



## Improved Leadership to Meet New Organizational Operations and Funding Requirements

Ms. Duong Thi Van, President of the Hanoi Association of Persons with Disabilities (DP Hanoi), has struggled to effectively lead her association within the local climate of ever-changing operations and policies. She, like many other civil association leaders in Vietnam, has found it difficult to adjust to the government's budget cuts for civil associations while also adhering to the introduction of new regulations that affect the funding for VNGOs. In this midst of this change, Ms. Van has also had to reorient DP Hanoi to accommodate the shifts in donors' funding policies and thematic areas.

According to Ms. Van, "The operation and funding context is changing very fast in Vietnam. Most of the VNGO leaders in the disability community come from a technical background who work to address PWDs' pressing social needs. Like them, I was not trained to become an effective leader and manager. I did not know how to effectively operate and sustain DP Hanoi so that we can continue to support PWDs."

Supported by USAID, Ms. Van attended two three-day Partner Capacity Development (PCD) trainings in Hanoi to help overcome this knowledge gap. Through the trainers and participants of the Fundraising Workshop (2016) and Governance & Strategic Planning (2017), she gained the knowledge and hands-on experience to implement an effective governance strategy, in addition to learning how to approach a more diverse range of donors in Vietnam.

With the assistance of PCD, Ms. Van shared her new knowledge and skills with the association's steering committee members. She then led the review and revision of the 2017-2022 DP Hanoi Strategic Plan to make it clear in terms of vision, mission, core values and objectives. The 2018 operation plan was subsequently developed and implemented in line with the Strategic Plan. Ms. Van has also drafted clear TORs for the steering committee members, differentiating the roles of governance and management. She is now setting up the association's advisory board to help guide the further development of DP Hanoi.

DP Hanoi has also changed the way it raises funds. Ms. Van now understands the importance of having a fundraising strategy in place, as well as the relationship between fundraising and communications efforts. The association has begun approaching new donors, especially in the private sector. It has developed a donor database and maintains contact with them about what they do to support PWDs in Hanoi. Based on the Strategic Plan, Ms. Van has asked the Abilis Foundation to support the development and implementation of DP Hanoi's communication plan. Finally, DP Hanoi has developed a proposal entitled, "Sustainable Model of Clean Vegetable Planting for Improving the Inclusion of Women with Disabilities in the Van Tu and Van Nhan communes, Phu Xuyen district, Hanoi," which has been submitted to USAID for funding consideration.

"With PCD support, new things are happening in DP Hanoi. We are setting up systems and processes to ensure potential donors that we are implementing effective governance, accountability and compliance with the law and regulations. We are now more confident to approach them and share with them what we do and seek their common interest in supporting PWDs in Hanoi. It is more effective!" (Ms. Van).



## **Building Local NGO and Private Sector Relationships to Protect Vietnam's Coastal Environment**

Since 2003, the Centre for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD) has worked closely with coastal communities in Vietnam to support community development while preserving natural biodiversity. As traditional donors in the development sector downsized their spending in Vietnam, MCD recognized that the operations and funding context had changed, and it would need to adjust its strategy. Accordingly, it identified partnerships with private sector companies as way to build a sustainable future for both the NGO and the coastal communities it aims to protect.

As MCD established a relationship with General Motors (GM) Vietnam, it realized that it would need to enhance its organizational capacity to meet the needs of this new partnership. USAID's Partner Capacity Development Program (PCD) supported two MCD staff to attend its 3-day training of fundraising and external relations in July 2016. Ms. Hue, the Director of MCD, stated, "It was the training and technical assistance provided by PCD that built MCD's institutional and human capacity through drafting organizational and fundraising strategies along with communication tools to execute them. I believe the assistance provided by PCD allowed MCD to develop a clear vision for the future and to think more broadly about fundraising, external relations and the development of new private sector partnerships. MCD now has benchmark fundraising targets, which include building relationships with private sector companies such as GM Vietnam."

As a result of their new partnership, MCD worked with GM Vietnam to co-sponsor an event celebrating World Environment Day on June 24, 2017, in Nam Dinh province. The event, which was in support of the Red River Delta Adaptation and Youth (READY) program, aimed to raise the public awareness of the role that mangroves play in mitigating the impacts of climate change and protecting the marine environment. 100 GM Vietnam employees, executives, and dealers joined 200 local youth volunteers to plant over 500 mangrove trees at the Xuan Thuy National Park. In the spirit of corporate social responsibility, GM Vietnam also worked with MCD to build a playground made from recycled materials, such as old tires, for children in the Giao Thien Commune.

MCD is now demonstrating its capacity to implement a fundraising strategy which leverages private sector relationships to access corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds while raising awareness within the business community of development challenges in Vietnam. In the words of Ms. Hue, "MCD has worked closely with coastal communities to address their development challenges and I hope that this partnership with GM Vietnam is the first of many private sector partnerships for MCD and that this model of partnership between VNGOs, the private sector and local communities will become increasingly widespread in Vietnam."



## Leader Uncovers New Ideas to Care for Persons with Disabilities

Before entering the 10th grade, Hoang Manh Hoai faced the most difficult decision of his young life. A horrible spell of weather had wiped out all the crops on his family's farm overnight. With the family's source of income gone, Hoai, the eldest of seven children, knew he had to help. He then made the unenviable choice to drop out of school.

The family's luck turned a year later but the time Hoai had spent toiling for his loved ones left an indelible imprint in his mind. That year instilled in Hoai the value of education and learning. "Knowledge is endless, so we need to improve ourselves every day," said Hoai, reflecting on his family's woes from three decades earlier. "When we study, even just a little bit, it can make a huge difference on ourselves."

The mindset of perpetual learning carried Hoai through university and beyond. Over the years, he has earned a medical doctorate and joined Vietnam's Ministry of Health (MOH), where he currently serves as the Head of Medical Service for the Binh Phuoc Department of Health. He is responsible for overseeing the MOH's services for the nearly one million residents in the province. Chief among his duties is ensuring that disabled persons receive the care and support they need to lead healthy, active, and rewarding lives.

Due to his department's limited resources and facilities, Dr. Hoai is perpetually looking for new ideas that will improve the services his department provides. When Dr. Hoai heard about the opportunity to join a USAID-funded study tour of disability services in Thailand, he knew it would open new doors for growth.

The program brought 11 Vietnamese policymakers and medical practitioners to Bangkok in April 2018 to learn about the comprehensive rehabilitation services offered in Thailand. During the tour, Dr. Hoai engaged with leading healthcare policymakers, hospital managers, and public health officials in Thailand who shared their knowledge about integrating inpatient and outpatient care and delivering high-impact rehabilitation services.

Dr. Hoai left Bangkok with new ideas to improve the efficiency of health services in Vietnam. He also gained hands-on experience using cutting-edge prosthetics and innovative technologies that are greatly improving the lives of disabled individuals. It was visiting with patients in the hospital and the community, though, that made the deepest impression on Dr. Hoai. "I found out that people with disabilities, whether you're in Vietnam or Thailand, need care from the community," Dr. Hoai said.

Interacting with community members made it apparent to Dr. Hoai that Vietnam lacked the same organized system of peer support from community and family members, as well as home visits from medical volunteers and professionals. He then began thinking about how he could develop the same community support model in Binh Phuoc. Alongside his colleagues Drs. Le Anh Tuan, Phan Van Tap, and Nguyen Thanh Hoi, Dr. Hoai first assessed the potential of a Binh Phuoc model, built key local partnerships to support the initiative (such as the local Women's Union and Elderly Union), and then found the necessary resources and facilities to take action.

In June of 2018, Dr. Hoai and his colleagues officially launched the Tan Hiep Community-based Rehabilitation Center, the first of its kind in the province. The center serves as the focal point for rehabilitation care for the elderly and people with disabilities in Tan Hiep Commune. The center houses both the equipment and resources needed to provide quality rehabilitation care for its target population. It also has a team of dedicated doctors and health volunteers who make regular visits to the patients' homes, thereby providing personalized care and reducing the burden on families. It's the human element that is too often overlooked in healthcare, and Dr. Hoai is on a mission to fix that problem for his loved ones and the thousands of constituents who depend on him.



## **Achieving Project Targets through New Leadership Strategies.**

Ms. Dinh Thu Hang is a Project Officer at the Center for Environment and Community Research (CECR), a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that works to protect and restore the environment. Ms. Hang trains and supports stakeholders to implement CECR models of waste classification in Danang, one of Vietnam's biggest tourist destinations.

When Ms. Hang began working at CECR, she found it difficult to effectively engage her team and stakeholders to implement project activities, which often resulted in their projects being behind schedule. USAID recognized the need for representatives from local NGOs, like Ms. Hang, to improve their knowledge and skills to manage and implement activities and helped organize a Leadership and People Management training in March 2018. At this training, Ms. Hang not only learned new leadership and management skills, but she also had the opportunity to reflect on her work and her role at CECR.

As a result of the leadership training, she was able to realize that she needed to manage relationships differently. Ms. Hang has since adjusted her approach to differentiate between team members' styles to achieve the project's common targets. For example, she provides more autonomy to those with more advanced knowledge and skills while working one-on-one with less experienced team members.

"I have learned that I must change myself to work effectively with my team and stakeholders. In a small group like ours, I need to perform both management and leadership roles to inspire the shared vision of a green city and look for innovative ways to improve it," Ms. Hang said. "Thanks to the leadership and people skills training, I have improved my performance a lot!"

USAID's Organizational Development Trail (ODT) Program, which runs from November 2017 to November 2018, is aimed to strengthen the human and institutional capacity of Vietnamese non-government organizations (VNGOs) to bid for, receive and manage donor funding. The ODT program consists of 7 technical training courses, 3 leadership forums with coaching and mentoring back in the workplace. To date, 160 persons-time from 15 VNGOs attended 5 training courses and 2 leadership forums.



## **VAVA Builds Institutional and Human Capacity to Meet New Fundraising Challenges**

With the donor landscape rapidly changing in Vietnam, Ms. Le Kieu Oanh realized that she needed to find new ways to secure and manage funding if her organization wanted to continue its work supporting victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin. As the Deputy Manager of the Finance Department for the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA), a quasi-government association, Ms. Oanh is keenly aware of changes in the field and their implications for VAVA's future.

VAVA has operated in a highly traditional way since it was established in 2004. Recently, though, the government budget for VAVA operations has been dramatically reduced to 70% and the traditional funding companies no longer support VAVA activities due to their financial limitations. With these changes, Ms. Oanh began exploring new avenues for financial security and growth. This led her to the USAID-funded Organizational Development Trail (ODT) Program.

Taking what she learned in the ODT program, Ms. Oanh has persuaded VAVA senior management to adopt more modern approaches, such as using technology to build new networks. They have upgraded their official website and fan page to provide information on government health care policies, vocational training for Agent Orange victims, and VAVA programs for that population. As of September 2018, VAVA has more than 20,000 followers and a network of over 200 collaborators who work in all different sectors of the government, military, schools, businesses, VNGOs and more, helping VAVA further reach these communities.

With this growing network, VAVA has piloted new funding approaches such as crowdfunding and payable services, in addition to organizing fundraising events. They work with other government and private agencies to organize payable services to raise funds. In 2018 alone, VAVA has raised about \$300,000 USD (6.8 billion VND). These funds will be used to provide housing, food, and scholarships for the victims with difficulties.

Thanks to the institutional management training she also received in the ODT program, Ms. Oanh can lead and manage her team to organize services themselves instead of outsourcing. She now assigns clear tasks with clear expectations and deadlines to staff with relevant skills and coaches them to complete the tasks.

“The ODT program has opened a new world of organizational governance and management knowledge and experience in the development sector, the trend in the world and the development implications for Vietnam that I did not know before. I now know that I can find the answers to any of our questions in the ODT network.” said Ms. Oanh.

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## Training Series Brings Positive Changes to Vietnamese NGO

Like many other NGOs in Vietnam, Environment and Development Action (ENDA Vietnam) found itself facing challenges with its organizational development and staffing. Despite having operated in Vietnam since 1995, ENDA lacked key organizational tools such as an annual work plan and it struggled with staffing issues. It had young staff with high motivation to work, but those staff members also lacked work experience. “As a young and inexperienced [ENDA] staff member,” Ms. Nguyen Thi Hoang Dung noted, “I did not understand work requirements correctly, which led to unexpected outputs and time-management issues.” Recognizing that such issues had a negative impact on its work, which focuses on urban poverty and the environment, ENDA turned to the USAID-funded Organizational Development Trail (ODT) program for organizational support and staff capacity development.

ENDA was selected by the Partner Capacity Development (PCD) Program to send three team members to participate in the seven-course ODT program, which also consisted of three leadership forums. ENDA learned from these trainings that it was crucial to develop an organization sustainably and professionally, apart from solely focusing on fruitful project implementation. As a result, ENDA’s Advisory and Management Board developed its first annual work plan for 2019-2020. Additionally, it also learned the importance of seeking and investing in successors from other participating organizations. ENDA subsequently turned its focus towards staff development and made detailed plans for its staff so that successors would be able to successfully lead and develop the organization in the future.

In addition to assisting ENDA with its organizational development, the ODT program also had a significant impact on individual staff’s capacity development. Ms. Dung came into her position at ENDA as a recent graduate with limited experience implementing large projects. Attending the ODT training courses has subsequently given her new skills that have prepared her to proactively take on new challenges. As a result of her participation in the Project Design and Management course, for example, she noted that she now knows the steps in project formulation, including PESTLE analysis and log frame development. “I had an enabling environment at the workplace where I could apply those tools into practice. This learning platform is a steppingstone to enhance my capacity and to contribute to my organization development.”

ENDA team members also noted that one of the biggest takeaways from the ODT program was learning the importance of effective communication skills and active listening in the Human Resources training. In her daily work, Ms. Pham Thuy Thanh Tuyen had to communicate with many stakeholders. Before knowing how to actively listen, she often received and conveyed inaccurate information and misunderstood messages. Ms. Tuyen has reflected that, “Thanks to the training, I now recognize the important steps of summarizing what I have heard, checking if my understanding had been correct before continuing talking. Since I have applied those steps in active listening, my listening and understanding the messages conveyed has been much more effective.” This in turn has led to improved worked efficiency and more synergy in the team’s work.

Through the learning environment created by the ODT Program, both ENDA’s organizational and staff capacity have improved significantly. It has helped ENDA staff develop individually and collectively as a team, which has a direct, positive impact on the projects ENDA is implementing, including USAID-funded projects such as “Towards a Higher Effectiveness of the Informal Sector on Plastics. With new strategies and tools in place, ENDA is now moving forward with a clearer future direction.

USAID’s Organizational Development Trail Program, which ran from November 2017 through November 2018, was aimed at strengthening the human and institutional capacity of Vietnamese



non-government organizations (VNGOs) to bid for, receive, and manage donor funding. The ODT program consisted of 7 technical training courses and 3 leadership forums with coaching and mentoring in the workplace. 230 persons from 16 VNGOs attended the 7 training courses and 3 leadership forums.



## **NGO Finds Financial Sustainability through Organizational Development Trainings**

When Ms. Tran Thi Hoa helped establish GreenHub in 2016, she found herself in a funding environment where many traditional donors were withdrawing their resources from Vietnam and shifting their focus to other developing economies. Her organization, the Centre for Supporting Green Development (GreenHub) is a Vietnamese Non-Governmental Organization (VNGO) which aims to develop effective practices, as well as communication and policy advocacy, to assist in advancing Vietnam's green growth and development. As similar VNGOs collapsed around hers, Ms. Hoa and her co-founders realized they needed to create a strategic development plan to survive as an organization.

While Ms. Hoa had overarching goals for GreenHub, she knew she lacked the experience needed to manage the organization. In GreenHub's first year, they focused on writing proposals and providing individual consultancy packages to cover core costs. Once they had secured a \$20,000 grant in June 2017, Ms. Hoa felt challenged. In reflecting on that time, she noted, "Though I knew what I had to do, I struggled with how to do it and how to manage my organization effectively." When GreenHub was selected to participate in the USAID/Vietnam- funded Organization Development Trail (ODT), she realized this could be the turning point for both herself and organization.

The Partner Capacity Development Program (PCD) developed the seven-course ODT to strengthen the human and institutional capacity of VNGOs to bid for, receive, and manage donor funding. The program also included three leadership forums and mentoring support in the workplace. Ms. Hoa felt a shift once she began participating in the courses. She learned how she could apply the tools and practical knowledge gained from the training into GreenHub's practices and behaviors. "We saw our growth in leadership and management skills as the training courses helped us to reflect on what we have done, and how confident we are in developing our organization."

GreenHub's organizational strategy and fundraising plan are the clearest examples of ODT's positive impact on the organization. Under the guidance of ODT, GreenHub was encouraged to develop an organizational strategy and create a subsequent fundraising plan. They worked hard and consulted with their staff, advisory board, and the PCD team to develop objectives for the strategy. Soon, they had created an organizational strategy for 2018-2020 with a vision to 2030, a fundraising plan for 2018-2020, and an organizational handbook. Once these materials were in place, a huge shift occurred. For the first time in its three years of operating, GreenHub generated funds larger than its annual operating costs. They have also already moved past their target for 2019. These benchmarks were passed just two months after the fundraising plan was finalized.

Starting from a small grant in mid-2017, GreenHub has received projects with a total value of \$700,000 USD. Ms. Hoa feels motivated to continue growing GreenHub in a business-oriented direction and wants to develop new, eco-friendly projects to sell to the market as a means of fiscal sustainability. Ms. Hoa remarked, "We can now decide what we will do (e.g. doing researches, selling eco products) in case we receive no funding. We are now driven by our mission and strategic directions."



## **How a Doctor Found Hope for a Better Future.**

When Dr. Nguyen Van Chi first eagerly strolled through the halls of Sirindhorn National Medical Rehabilitation Institute (SNMRI), he passed by a department that specializes in speech therapy, then another department that focuses on prosthetic technology, and still another that has an entire team of doctors and staff dedicated to child rehabilitation. As he observed the operation and structure of each department, new ideas began to bounce around his mind. A plan to institute world-class rehabilitation care within his own hospital in northern Vietnam soon took shape.

Dr. Chi has devoted his life to providing individuals with disabilities with the support they need to reach their potential and participate fully in society. He understands that Vietnam, where approximately 15% of its 95 million citizens have at least one disability, faces obstacles in delivering quality care to all persons with disabilities, especially to those in rural areas. One glaring example is that district-level rehabilitation hospitals simply do not exist. This means that Dr. Chi, as the Director of the Central Rehabilitation Hospital in Thanh Hoa province, is responsible for the care of all people with disabilities in a province that 4.5 million individuals call home.

With so many people depending on him, Dr. Chi cannot afford to dwell on limitations. Instead, he doggedly searches to improve the care available to his patients. These efforts led him to take part in a week-long study tour of Thailand's best practices in disability services, a component of the USAID-funded Partner Capacity Development (PCD) program, in March 2019.

During the tour, Dr. Chi and 14 other Vietnamese doctors and officials met with Thai colleagues, stepped inside the homes of patients to learn about their experiences, and saw the latest rehabilitation technologies in action. Two elements particularly impressed Dr. Chi: The specialized structure of care at SNMRI and the model of community support to help patients reintegrate into society once they leave the hospital. "These services are rarely seen in Vietnam, especially in the northern provinces," said Dr. Chi. He noted that his own hospital only has a general rehabilitation department in which staff members must handle everything, from speech therapy to hydrotherapy.

Dr. Chi took in everything he saw and learned on the tour. The diverse insights and observations started to connect in his mind like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. He ultimately left Thailand with a plan of action to adopt three new features into his own hospital in Vietnam. First, he will restructure his hospital to include specialized departments. He has already submitted this proposal to the Ministry of Health, including his plan to develop human resources to deliver quality, specialized care. Second, Dr. Chi will develop comprehensive guidelines for family and community members to support people with disabilities after they leave the hospital. In the coming months, he will begin piloting the new community support model for stroke and spinal cord patients. Finally, he aims to build a transfer house that enables patients to gain confidence living independently before returning to their communities full-time.

"The study tour was a very important visit that helped me gain a reference for my vision and goals," Dr. Chi said. Buoyed by the study tour, Dr. Chi's vision for a better future for his patients became clear. His holistic vision, combining better care in both the hospital and community, will empower individuals with disabilities to overcome their unique challenges and lead productive, meaningful, and fulfilling lives.



## **Developing a Strategic Journey along the Organizational Development Trail**

In 2018, the Centre for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP) celebrated its 10th Anniversary as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). This celebration highlighted the organization's achievements, but it also provided CCIHP with an opportunity to reflect and consider the direction it should take for future sustainability. For assistance in this exercise, CCIHP sought the support of the Organizational Development Trail (ODT) program, which was part of the USAID-funded Partner Capacity Development Program. CCIHP felt that ODT's unique mix of formal training courses, tailored consultancy and professional services would help the organization review its vision and develop a strategic plan for the next 5 years.

Dr. Vu Song Ha, CCIHP's Deputy Director, found that as a trained public health researcher, she often engaged in the technical aspects of CCIHP's work but did not prioritize finding the time to strategically think about the organization's future. She reflected that, "The ODT program provided me, the senior management team and other staff members the opportunity to discuss more critically about the challenges and opportunities that CCIHP faces, to exchange our thoughts and experience with colleagues from other organizations, and to review how we could strategically develop our capacity to achieve our mission."

Over the course of the 12-month program, CCIHP leadership saw the organization's capacity increase as it received advice on how to develop its strategic plan, engage more effectively with key stakeholders, and inspire and develop its staff. As a result, the staff now feels confident that their 5-year strategic plan, "Building a Healthy Future for Everyone," will better support the organization's journey in improving public health in a rapidly changing Vietnam. In this plan, CCIHP is now focusing on working with persons with disability so those individuals can realize their rights and reach their full potential.

In addition to developing a strategic plan, one of the goals of the ODT program was to build the capacity of Vietnamese NGOs to apply for, receive, and manage USAID funds. During the program, the opportunity arose for CCIHP to apply for a USAID award to support persons with disability. The knowledge and skills CCIHP gained throughout the trail supported it to apply as a competitive candidate; subsequently, CCIHP won the award. Its new project "I-Thrive" aims to develop accessible, high quality, and sustainable interdisciplinary rehabilitation services for persons with disability. This project also focuses on supporting children with developmental disabilities and their families in Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue provinces. I-Thrive will further deepen CCIHP's partnership with USAID and enable it to utilize the skills and knowledge it gained over the 12-month ODT program.