



2008/ED/UNLD/PI/EP/8

# United Nations Literacy Decade

## EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Presented at the UNESCO sub-regional Conference *Addressing Literacy Challenges in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches*. (31 July - 1 August 2007, Beijing, China)

**Programme name: Literacy and Community Development**

**Implemented by: ActionAid Viet Nam**

### Basic facts

Country: Viet Nam

Starting year: 2000

Outreach: 12 500 - 13 000 people

Target Population: poor and marginalized groups in remote areas, particularly those aged 18 and above; most of them from minority groups and 79% are women

Language of instruction: participants' mother tongues

Operating in: Viet Nam

Facilitator/Beneficiary ratio: 18 - 25

Main Funding: Action Aid and EC

Website: [www.actionaid.org/vietnam](http://www.actionaid.org/vietnam)

Contact: Mr Truong Quoc Can - [Can.truongquoc@actionaid.org](mailto:Can.truongquoc@actionaid.org);  
[qctruong1@yahoo.com](mailto:qctruong1@yahoo.com)

### Brief Description

ActionAid Vietnam (AAV) has been working in partnership with the Research Center for Literacy and Continuing Education (RCLCE) to pilot the Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) methodology (the Vietnamese name is Literacy with Community Development) in its adult literacy program. REFLECT is originally an approach developed for adult literacy which combines the pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire and the practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) creating a space where people feel comfortable to meet and discuss issues relevant to them and their lives.

### Rationale

One of the main obstacles for the development of certain Vietnamese remote areas is the large number of illiterate adults, especially women, who are therefore excluded from capacity-building activities, who lack access to information and are excluded from decision-making within the family and the community. Consequently, they remain poor; their children are being poorly educated and become poor again when they grow up. Conventional literacy programs often failed to address this issue, particularly because of a lack of relevance of the curriculum and inappropriate teaching methodologies.

The REFLECT programme provides the learners with contents relevant to their situation and needs which improves both the participants' literacy level and their confidence and ability in self-organization, decision-making and active participation in community and social work.

### **Objective**

The programme's overall objective is to improve literacy skills among ethnic minorities and reduce poverty by empowering the poor for communication, community participation, decision-making and proactive action.

### **Conceptual Model and Methodology**

The programme is based on "Reflect Circles" bringing together the learners in regular meetings to discuss and analyze their problems and needs, find possible solutions and plan actions. In the meantime, literacy content (key words, sentences, numbers, etc.) closely linked to the discussion is introduced as well as techniques and skills useful to solve the concerned problems. The literacy content emerges from issues relevant to the community and goes along with community development activities. In the learning process of Reflect, the participants develop their own learning materials, such as maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams that represent local reality (PRA tools). Reflect systematizes the existing knowledge of participants and promotes the detailed analysis of local issues. By linking literacy training with other community development activities, it provides participants not only with literacy skills but empowers them with different life skills and techniques and promotes a lifelong learning process.

### **Innovative features**

The literacy content emerges from communities' issues and goes along with community development activities. This attracts and holds the learners' interest in the learning process and makes the literacy contents meaningful to them.

The use of PRA tools enables participants to get better involved in the discussions and provides visual aids for their analysis as well as learning of literacy contents. Another distinguished feature of the program is the strong level of community mobilization and networking for supporting the process of learning and action. Bringing participants through complete cycles of reflection – learning – action – reflection - Reflect gives participants the capacity to self-analyzed, self-organised and proactive action and especially creates the demands for learning and knowledge.

Furthermore, linkage with existing government authorities and professional agencies creates the connection between learning needs and different sources of

knowledge. This connection ensures continuity and sustainable impact of the programme.