



In Viet Nam, UNV IT Specialist Tran Tien Cong (Second from right) and UNV Support Specialist Le Ha Long (right) engage with the Viet Nam Volunteer Information Resource Centre volunteers on the steps of the Viet Nam Youth Union office in Hanoi. Five UN Volunteers supported the centre, training about 150 people and establishing a trainer-of-trainers network with 70 members. (Harald Franzen/UNV, 2013)

## Strengthening the capacity of volunteerism for development in Viet Nam

In an effort to fight high levels of youth exclusion and vulnerability in Viet Nam, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) partnered with the Vietnamese Central Committee of the Ho Chi Minh Youth Union (HCYU) in 2009 to create the Strengthening the Capacity of Volunteerism for Development in Viet Nam (VDVN) project.

The project created the country's first national institution for the promotion, support and coordination of volunteerism for development in Viet Nam, the Viet Nam Volunteer Information Resource Centre (VVIRC). Since its inception, the VVIRC has brought together thousands of youth volunteers from more than 150 volunteer organizations to support communities in need. During the 2013 Blood Donation Festival in Hanoi, VVIRC attracted an unprecedented 10,000 blood donors.

The Vietnamese Government has stressed the importance of an inclusive agenda that includes youth in its Social Economic Development Plan. Volunteerism, among other mechanisms, can help bridge the urban-rural gap and contribute to community-led, equitable development by creating opportunities for participation and inclusion of youth.

VDVN aims to develop and expand the network of international voluntary cooperation and strengthen the operational capacity of volunteer involving organizations (VIOs) in Viet Nam. In its first phase (2009 – 2012), the project set up the *Vietnamese Volunteer Information Resource Centre (VVIRC)*, which has offices in the north, centre, and south of Viet Nam and a website which links youth volunteers to volunteering opportunities.

In addition, the project strengthened the capacity of institutions engaged with youth volunteers, created a public information strategy, and policy recommendations for drafting government regulations on volunteerism. The project mobilized five national UN Volunteers and over 200 volunteers from the community.

“ Strengthening the capacity of volunteerism for development in Viet Nam was made possible by contributions from the government of Viet Nam and UNV.

UNV played a critical role in developing the capacity of VVIRC staff, developing communication infrastructures to better match needs of organizations and skills of volunteers, and consolidating the relationship with national and international partners. In addition, it was able to share the lessons learned from volunteer infrastructure development projects which it has supported in 20 countries, thereby helping VDVN to improve its own volunteer infrastructure and develop a strong and open volunteer network.

The VVIRC’s establishment and its consolidated web presence (especially on social media) are highly successful components of the project. Offering Vietnamese youth unprecedented access to volunteering opportunities both nationally and internationally, the centre helps to fight youth vulnerability and exclusion. *Programme Green Dream 2010*, for instance, an initiative of Viet Nam Handicap International and Hue’s Medicine University, mobilized young volunteers through VVIRC to raise awareness about disabilities on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Another initiative, the *Skills – Excursions Club* was established to develop the skills and experience of young people through volunteer excursions in the southern provinces.

Another successful achievement is the establishment of a series of volunteer-related networks, including a network of trainers on volunteerism and volunteer management at the central and regional level, VVIRC networks of VIOs in Hanoi, and a network of social

support for organisations providing services to the homeless and disabled.

In addition to these networks, the project organized three *Volunteer Voice* forums, constituting a platform for 100 representatives from the volunteer community and the first-ever opportunity in Viet Nam to share experiences and challenges and forge links with like-minded organisations.

From 2011 onward the project introduced a volunteer awards, the first of its kind in Viet Nam, to honour individuals and organisations making an outstanding contribution to volunteerism. The awards have the dual impact of raising awareness of the VDVN project and promoting volunteerism, while also building the profile of award-winning organisations, enabling them to improve their chances of finding sponsorship and funding.

In order to consolidate, expand and guarantee sustainability of youth volunteering activities in Viet Nam, UNV committed and approved additional funding and technical assistance for the project's second phase, running from 2013 to 2015.

During the opening ceremony, Phan Van Mai, Permanent Secretary of the Ho Chi Minh Youth Union (HCYU), thanked UNV for its strategic assistance, technical expertise and for the great achievements of the project.

The second phase of the project will focus on the capacity development of VVIRC staff, developing communication infrastructures to better match needs of organizations and skills of volunteers, and consolidating the relationship with national and international partners.

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