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World  
Food Executive Board  
Third Regular Session

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Rome, 21 - 24 October 1996

## PROGRESS REPORT ON APPROVED PROJECTS

Agenda item 8 d)

### PROJECT VIET NAM 4304

#### Reforestation in coastal Viet Nam

Total food cost	16 463 670 dollars
Total cost to WFP	21 742 311 dollars
Date approved by the CFA	27 May 1991
Date plan of operations signed	10 January 1992
Date notification of readiness accepted	20 February 1992
Date of first distribution	1 March 1992
Duration of WFP assistance	Six years
Duration of project as at 31 March 1996	Four years and one month

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated. One United States dollar equalled 11,000 dong in March 1996.

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.**

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

The WFP focal points with this document are:

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Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documents Clerk (tel.: 5228-2641).

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## PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND OF WFP ASSISTANCE

1. The project supports a national reforestation programme executed by smallholders to whom denuded forest lands are allocated. It aims at increasing the availability of fuelwood, poles and small timber, thus reducing the pressure on existing national forests; protecting agricultural land from erosion and from the effects of typhoons and sand-dune encroachment; and providing an additional source of employment and income.

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## IMPLEMENTATION

2. The project is executed under the responsibility of a Central Management Committee (CMC) headed by a Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and including members of other relevant ministries. Day-to-day implementation at the central level is entrusted to a project manager (a member of the CMC) from MARD and three support staff. A similar organization exists at the provincial, district and commune levels.
3. The management structure works well but the geographic spread of the project and the resulting large number of committees make overall coordination by the CMC difficult. The work of the CMC is also impeded by a shortage of qualified personnel. Administrative staff in the provinces and districts are sufficient, but some local units suffer from a shortage of qualified technicians.
4. For a two-year period ending mid-1995, a UNDP/FAO technical assistance (TA) project in support of project Viet Nam 4304 strengthened implementation. Assistance was provided in the areas of monitoring, micro-planning, land-use planning and mapping, introduction of new species and provenances, and the adoption of improved nursery, planting and maintenance techniques.

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## FOOD MANAGEMENT

5. WFP has committed 115,939 tons of wheat grain (or a proportionate quantity of wheat flour) to be exchanged for local rice. As of 31 March 1996, a total of 28,000 tons of wheat grain and 36,723 tons of wheat flour had been delivered by WFP, representing 70 percent of the total commitment. Post-delivery losses during local transportation and handling amounted to 50.1 tons of rice (exchanged commodity), or 0.01 percent of total distribution.
6. The daily family ration consists of 2.5 kilograms of rice and is distributed according to established work norms for nursery work, land preparation, planting and maintenance. For plantations, 40 percent of the ration is withheld and distributed after verification of an acceptable rate of survival. These rules are well understood and accepted by the beneficiaries. WFP food rations also serve to compensate extension agents for their work.
7. Global shortfalls and consequent delays in arrivals of WFP commodities have resulted in the Government advancing rice to the project. In the reporting period, some 67,246 tons of rice were distributed to project participants, versus 58,011 tons of rice equivalent received from WFP. The difference constitutes an outstanding loan. As agreed with the Government, this loan will be repaid before the project's termination.

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## GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION

8. The Government has provided the necessary personnel, equipment, supplies and supervision through MARD and the provincial administrations. Prorated contributions reported by the Government have in general exceeded the indicative budget outlined in the plan of operations. This refers in particular to handling and transport expenditures and costs of project management which were about 50 percent higher than estimated. Storage costs were lower than anticipated due to the rice being distributed directly from provincial food company stocks. Total government expenditures at 31 December 1995 were equivalent to 8,710,670 dollars, representing 114 percent of the prorated contribution.



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## EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

9. The project has received non-food items from the Netherlands, Australia and Sweden. These amounted to some 790,000, 650,000 and 340,000 dollars, respectively. All necessary non-food items have already been supplied. The total value of such contributions, 1,780,000 dollars, is significantly lower than the plan of operations estimate of 3,041,878 dollars. The savings are due primarily to reduced seed costs.
10. The UNDP-funded, FAO-executed TA project UNDP/FAO VIE/92/022 - at a cost of 840,000 dollars - was implemented from April 1993 to July 1995.

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## ASSESSMENT

11. Project 4304 is being implemented in an economy in transition from centrally-planned to market-oriented. The resulting impact has been positive. For instance, there has been a continuous movement towards a people-centred approach, reflected in the stronger focus on smallholders and the adoption of participatory techniques, such as micro-planning. An increased attention to quality has been noted as a result of the direct involvement of smallholders in project preparation.
12. The lack of prioritization among environmental and poverty alleviation objectives hampered the early stages of the project. Survival rates in some first-year plantations were low because comparatively difficult terrain was chosen for environmental reasons. The project now focuses more on poverty alleviation by providing land which can be reforested profitably.
13. The annex shows physical achievements as at 31 March 1996. The project has met its prorated target, although the distribution of species differs from the one originally anticipated. Fruit-tree planting has expanded, reflecting the smallholders' preference for a mix of species that would give quicker economic returns. An increase of the Acacia plantations was prompted by the detection of a potentially serious fungus problem, affecting in particular Eucalyptus.
14. The transfer of land from the State to smallholders is progressing well and has become a national policy. Most of the participants in the WFP project receive a temporary land-use certificate and will obtain a permanent certificate once land has been surveyed and mapped by the cadastral service.
15. Most project beneficiaries experience food shortages for some period of the year and can be considered as medium-poor or poor farmers. The poorest families are not always able to participate because of labour and ability problems. For reasons of expediency, some local authorities included better-off farmers in the project. However, beneficiary selection has been improving through close monitoring by WFP and the use of micro-planning.
16. Women constitute more than 50 percent of the participants in the planting and maintenance activities, the majority of the nursery workers, and 30 percent of extension agents. Through the provision of food and extra income for their families, the project eases the plight of many women, by reducing the time and energy required for fuelwood collection.
17. Food aid plays a vital role in involving the villagers in reforestation, since it compensates for work done or income foregone, and meets short-term food needs. Before this project, only the well-to-do farmers could afford to plant trees on a significant scale. WFP support provides an incentive for poor farmers to invest for longer-term benefits.

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## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

18. The project is ambitious, but its main objectives are being met. It covers some of the most disadvantaged communities of Viet Nam whose income and nutritional status are precarious. These conditions make food aid a suitable and cost-effective input.
19. Project implementation has been greatly enhanced by the commitment of the authorities and the participants. However, the scale of this project, extending over an area of 30 by 1,200 km in 13 provinces,



has posed difficulties. Subsequently approved projects have been more concentrated, comprising up to seven provinces.

20. Delays were experienced because of WFP's resource constraints. The project will achieve its targeted outputs thanks to the Government being able to lend it rice and to the one-year extension in time.
21. The technical assistance provided by UNDP through FAO has optimized the project's impact. Such assistance has also been part of subsequent projects and has generally considerably improved performance.
22. The project authorities are gradually changing their policy from a quantitative approach to an emphasis on quality. This should be enhanced through the promotion of integrated land development by the new MARD, which comprises the former Ministries of Forestry and Agriculture, and through more people-centred approaches and the use of micro-planning.
23. The project is achieving its objectives as expressed in the plan of operations. Four years is too short a period to demonstrate its sustainability. However, given the security of land tenure the smallholders now have, created assets should result in sustainable incomes for the participating families, reducing their poverty and improving food security. Its activities are expected to result in an improvement in the quality of life for women. In addition to employment creation, the increased availability of fuelwood should reduce the time spent on routine tasks, allowing more for productive labour.



## ANNEX

**COMPARATIVE TABLE OF PLANNED AND ACHIEVED OUTPUTS AND WORKDAYS - PROJECT 4304 -  
(as at 31 March 1996)**

Activities	Output Units	According to plan of operations		Prorated at 31.3.96		Achievements as at 31.3.96		Achievements as percentage	
		Outputs	Workdays	Outputs	Workdays	Outputs	Workdays	Total according to plan of operations	Prorated
<b>Nurseries (plant production)</b>	ha	125 000	5 000 000	118 084	4 723 360	119 298	4 771 920	95	101
<b>Establishment of plantations</b>	ha	125 000	16 250 000	118 084	15 350 920	117 594	15 287 220	94	100
Acacia	ha	36 125	4 696 250	33 729	4 384 770	42 741	5 556 330	118	127
Eucalyptus	ha	67 732	8 805 160	63 479	8 252 270	53 153	6 909 890	78	84
Casuarina	ha	17 928	2 330 640	16 908	2 198 040	11 470	1 491 100	64	68
Others	ha	3 215	417 950	3 968	515 840	10 230	1 329 900	318	258
<b>Maintenance (two years)</b>	ha	217 425	8 697 000	158 525	6 341 000	158 107	6 324 280	73	100
<b>Extension agents (one/50 ha)</b>	pers-yrs <sup>1</sup>	6 852	1 507 440	5 411	1 190 383	5 411	1 190 383	79	100