



USAID Pathways for Participation Project

Final Report

October 1, 2011 to February 28, 2014

May 28, 2014

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by RTI International.

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October 1, 2011 to February 28, 2014

Cooperative Agreement No. AID-486-A-11-00008

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Abbreviations

ABA	Asian Business Academy
AIVL	Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League
ANSW	Asia Network of Sex Workers
BFN+	Bright Futures Network
CARE VN	CARE Vietnam
CARMAH	Center for Applied Research on Men and Health
CBO	community-based organization
CCD	Dien Bien Center for Community Development
CCIHP	Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population
CCRD	Center for Community Health Research and Development
CFRC	Community Finance Resource Center
CHBC	community home-based care
COHED	Center for Community Health and Development
CoPC	Continuum of Prevention to Care
CSO	civil society organization
CSVT	Community Social Volunteer Team
DOLISA	Department of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs
DSEP	Department of Social Evils Prevention
DSVP	Department of Social Vices Prevention
FOG	fixed obligation grant
FSW	female sex worker
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GNSW	Global Network of Sex Workers
GVN	Government of Vietnam
HAA	Hanoi AIDS Association
HAIVN	Harvard Medical School AIDS Initiative in Vietnam
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City
HG	host country government
HHSC	Hai Phong Support Center for Health Care and HIV/AIDS Prevention
HPI	Health Policy Initiative
HTC	HIV testing and counseling
IDAHO	International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
IDU	injecting drug user
IEC	information, education, and communication
ILOM	Indigenous Leader Outreach Model
INGO	international nongovernmental organization
KAP	key affected population
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex
LIFE	Centre for Promotion of Quality of Life
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
M7	M7 Microfinance Networks
MARP	most-at-risk populations
MER	Pathways' Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting system
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MOLISA	Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MPS	Ministry of Public Security
MSH	Management Sciences for Health
MSM	men who have sex with men
NGO	nongovernmental organization

OCA	organizational capacity assessment
OD	organizational development
OGAC	Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator
OOG	Office of Government
OSEDC	Organization for the Support and Education of Disadvantaged Children
OSP	organizational strengthening plan
PAA	Provincial AIDS Association
PAC	Provincial AIDS Committee
PACCOM	People's Aid Coordinating Committee
PAG	Project Advisory Group
PARAFF	Public Participation and Accountability Facilitation Fund
PDI	peer-driven intervention
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PHAD	Institute of Population, Health and Development
PLHIV	people living with HIV
PLP	Pathways Lead Partners
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
PSI	Population Services International
PSP	primary sexual partners
PWID	people who inject drugs
Q	quarter
RA	rapid assessment
RESED	Resource and Sustainable Environment Development Center
SCDI	Centre for Supporting Community Development Initiatives
SMART TA	Sustainable Management of the HIV/AIDS Response and Transition to Technical Assistance
SOP	standard operating procedure
SPN+	Southern Network of People Living with HIV
SW	sex worker
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
TG	transgender
TMA	Total Marketing Approach
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAA	Vietnam AIDS Administration
VAAC	Vietnam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control
VBSP	Vietnam Bank of Social Policy
VCSPA	Vietnam Civil Society Partnership
VND	Vietnamese dong
VNGO	Vietnamese nongovernmental organization
VNMSM-TG	Vietnam Network of Men who have Sex with Men and Transgender People
VNP+	Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV
VNPUD	Vietnam Network of People Who Use Drugs
VNSW	Vietnam Network of Sex Workers
VNW+	Vietnam Network of Women Living with HIV
VUSTA	Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations
WHO	World Health Organization
WPP	USAID HIV Workplace Project

Background

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Pathways for Participation Project (USAID Pathways) was designed to meet the goals of the Partnership Framework between the U.S. Government and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for HIV and AIDS prevention and control, dated July 22, 2010, and signed by representatives for the U.S. and Vietnamese governments. The project addressed the following three framework objectives:

- Improving the availability and quality of prevention, care, and treatment services for most-at-risk populations (MARPs);
- Developing standard, effective models for health service delivery, including community-driven health care, improving performance management, data collection and analysis, strengthening capacity of community-level providers, and on-site data collection; and,
- Promoting the appropriate engagement of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide technical mentoring and training to build local capacity in areas including effective program management and implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), clinical care, harm reduction, drug treatment, surveillance, health informatics, and laboratory support for the greater involvement of Vietnamese organizations in implementing HIV and related health programs.

The goal of USAID Pathways was to increase the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs), MARPs, and people living with HIV (PLHIV) to deliver effective and efficient HIV services and to engage in programming, decision-making, and policy and advocacy efforts in response to the HIV epidemic. The project supported CSOs to contribute to the Government of Vietnam's (GVN) National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS. USAID Pathways aimed to achieve its goal by realizing the following six objectives:

1. Pathways Lead Partners (PLPs) Established and Strengthened
2. Organizational Capacity of CSOs Strengthened
3. Technical and Leadership Capacity of CSOs Strengthened
4. Effective Community-Based HIV Interventions and Services to Reduce Risk Behavior and Increase Quality of Life Implemented
5. The Value of Civil Society's Role in the National HIV/AIDS Response and Effective Representation of Their Constituencies Recognized
6. Ability of CSOs to Influence HIV Policies and Programming Strengthened

USAID Pathways commenced implementation on October 1, 2011, and closed February 28, 2014. The project was implemented by RTI International in partnership with CARE Vietnam (CARE VN).

In order to meet the project vision for supporting the leadership and empowerment of Vietnamese CSOs, RTI provided grants to give leading Vietnamese NGOs (VNGOs), the PLPs. The PLPs were selected in 2012 through a competitive process and were tasked with providing technical and organizational capacity building support to the HIV CSO sector in the following areas, presented in **Table 1**, designed to correspond with USAID Pathways objectives and thematic areas.

Table 1. PLPs and Their Support Areas

Center for Community Health and Development (COHED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care and support for PLHIV• Livelihood development• Case management
Institute of Population, Health and Development (PHAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CSO strategic information• M&E• Evidence-based approaches• Organizational capacity
Centre for Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MARPs networking and organizational development• Policy advocacy
Center for Community Health Research and Development (CCRD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CSO organizational capacity development• Leadership training
Center for Promotion of Quality of Life (LIFE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MARPs infection prevention• Linking CSOs in the South of Vietnam

Early Termination of USAID Pathways

USAID Pathways was originally awarded for a five-year period of performance, from October 1, 2011, through September 31, 2016. Due to delays in project approval from the GVN and a related delay in obtaining RTI's registration in Vietnam, USAID made the decision to cancel funding to the project in January 2014. ~~Clarity regarding~~ the reasons underlying the delay in project approval and why RTI faced significant barriers in gaining registration is beyond the scope of this report.

Overview of Key Achievements

USAID Pathways was designed to build on the achievements of the National HIV program, U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief- (PEPFAR-) supported activities, and the growth of the CSO sector during the period prior to project implementation. The aims of supporting CSOs and the government to develop the CSO sector and meet the challenges arising from the decrease of international funding were in line with the broader development patterns in Vietnam and the USAID approach to building national and local CSO capacity, organizational resilience, sustainability, and country ownership. However, unanticipated delays to GVN approval of the project and conditional requirements to change the project's organizational, management, and funding structures created unacceptable delays. Nevertheless, despite legal barriers and a hostile political implementation environment, the project was able to achieve significant progress in all key objectives, as highlighted below.

CSO-GVN Strategic Relationships Supported

USAID Pathways developed the project's vision and approach and built partnerships with the CSO sector, government, and international organizations working in civil society and the HIV response in Vietnam. The project also established important relationships and positioned HIV CSOs with other PEPFAR-funded partners, including Sustainable Management of the HIV/AIDS Response and Transition to Technical Assistance (SMART TA), implemented by

Family Health International (FHI 360); USAID Health Policy Initiative (HPI), implemented by Abt Associates; the USAID HIV Workplace Project, implemented by Chemonics International; and the Social Marketing/Total Marketing Approach (TMA) Project, implemented by Population Services International (PSI). The project engaged with over 200 HIV CSOs and PLHIV and MARP groups and networks throughout the country, and worked closely with the United Nations (UNAIDS, UNODC, and UN Women) in support of MARPs networks and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) movement in Vietnam.

New MARP Networks Established

Support from USAID Pathways provided the platform and organizational capacity for the formulation of three national MARP networks in 2013 – the Vietnam Network of People who Use Drugs (VNPUD), the Vietnam Sex Worker Network (VNSW), and the Vietnam Men Who Have Sex with Men and Transgender Network (VNMSM-TG). USAID Pathways also supported capacity building, legal registration, and governance activities with the PLHIV networks in Vietnam. Of particular importance was the legal registration and official government recognition of the Ho Chi Minh City- (HCMC-) based Southern Network of People Living with HIV (SPN+) by the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA).

Vietnamese NGOs Positioned to Receive Direct USAID Awards

USAID Pathways partnered with five leading VNGOs, the PLPs. The PLPs were provided with a range of capacity building support from RTI and CARE VN staff and in turn provided HIV technical and organizational capacity building support to CSO groups and networks representing and working with HIV communities. In Year 3 of the project, three PLPs were selected for direct award by USAID, as follows:

- Center for Community Health and Development (COHED)
- Centre for Promotion of Quality of Life (LIFE)
- Center for Community Health Research and Development (CCRD)

LGBTI Movement Strengthened

The LGBTI Initiative was funded by the USAID Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance in Washington, DC, through USAID/Vietnam and implemented by USAID Pathways. The LGBTI Initiative was designed to support and strengthen LGBTI groups and networks. Using USAID Pathways resources and expertise and working with LGBTI leaders, the Initiative analyzed, mapped, and assessed the policy environment and organizational capacity of the sector; designed and implemented an LGBTI-specific organizational capacity assessment (OCA) tool—the first of its kind under any USAID activity and adopted by USAID for global use; and, supported leading organizations to conduct advocacy activities in Vietnam, including International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) and Gay Pride public events.

Sustainable CSO-GVN National Policy Dialogue Established

Establishing a forum for CSO-GVN dialogue was an important goal of USAID Pathways. CSO and GVN relations suffer due to their ad-hoc nature and to challenges faced by CSOs in overcoming GVN reluctance to partner and engage with the sector. In May 2012, in collaboration with Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM)/VUSTA, HPI, and UNAIDS, USAID Pathways convened the first CSO policy dialogue conference. Conference themes addressed the issues of civil society capacities to meet the challenges of service delivery expansion, funding and revenue generation in the context of declining donor support, and greater representation of the CSO sector in government HIV planning and strategy forums. The conference has become an annual event in the national HIV calendar with funding provided through the Office of Government (OOG) and the Ministry of Health (MOH).

MARP Livelihoods Support Strengthened

In 2012 and 2013, the USAID HIV Workplace Project (WPP) was integrated with USAID Pathways in order to continue to expand services under the microfinance model of public-private partnerships (PPP) established between the Community Finance Resource Center (CFRC), M7 microfinance network, and Provincial AIDS Committees (PACs) in Vietnam. Under this activity, CFRC provided a total of 142 income-generating loans and supported MARP community groups in Dien Bien province to build capacity to access microfinance resources.

In 2013, working with the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA), the project supported an assessment of the microfinance environment for MARPs in Vietnam, with a particular focus on MARP and PLHIV access to government microfinance operating schemes through the Vietnam Bank of Social Policy (VBSP). Assessment findings, identifying significant limitations in key affected populations (KAPs) and in PLHIV access resulting from stigmatizing and discriminating institutional practices, were used by MOLISA to issue a new government policy (*Decision 2013/QĐ-TTg, Provision of Loans to People Living with HIV/AIDS, Recovering Drug Users, Sex Workers, Persons Receiving Methadone Maintenance Treatment [MMT]*) directing the VBSP to explicitly support MARPs access to GVN microfinance. The new policy also provides direction to the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and MOH to monitor and support the VBSP and the MARPs sector to expand access to loans.

GVN Drug User and Sex Worker Community Services Policy Reform

In November 2012, USAID Pathways provided technical support to the Department of Social Vices Prevention (DSVP) and SCDI to conduct a needs assessment of the Community Social Volunteer Team (CSVT) in four provinces (HCMC, Hanoi, Tien Giang, and Lao Cai). Based on the results of the needs assessment, MOLISA and DSVP updated their policies to allow PLHIV and MARPs to become members of the CSVT team at the community level (*Regulation on Establishment, Dissolution, Operation and Policy for Social Community Volunteer Team, Joint Circular 24/2012/MOLISA-MOF-MOHA*).

CSO Code of Good Practice Developed

Central to achieving the aim of USAID Pathways was the need to establish a value-based framework for partner activities and involvement. In Vietnam, the importance of constructing an NGO values framework fostering the work of NGOs is underscored by the difficulty the sector encounters in maintaining a critical distance from state agencies and control. To support this, USAID Pathways adapted the International Code of Good Practice for NGOs as a way of providing a framework in which to anchor the work of the CSOs and promote a better understanding of the role and accountability of CSOs working in HIV.

Achievements by Objective

Objective 1 – Pathways Lead Partners Established and Strengthened

The key activity under Objective 1 was to ensure that the project partnered with local organizations capable of providing high quality HIV and organizational capacity building to the broader HIV CSO sector and to support these organizations to build their own capacity as leaders in Vietnam with the ability to receive and implement direct awards from USAID.

PLP Selection: An open, competitive, and transparent process to select USAID Pathways local partner organizations, referred to as PLPs, was implemented in late 2011. Thirty-five applications were received from locally registered VNGOs; of these, 18 organizations were shortlisted and forwarded to the Project Advisory Group (PAG) for review and recommendation. The PAG reviewed the shortlisted proposals and agreed on a list of seven potential PLPs. The USAID Pathways team and USAID further reviewed this list and in March selected five final organizations: COHED, LIFE, CCRD, SCDI, and PHAD.

Grants to all five organizations were issued in 2012; however, because of the issues related to project approval and RTI registration, the role of the PLPs was significantly modified. In Years 2 and 3, PLP activities were adapted to focus on internal capacity building and the development of CSO technical support guidelines and training programs.

PLP Training and Capacity Building: Under USAID Pathways, capacity of the PLPs was strengthened in all key areas of competency—organizational development (OD) and technical and financial management. Highlights include the following:

- Drawing on the OCAs conducted in Year 1, USAID Pathways finalized organizational strengthening plans (OSPs) with each PLP. Working through this process fostered a stronger sense of ownership and a better understanding of the role of each PLP in working with the CSO sector.
- USAID Pathways worked with the PLPs to develop performance management plans (PMPs) with each of the PLPs, drawing on the results of the OCA and risk management assessments conducted during the grant-making process.
- USAID Pathways established an OD Task Force to promote ownership and learning among PLPs and to coordinate delivery of OD capacity building support to USAID Pathways' CSOs.

- PLP staff were provided training from InsideNGO concerning *USAID Rules and Regulations* and *Financial Management for U.S. Government Funding*. This training was instrumental in increasing the capacity of the PLPs to obtain direct USAID funding.
- USAID Pathways' Finance and Grants team provided significant capacity building support to build the financial and operational management capabilities of the PLPs to support adherence to USAID policies and rules and regulations; adherence to USAID Pathways cost norms understanding the principles of *reasonability*, *allowability*, and *allocability* in terms of monthly expenditures; and preparation of monthly financial reports and supporting documents.
- A budgeting tool was developed to help CSOs determine funding needs and ways to address gaps and leakages in the service delivery process. The tool encourages CSO grantees to focus project resources on core services for MARPs, while also increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of services delivered by CSO grantees.
- In Year 3, USAID Pathways hosted a series of training and capacity building sessions focusing on *Project Start-Up*, *Financial Management*, *Grants/Subaward Management*, *Human Resource Management*, *USAID Compliance in Contracts Management*, and *Project Closeout*. Each session was widely attended by PLP staff, including Executive Leadership, Finance and Grants, and Contracts staff.

As a direct result of the capacity building activities implemented under USAID Pathways, three PLPs were selected for direct award by USAID: COHED, LIFE, and CCRD.

Objective 2 – Organizational Capacity of CSOs Strengthened

CSO Rapid Assessment: In Year 1, the project worked with Partners in Health Research, a locally-based consulting company with expertise in survey methodology, to complete a rapid assessment (RA) of the 246 registered and unregistered HIV-related CSOs working in the nine project provinces. The RA provided a map of Vietnamese CSOs and outlined their capacity strengths and weaknesses, which in turn informed capacity development planning and generated data to prioritize community-based programming and align project resources with MARP prevention, care, and support needs. The data from the RA was updated annually by USAID Pathways and transferred to PHAD upon project close.

CSO Registration: Among the CSOs sampled in the RA, only four (less than 2%) were legally registered in Vietnam. As a result, USAID Pathways worked with the PLPs and other partners (HPI Vietnam) to develop a package to support CSOs to become registered. In Year 2, this support was provided to SPN+, the southern regional network, to enable it to become a legal organization.

CSO Grantee Capacity Assessments: CCRD worked with the PLPs to conduct a capacity assessment of the 10 selected CSO grantees in Hanoi, Hai Phong, Quang Ninh, Nghe An, and HCMC, using the OCA tools and methods adapted from the PLP assessment.

CSO Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool Review: The OCA tool is a self-administered assessment tool that promotes organizational learning, team sharing, reflection, and ownership of the capacity strengthening process. It was designed for PLP use to perform organizational assessments for non-Pathways CSO grantees in their focus provinces. USAID Pathways completed a second revision of the OCA in April 2013, using the CSO Code of

Good Practice to test each element of the tool. The revised OCA was used to inform the development of the LGBTI tool.

CSO OD Toolkit: USAID Pathways' approach to capacity building was to use and/or adapt existing tools rather than develop new products, thereby avoiding duplication. The tools developed by the project provided a standardized package of OD support to the CSO grantees and the MARP and PLHIV groups and networks.

Objective 3 – Technical Leadership Capacity of CSOs Strengthened

Prior to the start of USAID Pathways, CSOs working in HIV were providing community-based support, particularly through the major PLHIV groups and networks. However, CSO service provision from this sector remained largely de-linked from GVN HIV services with minimal involvement of the sector in GVN-led HIV planning or services. The credibility of CSOs with GVN supported services was low, despite the fact that community groups and local NGOs provided direct access to hard-to-reach groups and populations. Under Objective 3, Pathways addressed these issues via a focus on supporting CSO capacity and engagement in joint development of technical approaches with the GVN, SMART TA, and provincial-led activities. Support was framed to develop new ways of thinking about HIV community-based activities in order to introduce CSOs (and GVN partners) to an integrated program framework based on partnership and integrated activities.

Participation in Multiple National-level Technical Discussions Around Development and Finalization of the “Core” Services on HIV Prevention, Care, and Support: During Year 1, USAID Pathways joined the Vietnam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control- (VAAC-) led technical working group on prevention comprised of the VAAC, World Health Organization (WHO), PEPFAR, the World Bank, and other key agency representatives. Project staff contributed to the development of the “core” package for HIV prevention, care, and support services. The importance of intensive case findings was a focus for technical discussions and training and with CSOs. In addition, the Continuum of Prevention to Care (CoPC) was introduced to ensure services are linked, reducing the loss-to-follow-up and increasing service uptake by MARPs and PLHIV.

Together with this refocusing of technical approaches for service delivery, USAID Pathways collected and reviewed relevant existing technical materials, including guidelines; standards of practices; information, education, and communication (IEC) materials; and key messages for adaptation. To avoid duplication of effort, USAID Pathways also coordinated with GFATM to develop guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) aimed at strengthening the capacity and role of CSOs with the aim of achieving standardized national technical approaches.

USAID Pathways HIV Technical Task Force: The HIV Technical Task Force was established in August 2012 with representation from USAID, RTI, GFATM-VUSTA, and SMART TA. The task force oversaw the technical capacity building and implementation plans for CSOs, provided direction on the “core” service package to be provided by CSOs, and offered a forum for information exchange and updates of new and innovative models of community-based interventions to reach core and hidden MARPs groups.

CSO Engagement in the Development and Adaptation of a Core Package of HIV Services for MARPs and PLHIV: Over the life of the project, USAID Pathways supported PLPs and CSOs to develop a “core” package of HIV services for MARPs and PLHIV, which was used to inform CSO service delivery. This process included working with USAID and national HIV program partners to understand the value of the model in identifying the role of CSOs in increasing patient retention in HIV services and introducing innovative outreach models for CSOs.

Development of Technical Capacity Building Framework and Materials: USAID Pathways worked closely with COHED and LIFE to develop the CSO technical capacity building framework. The framework provided SOPs to guide CSOs in delivering prevention and care and support services at the community level, with a focus on high-need health care services and other social support for PLHIV. As a result, the following technical capacity building materials were developed:

- **Community-Based Technical Guide:** training manual for CSOs and outreach workers, which provides an overview of core prevention, care, and support services to be delivered to MARPs and PLHIV.
- **Facilitator Handbook :** guidance for CSOs and outreach workers to conduct a four-day training on delivering HIV prevention, care, and support services.
- **Mentoring Guide:** to facilitate PLPs to build the technical capacity of CSOs and support them in the delivery of core services to MARPs and PLHIV at the community level.
- **Livelihoods Guide for Community-Based Organizations:** on managing microfinancing opportunities and funds/loans.

NOTE: Given the early termination of USAID Pathways, there was insufficient time for the required editing and translation of the materials referenced above. All are available in draft form only.

Objective 4 – Effective Community-Based HIV Interventions and Services to Reduce Risk Behavior and Increase Quality of Life Implemented

CSO Grantee Selection: In Year 2, USAID Pathways used a competitive tendering process to select 11 CSO grantees to deliver HIV prevention, care and support services. An additional CSO, CFRC, was added to the list of selected CSOs; please see **Table 2** for additional information.

Although service delivery plans were finalized for each of the 11 selected CSOs, none of these grants were allocated due to ongoing project approval and registration delays.

Table 2. Summary of the Selected CSOs, Including Their Target Geographical Locations and Target Populations

CSO	Province/Geographical Focus	Target Populations
Asian Business Academy (ABA)	Lao Cai	PLHIV, people who inject drugs (PWID), female sex workers (FSWs), primary sexual partners (PSP)
Bright Futures Network (BFN+)	Hanoi, Quang Ninh (Van Don, Dong Trieu, and Uong Bi districts)	PWID, PLHIV, PSP
Center for Applied Research on Men and Health (CARMAH)	HCMC	Men who have sex with men (MSM)
Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP)	HCMC, Can Tho, An Giang, Hanoi, Hai Phong	MSM
Hai Phong Support Center for Health Care and HIV/AIDS Prevention (HHSC)	Hai Phong city	PLHIV, PWID, MSM
Ho Chi Minh AIDS Association (HAA)	HCMC	PLHIV, PWID, PSP, FSW
Organization for the Support and Education of Disadvantaged Children (OSED)	Quang Ninh (Ha Long and Yen Hung districts)	PLHIV, FSW
Resource and Sustainable Environment Development Center (RESED)	Nghe An	PWID, PLHIV, PSP
Southern Network for PLHIV	HCMC, Can Tho, An Giang	PLHIV, PSP
Community Financial Resources Center (CFRC)	Quang Ninh (Dong Trieu and Uong Bi districts), Dien Bien (Dien Bien Phu town, Tuan Giao, and Dien Bien districts)	PLHIV, former PWID and their PSP

CSO Provincial Planning: During Year 2, all PLPs met with their provincial authority counterparts to develop work plans for CSO service delivery grantees and the role of USAID Pathways in supporting provincial responses. Despite issues with project approval and registration, USAID Pathways supported the PLPs to remain actively engaged at the provincial level via a series of meetings, which included the provision of technical assistance and facilitation of the participation of local CSOs in planning and coordination meetings with the Provincial AIDS Committees (PACs).

Microfinance Capacity Development: USAID Pathways supported CFRC to continue activities under The Microfinance Initiative previously implemented by Chemonics. Although USAID was unable to issue a grant to CFRC, direct funding for staff time and activities was provided by RTI; CFRC continued to provide technical assistance to microfinance instructors to enable activities under the project to move forward. Successful CFRC activities included the following:

- In Quang Ninh, CFRC enrolled 172 members in microfinance activities and is providing a total of 142 income-generating loans to its members.
- CFRC provided microfinance services to target populations in three districts in Dien Bien.
- CFRC provided technical assistance and capacity building to New Horizon, a local group supporting people who use drugs, on microfinance in Dien Bien.

Objective 5 – The Value of Civil Society’s Role in the National HIV/AIDS Response and Effective Representation of Their Constituencies Recognized

USAID Pathways achieved considerable headway in supporting CSOs—notably representative MARP networks—to form, develop, and link with GVN and international organizations. During the course of the project, three new MARPs national networks were created with support from USAID Pathways: VNPUD, VNSW, and VNMSM-TG. In addition, the project provided support to the Vietnam Network of People living with HIV (VNP+) as well as several local and regional PLHIV groups.

Linked National MARPs/PLHIV Networks with GVN: USAID Pathways and SCDI, together with the UNODC, supported VNPUD to develop its constitution and representative structure. USAID Pathways support also included facilitating meetings with VAAC and DSVP of MOLISA to facilitate the profile and awareness of the network among key government actors. As a result of this activity, VNPUD representatives worked with DSVP to facilitate the involvement of people who use drugs in the DSVP community MARPs support teams.

MARPs/PLHIV and CSO Leadership: USAID Pathways organized a number of CSO roundtable meetings, bringing together CSO representatives from the HIV, LGBTI, disability, and women’s movement in Vietnam. The roundtables were designed to provide a forum for CSO and community representatives to meet with USAID and discuss the challenges faced by CSOs in Vietnam in relation to registration, systematic engagement in national program and policy development, and the legal framework governing financial support for CSOs. The roundtables included one event held in conjunction with the visit of Mr. Donald Steinberg, Deputy Administrator of USAID in Washington, DC, to Vietnam. The LGBTI roundtable brought together representatives from a diverse range of LGBTI groups and organizations working on HIV and LGBTI rights. The meeting discussed stigma, discrimination, and access to services among LGBTI people.

CSO-GVN Conferences: USAID Pathways partnered with GFATM-VUSTA and other international organizations to support the annual CSO conferences in 2012 and 2013. These events brought together CSOs, international organizations, and high-level participants from the GVN to discuss CSO activities, raise challenges facing CSOs, and facilitate and strengthen dialogue between the CSO sector working in HIV and the GVN. In 2013, the conference featured a keynote speech from Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, representing the first time a senior-level member of the GVN has participated in an HIV CSO meeting.

Capacity of National and Local MARPs/PLHIV Networks Strengthened: In Year 2, USAID Pathways worked with the GVN, GFATM-VUSTA, UNODC, UNAIDS, and other key implementing partners to provide support to national and regional networks, as detailed below:

- USAID Pathways provided **support to VNP+** to develop a proposal and budget to finalize a regional network communications strategy to be implemented within the nine PEPFAR provinces. Under this initiative, VNP+ has mobilized funding from other donors, including UNAIDS.

- With advocacy and technical support from USAID Pathways and SCDI, and in consultation with DSEP, **VNPUD** was established on December 8, 2012. Following the establishment of VNPUD, USAID Pathways provided technical support to enable it to develop its constitution, strategy, mission, and program of work with CSOs in the nine PEPFAR provinces.
- The Annual General meeting of the **Vietnam Network of Women Living with HIV (VNW+)** was organized on April 3, 2013, with technical and financial support from USAID Pathways. Additional technical assistance was provided to VNW+ to review their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and identify priority activities for the next year.
- USAID Pathways connected the **VNSW** with the Asian Network of Sex Workers (ANSW) and the Global Network of Sex Workers (GNSW) to identify future collaboration opportunities working with the Vietnam Civil Society Partnership (VCSPA) and other donors.
- Working with UNAIDS, USAID, GFATM-VUSTA, World Bank, NGOs, and PACs, USAID Pathways supported the establishment and launch of the **VNMSM-TG Network** in July 2013.
- Working with the VAAC, USAID Pathways supported the **Hanoi AIDS Association** to conduct a two-day conference on “Innovation to Strengthen Activities of Community-Based Organizations.” The Deputy Prime Minister endorsed the conference recommendations, including providing the legal backing necessary for Provincial AIDS Associations (PAAs) to access funds from GVN sources to implement activities at the provincial level.
- Working with Management Sciences for Health (MSH) and the SPN+, USAID Pathways interviewed PLHIV; results of the interviews were presented at the following link: <http://asiancorrespondent.com/110632/vietnam-concerned-over-hiv-donor-funding-cuts/>

CSO Strategy on HIV/AIDS Response in Vietnam: USAID Pathways worked closely with GFATM-VUSTA, UNAIDS, VAAC, DSVP, and VNGOs to develop the *Strategy on Strengthening CSO Participation in Response to HIV/AIDS in Vietnam by 2020*.

CSO Advocacy Strategy: In Year 2, USAID Pathways established the Advocacy Task Force, which developed the project’s advocacy strategy. The strategy supported CSOs and communities to develop their advocacy capacity and to participate in the national HIV response.

Management and Fundraising Capacity of MARPs Networks and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) Strengthened: In Year 2, USAID Pathways provided technical assistance to CBOs to increase their management and fundraising capacity, as follows:

- Supported New Horizon, a group working with people who use drugs in Dien Bien province, to mobilize resources and advocate to the district government to fund livelihood activities, resulting in 100,000,000 VND of funding from the VBSP.
- Provided OD technical assistance to New Horizon with a focus on developing capacity in management, human resources, and advocacy.

- Worked with VNMSM-TG to submit a proposal to GFATM and Canadian Fund to support capacity building to reduce violence against MSM/TG.
- Supported VNSW, ANSW, and GNSW to submit a proposal to GFATM and Red Umbrella Fund on sexual and reproductive health rights of sex workers.
- Supported VNPUUD to write a proposal to the Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) and GFATM on hepatitis C.
- Worked with VNW+ to write a proposal to the Public Participation and Accountability Facilitation Fund (PARAFF).
- Supported the Kids' Sun Group, a self-help group of PLHIV, to develop a proposal to the HIV Young Leader Fund, resulting in a \$30,000 project over the next three years.

Objective 6 – Ability of CSOs to Influence HIV Policies and Programming Strengthened

CSO-GVN Relations Strengthened: During Year 1, USAID Pathways' approach to supporting Objective 6 was to build relationships with key HIV policy actors and institutions in Vietnam to establish Pathways as a credible capacity building partner and supporter to both the CSO and government sectors. Our focus engaged these partners with the CSOs and developed a framework of cooperation and joint dialogue. To support this aim, USAID Pathways partnered with GFATM, HPI Vietnam, UNAIDS, the OOG, VAAC, and the Vietnam National Assembly (Social Affairs Commission).

Development of Primary Sexual Partners Model. Working with USAID, FHI 360, the PACs, and SCDI, USAID Pathways organized a series of meetings to develop a plan to transition responsibility for the development of the PSP model in Dien Bien from FHI 360 to USAID Pathways.

MARPs Policy Reform: In November 2012, USAID Pathways provided technical support to DSEP and SCDI to conduct a needs assessment of the CSVT in four provinces (HCMC, Hanoi, Tien Gian, and Lao Cai). Based on the results of the needs assessment, MOLISA and DSEP updated their policies to allow PLHIV and MARPs to become members of the CSVT team at the community level (see *Regulation on Establishment, Dissolution, Operation and Policy for Social Community Volunteer Team*, Joint Circular 24/2012/MOLISA-MOF-MOHA).

Microfinance and Livelihood Strengthened: USAID Pathways worked with MOLISA to enforce GVN policies to increase access to employment opportunities and microcredit for MARPs drug users; including the following:

- Workshop on microfinance and employment policy mechanisms (December 2013)
- Study tour to HCMC and Dien Bien province on microfinance and employment policy, including participants from DSEP, the VBSP, M7, and the Vietnam Women's Union (January 2013)
- Needs assessment on the provision of credit, vocational training, and job placement for HIV infected and affected people, recovering drug users, sex workers, and MMT patients in seven provinces (Hai Phong, Hanoi, Nghe An, Dien Bien, Can Tho, Ho Chi Minh, and Lam Dong). Results of the assessment provided evidence to the GVN to

ensure sufficient resources on hand to support these populations through livelihood and employment activities on an annual basis.

- USAID Pathways hosted consultative meetings, including participation from MOLISA/DSVP; the Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA); OOG; MOF; MOH/VAAC; the State Bank; VBSP; and CBOs to review the draft decree *Provision of Credit, Vocational Training and Job Placement for HIV Infected and Affected People, Recovering Drug Users, Sex Workers, and Methadone Medical Treatment Patients*.

Leadership Program for PLHIV and MARPs Established: RTI worked with SCDI to develop a leadership program for MARPs and PLHIV, established in Year 3.

Media Strategy Development and Training: USAID Pathways and SCDI developed a capacity building strategy for the Vietnamese media, focusing on sharing information with the public about the role of CSOs in the HIV response in Vietnam. In September 2013, Pathways hosted two media trainings attended by PLHIV, MARPs, networks, PLPs, and CSOs from the nine project provinces, focused on building the capacity of PLHIV and MARPs with policymakers.

Advocacy Training: In July 2013, USAID Pathways hosted two advocacy trainings for PLPs, CSOs, networks, and CBOs to build their basic skills to work with policymakers at the national and provincial level.

Monitoring and Evaluation

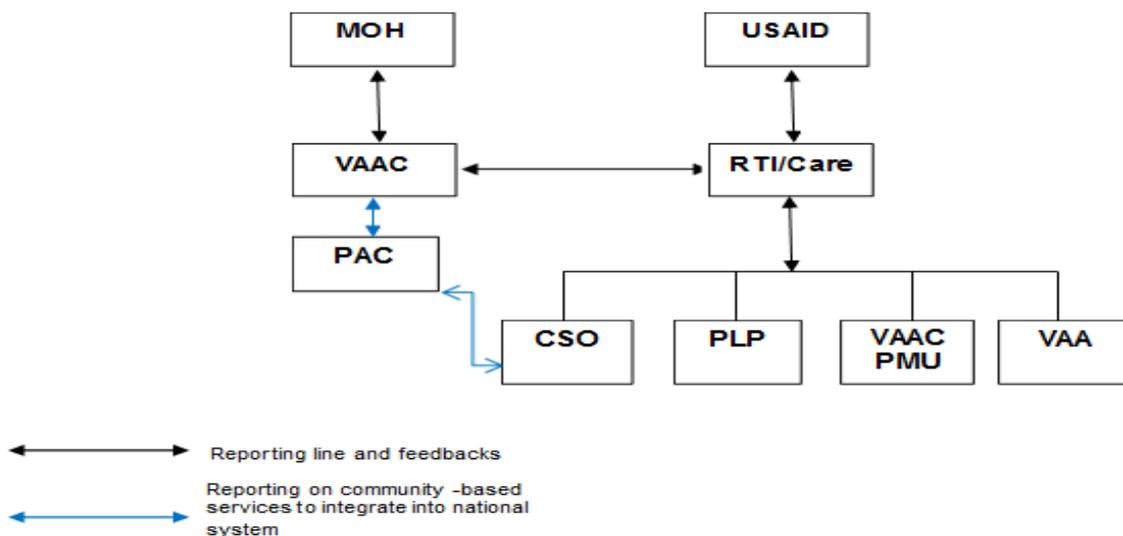
USAID Pathways' Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER) System

USAID Pathways designed the MER to support program activities and strengthen the flow of strategic information between implementing partners and stakeholders—PLPs, CSOs, PLHIV/MARPs groups/networks, GVN policymakers, and PEPFAR—with a focus on the following outcomes:

1. M&E capacity of PLPs and CSOs improved to understand how to best use data for evidence-based decision making and programming.
2. Program results readily available for key stakeholders allowing more timely decision making.
3. Advocacy to promote the role of CSOs in the HIV response is based on data collected and maintained in USAID Pathways' MER system.

Data flow within the MER was as shown in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1. Data Flow in the MER



USAID Pathways’ MER system was developed to align with Vietnam’s national M&E system. Focus was placed on ensuring CBOs collect data based on nationally tracked indicators, allowing provincial- and national-level data to be easily linked with the national M&E system. USAID Pathways’ M&E system differs slightly from the national system in that Pathways focused on capacity building and service delivery indicators, specifically those related to prevention and care and support; additionally, Pathways tracked more qualitative indicators than those tracked through the national M&E system.

M&E Guidelines and Tools

USAID Pathways developed M&E Guidelines to be used by all implementing partners. Staff training was provided to ensure compliance with the guidelines and understanding of how to use the M&E tools for data collection and reporting to ensure consistency among implementing partners.

Minimizing Duplication, Data Triangulation, and Data Audit

Data duplication related to beneficiaries receiving direct support from USAID Pathways was avoided through aggregation by geographic region and gender, and by assigning a Unique Identity Code (UIC) to each beneficiary, thus easily identifying “repeat” individuals. Additionally, USAID Pathways used a multi-level review system in which the M&E staff within each CBO were responsible for reviewing data collected before sending the data to the PLPs and then to USAID Pathways for reporting. At each level of the project, data were reviewed, collated, and triangulated before being reported to USAID.

Lessons Learned

CSO Sector in Vietnam

The CSO sector in Vietnam is complex and cannot easily be categorized in terms of its independence from state-based agencies. The idea of CSOs, if understood as largely separate from state-based organizations, is new in Vietnam. State-sponsored mass organizations have, until relatively recently, been seen as the organized and representative arm of civil society in Vietnam. Advocacy and representation for communities and populations that remain outside of the state framework is also limited by government control of the media, limited rights to organize, and strict regulation of social media.

CSO advocacy is conditioned by the political necessity of working in harmony with state strategies and approaches. This is not to say that critical advocacy on government policy is absent or ineffective, rather that the avenues open to CSOs depend on leveraging or establishing relationships with GVN/state actors if views are to be heard and acted upon. The legal and policy framework regulating CSOs is a particularly strong example; the draft Law on Associations—developed to simplify the process of establishing an NGO in Vietnam—has been before the National Assembly for over 10 years and has failed to pass due to repeated debates over its content.

Without a clear legal framework, groups and organizations wishing to establish an NGO have to engage in a lengthy and complex process of registration requiring significant economic resources. This works against grassroots groups and communities and instead favors the privileged groups and individuals with ties to government or state actors.

The Role of CSOs in National HIV Policy

The growth of the CSO sector working in HIV has largely occurred as a consequence of international funding and capacity support, primarily through PEPFAR and GFATM, although other donors and international organizations (i.e., the United Nations) have played a significant role in facilitating HIV CSO development. International support has provided momentum for NGOs and communities to establish themselves as a presence in the national HIV landscape; however, they remain largely marginalized due to government national HIV policy processes, including restricting access to government funding. As an example, during discussions on the development of a transitional roadmap for PEPFAR support, no formal role was assigned to CSOs/NGOs and MARP networks. CSO input via public meetings discussing HIV policy and strategy is encouraged; however, formal representation of the sector or meaningful engagement in the policy process remains elusive.

VNGOs, including the PLPs under USAID Pathways, established an informal presence in GVN policy and planning processes. As civil society expands, pressure on the government to more formally recognize the role and value of CSOs in the HIV response will increase, as will the capacity of organizations to navigate the complex regulatory environment to achieve government recognition. The approach adopted by USAID and implemented through USAID Pathways of working to support established NGOs and—through them—nascent and emerging groups and networks, remains viable and must be continued. This approach should be supplemented by more effective support from donors and other international organizations

for the role of PLHIV and MARP networks and groups in HIV policy processes, establishing agreements and norms that mandate their involvement in forums and discussions with GVN on HIV policy and planning.

Supporting CSO-GVN Partnerships

The promotion of CSOs within a partnership framework that recognizes the legitimacy and effectiveness of the role of CSOs is possible in Vietnam. This report highlighted several examples of joint activities between GVN and CSO groups and organizations where participation and representation was acknowledged and supported by the GVN. Success in this regard is dependent on a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Identifying GVN actors sympathetic to and willing to work with CSOs and MARPs and linking CSO activities to GVN plans and strategies;
- Recognizing and addressing GVN doubts or concerns regarding the roles and capacities of CSOs;
- Facilitating relationships between CSO and GVN actors; and,
- Generating evidence of CSO effectiveness.

HIV CSO Capacity Building and Sustainability

USAID Pathways worked with leading, high capacity, mature organizations within the broad NGO sector in Vietnam, as well as nascent and emerging community groups and networks, to identify opportunities to inform future international support to the CSO sector in Vietnam, including the following:

- The pattern of international support to the CSO sector in Vietnam has not fostered strong organizational resilience.
- Funding programmed through international organizations is typically project-based, with support for organizational management and governance limited to basic training.
- CSOs have not been systematically supported to develop diversified approaches to revenue/fundraising or resilient organizational structures based on strategic analysis of the development environment.
- CSO technical approaches and organizational structures are often linked to unrealistic funding expectations.

The lack of CSO resilience was highlighted during the implementation of USAID Pathways as organizations supported by the project struggled to cope with demands for technical innovation and cost effectiveness in the face of declining funding opportunities. USAID Pathways addressed these challenges by working closely with individual organizations to assess their needs and build tailored capacity support, finding that organizational capacity support must move beyond basic management training to encompass strategic growth.

CSOs are still “poor relations” in terms of their engagement and integration in the development of technical activities and strategies in HIV prevention, care, and support. In part this stems from the disconnect between communities and the programs and services implemented by the health sector. USAID Pathways made significant headway facilitating community groups within the HIV prevention and care technical discourse in Vietnam; SMART TA were especially supportive in this regard. However, increased effort is required to ensure that CSOs—especially MARPs communities—are fully supported to participate in the development and implementation of HIV programs. A strong example of this is the need to engage local MARPs groups and networks in HIV case management approaches and loss-to-follow-up activities—an issue ideally suited to maximizing the value of social and community networks as supportive structures linked to health facilities.