

Promoting Active Teaching and Learning in Vietnam

Our education programme takes place in five provinces in North and Central Vietnam. It aims to improve the quality of education by promoting the use of Active Teaching and Learning (ATL) methods. We are cooperating mainly with three partners: the Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs), Departments of Education and Training (DOET) and Women's Union (WU). In each of these institutes we are improving capacity at different levels: management, trainers and implementers (principals, teachers, college lecturers, club leaders and facilitators) and where possible we support the partner to reach the next level target groups (college students, club members being parents).

Involvement at management level is important to ensure understanding of and support for activities, and sustainability. By the end of 2010 and again in 2011, about 30 TTI managers, 15 DOET managers and 10 WU managers participated in trainings and workshops on aspects of planning, monitoring and evaluation of capacity development.

Teach the teachers

Training trainers is a practical way to reach a bigger group of people and increases the sustainability of the activities. To do this, we follow the same approach with each partner: developing relevant materials with the partners, training a number of key trainers, supporting the key trainers to multiply the training to their target groups (with limited funds, coaching and monitoring), and where possible offering limited support for the next level of multiplication.

Key trainers

In the first phase of the programme (2008-2010), VVOB focused on capacity development of key trainers. By the end of 2010, in the TTIs about 200 trainers (college lecturers) were trained. They multiplied trainings on different aspects of ATL to about 500 lecturers (about half of the total number of lecturers of the five TTIs). In the DOET, about 100 provincial and district staff were trained to multiply similar trainings on ATL, and on topics of education management as well. They trained about 2,200 teachers and 2,300 principals in 2010 and even more in 2011. In the WU, 25 key trainers at provincial and district level were trained on topics of social participation in education in 2010 and again in 2011. These people trained 152 leaders and facilitators of 'education clubs' (a club concept developed by VVOB and promoted by the WU). These clubs are able to reach more than 3,000 parents each month in their well attended club meetings.



"The content of club activities is very practical and useful for parents. Realising the influence of the Education and Life club, we have upscaled the model from two pilot clubs initially in 2009 to 30 clubs by the end of 2011."

Ms. Nguyen Thi Ha, representative of the Nghe An Women's Union, talked about the effectiveness of the Education and Life club!

Support the multiplication

By the end of phase one, these key trainers already reached a significant number of stakeholders. In the second phase of the programme (2011-2013),



Scope

A pick from our figures from 2008 until 2010

Teaching methodologies in TTIs:

- 30 managers of TTIs reached
- 202 key trainers ATL trained
- 505 lecturers trained by key trainers
- 3500 students (pre-service teachers) trained by lecturers

Teaching methodologies in in-service (DOET):

- 32 key trainers reached
- 2200 lower secondary teachers

Education Management in in-service (DOET)

- 32 key trainers
- 2300 school principals received in-service training by key trainers
- Management and at least 2 teachers of each lower secondary school of 5 provinces reached

Social participation (through Women's Union):

- 25 key trainers (provincial and district level)
- 152 key trainers at commune level (club facilitators)
- 3040 parents attending monthly club meetings

each partner institute continues with this capacity development. In phase two we still support the development of materials, we are training key trainers in other ATL related subjects and supporting the subsequent multiplication.

However we are also focusing more on assisting the respective institutes in planning, monitoring and evaluation of capacity development. When our partners are planning and monitoring these activities, this indicates we reached our goals of sustainability and ownership.

"In some classes, in the morning there were 30 participants, and in the afternoon 35 people came because they heard that the training was really relevant."

Nguyen Van Trac, member of the Provincial Programme Unit and the Core Group, talked about the multiplication trainings in Facilitation and Peer Coaching.



Agricultural extension in Cambodia and Vietnam: getting ready for handover

Next to education programmes, VVOB is also implementing agricultural extension programmes in Vietnam and Cambodia. We will phase out these interventions by the end of 2012 following the strategic decision of VVOB to concentrate on formal education. The current PAEX (Participatory Agricultural EXTension) programme in Vietnam started in 2008 as the continuation of two earlier projects in 2001-2007. The VVOB support to the agricultural extension system in Cambodia started only in 2008 with the ImAge programme (Improvement of Agricultural Extension). Through the strengthening of agricultural extension, both programmes aim to improve farmer's agricultural practices and livelihood.

PAEX in Vietnam

In line with the national policy PAEX contributes to an extension system that addresses the needs of the farmers. Farmers and extension personnel need skills to be able to play their role in an extension system that is based on real farmers' needs. To support this development, we collaborate with the Agricultural Extension Centre, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Women's Unions and Farmers' Associations in five provinces of South Vietnam.

In phase one (2008-2010), our operational partners, the Mekong Delta Research Institute (Can Tho) and the Institute of Agricultural Science (Ho Chi Minh City), organised training and coaching. Since 2011 we work directly with provincial authorities, although field staff of the institutes are still liaising with the provinces. During phase 1, 66 Farmers' clubs were started, the basis of the bottom-up approach: clubs and extension workers exchange information in a participatory manner. As part of this approach club members initiate experiments (254 experiments were carried out in 2008-2010 and 131 in 2011). At first we trained extension workers centrally, but since 2009 we train core groups of trainers in each province. During 2009 and 2010 26 'Trainers of Trainers' were trained, who in turn train new trainers, extension workers, Farmers' clubs and members of Mass Organisations. The training – supported by materials that we developed - ranges from participatory development of new technologies to issues regarding the Farmers' clubs (leadership, club administration, experiments,...). In all 2,848 participations of Farmers' clubs, extension workers and Mass Organisations were registered in 2008-2010 and 1,232 in 2011. Clubs

and extension workers (186 of the participations in 2011) were trained in participatory extension planning so their plans can be in line with official guidelines while based on local resources and needs.

While these trained clubs and extension workers now have the skills to participate in the development of needs-based planning, our close cooperation with the Agricultural Extension Centre ensures that a participatory approach is part of extension activities. On a higher level (management of the Agricultural Extension Centre and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development), we advocate that the provinces allot time and means for participatory methods and that the planning takes into account the farmers' needs. The latter we do in meetings and workshops (32 in 2011) organised for the leaders of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Agricultural Extension Centre, key extension workers, Farmers' Association and Women's Union (about 1,000 participations registered in 2011). In 2011 the commitment of the provinces was reflected by their contribution to the PAEX activities of an extra 40%.

"It is quite time-consuming to develop a technical leaflet with farmers. However, it is easy to see that when farmers talk with farmers, they use their own words, and information is more effectively disseminated and easier understood. Also, information provided by farmers is more up-to-date and practical. That is why we have developed technical leaflets together with farmers."

Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Thanh Tâm, field staff of the Sóc Trăng provincial Agricultural Extension Centre (AEC)





ImAgE in Cambodia

The Cambodian agricultural sector has great potential for productivity improvement, e.g. if rice yield is the same as in Vietnam at 4.6 ton/ha, rice production in Cambodia would double. This would lift a large number of farm households above the poverty line and improve food security. However, farmers are reluctant to change their practices: rice is their main source of income and they consider the risk too high. Clearly, training farmers is not sufficient to convince them to adopt new practices.

One way to overcome this barrier is by conducting farmer field schools and setting up demonstration plots where farmers witness first-hand the benefits of new practices and learn to apply them. The ImAgE programme strengthens provincial and district extension workers in knowledge and skills to conduct such field activities and support farmers. Through the Provincial Department and District Offices of Agriculture in Kandal province the programme also supports the establishment of 74 village farmer groups and many more topic-specific subgroups. Nearly 3,000 farmers now regularly conduct farmer group meetings. Extension workers support these farmer groups, providing advice and training on technical matters, methodology and farmer group management. In 2011, the 45 extension workers in the seven target districts of Kandal conducted 297 farmer field schools in chicken raising (59), mushroom production (61), fish raising (60), organic vegetables (59), and rice growing (58). On all these topics the programme developed together with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries training manuals, technical notes and leaflets. 48% of the targeted farmers in the three pilot districts adopted at least one new agricultural practice while in the four recently added districts we see the first early adopters. This leads to considerable improvements in productivity; e.g. rice yield/ha increased from 2.6 to 4.5 ton/ha and mortality rates for chicks declined from 46% to 9%. Surely these impressive results will convince more farmers to adopt new practices.

Also in 2011, 77% of the farmer groups established saving and credit groups, involving nearly 2,000 farmers. The trust and solidarity between the members of these groups leads to improved empowerment of the farmers as they become more united and self-reliant. Women's participation in these groups is very high, a success for the gender mainstreaming of the ImAgE programme.



"By using the chicken raising technique with semi-confinement, I have good results. The death rate of the chicken is very low and they grow fast. Most importantly, I can control my chickens better and intervene when needed. I am also able to keep track of my stock now: I know how many chickens I have in the opening stock and can count how many I have in the closing stock. This allows me to do an economic analysis and calculate if I have any profit."

Suong Saroeun, farmer, 45 years old, lives in Pohnea Lueu district of Kandal province

What the future holds...

2011 was a year of heavy rains and flooding in Southeast Asia, affecting numerous families in rural Southeast Asia. This unfortunate event underlines once more the vulnerability of the poor who often depend on small-scale, subsistence farming. By enabling and convincing farmers to reduce their dependency on single crops and improve their agricultural practices we can limit this vulnerability. Both the PAEX and ImAgE programmes have significantly contributed to addressing this challenge.

2012 will be the year to consolidate our work so that farmers will continue to benefit from the improved extension services and systems in the future. The programmes work closely with the local Vietnamese and Cambodian partners. This integration in the local systems makes us hopeful for a successful handover and dissemination of sustainable results when the programmes end in 2012. Still, numerous challenges remain and 2012 promises to be a busy year for our agricultural extension teams in both countries.