Committee for Ethnic Minorities in Mountainous Areas
Vietnam Bank for the Poor
Lai Chau Women’s Union
UNICEF

Ethnic Minority Development Project

Evaluation of the Linking Bank Credit Model implemented by the Vietnam Bank for the Poor and Women’s Union in Lai Chau Province

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with input from Evaluation Team Members

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**List of Abbreviations**

CEMMA Committee for Ethnic Minorities in Mountainous Areas

DRTs District Research Teams

EMDP Ethnic Minority Development Project

HHI Household

LBCM Linking Bank Credit Model

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

VBP Vietnam Bank for the Poor

WSCG Women's Savings and Credit Groups

WU Women's Union

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Summary

In December 1997, UNICEF and the Committee for Ethnic Minorities in Mountainous Areas (CEMMA) established the “Linking Bank Credit Model” (LBCM), in partnership with the Vietnam Bank for the Poor (YBP) and the Lai Chau Women’s Union (WU), in 9 communes and 4 districts in Lai Chau province. After two and a half years of operation an evaluation of the LBCM is being undertaken to learn about the impact on the lives of women, their children and families in the 8 of the 9 pilot communes.

1. Overall impact on the lives of Village WSCG members

1.1 The LBCM has had a dramatic positive impact on the lives of all Women’s Saving and Credit Group (WSCG) members and their families. This impact is further defined as:
   - increased household income,
   - expanded range and wealth of household assets,
   - substantially reduced production risks through diversified household farming systems;
   - increased household food security,
   - new health knowledge and changed health behaviours leading to improved children’s and women’s health,
   - improved agricultural production knowledge and practices leading to increased agricultural production and subsequently higher rates of loan repayment,
   - increased confidence in taking and repaying loans from the Vietnam Bank for the Poor (YBP) leading to a willingness to take additional loans to further increase household incomes, and,
   - empowerment of ethnic minority women within their families and broader communities (village, commune, district).

2. Impacts on household income

2.1 Field research found that women group members defined “a successful loan” as money that had been borrowed, invested in animal husbandry (for the majority of cases), and repaid without having less livestock than when women took the loan (i.e. without losing money). Based on this “local” definition of impact on household (HH) income it is clear that the LBCM has had a significant positive impact on HH incomes. 94% of women interviewed stated that their loan had been successful.

3. Impacts on household assets

3.1 The LBCM has had a clear and measurable impact on HH asset diversity, number and wealth. The majority of women surveyed have been able to substantially increase their animal production assets (head of livestock) through a combination of loans from the YBP and increased knowledge on animal husbandry and animal health practices.
4. Impacts on household farming systems

4.1 Through loans from the VBP women have been able to diversify and strengthen HH farming systems, from crop-dependent models to crop/animal production models, which provides greater income/food security through sharing risk over more than one farming system.

5. Impacts on household food security

5.1 In-depth interviews found that WSCG members experienced less food shortages than in the past, in addition, they now had higher levels of food consumption/HH member.

6. Impacts on women’s health knowledge and behaviours

6.1 One of the most important findings of this evaluation is the impact new knowledge (in the areas of women’s and children’s health, agricultural production, and credit and savings) has had on the social and economic situation of women group members and their families.

6.2 91% of group members interviewed had learned and practised new information on women’s and children’s health. This is a very significant and important finding as women experienced the impact of new health behaviours on the health of their children and family members. 72% of women interviewed knew when to start breastfeeding their child. 76% knew when to start providing complementary food in addition to breastmilk. Women stated that this new knowledge had led to improved health among children born in their commune since they joined their WSCG in December 1997.

6.4 Impacts have also been realised in children’s health through: (1) better health care of sick children -- 88% of women knew that they needed to feed children differently (defined by women as giving more food) when their children were sick, and 42% knew the correct amount of water to mix with a bag of Oresol, and, (2) child immunisation -- 85% of women knew why it was important to immunise their child. 54% of women knew how many examinations at the commune health centre a pregnant woman should have during her pregnancy.

7. Impacts of agricultural production knowledge

7.1 The most common method of learning new knowledge on agricultural production and animal health was through “knowledge sharing” at monthly WSCG meetings. 80 (41%) of the 166 women interviewed stated that one of the main topics of their monthly group meetings was “exchanging ways of production and animal breeding,” which resulted in better use of HH loans and reduced risk of livestock deaths.
8. Impacts of credit and savings knowledge

8.1 Prior to joining their WSCG, the majority of women members (66% of women surveyed) had no knowledge or experience in (1) taking loans from the VBP, (2) paying interest, (3) making regular monthly savings, or (4) repaying loans at the end of an agreed loan period. It is clear from the quantitative and qualitative research data that taking loans from the VBP has been a very positive empowering experience for the majority of WSCG members.

8.2 89% of women group members (729 out of 820 women) in the 8 research communes repaid their 1st loan on time to the VBP.

8.3 91% of women (110 out of 121 women) in 5 of the 8 communes repaid their 2nd loan on time to the VBP. 309 women in 2 communes in Tua Chau district received a 3rd loan under the LBCM. To date, 13 HHs have repaid their loans before they are due.

9. Impacts on women's empowerment

9.1 The impact of the LBCM on women's empowerment has been dramatic in all surveyed communes. WSCGs have provided opportunities for village women to overcome their social and cultural isolation and take a more active and visible role in the communities where they live.

10. Impacts on commune, district and provincial WU and VBP staff capacities

10.1 The LBCM has had a huge impact on the capacity of commune, district and provincial WU and VBP staff to provide new knowledge and loans to ethnic minority women living in remote areas. Prior to the implementation of the LBCM, none of the district WU staff in the four surveyed districts had any knowledge or experience in credit and savings. 30 months later, these women are managing and supporting WSCGs involving 1,614 women in 15 communes (the current # of communes in the four districts where the LBCM is being implemented). In partnership with district VBP staff, who prior to being involved in the LBCM had very little direct contact with ethnic minority women borrowers, WU staff have disbursed loans totalling VND 2,182,000,000 (US$156,000).
Evaluation of the Linking Bank Credit Model 
implemented by the Vietnam Bank for the Poor and Women's Union 
in Lai Chau Province

1. Introduction

1.1 Since 1993, UNICEF has been working in partnership with CEMMA to implement an integrated, poverty-focused rural development project in 14 remote and mountainous districts in Ha Giang, Yen Bai, Lao Cai, Lai Chau and Kon Tum provinces. The main goal of the Ethnic Minorities Development Project (EMDP) is to improve the quality of life of ethnic minority women, children and families living in remote and disadvantaged communes.

1.2 To achieve this goal, staff from UNICEF and CEMMA have worked closely with provincial, district and commune staff to design and test a number of community-based, service delivery interventions aimed at improving the quality of access to basic services, such as primary health care, nutrition, primary and adult education, credit, animal health and safe water.

1.3 In 1996, field research found that the provision of credit for ethnic minority women was having a significant impact, not just on household food security but also on the success of other EMDP interventions, such as girls primary school enrolment, adult literacy, and health education among others. In response to these findings, UNICEF and CEMMA decided to strengthen the design and long-term sustainability of the EMDP Credit Program through institutionalising the model within the Vietnam Bank for the Poor (VBP) and Women's Union (WU). (Prior to this point, the EMDP Credit Program had been managed independently by the provincial WU). In December 1997, UNICEF and CEMMA established the “Linking Bank Credit Model” (LBCM), in partnership with the VBP and the Lai Chau WU, in 9 communes and 4 districts in Lai Chau province. In June 1999, the LBCM was expanded to an additional 6 communes in the 4 districts.

1.4 The aim of the LBCM is to combine the comparative advantages of the VBP (strong capacities in banking and rural credit management) and the WU (strong grass-roots networks at village levels) to enable ethnic minority women to increase household (HH) food security and income through agricultural production loans from the VBP.

1.5 The LBCM involves the establishment of village-based Women's Savings and Credit Groups (WSCGs) consisting of approximately ten women per group. Each WSCG is led by an elected woman group leader who is trained in group leadership and management by district VBP and WU staff. WSCGs meet monthly to learn about children’s and women’s health, discuss agricultural production practices, make monthly savings and interest payments, and learn how to apply for loans from the VBP. Under the initial design of the LBCM, VBP staff were to provide loans to WSCG members for VND 1,000,000 over a one year period. However, during LBCM implementation provincial VBP and WU staff decided, due to concern about the capacity of poor women to repay their loans on time, to extend the loan.

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1 Defined as understanding and application of key health messages, increased household food security and HH income, and improved access to basic services, such as primary education, health care, and animal health care.
repayment period to 2 years for first-time borrowers (For a more detailed description of the
LBCM refer to Annex 5)

1.6 After two and a half years of operation an evaluation of the LBCM is being undertaken
to learn about the impact on the lives of women, their children and families in the 8 of the 9
pilot communes

2. Objectives

1 To assess the impact of savings and credit activities on the lives of village Women’s
Group members;

2 To assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the LBCM and to make
recommendations to UNICEF, the VBP and CEMMA addressing appropriate
strategies for credit provision in mountainous, poor ethnic minority communities.

3. Target Research Areas

3.1 The evaluation was undertaken in 8 communes and 4 districts (Dien Bien Dong,
Muong Te, Tua Chua and Tuan Giao) in Lai Chau province. All communes are listed in the
national 1,715 Poorest Communes Program. A list of communes with km distances to district
centres are listed in Annex 7. The photograph below is representative of the geographic
terrain in the 8 target communes.
4. Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to collect data for this evaluation.

**Qualitative research methods**

4.1 In four of the eight communes surveyed semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with WSCG leaders, group members, and village members not involved in the WSCGs. At village and commune levels the emphasis of the in-depth interviews was on understanding the social and economic impacts of the LBCM on the lives of women and their families. To learn about women's empowerment WSCG members were asked to describe their position/status in the community before participating in WSCG and now 2½ years later.

4.2 In-depth interviews were also conducted with commune WU leaders, and district and provincial VBP and WU staff responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the LBCM. At district and provincial levels the in-depth interviews focused on how the capacity of the WU and VBP staff had changed through implementing the LBCM. Other questions addressed the sustainability of the model and capacity of staff, especially at district levels, to replicate the model in other communes through existing government funding.

4.3 To further clarify and cross check the information collected during in-depth interviews with WSCG members focus groups were held with groups of WSCG members in selected communes.

**Quantitative research methods**

4.4 Four structured questionnaires were designed (based on lessons learnt from reviewing all available credit evaluation studies in mountainous areas), field tested (in a LBCM commune in Lai Chau province) and used to collect quantitative data from women WSCG members (Form #1), WSCG leaders (Form #2), non-WSCG members (Form #3), and commune leaders (Form #4) (For reference these questionnaires are listed in Annex 6).

4.5 The WSCG members questionnaire collected information on family profile, group participation, HH economic situation, health knowledge and practice, and, loan use. The group leaders questionnaire collected data on group members selection, group meeting frequency, group meeting activities, loan practices and procedures, use of group funds and other areas. The non group members questionnaire collected data on reasons why the woman is not in the WSCG, income, and, credit access. The commune leaders questionnaire covered LBCM implementation and management issues.

4.6 Due to lack of accurate base-line data the WSCG members questionnaire collected information on the current social and economic situation of group members, such as age, ethnic group, educational level and household size among other data. The design of all questionnaires was influenced by a list of areas to be addressed in the evaluation (Listed in Annex 8) which was part of the Terms of Reference for the study.
5. **Research Evaluation Team members**

5.1 The research evaluation team consisted of 18 members (10 women and 8 men) from the VBP, CEMMA, Vietnam WU, Micro-finance Research Center and Lai Chau VBP and WU. 16 evaluation team members were divided into four District Research Teams (DRTs) of 4 people/team (district staff were assigned to teams in other districts where they lived and worked). The evaluation team leader (international consultant) and assistant/interpreter provided support to all DRTs. In each district WU staff acted as guides for commune visits. (A full list of evaluation team members and their professional positions are listed in Annex 7).

6. **Sample size**

6.1 In the eight surveyed communes it was estimated that there were 830 direct beneficiaries (WSCG members). It was agreed to randomly select, and interview using structured questionnaires, 20% (166) of these women. In addition, interviews using questionnaires were planned with four group leaders/commune (32 in total), three non group members/commune (24 in total), and two commune leaders/commune (Chairman of the Commune and President of the Commune WU) (16 in total).

6.2 The initial sampling method involved randomly selecting WSCG members from lists provided by district WU staff. However, during the two-day field testing and training period in Lai Chau evaluation team members pointed out that this approach was not feasible as there would not be enough time to inform selected group members in advance of the planned interview (many group members would be away working in the fields). It was decided that evaluation team members would visit villages and randomly select WSCG members who were home. In order to standardise this approach a series of research procedures were written and provided to all DRTs.

7. **Research schedule**

7.1 The field data collection took place in Lai Chau province over a ten-day period from May 7 through May 17.

8. **Data collected in the field**

*Qualitative data*

8.1 In three of the four districts formal semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with WSCG leaders (8), WSCG members (26), family members (4), and, village members not involved in WSCGs (8). In-depth interviews were also conducted with commune WU leaders (4), district VBP and WU staff responsible for LBCM management and supervision (8 -- 1 VBP and 1 WU staff/district), and, provincial staff (VBP 1, WU 2, Resettlement Office (provincial CEMMA) 1). Three focus groups were held with groups of 4-6 WSCG members. Additional qualitative data was collected by evaluation team members through informal discussions with interviewees following the completion of various questionnaires.
**Quantitative data**

8.2 The number of completed questionnaires from the eight communes are:
- Group members questionnaire (166)
- Group leaders questionnaire (38)
- Non group members questionnaire (29)
- Commune leaders questionnaire (8)

9. **Primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative data**

9.1 Primary and secondary data of a qualitative and quantitative nature, such as reports, studies and YBP data were collected in Lai Chau and Hanoi to provide additional sources of information for writing up the results of this evaluation.

10. **Data Analysis**

10.1 All quantitative data was entered and analysed using Epi Info 6 04. Qualitative data was analysed through reviewing field notes and holding review meetings with evaluation team members in the field and in Hanoi.

11. **Photographic documentation**

11.1 Photographs were taken in the field to document and illustrate cultural diversity, geography and farming practices. The photograph below shows two Thai WSCG members being interviewed in Dien Bien Dong district.
12. **Results of the Quantitative Data**

12.1 The results of the quantitative data analysis are presented in this section following the structure of the 4 questionnaires listed in Annex 6. As to be expected with survey questionnaires a number of the questions have not yielded any useful data in these cases the information has not been listed.

13. **RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH WSCG MEMBERS**

13.1 **Profile of WSCG members**

13.1.1 **Age of women and education level (grades completed)**

The age of sampled group members ranged from 18 to 70 years old. The woman aged 70 was considered eligible as she was raising two grandchildren under the age of 16. The majority of women interviewed were between the ages of 20 and 40. Education grades completed ranged from grade 1 to 7. The mean age and grades completed of group members by district are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Mean age of group members</th>
<th>Mean grade completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua Chua</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 92 women (55%) out of 166 women interviewed gave answers to the question on education grades completed possibly indicting that 74 women (45%) had not attended school.

13.1.2 **Marital status**

96% (160) of women interviewed were married, 3% (5) were widowed and 1 single.

13.1.3 **Ethnic group**

Women interviewed were from four different ethnic groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>% of interviewed group members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kho Mu</td>
<td>2% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>36% (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Hu</td>
<td>8% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>54% (90)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.1.4 **Number of family members and working adults**

The mean number of family members HH1 (defined as family members who eat together) and working adults HH1 (defined by women interviewed) are
The majority of HHs surveyed (67%) had two working adults. Gender segregated data showed that 12 of the households surveyed had no working males. In these cases men had either died (see earlier reference to 5 women who were widowed) or they were no longer able to work.

13.1.5 Number of children/woman interviewed

The number of children/group member interviewed ranged between 1 and 11 children. The mean number of children/woman/district are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Mean # children/woman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua Chua</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no significant difference between the number of daughters and sons/woman.
13.2 **WSCG Information**

13.2.1 **Group size**

The mean number of group members/WSCG/district are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Mean # group members/WSCG/district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua Chua</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.2.2 **Frequency of group meeting**

70% (104) of WSCGs met monthly, 14% every quarter, 5% (8) twice a month, and 3% (4) every six months.

13.2.3 **Meeting location**

95% of group meetings were held at the house of the group leader. Other locations were the house of the assistant group leader and hamlet leader.

13.2.4 **Length of time of group membership**

82% (98) of the 119 women who answered this question (assumed it is those women who could remember) joined their group in 1997. Other women stated they had joined in 1998 (13) and 1999 (8).

13.2.5 **Reason for joining the group**

In answering this question group members gave multiple answers. The most common answers were:

1. Borrow funds for income generating activities (152 women)
2. Learn/exchange experiences about agricultural production/life (33 women)
3. Increase knowledge/social perception (37 women)
4. Participate in social activities (26 women)

13.2.6 **Non group members participation**

70% (113 of 160) of women interviewed knew of women in the village who wanted to join their WSCG but were unable. The most common reasons given why these women could not join were:

1. Did not know why (53)
2. Afraid that they were unable to repay loans (24)
3. They did not know how to develop their economy (17)
4. Program is still in pilot phase (4)
5. Still in debt (3)
13.2.7 Content of group meetings

Multiple answers were given by group members in answering this question, the most common answers were:

1. Exchange ways of production and animal breeding (80)
2. Exchange how to use the loan effectively (66)
3. Repay loan/interest (87)
4. Bring money for saving (87)
5. Exchange how to grow up/take care of children (13)
6. Learn about family planning/nutrition/health care (37)
7. Help each other (4)
8. Improve people’s knowledge (10)
9. Cultural activities (10)

13.3 Social and economic situation of WSCG members

13.3.1 Number of animals/HHH

Buffaloes: 135 (81%) of the 166 HHs owned buffaloes, ranging from 1 (46 HHs) to 7 (1 HH). The mean number over all districts was 2.4 head/household.

Cows: 31 (19%) of the 166 HHs owned cows, ranging from 1 (5 HHs) to 12 (1 HH). The mean number of cows/district was 3.5 head/HH for Muong Te, 3.4 for Tuan Chua, and 3 for Tuan Giao districts. For Dien Bien Dong the number was very low at 0.33 head/HH. This could be due to a number of reasons, such as a lack of knowledge, unsuitable geographic conditions, lack of interest/suitability with ethnic groups living in this district, or lack of market access.

Pigs: 155 (93%) of the 166 HHs owned pigs, ranging from 1 (23 HHs) to 20 (1 HH). The mean number of pigs/HH for all districts was 4.6.

Chickens: 141 (85%) of 166 HHs owned chickens, ranging from 1 (2 HHs) to 200 (2 HH). The mean number chickens/HH/district covered a wide range as indicated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Mean # chickens/HH/district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Chua</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other animals: Out of 166 households 86 owned dogs, 33 owned horses, 15 owned goats, 51 owned ducks, and, 44 owned fish.
13.3.2 Housing classification

56% of women interviewed lived in the house type shown in the photograph below.

31% of women lived in the house type shown in the photograph below.
13% of women lived in a house with solid brick walls, concrete floor and tiled roof.

13.3.3 Access to water

37% of women interviewed had access to a water tank, 25% a spring, 14% a well, 13% bamboo pipe, and, 11% other sources. The mean distance to these water sources for all districts was 350m. However, only 66% of women had access to water year round.

13.3.4 Access to electricity

72% of HHs did not have electricity.

13.3.5 Annual sources of income

All women interviewed earned income through agricultural production activities, such as rice (wet and dry land varieties) maize and cassava crops and livestock production. Collection of data on HH income proved to be very difficult for evaluation team members and women to calculate. The reasons are outlined in more detail in the discussion section of the report.

13.3.6 Asset ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>'Yes'</th>
<th>'No'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorbike</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing machine</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other assets owned by women included milling machine (12 HH), electric generator (6 HH), and, other household equipment (9 HH).

13.3.7 Annual food shortage

20% of women interviewed currently experience shortages of food for 1 month (12 HHs), 2 months (6 HHs), 3 months (9 HHs), and, 4 months (2 HHs). In these cases women sold agricultural products (9 HHs), borrowed food or money (7 HHs), collected forest products for eating (7 HHs), or worked as labour (5 HHs) to earn income for food.

13.4 Access to credit and health information before joining the WSCG

13.4.1 Access to credit before joining the WSCGs

66% (109 HHs) did not have access to credit before joining their WSCGs. The reasons given were: did not know how to access loans (47%), did not want a loan (34%), too poor (6%), or other reasons (13%). The loan size for the 57 HHs who had taken a loan (from the government) ranged from VND 500,000 to VND 3 million. 52 of the 57 HHs who had taken loans (in the name of their husband) had repaid them. All women stated that their loans had been successful.
13.4.2 Access to health information before joining the WSCG

78% (129) women had access to health information before joining the WSCGs, while 22% (36) women did not. For those women with access to information the main source was from the WU. Other women listed radio, television, health staff, commune and district staff, and training courses as other sources of information.

13.5 Access to credit and information after joining the WSCG

13.5.1 Loans from the VBP

100% (166) of women interviewed had taken loans from the VBP since joining their WSCG. The loan size ranged from VND 500,000 (1) to VND 2,500,000 (5). The majority of women 88% (147) took loans of VND 1,000,000

13.5.2 1st loan

147 women took loans from the VBP of VND 1,000,000 for a repayment period of 24 months. 96% repaid their loans on time

13.5.3 2nd and 3rd loans

64 women (38%) interviewed took a 2nd loan under the LBCM. 12 women for VND 1,000,000 (over 12 months), 32 women for VND 2,000,000 (over 24 months), and 10 women for VND 2,500,000 (over 24 months). Other loans ranged in size from VND 500,000 (3) to VND 1,500,000 (6) to VND 3,000,000 (1). At the time of this evaluation 13 women had repaid their loans to the VBP on time. 8 women had taken a 3rd loan under the LBCM.

13.5.4 Loan use

Multiple answers were given in answering this question as some women may have used their loan to purchase a combination of inputs, such as pigs and chickens or pigs and seed. The most common answers are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st loan use</th>
<th># of women</th>
<th>2nd loan use</th>
<th># of women</th>
<th>3rd loan use</th>
<th># of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pigs</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>buffaloes/cows</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>buffaloes/cows</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chickens</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>pigs</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>pigs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buffaloes/cows</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>chickens</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>crops</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>fish</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goats</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>horses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horses</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>crops</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.5.5 Loan effectiveness

152 (94%) women stated that their loan had been successful. For 8 of the 9 women who said that their loan was not successful the reason was due to animal diseases that resulted in livestock deaths.
13.5.6 Source of loan repayment

98% of women sold agricultural products to repay their loans.

13.5.7 Ability to take another loan from the VBP

54% of women stated that they now had the ability to take an additional loan from the VBP. Note: This question was not well written. Many women interpreted the question as having the ability/confidence to go on their own to the VBP and take a loan as opposed to the original intention of the question which was to ask women if they had the confidence to take an additional loan from the VBP though the support of their WSCG.

13.5.8 Interest and savings

86% of women knew what interest was. 92% (100 out of 109 women) saved on a regular basis. The amount of savings at home ranged from VND 20,000 (1) to VND 5,000,000 (1). The mean amount saved at home and at the VBP by district was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Mean savings/HH/district</th>
<th>Mean savings/HH/VBP/district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>VND 862,000 (30 HH)</td>
<td>VND 53,000 (23 HH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>VND 611,000 (26 HH)</td>
<td>VND 140,000 (31 HH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua Chua</td>
<td>VND 445,000 (49 HH)</td>
<td>VND 51,000 (34 HH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>VND 914,000 (22 HH)</td>
<td>VND 174,000 (22 HH)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: The above data represents 127 of the 166 women who answered this question.)

In all districts, the amount of cash saved at home is very high. Especially in Dien Bien Dong and Tuan Giao districts. The main source of savings was from selling agricultural products. The difference in VBP savings between districts is due to the fact that in some communes women withdrew their savings after repaying their loan to the VBP. Women stated that savings at home and deposited at the VBP were to be used for further investments in the household economy (agricultural inputs), living expenses costs (clothes, school books and fees, food, medicines), and, debt repayment. The majority of women (95%) did not take loans from the Group Fund (defined as the accumulated WSCG savings on deposit at the VBP).

13.5.9 Willingness to take another loan

86% of women (141) stated that they would like to take a second (or additional) loan under the LBCM. 100% stated that the loan would be used for investments in agricultural production/income generating activities.

13.6 Health knowledge through WSCG membership

91% of women (141) stated that since joining their WSCG they had learnt new information about women’s and children’s health that had directly helped their family. The most useful information learned was (direct translations of multiple answers) answers are listed:

- Growing up healthy children (81 women)
- Exchange knowledge about life (34 women)
- Health prevention and care (34 women)
Family planning (29 women)
Hygiene/disease prevention (14 women)
Develop the economy (6 women)
Clean foods/nutrition (5 women)
Sending children to school (4 women)

13.7 Testing of knowledge

At this point in the questionnaire women were shown a series of pictures (without a text message) from the women's and children's health flipchart developed under the EMDP. However, in the field it became clear that many women had not seen the flipchart before, which made it unfair to expect women to match the correct message with the sample picture. For this reason the answers to this question are not listed. In the second part of the health knowledge test women were asked to answer a series of questions on children's and women's health (questions and answers were provided by UNICEF). The results are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>% of women who answered correctly</th>
<th># of women out of 166</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. According to you, when should a mother start breastfeeding a child?</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. At what age/when should additional foods be given to a baby?</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How many meals do you feed your baby a day (children from 4-6 months to 3 years old)?</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If a child has been sick, how should he be fed differently after the illness is over?</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Why should a child be immunised?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What do you do when you child has diarrhoea?</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How much water do you use to mix with one Otesol bag?</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How many examinations should a pregnant woman get during her pregnancy?</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you know about &quot;3 cleans for Delivery&quot;?</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of questions listed above had to be translated from Vietnamese into a local language, this may have created confusion leading to incorrect answers. With this taken into consideration the numbers of correct answers are very high confirming earlier data where women had stated that they had learnt new health information that had a direct impact on their family.

13.8 Final comments by interviewers

General comments listed by interviewers at the end of the WSCG members questionnaire are listed in the discussion section of this report.
14. RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH WSCG LEADERS

Note: There were a number of questions in this questionnaire that have not provided useful data. Only the most interesting data is presented below. The photograph below shows a Hmong WSCG leader being interviewed in Tua Chua district.

14.1 WSCG meeting attendance and duration

The mean group attendance for all districts is very high. The following table compares mean group attendance, mean group size (listed earlier), and mean group meeting duration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Mean group attendance /WSCG/district</th>
<th>Mean # group members /WSCG district</th>
<th>Mean group meeting duration (# hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua Chua</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14.2 Selection of WSCG group members

Only 46 women answered this question indicating that many did not know who made the final decision on WSCG member selection. The majority of women (29) stated that the selection was made through hamlet meetings. Other answers included hamlet leaders (9), commune leaders (7), and WU staff (3).
14.3 Impact of WSCG membership on women group members

Group leaders gave the following answers (direct translations (of multiple answers) answers are listed)
Helped each other in difficulties (23 women)
Sharing experiences (12 women)
Visit and help when sick (11 women)
Teaching how to improve the HH economy (9 women)

14.4 Frequency of commune visits by district VBP and WU staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Mean # of visits by district VBP staff/year</th>
<th>Mean # of visits by district WU staff/year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua Chua</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14.5 Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Mean # of training courses group leaders have attended</th>
<th>Mean # days 1st training course</th>
<th>Mean # days 2nd training course</th>
<th>Mean # days 3rd training course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua Chua</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100% of group leaders felt that the training they had was useful, however, 60% felt that the training courses provided under the LBCM were not enough. Additional training was requested on hook keeping (15 women), and agricultural production techniques (15 women). Group leaders requested technical guidelines/educational materials on: animal breeding (18 women), animal health (5 women), cultivation (10 women), and, family health (8 women).

15. RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH NON WSCG MEMBERS

15.1 Number of children

The mean number of children for WSCG members was 3.7 children and non group members 3.6 children (data was not collected for Muong Te district).

15.2 Annual food shortage

52% of non group members interviewed suffered from annual food shortages compared with 20% for WSCG members. The mean food shortage period for non group members was 1.8 months.
15.3 Interest in taking a loan

90% of women surveyed (26) stated that they wanted a loan from the VBP to buy buffaloes/cows (10 women), pigs/goats (7 women), chickens/ducks (4 women), and fish (2 women).

16. RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNE LEADERS

Data collected from the commune leaders questionnaires are listed in the discussion section of this report.

17. RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA

Data collected from the in-depth interviews undertaken in the field are listed in the discussion section of this report.

18. RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE LOAN DATA FROM DISTRICT VBP OFFICES

18.1 In the first loan cycle 820 women received loans (with an average loan size of VND 1,010,000) 89% (729 of the 820 loans) were repaid on time (compared with 96% for the 166 surveyed WSCG members) (For information on loans disbursed/commune in the first loan cycle refer to Annex 1). At the time of undertaking this evaluation 91 first cycle loans were outstanding and listed in default, however, efforts are still being made by VBP staff in the three concerned districts to collect money due on all outstanding loans. There is a direct relationship in the table below between # loans disbursed/commune and the # loans in default indicating that in Dien Bien Dong district VBP and Wu staff may have disbursed too many loans too quickly leading to repayment problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District and commune</th>
<th># loans disbursed</th>
<th>Total loans disbursed (VND)</th>
<th>Total loan value VND and (% loans in default)</th>
<th>Default rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100,000,000</td>
<td>2,030,000 (2)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bum Nua</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>61,000,000</td>
<td>2,030,000 (2)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bun To</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32,000,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>352,000,000</td>
<td>58,400,000 (79)</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na Son</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200,000,000</td>
<td>25,000,000 (36)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kao Lom</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152,000,000</td>
<td>33,400,000 (43)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua Chua</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>276,000,000</td>
<td>9,400,000 (10)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinh Phinh</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>61,000,000</td>
<td>2,400,000 (3)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Bang</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>61,000,000</td>
<td>7,000,000 (7)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100,000,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pu Nhuong</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50,000,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Mun</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50,000,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: The default rate is defined as the total loans in default/loans disbursed.)

18.2 In the 2nd loan cycle 223 loans (in 5 of the 8 communes) were disbursed with an average loan size of VND 1,813,000 (for 12 to 36 months). In two communes in Tua Chua district 309 loans were disbursed in the 3rd loan cycle with an average loan size of VND 1,890,000 (for 24 months) (For information on loans disbursed/commune in the 2nd and 3rd loan cycles refer to Annex 2 and 3).
19. DISCUSSION OF IMPACTS

20. Overall impact on the lives of Village WSCG members

20.1 The LBCM has had a dramatic positive impact on the lives of all women WSCG members and their families. This impact is further defined as:
   - increased household income,
   - expanded range and wealth of household assets,
   - substantially reduced production risks through diversified household farming systems,
   - increased household food security,
   - new health knowledge and changed health behaviours leading to improved children’s and women’s health,
   - improved agricultural production knowledge and practices leading to increased agricultural production and subsequently higher rates of loan repayment,
   - increased confidence in taking and repaying loans from the VBP leading to a willingness to take additional loans to further increase household incomes; and,
   - empowerment of ethnic minority women within their families and broader communities (village, commune, district).

21. Impacts on household income

21.1 In undertaking this evaluation one of the most challenging tasks was to identify ways to collect accurate quantitative data on income growth of WSCG members through their involvement in the LBCM. Lack of baseline data meant that it was not possible to compare income levels now with those at the start of the project in 1997.

21.2 Field testing of the WSCG members questionnaire found that it was not possible for women to accurately recall their annual income when they joined their WSCG groups 30 months ago. In addition, there were cultural differences in the concept of annual income as the majority of women interviewed did not quantify their total income each year. Families produced food for HH consumption and when they needed to purchase goods either sold or bartered agricultural products, such as maize, rice, and livestock.

21.3 The next best option to assess HH income was to estimate HH production and then convert this into a monetary value. The biggest constraint with this method was accurately estimating the land area that HHs farmed. Many women had different concepts of land area that did not easily transfer to m² or sao area measurements that research team members were more familiar with. Field testing of the questionnaire found greater consistency among households with the “kgs of seed used for planting” measurement, which could be used to measure crop area (e.g., 16 kg of maize seed/0.5 ha), crop production and possibly household income (see questionnaire #1, questions #23 and #24, Annex 1). However, in collecting the data in the field it was evident that there were too many variables affecting HH income that were not accounted for in the initial questionnaire design, such as seasonal variations in agricultural prices, bartering of goods, collection and sale of forest products, and seasonal labour. Due to these variables (not evident in the field testing) and the wide quality range of data collected in the field (from accurate production income data for some HHs to weak data for other HHs), evaluation team members decided not to present HH income data in this report.
A very interesting finding during the field testing of the questionnaires was the relationship between "a successful loan" and increased HH income. Among women group members "a successful loan" was defined as money that had been borrowed, invested in animal husbandry (for the majority of cases), and repaid without having less livestock than when women took the loan (i.e. without losing money). Based on this "local" definition of impact on HH income it is clear that the LBCM has had a significant positive impact on HH incomes, 94% of women interviewed stated that their loan had been successful.

Qualitative in-depth interviews with group members and commune leaders confirmed this finding. Through participating in WSCGs women stated that they had increased HH income and assets with which to protect against unexpected "economic shocks," such as illness or seasonal variations in crop yields (caused by drought, pests and other problems). With 86% of women interviewed willing to take another loan one could argue that this figure would be significantly lower if women had not experienced a measurable increase in HH income and assets through taking a loan from the VBP.

Impacts on household assets

Information on HH assets was included in the questionnaire in order to get an idea of the "wealth" of WSCG members. In the surveyed HHs there was a range of HH assets, from production assets (livestock and farming equipment) to information assets (radios and televisions) to quality of life assets (water tanks and sewing machines). In hindsight it would have been useful to have a question that asked women to state the number of animals and HH assets prior to joining the WSCG so that this could be compared with their current situation (assuming that women could recall this information).
22.2 In-depth interviews found that the majority of women had been able to substantially increase their animal production assets (head of livestock) through a combination of loans from the VBP and increased knowledge on animal husbandry and animal health practices (learned in monthly WSCG meetings). The LBCM has had a clear and measurable impact on HH asset diversity, number and wealth. This finding is confirmed by the high numbers of HHs raising three or more kinds of livestock.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livestock type</th>
<th>% of HH ownership</th>
<th>mean # livestock/HH (across 4 districts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffaloes</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>2.4 head/HH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>4.6 head/HH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>25 head/HH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. **Impacts on household farming systems**

23.1 From the data available it is evident that through loans from the VBP women have been able to diversify and strengthen HH farming systems, from crop-dependant models to crop + animal production models, which provides greater income/food security through sharing risk over more than one farming system.

24. **Impacts on household food security**

24.1 52% of non group members interviewed experienced annual food shortages compared with 20% for WSCG members. This could indicate significant increases in HH food security through WSCG membership. If one accounted for the selection of group members with higher incomes by assuming the rate of annual food shortages among WSCG members (at the start of their involvement in WSCGs) was 1.3 less than non group members then this would still translate to a 58% reduction (from 34% to 20%) in annual food shortages. In-depth interviews found that WSCG members had experienced less food shortages than in the past, in addition, they now had higher levels of food consumption/HH member.

25. **Impacts on women’s health knowledge and behaviours**

25.1 One of the most important findings of this evaluation is the impact new knowledge (in the areas of women’s and children’s health, agricultural production, and credit and savings) has had on the social and economic situation of women group members and their families. This finding was partially revealed in the quantitative data and clearly evident through in-depth interviews with WSCG members and commune leaders.

25.2 Before discussing the impacts of knowledge in more detail it is important to remember that the majority of WSCG members are illiterate making learning and knowledge impact more challenging. Only 92 (55%) of the 166 women interviewed had attended and completed one or more grades of primary school. Many of these women had lost attained language skills through lack of opportunities to practice with other women and limited access to Vietnamese language materials.

25.3 The quantitative data found that prior to joining WSCGs 78% of women interviewed had access to health information, mainly from the commune WU. What was not evident in this data was the quality of the information they had access to. In-depth interviews revealed
that the majority of women had access to health information through their husbands who attended commune education meetings (organised by the WU) on their behalf. Prior to the LBCM implementation, cultural practice did not allow the majority of village women to attend meetings in the commune on their own. As a result, it was very difficult for them to access health information, especially on sensitive topics, such as women's health and family planning. In many cases, men would simply not inform their wives about information they did not understand or felt embarrassed to talk about.

25.4 91% of women interviewed in the survey questionnaire had learned and practised new information on women's and children's health. This is a very significant and important finding as women experienced the impact of new health behaviours on the health of their children and family members (revealed in in-depth interviews). The new knowledge was defined by women themselves as: "growing up healthy children, health prevention and care, family planning, and exchanging knowledge about life."

25.5 The results from testing women on their new knowledge were very impressive, especially considering that questions were asked through local interpreters. In addition, many women were nervous and worried about getting questions wrong. Despite these constraints, 72% of women knew when to start breastfeeding their child. 76% knew when to start providing complementary food in addition to breastmilk. Women stated that this and other new knowledge had led to improved health among children born in the 8 target communes since they joined their WSCG in December 1997 (based on in-depth interviews). Impacts have also been realised in child health through (1) better health care of sick children -- 88%
of women knew that they needed to feed children differently (defined by women as giving more food) when their children were sick (42% of women knew the correct amount of water to mix with Orsol), and, (2) child immunisation -- 85% of women knew why it was important to immunise their child. The impact of new knowledge on women's health is also significant -- 54% of women knew how many examinations at the commune health centre a pregnant woman should have during her pregnancy.

25.6 The level of new knowledge on women's and children's health is exceptional considering the fact that the information was transferred by WSCG leaders with limited access to fact-based educational materials. Under the EMIDP commune libraries were established in each commune with the intention that WSCG leaders would visit these libraries and take out educational books and materials for discussion/teaching in their monthly WSCG meetings. In the majority of communes this did not occur due to distance from villages to commune centres, lack of information at the village level on the library and the materials it contained; fear of some commune WU leaders that the materials would not be returned; and most importantly, lack of familiarity/understanding among commune and WSCG leaders of the concept of borrowing materials from a library and returning them at a later date. It is clear that if the women's and children's health education flipchart and "three cleans" flipchart (developed under the EMIDP) had been more widely available to village WSCGs the new knowledge learnt and acted upon by women would have been greater.

26. Impacts of agricultural production knowledge

26.1 Impacts of new agricultural production knowledge (crop and animal husbandry) was not tested directly during this evaluation as it was not one of the initial components of the LBCM. Very basic materials on agricultural production were provided under the EMIDP to commune libraries, however, as noted earlier these were not accessed. Animal health knowledge was addressed under the EMIDP through training of commune animal health staff who were required to provide basic animal health care services to all WSCG group members. However, unfortunately these staff were trained prior to the disbursement of loans to WSCGs, which resulted in large numbers of animal deaths which possibly could have been prevented.

26.2 The most common method of learning new knowledge on agricultural production and animal health was through "knowledge sharing" at monthly WSCG meetings. 80 (41%) of the 166 women interviewed stated that one of the main topics of their monthly group meetings was "exchanging ways of production and animal breeding." Although successful this approach had high personal economic costs for some group members who had to gain knowledge that could then be shared among other group members. For example, women who took loans from the VBP, purchased animals, such as pigs and chickens, and then learned about the importance of animal vaccinations through animal deaths. Knowledge of animal health prevention techniques had a direct impact on loan success and subsequent increases in HH assets and income. Of the nine women who stated that their loans were not successful eight were due to livestock deaths.
26.3 In-depth interviews found that livestock deaths, through a combination of lack of animal health knowledge and village-wide “disease epidemics” (that could not be solved by district veterinary staff) were the main reasons for rescheduling loans. Many women used loans to purchase chickens and pigs, some of which died due to lack of vaccination and other animal health measures, thereby requiring a longer repayment period for the remaining livestock to generate sufficient income to repay the loan.

27. Impacts of credit and savings knowledge

27.1 Prior to joining their WSCG, the majority of women members (66% of women surveyed) had no knowledge or experience in (1) taking loans from the VBP, (2) paying interest, (3) making regular monthly savings, or (4) repaying loans at the end of an agreed loan period. Participation in WSCGs has provided all women with invaluable experience and confidence in credit and savings that will enable them to access additional loans from the VBP over the long-term. It is important to highlight that taking a loan of VND 1,000,000 (from the government) for the first time is an enormous challenge for village women who have never taken a loan before. In addition to overcoming individual fears and inaccurate cultural beliefs, there are added pressures from husbands and family members who may not fully understand the responsibilities involved. It is clear from the quantitative and qualitative data that taking loans from the VBP has been a very positive empowering experience for the majority of WSCG members. This is highlighted by the finding that 86% of WSCG members surveyed want to take a second loan from the VBP under the LBCM.

27.2 89% of women (729 out of 820 women) in the 8 research communes repaid their 1st loan on time to the VBP. Of the 91 outstanding loans (listed in Annex 1), 79 loans are from two communes in Dien Bien Dong district. Field research identified a combination of problems in this district that led to this aberration (compared with other districts) in loan repayment rates. The most critical issues were not enough attention from WU and VBP district staff in monitoring/supporting village WSCG activities combined with too rapid disbursement of loans to HHs who lacked experience in animal husbandry and health care.

27.3 In one village visited with very high rates of overdue loans, husbands had taken over the WSCG arguing that their wives could not participate in the groups due to their illiteracy. In this village, large numbers of loans were given out at the same time resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of livestock purchased outside the commune without proper animal health prevention measures, which led to a serious village-wide disease epidemic. Following this disaster, men group members (including the village leader) jointly decided that no one would repay their loans. Their united stand has made it very difficult for VBP and WU staff to collect money on outstanding loans. An early intervention by district staff to make it clear to village members that the WSCG is for women only (this was done by VBP and WU staff in other districts) might have avoided this problem. In addition, loans should have been introduced more gradually (as was the case in other surveyed communes) and combined with information on animal health prevention practices.

27.5 223 women in 5 of the eight surveyed communes received 2nd loans under the LBCM. The average loan size/HH was VND 1,813,000 with a loan repayment period of 12 months (121 HHs), 24 months (50 HHs), or 36 months (52 HHs). To date, 91% (110) of women receiving a 2nd loan (for 12 months) have repaid their loans on time (compared with 89% for
the 1st loan) indicating that after the experience of the first loan women have greater capacity to repay additional loans on time (See the 2nd Loan Cycle Table listed in Annex 2) 121 of the 249 HHs that have taken 2nd loans remain restricted by a one year repayment period which places a great deal of pressure on income earned by a HH over one year This finding highlights the need to standardise loan procedures through clear Guidelines on loan size and duration. There is consensus among women group members and VBP and WU staff that larger loans should have a longer loan repayment period.

To date the majority of WSCG members have not been able to access additional loans under the LBCM due to lack of clear guidelines on the 2nd loan size and duration. District VBP staff have stated their willingness to provide 2nd loans to all women who have repaid their loans in the first cycle including women who had to reschedule their loans for an additional 12-24 months.

309 HHs in Tua Chau district received a 3rd loan under the LBCM. The average loan size is VND 1,890,000 for a duration of 24 months. 13 of the 309 HHs have repaid their loans before the due date (See the 3rd Loan Cycle Table listed in Annex 3).

28. Impacts on women’s empowerment

The impact of the LBCM on women’s empowerment has been dramatic in all surveyed communes. Prior to the implementation of the LBCM the majority of women had very limited access to information and opportunities to meet and learn from women in their commune. Transferring knowledge through husbands attending meetings organised by the WU was extremely difficult.

The launching of the LBCM at the end of 1997 provided opportunities for village women to overcome their social and cultural isolation and take a more active and visible role in the communities where they lived. This resulted in a radical change in the role and position of women at HH, village and commune levels. Through joining WSCGs women had access to new knowledge in a supportive (all women) environment. Gender-based groups were crucial to enable women (who were very shy and often invisible in mixed-gender groups) to discuss, understand and learn information that they were exposed to for the first time.

Illiteracy in Vietnamese language was a constraint but not a barrier as women’s solidarity resulted in group members combining their Vietnamese language skills to help each other complete forms to apply for VBP loans and maintain accurate records of WSCG activities, such as, savings and interest payments. Focus groups with women in the field revealed the dramatic cultural changes that had occurred in all communes where the LBCM had been implemented -- women were now taking a more active role in HH decisions, meeting and learning from each other on a regular basis, visiting each others houses to help each other more often, and travelling to the commune centre (and in some cases the district centre) for meetings and training courses.

Women’s literacy classes (funded under the EMDP) played a key role in the success of WSCGs and subsequent impacts on women’s empowerment. The classes, some of which were implemented prior to the establishment of WSCGs, provided an opportunity for women to expand their language skills and at the same time establish a precedent for women’s
participation in education/group activities. There is a huge unmet need for literacy classes among village women interviewed in this evaluation. It is unfortunate that the majority of them are unable to attend government-funded literacy classes as they are outside the strict age limit (under 25) set by the program.

29. Impacts on commune, district and provincial WU and VBP staff capacities

29.1 The LBCM has had a huge impact on the capacity of commune, district and provincial WU and VBP staff to provide new knowledge and loans to ethnic minority women living in remote areas. Prior to the implementation of the LBCM, none of the district WU staff in the four surveyed districts had any knowledge or experience in credit and savings. 30 months later these women are managing and supporting WSCGs involving 1,614 women in 15 communes (the current # of communes in the four districts where the LBCM is being implemented). In partnership with district VBP staff they have disbursed loans totalling VND 2,182,000,000 (US$156,000).

29.2 Prior to the implementation of the LBCM, it was very difficult for commune and district WU staff to effectively transfer new knowledge to village women. WSCGs have proven to be a very effective vehicle for providing new knowledge on children’s and women’s health, family planning, agricultural production (especially animal health) and credit and savings. Prior to the LBCM, VBP staff had considerable difficulty identifying and providing credit to poor ethnic minority HHs, now through WSCGs, VBP staff have a much larger pool of clients with which to provide credit services to. The LBCM has provided an opportunity to build strong partnerships between district and provincial VBP and WU staff resulting in more
efficient delivery of government services (credit and health/agricultural production information) to ethnic minority women and their families in the target communes.

30. **DISCUSSION OF THE SAVINGS AND CREDIT OPERATIONAL MECHANISM**

31. **Selection of borrowers and group formation**

31.1 One of the most common questions asked when undertaking an evaluation of this kind is: Are you reaching the poor? Often defined as poor HHs farming on marginal land with no agricultural production assets and suffering from annual food shortages. If this group are “the poor” then no the LBCM did not select women from these HHs when establishing WSCGs. However, it is important to highlight that no credit model (designed based on existing government staffing and resources) can be established in mountainous villages, without any prior experience in credit and savings, and successfully provide agricultural production loans to the poorest HHs. What is often forgotten in the “rush” to reach the poor are the social and cultural barriers that must be overcome before the poorest HHs can access credit services.

31.2 An important finding of this evaluation has been the impact the initial selection of WSCG members has had on overcoming village-wide beliefs that people become poorer through taking loans from the VBP. By selecting poor women (34% estimated) with annual food shortages, and, 34% with no year-round access to clean water who had the capacity to repay loans the LBCM has been able to demonstrate the impact of credit and savings on HH income and asset wealth to HHs throughout each village. This learning through seeing is essential to convince poorer HHs to consider taking loans from the VBP. Data collected in this evaluation confirms the “word of mouth” effect the LBCM has had in the surveyed communes – 90% of non WSCG members interviewed (who are poorer than WSCG members) want to take a loan from the VBP. If the WSCGs had not been successful it is highly unlikely that non group members would have wanted to take loans from the VBP.

31.3 With a strong foundation of village-wide knowledge and trust in credit and savings now established (in six of the eight surveyed communes) an opportunity exists to expand WSCGs in order to respond to the high demand for loans from poorer HHs. The step-by-step approach to reaching the poor being proposed builds on “local” traditions of village solidarity and equity where those with “knowledge and skills” help those who have less access to information and government services. In-depth interviews found that many women group members supported the idea of expanding WSCGs to enable other women (neighbours in their village) to have an opportunity to benefit from loans from the VBP. The expansion of WSCG is very important as it will reduce the risk of creating a wealthy elite (those with access to VBP loans) within LBCM villages. 70% of women surveyed knew of women in their village who wanted to join their WSCG but were unable. Many group members saw no difference between themselves and other village women indicating that there is a much larger pool of women with the capacity to successful use loans from the VBP (this finding was confirmed through in-depth interviews with group leaders and non group members).

32. **Group meeting frequency and activities**

32.1 The low rate of monthly group meetings (70% of WSCG surveyed are meeting monthly) is due to the fact that many WSCGs have lost momentum since repaying their loans
received under the LBCM. With opportunities for a 2nd loan on hold for the majority of WSCG members until the completion of this evaluation, many women see no purpose in meeting on a monthly basis. However, mean meeting attendance remains very high (mean group membership is 11.6 and mean group attendance 11.1) indicating that WSCG members enjoy and get a lot out of their regular group meetings (confirmed through in-depth interviews).

32.2 Regardless of meeting frequency, the quality of group meetings in terms of knowledge sharing and making monthly savings and interest payments was very high. Women stated that their groups meetings consisted of exchanging knowledge on a wide range of topics, such as agricultural production and animal breeding, taking care of children, family planning, nutrition and health care, in addition to, making monthly interest and savings payments, and repaying loans.

33. Loan practices and procedures

33.1 This evaluation has identified an immediate need to simplify and standardise LBCM loan practices and procedures. A great deal has been learnt over the last 30 months, however, many of these lessons have yet to be formally transferred into revised LBCM procedures and practices. Lack of updated Guidelines for district VBP staff has resulted in a variation in loan practices and procedures across the four surveyed districts. This can be seen in the loan data listed in Annexes 1-3. Tua Chua district staff have taken the initiative and disbursed 2nd and 3rd loans to WSCG members while other districts have waited for clear Guidelines. There is an urgent need to respond to the requests of WSCG members who have been waiting a number of months for a 2nd loan under the LBCM. What is needed are clear Guidelines describing the range of loan products to be offered by the VBP under the LBCM. District VBP and WU staff have recommended a series of staggered loan products that can be made available to all WSCG members. This will enable women to “graduate” from smaller, shorter-term loans to larger, longer-term loans which enable HHs to further diversity farming systems into cow-raising and fruit production.

33.2 Within the proposed Guidelines there is a need to address a number of inefficient practices and procedures so that the LBCM can be more responsive to the needs of WSCG members. For example, at this time WSCG leaders are required to make individual monthly visits (usually by foot) to district VBP offices to deposit group interest and savings payments. For WSCG leaders there are high opportunity costs in lost working/child care days with this practice (e.g. the round trip from Xinh Phinh commune to Tua Chua district town is 40 km). This practice may be the reason why some WSCG meetings are now being held quarterly as opposed to monthly.

33.3 Meetings with VBP staff identified monthly “commune banking days,” as a good solution to this inefficient practice of district visits by WSCG leaders. It was proposed that VBP staff would visit each commune on a fixed date each month (e.g., the 15th) and spend the day in the commune collecting interest, savings and loan principal payments and answering any questions and concerns of WSCG leaders and members. (This suggestion replicates the successful monthly “commune family planning day” service delivery model implemented by the National Committee for Population and Family Planning.)
34. **Use of group funds**

34.1 Under the initial design of the LBCM WSCGs were to pool their compulsory monthly savings into a Group Fund and then provide loans to group members. However, lack of clear Guidelines, combined with a concern among commune and district leaders that WSCGs did not have the capacity to undertake this task, meant that the majority of groups did not manage and disburse Group Funds (95% of women surveyed did not take loans from their Group Fund). Another constraint is that monthly savings are very small (VND 5,000/month) which means that it takes a long time for Group Funds to reach a suitable size to use as a loan. In Bun To commune, Muong Te district the accumulated savings/group (assuming 10 members/group) after 30 months was VND 292,500 (see Savings Mobilisation Table in Annex 4). Access to savings was also an issue as the VBP required WSCG members to deposit monthly savings at the district VBP as this provided added security for VBP staff.

35. **Book keeping practices**

35.1 Current book keeping practices are far too complicated for WSCG members. There are currently seven different record keeping books that must be kept by WSCG leaders and group accountants placing an unnecessary burden (especially considering the low levels of literacy) on those responsible for record keeping. In addition, the current series of record books results in high training and retraining costs. Provincial and district WU and VBP staff have recommended (based on their field experience) that the current 8 books could be reduced to 2 books making it easier for WSCG members to manage, and for district staff to monitor.

36. **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)**

36.1 The formal LBCM M&E reporting system involves a series of structured forms (developed under the EMDC) that are completed and submitted at commune, district and provincial levels. Each month WSCG leaders complete a report form and submit it to the President of the Commune WU, who together with the EMDC Project Commune Management Board, complete a separate report form combining information from all WSCGs in the commune. This form is then sent to the district WU. Each quarter district WU staff complete a third report form (compiling commune data) and then forward it to the province. In addition, there are also records maintained, and reports submitted to higher levels, by district VBP staff. Informal M&E involves regular meetings at all levels to discuss and address LBCM implementation issues and concerns. The current M&E system involving both formal and informal reporting seems to be working well. In interviews with provincial and district staff there were no recommendations to make major changes in the current M&E system, rather what was proposed was to revise the current series of forms so that they could better reflect the experience and lessons that have been learnt over the last two 1/2 years.

36.2 Concerning field M&E activities the survey data found that district WU staff made more visits to the target communes each year (4.4 visits/commune/year) compared with VBP staff (3.8 visits/commune/year). For both organisations there did not seem to be a structured program of visits that would maximise the limited time and resources of district VBP and WU staff. The active M&E activities of provincial and district VBP and WU staff has played an important role in the overall success of the LBCM. Based on loan repayment rates some districts, such as Tuan Giao, indicate better M&E practices than other districts. There is an
opportunity to learn from/replicate the M&E activities undertaken in this district which has the potential to reduce problems with outstanding loans in other districts.

37. Financial viability

37.1 The LBCM in its current form is financially viable in terms of independent replication through government funding. This has already taken place over the last year through the active leadership of provincial VBP and WU staff. However, there is considerable potential to improve the financial viability of the model through simplifying procedures, clarifying roles and responsibilities at various levels, and improving the quality of various inputs that are linked to the LBCM, such as training manuals and education materials.

38. Discussion of Institutional Issues

39. Compatibility of the LBCM with partners mission/goals

39.1 This evaluation has found that the LBCM is very compatible with the overall goals and mission of both the VBP and WU. For the VBP, the LBCM complements the bank’s national mandate to disburse loans to poor ethnic minority HHs. WSCGs have proven to be more effective in terms of targeting the poor and loan repayment rates than existing VBP credit provision models, such as Commune People’s Committee (PC) Credit Groups established in a number of communes in Lai Chau province. PC Credit Groups have no family health/agricultural production education component, are dominated by men with strong links to the Commune PC, and have a wider range of loan default rates (from 1 to 20% compared with 0% to 8% for the LBCM). For the WU, the LBCM has provided an opportunity (that did
not exist before) to empower illiterate village women to improve women's and children's health (though changed health behaviours) and increase HH incomes.

39.2 There is very strong support and ownership of the LBCM at provincial, district and commune levels in Lai Chau province. However, in order to strengthen the integration of the LBCM within both the VBP and WU, and ensure the successful expansion and sustainability over the long-term, there is an immediate need to clarify, and revise based on lessons learnt to date, the overall design of the LBCM.

40. Organisational and cultural issues

40.1 The LBCM fits very well within the current organisational structure and operations of both the VBP and WU. This study did not find any evidence that the model created any cultural difficulties at provincial, district, commune, or most importantly, village levels.

41. Project management structure

41.1 As a component of the EMDP, the LBCM comes under the responsibility of EMDP Management Boards established at provincial, district and commune levels. However, due to the compatibility of the LBCM with the goals of the VBP and WU, combined with the high level of local ownership in the model by both organisations, the LBCM is in reality implemented and managed independently of EMDP Management Boards.

41.2 It is clear from this evaluation that some districts have developed more effective LBCM management practices than others. In order to learn from and replicate these practices, it is important to take the time to document "best practices in LBCM management" at village, commune, and district levels so that a standard management structure can be established for LBCM expansion over the long-term.

42. Human resources

42.1 The LBCM has been successfully implemented without any increases in staffing at either the WU or the VBP. This is one of the reasons the model has been so suitable for both organisations.

43. Effectiveness of the endowment fund

43.1 Under the LBCM, an endowment fund of 30 million VND has been established for each commune. The money is held in an account at the VBP (in Hanoi) where it generates interest which is then used to cover operational costs of commune and district staff active in field-based LBCM M&E activities. This income-generating model was proposed and established when interest rates at the VBP were much higher than the current savings interest rate of 0.5% per month. At this interest rate, endowment funds cannot generate sufficient funds to cover local management costs, and a cost analysis would most likely find that human resource costs in fund management and disbursement are greater than the income generated from the endowments. In addition, the endowment fund model is not replicable under government funding. It is therefore recommended that endowment funds are closed and the money used for expanding the LBCM to other districts and communes in Lai Chau province (costs would
involve training district WU and VBP staff, commune leaders, commune animal health staff, WSCG leaders and WSCG members, printing of WSCG education materials, and literacy and post-literacy classes for WSCG leaders)

44. **DISCUSSION OF TRAINING ISSUES**

45. **Design of training programs**

45.1 In undertaking this evaluation there did not appear to be a clear training program for training of staff at various levels in LBCM operation and management. Part of the reason for this was that as a pilot project it was necessary for the LBCM training program to have some flexibility so that training courses could be designed and implemented to respond to identified training needs at district, commune, and village levels. At the start of the LBCM implementation a 5-day foundation training course on credit and savings was provided for provincial and district VBP and WU staff in Hanoi. Under the EMIDP a training manual was developed to assist district staff to train commune staff and WSCG leaders. In all districts WSCG leaders were trained in a series of 3-day training courses spread out over a number of months. Lack of a clear training program at this level resulted in a wide variation in the number of training courses implemented in each district as discussed below.

46. **Implementation of training programs, coverage and impact**

46.1 There is a direct relationship between the number of training courses attended by WSCG leaders and the loan default rates in each district as shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Mean # of training courses group leaders attended</th>
<th>Loan Default Rate (1st cycle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuan Giao</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua Chua</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muong Te</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dien Bien Dong</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: The mean course duration for all districts is 2.7 days).

46.2 Additional training courses for WSCG leaders (assuming comparable training quality) in Dien Bien Dong district could have had a measurable impact on loan default rates in the district. It is assumed that all districts had an equal allocation of funds for training under the LBCM, therefore, Tuan Giao and Tua Chua districts either used their training funds more efficiently (implementing more courses with the same funds) or implemented additional courses using their own resources. With training playing such an important role in terms of loan repayment rates it is recommended that a more in-depth assessment is undertaken to understand what Tuan Giao and Tua Chua did differently in terms of training WSCG leaders. The outcome would be a clear training program to successfully replicate the LBCM.

47. **Quality of training manuals and training gaps**

47.1 The LBCM training manual developed at the start of the project in 1997 needs to be revised and simplified so that it is an easier tool for district VBP and WU trainers to use in replicating the LBCM in new districts and communes. Two training manuals, one for training...
district WU and VBP staff in LBCM management and M&E, and a second manual for training WSCG leaders (to be taught in three separate training courses) need to be developed. There are currently very experienced district staff (in the four LBCM districts) who with well written and structured training manuals could successfully train VBP and WU staff in expansion districts and communes in the implementation and management of the LBCM.

47.2 60% of WSCG leaders interviewed felt that the training courses provided under the LBCM were not enough. However, as the investment in training is already quite high (e.g. 11 training days/WSCG leader in Tuan Giao district) it is important to focus on a combination of better quality training courses and more effective training materials as opposed to increasing the number of training days through additional training courses. Requests for additional training in book keeping (made by 15 group leaders) may not be necessary if the book keeping system is simplified as is being proposed.

47.3 There are currently no training materials, such as Trainer’s Guides, provided to WSCG leaders to use in village WSCG meetings. Simple Trainer’s Guides (written for grade 3 levels of education) that are linked to hand-held picture-based flipcharts could greatly assist WSCG leaders to transfer information to WSCG members. WSCG leaders have requested these materials in order to improve the quality of learning during group meetings.

48. DISCUSSION OF INTEGRATION ISSUES

49. Impact of integrated activities carried out under the EMDP

49.1 The evaluation found that the LBCM is a key component of the EMDP as it provides a very strong foundation, WSCGs, upon which to link to and subsequently impact other EMDP components, such as girls/children’s primary school enrolment, use/access of commune health centres, and behaviour changes to reduce child malnutrition. The two most important EMDP components for the LBCM are women’s literacy classes (discussed earlier) and training of commune staff in basic animal health care. Animal health training has played an important role in reducing the risk of livestock deaths in the target communes, which in turn reduced the numbers of loans in default.

50. Implementation, monitoring and supervision capacity of CEMMA

50.1 Staff from CEMMA and branch Resettlement Offices (RO) at provincial and district levels have played an important role in supporting the partnership between the VBP and WU in Lai Chau province. However, as the partnership between the VBP and WU has become stronger, the need for co-ordination by CEMMA and RO staff has been reduced. In Lai Chau provincial RO staff have taken a leading role in advocating for the expansion of the EMDP and LBCM in other districts and communes. The constraint to this important advocacy work is: (1) lack of a clear description of the EMDP model, and, (2) lack of LBCM Management Guidelines that will enable the successful replication of the model in Lai Chau and other provinces in the Northern mountains region.
Recommendations

1. Development of LBCM Management Guidelines

1.1 It is clear from this evaluation that the LBCM is a very successful model that has had a measurable impact on the lives of hundreds of women and their families in the 8 communes surveyed in Lai Chau province. As the LBCM is currently being replicated in 35 communes, in 14 districts, and 5 provinces, one can state that the model is having a positive impact on the lives of thousands of ethnic minority women and family members living in the Northern and Central Highlands regions of Vietnam (this statement is made based on interviews with CEMMA, VBP and UNICEF staff monitoring the LBCM in these 5 provinces).

1.2 One of the most important findings of this evaluation is how cost-effective and compatible the LBCM is with the current mandates of the VBP and WU. The fact that the LBCM can be easily integrated within the current operations and existing staffing structures of both organisations makes the model very desirable for government replication. The findings that the LBCM realises human resource and other cost savings through the partnership between the VBP and WU are additional incentives for replication.

1.3 A great deal of work has been done over the last two years in developing and improving the LBCM, however, the most important work remains to be done -- documenting the LBCM in its current form so that the model can be successfully replicated through government (or donor) funding in Lai Chau and other provinces with ethnic minority populations. This documentation would involve writing detailed LBCM Management Guidelines that cover every aspect of LBCM implementation, from the initial foundation training courses for VBP and WU staff to commune selection, WSCG formation, WSCG activities, M&E, and many other aspects of LBCM operation.

1.4 The proposed Guidelines would be written in a very clear step-by-step format making it easy for provincial and district staff to independently replicate the LBCM through existing government structures and funding sources. The LBCM Guidelines would include LBCM implementation materials, such as training manuals, WSCG education and book keeping materials, M&E forms and other relevant documents, such as this evaluation report. The aim is to develop Management Guidelines combined with an integrated package of implementation materials that can be easily distributed to relevant provinces and districts throughout Vietnam. Through reading the LBCM Guidelines provincial staff can learn how to successfully replicate the LBCM using the package of implementation materials.

1.5 As evident in this report there is a great deal of experience and lessons that have been learnt by provincial and district staff in the management of the LBCM. Unfortunately, this knowledge has yet to be documented and incorporated into clear LBCM Management Guidelines. As it is likely that the current funding for the LBCM will end this year there is an urgent need to document and formally transfer the LBCM to the government of Vietnam.
2. Strengthening the LBCM

Note: At the end of the data collection in Lai Chau province a ½ day review meeting was held in Dien Bien Phu town with evaluation team members and provincial leaders to review the evaluation findings and discuss areas where the LBCM could be strengthened. The recommendations agreed in this meeting are outlined below:

2.1 A range of VBP loan products offered under the LBCM

The range of loan products listed in the table below provide an opportunity for WSCG members to access larger, longer-term loans over a number of years. This step-by-step approach to accessing VBP loans gradually builds individual HH loan use and repayment capacity while minimising risks for the VBP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loan</th>
<th>Loan Size</th>
<th>Loan Repayment Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>VND 300,000 to 1,000,000</td>
<td>18 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>VND 1,000,000 to 2,000,000</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>VND 2,000,000 to 3,500,000</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>VND 2,000,000 to 3,500,000</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2 Women receiving their 1st loan from the VBP will be required to repay their loan in two instalments: at the end of 9 months and 12 months after 18 months. WSCG members should not be forced to wait until all group members have repaid their loans before being able to receive additional loans under the LBCM. This unfairly penalises women who have set an example by repaying their loans. In addition, it undermines WSCGs by placing unnecessary pressure on women who are still trying to repay their 1st loan.

2.2 Expansion of WSCGs to respond to local demand and address equity concerns

It is proposed that WSCGs gradually expand their membership in order to respond to the growing demand for VBP loans and to address equity concerns in the LBCM villages. The WSCG expansion model is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>End of Year 2</th>
<th>End of Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WSCG members are selected based on a woman's capacity to repay a loan</td>
<td>Selection of additional WSCG members who are poor and want a loan from the VBP</td>
<td>Existing WSCG members will divide into two groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pairing of current WSCG members with new WSCG members</td>
<td>Selection of additional WSCG members who are poor and want a loan from the VBP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All current WSCG members (those able) will be paired with new WSCG members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Selection of new WSCG members at the end of years 2 and 3 occurs when the majority (2/3rds) of WSCG members have repaid their loans to the VBP. When WSCGs expand existing members are be paired with new members so they can act as personal advisors/mentors over the coming year. 2nd and 3rd loans cannot be granted to WSCG members unless women are willing to mentor new WSCG members.

- All WSCG members would take an active role in teaching new women members about women's and children's health and animal husbandry, and health practices at monthly WSCG meetings.
2.3 Flexible client-based loan repayment conditions

2.3.1 Many group members requested the option to repay their loans in instalments when they have funds available as opposed to the current practice when their loans are due. Loan repayment by instalments is very suitable for many HHs as it reduces the pressure of an "outstanding debt," in addition, to reducing the risk of savings at home being used for other purposes.

2.4 Monthly Commune Banking Days

2.4.1 It is clear that considerable savings in time can be realised for WSCG leaders and district VBP and WU staff through establishing a simple system of monthly commune banking days where VBP staff visit each commune on a fixed day each month to collect interest, savings and loan payments from WSCG leaders.

2.5 Commune WSCG Training and Management Fund

2.5.1 This evaluation identified the need to establish a sustainable mechanism to share some of the costs incurred in the management of WSCGs in each commune. What is being proposed is to reduce the compulsory monthly savings fee from VND 5,000 to VND 4,000 and then to have the remaining VND 1,000 paid into a commune-managed WSCG Training and Management Fund. This money would be used by a Commune WSCG Committee (consisting of the President of the Commune Women's Union and all WSCG leaders) to cover costs incurred in management of WSCGs in all villages in the commune. The fund would also be used to pay for training courses, such as women's literacy, WSCG Committee members wanted to organise for WSCG leaders and members in the commune.

2.5.3 It is important to highlight that this evaluation has found that even the poorest WSCG members are able to make compulsory monthly savings required under the LBCM, yet these savings do not make any meaningful contribution to WSCG operation or HH income growth. A commune-managed Training and Management Fund would empower WSCG leaders (through the Commune WSCG Committee) to take a more active role in the education of village women and management of WSCGs throughout each commune. Provincial VBP and WU leaders have proposed to pilot-test this recommendation in Tua Chua and Tuan Giao districts in the coming months.

2.6 Simplified book keeping procedures for WSCG leaders and accountants

2.6.1 This recommendation is very easy to implement as provincial and district VBP and WU staff already have a very clear idea on what is needed.

2.7 Education materials on family health, agricultural production and animal health for WSCGs

2.7.1 WSCGs in each commune should be given copies of the health education materials developed under the ENIDP. In addition, they should be provided with simple agricultural production and animal health factbooks which they can study in monthly group meetings (suitable factbooks are already available from other development projects in the region).
Access to animal health factbooks will reduce the risks of livestock deaths for women using loans for this purpose.

**Note:** To successfully implement the above recommendations Guidelines will need to be developed and distributed to district and commune staff and WSCG leaders. Ideally these Guidelines would be included within the LBCM Management Guidelines proposed earlier in this section.

3. **Documentation of key EMDP components that are linked to the LBCM**

3.1 Through undertaking this evaluation it is clear that the impact of the LBCM is greatly enhanced through the implementation of the women’s literacy and animal health training components of the EMDP. Therefore it is recommended that these two components are also written up in the form of Component Management Guidelines. In this way provincial staff will have an opportunity to implement the two components together with the LBCM which will significantly increase the chances of long-term LBCM impact and success.
Annex 1: Results of LBCM Credit Activities in the 1st Loan Cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>District/Commune</th>
<th>Loans disbursed since (9/1997)</th>
<th>Loan Term months</th>
<th>Average Loan size per household</th>
<th>Loans repaid on time</th>
<th>Default (Outstanding Loans)</th>
<th>Default rate vs. disburs-ment (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of loans</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>No. of loans</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>No. of loans</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Muông tè</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>1,087</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>97,970</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xã Bum nua</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>61,000</td>
<td>1,173</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>58,970</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xã Bum tô</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Điện biên đông</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>352,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>293,600</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xã Na son</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>175,000</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keo Lומים</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>118,600</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Tuấn giáo</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pù nhung</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muông mòn</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Tủa chưa</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>276,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>266,600</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xinh phình</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99,600</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muông Bằng</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>174,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>167,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>828,000</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>758,170</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2: Results of LBCM Credit Activities in the 2nd Loan Cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Mường tê</td>
<td>4 7,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 7,000</td>
<td>4 7,000</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xà Bum núa</td>
<td>4 7,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 7,000</td>
<td>4 7,000</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Điện biên đông</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Tuan giáo</td>
<td>78 168,767</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,164</td>
<td>26 66,767</td>
<td>29 68,918</td>
<td>49 99,849</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pù nhung</td>
<td>26 66,767</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,568</td>
<td>26 66,767</td>
<td>26 66,767</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mường mủn</td>
<td>52 102,000</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1,962</td>
<td>3 2,151</td>
<td>49 99,849</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Tủa chú</td>
<td>141 228,500</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,621</td>
<td>84 133,247</td>
<td>85 135,242</td>
<td>56 93,258</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xích phinh</td>
<td>50 89,000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1,780</td>
<td>1 2,000</td>
<td>49 87,000</td>
<td>1 1,000</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mường Bang</td>
<td>91 139,500</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,533</td>
<td>84 133,247</td>
<td>84 133,242</td>
<td>7 6,258</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>223 404,267</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,813</td>
<td>110 200,014</td>
<td>114 204,160</td>
<td>109 200,107</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit: VND 1000
### Annex 3: Results of LBCM Credit Activities in the 3rd Loan Cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>District Commune</th>
<th>Loans disbursed (9-12/1999)</th>
<th>Loan Term (mths)</th>
<th>Average loan size per household</th>
<th>Loans repaid in advance</th>
<th>Outstanding portfolio as of 30/4/2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of loans</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of loans</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Mường tê</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Diên biên đồng</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Tuấn giáo</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Tú a chúa</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>584,000</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xinh phinh</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>234,000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mường Bằng</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>584,000</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 4

WSCG VBP Savings Activities as of April 30, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District/Commune</th>
<th>Savings made by members</th>
<th>Savings withdrawn</th>
<th>Savings Balance on 30/4/2000</th>
<th>Amount deposited at VBP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of members</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Number of members</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mường tè</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>10,404</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bùm nua</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5,435</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bùn tơ</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2,925</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Điện biên đồng</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>13,200</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xà Na son</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>4,600</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keo Lóm</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuấn giáo</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>6,145</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pù nhung</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1,942</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mường mòn</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2,670</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tủa chửa</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>33,781</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>14,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinh phinh</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>10,953</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>5,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mường Bàng</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>15,919</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>8,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,465</strong></td>
<td><strong>63,530</strong></td>
<td><strong>388</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,315</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 5

Description of the Linking Bank Credit Model (LBCM)
(provided by UNICEF)

Introduction
The aim of the LBCM is to provide credit to ethnic minority families through a sustainable co-operation between a governmental financial institution -- the VBP, and a mass organisation -- the WU, under the co-ordination and management of CEMMA and support of UNICEF.

Objectives
Long-term objective: To contribute to improving the quality of life of ethnic minority children and women through integrated socio-economic development activities and the provision of support services in the target communities.

Short-term objective: To establish a credit model managed by the VBP, with the WU in an intermediary, that provides credit to poor ethnic minority women to help them increase annual incomes and improve living conditions.

Beneficiaries
Poor ethnic minority women with school-aged children (under 16) who have a need for credit.

Roles of partner organisations
The LBCM is organised under the collaboration of three organisations — The Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas (CEIMMA), VBP, and WU. Responsibilities of each organisation is as follows:

CEIMMA
- To co-ordinate and monitor the activities of the WU, VBP and concerned organisations to establish and train WSCGs,
- To co-ordinate the integration of credit with other activities of the project,
- To organise, co-ordinate, manage and supervise project activities.

The Vietnam Bank for the Poor
- In collaboration with the WU to organise training courses on savings and credit management for the WSCGs and to enable women to access loans from the VBP.
- To provide loans to the poor women through WSCGs with the following conditions:
  - Borrowers must participate in group meetings; no collateral is required; loans are set based on the borrowers' demand but cannot exceed VND1 million for the first loan cycle; duration of the first loan is 12 months; interest rate is equal to the rate applied by the VBP in the area (0.8% per month); loan recovery is at the end of the lending circle; interest is paid monthly in the group meetings, after the first circle the bank will continue to provide loans to borrowers if the previous loan is well repaid.

2 The highest loan to each household is currently VND 2.5 million, according to VBP regulations.
- To monitor and supervise loan use, capital and interest repayment.

**Women's Union**
- To select borrowers and establish WSCGs,
- In co-operation with the VBP and related organisations to organise training courses for borrowers on credit and savings management
- To mobilise borrowers to deposit savings,
- To assist the VBP in loan disbursement and recovery,
- To monitor and supervise family income generating activities,
- To carry out other project activities such as literacy elimination, health and nutrition education, etc.
- Activities of the above organisations are co-ordinated by the project management committees at central, province, district, commune levels and groups

**Groups**
The WU selects project beneficiaries and organises them in WSCGs in villages with about 10-20 members in each group. The group organisational structure comprises of a group leader, a deputy group leader undertaking the role of accountant, and a secretary/ cashier. Groups must meet monthly.

**Borrowers must deposit savings**
Initial savings: at least VND5,000/person.
Periodical (monthly) savings: VND2,000-5,000/person to be deposited at the monthly group meetings.
Besides, voluntary savings of borrowers is encouraged.
According to the conditions and capacity of each group savings will be either used as loans for group members or put into a savings account at the VBP (in case of savings used as loans to members, no interest shall be given to the savings of group members)

**Endowment fund**
An endowment fund will be established (VND30 million per commune) with the financial assistance of UNICEF. This fund is put in a saving account at the VBP and interest earning from the fund will be used to maintain project activities at provincial, district and especially commune levels.
**Annex 6**

**Form 1: Village Women's Credit Group Members Interview Questionnaire Form**

*Note:* In order to make it easier to use the following questionnaires in the field a larger font size with more space for writing collected data was used in the Vietnamese versions of these forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewer</th>
<th>Commune</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date and Time of Interview</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;!-- Insert data here --&gt;</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Full Name of the Women's Credit Group member**

Are you a group leader? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Are you a group member or your husband? [ ]

1. Age in years

2. Marital status: [ ] Married [ ] Widowed [ ] Divorced [ ] Single

3. Ethnic group: [ ] H'mong [ ] Thai [ ] Kinh [ ] KhMu [ ] Other

4. Grades of schooling completed:

5. Total number of family members in the household (people who live and eat together):

6. How many family workers: [ ] women [ ] men

7. Status of the woman's children in the household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education level (grades completed)</th>
<th>Now in school</th>
<th>Drop-out</th>
<th>Never been in school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Asking in combination with observation
**Woman's participation in her group**

**Note:** If the Village Women's Credit Group leader is in the room make sure that she does not interrupt the women being interviewed with different answers.

8. How many women in your Women's Credit Group?
9. How often do you meet together?
10. Where do you meet together?
11. How long have you been a group member? (write # months/years)
12. Why did you join the group? (write answer)
13. Do you know any women in the village who wanted to join the group but could not? (If no, go to question 15)
14. If you do know some women why did they not join?
   - Too poor
   - Did not know
   - Living too far
   - Afraid to have a loan
   - Other reason
15. What exactly do you do in each group meeting?

**Family economic situation**
16. How many animals do you own?
   - a) Buffaloes
   - b) Pigs
   - c) Horses
   - d) Goats
   - e) Fish
   - f) Cows
   - g) Dogs
   - h) Chickens
   - i) Ducks
   - j) Geese
   (Observation method only)
17. What kind of house do you own? (mark one answer with an X)
   - a) Bamboo or mud walls, dirt floor, thatched roof
   - b) Raised traditional house
   - c) Loose brick walls, dirt floor, thatched roof
   - d) Solid brick walls, concrete floor, tiled roof
   - e) Other type of house describe here
18. Is the house in good or bad condition? (compare her house with others in the village)
   - good
   - OK
   - very poor
19. Which water source does your family use?
   - Gravity Flow System
   - Bamboo pipe water
   - Open pool
   - Spring
   - Well
   - River
   - Rain water tank/jar
   - Other
20. Does your family have enough water around the year?
21. How far does it take to get water?
22. Does the family have electricity?  
Yes  No

23. How much crop land does the family own?  
- Wet rice field: m²  
- Upland fields: m²  
- Forest land: m²

(keep them calculate how much in m²)

1kg rice = ____________  
1kg maize = ____________  
1kg cassava = ____________

24. What are the annual income sources of the family?  
(list income sources by production and production value in figure)  
(help them calculate how much - 1kg rice = ____________  
1kg maize = ____________  
1kg cassava = ____________)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Production value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. What assets does the family have?  (mark X in box)

- a. Bicycle
- b. TV
- c. Radio
- d. Motorbike
- e. Sewing machine
- f. Other assets (list here)

26. Does your family suffer a food shortage each year?  
Yes  No

27. If your family does have a food shortage, for how many months?  
_________ months

28. Before joining the Women’s Credit Group did you have access to information about how to apply for loans from the Vietnam Bank for the Poor?  
Yes  No

29. If the answer was no, why not?  (mark one answer with an X)

- a) Because I did not know about the loans
- b) Because they said I was too poor
- c) Because I did not want a loan
- d) Other reason (write what it is)

30. If the answer was yes, how much was the loan for?  
VND

31. Did you pay back all of the money for the loan?  
Yes  No

32. In your opinion was the loan successful?  
Yes  No

33. Before joining the Women’s Credit Group did you have access to information about women’s and children’s health information?  
Yes  No

34. If yes, where was it from?

Have a break at this time for about 15 minutes.
**Woman’s economic situation after joining the credit group:**

35. Since joining the Women’s Credit Group have you had any loans from the Vietnam Bank for the Poor? (If no loans go to question 41)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Loan size</th>
<th>Loan duration</th>
<th>Repayment amount</th>
<th>Outstanding debt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loan 1</td>
<td>Reschedule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan 2</td>
<td>Reschedule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan 3</td>
<td>Reschedule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36. What was the loan used for? (mark one answer with an X)

- Pigs
- Chickens
- Fish
- Crops
- Buffaloes/cows
- Other purpose (write what it is)

37. In your opinion was the loan successful? Yes No

38. Why was the loan not successful? (mark one answer with an X)

- Because the Bank refused to lend
- Because I did not want a loan
- Because I did not know
- Other reason (write what it is)

39. Where did you get the money to repay the loan? (mark one answer with an X)

- VBP
- Friends
- Another loan
- Money lender
- Selling property
- Savings at home
- Selling their products

40. If the answer was no, why not? (mark one answer with an X)

- Because the Bank refused to lend
- Because I did not want a loan
- Because I did not know
- Other reason (write what it is)

41. Now, do you know how to apply for a loan from the Vietnam Bank for the Poor? Yes No

42. Do you know what interest is and why it is paid? Yes No
44. Do you often save money?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Savings amount that you have at home: __________ VND

Savings amount that you deposited to the bank: __________ VND

45. Where do you get money for savings?

________________________________________________________________________

46. What will you use savings for?

________________________________________________________________________

47. Have you taken a loan from the group fund?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

48. In your opinion, how can we make the Women's Credit Group better?

________________________________________________________________________

49. Do you intend to take another loan from the Bank?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

50. What will you use it for?

________________________________________________________________________

51. Since joining the Women's Credit Group have learned new information about women's and children's health that has helped you and your family?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

52. If yes, please explain what information you have learned has been most helpful to your family?

________________________________________________________________________

Now the interviewer must show 4 pictures from the Women's and Children's Nutrition Flipchart and ask the woman being interviewed to state what the message is or the meaning of each picture:

**Complete the table:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material title</th>
<th>Page No</th>
<th>Message given by the woman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions to test the health knowledge of women being interviewed.

**BREASTFEEDING**
1. According to you when should a mother start breastfeeding a child?

**CHILD GROWTH**
2. At what age/when should additional foods be given to a child?
3. How many meals should you feed your child a day (children aged 4-6 months to 3 years old)?
4. If a child has been sick how should she or he be fed differently after the illness is over?

**IMMUNISATION**
5. Why should a child be immunised?

**DIARRHOEA**
6. What do you do when your child has diarrhoea?
7. How much water do you use to mix Oresol?

**DELIVERY**
8. How many examinations should a pregnant woman get during her pregnancy?
9. Do you know about "3 cleans for Delivery"?

In this section, please write your overall impressions of the interview.
How has the family benefited from having a woman from the household a member of the credit group?
Try and list concrete examples. List any other information you think is relevant.

Signed by:
Form 2: Village Women’s Credit Group Leaders Interview Questionnaire Form

Note: The Village Women’s Credit Group Leader will be interviewed as a group member using the Group Members Interview Form and then as a Group Leader using this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Name of Village Women’s Credit Group Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What is the average number of group members who attend the group meeting?

2. Approximately how long is each meeting?

3. How were group members selected? (mark one answer with an X)
   - a. By commune leaders
   - b. By village leaders
   - c. Village meeting
   - d. Other ways (*please explain*)

4. Is your group better or worse as compared with other groups?

5. Since the group has started, how many group members have had loans from the Vietnam Bank for the Poor and paid them back?

6. How many group members currently have loans from the Bank for the Poor?

7. How many group members have taken 2 loans/3 loans from the Bank for the Poor since joining your group?

8. What are the biggest constraints for women in your group on getting loans?

9. In your opinion, how has the Women’s Credit Group helped women members?

10. How many times a year do you meet with the District VBP staff in your commune?

11. How many times a year do you meet with the District WU staff in your commune?
12. What suggestions do you have to improve the partnership between your group and the district Bank for the Poor?

13. How many training courses did you have to become a group leader?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Was this enough?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

15. Do you find the training courses useful?

- [ ] Good
- [ ] Fair
- [ ] Not good

16. How many days each time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. What other training do you need?

18. What are the most useful education materials you use in the group meetings? (list best first)

19. What other education materials do you need?

20. Approximately how many women in the village have children under 16?

21. How many of the women in the village having children under 16 are in following situations:

- [ ] Better off
- [ ] Average
- [ ] Poor
- [ ] Food shortage

22. How many women with children under 16 in your group?

23. How many of non group members having children under 16 want to join the Women's Credit Group?

24. What is your recommendation to assist poor and very poor women in your village?
**Form 3: Interview Questionnaire Form for non-Village Credit Group Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewer</th>
<th>Commune</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Interview</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of co-interviewer</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Name: ................................................................. age: .................................................................
2. How many children do you have? .................................................................
3. What are your family's main sources of income? .................................................................
4. Does your family suffer a food shortage each year? .................................................................
5. If your family does have a food shortage, for how many months? .................................................................
6. If your family does have a food shortage what do you do in this situation?
   a. .................................................................................................................................
   b. .................................................................................................................................
   c. .................................................................................................................................
7. Do you need to borrow credit for production investment? Yes: ................................................................. No: .................................................................
8. If yes, what would you use the money for? .................................................................................................
9. Do you know about the credit and saving program of the VBP and WU in the village? what do you concretely know about it? .................................................................................................
10. Do you know how borrowers are selected for this program? .................................................................................................
11. Do you think if the borrowers were rightly selected? If no, why? .................................................................................................
12. Why didn't you joint the program? .................................................................................................
13. Are you borrowing from anyone at this time? If yes, from who, what rate, and how much? .................................................................................................
14. Do you know about other credit programs in the village? .................................................................................................
15. Do you have any recommendations to make the project more helpful to the poor? .................................................................................................
Form 4: Interview Questionnaire Form for the leaders of the Commune People Committee and Women's Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewer</th>
<th>Commune:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Interview</td>
<td>Village:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Full Name of the commune leader ..................................................
Title .................................................................................................

1. Socio-economic situation in the commune
   - Population:
   - Ethnic group:
   - Poverty rate:
   - Illiteracy rate:
   - Drop-out rate:
   - Credit programmes in the commune

2. Please describe the launch of the project activities in the commune.

3. Please inform us some information about the project in the commune:
   - How many borrowers have received loans
   - Total loans distributed to borrowers in the commune
   - How many borrowers have repaid their loans
   - How many people deposit savings
   - Total savings amount
   - How many people in the commune have not borrowed loans from the Bank for the Poor? .......................................................... and why have they not taken a loan? ............................................

4. What are the difficulties in management and monitoring of the project activities?

5. How can you solve these problems? ............................................................

6. According to you, what are the project benefits for the commune and beneficiaries?

7. How can you continue to implement this project? ..........................................

8. Do you have any recommendations to improve the implementation of the project? ..............................................................

9. What experience have you gained from managing and monitoring the project?

If yes, How can you apply this experience in other programmes? ..........................
### Evaluation Team Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jonathan Caseley</td>
<td>Team Leader, Hanoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lê Minh Nguyệt</td>
<td>Micro-finance Resource Center, National Economics University, Hanoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hoàng Thị Chương</td>
<td>Vietnam Bank for the Poor, Hanoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Phạm Thị Tuân</td>
<td>Vietnam Bank for the Poor, Hanoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bùi Xuân Thiểm</td>
<td>Committee of Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas, Hanoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trần Quang Tiến</td>
<td>Vietnam Women’s Union, Hanoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Quang Thị ẩn</td>
<td>Women’s Union, Lai Chau province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Nguyễn Thị Dung</td>
<td>Women’s Union, Lai Chau province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Tống Văn Thương</td>
<td>Vietnam Bank for the Poor, Lai Chau province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Pham Tấn Sỹ</td>
<td>Vietnam Bank for the Poor, Lai Chau province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Giang Thị Dị</td>
<td>Women’s Union, Tủa Chua district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Thảo Thị Dung</td>
<td>Viet Nam Bank for the Poor, Tủa Châu district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Lý Phi Nhu</td>
<td>Women’s Union, Mường Tè district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Lò Văn Sơn</td>
<td>Viet Nam Bank for the Poor, Tuan Giang district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Bùi Thị Huệ</td>
<td>Women’s Union, Tuan Giang district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Nguyễn Thạch Lam</td>
<td>Viet Nam Bank, for the Poor, Điện Biên Đồng district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Lò Thị Phượng</td>
<td>Women’s Union, Điện Biên Đồng district</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Names of target communes and distances in km
to district centres in Lai Chau Province

1. **Mường Tè District**
   - Bum nua commune: 3 km
   - Bùn tè commune: 3 km

2. **Diên Biên Đồng District**
   - Na son commune: 18 km
   - Keo Lum commune: 15 km

3. **Tuan Giang District**
   - Pù Nhùng commune: 10 km
   - Mường mè commune: 35 km

4. **Tủa Châu District**
   - Xinh Phính commune: 20 km
   - Mường Bàng commune: 5 km
Annex 8

Main Areas to be Addressed in the Evaluation

A. Impacts
To assess the Project impacts on:
1. Borrowers' income,
2. Changes in the borrowers' awareness on health care and nutrition for women and children,
3. Capacity of poor ethnic minority women (borrowers),
4. Management capacity of the Women's Unions at all levels,
5. Changes in the awareness of the VBP credit officers in credit provision for the poor in general and poor ethnic minority women in particular,
6. In the project areas, to assess the impacts of the Project on the empowerment of women as well as positive changes in the life of ethnic minority women.

B. Savings and Credit Operational Mechanism
To review and assess the credit and savings implementation mechanism covering:
1. Selection of Borrowers and Group Formation;
2. Group Meeting frequency and activities;
3. Loan practices and procedures;
4. Use of Group Funds;
5. Book Keeping Practices;
6. Information Systems;
7. Monitoring and Evaluation;

C. Institutional Issues
To evaluate the institutional strengths and weaknesses of the project partners in implementing credit and savings activities:
1. Compatibility of the model with Project Partners' Vision/Mission/Goals,
2. Organizational and Cultural issues,
3. Project Management Structure,
4. Staffing/Personnel Arrangements,
5. Human Resource concerns,
6. Networking and Policy Advocacy,

D. Training Issues
To assess training programs addressing:
1. Design of Training Programs,
2. Implementation of Training programs,
3. Coverage, Consistency and Adequacy of Training,
4. Quality of Manuals,
5. Training Impact,

E. Integration Issues
1. Impact of integrated activities carried out by the Ethnic Minorities Development Programme on credit and income generation activities,
2. Link with other project activities and other International and Governmental development programmes.

F. Implementation, Monitoring and Supervision Capacity
1. To assess capacity and ability of CEMMA in Implementation, Monitoring and Supervision.