



VIETNAM

CDF NETWORK GIVES ACCA A BIG HEAD START IN VIETNAM :

ACCA in VIETNAM :

PROJECT CITIES (total 9)

- Viet Tri
- Vinh
- Lang Son
- Ben Tre
- Hung Yen
- Thai Nguyen
- Hai Duong
- Ha Tinh
- Ca Mau

SMALL PROJECTS

Small projects approved : 41
 In number of cities : 8
 Total budget approved : \$120,000

BIG PROJECTS

Big projects approved : 2
 In number of cities : 2
 Total budget approved : \$80,000

IMPLEMENTING GROUPS

The ACCA projects in all nine Vietnamese cities are being implemented by a close collaboration between the Associated Cities of Vietnam (ACVN), the National Community Development Fund (CDF) savings network, the National Women's Union and the NGO ENDA Vietnam.

STRONG country, STRONG people.

"This ACCA Program is a very important starting point for Vietnam's community development process. Vietnam is a very strong country, and we Vietnamese are very strong people. Who else has won wars against both the French and the Americans? The government is also very strong, and this can sometimes be a problem. Usually, it is the government which mobilizes people to achieve the government's objectives. We want to use the ACCA Program to help change that, so that the people can mobilize the government to achieve the people's plans and objectives. That is the challenge for us."
 (Tran Minh Chau)

Vietnam is another country which starts the ACCA Program with a big head start. Over the past ten years ACHR and ENDA-Vietnam have been supporting a process of strengthening community savings groups and setting up city-level community development funds (CDFs) to link these savings groups in a growing number of Vietnamese cities. In each of these cities, the women's union and the communities are working together. This "CDF Network" started in five cities, then grew to eight, and has now spread to 28 cities around the country. But so far, these savings group networks have worked only on income generation activities, and some very small upgrading projects in the communities, not on the more complex and more urgent issues of land or housing.

In the current market-oriented phase of Vietnam's development, many of the old socialist collective housing projects are being bulldozed and redeveloped, as the inner-city land they occupy becomes more commercially valuable. And the poor families who live in these neighborhoods and housing blocks are finding themselves facing either eviction or the prospect of having to pay for brand new, contractor-built housing they cannot ever hope to afford. This is happening all over the country. So for the CDF network and ACCA, the key issue has been how the savings groups, the communities and the Women's union can begin to use the strength of their savings network to deal with these problems of land and housing.

Showing an alternative people-driven redevelopment model : With support from ACCA, teams of community architects are helping communities in several cities (especially Viet Tri and Vinh) to show a different way to redevelop Vietnam's poor inner-city neighborhoods, by getting the communities to start making their own redevelopment plans and getting the city and the Women's Union involved. If these first people-driven housing projects go well, it will be possible for the process to expand to city-wide scale and to many other cities as well. The goal in Vietnam is ultimately to mainstream community-driven development. And this is happening through savings, through city-wide housing and by bringing the city, the women's union and the communities to work together, at the same time.

Partnership with ACVN : In 2007, the CDF network forged an important new partnership with the Associated Cities of Vietnam (ACVN), a national union of 92 of the country's 96 towns and cities. Through workshops, national meetings and exchanges, the ACVN is helping facilitate the sharing of ideas between cities and promoting community savings and community-driven upgrading as key aspects of its work in its 92 member cities. ACVN and ENDA are leading partners in the implementation of ACCA in Vietnam and are two keys to scaling up the process around the country. With this national linkage between cities already in place, when a process works in one city, it spreads to other cities almost automatically.

ACCA TARGET : 100 VIETNAMESE CITIES BY 2012

The ACCA Program has begun in nine cities so far, but the program's key implementing partners are thinking nation-wide and have set an ambitious target of bringing 100 cities into the community savings/CDF and upgrading movement by 2012. And the work of expanding this national process continues: surveying new cities, starting savings groups and forming networks, inviting new cities to join workshops and milestone events in other cities, helping communities in new cities to prepare their small projects and building teams of community leaders experienced with their own housing and savings projects to visit other cities to help start savings, expand the CDF network and help other communities plan their ACCA projects.

Verticals and horizontals : We can talk about city-wide saving and community-driven development, but it's not so easy to change the relationships in a city to make that possible, especially in Vietnam, where the relationships between the people and the city authorities and the Women's Union are still overwhelmingly vertical. It's difficult for cities to change those vertical relationships by themselves, but the horizontal links between communities within a city and between cities can be a powerful force to soften those relationships and create a counterbalancing set of horizontal relationships. The national workshops and committees and the exchange visits of community leaders and city officials are all being used to create this horizontal platform between communities and between cities. And that's why ACVN's role is so crucial. Because ACVN is accepted and respected by the city authorities, they can intervene proactively and can open more room for the active participation of people in the city development process.

DOUBLING AND TRIPLING THE ORIGINAL ACCA INVESTMENT

One of the striking characteristics of the ACCA-supported small projects in Vietnam has been the high contributions communities have been able to leverage from their local governments. Why is this? In many Vietnamese cities, the government's action plans put infrastructure development in their newly-expanded rural communes on top of the priority list. Many of the small municipal projects in these semi-rural areas to build roads, drains and water supply systems are managed as joint ventures between local governments (who provide the funds) and communities (who build the projects) - this is something quite common in Vietnam. But usually, it's the local government that manages the projects and controls the money, and the people who contribute. *With ACCA, we're trying to turn that equation around!* In most of the small infrastructure projects implemented so far in Vietnam, the original investment from ACCA has been tripled or even quadrupled by contributions from the city and from the communities. Plus, since the communities all use the ACCA funds as revolving fund loans, that \$15,000 per city is already being paid back and going on to help other communities make improvements and unlock more local and government funds.

CITY: VIET TRI

Northern Vietnam

Viet Tri is a small "Class 2" provincial city, about a 2-hour drive from Hanoi, in northern Vietnam. Although it is very old, Viet Tri was a very small town until after the war, when the government encouraged migrants to come here and work in the state-run factories it was setting up, to help transform Viet Tri into an important industrial city in the north of Vietnam. More than half the municipal area is still mostly agricultural, with a factory or two scattered amidst beautiful farms and rice paddies and little clusters of forest.

POOR COMMUNITIES IN VIET TRI : Of the 71 poor communities in Viet Tri, 52 have insecure land tenure (2,049 households), and 19 are facing immediate eviction (878 households). The CDF network in Viet Tri has conducted community-based survey and mapping in two wards to identify community needs and promote savings groups, but no city-wide survey has been carried out yet. There aren't any totally informal squatter settlements in Viet Tri, of the sort we see in other Asian cities, but there are two kinds of poor settlements in the city with housing, land and environmental problems :

- **Vertical slums :** Dilapidated, run-down collective social housing in low-rise blocks (2 - 4 stories), where low-income people stay, which the government wants to demolish and "redevelop" with new housing. The families living in these buildings are in clear danger of eviction and will probably be forced out eventually.
- **Row-house slums :** There are also run-down collective housing developments for workers (mostly ground floor rowhouses), where the occupants do not have land use rights. In these settlements, there is a mix of poor and not-so-poor households. The government wants eventually to redevelop all these old collective housing developments, by either demolishing and rebuilding them *in-situ*, or by relocating the people to newly-developed housing elsewhere - or some combination of the two (as in Nong Trang Ward). Either way, the redevelopment process is so far conceived only as a conventional, top-down, state-planned, contractor-built process, with almost zero participation of the communities, and in which the people are expected to pay for everything: land-use rights, infrastructure and new housing, to the tune of \$4,000 - \$5,000 per household! There are six or seven of these redevelopment projects in Viet Tri, and the project at Nong Trang Ward is the first to be redeveloped in the Province's urban development plan for Viet Tri.

STRONG SAVINGS BUT NO EXPERIENCE WITH LAND OR HOUSING ISSUES : The CDF / community savings process in Viet Tri began in 1998 and is by now quite strong and active, with good support from the Women's Union, especially with income generation. There are now nearly 4,000 savings members (mostly women) in 244 small savings groups, with combined savings of over US\$ 150,000. The city's savings process got a big boost in September and December 2008 when ACHR, ACVN, ENDA and the Women's Union organized two big seminars here, and many new savings groups were launched then. The big question when the ACCA project began in Viet Tri was how to use the savings and CDF process to mobilize people to take on housing and upgrading activities, not just income generation. This is also the big question for most of the Vietnamese cities in the CDF network.

SMALL PROJECTS : The community savings network in Viet Tri (as in the other ACCA cities in Vietnam) decided to use the \$15,000 ACCA budget for small projects to start a special revolving fund for small infrastructure improvement loans, which are given to communities at 0.3 - 0.5% monthly (4 - 6% annual) interest. But they use that loan money to negotiate for the bigger money! They originally estimated that this small \$15,000 seed capital from ACCA would be matched by an additional US\$ 20,000 contribution from communities and leverage another \$5,000 - \$10,000 from the local authorities. But in fact the contributions from both communities and local authorities has far surpassed that target. Plus, since they use the ACCA funds as revolving fund loans, that original ACCA investment is already helping other communities make improvements and unlock more local and government funds. Four small projects have been completed so far :

- **Song Thao Block, Tien Cat Ward (16 households benefit** in a community of 38 households) Drainage. Total project cost \$1,779 (\$1,112 from ACCA + \$667 cash contribution from community)
- **Na Community, Block 5, Van Phu Commune (270 households benefit** in a community of 675 households) Paved walkway. Total project cost \$10,002 (\$2,778 from ACCA + \$4,133 in cash and materials from the community + \$5,152 cash from the local government).
- **Co Do Community, Block 2, Van Phu Commune (180 households benefit** in a community of 396 households). Paved walkway. Total project cost \$10,002 (\$1,667 from ACCA + \$3,334 cash from the community + \$4,840 cash from the local government + \$167 from the private sector).
- **Hung Community, Block 5, Van Phu Commune (270 households benefit** in a community of 675 households). Paved walkway. Total project cost \$32,663 (\$2,778 from ACCA + \$10,778 cash from the community + \$19,108 in cash from the local government).

PROJECTS WORTH 7 TIMES THE ORIGINAL ACCA INVESTMENT :

The ACCA investment of only \$8,335 has mobilized another \$18,911 in cash and materials from the community, and \$29,266 in cash from the local government, bringing the total value of the four projects so far to \$56,513. That means that the ACCA budget accounted for less than 15% of the total project costs, and that the projects were worth almost 7 times the original ACCA investment.



Communities do it faster : It took the community in Van Phu Commune just one month to build their new road. Compare that to a similar project in Ho Chi Minh City, which went through the government bureaucracy and took six years!

CITY INFORMATION :

URBAN POVERTY IN VIET TRI

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Total urban population | 41,114 households (185,013 people) |
| Urban poor population | 2,650 households (11,925 people) |
| Number of slums | 71 communities |
| % population in slums | 6% |
| Survey conducted in only 2 wards so far | |

SAVINGS

| | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Date savings started | 1998 |
| Savings groups | 244 groups |
| Savings members | 3,830 members |
| Total savings | US\$ 159,588 |
| CDF started | 2002 |

ACCA BUDGET APPROVED SO FAR :

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Small projects (5) | \$ 15,000 |
| Big projects (2) | \$ 40,000 |
| City process support | \$ 3,000 |
| Seed capital to boost CDF | \$ 2,000 |



2 BIG PROJECTS :

Two big land and housing breakthroughs in Viet Tri :

The ACCA big project funds are being used to partially support two important, alternative people-built housing demonstration projects in Viet Tri (one relocation and one reconstruction on the same site), both of which have been used to persuade government authorities to allow people to do it another way. The \$40,000 from ACCA has been combined with an earlier grant of \$30,000 from Selavip, which by itself was too small to get any housing project going. With both these grants, the available pool of funds is \$70,000. There is an old saying in Vietnam that when we eat rice, we have to share the same small piece of salty fish, to give flavor and nourishment to the rice. In the same way, the community people are seeing how they can use this small budget to make beautiful houses for as many people as possible.

1

FIRST PROJECT : Nearby relocation of the community at Block 5, Van Phu Commune (42 households initially) to free land provided by the government.

For seven years, this dilapidated community of 146 households, in the still-mostly-agricultural outskirts of Viet Tri, had resisted attempts to evict them to make way for a provincial university-building project, and to relocate them to land nearby, where each family would get a postage stamp-sized plot, with no space for any trees or vegetable gardens. The community started savings in 2007, joined the national CDF network in 2008 and became the first case in Vietnam where all the 15 savings groups in the commune put their savings together in a common loan fund for members. After an intense half-year of negotiation and planning, the people were finally able to persuade the city authority to agree to a better deal: each displaced family will get a free 300m² plot (with space for house, vegetable garden and income generation activities), with some compensation for new house construction, and the whole new settlement will be designed and built by the people themselves, using a small sub-group system to organize the project and using the hollow concrete blocks they will manufacture themselves (using the machine from Thailand) to make the houses cheaper. The first 42 households got their land certificates in December 2009.



2

SECOND PROJECT : On-site reconstruction of the community at Blocks 3 & 4, Nong Trang Ward (337 households) with land-use rights from the government.

This large community of 337 dilapidated 1-room row-houses was built originally to house workers at a state-run factory, which went bankrupt a few years ago. When the government invited the Provincial Authority to make plans for redeveloping the community, the scheme they came up with followed a very high standard, with wider roads, bigger plots and larger houses - all of which the people would have to pay for. The plan would require 97 households to be evicted and those who stayed to pay more than they can afford for the new, bigger, contractor-built houses. The people objected and began negotiating with the city. Now, with help from ACCA and the Selavip project, the residents have finally persuaded the government to allow them to redevelop their housing and community in their own way, and to show the city a cheaper and better way to redevelop old, run-down neighborhoods like this one - not by developers but by the residents themselves.

In March 2009, the first batch of 56 families got their land-use certificates, in a big event, to which the community network and ACVN invited as many community people and government officials as possible, to let the whole city see this alternative planning process by people becoming something real, and to begin building a momentum for change in the city. The 60 square meter pilot house that the people in Nong Trang ward built, in September 2009 (after a housing design workshop with the young CODI architects and ACVN, and using the community-manufactured cement blocks made with the Thai machine) cost just \$1,600 to build, compared to the normal cost of the same house built by a contractor for at least \$2,500. That means that when the people do the work together, they can build ten houses for the price of six! It's much cheaper when people build.



Lowering costs by making their own **BLOCKS** :

A growing team of community architects from Viet Nam continues to work with communities in the ACCA process in Viet Tri and other cities. They have gotten strong support from visiting teams of community architects, community leaders and CODI organizers from Thailand, through a series of hands-on community planning and low-cost housing design workshops. In July 2009, the Thai team brought a concrete block-making machine to Viet Tri, and organized a week-long training program in Nong Trang, in which community builders from Chantaburi Thailand taught their friends in Viet Tri and Vinh how to make their own concrete and pre-cast building materials (blocks, paving slabs, toilet rings, etc), which will help lower the cost of their housing projects. But besides reducing house costs, the important point about block production by community people is that it helps them work together, plan together and build the confidence to manage and decide more things among themselves collectively. It is a form of empowerment through a very concrete process of working together.

CITY: VINH

Northern Vietnam

The coastal city of Vinh is Ho Chi Minh's birthplace, and it was recently reclassified as a "Class 1" city, even though its population is much smaller than in the other Class 1 cities like Hanoi, Danang and Ho Chi Minh City. The upgrading of Vinh's status has been a boon for civic pride, but a nightmare for the city's poor communities. With the Class 1 status comes a whole range of Class 1 urban planning standards and "modernization" imperatives the city must meet, like wider roads, larger land plots and higher buildings, and these changes are causing a lot of eviction and demolition of the city's many poor and "substandard" housing areas.

ALL COLLECTIVE HOUSING IN VINH TO BE DEMOLISHED AND REDEVELOPED : In the 1970s and 80s, under Vietnam's centralized planning system, Vinh was targeted to be developed as an industrial city. Many collective rental housing projects were subsequently constructed by different companies to provide housing for their employees and their families. Most of this housing took the form of very poorly-built one or two-room row houses of 15 to 23 square meters. There are now 142 of these collective housing developments in Vinh (with 3,386 households), and most are in badly deteriorated conditions. In many cases, the factories have sold these houses to the poor workers who occupy them, but because they didn't come with any land-use rights, the house owners are still vulnerable to eviction. In 2007, as part of the city's Class 1 modernization process, the Nghe An Provincial authority approved a proposal from the city to demolish and redevelop all these collective housing developments. As in Viet Tri, the redevelopments will involve upgrading these areas to higher planning standards, with wider roads, bigger plots and larger houses - all of which will be built expensively by contractors and all of which the people will have to pay for. And as in Viet Tri, most of these poor worker households can't afford such housing, and will end up being made homeless by the redevelopment process.

STARTING A DIALOGUE AND SHOWING AN ALTERNATIVE : The poor communities in Vinh are not taking these big changes in their city lying down, though. Most of these collective housing developments have become tightly-knit communities over the years, and the people want to stay. In February, 2009, a city-wide training workshop on participatory planning and self-help housing construction was organized in Vinh by ACVN and ACHR, with technical support from a team of architects and community organizers from CODI in Thailand. In this workshop, the city authorities provided for the first time a full set of information about these plans to demolish and redevelop the city's collective workers housing. And this meeting opened up a public dialogue on the issue, and started a process of looking at cheaper, more community-managed alternatives to the city's expensive, contractor-driven redevelopment model (which are not written in stone after all).

SAVINGS IN VINH : The city has a large and richly-developed community savings and credit movement and a Community Development Fund, but the savings groups are still quite scattered. Many of them are still managed by the Women's Union and follow the traditional Vietnamese savings group models where all the members take turns getting the full savings kitty, or else have shares and withdraw all their savings at Tet - the Vietnamese New year. The people have not yet been able to link the savings with issues of land and housing.

SMALL PROJECTS : The community savings network in Vinh (as in the other ACCA cities in Vietnam) decided to use their \$15,000 ACCA budget for small projects to start special revolving fund for small infrastructure improvement loans, which are given to communities at 0.3 - 0.5% monthly (4 - 6% annual) interest, repayable in 25 months. The idea of this system is to use the small ACCA projects as an opportunity to strengthen the savings and network and collaboration process in Vinh, since the savings groups in the city are still working more-less independently and not coming together. They estimate that these projects will directly benefit about 900 households, and should be completed quickly from 5 days to 2 months. They also originally estimated that this small \$15,000 seed capital from ACCA would be matched by an additional US\$ 25,737 contribution from communities and leverage another \$7,421 from the local authority, so the value of the small projects will total US\$ 48,158. Three of the projects have been completed so far, and all the projects have leveraged much more money from within communities and from the local authority than they had ever hoped.

- **Cell 3, Block 12, Doi Cung Ward (20 households benefit** in a community of 50 households) Underground sewers. Total project cost \$21,324 (\$3,000 from ACCA + \$16,366 cash and materials contribution from community + \$1,958 from local government)
- **Cell 4, Thuan 2 Village, Hung Hoa Commune (20 households benefit** in a community of 40 households) Paved walkway. Total project cost \$18,995 (\$3,000 from ACCA + \$11,521 cash and materials contribution from community + \$4,474 from local government)
- **Cells 1, 2, 3, Kanh Hau Village, Hung Hoa Commune (50 households benefit** in a community of 60 households) Underground sewers. Total project cost \$18,995 (\$3,000 from ACCA + \$11,521 cash and materials contribution from community + \$4,474 from local government)

PROJECTS WORTH 7 TIMES THE ORIGINAL ACCA INVESTMENT :

The ACCA investment of only \$9,000 has mobilized another \$39,408 in cash, labor and materials from the community, and \$10,906 in cash from the local government, bringing the total value of the three projects to \$59,234. That means that the ACCA budget accounted for just 15% of the total project costs, and that the projects are worth almost 7 times the original ACCA investment.



CITY INFORMATION :

URBAN POVERTY IN VINH

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Total urban population | 108,802 households (435,208 people) |
| Urban poor population | 3,386 households (12,463 people) |
| Number of slums | 201 communities |
| % population in slums | 11% |
| Latest survey conducted | No information |

SAVINGS

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Date savings started | August 2006 |
| Savings groups | 20 groups |
| Savings members | 325 members |
| Total savings | US\$ 12,638 |
| City Fund started | 2006 |

ACCA BUDGET APPROVED SO FAR :

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Small projects (5) | \$ 15,000 |
| Big project (1) | \$ 40,000 |
| City process support | \$ 3,000 |
| Seed capital to boost CDF | \$ 2,000 |

BIG PROJECT :

Another big land and housing breakthrough in Vinh :

BIG PROJECT IN VINH : On-site reblocking and reconstruction of the community at Block 6A, Cua Nam Ward (29 households) with land-use rights from the government.



The Cua Nam Ward is one of the neighborhoods in Vinh where the provincial authority has approved plans to demolish 142 units of old, “sub-standard” collective workers housing (with one-room row house units of 30 square meters) around the city and replace them with a contractor-built redevelopment with units of more than double the size (70 square meters is the province’s “minimum” house size), which people wishing to stay would have to pay for, at market rates. The 29 poor households living in collective housing in Block 6A wanted to stay, but they could never afford units in the new scheme.

So they decided to propose an alternative plan to the provincial authority, in which they redevelop their block themselves. As Mr. Le Viet Hung, a community leader in Block 6A, said, “We have been living here for 30 years, and our houses are in very bad condition, with leaking roofs and very hot in summer. We want the government to give us the land use rights so that we can improve our settlement and rebuild our houses ourselves. Now we have a lot of work to do, to show our government another way - besides the usual system of evicting poor families in collective housing.”

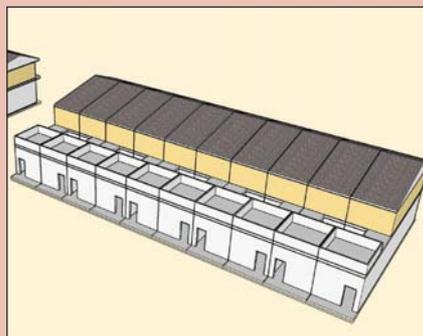
The plans they developed, with help from a local architect and the Thai team from CODI, include widening the lanes to five meters, laying proper drains and rebuilding their own small houses using a modest row-house design on 45 square meter plots. They used these redevelopment plans, which will be partly financed by the big project funds from ACCA, to negotiate, first with the city government. Once they got the city’s support, they used the force of that approval to negotiate with the provincial authority. The province finally agreed to the people’s proposal in early September 2009, and the community held its ground-breaking ceremony to start the house construction on 19 March, 2010.

This project sets an important new precedent in Vietnam : This is the first-ever case in Viet Nam in which urban poor communities living in collective housing have won the right to design and rebuild their own affordable housing on the same site. It is an important breakthrough because in cities all over Viet Nam, municipal governments keen on modernizing their cities are now on the warpath to demolish and redevelop their stock of run-down collective housing, which are seen as an eyesore. When the redevelopment is done by for-profit developers, as it usually is, the redevelopment process invariably means eviction and homelessness for most of the poor families who live there.

Using the ACCA project to challenge and change unrealistically high building standards, which make most new housing unaffordable to the poor. The province-set standard minimum house size of 70 sq. meters was challenged by the people in Cua Nam Ward, who have for 30 years lived in 30 sq. meter houses, and have successfully proposed building their own new 45 square meter row houses that are designed to more closely fit their affordability. This people’s standard has now been officially recognized and sanctioned by the local government. After winning approval for their community-driven redevelopment plans, the Block 6A community has begun to assist four other communities living in collective housing quarters elsewhere in Vinh City to initiate the same process, in which the communities develop their own rebuilding plan, and then design and build their houses together.



BEFORE : The roofs leaked, the kitchens had no ventilation, the toilets clogged - nobody in Block 6A wanted to keep living this way either.



AFTER : The modest 3m x 15m row houses they have designed and are building themselves cost just a fraction of the contractor-built alternative.



The problem of standards that are **TOO HIGH** . . .

In all cities in Vietnam, there is a system in which the communities have to link with the ward authority, the ward with the district, the district with the city and the city to the province. This centralized system has many tiers and it works very efficiently in Viet Nam. But sometimes there are problems, as when the system imposes the kinds of standards we see here in Vinh, where all houses are supposed to be 70 square meters or bigger.

That standard suddenly makes all the poor people’s existing houses in the city illegal and creates an artificial reason to evict them. People might have lived and prospered for centuries in their less-than-70-square-meter dwellings without any problem, but these kinds of new standards can suddenly create a lot of problems for them. Here in Vinh, the pilot project is showing a new alternative standard, which is more realistic and more possible for the city’s poor, to show the government and to persuade the system to come down a bit with its too-high standards and be a little more realistic.

CITY:

LANG SON

Northern Vietnam

Lang Son is a small "Class 3" city located in the beautiful mountains of Northeast Viet Nam, just 18 kilometers from the Chinese border and about a four-hour drive from Viet Tri. This is one of the poorest areas of Viet Nam. The city is divided into five urban wards and three semi-rural communes. The city's economy relies on cross-border trade with China and tourism, and has become a magnet for poor migrants from surrounding hill tribe areas. The city's infrastructure (water supply, roads, bridges etc.) is still very poor in the three rural communes, where most of the city's poor live - many in still quite village like agricultural communities. Most of the city's poor are members of ethnic minorities from the mountains (from the Tay, Nung, Man and Dzao hill tribe groups).

GOOD WILL FROM THE CITY GOVERNMENT BUT CONVENTIONAL APPROACH : Lang Son's local authority has a strong intention to support poor families with a comprehensive plan to provide vocational and agricultural training, micro-credit, housing and basic infrastructure improvements, but most of these programs are run along the lines of conventional welfare-delivery or micro-credit. There is also a very strong and effective cooperation between technical agencies in the city (like the Economic Development Office) and the various mass organizations working in Lang Son (like the Women's Union and the Farmer's Union) to help poor families. The city has already invested US\$ 26,300 from the city budget to provide loans to poor families, individually. And since the savings groups and CDF started in September 2009, the local government has committed to contribute US\$ 70,000 (\$25,000 each year) to the new CDF in Lang Son.

COMMUNITY PROCESS STARTING FROM SCRATCH : In December 2008, Lang Son was one of 11 new northern cities which participated in the national CDF workshop on "Scaling up CDF to contribute in the urban poverty reduction" in Viet Tri. Before that, there was no community process in the city, no savings groups, no community network. Lang Son was the only one of those 11 new cities to agree to join the national CDF network. Right after that workshop in Viet Tri, a small team (including Minh Chau, Thuy and two community leaders from Viet Tri) visited Lang Son on the first exchange visit and helped start the first savings groups. Within six months of starting the ACCA project, there were 9 savings groups, with 130 members, in Lang Son, with a total savings of about \$1,500. In February, 2009, a group of 15 people from Lang Son (including community leaders, city and ward authorities and Women's Union staff) came to Viet Tri to attend the training on community-based survey and mapping with the visiting Thai team. Since then, Lang Son has become an active member in the growing network of northern Vietnamese CDF cities.

6 SMALL PROJECTS : The community savings network estimates that the small \$15,000 budget from ACCA (which is being used as grants) will be matched by an additional US\$ 28,900 contribution from communities and leverage another \$24,616 from the local authorities, so the value of the small projects will total US\$ 68,516.

- **Co Man Village, Mai Pha Commune (270 households benefit)** Road building. Total project cost \$5,662 (\$2,000 from ACCA + \$1,862 cash and materials from community + \$1,800 from local government)
- **No Chuong 2 Village, Mai Pha Commune (96 households benefit)** Road building. Total project cost \$2,170 (\$2,000 from ACCA + \$170 cash from the community)
- **Quang Trung Village, Quang Lac Commune (50 households benefit)** Water supply system. Total project cost \$8,831 (\$3,000 from ACCA + \$5,243 from community + \$558 from local government)
- **Hoang Thuy Village, Hoang Dong Commune (15 households benefit)** Road building. Total project cost \$1,678 (\$500 from ACCA + \$678 cash and materials from community + \$500 from local government)
- **Na Pan Village, Hoang Dong Commune (100 households benefit)** Road building. Total project cost \$26,645 (\$2,170 from ACCA + \$1,580 from community + \$22,895 from local government)
- **Luc Khoang Village, Hoang Dong Commune (74 households benefit)** Water supply system. Total project cost \$17,275 (\$2,170 from ACCA + \$15,105 in cash and materials from the community)



CITY INFORMATION :

URBAN POVERTY IN LANG SON

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Total urban population | 86,005 people (21,527 households) |
| Urban poor population (government figures) | 785 people (364 households) |
| Number of slums | 35 communities |
| % population in slums | 1% (gov. figure) |
| Latest survey conducted | April 2009 |

SAVINGS

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Date savings started | September 2009 |
| Savings groups | 12 groups |
| Savings members | 204 members |
| Total savings | US\$ 1,500 |
| CDF started | September 2009 |

ACCA BUDGET APPROVED SO FAR :

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Small projects (6) | \$ 15,000 |
| City process support | \$ 3,000 |
| Seed capital to boost CDF | \$ 2,000 |
| No big project proposed yet | |



The water-supply system at QUANG TRUNG

Quang Trung is one of the poorest communities in Lang Son. Most of its 77 households earn their living from farming or raising pigs and poultry. The families have always had to collect their drinking water in buckets from a mountain spring two kilometers straight uphill from the community - a daily task that mostly fell to the women. Nobody had tanks to store water during the dry season, when the spring ran dry. So the community's first priority was to install a system to pipe the water down from the source, and build a series of communal tanks to store it in, with a proper filtration system. After starting a savings group (which has 100% membership now!), negotiating with the local government to contribute, and gathering their own contribution in cash and materials, the people did all the work together, starting in September 2009 and working even during the rains. When the water supply system is up and running, which will be soon, each family will pay 2,000 Dong (US\$ ten cents) per year to help maintain the system. The people are now planning to continue to work together to upgrade the community roads. While the work was going on in Quang Trung, villagers from neighboring communities kept coming by to see what was going on, and seeing inspired them to start planning and proposing their own projects.