carrying out such evaluations, since they offer further opportunities for organisational learning. Funding should be set aside for such exercises and they should be a regular part of monitoring and evaluation;
- following the previous point, examples of needed post-phase-out studies are (1) a quantitative assessment of groups three years after phase-out to examine the extent to which these groups are still active; (2) a qualitative evaluation of failed and struggling groups to learn from their experience and challenges; and (3) a study on the methods that VIAFP introduced with the aim of furthering sustainability, like community facilitators, transition to other service providers after phase-out, and the practice of offering on-demand support to groups after phase-out.
- develop a methodology for full termination of support, including financial, logistical or training help to already phase-out groups; and establish a deadline after phase-out after which VIAFP will halt cost-sharing with these groups. This means that all costs for services demanded by graduated groups should be covered by themselves. This will also help clarify the Programme’s role towards farmer groups and organisations after phase-out; a role of an equal and not of a donor.
- enhance the training of organisational capacity during the operations, to pre-empt the challenge of funding after group graduation. The Programme is already addressing this aspect, but more steps need to be taken to ensure that the emerging groups are financially viable after support withdrawal.
- following the previous point, a strategy change of working with both governments and civil society equally might lead to an increased support of the government to these emerged farmer groups. In its current form, the consortium model only consists of civil society organisations; perhaps a reconfiguring of the model to include governmental organisations could lead to greater cooperation between non-governmental and governmental organisations.
- change the current approach towards women’s rights by working together with African governments and other international donors to ensure that the work of most of the Programme’s farmers is protected.

Part of the requirement for Sida funding, the Vi Agroforestry Programme will undergo a process of external evaluation later this year, which will include the sustainability of the operations. Within their qualitative assessment, the external evaluation team will look at the capacity of the farmers and the
farmer groups to carry on and build on the work of VIAFP, as well as the factors that affect the sustainability of the aid operations (Sida, 2012). This Sida evaluation will be a further building block in assessing the sustainability of VIAFP’s work but it does not decrease the need to establish sustainability as a priority for internal M&E as well.

8. References


poverty? Umea: Umea University, Department of Social and Economic Geography.


Vi Agroforestry Programme, Swedish Cooperative Centre (2012) Final Report of the Lake Victoria Regional Environmental and Sustainable


Questions of the semi-structured interviews with Project Managers

1. Could you briefly describe how your project works within the Vi Agroforestry Programme?

2. How do you implement the phaseout of operations and what criteria have to be achieved for a phaseout to be initiated?

3. What is your experience with the phaseout model/guideline and what is your opinion on it, having implemented it?

4. I call remote support the period of extensive support given by Vi Agroforestry. What criteria have to be fulfilled to go from intensive support to remote support?

5. What is the experience with remote support? What are the most common challenges that communities face during remote support and how does Vi Agroforestry help them?

6. If you would change any of the issues related to phaseout or remote support, what and how would you change them?

7. Do you still work with groups that you have phased out or are you working with communities that you have phased out from?

8. Are you still in contact with phased out groups? Has there been any assessment of these phased out groups?

9. To what extent do you think the groups will continue their work after the withdrawal of VIAFP?