

Selection of beneficiary families A community decision process

Xã Quảng Thọ / Xã Tân Xuân Lai / Xóm 17
ngày 21/5/03 lúc 17h 25 phút

Đào Thị Hồng	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	= 210
Thái Văn Lý	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	= 150
Phạm Thị Chơ	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	20x
Thái Ngọc Lâm	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	22-
Thái Văn Tình	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	1200
Thái Văn Cường	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	150
Ngô Thị Bơ	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	20x
Phạm Tiến	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	22-
Thái Ngọc Cường	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	11
Phạm Thị	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10
Ngô Tiến	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10
Lê Mân	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	6
Phạm Đm	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	8
Chi Văn Hải	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3
Thái Ngọc Đoàn	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	210
Phạm Phúc	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	1300
Ngô Phi Ng	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10
Ngô Cường	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5
Ngô Đức	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10
Ngô Ngọc	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	22-
Phạm Thị Gái	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	17x
Ngô Kiên	: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10

1. Thái Ngọc Lâm + Phạm Tiến + Nguyễn Ngọc
2. Đào Thị Hồng + Thái Ngọc Đoàn
3. Phạm Thị Chơ + Nguyễn Thị Bơ
4. Phạm Thị Gái
5. Thái Văn Lý + Thái Văn Cường
6. Phạm Phúc + Thái Văn Tình

TM/BĐTTH Tân
L. Minh Tuấn
TM/BĐTTH Tân
L. Minh Tuấn
Phạm Thị Thu Thủy

Formal record of voting results

The example of Quang Tho Commune May 2003

General organisation of the process and criteria for the selection of beneficiary families

The aim of the DW project is to achieve greater responsibility for the prevention of storm damage, both at commune level (Commune Prevention Committee¹) and at family level (Family Prevention Groups).

The family groups (of between 4 and 11 families) are intended to enable the objectives and ideas of the project to be more widely disseminated, and to generate greater solidarity between families in the process.

House strengthening work is carried out by the skilled construction workers (trained by the project, and is jointly financed by the project and the families. The selection of beneficiary families in each hamlet or small village is an important stage in the strengthening process.

a) Overall process: from the selection of the families to house strengthening work

- Hamlet ("Xom" 20-25 families) or group of hamlets ("Cum" = on average 3 Xom, i.e. 50-60 families) is selected by the Commune;
- Meeting in the hamlet organised by the Commune Prevention Committee (+ DW team), with all the families and explanation of the programme and of the family selection criteria; requests to participate come from families; important opinions voiced by community elders and village cadres; discussion;
- List of priority families drawn up (5 to 10 or more) by all families;
- The group then considers the situation of each family/each house and accepts or rejects the request;
- A decision on the work to be carried out and the subsidy is taken.

b) Family selection criteria

The selection process is based on simple criteria:

- Need for house strengthening (thus the house – structure, walls, etc. – exists but is weak; no total reconstruction is undertaken except under exceptional circumstances);
- Direct or indirect ability (on the part of the family) to carry out the improvement project;
- Ability to pay for part of the work (cash or credit) and to repay the loan element if applicable;
- Priority given to women-headed families;
- "Poor" families have priority (but not those with the flimsiest house-shelters that will need total rebuilding);
- Families selected on the basis of no risk of leading to conflicts in the hamlet or the village;
- Beneficiaries should have a spirit of solidarity and willing to spread the word about the DW project;
- For each family, the amount project budget will not exceed 4 M Dongs maximum (of which 50% maximum subsidy), and of this, the family is expected to cover up to 50% of the costs.

In each project commune, this process took place in May 2003, based on the above principles, but the process varied a bit depending on the context and on the willingness of the local leaders to make the selection process truly participative. DW has worked to ensure that choices were fair and democratic, and this has been interesting.

Thus in the commune of *Thuy Thanh*, information-selection meetings took place at village level (100 to 150 families), proposals for the lists of beneficiaries having already been discussed within the communities. Agreement to these lists was achieved with families expressing their opinions at length, and sometimes putting forward reasons for rejecting candidates (e.g. one request from a head of family was rejected: "he requests repairs to his house, but had just bought a Honda motorbike").

In *Phu Da*, where DW has been working for over 3 years, local leaders and the Prevention Committee are experienced and rely on the heads of the villages and hamlets. Meetings at village/hamlet level enable "fair" choices and avoid conflict between families.

¹ This committee includes 4-5 members of the People's Committee, popular organisations (and in addition the village heads within the commune of Phu Da).

In *Vinh Hai*, commune leaders pre-selected families, which were then revised after a first meeting, and information-selection meetings are held in each village concerned.

Selection by "secret ballot" in Quang Tho commune

In the commune of *Quang Tho*, the Prevention Committee picked one hamlet ("xom") per village at random. Meetings between the inhabitants of these hamlets (with Committee members) took place to discuss which families to select.

In the hamlet of *La Van Ha 3* (31 families), a provisional list of 11 to 13 families had been drawn up, using the project allocation criteria. During the first open meetings with families (60% attended) people were not able to reach a final decision. Some wanted there to be a study beforehand to assess all the families and their situations before then drawing up the list of beneficiaries (for fear of conflict between families). Others argued the case of very weak (bamboo) houses or of families who should receive assistance because of their revolutionary past. More discussions were then needed before a final selection could be made.

In the hamlet of *Tan Xuan Lai 17* (35 families), the meeting (attended by 27 families) was able to achieve more: a "provisional" list of some ten families was under consideration, and 22 families put themselves forward as "candidates" – from which a maximum of 7 priority families and 5 second priority families had to be selected. There was a request to examine all the houses, but a ballot was also proposed. After some hesitation (particularly on the part of the village head, who feared that the vote might not be "realistic" and might fail to reflect actual needs), and following the announcement that the result of the vote would be subject to a socio-technical assessment of the families selected in this way before a final selection was made, the (secret) ballot was accepted by all the families.

25 "ballot papers" with the names of the candidates (numbered 1 to 22) were written by hand and distributed to the families. Voters were asked to retain 12 of the 22 names proposed.

Some elderly women – unable to either read or write – asked for help in filling in their papers.

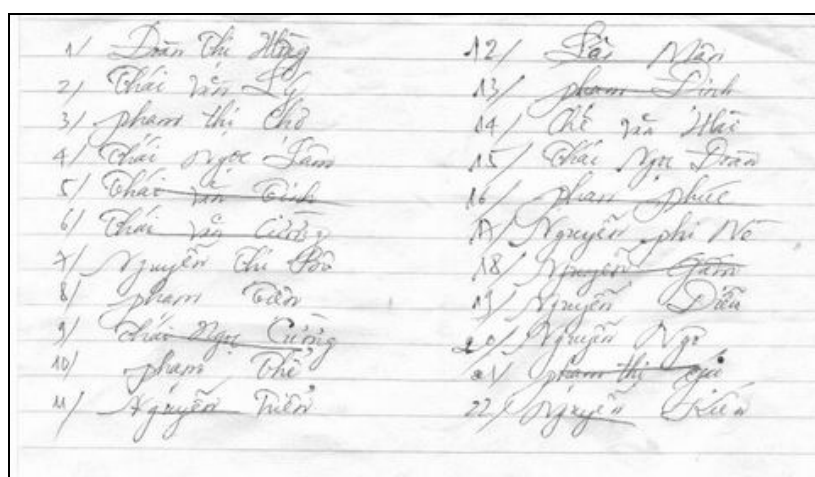
Each ballot paper was folded and placed in the "urn" (a hat).

All the papers were counted and analysed by the scrutineers (DW and the Prevention Committee).

The results showed considerable degree of consensus, and were very quickly accepted by the families

In another hamlet, it was not possible to use a ballot, as family relationships (same lineage) would have prevented a normal result.

Ballot paper



Local democracy and development...

DW's project for the prevention of storm damage to housing has now accumulated 3 years experience in 10 communes in the province of Thua Thien Hue.

The main objective (raising popular awareness of cyclone damage prevention, through animation – training – demonstration) takes place alongside the preventive strengthening of houses, and therefore the selection of beneficiary families.

Several selection methods were tested with the objective of families themselves playing a greater part in taking decisions, bearing in mind that the number of beneficiaries remains limited.

DW experience of the selection process used in Quang Tho (a relatively well-off commune) in May 2003 suggests the following:

1. In a "normal" hamlet, approximately 50 to 60% of families are "eligible" according to the project criteria (weak house, or with weak components; ability to self-finance 2 M Dongs or more, with a matching subsidy; desire to take direct part in the project). It can be estimated (and this varies between communes) that 10 to 20% of the houses are strong, according to the project criteria (able to withstand annual storms). 10 to 20% are very weak houses which need to be (re)built to be able to benefit from preventive strengthening. Finally 10 to 20% of families do not consider themselves concerned by the issue.
2. The shift from direct intervention on the part of commune leaders (i.e. the general rule of local government) to a democratic choice on the part of families by and for themselves is difficult, and there is clearly hesitation at all levels. The argument often advanced is the risk of conflict between families within the community. Selection procedures at grass roots, including by secret ballot, have – so far – proved to be widely accepted by all the families. The role of the commune authorities and the extent to which they favour or not families taking decisions is however significant, and cannot be overlooked. It is also up to the DW project animation team to "guarantee" such methods to families and to explain the need for them in the spirit of fairness.
3. Discussions held – and decisions made – in the hamlet in relation to the project are an important part of the – sometimes theoretical – process of strengthening local power in Viet Nam, and at the same time part of the global poverty reduction programme (more control in the face of natural disasters). In this respect, they should therefore continue and be developed.

Ballot in Tan Xuan Lai village

Result of the ballot

Families (in the hamlet) :35

Families attending the meeting :27

Families voting :25

N°	Name	Votes	%
20	Nguyen Ngo	22	88%
8	Pham Tien	22	88%
4	Thai Ngoc Lam	22	88%
1	Doan Thi Hong	21	84%
15	Thai Ngoc Doan	21	84%
7	Nguyen Thi Bo	20	80%
3	Pham Ngoc/Thi Cho	20	80%
21	Phan Thi Gai	17	68%
6	Thai Van Cuong	15	60%
2	Thai Van Ly	15	60%
16	Pham Phuc	13	52%
5	Thai Van Tinh	12	48%
9	Thai Ngoc Cuong	11	44%
17	Nguyen Phi Ne	10	40%
19	Nguyen Dieu	10	40%
22	Nguyen Kien	10	40%
11	Nguyen Trien	10	40%
10	Pham The	10	40%
13	Phan Dinh	8	32%
12	Le Man	6	24%
18	Nguyen Gam	5	20%
14	Che Van Hai	3	12%

**Priority list of
7 families**

**Supplementary list
of
5 families**