

Country profile prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2008
Education for All by 2015: will we make it?

Vietnam

Non-formal education

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2007

This profile was commissioned by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report as background information to assist in drafting the 2008 report. It has not been edited by the team. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to the EFA Global Monitoring Report or to UNESCO. The profile can be cited with the following reference: "Country Profile commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008, Education for All by 2015: will we make it? For further information, please contact efareport@unesco.org

Country Profile of Vietnam on Non-Formal Education (NFE)

By Chau Lam

In order to fulfil the commitment concerning the goals set at the Education for All (EFA) International Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of Vietnam proposed and requested the government for the approval of the National Education for All Action Plan for Vietnam 2003-2015 (Government of Vietnam, 2003). The action plan was approved by the government on the 2nd of July 2003. The plan succeeded in rallying the government, international organisations, bilateral donors, NGOs and civil society into the effort to accelerate and ensure the quality of EFA activities. As stated in the plan, Non-Formal Education (NFE) is identified as one among the four priority components of the educational system¹. This report aimed to focus only on NFE with its activities and achievements obtained during the past few years since the action plan was approved and implemented at national and provincial levels all over the country. The report will provide the country level information on NFE with an overview of the organisation, governance, finance and assessment of NFE, as well as targets, action programmes and expected results of the implementation of NEF in Vietnam during 2003-2015. Information about major types of NFE activities will also be included in the second part of the report.

Glossary

| | |
|---------------|---|
| CE | Continuing Education |
| CEC | Continuing Education Centre |
| CLC | Community Learning Centre |
| DOET | Department of Education and Training |
| EFA | Education for All |
| HCMC | Ho Chi Minh City |
| MOET | Ministry of Education and Training |
| NFBE | Non-Formal Basic Education |
| NFE | Non-Formal Education |
| NEFAC | National Education for All Committee |
| SEAMEO RETRAC | Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, Regional Training Centre |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Funds |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Plan |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organisations |

¹ The other three included early childhood care and pre-school education, primary education and lower-secondary education.

A. Country Level Information on Non-Formal Education

1. How is NFE conceptualised in the country?

i. Definition of NFE

Non-formal education, as defined in Section 5, Article 40 in the Education Law² of Vietnam, is ‘the mode of education to help everyone to work and learn at the same time and to learn continually all the life aimed at perfecting their personality, broadening their knowledge, elevating their cultural, specialization and professional standard in order to improve the quality of life, find a job and adapt to social life’ (Government of Vietnam, 1998).

Specifically, in the National EFA Action Plan 2003-2015 (Government of Vietnam, 2003), NFE is defined as

comprises organized learning activities that cater to persons not enrolled in formal education. In Vietnam, NFE spans complementary education programmes, continuing education and life skills development activities aimed at the different learning needs of different categories of youth and adults. NFE does not necessarily follow the structure of the formal system. It may be of varying duration, and may or may not confer certification of the learning achieved. In the EFA Plan, NFE comprises complementary primary and lower secondary programmes, life skills programmes, and literacy training. (p.xxi)

ii. Definition of Literacy

The definition of literacy can also be found in the action plan as

the ability to read and write in the Vietnamese language. It also includes basic numeracy skills. Basic literacy in Vietnam represents the equivalent level of the five-year primary cycle. The literacy rate is the percentage of the adult population that has achieved basic literacy. In Vietnam the literacy rate refers to the population of the age group 15-40.

(Government of Vietnam, 2003, p.xx)

iii. Definition of life skills and lifelong learning

The concept of ‘life skills’ in Vietnam is recognised and understood from the international concept of life skills. In a broad sense, life skills, as defined by UNESCO, refer to the individual’s ability to fully perform his or her functions and participate in daily life (UNESCO Hanoi, 2003). Applying the UNESCO’s definition of life skills to NFE in Vietnam, life skills include essential skills, generic skills and skills to be applied in specific situations and contexts of social life (Brouwer, 2006). Essential life skills refer to skills for daily life, literacy, numeracy, and functional literacy, or the ability to use these skills in daily activities. Generic life skills include cognitive skills, skills to scope with emotions and social or interactive skills. These skills deal with critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, motivation, stress resistance, emotion control, self-management, self adaptation, team work, negotiation, cooperative skills and communication. Besides these essential and generic skills, there are life skills to be applied in specific aspects of social life such as health (sanitation, food hygiene, nutrition, alcohol, tobacco and drug use), gender, natural and environmental protection, culture, language, technology and income creation (ibid). The

² The Education Law of Vietnam, decreed No 11/1998/QH10, was adopted by the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *Xth Legislature, 4 Session, on December 2, 1998*. Retrieved on 10 February, 2007 from http://www.edu.net.vn/VanBan_Luat/LuatGD_1998/law_in_english.htm

concepts of non-formal education and life skills help demonstrate the concept of lifelong learning, which is to serve the diverse learning needs of every individual through out his/her own life. Individuals, at any phase in life, can study in search for new knowledge and skills that help improve their professions, working lives and quality of life. Lifelong learning therefore can be carried out under any types of education: formal or non-formal, and within or beyond the boundaries of schools.

iv. Target learners of NFE

Non-formal education in Vietnam serves a variety of participants, ranging from illiterate people and those who have just been out of illiteracy, to those who dropped out of the formal education before having acquired the basic knowledge in reading, writing and arithmetic necessary for them to have a productive life. With the objectives of creating a second opportunity to learn for disadvantaged population groups and provide practical knowledge for adults to satisfy production requirements, NFE targets groups of people with limited educational background. The priority is given to out-of-school youth and adults, especially women and disadvantaged groups such as farmers, ethnic minorities, the poor and unemployed young people (Brouwer, 2006; Government of Vietnam 2003). In addition, as NFE aims to develop a comprehensive national strategy for affordable and relevant continuing education, lifelong learning opportunities and to build a learning society (Government of Vietnam 2003), the target group for literacy and post-literacy education are adults from 15-35 years who are illiterate or have not yet completed the third grade of primary education (Government of Vietnam, 2000). Non-formal education also targets labourers who need to learn, update or improve their vocational knowledge in order to increase income, to look for a new career, or to enhance the quality of life.

2. What are the legal foundations of NFE policies?

Major legal documents of the Vietnamese Party and State that serve as foundations for EFA policies in general and for NFE policies in particular include:

- i. The Resolutions of the 2nd Conference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam in December 1996 pointed out the objectives for EFA, with an emphasise on ‘eradication of illiteracy for people in the age group 15-35, reducing the number of illiterates at different ages with special attention given to mountainous, remote, disadvantaged areas to ensure that all provinces achieve national standards on literacy and Universal Primary Education before the 21st century; and on the expansion of continuing education forms, particularly distance education.’ (Government of Vietnam, 2000, p.4)
- ii. The Constitutions of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992
In Chapter three, Article 35 stated that education and training are top priority policies. The State develops educational work and ensures that ‘the aim of education is to form and nurture the personality, moral qualities, and abilities of the citizen; to train working people and equip them with skills, to imbue them with dynamism and creativeness, national pride, good morality, and the will to strive for national prosperity, so as to meet the need to build and defend the country.’ (Government of Vietnam, 1992)

Article 36 stipulates the overall management of the national system of education undertaken by the State.

The State shall ensure the harmonious development of the educational system: pre-school education, general education, vocational training, college and post-graduate education; it shall enforce the generalisation of primary education, eliminate illiteracy. (Government of Vietnam, 1992)

The State's priority investment to education is reserved for educational work in the high-lands, in regions inhabited by national minorities and in regions encountering special difficulties.

iii. The Education Law 1998

Article 40 of the Law on Education of Vietnam stipulates NFE as a method to help people to learn while working to develop their personality, knowledge, professional skills and living standards.

Article 41 of the Law on Education stipulates the requirements for the content and method of non-formal education. As stated in the article, the content of non-formal education includes educational programmes of the eradication of illiteracy and further education after literacy. Educational programmes of non-formal educational must also meet the needs of the learners and must ensure the practicality to help learners raise their labour capacity, production and working capacity and quality of life. The method of non-formal education, therefore, must develop the initiative role and exploit the experience of the learner and give importance to fostering his/her self-teaching capacity (Government of Vietnam, 1998).

iv. The National Education for All Action Plan 2003-2015, approved by the National Assembly and Government on 2nd of July 2003 (Government of Vietnam, 2003).

The action plan identified five strategic EFA goals for Vietnam, with the third goal focusing on providing lifelong learning opportunities. The objectives for the target group 4 of the action plan, the NFE, are

- 1) to ensure that all out-of-school youth have education opportunities to achieve primary and lower secondary levels;
- 2) to ensure that all adults, especially women and disadvantaged groups, have access to free and quality literacy and post-literacy programmes and to affordable and quality life skills programmes and lifelong learning opportunities;
- 3) to improve the quality, relevance and results of all continuing education programmes (complementary primary and lower secondary programmes, literacy, post-literacy and life skills programmes) for youth and adults up to age 40;
- 4) to develop a comprehensive national strategy for affordable and relevant continuing education, lifelong learning opportunities and to build a learning society; and
- 5) to strengthen management capacity of non-formal education and continuing education at the local level.

(Government of Vietnam, 2003)

- v. Guidelines³ for implementing non-formal education for the school year 2004-2005 (MOET, 2004).

In the decree dated 25/2004/CT-BGD&DT, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of Vietnam set up guidelines for implementing non-formal education for the school year 2004-2005 (MOET, 2004). In the guidelines, the common mission of non-formal education focused on the development of the achievement obtained in the school year 2003-2004, consolidating the results of eradication of illiteracy obtained in the previous school year, universalising primary education, increasing the number of literate people aged 15 to 35, and narrowing down the illiteracy in the other ages. The guidelines also emphasised the development of continuing education at lower secondary level, aiming at universalising lower secondary education by 2010.

3. How are NFE programmes governed and financed?

Within the National EFA Action Plan 2003-2015, NFE has been and continues to be mainly funded by the State budget. As stated in the Action Plan, the State budget expenditure on education provides a strong financial basis for the development and modernisation of education envisaged for all four EFA Target Groups, which include NFE. However, as the government budget for education does not cover all EFA funding needs, there will be funding gaps which need to be covered by complementary sources. Financial contributions come from social organisations, individuals, international organisations, foreign and non-governmental organisations and credit loans from international organisations (Government of Vietnam, 2000). Vietnam, as the only Asian country, is in the first groups of countries eligible to receive EFA Fast Tract Funding from the international donor community. Among the international organisations which co-ordinated and provided support to implementing the EFA programmes in Vietnam in recent years are UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, JICA, WORLD BANK, and NGOs such as Oxfarm UK, Save the Children UK, Radda Barnen and the Catholic Relief Service.

The role of donor funding has been recognised as the key to effective plan implementation. Community contributions are also viewed as necessary to improve education in schools and are actively encouraged. Direct parental contributions, for example, can help reduce funding shortfalls. However, although community contributions may serve to improve the teaching and learning conditions of the school, government financing remains the major source of providing all basic inputs needed to ensure good quality education (Government of Vietnam, 2003).

4. To what extent is NFE formally supported and managed?

NFE, within the EFA in Vietnam, is under the unified management of the Vietnamese Government. Ministries and committees belonging to the Government will take concrete responsibilities and tasks in implementing NFE in particular and EFA in general. Specifically, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) will implement literacy, post-literacy and continuing education.

³ The decree 25/2004 CT-BGD&DT was signed on 2 August, 2004 by the Minister of Education and Training. The guideline for implementation was retrieved at <http://www.edu.net.vn> on 26 January, 2007

At national level, management of NFE implementation, or management of EFA in general, will be taken over by the National EFA Committee (NEFAC). This committee is responsible for overseeing the entire implementation process (Government of Vietnam, 2003). The NEFAC will coordinate the MOET, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Bank of Vietnam, and other related Ministries, Provincial Departments of Education and People's Committees. In order to support the NEFAC to undertake its function, there are a number of technical groups namely National EFA Observation, EFA Technical Support Group, EFA Progress Review Group and EFA Evaluation Group. These groups will provide monitoring, technical assistance, evaluation, and progress assessment for the National EFA action plan (ibid).

At provincial level, Provincial EFA Task Forces were created by mid 2003, comprising representatives of Provincial People's Committees, selected District People's Committees, Provincial Department of Education, selected Bureaus of Education, and other stakeholders at provincial, district and commune level (Government of Vietnam, 2003). A provincial EFA planning Unit will also be created at provinces, reporting to both Department of Education and the People's Committees. The NEFAC will provide policy guidance, planning directions as well as direct support in technical and methodological matters to these provincial EFA planning units.

Besides these entities of the government, social organisations also co-ordinate and take part in the implementation of NFE from the central to grassroots levels. These organisations include the 'Vietnam Fatherland Front', the 'Vietnam Confederation of Labour', the 'Vietnam Farmers Association', the 'Vietnam Women's Association' and the 'Ho Chi Minh Youth Union' (Government of Vietnam, 2000).

5. Targets, action programmes and expected results of the implementation of NEF in Vietnam during 2003-2015

i. Targets for NFE to be reached during 2003-2015

The National EFA Action Plan set up specific targets for NFE to be reached during the EFA period 2003-2015. These targets are categorised in the access, quality and relevance, and management areas.

Specific access targets for NFE include:

- 1) Achievements of literacy campaigns consolidated with emphasis on young illiterate adults (aged 15-34) and women
- 2) 50% of all communes have a Community Learning Centre (CLC) by 2005; 90% by 2010 and all communes by 2015
- 3) Out of school children aged 6-14 (30% by 2005 and 75% by 2015) attend complementary primary programmes
- 4) Out-of-school youth aged 11-14 (30% by 2005 and 75% by 2015) attend complementary lower secondary programmes

Quality and relevance targets for NFE include

- 5) Curriculum and textbooks of complementary primary and lower secondary programmes improved

- 6) Post-literacy and life skill programmes diversified to meet the needs of local population by providing sufficient funds to develop and implement lifelong learning programmes (\$5,000/CLC by 2015)
- 7) Continuing Education Centres (CEC) set up in all districts and developing localised materials and training programmes

Management targets for NFE include

- 8) Management of Continuing education (CE) and NFE reformed and modernised at every level.

(Government of Vietnam, 2003)

ii. Action programmes for NFE

For these NFE targets to be reached, relevant action programmes have been designed and carried out. The major NFE programmes implemented in Vietnam include

- 1) literacy and post-literacy programmes for adults under 40,
- 2) complementary primary and lower secondary programmes for poor and disadvantaged groups,
- 3) continuing learning programmes for all communes and districts,
- 4) improvement of the quality, relevance and delivery of literacy and post-literacy programmes,
- 5) improvement of the curricula and delivery of complementary primary and secondary programmes,
- 6) improvement of the quality and relevance of community learning programmes delivered through CLCs and CECs,
- 7) National policy for continuing education (CE), non-formal education and lifelong learning, and
- 8) Capacity building of local managers to provide NFE/ CE programmes relevant to adult learners and the labour market.

(Government of Vietnam, 2003)

iii. Expected Results of EFA Plan Implementation for the target group of NFE

The results of EFA Plan Implementation for the target group of NFE (out-of-school youth and continuing education) expected to be achieved by 2005, 2010, 2015 are presented in the National EFA Action Plan 2003-2015 (See Table 1).

Table1: Results of EFA Plan Implementation by 2005, 2010, 2015 EFA Target Group 4: Non-Formal Education (out-of-school youth & continuing education)

| | 2001 estimate | 2005 | 2010 projections | 2015 |
|--|------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| a. NFE Beneficiaries ('000; public only) | | | | |
| 1.1 Total beneficiaries | 851 | 2,869 | 3,248 | 3,441 |
| 1.2 Equivalency (Complementary) programmes | 348 | 827 | 366 | 134 |
| Primary (aged 6-14) | 130 | 240 | 82 | 18 |
| Lower Secondary (aged 11-14) | 170 | 527 | 224 | 56 |
| Lower Secondary (aged 15+) | 48 | 60 | 60 | 60 |
| 1.3 Literacy and post-literacy | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Adult Literacy | 125 | 497 | 109 | 1 |
| | Post-Literary | 128 | 316 | 669 | 1,005 |
| | Various Programmes at CLC | 250 | 1,229 | 2,104 | 2,302 |
| 1.4 | Population aged 15-34 | 29,525 | 31,580 | 33,427 | 33,492 |
| | Illiterates aged 15-34 | 1,619 | 1,657 | 218 | 1 |
| | Literacy rate aged 15-34 | 94.5% | 94.8% | 99.3% | 100% |
| b. | NFE Centres | | | | |
| 2.1 | Number of CLCs operating | 600 | 5,300 | 9,500 | 10,540 |
| | % Communes with CLC | 5.7% | 50.2% | 90.0% | 99.0% |
| 2.2 | Number of CECs operating | 494 | 529 | 614 | 692 |
| | % Districts with CEC | 68.6% | 74.2% | 87.6% | 100.0% |

Source: Government of Vietnam, 2003

B. Information about major types of NFBE activities

This section provides information on major types of NFBE activities planned to be carried out in Vietnam during 2003-2015. In a report on the implementation of continuing education for the school year 2003-2004 made by the Department of Continuing Education, achievements on NFE had been obtained in the areas of illiteracy eradication, post-literacy programmes and universalisation of primary education; equivalency/complementary education; life skills and community development programmes; and programmes that meet the needs of the working people aiming to increase the productivity, increase income generation and/or to make career change (MOET, 2004a).

The following major NFE programmes have been carried out in Vietnam since 2003

1. Illiteracy eradication and post-literacy programmes:

At national level, illiteracy eradication programmes were carried out with an aim to obtain 100% literate in advantaged (urban) areas and 98% in disadvantaged or remote (rural, isolated and mountainous) areas by 2005 (MOET, 2004). Post-literacy programmes were also implemented to keep those who had just been out of illiteracy from relapsing into illiteracy. These programmes targeted people at the age of 15 to 35.

In Ho Chi Minh City, besides this age group of 15-35, these programmes also targeted people of ages other than 15-35 and immigrants coming from other regions of the country (Nguyen, 2005). The percentage of adult literate obtained in Ho Chi Minh City in 2003 was 98.5%. Specifically, more than 6000 adults had been out of illiteracy in 2003. The aim of the illiteracy eradication programme in Ho Chi Minh City is to raise the percentage of literates to 99% the following year (Nguyen, 2005).

The major source for literacy and post literacy programmes are primary and secondary school teachers and members of social organisations. In addition, local individuals and intellectuals also participate as complementary source for these programmes (Government of Vietnam, 2000).

It is not clearly stated in the MOET's report of 2003-2004 how these programmes were funded (MOET, 2004a). However, as stated in the National EFA Action Plan, national budget provides major funding for these programmes (Government of Vietnam, 2003).

2. Complementary primary and lower secondary education programmes

The complementary education programmes are in line with the eradication of illiteracy programmes and the universalisation of primary and lower secondary education programmes. These complementary programmes have been consolidated and developed in both quantity and quality in the school year 2003-2004 (MOET, 2004a). There have been 57 Continuing Education Centres at provincial levels, 499 at district levels and 80 schools all over the country providing complementary education. The number of students attending these complementary education programmes in 2004-2005 was 592,983, among which 241,780 had completed complementary primary programmes and 351,203 completed complementary lower secondary programmes (MOET, 2004a). Specifically, in 2003-2004 complementary education has been organised for thousands of workers in a

rubber plantation, and tens of thousands of workers in factories located in Dong Nai province.

In a report prepared for the conference on ‘Universalisation of Education for Period I (2001-2005) and Objectives and Solutions for Period II (2006-2010)’, universalisation of primary education has been accomplished in all 614 districts all over the country in 2003; and in June 2006, the percentage of universalisation of primary education has reached 99,84% (10,800/10,816 communes were recognised as having achieved the national standards on universalisation of primary education, and the other 16 communes are trying to accomplish the universalisation of primary education by 2010) (MOET, 2005).

The attainment of universalisation of primary education—eradication of illiteracy and universalisation of primary education for children of the right age for primary education—provides basic conditions for the universalisation of lower secondary education (completing grade 9, for the 15-18 age group). In December 2005, 30/64 provinces, 436/665 districts and 9,132/10,816 communes have accomplished the objectives for universalisation of lower secondary education (MOET, 2005).

These complementary programmes aim at universalising elementary and secondary education, providing a basis level of literacy skills for basic literates (equivalence to elementary level) and an advanced level of literacy for advanced literates (equivalence to lower secondary level). The age group that these programmes target is from 11-18 (MOET, 2004a). However, there are different group targets in different regions of the country. In mountainous and coastal areas, such as Tuyen Quang, Quang Tri and Tay Nguyen, and in delta areas in the South, drop-out students aged 15-18 and students who are currently not in the right ages⁴ for their grades are encouraged to take complementary education programmes. These programmes provide the students equivalency to formal basic education and assure that they would be able to mainstream into the formal upper secondary education upon successful completion of the programmes (Vietnam Edu.net⁵, 2004).

With a relatively small budget from the government reserved for universalisation of elementary and secondary education, many provinces and districts face financial problems in encouraging the youth to pursue these complementary programmes. However, in supporting these provinces and districts to implement universalisation of education, the government promulgated a degree numbered 62/2005/QD-TTg. In this degree, poor children, children with difficult living conditions, and ethnic minority children will be exempted from school fees or any other contributions to the school. In addition, those children will be provided with basic resources for learning such as books, note-books and stationery.

The language used in these complementary programmes is Vietnamese, which is not the home language for some ethnic students. Not many teachers in ethnic areas can speak the

⁴ Many students are not at the right ages for their grades; most of them are older than their class-mates. These include those who started school at a later age than the other normal students, repeated classes and/or withdrew from formal education. They are encouraged to come back to school by attending complementary education programmes.

⁵ Vietnam Edu.Net is a webpage of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam. Available at <http://www.edu.net.vn/>

ethnic language of the students and this makes it difficult for them in communicating with as well as in teaching ethnic students. The teaching staff involved in these programmes are mainly those who are currently teaching in the formal education system. In general, there is a shortage of teaching staff for these programmes and many of the teachers are not highly qualified, especially in disadvantaged areas (MOET, 2005).

Almost all of these programmes are carried out in the evenings at continuing education centres at district level, community learning centres at commune level, some cultural youth houses at ward level, communal houses in the villages, or at some primary and secondary schools in the region.

3. Life skills and community development programmes, programmes aiming to increase the productivity, to increase income generation and/or to make career change are carried out in Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and Continuing Education Centres (CECs), foreign language centres and information communication technology (ICT) centres.

Specifically, these programmes include vocational education, foreign language and information communication technology (ICT). The national statistics of 2004 has shown that there are 300 foreign language centres providing opportunities for learning foreign languages from elementary to advanced levels for over 300,000 people. These foreign language programmes are conducted in response to the needs of a large number of the population (mostly in urban areas) who aim to obtain foreign language certificates for further study or for a better job, to study languages for special purposes, or simply to improve their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing a foreign language. Concerning information communication technology, more than 200,000 people took courses on ICT at 125 ICT centres in 2004 (MOET 2004a). These language and ICT centres mainly locate in big cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh, Da Nang and Hai Phong. The number of foreign language centres in these big cities, as well as the number of participants, however, has declined considerably in recent years. In some foreign language centres in Danang and Hue, for example, the number of participants declined to more than 50%. Foreign language and ICT centres receive no financial support from the government and their operating costs depend largely on tuition fees paid by students

CECs and CLCs are very important to the implementation of NFE in Vietnam. As CECs at district level can not provide learning opportunities for all, especially those who live in remote, mountainous and rural areas, CLCs at grassroots areas proved to be an appropriate model of education and had been gradually established and operated in mountainous rural areas in Vietnam since 1998 (MOET, 1999). By June 2006, there have been 7,384 CLCs locating nearly 70% of communes all over the country.

In a report prepared by the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Education and Training (HCMC DOET) on the activities of Community Learning Centres in the city, since February 2002 there have been twenty three CLCs established in many remote districts and suburb areas of the city. These CLCs are utilising the meeting halls of the villages, cultural houses of the wards, temples, and primary schools as places in which their educational programmes are conducted. With the support from Education Service (at district level), CECs (at district level), and People's Committee (at ward level), these CLCs aim to provide more educational opportunities to a wider variety of people in the community, almost all of whom are adults at the age of 15-35 (HCMC DOET, 2005).

Based on the educational needs of the population, which have been surveyed through questionnaires, community meetings and suggestions made by local people, different educational programmes have been carried out at these CLCs in Ho Chi Minh City. These programmes include eradication of illiteracy, complementary education, foreign language, information communication technology, non-formal vocational training (such as animal husbandry, vegetable gardening and fish farming), life skills and community development (such as health and hygiene, food nutrition, community health service, environmental sustainability, water supply, garbage waste disposal, legal and political consultation, cultural and physical activities and entertainment activities) (HCMC DOET, 2005).

As these CLCs in Ho Chi Minh City do not receive any financial support from the government, they have to exploit funding from local welfare funds, local businesses and donors, which are often very limited and not constant. As a result of the shortage of budget, these CLCs often face difficulties in maintaining their frequent activities. The human resource serving at these CLCs involve specialists and lecturers from many services and departments of the city. Many CLCs are able to call for support from universities and companies (such as the University of Agriculture and Forestry of Ho Chi Minh City and Vinamilk Company). Contributing to the human resource at these CLCs are many specialists, retired engineers, office staff and teachers at local schools.

4. The pilot project entitled ‘Transforming Schools into Learning Centres’

Recently, a pilot project entitled ‘Transforming Schools into Learning Centres’ had been carried out in Can Gio District, a poor and remote district of Ho Chi Minh City, by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Training Centre in Vietnam (SEAMEO RETRAC), in cooperation with the Department of Education and Training (DOET) of Ho Chi Minh City. With an aim to facilitate access to education for all and to promote lifelong learning in Vietnam, the project succeeded in establishing the pilot model of transforming schools into learning centres. The project targets community people living in the areas surrounding the two selected schools in Can Gio District: Binh Khanh and Can Thanh high schools. The expected outcomes of the project include improving socio-economic livelihoods for members of the community, developing in-place human resources, and succeeding in the country’s process of industrialisation and modernisation (SEAMEO RETRAC & DOET, 2006).

The project consists of three phases. The first phase of the project is to focus on teacher training, educational management training, computer training, and the assessment of needs and resources for the two selected schools in Can gio district. This phase, which had been mainly funded by the People Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, was carried out from 2005 to 2006. The second phase of the project is to implement the model by conducting various educational programmes based on the community needs, organising CLC management systems, establishing the structure and activities. The last phase is to emphasise the development and the evaluation of project objectives.

The results of the study of the first phase has shown that Can gio is a poor district and residents live scateredly, and that the learning need of residents is very high and has not yet been met sufficiently. The schools in the districts have resources and high potential to serve the community but are not properly and fully utilised. As mentioned above, in this first phase, the major activities carried out include computer training, management training, library training, and teacher training. Besides, a survey for the needs of learning

of local residents (those who live in areas nearby the two selected schools) had been conducted. Based on the results of this survey, training for income generation (such as aquaculture, fishery), and training for livelihood skills (such as aquaculture, fishery, tailoring, cooking, and electricity repairing) will be carried out for the local residents in the second phase.

The target group for the first phase includes school management boards, teachers and staff (librarians, technicians) at the two selected schools, and local residents of the district. The human resource involved in this phase includes specialists from SEAMEO RETRAC, specialists and lecturers from the University of Agriculture and Forestry of Ho Chi Minh City, and specialists from the Women Culture House of Ho Chi Minh City. The human resource for the second phase will include teachers and staff at the two schools who had attended training courses in the first phase.

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