

## Participatory Poverty Assessment in Nghe An Province

### Development of PPA in Vietnam

The report on Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) in Nghe An Province, which was implemented by the Institute of Sociology (IOS), was completed in January 2004 with assistance from JICA.

The poverty rate in Vietnam improved markedly through the 1990s from 58% to 37% and the Vietnamese government is currently working to further reduce poverty. In 2002, the Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS) was implemented, which clarified actual poverty conditions in quantitative form. However, in the effort to further promote effective poverty reduction, it is essential to understand the situation in terms of qualitative aspects; i.e., to understand needs by listening to impoverished people directly. In order to do this, the PPA was implemented in the summer of 2003 as a Poverty Task Force activity. The PPA, which was conducted jointly by donors and NGOs, targeted 13 provinces and 43 communes throughout Vietnam. Among them, JICA was responsible for Nghe An Province. The results of the assessment are expected to be compiled into 13 provincial reports and 8 regional reports.

### Overview of Nghe An Province

Nghe An Province is the largest in Vietnam in terms of area (16,370 km) and it stands third in terms of population (2.8 million people). Although the province has gained substantial achievements in poverty alleviation for the last decade, it is classified as one of the poor provinces with severe climate, poor socio-economic development, slow growth rate and its mountainous location. Its Human Development Indicator ranks it 26th in the country (UNDP, 2001).

Tuong Duong, one of the poorest districts in the province where ethnic minorities live in mountainous areas, and Nghi Loc, which is located on a plain along the coast, were selected as the target districts for this poverty assessment.

### Findings from the Nghe An PPA

According to the results of the assessment, which were mainly based on interviews and focused group discussions, about 80% of non-poor households and half of poor households indicated that they sense their living standards are improving. Reasons mentioned for this include improved access to markets, better agricultural policies, improved access to agricultural financing and agricultural extension services, promotion of livestock breeding and aquaculture, and improvement of infrastructure. Although the benefits of this have contributed to better educational opportunities for children, benefits for women remain low compared to men. Furthermore, approximately 6% of impoverished residents feel their lives have worsened.

### JICA's Assistance to Nghe An Province

Since 1997, JICA has been implementing a reproductive health project in Nghe An Province with the cooperation of JOICEF (Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning), a Japanese NGO. The project aimed to realize an environment, with better facilities and better quality of services of Commune Health Center, in which rural women could safely give birth. All 19 of the districts are targeted in the province. The results of the PPA will be also utilized to further improve this project's activities.

- JICA

## The "Ogata Reform" and steps toward local initiative - JICA Vietnam is selected as a pilot office

JICA recently announced its plan for a major institutional reform aiming at strengthening its overseas program management. In this plan, the JICA Vietnam Office was selected as one of eight "pilot offices" adopting new business model. In principle, most of authority and responsibilities from project formulation to project implementation and evaluation will be transferred to the Vietnam office as a pilot model from

October 2004. When this model is fully realized, the office's capacity will dramatically increase with a view to meet the needs promptly and precisely. It is also expected that the office will contribute to the enhancement of the Japan's aid policy formulation to Vietnam by actively participating in the Japan's ODA Task Force (Japan Team), which is a field-based aid coordination mechanism among Embassy, JICA, JBIC and JETRO.

### Ogata Reform and field-oriented management

Last October, JICA took a new step forward as an Independent Administrative Institution. Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was appointed as the new JICA president. Since taking office, Mrs. Ogata has put forward the concept of "field-oriented management" while promoting the



Trainers of training workshop organized by Reproductive Health Project in Nghe An Province

### Voice of the poor

- excerpts from the Nghe An PPA report -

#### Use of loan

"Living standard is better than three years ago because the State has provided small loans. But on the other hand, they also owe large debts; if they sell their household appliances and other things to pay these debts, then they will become very poor."  
(Male, aged 70, Nghi Thai commune)

#### Women's situation

"Men have enjoyed more benefits from development over the past three years. In contrast, women have to work harder because they have to bring up children and have more work to do."  
(female, aged 40, Thai Binh)

#### Illiteracy

"As for the really illiterate people, there are deaf people who do not know how to hold pens. They went to class for some days, then felt disgusted and broke off study."  
(female, aged 35, Thai ethnicity, Quang Yen village)

#### Educational socialisation

"Children from poor families often drop out of school. Poor students who don't have money to pay school fees, when they are reminded by teachers of payments and contributions to be made, feel embarrassed, disgusted and shy with their friends and just drop school."  
(Aged 47, Thai ethnicity, Tam Dinh commune)

#### Agricultural extension

"After attending four training of agricultural extension programme, the people known how to apply the technique of planting of rice, ground nut, and Soya bean. Training in livestock raising has yielded results in the development of breeding cows and sows."  
(Male, aged 46, in Thai Cat village)

#### Migration

"Many labourers in my village have gone to work in Ho Chi Minh City. Only a few of them come from poor households because working in production establishments requires good health and meeting a designated working age, while poor households often have small or ailing children who cannot go."  
(Male, aged 37, in Thai Cat village)



Mrs. Ogata (President of JICA) visiting 5th Junior High school in Thanh Hoa province

agency's restructuring with focus on significant transfer of authority and responsibilities to field offices.

JICA Vietnam Office's selection as a pilot office is part of this process. From this April, JICA Headquarters has introduced a "team system" in its organiza-

tion in order to enhance flexibility and mobility. Other remarkable changes include the reassignment of 200 staff from the headquarters to the field by the end of the fiscal year 2006 to undertake broadened field mandates.

- JICA