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## Disaster Preparedness Training And Education Programs For The Future Generations In Vietnam

### **BACKGROUND**

The Vietnam Red Cross Society (hereafter called VNRC) is a humanitarian mass organization in Vietnam. The VNRC has a visible paradigm shift in 1998 for a Disaster Preparedness (DP) Programme with support from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (hereafter called the Federation). The VNRC carried out one evaluation of human and material resources in DP including training material developed and used in Vietnam by other in-country international and national, governmental and non-governmental organizations. One recommendation from this evaluation shows a need to revise and develop a new training DP material for VNRC and local governmental staff and for children and teachers at schools.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the program are: (1) to develop material resources for disaster management, (2) to strengthen human resources, (3) to increase public awareness on disaster management, and (4) to reduce risks and vulnerabilities.

### **ACTIVITIES**

By using inputs from Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and Disaster Management Unit (UNDP project in Vietnam), a set of DP training materials was prepared. It comprises of a training material for trainers, a training material for staffs at province, district and grass-root levels, and materials for teachers at primary school to introduce DP to children at grade 4 and 5. At the same time the VNRC selected 130 competent staffs from disaster prone provinces in Vietnam to train them the adult and active methodology with support from Asian Institute of Technology Center in Vietnam. The trainers discussed and recommended how to adapt and develop above training material through series of training workshops since 2000. And since 2001 they started trained VNRC staff, NGO and local staff, and teachers in Disaster management using those training materials. The DP training for

children at schools are maintained by teachers and VNRC through several activities such as field activities, children competitions and/or continuation of training by using funding from local government, local NGO etc.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

Those training material were highly appreciated by organizations working in DM in Vietnam and the Vietnamese government (according external evaluation in 2002 and 2004). Organizations such as UNDP, Dipecho, Japanese Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, World vision, Oxfam UK and Hong Kong and Save children alliance supported these activities. Up to now thousands of people have been trained and 125 Red Cross trainers have become core group in training DM in Vietnam. Over 12,500 teachers at primary school have been trained in DP and they provided training courses for over 550,000 children at grades 4th and 5th in 27 disaster prone provinces of Vietnam.

### **LESSONS**

Lessons learnt recognized in external evaluation include the importance of DP and disaster management plans in all locations. DP plans must be rooted in the community and should mobilize community forces with the aim of protecting the communities and individuals, especially vulnerable groups. Further strengthening and sustainability of the national and provincial trainers network is an essential requirement.

### **FUTURE**

To keep the trainers motivated and ensure regular interactions through workshops, the VNRC would need to mobilize internal resources. Future work on DP in these provinces and other parts of central Vietnam should also incorporate communes where other hazards are pertinent and these hazards should be included in training and teaching, and in materials. The most critical skills and thus training needs at the grass-roots level are more participatory method.



## *CONTACT DETAILS*

### **Dang Van Tao**

DM Programme Officer  
International Federation of Red Cross and  
Red Crescent Societies  
Vietnam Delegation

15 Thien Quang Hanoi  
Tel: +84 4 9422983 ext. 212  
fax: +84 4 9422987  
Mobile: + 84 9133 615 81  
[ifrcvn12@ifrc.org](mailto:ifrcvn12@ifrc.org)

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## Enhancing Community Capacity To Reduce Vulnerability To Economic Loss Caused by Storm Damage To Houses In Central Viet Nam

### BACKGROUND

Vulnerability of housing and small public buildings in central Viet Nam is a critical and paradoxically growing problem. Families and communities in central Viet Nam are extremely poor, but despite this over the past 20 years they have invested their scarce resources in building better housing with more durable materials. Unfortunately this investment is insecure because storm resistant techniques are not applied

The result: *unnecessary* damage is caused by annual storms that hit the Vietnamese coast. This can be avoided by applying the ten key but simple points of storm resistant construction to existing homes. Preventive action to strengthen community and domestic buildings is a cost efficient way to reduce economic and material vulnerability. Securing the house effectively reduces family vulnerability and allows them to get on with developing their lives and devote their meagre savings to other pressing needs such as education, income generation and health, which all help reduce poverty.

### OBJECTIVES

Since 1999, Development Workshop (DW) has worked Thua Thien Hué province, central Viet Nam to promote and demonstrate such preventive strengthening. DW runs an interactive programme in each village to stimulate short and long term awareness of the need to take preventive strengthening in building and rebuilding. DW works with individual families, women's groups, local communities and schools, and with a strong relationship with local government.

### ACTIVITIES

Through animation, training, demonstration, the development of commune level damage prevention institutions, and the introduction of small credit funds for strengthening, the project has been successful in changing grass roots and official attitudes

#### ■ Animation - getting the message across

Families need to be aware that prevention is essentially easy and affordable, and they need to know that it is much cheaper than rebuilding after a disaster. In each commune DW organises a wide variety of animation awareness raising events. Each activity - a play, a concert, using local actors and singers or school children - deals with the risk of storms, the damage caused and the action one can take to reduce vulnerability. Events encourage the participation of different groups of people (children, youth and families).



#### ■ Developing the institutional environment for preventive strengthening - partnership between family groups and Commune Damage Prevention Committees

Developing a durable programme of preventive action requires the engagement of families in the community and the commune representatives. Each plays a key role in awareness raising, support and implementation. In the villages, families who have made their homes safer share the experience with neighbours, whilst the commune provides the framework to provide guidance, support and organise animation events

At hamlet level DW encourages the democratic development of family groups, bringing together all the project beneficiaries, who are involved in decisions about priorities for support and credit for house strengthening, and in assessing what work is needed. The project then works with families to strengthen existing buildings simply and efficiently using locally available techniques and materials. Families always contribute both in kind and financially, covering about 58% of strengthening costs at present.

In each commune DW has collaborated with the People's Committees to establish a Commune Damage Prevention Committee (CDPC) who progressively take on responsibility for managing most of the project

activities in their commune and deciding on priorities. The CDPC brings together members of the People's committee, village representatives and local unions. DW develops the capacity of the CDPC with training and work sessions, including skills for managing the credit programme.

Four complementary actions take place in each commune.

■ **Training:**

DW runs training sessions for community representative and construction workers so that they can learn and discuss about the need to strengthen houses and public facilities, and get practical and technical training about the ways that this strengthening is done on different types of building.

■ **Credit for strengthening:**

Families can borrow up to 165 US\$ to strengthen their house. Repayment is over 18 months, with a 0,3% monthly interest rate. Families choose whether to repay monthly or irregular lump sums, so that they can reflect they pattern of their income. People take fierce pride in repaying, and the credit has also enhanced the position of women who tend to manage this.

■ **Demonstration:**

As well as strengthening homes DW also collaborates with the commune to strengthen small public buildings, including primary schools, kindergartens and markets, as these buildings provide additional exposure for the same techniques that can be used on homes.

■ **Working with schools:**

DW works with primary level schools and kindergartens, to listen to children's' concerns about disasters and take account of their priorities, and at the same time make children – and their parents, aware of the need for prevention and to see how it can be done. Training is provided to teaching staff as well so that the prevention messages is integrated into school curricula



## ACHIEVEMENTS

The project targets poor and vulnerable families. It has been encouraging to see women in particular participate in the project's activities - 40% of the beneficiary families involved in house strengthening has been headed by women. They participate actively in the animation and communication activities, and are key actors in bringing about change in the attitude of families so that prevention becomes a priority in housing improvement and construction.

## LESSONS

Introducing innovative approaches to disaster prevention takes time. Six years ago local authorities were sceptical that one can strengthen existing buildings and that the community can make a major financial and material contribution to prevention. Today there is wide acceptance and enthusiastic at provincial level. The challenge is to achieve similar acceptance at national strategy level, and this is a priority for the future. But the results of the project 'on the ground' acts as a clear example of what can be done, and this is the best way to convince.

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## CONTACT DETAILS

**John Norton**

Development Workshop France  
B.P13, 82110 Lauzerte, France  
Tel+33-563 95 82 34  
john.norton@dwf.org

**Guillaume Chantry**

Development Workshop Viet Nam  
173/31 Phan Dinh Phung, Hue, Viet Nam  
Tel: 054.848231  
dwwn@dng.vnn.vn  
<http://www.dwf.org/vietnam/preventdamage/index.htm>