

# Vietnam

## *Active participants in education and agriculture*



Vietnam is reviewing its strategy for education. The Education Sector Strategy Report 2008 – 2020 has become the EDSP 2009 – 2020 after 14 revisions. However there is still criticism from education experts concerning the ambitious goals. Possibly this version will be adapted again – some people advice to start from scratch – and the implementation will not start in 2009. Whatever the outcome, this document clearly illustrates that the quality of education in Vietnam is still a challenge.

Quantity was indeed the prime concern up to now: in the Strategy for 2001–2010, universalization of the Lower Secondary Education was an important goal. In the meantime there is (officially) hardly any illiteracy, Basic Education is universal and Lower Secondary Education is close too. In 2007 more than half of the students attended free education and in 2008 a start was made with a review of the funding of education. But education still is too costly for many people and many children stay home or are being sent to the country side where schools are cheaper.

Not only is there a lot of discussion about the new strategy but there are also a lot of initiative that illustrate the desire for better quality: e.g. Ha Noi National University plans development of 33 training specialities to address international standards by 2012, a.o. business management, computer science, telecommunication, biology and geology. Also the lack of command of foreign languages and in particular the English language, is a concern of the government. The objective of the government is that by 2020 all the graduates of vocational schools, colleges and universities would be fluent in one foreign language. According to some experts, this objective is not feasible due to the shortage of English teachers.

For agriculture and fisheries, 2008 was a good year, despite the unexpected rain and flooding. However a correct prediction of the markets and stability are important to agriculture and fisheries. In 2008 there were some initiatives to promote stability: in some provinces long term contracts were signed between rice and fish producers and industry. Market and value chain projects also receive more and more attention and extension services are requesting clear information and capacity building to be able to give farmers adequate information and appropriate training.

Two projects were finalized in 2008: an ICT-project (Hanoi) which started in 2004 with as the aim to support integration of ICT to improve quality of management, teaching and learning in schools of Hanoi. After 4 years all activities of the project have been completely integrated in the Hanoi Retraining College for Educational Managers. An ICT-project in Ho Chi Minh City was extended for 6 months in 2008 with the goal of multiplying and mainstreaming the results for more sustainability. The project was finalized with an event about ICT in Education and the results were compiled in a collection of good practices, available on DVD/CDR. These materials are very much appreciated by colleges and schools and are being used in the new programme.

The VVOB Programme 2008–2013 in Vietnam focuses on education and agricultural extension.

The education programme focuses on improving the quality of Lower Secondary Education in North and Central Vietnam. VVOB is supporting the change process of active learning and teaching. The entry point is Environmental Education and ICT and the targets are educational management, teacher training and the community. One by one, these are elements that are to be found in the EDSP 2009-2020: the lack of quality including environmental issues, the low quality of professional training, lack of innovative teaching methodologies in teacher training.

EDSP strategies which the VVOB programme is addressing: innovation of the teacher training concerning teaching methodologies, contextualization of the curriculum; innovation of teaching, learning and assessment methods, improved use of ICT in teaching and learning, institutionalization of community involvement in education, “creating a friendly school with active students” which was initiated in 2008 -2009 for a better learning environment and community involvement.

The agricultural extension programme aims at improving the extension skills of extension workers in two institutes and five provinces in South-Vietnam. The focus is on participatory skills and the goal is to come to a more efficient extension system in South-Vietnam.



The VVOB programme is in line with the objectives of the government to improve agriculture with an efficient extension system.

A comprehensive baseline study was conducted for the education programme. In total more than 1200 people from the five teacher training institutes, principals and educational managers, and parents were asked about their perception on teaching and learning, environment and ICT and involvement of the community in the school. Data analysis was supported by Prof. Van Petegem of the University of Antwerp. The results were disseminated to all stakeholders during a workshop in October. The planning for 2009 in December 2008 was based on these data. An agreement was signed with each of the five provinces. A team of two teacher trainers, a member of the Woman's Union and a member of DOET was formed in each province in September. These teams are at once part of the beneficiaries and our support to plan and implement the programme.

2009 is a very important year for the implementation of our 2008-2013 programme: activities that were postponed in 2008 have to be implemented this year; the conservatism in teaching and learning is still a challenge although individual differences are big; active teaching and learning has a different meaning to many people; and change processes take time.

The baseline study of the agricultural extension programme consisted of 14 in-depth interviews of important stakeholders. In July the teams of MDI and IAS participated in workshops in the five targeted provinces. In these participatory workshops, the farmers, extension workers, district and provincial extension services proposed their activities and expectations for the coming year. The teams of MDI and IAS were there to advise. The training needs were mapped per province. The workshops and baseline study gave the necessary input for the activity plan for 2008 in the five provinces. The training centre is offering trainings based on the feedback of the extension services and farmer clubs and in the fall trainings were organized for five provinces.

The teams of IAS and MDI have build considerable capacity in the past years with regards to participatory extension methodologies and monitoring tools. What seems to be missing is the necessary management capacity to implement the programme independently. Simon Jeanmart started in November as the new programme coordinator. The cooperation and coordination between IAS and MDI will be in his hands in 2009.



## More than 'education for development'

I am Dr. Nguyen Duy Can and I work at the Mekong Delta Development Research Institute (MDI) of Cantho University. Through my work I came into contact with VVOB because I am interested in agricultural extension, which provides education for extension workers and the rural poor.

In 2008, VVOB has supported a Participatory Extension (PAEX) programme in the Southern of Vietnam. Through the PAEX programme, VVOB enhances knowledge, skills and extension methods for extension workers by education and training, empowers leaders and farmer clubs by practicing participatory extension. As a result, VVOB achieved in 2008 a great success as five participating provinces in the South of Vietnam, are improving extension methods, and farmers become more active and participative.

To me, VVOB is doing more than 'education for development', it is doing education for the development of agriculture and rural poor in the South.

