

**Evaluating the Application of a Behaviour Change Model in a Community
Development Project in a Rural Ethnic Minority Community in Vietnam**

**A Case Study of Plan International's Early Childhood Care and Development
Project in Lam Vy Commune, Dinh Hoa District, Thai Nguyen Province**

By

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the application of development communication in rural ethnic minority community development in Vietnam. The main research question focused on *“How effective is the implementation of a community development project that applies a behaviour change model in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam?”*. A related case study from the ongoing Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) project of Plan International in Vietnam in Lam Vy commune (Dinh Hoa rural district, Thai Nguyen province) provided the context of the research, in which there were 26 informants during the period of one month, from late September 2013 to late October 2013.

Non-participant observations, along with in-depth interviews and focus groups were the main data collection methods that sought to identify the researched community’s behaviour change in parenting skills and practices. Communicative ecology mapping, in addition, assisted the researcher in understanding more about the community and its people via exploration of the channels of communication that have impacted their daily activities. The research aims to evaluate how effective the project has been in implementing participatory approaches and the behavioural model, in improving parents’ knowledge of holistic child care and development. Effectiveness, in this research, is measured through both expected outcomes of Plan in Vietnam and perceptions of parents/community about the project, their needs, and their behavioural change.

The low participation level of the participants, the absence of fathers from the parenting groups, and the lack of utilisation of the media are presented as the key findings of this research. It is recommended that the participation level of the participants needs to be increased by giving the parents more opportunities, not only to contribute to, but also define for themselves the operation of the parenting groups. It is also recommended that the organisation considers the use of media as a tool in engaging people in the project and increasing participation levels. Evidence from this research indicates that the integration of top-down policies and projects and bottom-up approaches with the participation of marginalised people could benefit the development process in ethnic minority communities in Vietnam.

KEY WORDS: *ethnic minority community development; ethnographic non-participant observation; the behaviour change model; development communication; participation and development; Plan International; Vietnam*



Declaration

Name of candidate: **Kiet Le-Quang**

This thesis entitled: "Evaluating the application of a behaviour change model in a communication development project in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam – a case study of Plan International's Early Childhood Care and Development project in Lam Vy commune, Dinh Hoa district, Thai Nguyen province" is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of:

Master of International Communication

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2013-1065

Candidate Signature:Date: 02 April 2014

Student number: 1396400

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| 3G | Third Generation of Telecommunications Network |
| ECCD | Early Childhood Care and Development |
| GDP | Gross domestic product |
| GSO | General Statistics Office |
| ICT4D | Information and communications technologies for development |
| IEC | Information, education and communication |
| IFAD | International Funds for Agriculture Development |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| NGOs | Non-governmental Organisations |
| OAB | Operation and Administration Board |
| P135 | Programme 135 |
| PDA | Positive deviance approach |
| PG | Parenting groups |
| PiV | Plan in Vietnam |
| RQ | Research question |
| SIM | Subscriber identity module |
| UNDP | United Nations' Development Programme |
| UNP | Unnamed person |
| UNESCO | United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UREC | Unitec's Research Ethics Committee |
| VOV | Voice of Vietnam/Vietnam's National Radio |
| VTV | Vietnam's National Television |
| VUW | Vietnam Women's Union |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Overview

Derived from the empirical fieldworks in the 1950s, development communication was theorised as the utilisation of communication for the purposes of development. Diffusion of innovation was initially developed as one of the primary paradigms in research of development communication and has led to social marketing that stresses the importance of behaviour change (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006) as an effective tool to pave the pathway for development process by disseminating information and new knowledge to marginalised people in developing countries. Although criticised as a top-down approach (Inagaki, 2007), the behaviour change model is still employed by a large number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other development agencies in the development field. The implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) project of Plan International that this research has used as a case study in Vietnam is an example.

By exploring the above case study, this thesis aims to evaluate how effectively development communication has been implemented in the ethnic minority community development process in Vietnam, with focusing on the level participation, and the exploration of how the media have been employed in this process. Supported by the collected data, a suggestion for an appropriate development communication approach for rural ethnic minority community development in Vietnam is put forward and discussed with the support of existing literature.

The research took place at the Lam Vy commune (Dinh Hoa district, Thai Nguyen province) from late September 2013 to late October 2013. It is one of the 135 least developed communes in Vietnam, where the ethnic minority groups account for around 78% of the population and

where the Plan's project has been under implementation for a year.^{1 2} The study was led by the following key research question:

RQ: "How effective is the implementation of a community development project that applies a behaviour change model in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam?"

In addition, the answers to the following set of sub-questions enriched the findings of the research:

RQ1. How important is the understanding of local context and culture in implementing a community development project in Vietnam?

RQ2. What is the impact of the behaviour change model on the development of a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam?

RQ3. How are the local media engaged in implementing the project?

RQ4. What is the level of participation of participants in a development project in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam?

Ethnographic non-participant observation was utilised as part of a holistic approach that employed the tools of communicative ecology which enabled the researcher, who is an ethnic Viet (Kinh), to put the parents' behavioural change within the context of local community and took into account current infrastructure, as well as available services. The research was also supported by other qualitative methods such as in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Twenty six informants, who were the project participants, the volunteers, the teachers, the community leader and the staff of Plan in Vietnam (PiV), were involved in the research which lasted for a month.

Thesis structure

Chapter 1 provides the essential background information such as development transformation and policies in Vietnam and the introduction of Plan and its ECCD project as well

¹ Listed by the Vietnamese Government, the list of these communes can be accessed via the following link: <http://www.cema.gov.vn/modules.php?name=Doc&op=detaildoc&pid=1357>.

² As defined by Plan International in Vietnam and the community leaders in personal communications during the period of August – December 2013.

as background of the researched community. Chapter 2 takes the readers through the literature review of development communication field, with focusing to behaviour change model, community development, the role of media in empowering people and participatory approaches. The methodology that designed the research, included the ethnographic non-participation observation, the communicative ecology mapping, and the qualitative methods (in-depth semi-structured interviews, mini focus groups), is introduced in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 is dedicated for the findings which the researcher explored during a month staying in the community in Vietnam. They include the understanding of local context and culture (including the communicative ecology), the level of participation, the involvement of the media, and the benefits from participating to the parenting groups (PG). Chapter 5 presents the analysis and discussion based on the key findings supported by the related literature review and relevant research. It is followed by the final summary and conclusions (Chapter 6) that answer the research questions and provide recommendations in order to assist the organisation to implement the project better.

2. The Vietnamese context

Vietnam has achieved an impressive success in development during the last few decades. In this section, the development transformation of Vietnam is presented, along with the rural development policies of the Vietnamese Government, as well as the status of ethnic minority. The above information is essential to understand the country's context.

2.1 Vietnam's development transformation

Despite the difficulties that the country had to face after the wars, Vietnam has been seen as a successful story in poverty reduction and development.³ The annual GDP growth during the decade of 1999-2008 averaged 7.2% (UNDP, 2011). The overall poverty rate dramatically dropped from 60% of the population in 1993 to less than 16% in 2006 (World Bank, 2009). These changes have been the results of various successful development programmes and policies that the Government of Vietnam had implemented during the 1990s and the 2000s in

³ The World Bank, see: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview>.

an effort to reduce poverty, eradicate hunger, improve people's living conditions and ensure the country achieved the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

According to the United Nations (2012a), in 2009, the adult literacy rate of Vietnam was 97.1% of the population while the enrolment rate in primary school had significantly reached 95.5% with 88.2% of enrolled students completing the level of grade 5. Likewise, the national basic health care system in Vietnam has also significantly improved during the last few decades. The infant mortality rate was impressively fallen from 44.4 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to less than 14 in 2011 (United Nations, 2012b).

Ethnic minority groups have also been included in the government's development policies. *Chương trình 135* (Programme 135 (P135)), for instance, has targeted poor people in deep rural provinces and ethnic minority groups in remote areas since 1998, the priority being economic and educational development (Ủy ban Dân tộc (National Ethnicity Committee), 2013).^{4 5}

2.2 Rural development policies of the Vietnamese Government

Since the *đổi mới* (transformation) was introduced in 1986, Vietnam has witnessed rapid growth in all sectors, particularly the economy. The Government's priorities of urbanisation and industrialisation have also transformed society and improved people's lives.

Twenty years after the *đổi mới*, the Communist Party and the Government have decided to implement new development policies for the whole country during period of 2010-2020. Agriculture and rural development are placed top priorities, together with industrialisation. The new development policies stress economic and educational growth and advanced technological application, because:

“khoa học, công nghệ là khâu đột phá quan trọng nhất để thúc đẩy phát triển nông nghiệp và kinh tế nông thôn”.

⁴ P135 was created by the Government of Vietnam and has been placed as an important development policy which aims to assist the 135 poorest communes of the country being more economically developed.

⁵ Ủy ban Dân tộc is in charge of any policy or issue related to ethnicity in Vietnam.

(science and technology are the most important breakthrough elements to promote the development process of agriculture and rural economy) (Bộ Nông nghiệp và Phát triển Nông thôn (*Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development*), 2005: 5)

2.3 Ethnic minority communities in Vietnam

Vietnam currently has 54 different ethnic groups. The major one is Kinh (Viet) which accounts for 86% of the population and is settled mostly in the urban areas (World Bank, 2009). The official national language is Vietnamese.

Despite the Government's implementation of a series of development programmes aiming to improve ethnic minority groups' living conditions, eradicate hunger and reduce poverty, most of ethnic minority people, in fact, are still living in economically underdeveloped areas, particularly in the remote mountainous provinces in the north and in the central highlands.

Lower levels of education; less mobility; less access to financial services; less productive lands; lower market access; stereotyping and other cultural barriers; the isolated location (World Bank, 2009); and the great dependence on agricultural sources (IFAD, 2012) have been identified as the specific disadvantages that keep ethnic minority people remaining in poverty. The inability to speak the Vietnamese is criticised as a hurdle in preventing them from approaching the Government's development policies, particularly in health care services (Chuyen, Houghton & Houghton, 2002; IFAD, 2012). Being labelled as ethnic minority people, even worse, sometimes makes them be secretly discriminated against by major groups such as Kinh (Viet), Hoa (Chinese), and therefore, development policies in some cases "have not helped, and may have hurt" (Chuyen et al., 2002: 11).

3. Plan International and the Early Childhood Care and Development project in Vietnam

Plan International was founded in 1937, and is now operating in 50 countries, helping so far 84 million children in more than 90,000 communities (Plan International, 2014a). Its vision is that "all children realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity" (Plan International, 2014a: para. 5) while its mission includes:

- “enabling deprived children, their families and their communities to meet their basic needs and to increase their ability to participate in and benefit from their societies”
- “building relationships to increase understanding and unity among peoples of different cultures and countries”
- “promoting the rights and interests of the world's children” (Plan International, 2014a: para. 7)

Since 1993, Plan International has been working with marginalised children across Vietnam, specifically those who are from ethnic minority groups, in aiming to “reduce the malnutrition rate, to improve health care and to provide quality basic education to children” (Plan International, 2014b: para. 3)

Plan International also points out that ethnic minority parents are often voiceless in engaging to the issues of child health and development services (UNP, personal communication, 2 July 2013). The implementing project of Plan International in Vietnam, therefore, aims to provide access to quality, gender sensitive and age appropriate Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) services for ethnic minority children by equipping parents with the necessary skills for supporting the development of their children (UNP, personal communication, 23 May 2013).

The project is in coordination with the national campaign “*Năm triệu bà mẹ tốt trong việc chăm sóc và giáo dục con cái*” (five million mothers who are good at caring for and educating their children) of the *Hội Liên hiệp Phụ nữ Việt Nam* (Vietnam Women’s Union).⁶ By participating in Plan’s ECCD project, ethnic minority parents are expected to improve their knowledge of positive ECCD practices as well as their access to community-based support mechanisms. The community’s capacities in establishing, managing and supporting the parents and the ECCD practices are also expected to be strengthened in a positive way (UNP, personal communication, 2 July 2013). Thus, the ECCD is expected to contribute to community development.

⁶ See more in Section 4 of this chapter (page 8).

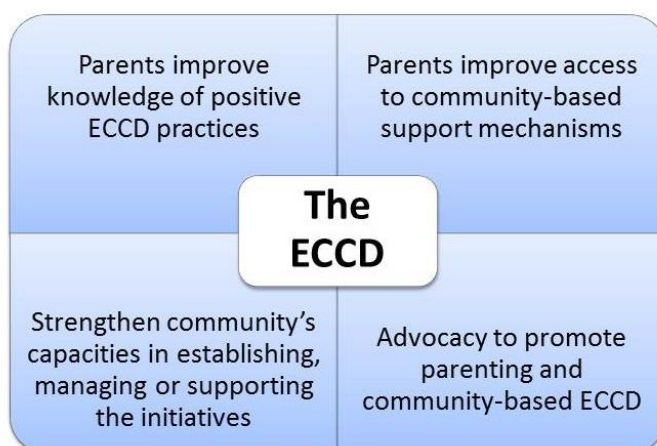


Figure 1: The overall outcomes of the ECCD (UNP, personal communication, 23 May 2013)

At the time this thesis was written, the project has been widely implemented at 74 poorest communes in 24 districts in nine provinces in Vietnam (with four northern mountainous ones, three central coastal ones, and two central highlands ones) since late 2012 (UNP, personal communication, 23 May 2013) and will last until June 2015. The project is expected to last for three to five years (this depends on the agreement with the local authorities) and has been divided into three intervention models with each one having different targets:

Model 1 – Parenting groups: Parents whose children are eight years old and under are involved in community-based parenting groups which offer supportive forums to discuss community problems and topics relevant to children's holistic development, including education and learning, hygiene promotion, health, child protection, birth registration, child injury prevention, nutrition, etc. (UNP, personal communication, 23 May 2013). These groups also mobilise parents and the community to put children's early care and development on the community's agenda as a priority. [This research focuses on this first intervention model]

Model 2 - Child play-reading groups: They give opportunities to 4-11 year-old children to discuss and address community issues and topics of importance to them. By exploring these issues, they would become self-confident in social interactions, and improve their language skills as well (UNP, personal communication, 23 May 2013).

Model 3 – Key stakeholders: Local authorities and policy makers are involved in the project as key stakeholders. Increasing their awareness of policy makers on ECCD and the importance of integrated ECCD initiatives, and advocating through a policy paper to promote parenting and community based ECCD for children are the two important activities of the project in this model (UNP, personal communication, 23 May 2013).

Ethnic minority parents are placed in the centre of implementing this project. They join the designated parenting groups based on a voluntary and participatory basis to access information, share their experiences, send their feedback and suggest solutions. The research focuses on the intervention Model 1 (the parenting groups) and utilises it as a case study for evaluation.

4. Vietnam Women's Union

Founded in 1930, Vietnam Women's Union (*Hội Liên hiệp Phụ nữ Việt Nam*) (VWU) currently operates throughout the country and is systematically organised at four administrative levels: Central, Municipal/Provincial, District, and Commune. It is a socio-political organisation and aims “to protect women's legitimate rights and strive for gender equality” in Vietnam.⁷ Women voluntarily join the local VWU. It is estimated that VWU has recently had more than 13 million members nationwide. VWU has succeeded in raising awareness about women's rights, and contributing to the approval of the Law of Gender Equality of Vietnam in 2006.

In the ECCD, particularly the parenting group intervention, VWU acts as the coordinator in engaging ethnic minority women in the project. According to Plan, many volunteers of the ECCD are members of local VWU at commune level (UNP, personal communication, 23 May 2013).

⁷ Source: <http://hoilhpn.org.vn/newsdetail.asp?CatId=66&NewsId=819&lang=EN>

5. Community profile

Xã Lam Vỹ, huyện Định Hóa, tỉnh Thái Nguyên (Lam Vy commune, Dinh Hoa district, Thai Nguyen province), which has been engaged in Plan's ECCD project, was chosen as the unit of analysis for this research as a result of mutual agreement between Plan in Vietnam (PiV) and the researcher. PiV works with marginalised communities and children in Vietnam and this community was chosen because of its unique context with a predominately remote rural ethnic minority population.

Dinh Hoa is located in the northwest of Thai Nguyen province (northern Vietnam), 50km from the provincial centre and 130km from the national capital Hanoi. Its population is comprised of 12 different ethnic groups, with the Viet people (*the major group in Vietnam*) making up less than 15%. The lack of natural resources, and the harsh weather conditions, have contributed to its underdevelopment, particularly in agriculture.



Map 1: Dinh Hoa district (on the top-left) and Lam Vy commune (pointed by the black arrow)⁸

⁸ Adapted from <http://vietnamnay.com/upload/default/07.2011/BanDo/ThaiNguyen-.jpg>

Dominated by ethnic minority groups, Lam Vy commune, the researched community, consists of 20 villages with 1064 households and more than 4100 residents; 77.59% of which belongs to the ethnic minorities.⁹ The *Tày* is the dominant group which accounts for 66% of the community's population, while the *Kinh* group is less than 23%. Some other ethnic minority groups in the community are *Nùng*, *San Chí*, *Dao*, *Hoa* (Chinese), *Thái*. The community centre is placed at *Làng Há* village, approximately 15km from the district centre (photo 1). It was easy for the researcher to get into the community and travel around its villages on foot or by bicycle, although the local people generally prefer using the motorbike as primary transportation because of its convenience. Some households are located remotely up on a hill or mountain, quite far from the main road (photo 2 and photo 6). The community has one health service centre (*trạm y tế*) which is in *Làng Há* (photo 5). At the time the researcher visited, a postal shop was available but usually closed, possibly due to the low demand from the local people.



Photo 1: The main road in the community centre which runs through most of the villages and connects to other communities (Source: Author)

⁹ Based on the latest statistics in September 2013, provided by the local government.



Photo 2: An unsealed road leading to the houses of the villagers (Source: Author)

According to PIV, the poverty rate of the researched community is 54.62% and the preschool enrolment rate is roughly 51%. Among the 251 children of the commune, 228 are of ethnic minority background (UNP, personal communication, 23 May 2013).¹⁰ The community has one kindergarten (*trường mầm non*) (photo 4), one elementary school (*trường tiểu học*) (photo 3) and one secondary school (*trường trung học cơ sở*).¹¹ The high school is in the district centre. 1029 households own television (equivalent to 96.71%) and it is easy to access

¹⁰ According to the local government, if the average income of a household (per capita/per month) is VND400,000 (equivalent to NZ\$25) or less, it is classified as *nghèo* status (poverty); from VND401,000 to VND520,000, the household is in *cận nghèo* status (near poverty).

¹¹ The education system of Vietnam is divided into three stages with elementary school is from grade 1 to grade 5; secondary school is from grade 6 to grade 9, while grade 10 to grade 12 is in high school.

television channels.¹² Each household has at least one motorbike which was convenient and fast in travelling between villages and from community to community. The public toilets are in the schools and in the health service centre (photo 7). There is no playground for the children.



Photo 3: The elementary school of the community (Source: Author)



Photo 4: The kindergarten of the community (Source: Author)

¹² Source: Local government.



Photo 5: The community health service centre (Source: Author)



Photo 6: Some traditional houses of Tay people (Source: Author)



Photo 7: A public toilet for the students at the elementary school – Khau Vieng village (Source: Author)



Photo 8: A usual simple lunch with thin fried egg and white rice of a 5th grade student, prepared by his mother. Some students had lunch with rice only (Source: Author)

Among the villages, the parenting groups are operated as two groups with one group involving 22 participants of *Thâm Pục* village and *Làng Quyển* village, and another including 21 mothers of *Nà Toán* village. These villages are located closely to the community centre.

6. Summary

Vietnam has been seen as a successful story in economic transformation and development by international organisations such as the World Bank (2009), IFAD (2011; 2012), UNDP (2011). The Government has implemented various projects, some in coordination with the NGOs, in efforts of ensuring the country to meet the MDGs, eradicating hunger, reducing poverty and improving people's living conditions. Its development policies have directed the national development process to industrialisation and urbanisation as the primary targets.

However, as the NGOs point out, a large number of Vietnam's population, particularly the ethnic minority groups, still lives in rural areas, and the poverty rate remains high, although it has decreased from year to year. Gender inequality, social disparity, the slow transformation of IEC, and a development gap between the ethnic groups are defined as existing barriers and recent issues that Vietnam has encountered. Many development studies have been done by both the Government and the NGOs, including Plan International, to search for the possible solutions in tackling the above challenges.

Using the ECCD of Plan International in Vietnam as a case study, this thesis aims to evaluate its effectiveness in applying a behaviour change model in a rural ethnic minority community. The parenting group intervention (model 1) at Lam Vy commune (Dinh Hoa district, Thai Nguyen province), in particular, was utilised as the base for data collection of this research. Relevant literature is presented in next chapter to provide a deeper understanding about development communication and its role in community development in the countries such as Vietnam.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development communication can be understood as the utilisation of communication for development purposes, specifically to improve living conditions of those who are underdeveloped (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). The notion of development communication also includes the aim to bring change, from an individual to a social level. However, development and change are processes that cannot be achieved instantly. In some cases, marginalised people are excluded from these processes. How can communication bring change, involving people in the development process?

This chapter presents a literature review on how communication can contribute to change in communities in developing countries, therefore, in an effort to answer the above question. Participatory communication, specifically, forms a main part of this chapter as this approach is a crucial tool in assisting development and social change. Literature of community development communication follows to stress the importance of the field. Relevant studies in Vietnam are reviewed to address development issues of the country and presented in the end of the chapter. The terms *implementer(s)* and *practitioner(s)* are interchangeably used in Chapter 2.

1. The principal approaches in development communication research

1.1 *A short journey through the evolution of development communication*

Development communication evolved during the 1950s and '60s with the implementation of various development programmes (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006) as a tool to tackle the problems of underdevelopment and marginality (Melkote, 2012) such as poverty and inequality (Rosati, 2012) in developing countries. The primary paradigms in development communication research were derived from both academic study and empirical fieldworks at that time (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006) and have usually been considered as the principal models of the field.

Being developed from the idea that “information and knowledge generate development” (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006: p. xvi), the modernisation model highlights the importance of new technologies in modernising marginalised people in developing countries (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). These technologies bridge the developing countries to the outside world by transmitting advanced knowledge from the North to the South (Melkote, 2012). The mass media, in the modernisation model, serves as a tool to ensure the free flow of information and knowledge to the target populations (Inagaki, 2007; Melkote, 2012; Servaes, 1985). This model may well serve as a catalyst in supporting economic growth; however, instead of being a development process, it is criticised as an “economic process” (Servaes, 1985: 285), in which, poor people in developing countries are advised to adopt and adapt new ideas from developed countries into their normal daily lives with the hope that they would become more developed and the poverty would be gradually eradicated.

The diffusion of innovations model (diffusion model) is actually based on the modernisation model. Mass media, in this theory, are powerful (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006) in disseminating one-way information vertically from the sender to the receiver (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007). Developed at the time when agricultural productivity and health promotion were primary targets for development, the diffusion model differed from the modernisation model by directly targeting behavioural change via persuasively interpersonal communication (Inagaki, 2007; Melkote, 2012; Morris, 2003). Social marketing and entertainment-education have evolved as the two main approaches of the diffusion model. While entertainment-education embeds the educational content into entertainment programmes, social marketing is a scientific method to disseminate the messages relevant to recent social problems (Melkote, 2012). Moreover, Donovan and Henley (2010) specify the diffusion model as the major one “for understanding how ideas and behaviours diffuse throughout a community” (p. 125). Its social marketing is hence targeted at both a personal and a social level (Donovan & Henley, 2010; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006) and facilitated by education, motivation and advocacy (Donovan & Henley, 2010).

The interventions in development communication campaigns in this model, accordingly, drive and guide people to the “new behaviour” (McKee et al., 2008: 254) that can help them and their groups become more developed. Many international donors tend to rely on

interventions towards behavioural change in the campaigns related to public health communication. The behaviour change model, therefore, is seen to be widely utilised to increase “the enactment of particular behaviours known to promote health and growth” (Briscoe & Aboud, 2012: 612) though it is still employed in various development projects. It may be because the development practitioners would like to target to the attitudinal and knowledgeable change which are, according to Inagaki (2007), possibly turned into the behavioural change. Like a circle, this change is then diffused throughout the community. It can lead to the development and social change, and in turn, the new behaviour may emerge in the change process. The behaviour change model is required to be consistent with the local context of the community which it is implemented. The mentioned consistency includes the accurate issue identification (Martin, 2008), the understanding about development problem that the community faces and the appropriate solution design (Waisbord, 2005). Once the consistency is involved in the programme design, as McKee et al. (2008) figure, people feel being motivated and mobilised “with information and awareness about a new (promoting) practice” (p. 254) and hence, change their behaviour.

However, the behavioural change process, as Donovan and Henley (2010) describe, shifts from the unusual behaviours to the normative ones, and requires to be integrated with other interventions with communication to enable people to apply new behaviour and encourage them to practice new related change (Inagaki, 2007; McKee et al., 2008). The development practitioners therefore should carefully consider exploring whether the potential benefits outweigh the existing barriers of the community (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007). Behavioural change, in any case, also needs to be strongly supported by the society from which it has emerged (Briscoe & Aboud, 2012) to be sustainably retained in the community.

Development communication research has gone a step further with dependency theory which implies to “promote social change rather than individual behaviour change” (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006: p. xvi). The field works have not turned around agriculture or health but have expanded to other aspects of human life. Thus, empirical knowledge has led the dependency practitioners to focus more on the participation of marginalised people. Participatory communication models which promote the involvement of stakeholders in order to identify and solve problems such as gender inequality, poverty, and low education are strongly encouraged to be implemented (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; McAnamy, 2012).

1.2 Towards communication for social change

Although modernisation model, diffusion model and dependency model were all developed from and for the development purposes, the requirement for two-way communication has been an apparent need for communication towards social change. Development communication, as Melkote (2012) points out, “has been engaged in finding a niche in the efforts to tackle the formidable problems of underdevelopment and marginalisation of millions of people and thousands of communities worldwide through a process of directed social change” (p. 15). Kothari (2001), Rosati (2012) and Servaes and Liu (2007), furthermore, emphasise the role of development communication in creating, bringing and facilitating the potentially real change, from individual to social level.

Since the top-down models such as modernisation and diffusion are criticised as media-centric bias (McAnamy, 2012) and merely one-way communication, the participatory approaches are suggested as pathways to social change with the true participation of the community (Van de Fliert, 2007) in developing countries.

Communication for development and social change, therefore, needs to be based on dialogue, listening and responding (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006) to the voices of involved stakeholders, to identify “who they are, what they need and what they want in order to improve their lives” (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006: p. xix).

2. Participatory approaches in rural community development communication

2.1 Main approaches in development communication research

The practical experiences from field works and the disadvantages of one-way communication models have put the practitioners into the requirement of a new paradigm which would be more appropriate with the empirical world, and could simultaneously create grassroots social change. Participatory development communication has been developed and became a dominant framework from the 1980s and being widely implemented in recent development projects worldwide (McAnamy, 2012). Bessette (2004) describes it as “a child of development communication and participatory research” (p. 12) whilst Brown (1985) and McAnamy (2012) appraise participatory models as means to empower people and to push

them into acting effectively and positively on the process of development. In participatory approach, participation plays a central and vital role in facilitating communication for development and social change purpose.

Participatory approaches in communication for development and social change, moreover, can be seen as an interactively open-ended process which can challenge the powerful elites by widely recognising and raising the voices of unheard people and groups in society and encouraging them to take part in suggesting solutions (Brown, 1985; Kothari, 2001; Lennie & Tacchi, 2013; Rogers, 1976; Tacchi, 2007). Therefore, the participatory model is usually employed in development communication campaigns as the mainstream for appropriately approaching the targeted population (Inagaki, 2007).

However, the reasons are not merely because this model engages people. The participatory model, according to Morris (2003), is a horizontal communication that stresses the process of information exchange, in aiming to bring empowerment and equity to the community. Development, apparently, is the common objective for the whole community, accompanied by dialogue. In order to facilitate this dialogue among the stakeholders, participatory development communication is often planned and implemented based on interpersonal communication (Bessette, 2004) which could vary from group discussions, role-playing, visioning session to workshops and exhibitions. It could sometimes be delivered via the traditional approach: drawing the attention of the community and building interventions by the diffusion of the innovations model (Inagaki, 2007).

The role of 'people' plays as another central crucial factor in participatory development communication research. This factor, as Hermann (2007) points out, needs to be put at the forefront of the development project. Servaes and Malikhao (2005) agree that people "are 'voiceless' not because they have nothing to say, but because nobody cares to listen to them" (p. 91). Communication essentially creates the platforms for them to be listened to. People-centred communication strategies are also the processes that transform awareness, equalise power and increase deeper participation in relevant activities (Brown, 1985; Deanne, 2001).

Identifying the most recent models in participatory development communication approaches, Bessette (2004) divides them into two trends: one is called 'large scale' and relies

on mass media while another uses small scale media at 'small scale'. Melkote (2012), differently, calls on social mobilisation, social movements, participatory action research and co-equal knowledge sharing as principal models in approaching participatory development communication. Among them, social mobilisation provides true participation for stakeholders in social and political action, while social movements lead people and the media to fight against power structures (ibid). Local people and their organisations, in Melkote's suggested models, can be empowered by local knowledge via participatory action research (ibid), and the co-equal knowledge-sharing model emphasises two-way interactive and participatory information transmission from people to people (ibid). Structural and sustainable change via advocacy communication is another notable idea that Servaes and Malikhao (2007) suggest in participatory development communication by involving the stakeholders in the policy change process, from individual to community levels, and from national to international levels.

Participatory approaches in development communication, furthermore, require the implementers to take time to systematically observe the researched participants before suggesting and implementing solutions instead of automatically applying the same actions from one community to community. Ethnography, which is based on open-ended day-to-day observation, can be considered as an applicable method for development practitioners in exploring the community (Van Donge, 2006). The cultural insights, additionally, benefit the ethnographers in growing awareness of what has happened in the community, preparing and understanding any unexpected outcomes resulting from the development interventions (ibid) as well as avoiding personal bias.

During the implementation of participatory development communication, the media cannot stand aside from the process. They need to be focused, involved and used as an effective channel in gaining the participation of stakeholders (Gerace & Lázaro, 1973). The local media, such as radio and television are in fact reached by local people and are sources of references for them, particularly in developing countries. However, Balit (1988) reminds us that the mass media, in some cases, oversimplify development problems and eliminate the cultural, traditional or value aspect of the community. Their role in participatory development communication, consequently, is to assist interpersonal communication.

Though communication may lead to empowerment, or bring directed social change, participatory development communication is not the solution for every problem. Participation is particularly “central to task of defining and achieving development” (Bessette, 2004: 16) and very important in development projects (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009) as it contributes to the social change process (Eversole, 2012). Marginalised people can be involved in the process of development, their stories and their voices can be heard, but it does not mean that development communication involves every person in every aspect of the community’s daily life (Mefalopulos, 2002; Melkote, 2012; Thomas, 1994). Moreover, participation is an accumulation of knowledge (Kothari, 2001). Only by participating in the research fields, researchers and practitioners can gain the empirical experience of participation, which cannot be academically taught (Gerace & Lázaro, 1973).

Empowerment is crucial in participatory communication for development and social change. Communication for empowerment might be part of development communication, or might be considered as a further step in the field (Mefalopulos, 2002). Whatever its standing point is, empowerment is central to real social change, along with participation, and could be at different levels in different context (McAnamy, 2012; Melkote, 2012). Its consequences, nonetheless, would not disappear with the withdrawing of researchers but would remain in the community for a long time.

Besides, developing two-way communication via participation in communication for development and social change is as important as empowerment. Inagaki (2007) describes responsible participation as a horizontal communication in order to build non-hierarchical mutual understanding among stakeholders. The bottom-up approach to development would be produced, followed by the identification of existing problems, such as gender inequality or empowering women (Bessette, 2004; Inagaki, 2007).

Shaping the feasible goal which the community needs and pursues is the final purpose of all development communication campaigns. In order to achieve this, it is important to involve and effectively engage public participation (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). Clearly, communication is one part of participatory development; however, the understanding of local context and culture is a catalyst that leads to the understanding of social change too (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013;

Tagarirofa & Chazovachii, 2013). Servaes and Malikhao (2007), furthermore, stress that the decision-making process cannot be delivered without participation, and the cultural identity of the local community is important in participatory development communication model. The starting point of participatory development communication, therefore, is the community (Bessette, 2004; Charron, 2007; Servaes & Malikhao, 2007).

2.2 Rural development communication

Rural development has been an interesting research field for a long time. A call for an approach that focuses on the multiple livelihoods, rather than agricultural productivity, was raised in the 1970s, but not actually noticed until the 1980s when communication for development was promoted and widely implemented worldwide (Ramírez, 2005). The integrated approaches using communication were then applied (Balit, 1988) with the emphasis gradually shifting from transmitting information to acknowledging the “multi-sectoral, complex context” (Ramírez, 2005: 420) of rural development.

Poverty eradication is the important and primary goal of rural development. Rural poverty is indeed the issue (Van de Fliert, 2007) that prevents people from achieving basic needs in their day-to-day lives. More importantly, poor people are usually excluded from the decision-making process and are eventually marginalised right in their local communities. The “voice poverty” (Tacchi, 2007: 126) denies their rights to participate and makes them voiceless. Participatory communication approaches in rural development, fundamentally, give voice to the needs of marginalised people by providing them the essential opportunities of participation, not only in the development process, but also in other aspects such as education and health (Tacchi, 2007).

Participatory rural communication appraisal which combines participation and empowerment in people’s daily practices, according to Mefalopulos (2005), is the key in sustainable rural development. Multiple stakeholders, therefore, need to be involved interactively (Mefalopulos, 2005; Ramírez, 2005). Facilitating people’s participation, as Mefalopulos (2005: p. 248) points out, assists them actively in identifying the problems, deciding which actions should be oriented, and also shapes the way to achieve the sustainable development for the community. Ramírez (2005), meanwhile, implies new policies and

educational communication are the major functions of rural development, along with participation facilitation.

2.3 Communication for community development approaches

If development is a process which aims to promote the real freedoms of people in the community (Dongier et al., 2003), communication is a useful tool to expand it. If communication is really meaningful in engaging people in identifying problems, suggesting solutions and implementing actions (Bessette, 2004; Servaes & Liu, 2007; Waisbord, 2002), development plays an important goal for the entire community to pursue. Further, if development communication encourages the involvement and participation of all relevant people, groups and organisations, the community needs to be considered as important stakeholder, not the beneficiary (Bessette, 2004).

Community, as Phillips and Pittman (2009) define, can be a group of people who live in the same area, or a collection of individuals who share the same interest, whilst Tesoriero (2010) emphasises the consistency of the community with the empowerment that “provides a framework for people to take effective decisions” (p. 95), a human rights perspective and a needs-based perspective. Its nature is not homogeneous (Dongier et al., 2003) and its autonomy, visibility as well as power distribution system affect the way how communication can be developed within the members (Voth, 2001). As a consequence, the applicable communication for community development, according to Bessette (1996), is horizontal rather than vertical.

Thomas (1994) argues that communication creates community, and community, therefore, is the basis of the evolution of the dialogue. These public dialogues can serve as forums for the community’s members, not only to express and to exchange their opinions, but to pursue their development goals also (Kasemsuk, 2011; Martin, 2008). By speaking and listening to each other (Adams et al., 2007; Yerbury, 2012), participation in community development can be formed. Bessette (2004), moreover, emphasises the importance of facilitating the participation of stakeholders at different levels, from individual to community groups, even the need for the involvement of decision makers and researchers. The participation in communication for development and social change becomes an effective tool to liberate community from its own

development issues (Bessette, 2004; Teseriero, 2010). The outcomes, therefore, are less important than the process of participation itself (McAnamy, 2012).

Participatory community development, moreover, tends to put the emphasis on solidarity (Cleaver, 2001) as well as the capabilities (Dutta, 2012) of local communities in the development process. Although Servaes and Malikhao (2005) define people as the centre of the development process, integrated approaches are preferred to shift the change from the individual to the community (Charron, 2007; Cleaver, 2001; Waisbord, 2002). Binns (2006) promotes action research as a central role in improving the living conditions of a community. “Invitational social change” is another approach suggested by Greiner and Singhal (2009) in participatory community development to increase participation, in which the ordinary participants can be the change agents for themselves. This participation can be facilitated through communication in ten steps (Bessette, 2004; see Figure 2 on page 26) which may be generalised into four stages: building relationships with the community; identifying communication activities; implementing the interventions; sharing the results. Communication, as shown below, is resulted from the understanding of the context and the community, and produces the appropriate interventions as well as takes impact on the implementation of the development project. Furthermore, in the models suggested by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009), it is utilised to promote participation to empower participants for the purpose of achieving the two-way communication (dialogic) (see more in Table 1).

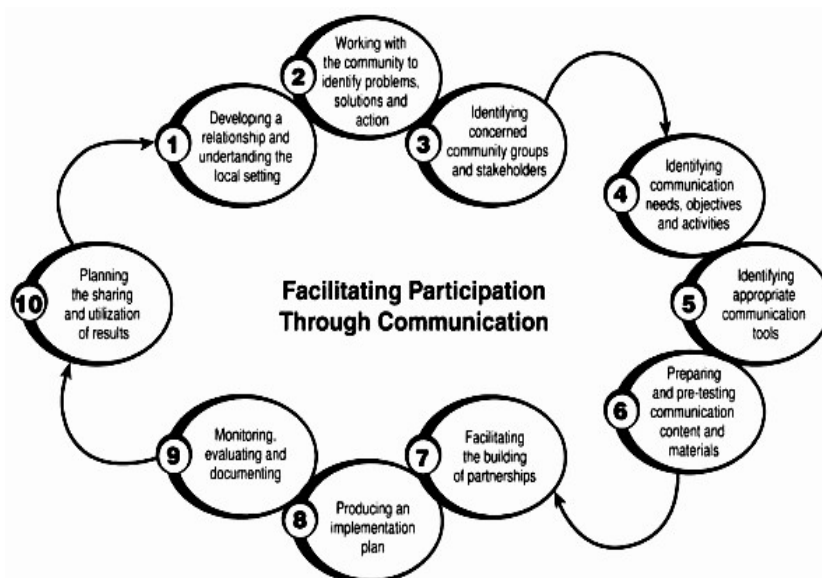


Figure 2: Facilitating participation through communication (Bessette, 2004: 35)

In community development, the understanding of local context and culture is important as it can lead to social change (Besette, 2004; Lennie & Tacchi, 2013) although it is only a step to facilitate the participation throughout the community. Lack of it, or misunderstanding of the above information may lead practitioners to fail in identifying the issues as well as in consistently designing the interventions to meet what people in the community really need. This, as Tagarirofa and Chazovachii (2013) examine, is seen as the reason why some international organisations failed in implementing development campaigns in developing countries. These kinds of understandings, according to Lennie and Tacchi (2013), and Tacchi, Slater and Hearn (2003) include an understanding about the communicative ecology of the community to explore which channel of communication people use the most. Creating a two-way communication in community development, therefore, is fundamental to ensure that participation is facilitated.

Besette (2004) defines the media as an important channel of communication that needs special attention. They can be divided into two categories, large and small scale media. Large scale media (such as national television and radio) are used in large scale activities while small scale media (community theatre, poster, community-based media) are employed in tackling grassroots communication (Besette, 2004). At small scale, more specifically, community radio is appraised as the centre of community development since it creates social networks (Fairchild, 2010), and a greater space for the community to contribute to the development process (Heong et al., 2008; Sharma, 2011) as well as provides essential information which may directly impact on attitudes and behaviours of people (Githinji, 2011). As Gaynor and O'Brien (2012) argue, it can function as a means to empower people by engaging them in "public talk . . . rather than to be talked at" (p. 443). However, this communication tool cannot be widely implemented effectively in all developing countries, especially in those where community broadcasting is not available or strictly under the control of the government. Utilising it should require caution and remain consistent with the development interventions as UNESCO (2013) reminds that it is "a media sector that responded to opportunity rather than being part of a planned and coherent media development strategy" (p. 19).

Participatory video is another community-based media trend that is usually employed by the practitioners in recent development projects, in which, instead of hiring video-making experts, the community and participants are engaged in training sessions and equipped with the necessary tools to produce videos or documentaries by and for themselves (Harris, 2008). This kind of “citizen’s media” (Rodriguez, in Harris, 2008), as Magallanes-Blanco (2010) points out, allows people to tell their stories in their own words. Participation is thus essential in the video-making process. As a consequence, not only the dialogue and discussion, but also the social movements and the participants’ empowerment, are promoted in the trend of participatory video (Harris, 2008; Magallanes-Blanco, 2010). Small-scale media such as participatory video, in many projects, are combined with the large scale ones to trigger dialogue, and create change and sustainable development. For instance, during the exploration how the *Komuniti Tok Piksa* model was implemented in Papua New Guinea, Thomas, Papoutsaki and Eggins (2010) found that the combination of large and small scale media led to the strong participatory communication focus by employing visual-based methods to produce stories on HIV/AIDS. The community members, in this research, had opportunities to decide and produce relevant videos with the help of local researchers. The final result was not only a high level of participation, but the process also increased awareness of the issue and produced visual material that was distributed by large scale media for greater awareness in Papua New Guinea (Thomas et al., 2010).

| | MONOLOGIC (one-way communication) | | DIALOGIC (two-way communication) | |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| | Communication to Inform | Communication to Persuade | Communication to Explore | Communication to Empower |
| Main purpose | Raise awareness, increase knowledge | Promote attitude and behavior change | Assess, probe and analyze issues, prevent conflicts | Build capacities, involve stakeholders |
| Main model of reference | One-way (monologic) | One-way (monologic) | Two-way (dialogic) | Two-way (dialogic) |
| Preferred methods and media | Predominant use of mass media | Predominant use of media | Heavy use of interpersonal method | Use of dialogue to promote participation |

Table 1: The monologic and dialogic models in community development communication (Source: Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009: 11)

Empowerment is as vital as participation to community development. It is also a process that involves people and links with interpersonal elements, in order to build the capability (Hollander, 2011) and to achieve social change (Laverack, 2001) for the engaged community. Once the issue is clarified, the voices of voiceless people are heard, solutions and actions are introduced, new knowledge is acquired (Dongier et al., 2003; Laverack, 2001; Waisbord, 2002). Empowerment, according to Tufte (2005), is the key to strengthen people's ability in identifying problems and in acting against them, and can be achieved via the education-entertainment (edutainment) approach. The edutainment approach is argued to assist the development practitioners and the community to understand "the change process as something catalysed from within, by the community itself, or by members of the community" (Tufte, 2005: 173). However, in a community where people are not voiceless yet at the same time not powerful enough, such as in Vietnam, the definition of *empowerment* and the way it can create change via a participation process needs to be amended consistently. In this case, community empowerment, Berner and Philips (2005) suggest, is considered as a tool to make people become more powerful and aims to change the relationship among people in a community, rather than breaking existing power structures or liberating people.

Community development, furthermore, takes its departure from the community (Charron, 2007; Servaes & Malikhao, 2007). Development projects are necessary for the community and its stakeholders and not only limited to poverty reduction but also focused such local issues as education and health care (Robinson & Green, 2011). Dongier et al. (2003) call for the idea of community-driven development that does not merely involve people in the decision-making process, empower the powerless ones, but at the same time, gives them more powerful control. On the one hand, it is also described as ways to enhance security for the poorest and most vulnerable groups, to facilitate accessibility to media and advanced information technology, to effectively fight against poverty, and to benefit those who are engaged in the process. On the other hand, community-driven development gives the most marginalised people "greater voice both in their community and with government entities" (Dongier et al., 2003: 4). Manyozo (2012) also sees the self-management of the community as the highest form of participation which drives the community to decentralisation in tackling its development issues.

Another notable approach in communication for community development, which is widely implemented in health communication, is called the ‘positive deviance approach’ (Singhal & Durá, 2012). This approach still puts the community in the centre of its development process. Nonetheless, the community is encouraged to self-discover the “certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviours and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing worse challenges” (Singhal & Durá, 2012: 158) and then to act and to amplify these factors. The positive deviants, however, “are ordinarily invisible to others in the community, and especially to expert change agents” (ibid).

3. Development challenges and recent development research in Vietnam

As in other developing countries, existing social disparity and gender inequality are the main barriers to development in deep rural communities and mountainous ethnic minority groups. They are also huge challenges for the Government in reaching the MDGs, even if Vietnam has entered to the lower-middle-income status in 2010 (IFAD, 2012).

IFAD (2012) reports that 70% of Vietnam’s population still lives in the rural areas. Agriculture plays a vital role in the national economy, although the Government has tried to direct the country towards urbanisation and industrialisation. UNDP (2011) estimates that roughly 12.1 million people in Vietnam live in poverty with 91% of this number living in the rural areas (IFAD, 2012).¹³ Ethnic minority groups account for 45% of poor people while encompassing 15% of the population (ibid). One fifth of ethnic minority girls have never attended school and ethnic minority mothers rely on cultural and personal experience in caring for their children (ibid).

The slow transformation of information, education and communication (IEC) at local authority level is considered as a hurdle in preventing marginalised people in deep rural areas and ethnic minority groups from benefiting of the national development policies appropriately. In Vietnam, IEC has been followed by formally governmental communication apparatus, which has relied on top-down and one-way communication methods (Laverack & Dap, 2003). In other

¹³ According to Vietnam’s General Office for Population Family Planning, in 2011, the population of Vietnam was estimated at 87.84 million people (see more at <http://www.gopfp.gov.vn/vi/>). 12.1 million people is equivalent to 13.78% of the population.

words, decision-making is a process that is centralised (Chuyen et al., 2002), and government policies are often seen as the main guidelines for implementing the programmes. People, therefore, are usually excluded from participating in the decision-making process. The lack of political devolution or “an explicit decentralisation policy”, as the International Funds for Agriculture Development (IFAD) (2004: 2) defines, contributes to development issues of the country.

The importance of participation in communication for development in ethnic minority communities in Vietnam has been apparently recognised and recently targeted by both Government and donors. However, participatory approaches have been adopted as the “fashion” (Nguyen et al., 2012) that may lead people to misunderstand and even distrust the decisions (Chuyen et al., 2002).

The approaches involving participation of local people in the development process are highly encouraged (IFAD, 2004; World Bank, 2009). The local participation into development projects not only gives ethnic minorities valuable opportunities to improve their lives, and to communally address the deficiencies of their social status; but also helps information to become more open, empowers the community and decentralises the old local power structures (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006; IFAD, 2004). Participatory involvement in Vietnam, moreover, requires the engagement of local authorities in this process. People, particularly in deep rural Vietnam, are scared of confronting those who are powerful in the community or those who used to have good connection with the local authorities (Hoang et al., 2006). From their experiences in fieldwork at Binh Dien and Xuan Loc villages, Rodríguez, Preston and Dolberg (1996) realised that once the local authorities found themselves interested in the projects, they would become important catalysts to push the project moving forward, and people would follow. However, the question of whether people would actively participate if the local governments were not involved was remained as an issue that Rodríguez et al. (1996) and Hoang et al. (2006) did not explore.

Increasing awareness of local participants via community-led projects plays a vital role in the development process as does the involvement of local people. Knowledge can be transferred from person to person and can be learned from practical experience. By gaining new empirical knowledge, local people realise their own ability and their development potential (IFAD, 2004; Rodríguez et al., 1996) and social change is gradually delivered. Working

with ethnic minority people in Vietnam has never been an easy task, particularly with women, who are mostly marginalised by traditionally cultural perceptions. Raising their attention and gaining their commitment via the pilot campaigns before officially commencing the principal one is useful for the practitioners (Tran, 2011).

Mass media campaigns are another approach to motivate the rural community in Vietnam. For example, Escalada et al. (1999) found that a carefully designed media campaign could change farmers' perceptions in pest management practices. The local small scale media, in this case, was more important and effective than the national one. Word-of-mouth communication was then established among participants (ibid) and the project was simulated in other rural provinces. The utilisation of mass media in development communication project in Vietnam is often linked to a social marketing model which aims to promote new behaviour, and seen as part of a mass publicised campaign, mostly the health-related ones. An example is a research study of Levy et al. (2006) on the role of public policies in reducing smoking and deaths caused by smoking in Vietnam, in which related news and articles were "published sporadically and presented in newspapers and on the radio and television" (p. 1823). The use of media also includes the use of various kinds of communication at the same time to secure a successful implementation. For instance, between July 2004 and July 2005, posters, leaflets, advertisements were used as the supporting materials to promote *Chuyện Quê Minh* (Our Homeland Story) which was a soap opera broadcasting simultaneously on *Đài Tiếng nói Nhân dân Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh* (Voice of Ho Chi Minh city) and *Đài Phát thanh Vĩnh Long* (Vinh Long Radio) to raise awareness and change behaviour of the farmers about rice pest management (Heong et al., 2008). 104 edutainment episodes were on air to deliver the drama conversations "discussing the pros and cons of agricultural inputs" (Heong et al., 2008: 1393) to the farmers in Vinh Long province (which is in Mekong Delta region and distant 130km from Ho Chi Minh city). On ground, the radio clubs were established for the farmers to listen the programme, to discuss the stories, and to participate in a quiz show. Positive results were cultivated in changes of the farmers towards seeding, fertiliser and pest management practices, beliefs and attitudes (Heong et al., 2008). These three interventions, however, did not direct participants to sustainable development, which is important in implementing projects relating to development and social change, particularly in ethnic minority groups in Vietnam. Community sustainability, therefore, should be placed in the local context and needs to be

appropriate with the cultural diversity of the community. It “will be accomplished by aligning with government policies, building the capacity of government agencies, engaging the private sector to generate employment and provide services, and addressing social equity by targeting the poor upland areas where the ethnic minorities reside” as IFAD (2005: 11) judges.

4. Summary

Development communication was derived after the Second World War and has been widely employed in many aid programmes worldwide. The modernisation model, the diffusion model and the dependency model have been the three basic paradigms in the field. Practical knowledge and empirical fieldwork, however, have contributed the participatory model to development communication. Instead of transmitting information one-directionally from the sender to the receiver, the participatory model approaches the marginalised community and its people in the development process via two-way communication, which engages the stakeholders in identifying the problems, suggesting the solutions and implementing the actions. Interpersonal communication and behaviour change are also the two main targets of this model. Communication, therefore, is used not only for development, but also towards social change.

Participatory communication for development and social change can play a vital role in rural development and community development. On the one hand, it serves as a means to raise awareness of stakeholders in terms of their own ability and potential to create change. Raising the voices of powerless people, on the other hand, is another target that communication for development and social change aims for. The development issues that remain in the community can be tackled when people participate in the process and use communication as the driver to social change.

However, neither communication nor development is the magic solution for every problem (Bessette, 2004) although “communication is the tool and goal of development” (Waisbord, 2005: 86-87). The development case in Vietnam’s context can be taken as an example. Although the country has succeeded in reducing its overall poverty rate, and many development policies have been implemented by the Government and international donor agents, the ethnic minority groups have sometimes not benefited from these programmes. Low

economic growth, gender inequality, cultural diversity or even top-down modernisation model can be considered as reasons. The empirical experience from previous fieldworks, nevertheless, has proved the importance of participatory communication in ethnic minority community development in Vietnam. Future research in this field, therefore, needs to further explore the complexity of implementing participatory communication models in Vietnam. For instance, how participatory communication can be appropriately utilised in development processes of ethnic minority groups, whether the educational aims of behavioural change can really empower women and create development for the ethnic minority community or how the media can benefit for rural community development.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Overview

Methodological design encompasses both broad elements such as research paradigms, and detailed methods that directly benefit data collection and analysis (O’Leary, 2010).

Methodologies, moreover, do not only provide the strategies, but also “the legitimatisation of knowledge production” (O’Leary, 2010: 89) for doing the research.

In this chapter, the research approaches in communication for development are presented, followed by the presentation of the methodology that was employed during the data collection. In this approach, ethnographic non-participant observation was borrowed as an important tool to gain deeper information, and to examine how the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) had been implemented at the time of September-October 2013 without interfering the daily activities of local people. In-depth interviews and focus groups were the other methodologies that supported the observation process to collect all necessary related data from participants.

Mapping the communicative ecology was also employed as part of this research to understand more about the participants and their context, their behaviours, and to explain how information and communication flow in the community. Some limitations are presented at the end of this chapter to indicate the issues that the researcher encountered during the field trip.

2. Communication for development research methodologies

The *development communication* and *communication for social change* terminologies were originally derived in the 1960s (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006) and considered as a means of tackling the problems of underdevelopment and marginalisation (Melkote, 2012). They bring opportunities to make the unheard voices to be heard, to create changes in every single aspect of normal life, particularly in developing countries via social mobilisation, social movements or giving empowerment to those who are powerless (ibid).

Development communication researchers flexibly design their studies, consistent with the context. However, according to Mayoux (2006), qualitative methods are preferred. Beazley and Ennew (2006) argue that this is because the numbers and the questionnaires of quantitative methods are usually poor and tend to focus on measurement to prove “how much is happening to how many people” (Mayoux, 2006: 116). Qualitative methods, therefore, are highly recommended to be used right at the very first stage of development communication research (Beazley & Ennew, 2006).

Participatory research has recently been raised as the basic and favourable method in implementing development communication research. According to Mayoux (2006), it “seeks to investigate and give voice to those groups in society who are most vulnerable and marginalised in development decision-making and implementation” (p. 118). In order to achieve this, the researchers need to participate in the projects, and then involve and engage those who are being researched to generate knowledge from their perspectives, before they can disseminate the catalysts for potential change and cultivate resolutions to existing misunderstandings and conflict in the communities (Beazley & Ennew, 2006; Mayoux, 2006). Thus, development communication gradually become a means to give stakeholders “a voice and a choice” (Cornwall, as cited in Beazley & Ennew, 2006: 192) to what affects their lives.

From this point of view, one of the methodologies that is employed in qualitative research is the ethnography approach. By implementing ethnographic approach, the researchers develop their skills based on intimately understanding the participants’ cultures and all their natures such as belief, symbols, values, norms (O’Leary, 2010) in depth. Ethnographers are then allowed “to enter into a dialogue with existing theory and/or develop insights that can lead to the development of new theory” (O’Leary, 2010: 118) to recognise and understand the phenomena from their own perspectives.

Likewise, ethnomethodology, as Berger (2000) depicts, is an approach that fascinates the social researchers, particularly development communication scholars, as it assists in studying the production of social order, as well as the ways people behave in their daily lives. Its tasks, consequently, are to define people’s world of common sense from day to day and reinvestigate

it, as well as to explore the relevance between people's daily activity and sociological theory (ibid).

Participant observation, or simply called *observation* also builds up development communication research and is seen as "a rich and rewarding component of the research tools" (Deacon et al., 1999: 277) for communication researchers. Moreover, it is a special research technique to benefit researchers by turning them into participants and observers simultaneously to get richer and deeper information (Berger, 2000).

In recent years, development communication research has been implemented in Vietnam, aiming to define the gaps in development among regions as well as between genders in the country. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a vital role in delivering relevant research nationwide, in coordination with the Government of Vietnam. A quick examination by the researcher in a series of completed development communication projects in Vietnam showed that sustainable rural development and information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) were the most targeted campaigns in Vietnam (Castella, Trung & Boissau, 2005; Escalada et al., 1999; Hoang et al., 2006).

Research into relevant literature in this field indicated that qualitative methods with the dominance of participatory observation, and mixed methods were centrally utilised. The research on how social networks provide evidence for the need of efficient delivery of extension services and development interventions at the micro level at Phieng Lieng – a northern mountainous village in Vietnam (Hoang et al., 2006), for instance, was first driven by quantitative methods (surveys and close-ended questionnaires) to identify how familiar the villagers were with the concepts of *social networks*. It was then deeply approached through participatory research and discourse analysis (qualitative methods) to understand the local phenomena, as well as to demonstrate the importance of social networks to development efforts of marginalised groups in Vietnam (ibid). The media, with local newspapers and radio, in this case, were involved in the research as ambassadors to connect local people with researchers, to convey the essential messages and to receive feedback on the designed projects as well.

The main question in my research [*“How effective is the implementation of a community development project that applies the behaviour change model in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam?”*], however, was not applying any quantitative methods as in the above case studies, because of the scope of this project. Ethnographic non-participant observation was borrowed as the main tool in this research while other qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus groups enriched the study.

The improvement of parents’ knowledge about positive ECCD practices, the improvement of community-based mechanisms supporting the parents, and the community’s capabilities in establishing, managing and supporting the promoted initiatives, all have served as key indicators for the research’s data collection and analysis.

3. Data sources and collection

In this research, the ethnographic tool of non-participant observation was utilised to generate a closer view of how participatory approaches and the behaviour change model can contribute towards development at the community level. It also enhanced the researcher’s knowledge by providing a culturally insightful understanding of the fieldwork. Using the communicative ecology approach assisted the researcher in mapping the community’s communication spaces, systems and behaviour and built relationships with the participants.

In-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups with the mothers who have been engaged in the project were also employed in the research with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of their behaviour change and level of participation in the project.

3.1 Ethnographic non-participant observation

Employing ethnography in communication research normally requires a period of time (Van Donge, 2006) which would be normally longer than a month. Because of the nature of a master thesis, spending a whole month in the community, with the coordination of Plan International in Vietnam was enough to collect the data. Ethnographic non-participant observation was borrowed in the research as a tool of this approach to give me an opportunity to step inside the community, to observe and collect data without intervening in the daily activities of people in the community (Gobo, 2008). It provided a deeper perspective on how parents have

participated in the ECCD project and how their behaviour with regard to their children's development might have changed. Being an observer at the same time brought further benefits to the research as I could move around the community, and gain a fuller understanding of its context, without participating in the implementation of the project (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). The open-minded observation, moreover, as Van Donge (2006) notes, assisted me in driving my data collection beyond the expected outcomes of the ECCD.

The data collection lasted for a month, from late September 2013 to late October 2013 and I stayed with a local family that resides in the Lang Ha village. The interviews, however, were not organised in advance but took place after I had spent two weeks staying in the community. This period of time was considered necessary to allow the villagers to become familiar with me and my research.

Before arriving at the researched community, a full consultation about the cultural, social and religious background of the local ethnic groups was undertaken with PiV by me. Since every community in Vietnam has its leader who is assigned by the provincial government (at the community level), or is respectfully nominated by the people (at the village level), and as it was culturally appropriate, I had to make an appointment with him before officially commencing the research as well as entering the community. I was then formally introduced to the community by someone with whom they have an established relationship; in this case, that one was the local staff of PiV. However, it was clarified that I was not working for PiV as a member of its staff and would conduct research independently.

Attending the parenting groups' meetings to observe how parents communicate with each other and the way the project's intervention model was applied, and interacting with the participants, were the tactics employed during the research time.

All conversations with stakeholders were noted in my daily journal and used to triangulate interviews and observations, and interpreted as material for data analysis.

3.2 Mapping the communicative ecology

Tacchi et al. (2003) describe communicative ecology as "the whole structure of communication and information in a people's way of life" (p. 15) which is unique for each

community (Tacchi & Watkins, 2007). Ascertaining it in the unique context of a researched community is important to address the sources, activities, channels of communication that people are using, and more importantly, to understand “how communications fit into other things” (Tacchi et al., 2003: 15) in their daily lives. Understanding the local context and culture is important, as Lennie and Tacchi (2013) point out, and can lead to the success of the development project aiming to bring social change to the community.

Mapping the communicative ecology (social mapping) of the researched community allowed me to explore the local people’s lives, to develop an understanding of social life in community (Kumar, 2002), apprehend the local context and culture (Barker, 2006), figure out the possible development issues and interact with people and build a relationship with them. Moreover, I utilised it to identify how the local media (such as radio, television that are using ethnic language) have been involved in the project as part of Plan’s communication strategy in reaching the villagers. Analysing the media content was not part of this research.

This task took me one week and helped me identify the surrounding environment and holistic assets of the community, such as the children’s playgrounds, the communal meeting house, water source, local market, the schools, the health service centre, rice fields. I also took photos of these places and hand drew the maps of some participating villages with the assistance of people in the community. The maps are presented in Chapter 4 as part of the communicative ecology exploration while the photos are placed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 to enhance the understanding of the community.

3.3 In-depth semi-structured interview

In-depth interviews were employed to obtain more information via two-way conversations between the researcher and the informants (Berger, 2000), in this case the parents who have participated in the Plan’s ECCD project. The interviews in this research were designed to find out more about the development processes in the community, the individual expectations from the project’s interventions, and evidence of parents’ behavioural change in regard to child development issues.

The semi-structured interviews were based on open-ended questions which had the same core for all interviewees, but were varied among them, depending on their answers and the interview process (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). Seven individual in-depth interviews with the mothers who had participated in the ECCD project for at least ten months at the time of interviewing were made, with no more than an hour per interviewee.

Furthermore, two primary key informants who were Plan's local staff and a community leader, and three secondary key informants who were the teacher and the volunteers were interviewed. These three interviewees were considered as the *secondary key informants* because the interviews with them provided useful and important information from different perspectives. However, they were still members of the community, and not the organisation's staff.

The interviewees decided on the interviewing environment that was most comfortable and convenient for them. The mothers, for instance, preferred to be interviewed at their houses at noon as they came back home to prepare for lunch, while the teacher was interviewed at school and the community leader appointed with the researcher for the interview at his office. The interviewees were also informed that their voices would be recorded and consent forms were presented to them for their agreement before the interviews began. [See Appendix 2A and 2B for ethics consent forms]

3.4 Focus groups

Focus groups are a group of people who are interviewed at the same time, and the *how* and *why* questions are usually the crucial parts of the process (Rubin, Rubin & Piele, 2000). The researcher, moreover, "takes a less directive and dominant role" (Chilisa & Preece, 2005: 151) during the group interviews. Observing the interactive attitudes and conversations among a group's members, leads to a better understanding of the complex communication at within community.

Two mini focus groups (one had six women (Group 1), and the second one (Group 2) involved eight women) took place as anticipated. As the Plan's project had two parenting groups at Lam Vy commune, having two different focus groups at two participating villages

provided a better understanding and a more general view of the intervention which might have been missed if the interview had involved only one group. The mini focus group interviews were done after the in-depth ones, and their participants were different from the individual ones, to ensure the greater diversity in collected information.

Similar to the in-depth interviews, the involved participants in two mini focus groups were parents who fulfilled two conditions: they had participated in the ECCD project for six months and longer at the time of research, and their children were between 4 and 13 years old. Group 1 mutually agreed to be interviewed in the afternoon at the communal meeting house in their village as they were free at that time. Group 2, meanwhile, gathered at the house of a volunteer in the morning because they wanted the discussion to be ended before mid-day, so they could go back to their homes to prepare lunch. Their behaviour and conversation were noted at the time of interviewing and interpreted later. Members of two mini focus groups were informed and explained carefully that the interviews would be for the purpose of research only.

During the focus groups interviews, all the conversation among members was carefully recorded (with the agreement of the participants), notes-taken and interpreted later. I spent no longer than two hours with each group.

4. Population and sample

Identifying a population sample for the research was a crucial step. As proposed, the research utilised qualitative methodologies, and a smaller sample was employed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) to get more in-depth data.

4.1 The community and participants

The rural ethnic minority communities in Vietnam were the population target. However, the community that has been implemented the ECCD project by Plan in Vietnam (PiV) was specified as the case study.

I stayed for a period of one month (from late September 2013 to late October 2013) with a local family in Lang Ha village, which is the community centre, and observed how people communicated with each other in their daily lives without intervening in their usual daily

activities. Some good locations for observing them were the health service centre, local market, small restaurant, schools.

4.2 In-depth interviews

The in-depth interviews were conducted with seven interviewees whose children were between 4 and 13 years old and the parents had participated in the implementing ECCD project of PiV. Several strategies were used in recruiting participants to ensure they would be open and willing to join in the research (O'Leary, 2010). These strategies included random sampling with four interviewees were randomly chosen from the parenting groups, and snowball sampling that was based on pre-existing relationships of people in the community (ibid). With the snowball sampling strategy, three informants were introduced by the project volunteers.

4.3 Focus groups

Random sampling and non-random sampling techniques (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; O'Leary, 2010) were employed at the same time in identifying the focus groups participants. One group was formed by selecting participants randomly, and members of another one were introduced by the volunteer.

Participants for the two mini-focus groups (six members for Group 1; eight members for Group 2) were drawn differently from the in-depth interviews. The participants were selected to ensure they would be different in age, occupation and educational level. The aim of engaging both mothers and fathers as participants for the focus group interviews failed because the fathers had never participated in the ECCD project. The participants, therefore, were all mothers. Having two groups ensured greater diversity in opinions and therefore, enriched the collected data. The time and place for focus groups' interviews were discussed and agreed between the interviewees and I to ensure they would feel comfortable and free to decline participation if they wished so.

5. Data analysis

Data analysis is a process that consumes time; however, it creates "new understandings by exploring and interpreting complex data from sources" (O'Leary, 2010: 256). Generally, the information for data collection process was gathered, coded and classified thematically, then

interpreted as the findings before being drawn into the discussion and conclusion (O’Leary, 2010).

5.1 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data, according to Deacon et al. (1999), are derived from specific situations or context. They thus assist the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of human interaction and behaviour to explain individual or group’s social problems (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). They concentrate not only on the *what, where, when* variables, but also the *why* and *how* ones (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The qualitatively collected data from in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups were transcribed and classified, reduced and coded into themes, while looking for emerging patterns and interconnections. The reflective analysis suggested by O’Leary (2010) was applied to analyse them thematically and systematically before being interpreted as the findings.

Entailing the advantages of ethnographic action research, all the filed notes (through diaries) and other documentation that were collected during my field trip and the observation process were coded and analysed as soon as collecting had been completed (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Gobo, 2008; Tacchi et al., 2003).

5.2 Ethnographic non-participant observation analysis

The collected data from the observation process benefited the research by providing a community insiders’ perspective in studying this local community in its natural context and with real situations (Berger, 2000; Rubin et al., 2000). Although one month’s observation might not provide enough data to answer the question of how people’s perceptions might have changed, these data were expected to contribute towards the analysis of data collected through interviews, and focus on how/if the participants’ perceptions on holistic child care and development would have changed as well as to evaluate the compatibility of community-led approaches with the researched community.

Social mapping data analysis (as it emerged from the communicative ecology mapping of the community), as Kumar (2002: p. 54) suggests, was useful to “explore the spatial dimensions of people’s realities”. With this case study, social mapping was used as a tool to identify and

collect relevant information, such as the infrastructure of the community, the available community-based services that support parents in improving their knowledge of child development; and whether communal meetings could have been utilised as effective forums for parenting groups. They were then evaluated to develop a deeper understanding of the community's life (Kumar, 2002).

The analysis of the data resulting from the communicative ecology mapping (including the use of local media) supported the proposed research in exploring the issues that the community and its people may have to face (Tacchi et al., 2003). The observations based on communication processes among parents; among them and PiV and community leader were coded, classified, transcribed and analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of the project on behavioural change of the engaged participants. The involvement of the local media by the PiV in this project was also analysed as part of the community's communicative ecology data.

The collected data was analysed and discussed in conjunction with the project's expected outcomes (and success indicators) as articulated by PiV, and compared to parents perceptions as documented during the research process. This could help provide answers to how effectively this behavioural change model based project could be implemented in this particular context from both the organisational perspective and those of the community.

6. Ethical considerations

The research followed the ethical standards and requirements set by Unitec's Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Accordingly, a formal consent from PiV had been acquired prior arriving to the community.

An ethics application form A was submitted to and approved by Unitec's Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Before the commencement of data collection, consent forms were handed out to the research participants to ensure their rights and confidentiality would be respected. They could decide whether they would like to participate in the research and could withdraw at any time prior to two weeks after the date of interviewing, and could also withdraw the supplied information at that time. The forms were secured in a safe place and transferred to my

principal supervisor for storing for five years from the date of collection as ruled. [see Appendix 1A and 1B for Participant Information Form; Appendix 2A and 2B for Consent Form]

Utilising ethnographic non-participant observation as one of the data collection tools, the researcher only observed the participants in their community and did not interfere in any of their daily activities. The harm, therefore, was minimised. Moreover, any photos related to the research were taken carefully to ensure that they would not include any children. If they appeared in the photos unintentionally (for instance, in the parenting group meetings, in the market, in the playgrounds, classrooms, and other community's assets), wide shots that did not identify faces were used or used Photoshop to blur faces. The photos that I took during the social mapping process are used only for gaining a deeper understanding of the community and for hand-drawing the map.

The researched community was carefully chosen because of its cultural and social stability, ensuring that any sensitive issues often present in ethnic minority groups would not be presented. In order to avoid any potentially cultural sensitive issues during the research period, full consultation between the researcher and PiV was made before the researcher entered to the community.

As the UREC's consent form and participant information form in this research were originally in English, their Vietnamese versions were given to the participants and their contents were explained in detail to them. All these files were secured in a safe place and used for the purpose of the research only. Questions were asked in Vietnamese to avoid any fear of deception among participants.

Mapping the social life of the community, interviews, and focus groups, were employed as tools to collect data. The mapping process was implemented with the assistance of members of the community. The researcher entered private properties only with the owners' permissions. Likewise, the places of proposed interviews (including in-depth interviews and focus groups with parents and key informants interviews) were discussed and finalised between the researcher and the participants.

To avoid any conflict of interest and potential confusion about my role, a formal introduction of the researcher to the community and its people was pre-arranged by Plan on the first day of the research process. It was clearly explained to the participants that the researcher was not a staff member and that he would be conducting research independently. The researcher did not interrupt any activities relating to the intervention models implemented in the community by Plan but carefully maintained the position of an observer.

With the limited time and required scope of work, this research had been adequately designed for a master thesis. One month in the community was considered enough time, supported by my non-participant observations, social mapping, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and focus groups. The collected qualitative in-depth data supported the research that sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the behaviour change model in a development communication project in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam. These methods and careful preparation along with my Vietnamese background helped me to avoid any misunderstandings that researcher as *an outsider* to the community might have to deal with.

7. Limitations of the research

Understanding the local context and culture is very important, particularly for those who are from a different cultural and ethnic background as the researcher. Entering the community as a Viet man who grew up in urban Vietnam and had never been to the area where ethnic minority groups majored in the population, I had to equip myself with a lot of information related to the Tay people and their culture, social norms, and beliefs to avoid any possible personal bias. Consultation with Plan which had close relationship with the community was sought before I started my research. As part of the research, I had to spend two weeks to understand more about the community, its complex context and culture. These insights assisted me in exploring daily lives of the local people and were very useful in data analysis and discussion (presented later in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). However, staying a month was not in fact enough, although it had been adequately defined as sufficient for the scope of this master research.

Although I was officially introduced to the community as an independent researcher and not a Plan staff member, some people still perceived me as the latter. It took me almost a week

to clarify this issue with the local people. An interview with a mother failed (as showed in the Findings chapter) because she was afraid of speaking out her opinion, although I had explained the purpose of the research to her.

Another issue was with the mini focus groups' discussions. In both groups, in the first half of each interview, the volunteers were active and dominant in responding to the questions while the participant mothers remained silent and agreed with them. I had to ask them a lot of warming up questions not directly relating to the research such as how they deliver goods to the local market, their children's studies, how often they went to the town or to the city in a month, and about the culture, the cuisine of the Tay ethnic group, in order to make them comfortable, and enable them to speak up in front of the volunteers, who were also the leaders of the parenting groups. This issue is also one of the findings presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

1. Overview

The findings of this research are based on data collected through in-depth interviews and focus groups with key participants and other information sources that included mothers who have been so far participating in the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) project, the volunteers and staff of Plan in Vietnam (PiV). These findings are enriched from data collected through daily field diaries and personal observation notes that contributed towards a more holistic community research approach. They provide insights into how the community has engaged with the Plan's project as well as how the ECCD's interventions have contributed to behavioural changes in the parents. Based on the above data, the findings in this chapter are divided into three sections: findings from the interviews and mini focus groups with project participants in the community; findings from the primary key informants including the staff of PiV and the community leader; and findings from the secondary key informants including project volunteers and a teacher. Since all the participants were mothers, the term *participant(s)*, *woman/women*, *interviewee(s)* and *mother(s)* are interchangeably used. The following terms are also regularly used in this chapter:

- *Knowledge*: relates to the level of knowledge and understanding parents have about child care and development. It also refers to the information/knowledge they have gained from participating in the parenting groups.
- *Skills*: refers to the parents' abilities to carry out what they have learned from the groups as well as from the other participants.
- *Practice*: refers to the way parents apply their new knowledge in order to change their behaviour relating to child care and development, and the improvement of their parenting skills.

The nature of this research, as stated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, is an evaluation of a real project which is still going on in a community. It is essential thus to focus on how the participants have benefited from the parenting groups (PG), how their knowledge and practices related to their children's development has been affected, as well as what has been the real level of participation of parents in the project. The voices of the parents, whether in the individual interviews or focus groups' discussions, are presented in part 2 of the findings. These are followed by the findings from the interviews with the key informants. This is done deliberately to ensure the voices of the parents are not dominated by the community leader and PiV's staff.

The findings from each group in the community are compared with each other to identify emerging themes and form the base for the discussion in Chapter 5. The outcome of this research, therefore, is not only a monitoring and evaluation of how effectively the project has been implemented or how the parents' behaviours have changed, but also an attempt to provide recommendations that may be appropriate for PiV and the other international donors in implementing the development project consistently with the local context and culture of the ethnic minority communities in Vietnam.

1.1 Purpose of the programme

According to the community leader (LD), PiV started collecting the preliminary information from the community in 2009. However, the ECCD had actually been introduced to the community in late 2012 and was aimed at supporting the community, specifically to empower the roles of the parents, in improving their knowledge and parenting skills related to the holistic development of children such as education, nutrition and sanitation.¹⁴ Three interventions have been created, including: the parenting groups (PG), the playing groups for children who are three years old or under (U3 playing groups) and the Reading and playing groups. Each of these has been implemented in a few villages which were selected by the community leaders and the

¹⁴ The programme was designed to run from 2012 to 2015 and its initiatives were expected to be remained in the community for a long time.

local Operation and Administration Board (OAB) (*Ban Điều hành*).¹⁵ All related activities from PiV, accordingly, need to be submitted to and approved by the OAB also. As part of the ECCD's approaches, Plan and the OAB had trained the teachers at the community's elementary and secondary schools about positive education practices.

Plan's staff (PL) confirmed that surveying is a basic but very important step before implementing any project. The researched community had been chosen because it had sponsored children, had a high poverty rate, was listed as "*đặc biệt kém phát triển*" (extremely low-developed) area by national standards, and ethnic minorities were the majority in the community.^{16 17} The ECCD was contextually designed, with the PG was the entry point to empower the roles of the parents and strengthen the capacity of local government to provide community-based mechanisms and better quality services for its people in education, health, clean water, and child protection. All these inter-relational campaigns would serve a common target: the holistic development of children.

According to PL, the community could decide which villages would be chosen to implement the interventions of the ECCD project, as well as consult with PiV to select the volunteers who would be the facilitators of the project at local level. They were expected to have good communication skills, be well respected by the other people in the village and to frequently and effectively collaborate with local authorities such as the Women's Union and the Youth Union. All the training sessions were developed and supported by PiV.

¹⁵ The OAB was established in responding to the requirement from Plan that needs to have a committee to manage all the related activities. Its members all work for the local government.

¹⁶ According to Plan's staff, the first and most important criteria in selecting the implemented community is that it has children who are financially sponsored by the international donors with Plan plays as an agent. How can Plan select a child to sponsor? The selection is determined in the group meetings in the community which works with Plan. The child and his family can decide whether they wish to be sponsored. Please see more at: <http://www.plan-uk.org/sponsor-a-child/frequently-asked-questions#9%20-%20How%20do%20you%20select%20which%20children%20to%20sponsor> and <http://www.planusa.org/content347861#selection>

¹⁷ Refer to Note 1 on page 2.

1.2 The PG and the factors influencing the participation level of the parents

The ECCD, as Plan's staff revealed, is the national programme of Plan in Vietnam and aims to tackle the development issues of ethnic minority communities by impacting the local governments in providing better community-based quality services. Hence, it involves not only the community leaders, but also the parents, the teachers, the locally social unions such as the Women's Union and the Youth Union. The PG, in the programme design, was initially defined as the catalyst to mobilise the community with support from the community leaders, the Women's Union, the teachers and the Youth Union. The initiatives of the PG might impact the local government via these factors. Community participation, therefore, was framed as the two-way process.

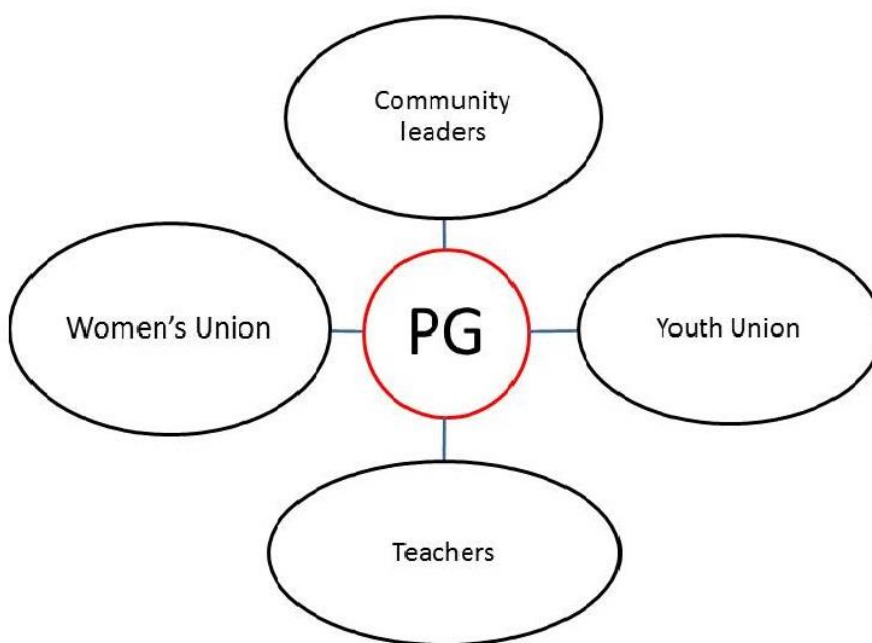


Figure 3: The PG in relation to the other groups

The interviews, together with my personal non-participant observation and personal communication, however, have produced another figure showing which factors influence the participation level of the mothers in the PG.

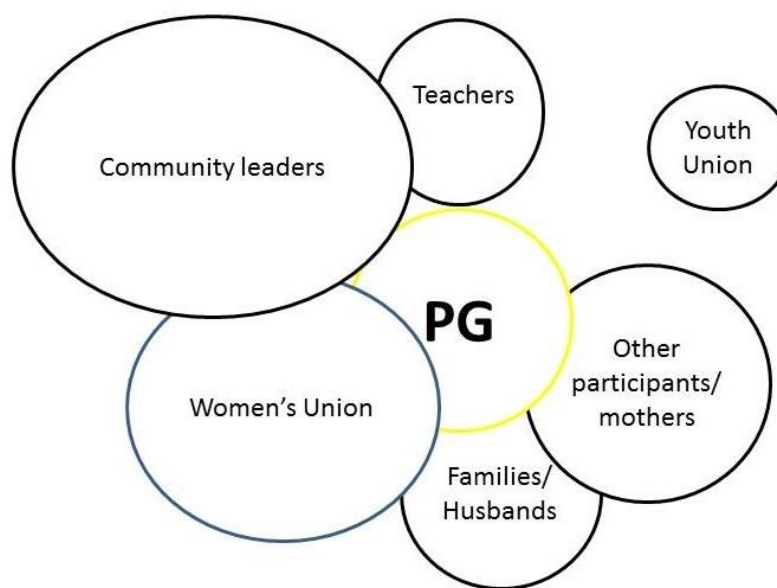


Figure 4: Factors influencing the level of participation of mothers in the PG

The community leaders and their decisions appear as the most powerful factor influencing the teachers and the Women's Union which in its turn, reflects these influences to the participants via its members who are also the volunteers and the leaders of the PG. The support of the local government for the PG is weak and not apparent. The teachers do not fully understand what was meant to be their supporting roles in the PG while the Youth Union plays no role in the implementation of the PG. Two other factors that have not been recognised but have still influenced the participation level of the participants are family support, and the encouragement of other mothers in the community. All the mothers revealed that they talked with their families, particularly their husbands, before deciding to participate in the PG. Some of them participated because they thought they could learn from the other women in the village.

2. Findings from the communicative ecology mapping of the community

During the first few first days in the community, I hand drew the maps of some villages which were participating in the ECCD, with the assistance of the local people, especially the

children, who were eager to take me around and show me their community. Photos of these hand drawn maps are listed as below.



Photo 9: Hand drawn map of Na Toan village (Source: Author)

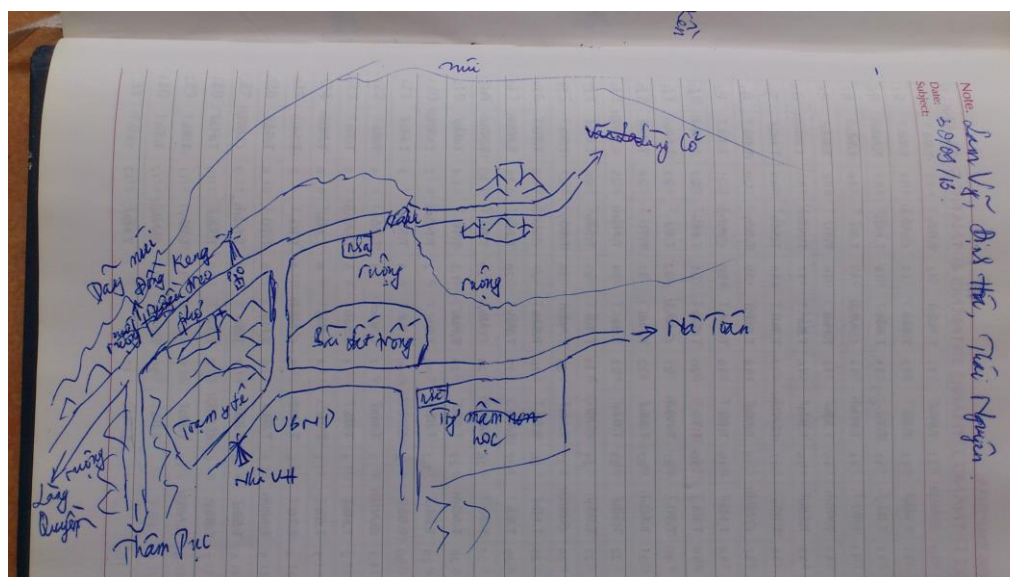


Photo 10: Hand drawn map of Lang Ha village which is the community centre (Source: Author)

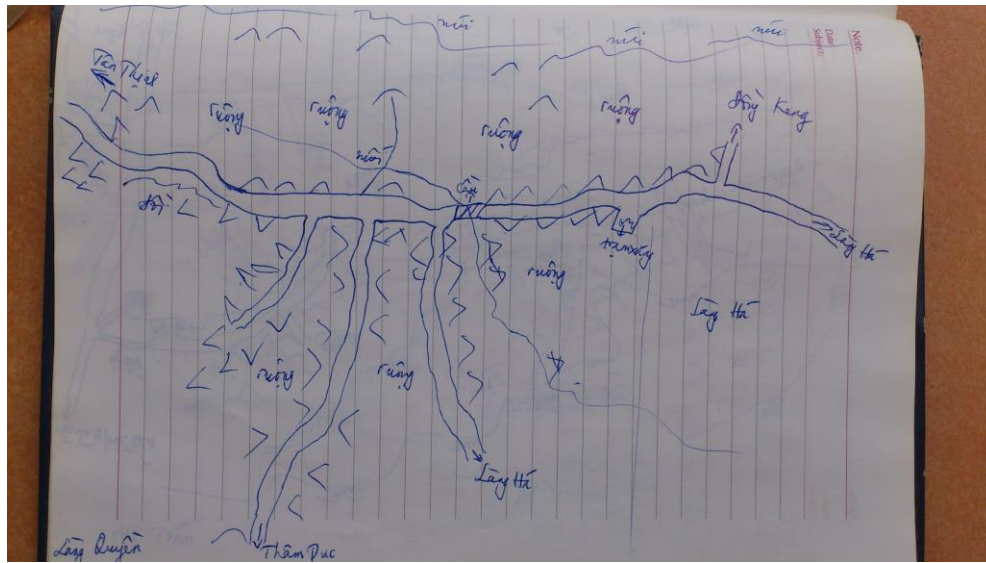


Photo 11: Hand drawn map of Lang Quyen village (Source: Author)

Data from the communicative ecology mapping were collected during the month I stayed in the community. They were based mostly on personal observation, diaries and field notes. My personal communication with the local people as well as the interviews with the participants also contributed to the data as shown in the following figure.

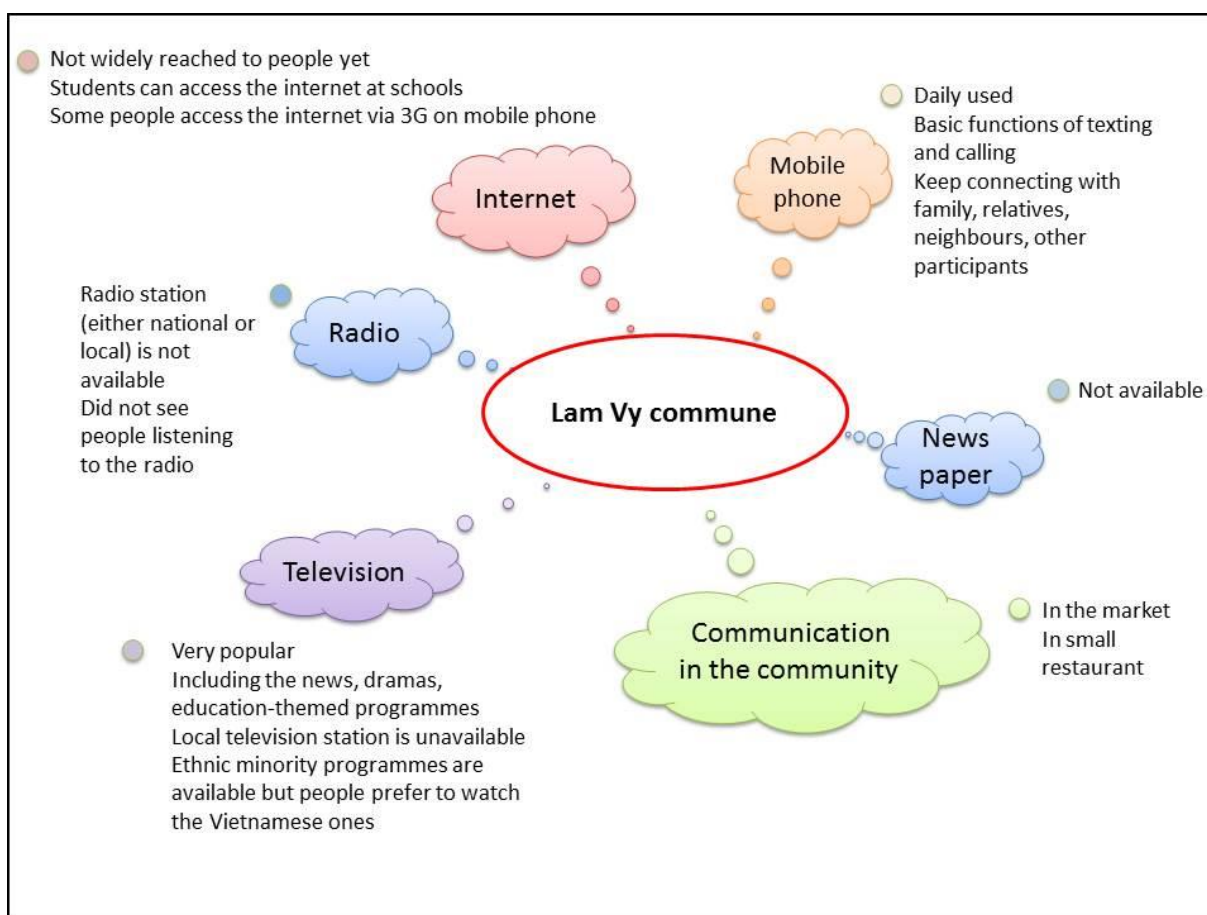


Figure 5: The communicative ecology of the researched community

Within the community, daily face-to-face communication is important and is the basis of all communication. Members of the community daily interact informally with family members, relatives and neighbours about what happens in the community and its people, and share what they have explored from watching television. For those who work for the local government or in the schools, communication is normally confined to their offices during working hours, but for most people, it usually takes place in the private space of their houses, in the market (*chợ phiên*, which is held once every five days), at *quán ăn* (small restaurant; the community has a few in its central village).¹⁸ The family that I stayed with, for example, runs a *quán ăn* which serves breakfast from 6.30am to 10.30am (or maybe sooner if everything is sold out). Because

¹⁸ This kind of restaurant is very popular in Vietnam and easily found from the big cities to the small rural villages. Depending on the needs of the local people, it may serve for either breakfast or lunch or dinner, or all kinds of meals. The Vietnamese love eating at *quán ăn* because it is cheap, tasty and conveniently found at many street corners.

it is centrally located and the husband works as one of the community leaders, people not only in the village, but also from neighbouring ones, often visit it in the morning and talk to each other about everything, from the news that they have watched on television to issues relating to their children and their education. Even a stranger like me was invited to join in their conversations when I was there for breakfast. Based on my observations, people in the researched community tend to use Vietnamese in their daily communication, and also occasionally speak in their own ethnic languages.



Photo 12: A mother carries her child on motorbike, this is very popular in the community (Source: Author)

The motorbike (*xe máy* in Vietnamese) is very popular in the community. It is considered as the preferred transportation for travelling between villages or communities. According to the

local people, it is convenient for them to visit their relatives, pick up their children, and also deliver goods to and from the market (photo 13).¹⁹



Photo 13: A corner of Lam Vy market which is held every five days at Lang Ha village (the community centre), a popular meeting place for the villager (Source: Author)

The mobile phone is another important channel of communication, and almost all adults own one. Most of them have basic functions such as texting and calling which allow the users to connect easily with their families, neighbours, buyers and suppliers. The community has two mobile repairing shops. One of them also operates as the post office but is often closed due to the low demand for postal services, according to the locals. SIM kits and prepaid cards can be conveniently purchased at grocery stores. Some adults also use their mobile phones to play music. Only a few people use the phones with internet access, because it is expensive and the 3G connecting speed is slow, according to the villagers.

¹⁹ *Xe máy* can be seen as a unique part of Vietnamese culture. It is unofficially estimated that Vietnam has approximately 40 million legally registered motorbikes (please see: <http://www.cand.com.vn/vi-VN/xahoi/2013/10/212793.cand> (in Vietnamese)). It is convenient and easy to travel from place to place in a country where infrastructures such as road conditions are still developing.

During the month of staying in the community, I did not observe people reading newspapers as I had in the urban centres. There was no place where newspapers were sold, and the only place where I could find a newspaper was the office of the local government with some complimentary copies sent from the provincial centre, such as *Báo Thái Nguyên* (Thai Nguyen newspaper), *Nông nghiệp & Nông thôn* (Agriculture & Rural), *Phụ nữ Việt Nam* (Vietnamese Women). The articles covered the latest news in the country, government policies, and entertainment news. None of them was related or relevant to the researched community or had local or regional content.

People in the community indicated they knew about the radio station in the provincial centre but after visiting 14 families in seven different villages (some of them were visited more than once at the same time of the day), I did not see anyone listening to the radio. My personal communication with other people in the community at five different villages has contributed to my observation that the people of Lam Vy commune may not listen to the radio. Instead, they preferred to watch television because it offered more channels to choose from and was more appealing because of the visual aspect. Based on my observations, people usually watch television at dinner time, with some families doing this twice a day (lunch time and dinner time). The news (*thời sự*), entertainment programmes (*giải trí* - quiz shows, game shows, reality shows), dramas (*phim truyện*), and educational-themed programmes (*khoa học giáo dục*) were among their favourites. Meanwhile, VTV3 (Vietnam Television – *Đài Truyền hình Việt Nam*) seemed to be the most popular channel as people usually mentioned it in their conversations.

Neither local radio nor television was available in the community. Although Vietnam Television (VTV) has a dedicated VTV5 channel for the ethnic minority groups broadcasting in ethnic languages and Thai Nguyen television (*Đài Truyền hình tỉnh Thái Nguyên*) produces programmes in ethnic minority languages such as Tay (*Tày*), Nung (*Nùng*), Dao, many people, based on my observations, skip them to turn to their favourite Vietnamese ones.²⁰

²⁰ Thai Nguyen Television dedicates two news programmes in Tay language per day, with each one lasting for 30 minutes in the afternoon and in the evening, while the radio broadcasts news in ethnic languages several times a day. A sample of the daily broadcasting schedule (in Vietnamese) can be found here: <http://thainguyentv.vn/default.aspx?tabid=463&CatelD=405>.

There was one internet shop in the community centre but it was closed most of the time. The local government office and the schools were other places where wired internet could be accessed. The students (of both primary and secondary school) were taught how to use computers and the internet, once a week for less than 45 minutes, so they had an understanding of what the internet was and how to use it, but their parents did not; the younger people were thus more familiar with the internet than the older ones. The further out people lived from the community centre, the less opportunity they had to encounter and use internet.

Two other channels of communication present in the community were the loudspeaker and posters. The former is available in every village, and is used only for announcing local government information or new policies, and reminding villagers about upcoming meetings. Posters were seen only in the community centre and contained messages relating to the importance of following the *Chiến lược dân số quốc gia* (National Population Strategy) and the presentation of the *Mặt Trời Bé Thơ* (Children's Sun) campaign that was created and is operated by the Ministry of Health, in coordination with the rural health service centres nationwide, aiming to raise the awareness of parents about the importance of providing essential nutrition sources for children, especially infants, and the importance of breastfeeding. I found that none of posters was related to the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) project of Plan.²¹

3. Findings from the in-depth interviews and mini focus groups with project participants

3.1 Participants' profiles

Seven participants, mothers participating in the Plan's ECCD, were engaged in the individual in-depth interviews exploring their communicative ecologies, how they perceive the project and its contribution to their behavioural change as well as the challenges in participating in the ECCD. Table 1 briefly provides a profile for each of them.

²¹ A long-term strategy of the Vietnamese Government which encourages parents to have no more than two children.

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Mother 1 (M1) | Viet ethnic who lives in Lang Ha village, the community centre, is the mother of two young girls and the owner of a grocery shop. She had participated in the U3 Play Group for few times but decided to discontinue for a month at the time of interviewing. |
| Mother 2 (M2) | Tay ethnic who lives in Tham Puc village with her two children. Her family's income, as with the other participants', depends mainly on farming. She has participated in the PG for a year. |
| Mother 3 (M3) | Tay ethnic who lives in Lang Quyen village. She has participated in the PG for almost a year and has two daughters. Her limited Vietnamese vocabulary affected the interview process resulting in less information from this participant. She was also uncomfortable in giving her opinions despite the purpose of the project having explained to her. |
| Mother 4 (M4) | San Chi ethnic who lives in Tham Puc village, a young mother of two young sons. Her house is quite far from the main road, located on a hill distanced from the other villagers. There was no television at the time the researcher visited, unlike the other participants' households. Her husband is rarely at home, which is why she has to bring her younger son with her to the farm. M4 is active in participating in the community activities. |
| Mother 5 (M5) | Ethnic Tay who lives in Na Toan village and has two young sons. She is the only participant who has used the internet a few times. |
| Mother 6 (M6) | Ethnic Tay who lives in Na Toan village, has two daughters and has been participating in two groups: the PG and U3 Playing group. Like some other participants, she is a farmer. |
| Mother 7 (M7) | Ethnic Tay who lives in Na Toan village. She has two daughters. Not only is she participating in the PG, but she is also active in other activities that Plan has implemented in the community. |

Table 2: Profiles of the participants

In order to provide greater diversity in collected data for the research, two mini focus groups were conducted in Na Toan village (Group 1) and Lang Quyen village (Group 2) after I had stayed in the community for more than two weeks. These villages were chosen because the parenting groups have been implemented there. Participants in these groups were different from the in-depth interviewees: Group 1 had six members while Group 2 included eight participants.



Photo 14: A group of mothers discussing during a meeting of a parenting group (Source: Author)

The following table profiles the participants of these groups:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Group 1</p> <p>(GR1)</p> | <p>Six participants, 24-45 years old, including five mothers who have participated in the PG and one volunteer responsible for the operation of the PG. All participants live in Na Toan village and are farmers.</p> <p>Ethnic composition: Tay ethnic group (4), Viet (1) and San Chi (1).</p> <p>Because of its proximity to Lang Ha, the community centre (only 2km), Na Toan village is considered as one of the fastest developing villages.</p> |
| <p>Group 2</p> | <p>Six mothers, Tham Puc village and Lang Quyen village and two volunteers who live in Lang Quyen village.</p> |

| | |
|--------------|---|
| (GR2) | <p>The PG in which they have participated used to meet in Lang Quyen village, only 2km from the community centre. Tham Puc village is very small and nestled between Lang Quyen village and Lang Ha village (the community centre) but low in density and some houses are quite far from the main road. It is much less developed than the other villages in the community due to its remote location.</p> <p>All members of Group 2 are farmers, and in between 25-50 years old. Ethnic composition: San Chi (1), Tay (5). Most have completed 9th grade as the highest education qualification. One of the members is a grandmother.</p> |
|--------------|---|

Table 3: Profiles of two mini focus groups

3.2 The communicative ecologies of the participants

The mapping of the communicative ecology of the participants provides an overview of the channels of communication in their daily lives and within the unique context of their community while exploring the communicative ecologies of the mini focus groups reveals the common and popular communication channels that are usually used by the members of the groups. These data serve to identify which types and modes of communication are most frequently used, as well as how the information flows in the community, especially amongst the participants and adds more information towards understanding how the project works in the community; for instance, how the media are involved.

The communicative ecologies of the participants and the mini focus groups are illustrated in the following figures (Figure 6-12) and Table 4.²²

²² The interview with Mother 3 was interrupted before exploring her individual communicative ecology. Please refer to the limitations of the research in Chapter 3, page 46.

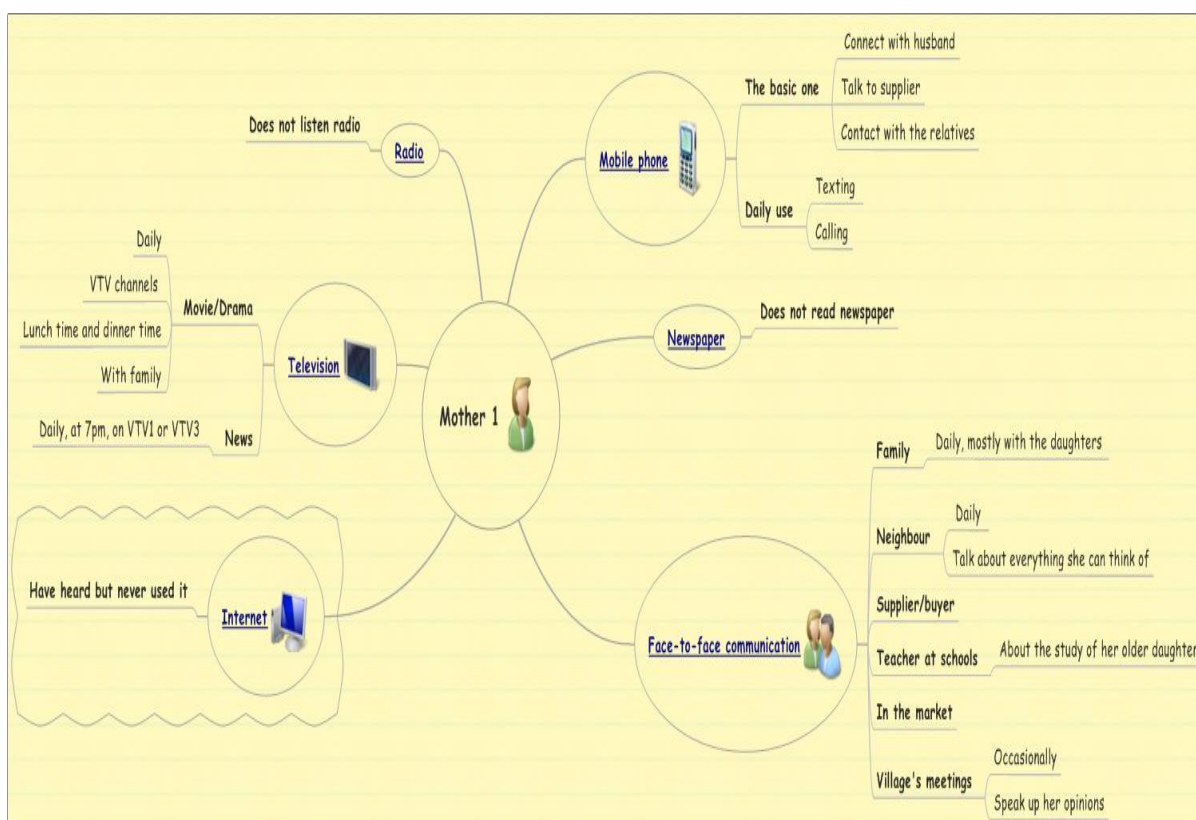


Figure 6: Communicative ecology map of Mother 1

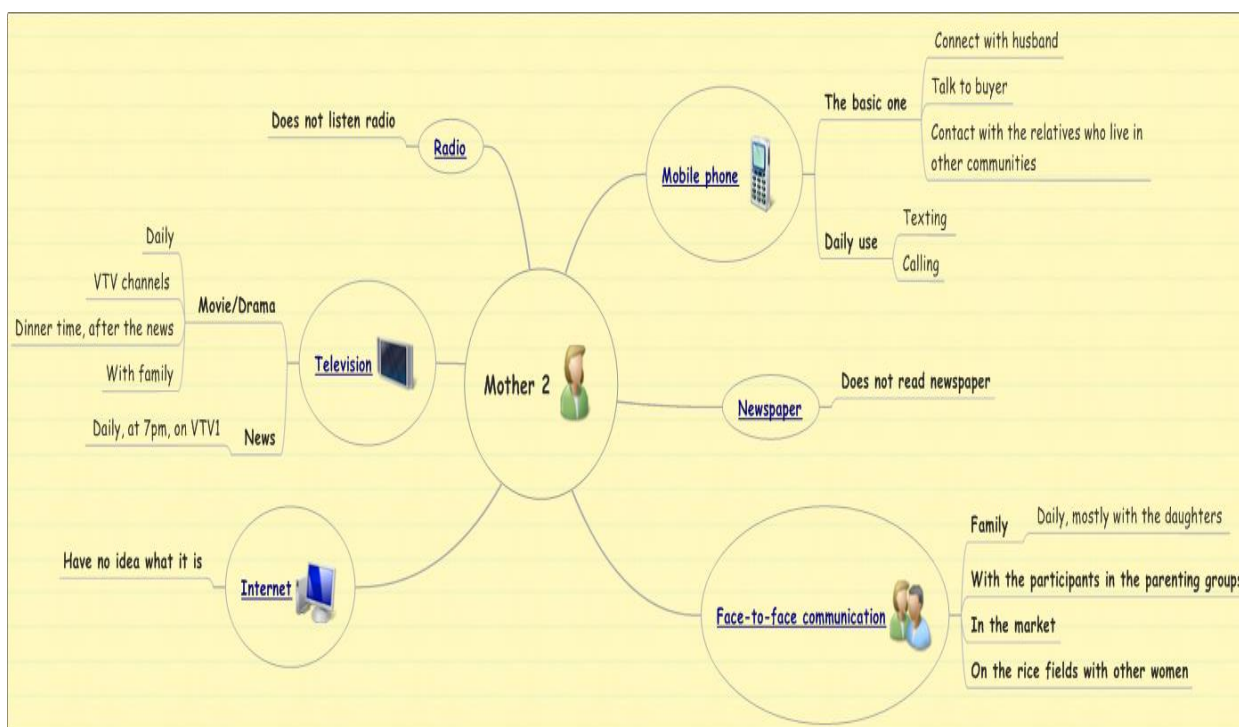


Figure 7: Communicative ecology map of Mother 2

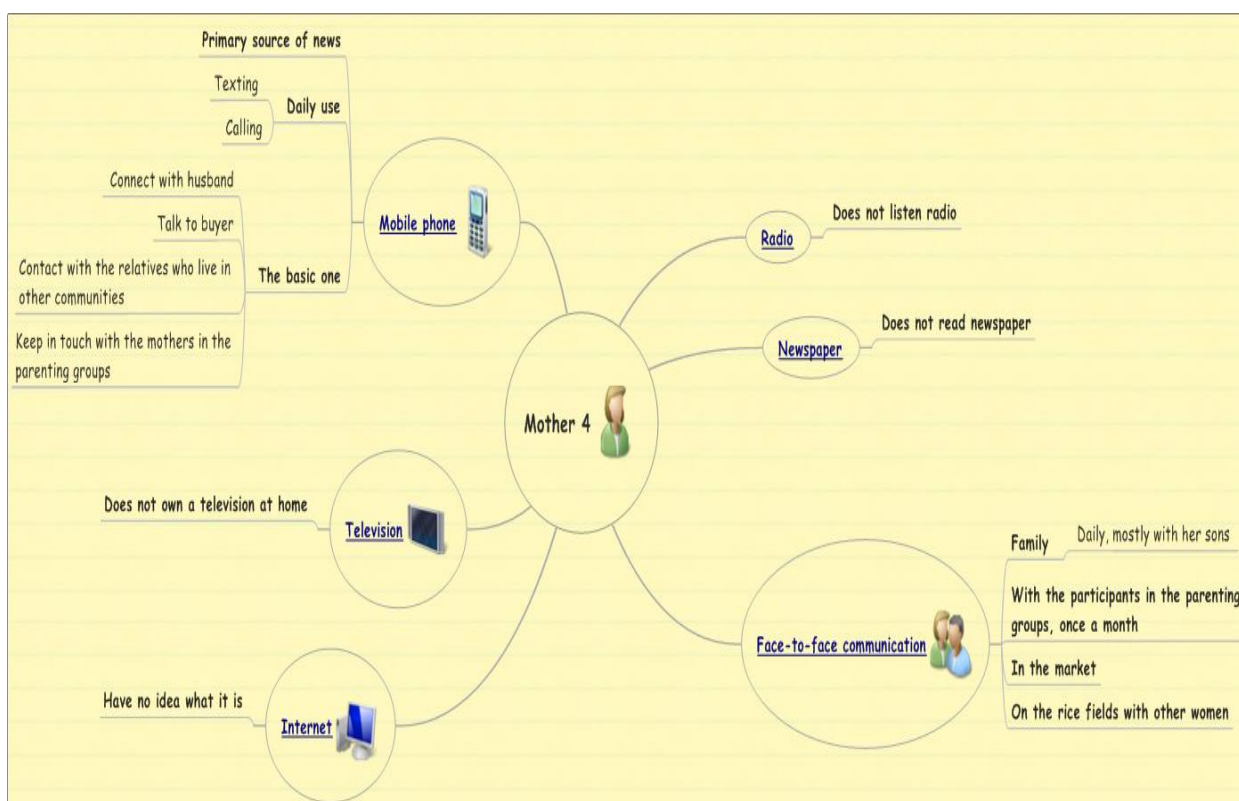


Figure 8: Communicative ecology map of Mother 4

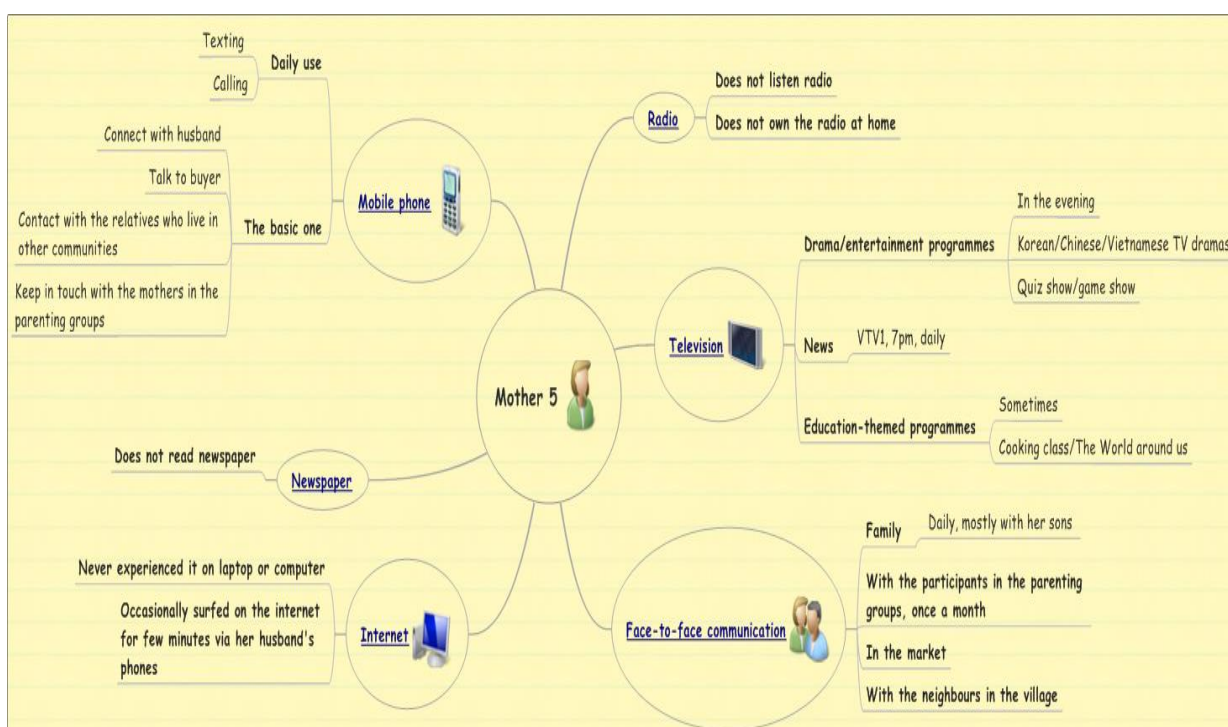


Figure 9: Communicative ecology map of Mother 5

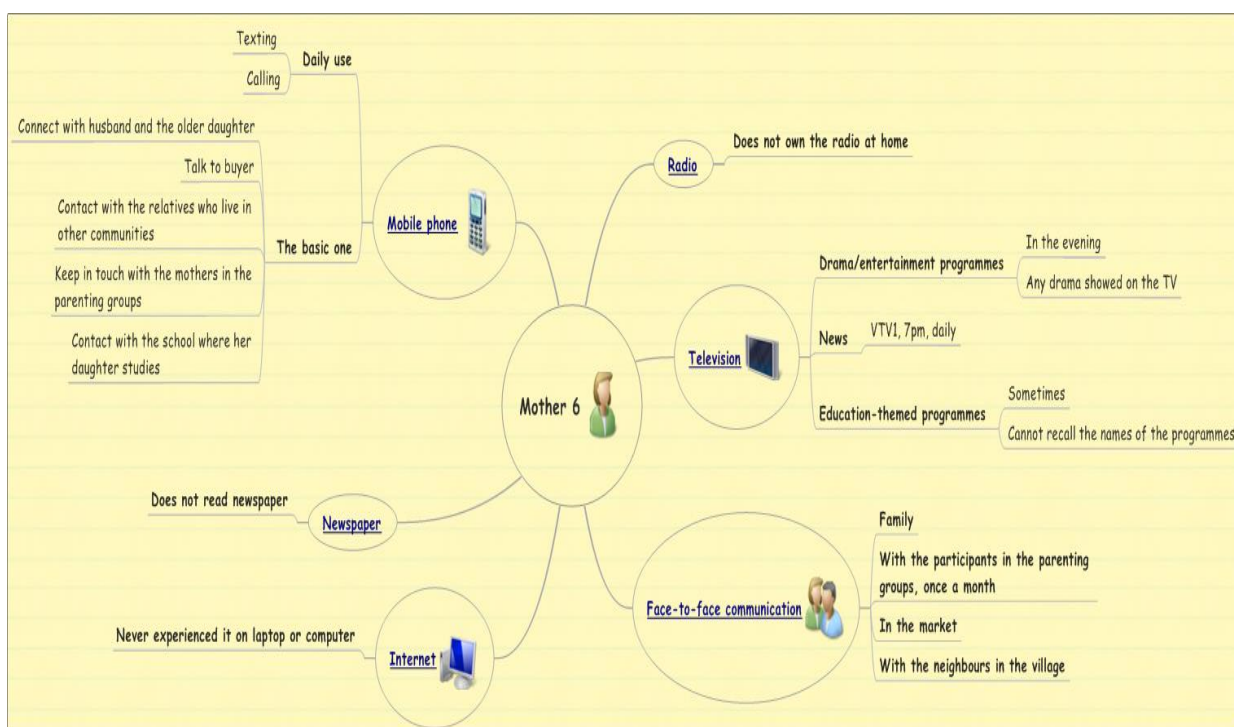


Figure 10: Communicative ecology map of Mother 6

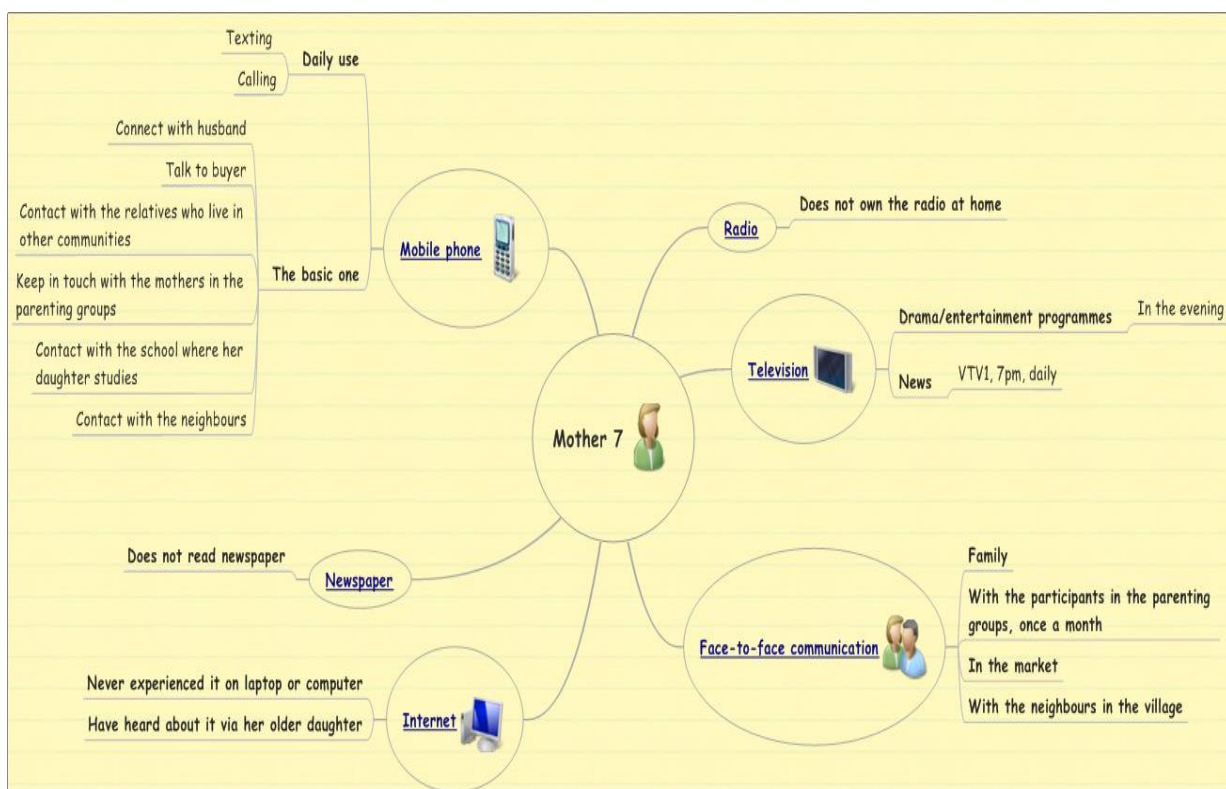


Figure 11: Communicative ecology map of Mother 7

The community communicative ecologies of two mini focus groups are described below in the Table 4.

| Channel of communication | Group 1 | Group 2 |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Face-to-face | Daily use, in the families, with the neighbours, with the other parents while waiting to pick up children from schools | In daily activities with families, neighbours, people who work for the local authority, also with other women in the market. |
| Mobile phone | Everyone owns a mobile phone (but not a smart phone) which help them contact other members in the group as well as the other villagers | Everyone has a mobile phone to keep them daily connected with their husbands, with relatives, and buyers. One member also uses it to contact the supplier as she runs a small stall in the market. |
| Television | 5/6 women watch television twice a day (lunch time and dinner time), only one watches once a day because she used to be busy in the afternoon and does not have enough time to do that. They all watch with their families | Watch the television twice a day with their families (except one mother who does not have television at home), but prefer to do that during the dinner time. The preferable programmes include the news, Korean or Chinese dramas. |
| Radio | No one listens to the radio because television is more informative | No one either owns or listens to the radio. They prefer to watch the television. |
| Newspaper | Not available in the village | Two mothers have seen newspapers while they were in the offices of the local government but did not read them. |
| Internet | No one has experience with the internet though the women have heard about it as an advanced technology to provide information, and the children who study at the secondary school can use it once or twice a week at school. | The women have heard about the internet and known that the secondary students learn it at school but they have never experienced it themselves and do not know exactly what it could do for them. |

Table 4: The communicative ecologies of two mini focus groups

As shown in the above figures and table, television, face-to-face communication and mobile phone (referred to as mobile) are the three most popular channels that participants use in their daily activities.

Face-to-face communication is essential to people in the community. Through face-to-face communication, news reaches the whole community quickly. What happens to one individual becomes public knowledge very quickly. Communication-flows involve neighbours, other villagers in public spaces such as the *chợ phiên* (market) (which is held every five days on the 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th, 25th and sometimes the 30th monthly), in the few small local restaurants which serve breakfast, in the rice fields, in community meetings and in the PG meetings. Participants would also talk sometimes to other parents and teachers while picking up their children from school. For one mother (M1), as she runs a small grocery shop in her house, face-to-face communication also involves exchanging information with her customers and suppliers. For those who have participated in the PG of PiV, face-to-face communication also included discussions in their groups about skills related child development.

The mothers in the community tend to watch TV usually at lunch and dinner time together with their families. Beside entertainment programmes such as TV drama and music, the news (particularly from VTV – Vietnam National Television) is the one mostly watched. This provides them with images of other cities and areas in Vietnam, and other countries, and a means of comparison in terms of economic development. They are aware of what has been happening outside their community, although they might have never been to the big cities. More importantly, according to all the interviewed mothers (except M4 who did not own one) television is a source of learning about new parenting skills. Their understanding about nutrition or sanitation has likely been affected by the media too. One participant (M2), for instance, indicated that she has learned from television that eating vegetables is healthier than consuming a lot of meat, and parents should spend time to play and talk with children. Another participant (M5) pointed out that although the PG had once or twice mentioned about the importance of brushing teeth twice a day and washing hands after using the toilet, she had

actually found out and remembered it because of watching the advertisements that were aired regularly during *giờ vàng* (prime time) on the television.^{23 24}

With the exception of one mother (M3) who does not own a mobile, the other participants do, and use it almost all the time for keeping in contact with their husbands, their relatives, schools where their children study, their neighbours (M1, M2, M4, M5, M6, M7), the buyers of their farming products (M2, M5, M6, M7), the suppliers for the shop (M1) and the other members in the PG (M2, M4, M5, M6, M7). The basic mobile functions of texting and calling are their favourite as they are cheap, affordable and help them get connected easily.

The internet has barely reached the community. The mothers know of it and have heard about this type of advanced communication technology; however, only two participants (M1 and M5) have used it; but rarely and were not familiar with it. Owning a computer or even a laptop for them “was a dream” (*như là giấc mơ*), as they put it. As one mother (M5) noted, her husband’s mobile could be connected to the internet while hers cannot and the only chance for her to surf is to borrow the phone from her husband. If the mothers want to keep in touch with each other, they would use either the mobile or a motorbike (every household has at least one motorbike) which could take them everywhere. TV and face-to-face communication remain their primary source of news and knowledge, not the internet.

Like most of the people in the researched community, the members of the mini focus groups utilise mobile, TV and face-to-face communication as the preferred sources of news while the internet is rarely used because of its high price and its unfamiliarity to participants who have not yet gained a higher education. The mobiles keep the mothers in contact with their families, their relatives and others in the PG. TV, meanwhile, provides the news, and new parenting skills, such as which kinds of food provide more fibre, that children should consume vegetables and fruit to get more vitamin, or that washing hands before eating and after using the toilet is a good habit for them, although not all of these could be applied easily. Face-to-

²³ In recent years, there have been increasingly more ads and public campaigns on personal care, food and home care products promoting behaviour change or providing useful information.

²⁴ *Giờ vàng* (prime time) on Vietnamese television used to air in the late evening, usually from 8pm to 11pm.

face communication is also important in the daily activities of the participants, but mostly with neighbours, relatives and other members of the PG.

3.3 Reasons for participating in the parenting groups

The participants in the mini focus groups recalled the first day when the project was introduced to them and gave reasons why they would like to be part of the ECCD project. Responding to the question of why they decided to participate in the PG, the mothers in Group 1 spoke out at almost the same moment with a unanimous answer saying that they had guessed the PG would be a good new programme that would assist them in improving the caring of their children. Only one participant (GR2M2) gave an individual opinion, indicating that she joined the PG because of the benefits it would bring to her children and her parenting skills. The other members of the group seemed to agree with that by smiling and nodding their heads.

More details of different reasons for participating in the parenting groups (PG) and definitions of child development were given by mothers who were interviewed in-depth. For two of them, child development relates to the height and the weight of the children whereas other mothers thought it relates to children's intelligence.²⁵ For one of the mothers (M5), it was really difficult to understand what her children would like to do, and to explain their behaviour. One participant (M6) pointed that although she had child-rearing experience with her older daughter, it had been some time ago and she found it necessary to update her knowledge. When the project volunteer and the local Women's Union came to their houses to introduce the PG, some mothers (M2, M4, M5 and M6) recognised the benefits of the new implementing campaign to them, their children's development and their communities. Thus they voluntarily participated in the PG right from the beginning and have never missed any group meetings, despite some challenges, as one participant explained: "my house is far away from main road and it is difficult to get there, especially in the heavily raining days" (M4, in-depth interview, 17 October 2013).

²⁵ In the minds of the participants, being tall or big in weight indicates better health, reflecting perhaps the parents' income.

Two mothers (M2 and M6) also stressed the need for improving their parenting practices. The PG is an opportunity for them to discuss and learn many useful skills about child care. More specifically, as one mother (M5) indicated, through participation in the PG, by exchanging real experiences with the other mothers, she hoped she could teach her older son about personal hygiene or the importance of keeping the environment green and clean.

3.4 Level of understanding about the PG amongst participants

Participants described the groups and their understanding about the activities of the PG: “We discuss a lot of different topics in the group, such as how to encourage our children to be more creative, how to provide more essential nutrition for them, how to keep them being tidy. The discussion theme is changed from month to month. We also sing children’s songs, play children’s games, pretend that we were the children. Parents now have to do what our children used to do. So funny”; a mother (M2, in-depth interview, 16 October 2013) described the activities in her group, adding that the members of her group meet on the 21th of each month, and the group, as she understood, is only for those who have children between the ages of 4 and 13.

Other mothers, such as M4, M6 and M7 for instance, knew they could share, discuss and even debate with other participants on every topic. There was a general expectation that their parenting skills would improve, and they would be able to apply the new knowledge to better care for their children.

By playing the games or singing the songs, which a mother (M5) called as “*khởi động*” (warm up) (In-depth interview, 17 October 2013), parents place themselves in children’s shoes in order to understand more about the world of their children. The PG, as she understood, benefits both her and her children.

One mother (M1) had different opinions when she described both the PG and the U3 Playing group in which she have participated as places for the mothers to hang out, having a chat while the children played around. For her, the knowledge related to child development, such as nutrition could be better found in the training sessions with *Mặt Trời Bé Thơ* (Children’s Sun), a campaign developed and operated by the Ministry of Health. Therefore, the PG had

wasted her time: “I am quite busy, cannot go anywhere as I have been running a shop as you could see. My husband is often not at home” (M1, in-depth interview, 13 October 2013).

The women in two focus groups also expressed their understandings about the PG and its activities. However, during the first part of group discussion, in both groups, the volunteers were more active in providing their opinions as well as leading the other members. They explained the purposes of the PG such as aiming to raise the awareness of the parents in child development, to equip them with better knowledge, skills and parenting practices, to create a forum in which the parents could share their own experiences once a month. The members did not add their opinion except nodding to show their agreement. There was therefore little evidence of their level of understanding of the PG functioning role and aims during the focus groups discussion.

3.5 Benefits from participating in the PG

The benefits from participating in the PG were defined in detail by the interviewees. Several mothers (M2, M4 and M7) saw the PG as a space for them to meet and chat with other mothers once a month. However, according to most of the participants I talked to, improving parenting skills and improving their behaviour with regard to child development were the most important benefits that the mothers have gained from the PG. One interviewee (M2) remembered how hard she had struggled herself to teach her son how to bow to the elders because “he was lazy . . . and the Tay children rarely bow to anyone” (In-depth interview, 16 October 2013). By participating in the ECCD’s PG, things have become easier for her as she has learned how to talk to her children in a friendly manner. For one mother (M6), the biggest benefit she has got from the PG is nutritional information for her younger daughter who is only two years old. She used to prepare for her the same meals as for the older one (who is 14), “but she seemed to dislike what I had cooked, so I shared that story with the other mothers in the group and they said I needed to update my knowledge” (In-depth interview, 17 October, 2013). This mother also shared that she practiced what she had learned from the group in order to change the menu for her daughter daily to ensure providing her all the essential nutrition. “And it works, feeding my two-year-old daughter is now easier for me”, M6 told (In-depth interview, 17 October, 2013).

It was interesting to the researcher to observe how the mini focus group discussions became more animated when the participants started discussing the benefits of their participation in the PG and what they had learned. They all had their own favourite topics and debated with the others to prove which one should be the most important. In Group 1, a mother (GR1M1) said the lessons in maintaining children's personal hygiene and protecting the environment should be the most important, while another (GR1M2) preferred the one about how to keep her children from getting into unexpected accidents. Another participant (GR1M3) argued that teaching children how to behave themselves was as important as the good nutrition. Other members of the group debated intensively for a few moments, but generally agreed with what the others said the rest of the time.

It was the same with Group 2, with half of the participants being actively engaged while the rest contributed little. In this group, opinions differed slightly, with one participant (GR2M2) for instance, saying that her crafting skills have been improved by participating in the PG, since she was taught how to make hand-made toys for her children from available materials such as bamboo and cardboard. Another mother (GR2M1) kept reminding the discussion group of the importance of adding fresh vegetables to her children's meals and described it as "brand new knowledge for me and my family because I used to provide only protein for my children" (Focus group, 19 October 2013).

All the mothers whom I interviewed said that they usually seek advice from the other mothers whenever they have child care problems. The solutions usually came from the PG. As a mother said, "I used to share what I know with the other members and in their turn, they would do the same. It is about what we have to face with caring for our children daily, something very familiar to us" (M6, in-depth interview, 17 October 2013). She also added that "sometimes we try to apply experiences from other mothers. Not everything is easily applicable, but at least, we have accumulated more useful knowledge" (ibid). Another mother (GR2M5) had the same idea and also noted that her knowledge about child care and nutrition has improved since she started participating in the PG. One participant (GR1M4) mentioned that she not only applies what she has learned from the PG at home, but also shares it with her neighbours and her relatives who live in the other villages, and recommends them to use it to be "the better mothers" (focus groups, 19 October 2013). A mother who was interviewed in-

depth said her neighbours told her that “it is a pity that they do not participate because they are busy. Whenever I told them what I had learned from the PG, they would understand how I could raise my children better and with more scientific knowledge they had” (M5, in-depth interview, 17 October 2013). It was the same for other mothers (GR1M2, GR2M2) who have become sources of knowledge in child development in their neighbours’ eyes. This circle of education will be analysed in Chapter 5 to find how it impacts on the success of the implementation of the ECCD.

3.6 The impact of the PG on child development knowledge, skills and practices

The PG, as PiV originally designed, aims to have an impact on the knowledge, skills and practices of the parents. In general, the participants appreciated what the ECCD’s PG has done as it has affected positively their parenting skills and practices related to child development. As a result, the mothers mentioned above spend more time playing with their children than before (M2, M4, M7) and take care of their children’s studies (M2, M5); they also try to create a safe playground at home for the children (M6), even learning how to make toys from available materials (M2). Their knowledge about child care has generally been improved (M2, M4, M5, M6, M7). The same opinions were given out by the mothers in the two mini focus groups. Most admitted that they had not been spending enough time playing with their children until they started participating in the PG, and learning that parents should be close to children, particularly the young ones. One of them (GR1M3), for instance, said she spends more time talking to her son whenever she is not in the rice field instead of letting him play alone as she used to do before joining to the PG. She discovered this to be the best way to find out what was happening in her son’s life. Another mother (GR1M1) shared with her group that her son is not close to his father and prefers to talk to her “because currently I am the one who spends time with him, not my husband, so he trusts me more than his father” (Focus groups, 17 October 2013). The other members of the groups agreed that they now spend more time with their children than before but had not yet reached the same level as in the case of GR1M1 with her son.

Of particular importance is that the mothers who participate in the PG have changed their practice in using the community’s health service centre. The traditional beliefs of the

Vietnamese, particularly of the mountainous ethnic minority groups, tend to rely on natural medicine which uses leaves, tree roots and flowers. The interviewed mothers (M4, M5, M6, M7) named the public health service centre (*trạm y tế*) as the first place they think of when their children get sick, and trust in the doctor. For them, traditional medical treatments are not always appropriate (GR1M2), regardless of what might happen to their children, they would take them to the doctor for checking and follow a prescription. Only in situations such as at the time when *trạm y tế* is closed, and it is not a serious emergency, parents would try to apply some basic traditional treatment and wait until the health centre would be opened in the early morning (GR2M1, GR2M5, GR1M1, GR1M3, GR1M4).²⁶ A mother expressed that: “I have never looked for wild grass to treat my sons. If they get a fever, I take them to the health service centre immediately” (M5, in-depth interview, 17 October 2013). Another mother (M7) shared her negative experience with traditional medical treatment from last summer when her older daughter had a strange mark that looked like an acne on her face, and she had no idea what it was. “At that time, she was spending her summer break with her grandparents and they tried to cure her by using the leaves they had found along the stream and in the forest”, she recalled. She had believed that it was the traditional practice, but the mark got worse, and she had to take her daughter to *trạm y tế* to see the doctor. “The strange mark went away forever after we followed his prescription. Now, whatever happens to my daughters, I take them to the health service centre to check immediately”, the mother (M7) said (In-depth interview, 17 October 2013).

One mother (M2) laughed out loud, saying she still uses both modern and traditional medicine for her children. She noted that they could be taken to the doctor for a “western medicine” (*thuốc tây*) prescription but she still uses ethnic medicine such as leaves of bitter melon to treat them: “That was because the medicine from the doctor was not always useful. Sometimes my children had to consume three or four different kinds of medicine but were not better. I used the traditional treatment with what I found in my garden, in the forest, and they recovered” (In-depth interview, 16 October 2013).²⁷

²⁶ *Trạm y tế*, as my observation, operates daily between 6am-5pm.

²⁷ In Vietnam, people usually refer to modern medicine as *thuốc tây* (western medicine).



Photo 15: A plant used by local people for traditional health treatment (Source: Author)

Knowledge and practice related to child nutrition of those who have participated in the PG, have been positively affected too. If the members of Group 1 discussed generally how the meals for their children have been changed and what kinds of food are healthy and best for their development, Group 2 described in detail how they prepare the daily meals. One participant (GR2M1), for example, cooks congee with mince pork for breakfast, rice with sesame, tofu and peanuts for lunch, and dinner with vegetable soup and rice with stewed beef, for her two sons. According to her, this sample menu provides all the essential sources of energy with many vitamins, fibres and proteins for their daily activities. It is changed from day to day to keep the children interested in the meals. For some kinds of food that could not be found in the local market, she would travel by motorbike to seek them in the town (which is 15km from the community).

However, not all of the participants can apply what they have learned from the PG in providing more nutritious meals for their children. The restrictions of family income were identified as the main reason why the children have the same menu for breakfast, lunch and dinner (M7, GR2M5). A participant (M2) said the problem was with her son he skips that meal and goes to bed with an empty stomach if his mother does not cook what his loves and wants

to eat. This seems to be the popular reaction of many of the children in the community as the interviewed mothers complained about the same issues to the researcher. A participant (M6) could name which kinds of fruit provide essential vitamins, and which vegetables are high in providing fibre; however, as with other mothers, her two-year-old daughter does not always eat what she cook for her, even though she tries to differ the menu from day to day.

Before participating in the PG, if my children were very naughty or fighting with each other, I was extremely annoyed and then probably used violence with both of them. Honestly, I likely lost my control, lost my human nature in the situation like that though I loved them too much. However, my behaviour has changed since I participate in the PG, I realise it will be bad to use violence with them. In the same situation, I will control myself, talk to them, explain to them what they have done wrong.

(GR2M1, focus group, 19 October 2013)

The PG, according to the participants, has also affected the way they behave with their children. One mother (M4) felt happier spending more time with her sons and mentioned that the three of them can play together for the whole day. Another mother (M6) has stopped using violence with her daughters because “whenever I am very angry and would like to yell at my daughters, to smack them, I instantly think of what I have learned from the groups how to deal with stubborn children in the same situations, and I stop acting like that” (In-depth interview, 17 October 2013). This “mental value” (*giá trị tinh thần*), as she described, is also as important as gaining

experience in nurturing children. The behaviour of their children, interestingly, has been changed as well. The older son of a participant (M5), no longer resists what his mother asks him to do. The children bowed and greeted the researcher politely, a behaviour their mothers (M2, M5, M6) proudly said could not have been seen in the past.

3.7 Level of participation

The responses to questions relating to the mothers’ level of participation in the PG led to widely diverse opinions. It was not difficult for the participants to define the level and the nature of their participation. One mother (M2), for instance, immediately responded that any mother could suggest a topic for the next meeting and then everyone in her group would

discuss to finalise the theme for the next meeting. According to her, “each one has her own idea such as what game we should play; this month we have discussed this topic, so next month, we need to talk about that topic, something like that” (In-depth interview, 16 October 2013).

For another mother (M4), the level of participation involved only a decision as to the meeting date, the actual discussion topics being always raised by volunteers who are also the group leaders. This was confirmed by another participant (M5) saying that what they discuss in the group, or the way it is operated, are decided by the volunteers based on the available list provided by Plan and approved by the community leader. However, she also noted that the mothers sometimes could suggest topics they would like to discuss at the next meeting and the decision would then be voted on and approved by all members of the group. The level of participation according to this mother is reflected in the way participants freely speak out their opinions during the discussion and share experiences with each other.

A mother (M6) who lives in the same village and participates in the same group as M5, showed hesitation in her voice while defining her level of participation to the PG and indicating the key roles of the group leaders in deciding discussion topics: “Each month, the group leaders raise an issue or a topic about child development and we all follow. Can we suggest the topic? Well, I see no one having any ideas about that. At the end of the meeting, group leaders announce the topic for the next month, we all know what it is and are dismissed from the meeting” (In-depth interview, 17 October 2013).

For two mini focus groups, identifying the level of participation led to similar answers in both groups, as the participants pointed out that they can only decide the date and time for the monthly meetings and join in the group discussions, but that sometimes they could mutually agree on next month’s discussion topic. The participants were very surprised to hear that Plan’s staff and representatives of the local government had visited the villages and conducted surveys before designing the program. They said it was the village chief, and the volunteer, who had introduced the PG to them and recommended them to take time to participate, and they did.

One of the program volunteer participants (GRV1VL) explained that this was because right from the beginning the community leaders and PiV had contacted the local Women's Union and then trained the volunteers, who in their turn became the facilitators and leaders of the project at their villages. They had been provided with a list of discussion topics that was finalised with the PG participants. "However, if any participant suggests any ideas, we will all finalise together", a volunteer (GR2VL2) hesitatingly added (Focus group, 19 October 2013). However, my non-participant observation in the PG meetings showed that the level of participation of the mothers was very low. The group leaders (also the volunteers) were often the ones who raised the discussion topics and all the participants followed them by splitting into small groups, and discussing with each other, then presenting their groups' opinions. The volunteers summed up all the opinions, reminded them of some more important points, and announced the topic for the next meeting before everyone went home. The participants, from what I observed, were involved in the PG but did not make any decisions as to the discussion topics. Their level of participation will be further analysed and discussed later in Chapter 5.

3.8 Fathers' engagement in the PG

Despite the aim of the PG program to engage both fathers and mothers, all the participants are in fact women. One mother (M2) justified her husband's absence from the group by explaining that he is busy, rarely at home and taking care of children should be the responsibility of the mother. She recalled that the volunteer did not ask for the father's participation at the beginning.

"*Bận*" (Busy) was the answer of another mother too. Her husband is a policeman and away from home all the time. However, he knows much about the group and its activities, "because I always share with him what we have discussed and suggest he lets me apply those new practices at home" (M5, in-depth interview, 17 October 2013). The husband of one participant (M6) refused participation in the PG as he thought each family needed only one representative although his wife has asked him to join her. Another participant (M7) also has shared the PG experience with her husband and had tried to convince him to participate. Nonetheless, "he refuses because of feeling shy to be the only man among the women", as she shyly responded (M7, in-depth interview, 17 October 2013). Another mother (M6) suggested that the group

leaders should visit participants' families or send invitations to the fathers to remind them about caring responsibly for their children.



Photo 16: Women usually work together in the fields (Source: Author)

Compared with the in-depth interviewees, the participants of the two mini focus groups were more excited when discussing the engagement of the fathers in the PG. The fathers, as they indicated, are aware of the existence of the PG, encourage the mothers to participate (GR1M2) and often share their ideas with the participants (GR1M4, GR2M1, GR1M2, GR2M6, GR2M3), but prefer to stay at home rather than participating directly in the PG because they are busy. Men must do the “*những việc lớn*” (big things) as one mother said as an explanation (GR1M1, focus group, 17 October 2013), and are afraid that their experiences might not be as adequate as the mothers' in nurturing their children (GR1M3, GR2M6).

The lack of fathers' participation was linked to traditional practices but also to a failure made in linking the project to a women's group, as one volunteer (GR1VL) explained: “according to the tradition of our people (*Tay group*), caring for children must be the responsibility of the mother. If only PiV and the community leaders had not assigned the Women's Union to implement this campaign from the beginning, fathers might participate in

the PG” (GR1VL, focus group, 17 October 2013). Therefore, “they (the fathers) always use the excuse that the PG belongs to the Women’s Union, related to women’s matters, and not their responsibility; some also ask me ‘why should I participate while my wife is a member already?’” (GR1VL, focus group, 17 October 2013).

3.9 The barriers and the challenges

While the participants, both in the in-depth interviews and the mini focus groups, found nothing preventing them from participating in the PG and applying new parenting skills related to child development at home, the definitions of barrier and challenge were expressed differently among the mothers.

The barrier with one mother (M1) was the limited time she had. She decided to leave the PG as she had not had enough time. For three other mothers (M4, M6, M7), distance was the barrier and might hinder some other mothers in their villages from participating in the PG. As a participant revealed, she knew one or two mothers whom would love to participate in the groups but their houses were quite far away from the meeting places. Poverty was also considered as a barrier since some did not earn enough money to feed their children well and were too shy to come to the groups to share how they had nurtured the children at home.

The underdevelopment of the community was identified by some women as the biggest hurdle in preventing them from practicing their new parenting skills learned in the PG.²⁸ Their knowledge may be improved. However, as GR1M2 shared, “I understand the importance of calcium to my children’s development, but milk is so expensive here and we cannot find any seafood to provide for my sons” (Focus groups, 17 October 2013). Many people in the community still live in the *poverty* (*nghèo*) status or *near poverty* (*cận nghèo*) status, which meant that while self-providing is still important, it is difficult for them to buy something

²⁸ The community is listed as one of 135 poorest communes of Vietnam (see to Chapter 1, page 13 for the community profile). These communes are also considered as in the underdevelopment status (*kém phát triển*, in Vietnamese) by the government of Vietnam. For the researched community, only a few grocery shops exist in the community centre, which provide the very basic needs for everyone in the whole community.

unusual (GR1M1) for their children's meals, or even to prepare separate meals for the children.²⁹

A limitation in obtaining education qualifications is also another barrier for the parents. Many participants have not yet gained the national high school standard. Some terms in the PG, thus, are not easy for them to fully understand. The PG does not hand out any official documents or relevant material appropriate to the educational level of the participants. Discussions between the mothers and the volunteers are based on their own experiences, as one volunteer indicated: "I was trained in three days only, not really enough to facilitate the sharing of all the necessary contents to my group's members. I wish we could have been equipped with more useful documents and materials" (GR1VL, Focus group, 17 October 2013).

During the group discussions, a notable issue was raised by Group 1 involving the fact that increasingly fewer children could speak their mother tongue since they learn Vietnamese (the official national language) in the schools and from television. From my observations, as shown previously in this chapter, parents and people in the community usually speak Vietnamese to each other in daily activities. According to one volunteer (GR1VL), "speaking Vietnamese means children could get a higher social hierarchy in the future" (Focus group, 17 October 2013). However, a mother (GR1M2) stated that "because we are the ethnic minority, we have to treasure our own languages" (Focus group, 17 October 2013). This mother usually talks with her son using both Vietnamese and Tay: "whenever I ask my son to do something, I speak both languages and do that from time to time; now he can understand Tay better and better though he does not speak it as fluently as I do" (GR1M2, focus group, 17 October 2013). How to retain an ethnic language for ethnic minority youth has emerged as an issue that will be discussed later in the next chapter.

In Group 2, the participants suggested an initiative of establishing a common garden for them in the village. They could compete with each other in planting organic vegetables, and harvesting them to prepare for their children's meals. All they would need is a small grant from Plan. It would be an opportunity for the mothers to practice their new knowledge and skills in reality.

²⁹ See note 10, page 11.

3.10 Summary of key findings from PG participants

The interviews with the women who have been participating in the parenting groups (PG) have revealed that the PG has basically met their expectations in improving their parenting skills and practices. The mothers also understand the benefits of the PG for their children's development. They enjoy participating in the PG and will continue until the project terminates, because in the PG they can learn from each other and share experiences related to child care and development. Although not everything from the PG can be easily practiced at home because of the socio-economic level of the community, the PG has positively impacted the parents' attitudes about using the health services as well as child care and development. However, the interviews have shown that only mothers have engaged with the PG while fathers have never participated in any related activities though the intervention was originally aimed at involving both fathers and mothers.

In combination with data from the non-participant observation, the researcher has found that the definition of participation is perceived differently among the participants. In fact, the level of participation is very low since the mothers cannot decide the discussion topics or contribute to the groups' operations. Their opinions on community issues are therefore weak and sometimes unheard.

Although media were not involved in the project from the beginning, they are still an important channel of communication in the daily lives of the participants, along with face-to-face communication and mobile phones. The mothers can recall exactly what they have learned from watching television, although the knowledge and skills may not have been mentioned in the PG's meetings yet.

The limited time participants have for the meetings, the poverty in the community, and other challenges like the distance from the community centre, are defined as barriers and challenges for them to participate in the PG.

The members of the mini focus groups indicated the same level of understanding about the purpose of the PG, how it has impacted their parenting skills, and practices related to child care and development, and what the participants have learned from the PG, as well as from the

other mothers. The level of active participation of the mothers in the mini focus groups was low and this might be because of the presence of the volunteers, who are also the leaders of the PG, made them too shy to speak up.

Exploration into the communicative ecologies of the participants has led to the finding that the media, particularly television, have a strong impact on the parenting knowledge and practices of the mothers, although this was not part of the project. This, combined with the data from the individual in-depth interviews with the mothers, will serve for the discussion in Chapter 5 about the role of the media and their involvement in the project later. Face-to-face communication and the mobile phone are important to the participants while the internet has not yet widely reached the mothers. The initiative that the PG should have a common vegetable garden for the participants to grow and harvest for their children was discovered in the interview with a mini focus group.

While defining the barriers and challenges, a stronger position emerged about the importance of preserving the Tay language (the mother-tongue of most of people in the researched community) instead of focusing too much on improving their Vietnamese (which is the official national language of Vietnam).

4. Findings from the interviews with secondary key informants: project volunteers and the teacher

The interviews with the project volunteers and the teacher (the secondary key informants) produced some more important data that assists in explaining how effective the approach of the implementing interventions are.

4.1 Profiles of volunteers and the teacher

The Plan's ECCD project has implemented three different interventions in the community. Each one has its own volunteers. The interviewed volunteers who are mentioned in this section had worked for PiV from the beginning.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Volunteer 1 | VL1 is female, a farmer, has volunteered for Plan for more than a year, is mainly responsible for the U3 Playing group and has strong relationships |
|-------------|---|

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| (VL1) | with the mothers in her village. She has only one son who is 20 years old. VL1 is extremely active in participating in the community activities. She volunteers not only for Plan, but also for some other programmes in the community (In-depth interview, 13 October 2013). |
| Volunteer 2 (VL2) | VL2 is male and has volunteered for Plan since 2010. He is responsible for the relationship between sponsored children and Plan, and connecting villagers to the Economic Development Assistance Programme of Plan. He is also a teacher at the primary school. |
| The teacher (TC) | TC has worked at the community's primary school for 13 years, and has experience in teaching from grade 1 to grade 5. She is a Tay, and lives in a village which is not engaged in any activities of the ECCD. |

Table 5: Profiles of the volunteers and the teacher

4.2 Findings from interviews with the volunteers

The data from a volunteer (VL1) are informative since VL1 is a secondary key informant, which means that she understands the project, the community and its people but does not work as a full time staff member of the organisation.

Prior to the commencement of the projects, the volunteers believed they had been properly trained by Plan in Vietnam (PiV). One of the volunteers (VL2) was equipped with data collecting skills while the other (VL1) participated in a class which lasted for four days in the town.³⁰ Along with the necessary lessons related to child development, VL1 also learned how to operate the group as well as play with the children. As she recalled, “we had to team up with each other, one played the volunteer, one was a mother and another pretended to be a child, and then we played the children games, sang the children songs” (In-depth interview, 13 October 2013). When she came back to the community, she visited every single household which had children three years old or under to introduce the program and invite the mothers to participate in the

³⁰ The training was held in Cho Chu town which is the district centre and approximately distant 15km from the researched community.

U3 Playing group. At that time, she stressed the benefits they would gain from the group, such as the common safe playground for the children, and the opportunity for the mothers to exchange their experiences in order to better raise their children. “I also told them that in this project (the ECCD), our village would be the first in the community to be implemented”, VL1 shared her experience, “and they were all very excited to participate” (In-depth interview, 13 October 2013).

“The fathers have already known about the group but here, in the countryside, men should do the big tasks, earn money. The activities related to child care like this, they would not like to participate”

(VL1, in-depth interview, 13 October 2013)

Twice a month, the mothers bring their young children to the kindergarten in the centre of the community to learn from each other’s experience while the children can play around. Making toys, learning children’s songs, and child development were among the most discussed topics

between mothers. However, according to VL1, “they prefer to share individually or within a small group, rather with the whole big group though I have told them right from the beginning that if they have any issue or question, they should raise it with the whole big group . . . I have to talk to each of them to see if they have any questions or if their children were good” (In-depth interview, 13 October 2013). The discussion topics are usually decided by the volunteer herself.

Another challenge for the volunteers is the community’s understanding about Plan’s activities, including the ECCD. Some of them had thought they would be rewarded by money if participating regularly. Once they had realised they would not, they would abstain from joining the groups. Some had thought the volunteers would earn more money if they could convince more people to participate. The reasons, as one volunteer (VL1) pointed out, are because of the poverty of the community which might lead people to link everything to financial matters, although Plan’s support for each volunteer amounts to the very small monthly stipend of VND60,000.³¹

³¹ Equivalent to NZ\$3.2.

The volunteer (VL1) also raised another challenge during the operation of the U3 Playing group, that of the lack of supporting materials. The only material she had had was from the training with PiV which had been a year ago. “Because of that, I have to rely on my own experiences too much, when I did not have the answers right away, I would tell the mothers that I would note them and answer them later. In these cases, I used to seek assistance from the teachers or the staff at the health service centre” (In-depth interview, 13 October 2013) as VL1 revealed in the interview. Despite these challenges, she (VL1) shared her desire to continue volunteering for the project as it benefits the mothers who she has met and talked to and the community development as well.

4.3 Findings from the interview with the teacher

The findings from the interview with the teacher (TC) provide insightful data from one who has several years of experience teaching ethnic minority students. Most importantly, TC and her colleagues were engaged in the ECCD at the same time as the implementation of the project in the community. The collected data will be analysed in Chapter 5 for discussion on how holistic are the approaches of the ECCD project.

According to TC, the teachers at the primary school have occasionally been trained to be more creative in teaching practices by positioning the students at the centre of the classes. Instead of asking leading questions, the teacher assists them with brainstorming to find out the answers for themselves. Teamwork among the students is also encouraged. After more than nine months applying these new skills, TC that “those who are outstanding adopt the new teaching skills quickly” (TC, in-depth interview, 14 October 2013). The teacher shared what she has experienced with the new teaching skills to PiV and requested for the more appropriate approaches to ensure all the students are feeling engaged.

“[T]he parents who have been participating in the parenting groups may change their behaviour, take more care with the studies of their children. However, it is hard to say whether students whose parents are members of the PG have performed better than others. Also, they do not receive any additional benefits in school, they still study the same programme with their classmates and are equally judged”

(TC, in-depth interview, 14 October 2013)

The interviewed teacher shared that some students in her class do not spell Vietnamese correctly

because their parents misspell at home. The reason behind this, according to TC, is that the parents “are 100 per cent farmers, so they used to be too busy to always care for the studies of their children; those who live in the community centre are much better at spelling” (TC, in-depth interview, 14 October 2013). She also said there are no differences in judging or marking for the students either, whether they are Viet or ethnic minority. All criteria, as she understood, must follow strictly the instructions of the Ministry of Education and Training.

4.4 Summary

For the volunteers, the interviews took them back to the very first stage of the project to explore how the PG had been introduced to people in the community. It revealed how people were engaged in the ECCD and what they would like to include in the project. The data assist the researcher in finding that the reason the fathers have not participated in the PG was that the organisation and the local government had mutually agreed to allow the Women’s Union to be the primary coordinator and facilitator. The lack of appropriate training and supporting material such as guiding manuals has caused the volunteers that operate the groups to rely heavily on their own experiences.

The interview with the teacher led to understanding how the organisation impacted quality education for children: ethnic minority students have not gained any additional benefits. The teacher did not realise that she and her colleagues were engaged as part of the ECCD aiming to provide better quality education for ethnic minority children.

5. Findings from the interviews with primary key informants: the community leader and staff member of Plan in Vietnam

The interviews with the community leader (LD) and the PiV's staff member (PL), who are the primary key informants, provide important information in exploring how the ECCD has been implemented in the community, and how it contributes to change in the community and its people. Putting the data generated from these interviewees together reveals the contrasts of opinions and leads to better understanding about the project.

5.1 The project's contribution to change in the community

The interventions of the ECCD project have been highly praised by the leader because of its positive and effective impact on the participants as well as on the community. All participants are farmers, consisting of parents with low parenting skills and knowledge, particularly of the nutrition needed for their children's development, and how to play with the children. The interventions, particularly the PG, according to the primary key informants, have bridged the gaps in their knowledge by providing, consulting and equipping them with new useful practices and skills. The contribution of the ECCD project, as LD described, has "completely changed the behaviour of the parents related to child development" (In-depth interview, 17 October 2013). Moreover, the playing and reading group for children between the ages of six and thirteen has created a safe playground for them, keeping them away from swimming in the stream during the summer and at the weekends, and improved their communication skills as well.

The gender equality of the community, according to LD, has been taken into consideration and contributed positively to the attitude change also. In his opinion, people have realised the rights of girls to access education and all other daily activities in the community. As the leader recalled, a few years ago it was sometimes really difficult to convince parents to let their daughters to go to school. However, since participating in the ECCD, they have understood how important education could be. "That is a huge change in their behaviour", the leader proudly said (In-depth interview, 17 October 2013). He also shared that the latest statistics at the primary school and the secondary school show that 100% of the girls in the community attend the schools.

5.2 Level of participation

The definition of participation led the staff and the community leader to express diverse opinions. Regarding the programme design, according to PL, the organisation assigned its staff to contact the local government of the planned community, at each village. They visited a few households based on the introduction of the community leaders. Qualitative surveys had then been conducted carefully to collect opinions and requirements from the parents. After that, the programme had been designed to be consistent with the surveyed data as the long-term activation plan. Therefore, PL confirmed the participants had been engaged in designing the programme right from the very beginning of the project. The role of the local government, as PL stressed, is not only to participate as the administrator, but is also able to provide access to appropriate ECCD services, and assists parents in enhancing their parenting skills.

However, according to LD, the community was indeed involved in selecting and deciding which villages would participate in the ECCD but had not been informed of any other details such as how long the project would be implemented, what stages it would have or what the community should do in each stage of the project. The community thus, “has no idea how long the project would be here, some said it could be 10 years or so; honestly, we have been always passive in implementing (the ECCD)” (LD, in-depth interview, 17 October 2013). The reason is that PiV does not have any specific stages for the ECCD, as PL admitted. The project has been implemented at the same time as building up the capabilities of local volunteers as well as preparing appropriate materials for the participants, volunteers, local staff, and the community leaders. As PL described, “it is an experiment for the volunteers and the participants” (In-depth interview, 29 November 2013). The behavioural change of the parents - the final and common target of the ECCD, according to PL - is the same for all participating communities nationwide although the designed frame of programme might differ depending on the requirements and the context of the local communities where the ECCD has been implemented.

These key findings will be discussed in Chapter 5 regarding the participation level of the participants.

5.3 Media involvement in the project

The interview with the community leader indicated that the media have not been used in the project in the community yet. He had never heard the organisation mentioning the media, and therefore did not understand how they could be involved in engaging people in the ECCD. The loudspeaker, as LD shared, is used for village meetings only. He was not sure if the radio would be effective for this project as “people here love watching television” (In-depth interview, 17 October 2013).

Although the radio was defined as an effective tool in implementing community development campaigns in rural areas of Vietnam by PiV, the interview with PL indicated the same results as those given by LD concerning media involvement in the ECCD. The organisation does not have any plans to utilise the media, or any answer to the question why they have not been considered as a part of the project, though in PiV’s programme design, the community radio was defined as an effective tool in engaging people. Despite that, the media, particularly television, play an influential role in mothers’ knowledge of parenting, as the findings from the participants have shown. This emerging issue of the importance of involving the media in the ECCD project will be discussed in the next chapter.

5.4 The engagement of fathers in the ECCD

Both PL and LD realised that fathers do not engage themselves in the interventions of the ECCD. Since the project was contextually designed to meet the needs of the community, as PiV’s staff confirmed, it does not limit the participation of the fathers. The PL also added that the fathers in the researched community do not participate, but in other communities they might, while LD responded that only a few fathers go to the ECCD’s groups and “few does not mean no one” (LD, in-depth interview, 17 October 2013).³²

The community leader, moreover, blamed the lack of specific rules in engaging fathers for their absence in the PG. He suggested that “[t]heir behaviour in child development should be changed. We all know that it would take time for them to be changed, but not immediately. Step by step they would realise the roles of the parents, including both of mothers and fathers in child development. The PG should create the rules for all of its members to engage the

³² Although in fact, during the time the researcher stayed and observed in the community, the fathers had never participated in any activities of the ECCD.

fathers, for instance, the mother and the father would participate in turns” (In-depth interview, 17 October 2013). However, PL thought the reason was because the Women’s Union was designated as the primary coordinator of the ECCD, and the women were the main target participants and invited to the groups, not the men.

5.5 The barriers and the challenges

The different perspectives and expectations of implementing the ECCD led PL and LD to express different opinions in defining the barriers and the challenges for the programme as well as for the community. The lack of necessary supporting materials such as a brochure, or an operational guide was identified by PL. At the time of implementing the ECCD, the volunteers were equipped with a “shopping list” (PL, in-depth interview, 29 November 2013) which assisted them in operating the PG.³³ Although “they (the volunteers) were not required to exactly follow the list” as PL stressed, during the observation of the researcher they used it as the primary guideline without any creativity. The low educational background of the participants and the capabilities of the volunteers are also some of the concerns of Plan’s staff. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the PG as well as the whole ECCD, according to PL, PiV is on the way to completing the latest guide books with many demonstration pictures to assist parents and volunteers to understand and practice new parenting skills more easily. At the same time, Plan will retain small grants for initiatives from the PG, and more books for the children to help them develop their reading and communication skills, as well as continue providing monthly aid stipends to the volunteers.

Enhancing the level of participation of the parents was another concern that PL shared during the in-depth interview. The participants are still afraid of speaking up in front of community leaders. PL said PiV will focus more on child issues and hopes the parents would become increasingly more active in their PG participation. However, she also stressed the need for consistency between Plan’s activities and the government’s development policies in designing and implementing the project. This finding will be analysed and discussed later in Chapter 5.

³³ The “shopping list”, as PL described, is a comprehensive list of recommended discussion topics and parenting group activities.

From the perspective of LD, the biggest barrier and also the challenge for the community in participating in the ECCD was the low socio-economic development.³⁴ Some people might know how the ECCD could benefit them, their families and their children's development, but they have to give priority to the farming which brings them income. They have thus regretfully decided not to participate in the PG. Moreover, although the community now has 20 villages, however, eight of them do not have a *nhà văn hóa* (cultural house) yet.³⁵ The OAB and the community, according to the leader, had decided to implement the ECCD in the villages which fulfilled two conditions at the same time: the number of children and must-have a *nhà văn hóa*. It also means that not all of the community takes part in the ECCD, but only some villages; and not everyone in the community has benefited from the PG, but only those who live in a few villages.

5.6 Summary of findings from key informants

The findings from Plan's staff and the community leader (primary key informants) have indicated that surveys had been completed before designing the programme frame. However, they did not know why some parts of the interventions have not worked as anticipated, although the project's impact on the community shows an improvement in parenting knowledge and practice of the participants as well as enhancing gender equality in accessing education. The engagement of the fathers in the PG, for instance, has not been what PiV expected. Understanding of the local context and culture might not have been carefully considered, although the project had been contextually designed, according to the staff.

The interviews with the primary key informants have also shown that the media were not regarded as part of the project. Neither the organisation nor the community leaders have considered how to use them despite their popularity in the community.

According to the primary key informants, the participants are encouraged in deciding what kind of activities they would like to have in the parenting groups, and therefore, the level of

³⁴ Refer to the community profile in Chapter 1, page 9.

³⁵ *Nhà văn hóa* (cultural house) is a preferred term and quite popular in Vietnam, especially in the rural communities. It is actually not related to any cultural activities, instead, it is a common meeting hall for a village or a community.

participation, according to the staff and the community leader, is high. The barrier for the community in implementing the project, is socio-economic, as the leader sees it, since the poverty rate of the community is still high; Plan's staff defines the low educational background of both volunteers and participants, and people's hesitation to speak up their opinions in front of the leaders, as some of the challenges for the project that the organisation needs to overcome.

6. Summary of overall findings

The community leader clearly understood the purpose of the ECCD in improving the knowledge, skills and practice of the local parents in child care and development, and pointed out the designed interventions to assist the community to achieve the desired goals. The participants and the volunteers saw the PG as an activity to provide useful lessons for the mothers in nurturing their children. For them, the PG was likely a common forum where they could come to talk with the other mothers and share experiences. At least one mother understood the ECCD and PiV as parts of a propaganda campaign of the Government. The participants, however, did not realise it was really just one of the interventions which have been implemented in the community, and the ECCD has been involved more than parenting matters. It was the same for the teacher who did not clearly understand that the reason why the teachers have been involved is that education is related to child development and the organisation would like to evaluate whether the students whose parents participate in the PG receive any additional benefits in school. The PG, in the eyes of the fathers who have not engaged themselves in child care, is linked to women's activities and responsibilities.

Since the participants perceived the PG would provide for them more knowledge about child nutrition and sanitation, the discussions often included these topics. The impact of the ECCD on the mothers was obvious in the way they varied daily meals for their children and how they used the community health services. Most of the participants have discovered the importance of vitamins, fibre and protein to the development of their children and tried to add more vegetables to the meals. They are increasingly relying on the health service centre rather than solely using traditional remedies like wild grass, trees or leaves to treat their children, although PiV did not confirm that they encourage local people to eliminate the use of

traditional medicine. Instead, using the health service centre more appropriately was placed as the desired goal of the project.

Some of the mothers shared that their attitudes towards their children had positively changed since participating with the PG. They had stopped using violence with their children. This attitudinal change has gradually turned into behavioural change and spread from mothers to mothers in the community. The community leader noted that fewer and fewer children had to work in the rice fields to earn money for their parents, and the drop-out-of-school rate in the community has been decreased to 0% because of the behaviour change of the parents towards child education.

Defining the level of participation led the interviewees to different opinions, with some in contrast with each other. For instance, the organisation said it had engaged the local people in the project in the early phase of collecting information, before designing the programme frame. The participants, according to PiV, could actively contribute to the contents as well as the operation of the PG, and the volunteers were just the facilitators to deliver the designed messages. However, in fact, the volunteers were seen as the leaders of the PG who could decide which topics should be discussed or which activities would be operated in the groups. Because of this, participants were afraid to speak up in front of them, and participation, for them, simply equalised access to the PG. This opinion was shared by the community leader who stressed that while attending the PG was important to the mothers, the operation of the PG depended on the volunteers as they were members of the local Women's Union that has been responsible for this intervention. The level of participation of the participants, therefore, was very low at the time the researcher stayed in the community.

Face-to-face communication was very important to the community as its people used it daily in their activities, usually in their families and also with other people such as neighbours and relatives. In spite of the media not being used in this project, they have been playing an important role in the daily life of the community, particularly television. Many people acknowledged it as the source for their knowledge about child nutrition; updated news, educational and scientifically themed short documentation films, drama, and entertainment were among the most viewed programmes while VTV was the channel they used to watch.

Lunch time and dinner time, moreover, were the times when people usually watched television with members of their families. The community did not have its own radio station and it seems its people did not listen to the radio anymore. The researcher did not observe people reading a newspaper. The internet was rarely used by adults in the community due to its high cost and slow connection speed. The mobile phones were used by many people using basic functions as texting and calling. The organisation did not respond to the question why the media have not been employed such as a tool to engage people in the project, although television was widely used in the community and posters of a health campaign which was run by the Ministry of Health were easily spotted in the community centre.

The volunteers identified that the lack of supporting material and the non-attendance of the fathers to the PG were a challenge for them. Most of the time, they had to rely on their own experience to find answers to questions related to child development. While the community leader saw the slow socio-economic development of the community contributing to the challenge in implementing the project, the organisation defined the challenge as the low educational background of the volunteers. Cultural customs were not barriers for the participants; the potential one, according to them, that might hinder some mothers to participate in the PG, was poverty.

The emerging findings based on data collected from interviewees and the personal observation of the researcher are important as they have indicated the strengths and weaknesses of implementing ECCD in the researched community. The data from the interviewed mothers, and the primary and secondary key informants will be used interchangeably, linked and compared in analysing and in discussing thematically. Understandings of the local context and culture that impact the design of the project, the level of participation of the participants in the parenting groups, the gender-divided roles, the engagement of the media, whether the participatory models work well with the top-down approaches, all of these data emerged from the findings in this chapter will serve to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research indicate the importance of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of a community development project that applies the behaviour change model in a rural ethnic minority community. Interpreted with the help of the relevant literature review from Chapter 2, the findings are discussed here in order to assess the impact of the project on the community, the engagement of the people with the project, the role of the local media, the barriers and the challenges for the people and the organisation in implementing the project, and the use of top-down and bottom-up approaches in the project. The analysis provides answers for the research questions and sub-questions.

Bessette's participatory approach model in community development (2004), together with the work of Briscoe and Aboud (2010), Tufté and Mefalopulos (2009), Inagaki (2007) and other relevant sources of literature are employed to compare and discuss the findings throughout this chapter.

1. Understanding the local context and culture

According to Lennie and Tacchi (2013), a program design based on understanding of local context and culture leads to successful social change. Bessette (2004) also stresses the importance of the understanding of the local setting, along with the process of establishing a relationship with the community (see Figure 2 on page 26). In this research, an understanding of Lam Vy commune (the researched community) is crucial in explaining how the locals perceive the implementing interventions, as well as why some channels of communication are more important than others. Entering the community as a Viet urban male, my preconceived ideas about the community were challenged during the field trip. Traveling between the villages and the main nearby urban area was much easier than previously thought. Most adults in the community own mobile phones, and households can conveniently access information via television. These changes, according to local government, have possibly been the result of

governmental aid during a period of several years as the community has been continuously listed in “*Chương trình 135*” (Programme 135 or P135).³⁶

The understanding about the local context is not only about culture which is often ignored by the development practitioners (McKee et al., 2008), but also about social norms, beliefs to explore what people need and to explain their behaviours. The Tay ethnic group which accounts for more than 67% of the researched community’s population, from my observation and understanding, can more easily access mainstream services because they speak Vietnamese (the official national language) fluently, as well as quickly adopt new technologies in their daily activities. They also realise the importance of higher education and the appropriate use of health care services. Their requirements for development, therefore, are possibly different from other groups. From personal communication during a month of staying with the community, their definitions of development tend to be linked with advanced technologies such as mobile phones, internet, cable television, and also related to the local economy like infrastructure, new techniques in farming and more financial aid from the Government. They prefer to do what they have been familiar with and with whom they feel trustworthy. They would like to have change without breaking their traditional ways. If there is something new to be implemented in the community, they would love to try it, but mostly because of curiosity. The parents understand how important it is to improve their parenting skills and knowledge related to child development, but they are also afraid the new lessons may not work because of possible conflicts with the traditional culture and beliefs of their ethnic groups, especially from the elders in the community. As a Tay mother shared in Chapter 4, she understood how important it was to take her daughter to the doctor at the health service centre when the child had a strange mark on her face but her grandparents wanted to use the traditional medicine and believed it would help, though in fact, it did not (M7, in-depth interview, 17 October 2013). This mother had to spend much time explaining to her parents-in-law the importance of using the appropriate medicine for the children, a lesson that she had learned from the parenting groups (PG). Other participants may encounter the same issue although they all said they had not experienced any generational conflicts or cultural barriers in practicing the new parenting skills at home.

³⁶ See Note 4 on page 4.

Understanding the communicative ecology not only provides information about the channels of communication of the community, but also the way communication can impact on the aspects of daily activities of people in the community, as Tacchi et al. (2003) describe. It leads to an understanding of the local context and culture which is very important in monitoring and evaluating the implementing project. According to the findings, face-to-face communication and the mobile phone are dominant in people's daily communication. If face-to-face communication helps people catch local and community news, mostly with their families and neighbours, the mobile phone performs the same mission over distance with people in other villages and sometimes in other communities. Exploration of community communicative ecology has shown that television plays an important media channel in educating parents and needs to be involved in the development campaigns. This emerged issue will be discussed later in this chapter.

The above insights can be usefully employed in carefully designing the appropriate interventions for the community. The organisation, as shown in the previous chapter, had assigned its staff to come to the community to investigate the needs of local people with the assistance of the local authorities. The proposed interventions, according to Plan in Vietnam (PiV), had been designed to appropriately reflect what the community would need. They had been contextualised into the local context and culture, and were designed to raise the awareness of the community in child development issues by influencing the existing services such as education and health care. In doing so, the change was expected to happen in the community.

However, in contrast, the interviewed staff member of PiV revealed that the same interventions have been implemented in all 74 different communities in Vietnam! Where is the mentioned contextualisation? It might have been missed during the programme design process as in reality, the implementation at Lam Vy commune has proven that the investigation process was not carried out properly. For instance, the aim of improving communication skills in Vietnamese and directing participants to overcome the language barrier, is inappropriate in the context of Lam Vy commune where people, particularly the children, already speak Vietnamese fluently, some even better than their parents. Fewer of them can speak Tay, Dao or San Chi because they learn Vietnamese at school, they watch television in Vietnamese and people

around them (including their parents) talk to each other in Vietnamese more than any other language. The lack of understanding of local context and culture, and the uniform application of technique and intervention, as Hoang et al. (2006) describe, may result bias in the implementation, and benefit for the powerful elites; and I argue it may lead to the inaccuracy in evaluating the ECCD project's results in the participating communities.

The organisation, as revealed in the interview with its staff, confirmed that visits to the families in the community had taken place and the programme had been framed accordingly to the collected information. Despite the differences in local context and culture, the same core interventions have been applied to all the participating communities in nine provinces. During the period of implementation, the local staff would take notes and the programme would be gradually adjusted in accordance with the uniqueness of each community, as the organisation indicated. This action, I argue, has led the researched community to becoming passive recipients in all of the related activities. The definitions of engagement and also the understanding of the purpose of the programme, therefore, are different among the community leaders, the volunteers and the participants. The community leaders define the engagement as an involvement in the decisions in which villages are implemented and the programme is for the community development in every aspect. They understand that the holistic impact of the project includes health service and education. The volunteers, meanwhile, regard the interventions as the additional “mental values” (*giá trị tinh thần*) for the participants and the engagement, for them, is participation in the project at community level. For the participants, engagement means participating in the groups and the implementing programme benefits their parenting skills by creating a place for them to discuss and have a chat with the other mothers. Some of them even hope for financial benefits such as grants for farming and scholarships for the children to come in the near future.

These different perceptions of development and participation have partly resulted as the lack of a uniquely contextualised project for the researched community, and led to the lack of meaningful engagement in decision-making processes and activities. All the interventions of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) project are the same for all of the participating communities in Vietnam, despite their cultural and contextual differences. A thoughtful understanding of local context and culture, which is important in identifying the development

issues of the community (Bessette, 2004) and involving people, is required. This understanding, as Bessette (2004) stresses, can be gained via conversations with different groups in the community. It is not clear how long the staff of Plan had been in Lam Vy commune, but spending a few weeks staying with its people, as I did, is a good way to explore the factors influencing their daily lives (ibid). Practitioners, such as Tagarirofa and Chazovachii (2013), observe the failure of some organisations in implementing campaigns in developing countries, for instance, Zimbabwe, caused by a lack of grassroots consultation about the social context and culture of local communities. The aims of mobilising the communities to participate consequently failed in these projects (ibid). The proper analysis of social and cultural phenomena of the researched community, therefore, “influence to the relationship between people and development” (Coetzee, as cited in Tagarirofa & Chazovachii, 2013: 76). This relationship, in my research, is analysed and discussed in two separate sections to find out how people have been involved in the implementing development project (reflected in the section about the level of participation) and is followed by the section on how the designated interventions have contributed to behavioural change of the parents towards child care and development.

2. Level of participation

Participation, as Bessette (2004) describes, “is not panacea or a magic wand” (p. 15), but it is an essential element in a development project to involve the community. In this section, the involvement of people in the interventions, and the level of participation, are analysed and discussed, based on the findings presented in Chapter 4.

People in the community feel they have been engaged in the project because they can express and exchange opinions with the other participants. The information exchange, as Morris (2003) points out, is crucial in community development. The nature of the parenting groups, in fact, is the forums where the participants can exchange knowledge and experience. The groups that I observed, for instance, were very lively when its members actively debated with each other about how to create a safe playground at home for the children. A mother said they should keep their children away from the electric sockets while another kept telling other participants about the importance of teaching them to be safe on the streets. Each participant

then turned to sharing what she had learnt, explaining and defending opinions. As a cycle of education, the information exchange was, at least, spread from the group to the whole community and has contributed to the success of the ECCD, as I could see the participants sharing the new knowledge with other people in the community. It is unsure whether the people in the whole community have applied what has been shared with them, but it is certain with those who have participated in the parenting groups. As a result of the PG participation, the mothers have changed their attitudes about parenting, and these new attitudes, in turn, lead to a parental behaviour change in them towards child care and development.

The above example is not only supported by the idea that interpersonal communication is fundamentally required in community development (Bessette, 2004; Inagaki, 2007; Servaes & Malikhao, 2007), especially in one where everyone knows everyone, but also stresses the importance of face-to-face communication in the community. Looking back to the communicative ecologies of the researched community, face-to-face interaction is defined as the easiest and most convenient communication channel for people, particularly the mothers, in following all the events in their villages. They can use it daily and freely. Mtega (2012) observes the same phenomenon with the development projects in Tanzania where face-to-face communication is often used by the women because of its cheapness, and links with social ties. Mills et al. (2007), meanwhile, appraise it as “the richest medium on the communication channel continuum” (p. 369). In my observation, much useful and interesting information was exchanged by mothers in the market, and in the restaurant where people used to have breakfast. Face-to-face communication has been an unofficial vital communication channel of the community and plays a role in engaging people with the interventions since “it provides the maximum amount of information to be transmitted during a communication episode” (ibid). Participants share what they have gained from participating in the PG with those who have not participated yet feel they might like to be involved. The flow of information, therefore, may reach every corner of the community.

However, not everyone in the community has been engaged in the project. The fathers, for instance, have not been part of the PG because the consultation process missed parts of the local context and culture. The Tay ethnic group, according to Duong (2012), perceives that “the wife has an important role in nurturing the child” (p. 36). Caring for children is the responsibility

of the women. Changing this perception takes time and requires an appropriate communication intervention. Instead of looking for an initiative to engage the fathers, the Operation and Administration Board (OAB) has put the PG under the management of the Women's Union because Plan would like to amplify and implement the "*Năm triệu bà mẹ tốt*" (five million good mothers) campaign which has been linked to the Vietnam Women's Union.^{37 38} The fathers have one more reason to refuse participating in the PG along with the feeling of being shy in sitting in a group of women to discuss activities related to children. Neither the community leaders nor the organisation had realised this issue until the PG had been operating for a few months but had no idea or solution how to engage the fathers.

Although the flow of information is approachable to the participants, the level of participation, however, needs to be considered carefully as it is still low. The organisation has affirmed that the participation of people in the researched community had been acquired before designing the proposed project, and that the volunteers had come to each household to invite and convince parents to join in the PG. It somehow follows the "invitational social change" approach that Greiner and Singhal (2009) mention. However, since the ECCD has gained participation of the community, I agree with Lennie and Tacchi (2013) to argue that what PiV had done was the "invitational participation" as social change did not happen in the first stage of the project (the information collection stage).

Despite what the organisation shared, the participants repeatedly said that they did not know anything about the programme until it was implemented in their villages. Those villagers who had provided the preliminary information for PiV might have never participated in the interventions, at least in the parenting groups. Moreover, the participants can rarely decide which activities the groups should have. The instructions from the organisation have become the guidelines for the volunteers in operating the groups. So, what is the participation? It depends on the understanding of the volunteers who are members of the local Women's Union. Participation, for them, means that participants go to the meeting places, talk to each

³⁷ It was originally under the management of the Child Protection Committee which involved both of fathers and mothers.

³⁸ A national campaign which is aimed to achieve the number of five million mothers who are good in nurturing their children. Its targets are the rural communities.

other, and discuss something. In other words, participation means attending. The volunteers here play an important role in the project, because they consider themselves as the group leaders, and have gained high credibility and respect from the people in the village, the mothers trust in them and follow what they decide. As mothers revealed in the interviews, if any members would suggest a discussion topic, the volunteer would be the one to make the final decision and all the members would agree with their leaders. Following the leaders without any argument is an accepted practice in ethnic communities such as the researched one. The idea that participation is facilitated throughout the community via two-way communication for the purpose of development (Bessette, 2004; Manyozo, 2012; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009) does not really work in this case, despite the organisation having aimed to do just that. Participation is thus limited, turned to the one-way communication and at a low level. It is the same with what Hermann (2007) found while exploring a development project in Madang (Papua New Guinea), which the effort of implementing the two-way communication of an unidentified organisation was not as successful as proposed, and it delivered a one-way communication flow to participants. Back to the ECCD of PiV, the roles of the volunteers in the project, instead of being the facilitators, have been turned into managers. The low education level and lack of appropriate training have also contributed to the volunteers' inability to be creative in operating the groups. It would have been better if the participants, one by one, could lead the groups with the assistance of the volunteers. By doing so, the activities of the groups would be more creative, more exciting and more engaging to the participants. The level of participation would be improved as well.

The interventions have been positioned in the centre of the ECCD project (PL, in-depth interview, 29 November 2013), not the community and its people as they should be. The aims of empowering participants and disseminating two-way communication via collaborative and consultative participation have in fact turned to the one-way information flow from the organisation to participants. It has also led to passive participation as well as contributed to a lack of proper engagement as discussed above. To avoid passive participation, a common development goal for the community to pursue, according to Bessette (2004), is important, with participation central to the participatory process. During the interviews, the mothers, the community leader and the Plan's staff, all defined behavioural change of the parents and the

community towards child care and development as their common goal and the main purpose of the ECCD. Active participation should be there and could be facilitated via communication (Bessette, 2004). However, it has been missed because of the lack of understanding about the communicative ecology of the researched community. The participation, in this case, is actually the community engagement, as Manyozo (2012) argues, since the voices of the participants have not been often taken into account, the decentralisation, and the self-management which is the “highest form of participation” (Manyozo, 2012: 125), are still invisible. As the participants did not have opportunities to select which development issues should be tackled, giving self-management to them is crucial as it allows them to contribute to groups as the stakeholders, not the beneficiaries, which means that decisions about the discussion topics, and the operation of the PG belong to them.

It is usual for the organisation to coordinate with the local authorities in implementing its project. The local government of Lam Vy commune, like other in Vietnam, whose leaders are powerful, has the strong impacts on the decisions for the whole community. Eventually, the participating villages were introduced and decided by the leaders, although the organisation had surveyed and consulted about the programme with the community. The community, therefore, is considered as the stakeholder of the project, as Bessette (2004) theorises. Its people, however, are the beneficiaries (Bessette, 2004), not the stakeholders as they cannot truly participate in the operation of the parenting groups. Besides that, they are still afraid to voice their opinions in front of the powerful leaders. As a consequence, safe solutions for them are agreements in silence and following what the leaders decide. Empowerment, although important in the project, therefore, does not expand the capabilities of the participants “to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives” as Narayan (2006, as cited in Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009: 4) supposes.

3. How the parenting groups contribute to community development

Although the behaviour change model is often linked to persuasively promote health, and grown at both individual and community levels (Briscoe & Aboud, 2012; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009), this does not mean that it is always about health communication. The ECCD, for instance, has employed it for the aim of changing the behaviour of the parents related to child

care and development, and improving the parenting skills of people in the community as its main targets although the ECCD is not a health campaign.

Realising that mothers enjoy sharing their experiences with each other, but the community had not had a common forum where they could come and talk, the parenting groups had been designed to meet the above need and motivate parents to be more responsible with the development of their children. Teachers at the primary and secondary schools have been similarly trained and encouraged to change their teaching methods. It is not certain that the ECCD has tackled all the recent issues of the community yet, but by facilitating the development via education and motivation, it has driven the community and its people to new positive behaviours in nurturing the children. The ECCD's individual-based interventions such as the parenting groups, moreover, assist the practitioners in understanding how the new ideas and behaviours can be diffused throughout the entire community via the social marketing model (Briscoe & Aboud, 2012; Donovan & Henley, 2010). The women who have participated in the project are willing to share what they have learned from the groups with people who have not. Face-to-face communication and word-of-mouth communication have been utilised to create a circle-of-education, which is important in spreading the impact of the PG in the community. Participants shared that they have also practiced the new skills at home. These prompt demonstrations or actual rehearsals, as Briscoe and Aboud (2012) argue, are vital in the behaviour change process. They have also evolved into new attitudes as well as affecting the beliefs of the participants in child care. Hence, they flow from the personal to the village and then to the community level, just as Donovan and Henley (2010) describe about the effects of the social marketing model in community development.

McKee et al. (2008), in addition, see the new behaviour as catalysts leading to the success of the community development. This idea might suit the researched community if the new behaviours were about technology or related to economic issues. The community leaders may appraise the project as it has contributed to behavioural change in the way that people use the health services, and equal access to education for girls. However, it is hard to measure how much more developed the community has become in the time the ECCD has been implemented. At the individual level, Christofides et al. (2013) argue that evaluation of behaviour change and how this change contributes to development needs to be based on the

understanding of “an ecological framework, from interpersonal relations to the policies, cultural norms, and values that shape the world in which individuals live” (p. 68). The understanding of local context and culture, including the communicative ecologies of the community, again, is restated as an essential part of a development project such as the ECCD.

4. The involvement of the media

Despite the positive impact on behavioural change, the media have not been utilised in the campaign to assist the process of change in the behaviour of parents towards child care and development, though the focus on education and health services may still benefit the community and the participants. The ECCD project is still going on, however, at the time this thesis was written, only those who have participated in the groups directly receive the obvious benefits as proposed, while the whole community has not actually benefited yet, even though the participants share what they have gained with other people in their villages.

As the community does not have its own radio station, this kind of small scale media which can tackle grassroots communication (Bessette, 2004) does not contribute to community development. The community, as revealed in the interview with its leader, has never had its own local media system such as radio, television or newspaper. The fastest and most convenient way to amplify information from the government to the people is via meetings at the communal houses, either in village or community. My personal observation and the findings from the communicative ecology mapping of the participants have also indicated that most people in the community do not listen to the radio, very few of them read the newspaper and the internet is rarely used. Instead, people love watching television which is their primary news source and makes them feel connected with the outside world. It is preferable because of its convenience in bringing news and knowledge in both image and sound actively and lively to the viewers.

This is unusual for a community in a developing country as Vietnam which usually employs radio as the preferable media tool for the purpose of development, and the organisation had emphasised the community radio and loudspeakers as effective tools in engaging people to the project. Rural radio, according to Bessette (2004) is convenient in approaching the larger groups in the community and gives the participants greater room “to express their points of

view” (p. 135) while UNESCO (2013) sees it as a vital channel of communication for people to exchange information. More than functioning as the provider of local information and entertainment services (Gaynor & O’Brien, 2012), radio can provide information related to development issues and solutions which may affect to people’s attitudes and behaviours (Githinji, 2011). Investigating a series of development projects in India, Sharma (2011) had the same opinion when appraising the radio as a successful tool in tackling development issues at grass roots level as well as promoting the development processes. It maximises its effectiveness once it is owned and developed by the community itself for non-profit making and engages the participation of the people in the community (Manyozo, 2012; Sharma, 2011). Another case study in Peru, named *Bienvenida Salud* (Welcome Health), utilises the community radio to deliver various messages to women and youth, encouraging them to change and act for the development of their community (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009). Here, the community radio is employed to promote and support the notion of the development of “communicative spaces” (Tufté and Mefalopulos, 2009: 37) which emphasises monologic communication and puts the empowerment of the participants as the long-term strategy.

Along with television, the radio, in fact, is still used to access information and entertainment by the ethnic minority groups such as H’mong, Dao, Giay (Nguyen, 2008). It is considered as an instrument to promote development and participation, and ensure the flow of information, as Higgins (in Nguyen, 2008) points out. This idea and the theories about the role of community radio in development projects, however, may not be applicable to the researched community (Lam Vy commune) where people prefer watching television and local radio is usually unseen. It can be a result of the unavailability of a community radio service in Vietnam (UNESCO, 2013).³⁹ The economic growth of the country in recent years may witness the change in Vietnamese people’s general living conditions. Unlike what Mtega (2012) observes in Tanzania where the television is high in cost, television sets are affordable in Vietnam.⁴⁰ More and more people in

³⁹ According to the Media Law of Vietnam, the media are owned and managed either by the central government or local governments. The challenge for the community radio, therefore, is about the governance arrangement and leadership, rather than the community engagement (UNESCO, 2013).

⁴⁰ A brand new regular television costs less than NZ\$60 while a second-hand one is much cheaper, around NZ\$30, as the marked price at some shopping malls in Ho Chi Minh city. The price may be slightly different in Thai Nguyen province.

Vietnam can access television with 86.9% of households owning at least one set while 77.5% of them claim that they do not own a radio anymore (GSO, in Park, Nguyen & Brennan, unknown date). The researched community may follow the same trend with the rate of people watching television increasing, and it is rare to see people listening to a radio. Another important reason lies in the communicative ecology of the community, as presented in Chapter 4, that Vietnamese is widely spoken in daily communication and people understand it as fluently as their mother tongue. It comes as an advantage for them to receiving information from the Vietnamese channels. Although the Radio of Vietnam has dedicated the VOV4 and Vietnam Television has designated the VTV5 as channels for the ethnic minority groups, they broadcast in 12 different ethnic languages (H'mong, Thai, Dao, Bahnar, Ede, Jarai, K'ho, M'nong, Sedang, Co Tu, Cham, Khmer) (for VOV4) and in Thai, M'nong, Khmer (for VTV5), the Tay language is not a part of these channels.⁴¹ The programmes on VOV4 and VTV5, as Nguyen (2008) and UNESCO (2013) find, used to be poor in content, and aired many times in a day with the same content which is boring to audiences although they may contribute to minorities by promoting their culture, providing them entertainment and news. Between a channel that does not boringly broadcast in the Tay language and a channel that broadcasts in Vietnamese which people easily understand, and with abundant content, apparently they choose the latter one.

Utilising of the media in development projects, at another level, in Bessette's models (2004), can be divided into two major trends with large media such as national or provincial televisions and radios linked to large scale activities, while the small scale media are employed to tackle grass roots communication issues. These trends have been occasionally adopted in implementing development projects by the international donors in Vietnam although they arguably serve for a short event (such as the projects of Levy et al., 2008 and Escalada et al., 1999), are supported by the Vietnamese Government and seen as the one-way information dissemination (such as the *Chuyện Quê Mình* in research of Heong et al., 2008). However, the communication challenge of the ECCD at Lam Vy commune is not about the implementation of the project or the community, but the organisation itself. PiV, right from the preliminary information-collecting stage, did not aim to involve the media in its interventions. The

⁴¹ The samples of broadcasting schedules on VOV4 and VTV5 can be achieved via the following links (in Vietnamese): <http://vov4.vov.vn/Default.aspx> and <http://vtv5.org.vn>.

communicative ecology of the community has not been carefully considered. This lack of identifying communication issues has led to the lack of both communication objectives and communication interventions (Besette, 2004). The large media in Vietnam such as *Đài Truyền hình Việt Nam* (Vietnam Television) and *Đài Truyền hình Thái Nguyên* (Thai Nguyen Television) are not easily affected, the small scale media such as the poster and banner, in this project, have not been utilised by the organisation. The small scale media, as Briscoe and Aboud (2012) argue, are “more than a mode of delivery” (p. 619) and may succeed in delivering persuasive messages about change and development to the community and its people. At the time of observation, *Mặt Trời Bé Thơ* (Children’s Sun) was another campaign which was implemented in the community. Posters promoting new parenting skills were displayed in front of and inside the health service centre where people easily spotted them. In my personal communication with the mothers who came to the centre and in the interviews with the participants, the mothers said they understood the messages on the posters and their attitudes towards child care had been improved because of them. This may be useful for Plan to consider utilising small scale media in engaging participants in the ECCD project.



Photo 17: A series of posters of *Mặt Trời Bé Thơ* posted at the community health service centre (Source: Author)

As community radio is unavailable in Vietnam (UNESCO, 2013) and people in the community seem to not listen to the radio as the findings in Chapter 4 indicate, the loudspeaker, I argue, can be part of the small scale media and functioned as *community radio* to engage people in

the project. It has recently served as a tool to deliver announcements from the local government to the community and is available in every village; people are familiar with it. Thus, the organisation does not need to fund the building of a new infrastructure. This kind of *community radio* would provide a greater space for people (Sharma, 2011) to talk about the local issues, and increase participation level of the participants. Once a week, using the loudspeaker, the volunteer and one of the participants can share a story with the villagers about experiences or parenting skills related to child care and development collected in the community or by watching the television. The broadcasting time may be around six o'clock in the evening when everyone has come back home and is preparing for dinner, as I observed. By contributing directly to this initiative, not only the participants are engaged, I argue, but other people in the community are involved also.

Participatory video is seen as a useful community-based medium that can be employed at community level to promote dialogue (Magallanes-Blanco, 2010), strengthen the operation of the PG, and empower the participants (Harris, 2008). For instance, once being engaged in the video-making process, women develop their understanding about each other and change might happen, as Harris (2008) observed while facilitating a video workshop for Fijian women. Plan in Vietnam may video as a visual method to engage participants in the ECCD. The stories about caring children could be written and produced by members of the existing parenting groups, and shown for the community. It would be a better way for mothers to learn from each other, reflect themselves, and increase their participation level. Similar to research about the implementation of the *Komuniti Tok Piksa* model in producing stories on HIV/AIDS issue in Papua New Guinea (Thomas et al., 2010), community-videos could be used in the large scale media to raise the greater awareness. Involving children in community-based visual methods is also a good idea to avoid the loss of ethnic minority language, culture, identity which might be gradually faded because of the dominance of the major ethnic group. The recent Photovoice by the Institute of Studies of Society, Economics and Environment (iSEE) involving ethnic minority children in the provinces of Ninh Thuan, Dak Nong and Lao Cai, in which they are equipped

digital cameras, trained to take pictures, and have mini photo exhibitions for themselves, is a good example for PiV.⁴²

Another small scale medium that could be utilised as a development tool to improve the participation level of the women is the community theatre. As Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) argue, it allows more dialogue via face-to-face interaction. Its stage can be placed at the *nhà văn hóa* (cultural house) in the community centre which already occasionally hosts several common activities for the whole community.⁴³ Once a month or once a quarter, in turn, each parenting group may perform a story which would be created by its participants. The story might be linked with issues related to child care and development to raise the awareness of the audiences as well as promote positive behavioural change. Role-playing in the edutainment like this (Tufte, 2005; Inagaki, 2007) would also increase the level of participation of the community in the project, and catalyse the change process. This small scale medium, however, is more useful for the ethnic minorities in Vietnam if the message in the story is simple and easy to understand (Nguyen, 2008).

At a large scale, the organisation may cooperate with the provincial television or VTV5 to create a programme promoting positive behavioural change related to child care. The participants could be actively engaged by contributing to the contents of the programme. Kwanda, a reality television show in South Africa, in which poor and marginalised people shape the message (Ramafoko, Andersson & Weiner, 2012) can be used as an example. This was an opportunity for the participating communities to address the development issues that they had to face, and mobilised them to think of possible solutions to tackle these issues (ibid). The innovative Kwanda programme, as Ramafoko et al. (2012) note, also engaged the local authorities and urged them to deliver promptly the services that would meet the needs of the communities. The changes in individual and community levels was apparently promoted and supported (ibid).

⁴² See more at <http://tuoitre.vn/Van-hoa-Giai-tri/600265/photovoice-cung-tre-em-dan-toc-thieu-so.html#ad-image-0> (in Vietnamese)

⁴³ Please see Note 32 on page 90.

5. Integrating the top-down and bottom-up approaches in one project

Examination of a series of previously completed research has shown that most of the projects had used either top-down or bottom-up approaches. Some might employ both approaches at the same time, but only one approach was utilised as the primary one while the other played a supporting role. According to Inagaki (2007), in some bottom-up projects, the top-down approaches (such as the diffusion models) can play as messengers to deliver effectively the messages to participants. By doing so, practitioners can promote the new behaviour, the change to the community, without fearing that the voices of the participants be unheard.

Using the top-down as the bridge for the bottom-up approaches (Inagaki, 2007), however, is not suitable within the context of a country like Vietnam where the development policies of the Government are regarded as the main directions for all relevant activities. PiV, as any other international organisations, has realised the importance of consistency between its interventions and the Government's development strategies. In the designed programme, the ECCD is aimed at creating platforms for the participants to raise their voices with the issues in their community and simultaneously learn the new parenting skills and practices related to child development. It is somehow a balanced combination between the top-down and the bottom-up approaches, with the promotion of new behaviours to the community (diffusion model) but also targeting the participation of people in the community (participatory model). The project, more importantly, follows the Governmental development policies by closely coordinating with the local authorities. This action avoids any conflicts between national policies and organisational targets that might occur during the implementation of the project.

However, because the organisation concentrates too much on balancing the interventions and the Government's policies, as well as trying to maintain good relationships with the community leaders, it tends to focus more on the behavioural change of the participants and relies more on the volunteers. The community development is thus confined to the behavioural change while the participation level of the participants seems to be lessened. The participants are eventually not aware that they can decide the discussion contents of the parenting groups. Therefore, I suggest the *bánh mì* (Vietnamese baguette) approach which allows the participants

to specify and choose what they need, and what brings more benefits for them but ensures that they follow the one-way governmental policies at the same time.⁴⁴ It is different with the models that are presented by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) (see Table 1 on page 26) when promoting the behaviour change and raising the awareness (monologic) via two-way communication (dialogic) with the utilisation of both interpersonal communication and small scale media. It, in general, is a flexible combination of monologic and dialogic communication which also leads to the integration of top-down approaches (such as the behaviour change model) and bottom-up approaches (such as the participatory model) as Waisbord (2005) suggests.

This approach is contextualised and differentiated consistently with the unique context and culture of the community. PiV, nonetheless, needs to introduce the available *shopping list* to participants in order to employ this new approach. It is not aimed at replacing the existing theories that have been employed in the community development projects. Instead, it is more appropriate for communities where government policies are a must, and neither the top-down nor the bottom-up approach plays the leading role, both need to be balanced equally.

6. Existing barriers and challenges

There are two kinds of initiatives existing in the community: the interventions created by PiV, and the initiatives arising during the implementation of the project by the participants. The interventions are expected to be more likely to remain permanently in the community since they were designed to be a long-term campaign, although they need to be consistently amended within the context of the community. Appropriate information about the community is essentially required in order to avoid any irrational decisions or irrelevant interventions that may limit its development (Mtega, 2012). Deep understanding of the local context and culture, thus, is important and also a challenge for the organisation. The evaluation criteria and

⁴⁴ *Bánh mì* is a famous popular street food in Vietnam because of its healthiness and tastiness. Everyone can freely choose what they would like to stuff in the baguette, usually vegetables (spring onion, pickled carrot and radish, cucumber, fresh chili, coriander, black pepper) and meats/egg/fish, topped up with homemade sauces, served while hot. Unlike the Subway in developing countries, the Vietnamese baked baguette is crunchy, the stalls that sell *bánh mì* are differently decorated and can be easily spotted on the streets. Each one has its *secret* recipe to make it distinctly different from the others.

expected outcomes of the ECCD project which Plan has proposed may be the same for all communities but should be differentiated depending on the local context of the implementing communities and the culture of participating ethnic groups. The Tay group, for instance, tends to speak Vietnamese as their primary language rather than use its mother tongue. The target of improving Vietnamese for the ethnic minority participants, thus, is not suitable for the Lam Vy commune anymore. Instead, treasuring and improving their Tay language for the young people in the community should replace the above target. Any adjustment, however, needs to consider the involvement of the *people* factor carefully. The participants, more than anyone else, know best what suits them and what does not.

The initiatives that have emerged during the meetings of the parenting groups, meanwhile, present a huge challenge to the group in realising and retaining them in the community. PiV, as any other international organisation, realises the importance of the political social hierarchy in Vietnam, and has to work closely with the community leaders and get their approvals prior to implementing any project. The powerful local government, therefore, can decide which initiative would be brought into their community. The idea that each parenting group would have its own garden where the participants could grow, cultivate and harvest organic vegetables for the children is worth to consider, since they encourage people to work together for a better community as well as create a more practical platform for the mothers to improve and practice their newly learned skills and experiences. As a rule, these initiatives have to be submitted to the organisation and then be approved by the community leaders before becoming a community reality. If they are not supported by the group, PiV or the community leaders, they are likely to be discarded. The development of the community is thus led by the leaders, not by the participants. The community-driven development model, presented by Dongier et al. (2003), which calls for the need of giving a greater voice to the people is challenged in the case of Vietnam. Instead of this, empowerment which aims to change the relationships between people in the community, and between people and the leaders, rather than liberate people (Berner & Philips, 2005) is more acceptable and less risky for the people at Lam Vy commune. Once the leaders feel their powers not being threatened by the people's empowerment, and the organisation can fund the initiatives, chances of getting approvals are

higher. The challenge for the initiatives would then in turn be to ensure the initiatives remaining in the community for a long time.

“Voice poverty” (Tacchi, 2007: 126), in which people are not able to participate in the decision-making process as to what affects their lives, still stands in the researched community. Although the community leaders said they encouraged people to contribute to community development and that the organisation always listens to them, evidence shows that they remain afraid of raising their voices. Following what the leaders say has been always the best option for them over the years, and they are not ready to break away from this behaviour. Another reason is the top-down structure. It makes the leaders, even at the village level, too powerful. My observation during a month of staying in the community produced an important notation that no one in the top social hierarchy really listened to the opinions of the participants. So, how could people voice up their ideas if there is no one to listen to? This may explain why people remain silent. Communication can create the community, and the community in its turn, leads to dialogue (Thomas, 1994), but it needs to be a two-way conversation to encourage participants to talk about solutions and expectations for themselves and their communities (Martin, 2008), not one-way as it has been happening in the researched community.

While culture does not create any barriers for the participants in changing their behaviours related to child care and development, as well as practicing their new skills at home, it does create a challenge for the community as a whole in engaging fathers into the parenting groups. The traditional conception of the ethnic minority groups there still links the responsibility of nurturing children to the mothers. Earning an income is seen as the fathers’ *big task*, thus the fathers are busy and refuse to participate in the parenting groups, according to the interviewed women. However, the volunteers believed this is the fault of both the community leaders and PiV since they have coordinated the project with the local Women’s Union, which makes it unattractive to the fathers. The community leaders explained that because the fathers were not invited to the groups from the beginning, and the groups do not rule who should join and who should not, but the organisation sees the responsibility of convincing the parents to join the groups belonging to the community. Conflicting information on the same issue among the interviewees reveals that neither the community nor PiV was well prepared to cope with this

challenge. No possible solution has been sought by either of them. Unless they can realise that fathers do not join the parenting groups because the activities do not interest them and they feel shy when sitting in groups dominated by women, the parenting groups will continue being the mother groups. Here, if only the organisation had an appropriate understanding about Tay culture and social norms, it would expect the PG to be the mother groups, and might not struggle in finding a solution to engage fathers to the intervention.⁴⁵

The community, as presented in the findings, tends to speak the national Vietnamese more than its mother tongue. Its people prefer watching television on the Vietnamese channels. Bilingualism, therefore, needs to be considered during the implementation of interventions. It also follows the Vietnamese Government's policies in treasuring the languages and culture of the ethnic minorities.⁴⁶ As a mother shared, she tries to keep the Tay language alive for her son by speaking it to him (GR1M2, focus group, 17 October 2013). It is the same for other children in the community who cannot understand Tay, in which Grosjean (1982) regards this trend as the adoption of the school language to be the medium of communication. Bilingualism, therefore, is required to originate firstly from the parenting groups and their activities before spreading to the community.

It is unsure if PiV has tried to promote the utilisation of *thuốc tây* (western medicine/modern medicine) to participants, but enhancing the community health services and driving local people to use it appropriately were among the main targets of the ECCD. However, ethnic mothers have perceived modern medicine as faster and better. The “appropriate use of health services” in the programme design may have been misunderstood by people in Lam Vy commune and perceived it as the promotion of *thuốc tây*. Responding to the question as to whether they still used traditional medicine such as herbs or wild grass for their children, as presented in the findings, many of them reacted instantly by denying this, saying that relying on the doctor or pharmacist were their first choices although traditional medicine, in fact, is

⁴⁵ In fact, as presented in Chapter 4, participants often share the groups' discussions and newly learned skills with their husbands. The PG is useful for the community although fathers are absent.

⁴⁶ As address in Article 5, Constitution of Vietnam – released in 1992, that “[c]ác dân tộc có quyền dùng tiếng nói, chữ viết, giữ gìn bản sắc dân tộc và phát huy những phong tục, tập quán, truyền thống và văn hoá tốt đẹp của mình” (the ethnic minorities have the right to use their languages in the aim of treasuring their culture and promoting their nice customs, beliefs, traditions).

strongly supported by the Vietnamese Government for further scientific development (Woerdenbag et al., 2012), and it plays an important role in a developing country such as Vietnam (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2008; Woerdenbag et al., 2012). The interviews revealed that only a few participants continue to utilise traditional medicine, one mother shared that she combined both forms of medicine in treating her children. Directing people to use both of them safely and scientifically, therefore, may be a challenge for the organisation.

Another challenge that the organisation has been facing in implementing the interventions at Lam Vy commune is the overlap of the ECCD and the *Mặt Trời Bé Thơ* (Children's Sun). The ECCD aims to indirectly impact child care and development via directing parents to the appropriate use of local health services while *Mặt Trời Bé Thơ* directly targets child care issues by raising the awareness of parents about child care and nutrition. The findings from my observation, as mentioned several times in this thesis, have shown that the Ministry of Health's campaign seems to be dominant. According to the mothers, they have learned how to feed their children better because of following the delivered messages of the *Mặt Trời Bé Thơ*. Cooperating with the Ministry of Health to present the bigger impact of the ECCD to the parents via *Mặt Trời Bé Thơ* may be a solution to tackling the challenge facing Plan.

7. The sustainability of the ECCD

At the time this thesis was written, it might be early to mention the sustainability of the ECCD since it has been implemented in the researched community for more than a year and still has more than two years to run. However, based on the findings, it is essential to analyse and discuss the potential of the initiatives in staying in the community as part of monitoring and evaluating the ECCD.

While the interventions which were designed by PiV are strongly supported by the local government and seem to remain sustainably in the community as a long-term development strategy, the initiatives that have emerged during the implementation of the project by the participants might gradually fade unless they are taken into consideration seriously by both PiV and the local government. "Social support", as Briscoe and Aboud (2012: 618) call it, is important in maintaining the initiatives related to behaviour change. A group of participants, for instance, suggested that they would like to have a common garden for the mothers to grow

and harvest organic vegetables but this desire has not been approved by the community leaders, and the organisation said that approval would be in the hands of the local government. These kinds of disapproval of community-born suggestion may be a result of the low level of participation that has been analysed previously in this chapter. The top-down approach in the project may become more dominant while the bottom-up may weaken and eventually be eliminated from the PG. The development process would then be a one-way communication, instead of two-way communication as practitioners in the field advocate (Bessette, 2004; Manyozo, 2012; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009).

The relationship between the community and the organisation is another element that impacts on sustainability of the interventions. According to Bessette (2004), the relationship with the local community “is a process that will develop all along the way” (p. 36). It lasts from the time of collecting the preliminary information to the post-evaluation of the project. As revealed in the interviews with the participants, the staff of PiV rarely visits the parenting groups, but usually keep in contact with the volunteers via mobile phones. Some of them, therefore, feel that they have been abandoned. Monitoring and evaluation of the PG, on the one hand, is required via regular visits of the organisation’s staff to understand how the interventions have been implemented, and then gradually amending them consistently within the reality of the community. On the other hand, it assists the organisation and its staff in tightening the existing relationships with the community and the participants. Visiting the groups and the participants at their homes, thus, not only strengthens the existing relationship with the community, but also, as part of the cycle of “action – reflection – action” presented by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009: 11), it can assist the organisation in self-reflection on the impact of the project on the participants.

8. Summary

Understanding the local context and culture is important as it leads to consistently designing the programme frame, reflecting what people need to have in the community. Doing so in an inconsistent manner may lead the organisation to design the inappropriate approaches or interventions. The Tay ethnic group, for instance, used to regard the mother as the one responsible for child care (Duong, 2012) while the father is responsible for earning money. Changing this perception requires time but engaging the father in the PG could be possible if

the Women's Union was not the only organisation assigned to manage it. The aim of involving both fathers and mothers in activities related to child care and development, therefore, has not been achieved so far. The media have not been used as a tool in the interventions as a result of the lack of understanding about the communicative ecology of the community, in which face-to-face communication, television and the mobile phone play important roles in connecting people to people, and the community to outside societies, and providing various sources of news and knowledge for all, especially the mothers.

Although communication, particularly the media, is itself not “an answer to every development problem” (Bessette, 2004: 15) it needs to be involved and utilised in such a project as the ECCD to increase the impact of the project and improve the participation level of the participants. The interviews revealed that the participants have learned many useful skills from watching television, sharing them with other mothers in the PG and in their villages. Utilising the media may also allow the participants to be able to voice their opinions related to child care as well as the development issues of the community. The level of participation may be elevated and the mothers contribute more and more to the activities of the PG. Not only behavioural change of the parents, but social change may be outcomes of the ECCD.

The question of why the media have not been employed in implementing the project has not been adequately answered by the organisation; however, it is highly recommended that Plan in Vietnam needs to think of and use the media as a tool to involve people in the project. Small scale media such as available loudspeakers can be functioned as *community radio* to make people feel being engaged with the ECCD. It is not necessary to create a separate intervention for communication only. Instead, it can be intertwined with existing activities to enhance the operation of the PG. Besides that, the organisation needs to visit the community and the participants regularly to keep building relationships with them, as well as reflect how the project has been going so that they can adjust their process accordingly. The initiatives that have emerged from the PG will be sustained if they are strongly supported by the community, PiV and the community leaders. More importantly, as PiV has stressed consistency between the interventions and the Vietnamese Government development policies, it is better to promote an approach that takes advantage of the top-down and bottom-up approaches to strengthen the

participation of the participants but not threaten the powerful local government at the same time.

The analysis and discussion in this chapter, in overall, have provided information and arguments related to the research questions, based on the findings and supported by the reviews of relevant literature and comparison with similar studies. The research questions will thus be answered in detail in the final conclusions in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research aims to evaluate how effective a behaviour change model has been implemented in an ethnic minority community development process in Vietnam. The implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) project of Plan International in Lam Vy commune (Dinh Hoa district, Thai Nguyen province) has been used as a case study. The following sub-questions have been formulated:

- RQ1. How important is the understanding of local context and culture in implementing a community development project in Vietnam?
- RQ2. What is the impact of the behaviour change model on the development of a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam?
- RQ3. How are the local media engaged in implementing the project?
- RQ4. What is the level of participation of participants in a development project in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam?

The answers to these questions have further enriched the data for answering the key research question:

“How effective is the implementation of a community development project that applies a behaviour change model in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam?”

In order to answer the above research question, the ethnographic tool of non-participant observation was utilised in the data collection process. Staying in the researched community for a period of one month allowed the researcher to generate a closer view of how participatory approaches and the behaviour change model can contribute towards development at the community level. It also enhanced the researcher’s knowledge by providing a culturally insightful understanding of the fieldwork. The communicative ecology approach was employed to assist the researcher in mapping the community’s communication spaces, systems and behaviour and build relationships with the participants. In-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups with the mothers who have been engaged in the project were also employed

in the research with the aim of gaining deeper information. The relevant data were collected during the month the researcher stayed in the community. The research was placed at Lam Vy commune (Dinh Hoa district, Thai Nguyen province) which has been listed as one of the 135 least developed ones in Vietnam by the Government, and where ethnic minorities account for 78% of its population with Tay as the dominant ethnic group. The researched community has been officially engaged in the ECCD from late 2012. For the nature of this research, parenting group intervention was chosen to analyse, and monitor and evaluate.

All the collected data were then thematically classified and grouped using the evaluation criteria of Plan as references and following the sub-questions of the research. Understanding of local context and culture, with the focus on communicative ecologies, have formed the important basis upon which the interventions were examined the community. The participatory models of Bessette (2004) and Lennie and Tacchi (2013) were employed at this stage. The level of participation of the participants has been analysed mainly by employing the theories of Bessette (2004) and Manyozo (2012) while Briscoe and Aboud's (2012) is used for the analysis and discussion of the emerging data on how the ECCD project has contributed to behaviour change towards child care and development of the parents and development of the community. The involvement of the media and its lack of use in this project have indicated their importance in the research as well as in implementing the intervention. Here, the model of Bessette (2004) was used to analyse the related data.

Twenty six interviewees were involved in the research. The interviews with them revealed that the community leader clearly understood the purpose of the ECCD in improving parenting knowledge, skills and practices of the local parents towards child care and development, and pointed out how the designed interventions have been assisting the community to achieve the desired goals. The participants and the volunteers saw the parenting groups (PG) as an activity to provide the useful lessons for the mothers in nurturing their children. For them, the PG was likely a common forum where they could come to talk with the other mothers and share their experiences. At least one mother understood the ECCD as a propaganda campaign that Plan has been incorporating with the Government. The participants, however, did not realise it was actually just one of the interventions which have been implemented in the community, and the ECCD has not been only about parenting matters. It was the same for the teacher as she did not

understand that the reason why the teachers have been involved is that education is related to child development and the organisation wants to evaluate whether students whose parents have participated in the PG gain any additional benefits at school. The PG, in the eyes of the fathers who have not engaged themselves in child care, is linked to women's activities and responsibilities.

The emerging findings based on data collected from interviewees, and the personal observations of the researcher, are important as they have indicated the strengths and weaknesses of the implementing ECCD in the researched community. The data from the interviewed mothers and the primary and secondary key informants, have been used interchangeably, linked and compared in analysing and discussing thematically. Understanding of the local context and culture that impact the design of the project, the level of participation of the participants in the parenting groups, how the PG contribute to development of the research community, the engagement of the media, and whether the participatory models work well with the top-down approaches; all of these issues emerging from the data can be used to monitor and evaluate the recent effectiveness of the project.

Since the participants perceived that the PG would provide them with more knowledge about child nutrition and sanitation, discussions often involved these topics. The impact of the ECCD on the mothers was obvious in the way that they changed the daily meals for their children and how they used the community health services. The question of *"What is the impact of the behaviour change model on the development of a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam"* has been answered. Most of the participants, for instance, had recently found out the importance of vitamins, fibre and protein to the development of their children and tried to add more vegetables to the meals. Many of them had also more and more relied on the health service centre rather than looking for the wild grass, trees or leaves to treat their children, although Plan did not encourage local people to stop using that traditional medicine. Instead, using the health service centre more appropriately was placed as the desired goal of the project. Some of the mothers shared that their attitudes towards their children had been positively changed since participating in the PG. They had stopped using violence with their children. This attitudinal change has gradually turned into a behavioural change and spread from mothers to mothers in the community. Because of these positive contributions, the

mothers indicated that they would continue participating in the PG, despite some existing socio-economic challenges and barriers. The community leader noted that fewer children had to work in the rice fields to contribute to family's income, and the drop-out rate had decreased to 0% because of the behaviour change of the parents towards child education. This big impact may be an overall result of a series of governmental policies and development campaigns that have been implemented in the community.

Defining the level of participation led the interviewees to differing opinions. The organisation, for instance, said it had engaged the local people in the project in the early phase of collecting information, before designing the programme frame. The participants, according to PiV, could actively contribute to the contents as well as the operation of the PG, and the volunteers were just the facilitators to deliver the designed messages. However, the volunteers acted as the leaders of the PG who could decide which topics should be discussed or which activities would operate in the groups. Because of this, participants were afraid to speak up in front of them, and participation, for them, equalised access to the PG. It was the same for the community leader who stressed that attending the PG was important for the mothers but the operation of the PG depended on the volunteers as they were the members of the local Women's Union that has been responsible for this intervention. The level of participation of the participants, therefore, was very low at the time the researcher stayed in the community.

Face-to-face communication was very important to the community as its people used it daily in their activities, usually in their families and also with other people such as neighbours, relatives. The answer of *"How are the local media engaged in implementing the project?"* was explored. Despite the lack of media used in this project, it has been playing an important role in the daily life in the community, particularly the television. Many people acknowledged it as the source of their knowledge about child nutrition with the updated news, educational and scientific themed short documentation films. Drama and entertainment were among the most viewed programmes while VTV was the channel they mostly watch. Lunch and dinner time, moreover, were the times when people usually watched television with members of their families. The community did not have its own radio station and it seems its people did not listen to the radio anymore. The researcher did not observe people reading the newspaper. The internet was rarely used by the adults in the community because of its high cost and slow

connection speed. Mobile phones were used by many people, with such basic functions as texting and calling. The organisation did not respond to the question about why the media, including the small scale ones, have not been employed as tools to engage people to the project, although television was widely used in the community and posters of a health campaign run by the Ministry of Health were easily spotted in the community centre.

The volunteers identified that the lack of supporting materials and attendance of the fathers in the PG were challenges for them. Most of the time, they had to rely on their own experiences to find answers to questions related to child development. The community leader saw the slow socio-economic development of the community contributing to the challenge in implementing the project while the organisation defined the challenge as the low education background of the volunteers. Cultural customs were not barriers for the participants. Poverty was identified as one of potential hindering factors.

Understanding the local context and culture of the implementing ethnic minority community appears as a fundamental step leading to consistently design the programme that reflects what local people need. The preliminary investigation of the organisation about the development issues of the community might not have been carried out appropriately. As a consequence, the understanding of the communicative ecology of the community was missed, and communication, particularly the media, have been left out of the implementation of the project although the mothers have learned much new knowledge by watching television. Word-of-mouth communication has created a circle of education which has spread the PG activities to the entire community effectively. The discussion focused on the role of the media in community development as they can be useful in tackling issues related to parenting skills. Because community radio is not available, and ethnic television and radio programmes are poor in content, broadcasting the same programmes repeatedly during the day, those in the researched community prefer to watch the Vietnamese television channels which provide them more interesting programmes. The large scale mass media are usually employed in projects in other developing countries, however, due to the Media Law of Vietnam, media are controlled by the Government and cannot be influenced by any NGOs. The community-based small scale media such as the existing loudspeaker, and the community theatre, thus, may be effective in engaging people, encouraging participants to more actively contribute to the parenting groups

as well as to the ECCD. These findings not only provide answer for the question of *“How important is the understanding of local context and culture in implementing a community development project in Vietnam?”*, but also remind the role of the local media in the implementation of the ECCD.

The level of participation of the mothers has emerged as key finding in this thesis to answer the question of *“What is the level of participation of participants in a development project in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam?”*. The parenting groups have indeed created platforms for information exchange among the participants. Their participation is defined as an opportunity for mothers to talk and share with each other about parenting skills and child development issues. It is also depended on the understanding of the volunteers who are members of the local Women’s Union and act as the group leaders. The right to decide discussion topics as well as the operation of the parenting groups contribute to the power status of the volunteer. Hence, the level of participation of the mothers is low. Participation is not as active as PiV has supposed and not facilitated through two-way dialogue. The organisation has put the behavioural change of the parents as the primary expected result of the ECCD. However, it is essential to consider participants as stakeholders who need to be empowered to define the issues, suggest solutions, implement them, monitor, evaluate and learn from the results, rather than just being involved as the beneficiaries. Once the level of participation is elevated, the parenting groups would leverage, not only the behavioural change process of the participating parents, but also social change in the community.

Despite the low participation level, the mothers enjoy participating in the groups and sharing their experiences. Their participation will continue. This may be because they have perceived the parenting groups as classes where they could learn new skills and knowledge from the volunteers who are considered trustworthy and knowledgeable. Being part of these groups may also bring pride to them. Attitudinal change has originated from learning from the groups and turned into a behavioural one at home, as many of the mothers shared. The change has also shifted from the individual to the community level with more mothers using the health service centres appropriately, and understanding of sanitation and personal hygiene has improved. The challenges for the organisation, recently, are how to engage the fathers with the parenting groups, how to sustain the initiatives in the community as long-term impacts, and

how to keep the volunteers being activity facilitators, not group managers, in order to level participation of the parents.

These key analyses and discussions have indicated the answer to the research question in evaluating the application of the behaviour change model in a community development project in an ethnic minority community in Vietnam. In general, the implementation of the ECCD of Plan in Vietnam has been overall effective in creating platforms for mothers to exchange skill and knowledge, and raising awareness of parenting knowledge, practices and skills related to child care and development via the PG in Lam Vy commune where ethnic minorities are the majority. Attitudes towards child care of the participants, their families and the entire community has been positively affected. The project, furthermore, has been strongly supported by the community leaders and the local government. However, as the organisation and the community leaders were the ones who had decided the development issues of the community and the designed interventions, and have been leading the process, the participants have been seen as the beneficiaries, not the stakeholders. Eventually, they have participated in the project but not actually engaged. Their level of participation is low, and their voices are unheard. Only when people could identify the issues of their community, suggest feasible and possible solutions to these issues, draw an itinerary for themselves to achieve these goals, they would be truly engaged and their roles would be empowered. In other words, letting people tell what they need and helping them achieving real change is better than telling them what is needed for them and giving them quick solutions. More importantly, the media, particularly the small scale ones, should be utilised to tackle grass roots communication, and enhance people's feeling that they could contribute to the project. The effectiveness of implementation of the development project would be improved.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Plan in Vietnam (PiV):

1. Increases the participation level of participants

The parenting groups and their related activities need to focus on empowering the roles of participants. The volunteers should act as facilitators guiding participants to new ideas and solutions to tackle development issues of the community (Toomey, 2011), as

PiV originally designated, not the managers. The participation level of participants, thus, will be much improved. It is recommended that the PG covers all related issues towards child care, not only confined in the nutrition or child health. The requirements of participants about supporting materials (toys for children, guide books for the volunteers and the mothers), common garden to grow organic vegetables, meetings to exchange the experiences with the other PGs from all the communities, need to be taken into consideration. PiV and the community leaders, as Bessette (2004) suggests, should explore how to help the participants to set their objectives and time frames to achieve their initiatives. Furthermore, the organisation needs to put participants as the initiators and the agents of change, to learn from the community (Eversole, 2012; McKee et al., 2008), instead of casting as the developers, “to see and do things differently” (Eversole, 2012: 39). The change in the community will be then improved, the level of participation may be higher as people feel being more engaged and encouraged, and the feeling of participating in the same boring activities from day to day may be eliminated.

2. *Reassesses the role of the media in the project*

Communication has apparently been missing although it plays an important role in daily activities of people in the researched community. The media, particularly, have impacted on the change in attitude of the mothers towards using the health service centre and child care. They need to be employed and utilised as a catalyst to promote the development processes in the participating communities, at both large and small scale. The small scale media such as the loudspeaker (that can be functioned as community radio), the poster, and community theatre are highly recommended to utilise because they are cheap, familiar to the local people, easy to understand and make people feel more engaged in the project. Participatory video which lets people tell their stories in their own words needs to be considered as it can increase participation level and tackle local development issues. The case studies of participatory video facilitating to Fijian women (Harris, 2008), the *Colectivo Perfil Urbano* in Mexico (Magallanes-Blanco, 2010), the Global Fund for Children in 2009 in Nigeria and India,

and the employment of visual-based methods in the *Komuniti Tok Piksa* (Thomas et al., 2010) are the useful reference sources for PiV.⁴⁷

3. *Reinforces the use the ethnic languages and consider a more careful approach of the traditional medicine*

The Tay language, for instance, needs to be more regularly used at the parenting group meetings. The use of traditional medicine in health treatment, similarly, needs to be encouraged in the community to support the ethnic cultural identities. The recommendation for PiV here, therefore, is it needs to embrace promoting both traditional and modern medicine, and direct people to use them safely and effectively (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2008; Woerdenbag et al., 2012) as well as integrate the traditional medicine with the western one to avoid the loss of indigenous knowledge in the participating communities.

4. *Gives room for the positive deviance approach*

“Positive deviance”, as Singhal and Durá (2012) describe, is the uncommon behaviour or practice of participants, and always lies centrally in the community and is easily accepted its people. However, they fail to conclude that positive deviance approaches (PDA) can contribute to the community development via health communication only. In fact, the PDA can be widely utilised in any development project as long as it is regarded as an element of behaviour change model. During the implementation of the ECCD at Lam Vy commune, some unusual behaviour of the women has emerged and could be regarded as the PDA. It could be the understanding that the expecting mother needs to consume as much food as possible in order to deliver essential nutrition to her child. It may also be the awareness of a visual demonstration in teaching the children, for instance, that traffic lights are required when talking about the traffic.

A room for examining the PDA in the ECCD, therefore, has potential. It is recommended that PiV keeps searching for the PDAs in the community and enables them to be applied in the PG as well as in the ECCD project. Nevertheless, the PDA can be guaranteed only when people whose ideas or behaviours are promoted feel they are supported by the

⁴⁷ For the Global Fund for Children, see more at <http://www.comminit.com/children/content/videoactive-girls>

others. Otherwise, they could feel weird in the eyes of the community, and their positive deviant behaviours could gradually fade and be eliminated.

Requirements for a future research

The amplification of positive deviance approach's factors and the way of how to combine consistently the bottom-up participatory approach with the top-down approach have been emerging and need to be explored and pre-tested to ensure the project maximise its contribution to the community development. In the future, further research in the coming future which expands the sample to some more different ethnic minority groups in other communities in Vietnam and in other countries which have been implemented the same ECCD project by Plan International or similar campaigns of the other organisations in Vietnam is required to examine the same questions in this thesis, monitor and evaluate the project with greater information and data.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1A – Participation information form



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

My name is Kiet Le Quang. I am currently enrolled in the Master of International Communication degree in the Department of Communication Studies at Unitec New Zealand and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to evaluate the application of communication aspect in one of the projects that has been implementing in rural ethnic minority community in less developed provinces of Vietnam by Plan International.

I invite your participation in the following way: participating in the interviews that will take no longer than 90 minutes for personal in-depth ones or 2 hours for focus groups. These interviews shall be audio recorded for purposes of the research, including the master thesis, conference, international journal publishing and may be re-used for my PhD dissertation in the future.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the thesis. You are free to ask me not to use any of the information you have given, and you can, if you wish, ask to see the Thesis before it is submitted for examination.

If you have any queries about the research, you may contact my principal supervisor at Unitec New Zealand.

My supervisor is: A/Prof-Dr. Evangelia Papoutsaki phone: 815-4321 ext. _____ or email: epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2013-1065

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 29/08/2013 to 29/08/2014. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 1B – Phiếu yêu cầu thông tin của người tham gia



PHIẾU YÊU CẦU THÔNG TIN CỦA NGƯỜI THAM GIA

Tôi tên là Lê Quang Kiệt, hiện đang theo học khóa Thạc sĩ Truyền thông Quốc tế, Khoa Truyền thông học, trường Unitec New Zealand, và đang tìm sự trợ giúp của quý ông/bà nhằm đáp ứng yêu cầu khóa luận tốt nghiệp như một phần yêu cầu của khóa học.

Dự án nghiên cứu của tôi nhằm đánh giá việc ứng dụng truyền thông, giao tiếp từ một trong những chương trình hiện đang được thực hiện tại các cộng đồng dân tộc thiểu số tại Việt Nam của Plan International.

Tôi sẽ mời ông/bà tham gia vào dự án bằng cách: tham gia phỏng vấn vốn kéo dài không quá 90 phút với phỏng vấn sâu và 2 tiếng với phỏng vấn nhóm; các cuộc phỏng vấn này sẽ được ghi âm lại để phục vụ cho mục đích nghiên cứu, bao gồm: luận văn thạc sĩ, hội nghị, bài viết trên tạp chí khoa học quốc tế và có thể được tái sử dụng cho luận văn Tiến sĩ sau này của tôi.

Ông/bà có thể yêu cầu tôi không được sử dụng nội dung của thông tin mà ông/bà đã trả lời, và nếu muốn, ông/bà có thể yêu cầu được xem qua khóa luận trước khi nộp cho hội đồng đánh giá.

Nếu ông/bà có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào về nghiên cứu này, xin vui lòng liên hệ người giám sát nghiên cứu của tôi tại Unitec New Zealand theo thông tin sau:

PGS.TS Evangelia Papoutsaki, ĐT: 815 4321, số máy lẻ: ... hoặc qua email epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz

MÃ SỐ DỰ ÁN ĐƯỢC CẤP BỞI UREC: 2013-1065

Nghiên cứu này đã được Ủy ban về các vấn đề đạo đức trong nghiên cứu khoa học của UNITEC duyệt thực hiện từ ngày 29/08/2013 đến ngày 29/08/2014. Nếu ông/bà có bất kỳ phản ánh hoặc nhận thấy hạn chế về mặt đạo đức của nghiên cứu này, ông/bà có thể liên hệ với Ủy ban qua Thư ký của UREC (số: 09 915-4321, số máy lẻ: 6162). Bất kỳ vấn đề nào được ông/bà nêu cũng sẽ được điều tra kỹ lưỡng và giữ bí mật, và ông/bà sẽ được thông báo kết quả của những điều tra này.

Appendix 2A – Participant consent form



Participant Consent Form

Evaluating the application of a behaviour change model in a communication development project in a rural ethnic minority community in Vietnam – a case study of Plan International's Early Childhood Care and Development project in Dinh Hoa, Thai Nguyen province

My name is:

Contact details:

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understand the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don't have to be part of this interview if I don't want to. I may withdraw the supplied information within two weeks from the date of interviewing if I wish to.

I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who will know what I have said will be the researchers and their supervisor. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of 5 years.

I understand that my discussion with the researcher will be taped and transcribed, and I may ask to check the transcribed versions of the tapes to ensure they are being accurately represented if I wish to.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Signature: *Date:*

Project Researcher: *Date:*

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2013-1065

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 29/08/2013 to 29/08/2014. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 2B – Phiếu đồng ý



Phiếu đồng ý

Đánh giá việc ứng dụng mô hình tiếp cận của truyền thông nhằm làm thay đổi hành vi trong một cộng đồng dân tộc thiểu số tại Việt Nam – nghiên cứu trường hợp của dự án Phát triển và Chăm sóc Trẻ thơ của Plan International tại huyện Định Hóa, tỉnh Thái Nguyên.

Tôi tên là:

Địa chỉ liên hệ:

Tôi đã được nghiên cứu sinh giải thích, đã đọc và hiểu mẫu phiếu lấy thông tin đưa cho tôi.

Tôi hiểu rằng tôi không nhất thiết phải tham gia nếu tôi không muốn. Tôi cũng có thể rút lại các thông tin đã cung cấp trong vòng hai tuần kể từ ngày phỏng vấn nếu tôi muốn.

Tôi hiểu rằng tất cả ý kiến của tôi sẽ được giữ kín và không có bất kỳ thông tin nào mà tôi đưa ra sẽ xác định nhân thân của tôi, và rằng chỉ có các nghiên cứu sinh và người giám sát đề tài của họ được biết các thông tin này. Tôi cũng hiểu rằng tất cả thông tin mà tôi cung cấp sẽ được lưu trữ an toàn trong máy tính tại Unitec trong thời hạn 5 năm.

Tôi hiểu rằng cuộc trao đổi với nghiên cứu sinh sẽ được ghi âm và chép lại bằng tay, và tôi có thể yêu cầu được xem lại bản chép lại cuộc ghi âm để đảm bảo nghiên cứu sinh ghi chép chính xác, nếu như tôi muốn.

Tôi hiểu rằng tôi có thể được xem phần chép lại này khi nghiên cứu hoàn thành

Tôi đã có thời gian để cân nhắc và tôi đồng ý là một phần của dự án này.

Người tham gia (ký tên): *Ngày:*

Nghiên cứu sinh (ký tên): *Ngày:*

MÃ SỐ DỰ ÁN ĐƯỢC CẤP BỞI UREC: 2013-1065

Nghiên cứu này đã được Ủy ban về các vấn đề đạo đức trong nghiên cứu khoa học của UNITEC duyệt thực hiện từ ngày 29/08/2013 đến ngày 29/08/2014. Nếu ông/bà có bất kỳ phản ánh hoặc nhận thấy hạn chế về mặt đạo đức của nghiên cứu này, ông/bà có thể liên hệ với Ủy ban qua Thư ký của UREC (số: 09 915-4321, số máy lẻ: 6162). Bất kỳ vấn đề nào được ông/bà nêu cũng sẽ được điều tra kỹ lưỡng và giữ bí mật, và ông/bà sẽ được thông báo kết quả của những điều tra này.