Community Learning Centres in Vietnam

I. Background and overview on CLCs

Vietnam now is a developing country with a population of 81 million. The country is divided into 64 provinces on January 2004. GDP per capita is US$500 in 2003. Vietnam exports rice, rubber, coffee, pepper and some agricultural products.

On education Vietnam is ranking No. 4 in the Asia Countries after Japan, Korea and Thailand on literacy rate with 94.2% of literate people. Regarding NFE, there are 595 continuing education centers (CECs) at district level and 2,532 CLCs at commune level in the whole country. In every commune now we have a primary education school, a lower secondary school, an early childhood care centre and expectedly a CLC in most of communes in 2010.

The NFE/CE as the part of Education system of Vietnam has its duties (1) To provide learning opportunities for all member of society from rural to urban areas in order to meeting their learning needs, helping them to full participate in the process of socio-economic development and improving quality of life for themselves and their families (2) To make active contributions to developing human resources. The Continuing Education system performs its duties through the following programmes:

- Literacy programme for literates,
- Post-literacy programme aim at maintaining and developing achievement made by literacy work,
- Retraining programmes, short term course to update knowledge and skills for learners helping them catch up with rapid scientific and technical changes or their new requirements in the family. Commune and society,
- Education programmes according to the interests, needs and conditions of each group of targets learners,
- Other programmes such as education programme equivalent to lower/upper secondary education and higher education, ICT, vocational training etc.. for adults.

The Continuing Education Department (CED) as the NFE Department not only in charge of literacy and continuing education but also is the nodal department for EFA. Since 1998 the CED has been assigned by MOET to in charge of CLC Development.

On the first year of the century 21, The Government of Vietnam has approved the Strategy for Development of Education and Training for 2001-2010. On the field of NFE (CE Section), the strategy mentioned that:
"NFE development is to create convenient conditions for everybody to lifelong learning, suitable to their opportunities and capability in order to increase intellectual, train for human resources for developing the country".

Based on that, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has officially launched the program for developing CLC in the whole country.

In Vietnam CLC is considered as commune-base unit organised by the local people to mobilise supports for literacy, post-literacy and lifelong learning for all children, youths and adults. CLC is also considered as the NFE-Cum-Learning model and local delivery mechanism to reach the unreach, the disadvantaged and under-served population groups living in the remote/dificult areas ( the moutainous areas in the North, the Tay Nguyen highland, the Costal areas in the Centre and Mekong River Delta in the South of Vietnam ).

From 2001, the number of CLCs has been increasing annually:
- December 2001: 78 CLCs
- December 2002: 680 CLCs
- December 2003: 2,532 CLCs (25% of communes)
- December 2004: 4,000 CLCs (from 2004 plan of CED, MOET)
- December 2005: 5,500 CLCs (from EFA Action Plan)
- December 2010: 11,000 CLCs (All communes, EFA Action plan)

An overview workshop on “3-year setting up and development of CLCs” was organised in September 2003, showing some experience on CLC Development as follows:
- CLCs have to depend on the support of local Government
- CLCs have to closely link with the cultural, economic, social development of the country in order to build a learning society in Vietnam.
- CLCs have been set up on the provincial overall plan which has to come from real situation of localities through need assessment surveys.
- The overall plan must be contributed by every branches, social associations in their localities.
- CLCs have made the full use of all resources in communes for setting up a centre with facilities, equipment etc.
- Especially, CLCs have been supported by education authorities at all levels and act as NFE centers in communes.

CLCs have been developed in Vietnam by three channels: (1) Supportation from international NGOs (2)Suportation from UNESCO and (3) Conduct from CED (MOET) with financial support of Vietnam Government

From 1998 to 2000, UNESCO provided financial assistance to set up 7 CLCs and NFUAJ supported for 41 CLCs in Vietnam as the pilot ones.

In 2001, the Continuing Education Department proposed to the Government a plan to develop CLC in the whole country.
II. Policy and legislation for CLCs

For development of CLC, we put CLC plan into EFA National Action Plan for 2003-2015. This Plan was approved by Government on July 2nd 2003. In this plan we expect there are 50% of communes having CLC in 2005 and 90% in 2010. The Government has committed to support CLCs with USD2,000 per year from 2010. We propose CLC as NFE unit in commune in national education law and certainly the new article for CLC will be approved by National Assembly in October 2004.

In the UN Literacy Decade 2003 -2012, we consider the CLC development as a prerequisite condition to eradicate illiteracy and to consolidate literacy achievement. Starting from 2004, we have included gender activities into CLC activities.

For CLC we have slogan "Development, Consolidation and Quality". So that in the guideline for developing CLC from MOET, the standard CLC must be:
- Having a steering board headed by chairman of commune people committee.
- Having a meeting hall with library, facilities and equipment for learning and meeting.
- Having 4 main activities: Education, Consultant, Economy and Income generation, and Cultural- Sport and Games
- Having a full time officer on education working in CLC as secretary of Steering Committee Board.
- Having monthly, quarterly, and annual action plan.
- Having bank account and a seal for transaction.

III. Main activities of CLCs

On education:
- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
- Literacy
- Non-formal primary and secondary education (Equivalent education programme)
- Vocational training
- Foreign language, ICT training

On agricultural production
- Income generation and poverty alleviation
- Technical transfer

On Health care and Environment Education
- Health and sanitation including HIV/AIDS prevention
- Family planning, drug abuse prevention
- Environment protection
On entertainment
- Culture, sports, games and recreation
- Local and traditional values
  Social and community activities
- Gender equality
- Human right and democracy
- Government policy
- Ethnic and linguistic minorities

IV. Effective implementation of CLCs

For organizing some activities in CLCs, we are conducting meetings, training courses, adult education classes. The meetings focus on introducing law, policy and guide from central level to grassroots level. Via these activities, people know more about the new law and policy of the Government such as transportation, migration law, news from the world, or some activities before National Election etc.

The training courses help people know more about the agricultural production so that increasing the value/quality their products. When the rural areas are affected by SARS, chicken diseases or some problems, they request to know more about it.

Especially, CLC help maintain traditional jobs in localities, of course including traditional culture.

The experience from Vietnam has shown that CLCs help people closely link with administrative officers and understand their work. CLC help localities keep peaceful atmosphere in rural areas where the living conditions and income are always lower than urban areas. CLCs help to improve many things in rural areas.

In order to have effective implementation of CLC, we attach great importance to capacity building of CLC personnel. Annually we organize many training workshops at national level and at sub-regional level. The CED in collaboration with UNESCO Hanoi, UNESCO Bangkok and with NFUAJ Japan has conducted some projects for CLC Development.

We also pay attention to collect statistics of CLCs across the country such as: facilities, equipment, number of learners and number of training courses.

V. Strengths and future Challenges

In rural areas we have able to say that Vietnam has a movement for development of CLCs. There are 4 provinces namely: Thai Binh, Ninh Binh, Phu Tho, Ha Nam have 100% of their commune having CLC. Also, there are 11 provinces have more than 80% communes having CLC. In
these provinces, local governments (people committees) have signed the regulation for CLC development suitable to local conditions.

However, there is still a big gap of number of CLC from the North to the South. For example, the number of CLC in the North (2,244 CLCs) is ten times higher than in the South (288 CLCs). In general, the CLCs are normally set up on the land and using the facilities of People Committees. The number good CLCs occupies one third of total number of CLCs.

Till now, there are many CLCs that are in short of libraries, books, training manuals for CLC personnel and learner work book for learners.

CED has coordinated with UNESCO Hanoi to conduct the CLC project for Highland Region and Binh Phuoc Province with very good results despite the implementation has been only for half a year. We are going to prepare a CLC project for Mekong River Delta next year (2005).

For Developing the CLCs, we drawn some strengths from CLCs in Vietnam as follows:

1. Help the learners to:
   - Increasing their family income and quality of life
   - Accessing to lifelong learning,
   - Having self-reliance.
2. Help the community to:
   - Creating of awrennees of rural development
   - Having a strong community
   - Enriching commune’s life
   - Preserving traditional cultures and jobs of localities
   - Realising the role and the important of CLCs in poor alleviation
   - Making a social justice on education from the community level

Future plan for developing CLCs is as follows:
- Developing a set of resource materials on management of CLCs
- Training for capacity building of CLC personnel
- Strengthening effective linkages to mobilise more resource
- Documenting the achievements and lessons from some best CLCs
- Expanding the internal and external network for CLC development.

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The Continuing Education Department (MOET)