

MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE INTERVENTION FACILITY FOR CAPACITY BUILDING (FCB)

VIE 11 888 11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final Draft, 27 November 2017



This review has been realised in the framework of the cooperation between Vietnam and Belgium.

The report has been drawn up by independent external experts.
The opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of BTC, the Belgian Development Cooperation or the authorities of the country concerned.

Principal expert: Jos Brand, MDF Training & Consultancy
National Expert: Vu Cuong, MDF Training & Consultancy

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Executive summary

For over 40 years the Belgian government is supporting Vietnam's education sector with academic scholarships. Both Masters and PhD studies in Belgium are widely respected in the country. In creating more coherence among the various non-project academic support interventions, the Belgian government initiated in 2011 a new strategy that aims to combine these various activities in the respective partner countries. The Facility for Capacity Building (FCB) in Vietnam is an example of this new strategy. Implementation period is December 2014 – June 2019. The implementing agency is the International Cooperation Department (ICD) of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). This Mid-Term Review (MTR) took place in September-October 2017.

FCB is a capacity building programme that aims to link individual training results with improved performance of the organisations in which these individuals are working. The project distinguishes three results:

1. Effective approaches and practices of training/ capacity building are used by beneficiary institutions
2. Capacity for innovation and management is developed through master scholarships & follow-up
3. Management & professional skills are strengthened through short-term training and other embedded capacity building initiatives

The scholarship programme has achieved its result concerning the number of students enrolled in the programme; 107 scholarships were organised and the last group will return to Vietnam in 2018. The follow-up activities, supporting the Vietnam-Belgium academic and private sector cooperation, are formulated in a separate sub-project to be carried out from January 2018 onwards by the Vietnam-Belgium Friendship Association (VBFA). This sub-project aims to sustain the international cooperation, also after the end of FCB. Current disbursement of this part of the project is 70%.

The other two results are related: using effective CD approaches will assist beneficiary organisations (BO) to improve their professional and management performance. The project organised three one-day workshops to sensitise 175 managers from universities and provincial government organisations in CD concepts and stimulate them to work towards a concept note and proposal for an improvement project. 21 sub-project proposals (including the VBFA project mentioned above) were accepted by the PMU and are now ready to be implemented. The sub-projects have €85,000 FCB funding and have a time frame of about one year. In order to link project training to the envisaged organisational improvements will need guidance by national consultants. Current disbursement of the two result areas is 10%.

The project is in line with the GoV directions to make universities more accountable for the quality of their programmes and making them more self-sustainable. The same goes for the Provincial Departments of Education and Training (DOET) and the Departments of Home Affairs (DOHA) who are also asked to provide services in line with the new demands of society.

FCB suffered a more than average delay in project operations, impacting on availability of key planning documents, M&E system, workshops and sub-project proposals. Besides the overall low disbursement rate, especially for results 1 and 3, the co-management funds are for 2% used. The MTR was asked to analyse this situation and suggests there are five main reasons:

- *Project design.* The period of project formulation was quite long, 2 years, because it was difficult to arrive at a resolution on the balance between individual and organisational objectives; the core of FCB was to achieve coherence between the two. The implementing agency – MOET's International Cooperation Department (ICD) – did not push for a solution, for them the previous set-up with two separate individually oriented

interventions was good enough. In the end, December 2014, the project was designed broadly: more than one government sector and both public and service organisations can apply for funding which made it hard to find the right implementing organisation. The selected implementing organisation had no experience with OD projects like this, which created additional delays. The TFF suggested adjusting the broadly designed project during the first year, but this was not done. Subsequently, the overall FCB project strategy was difficult to formulate, it was finally approved in March 2017

- *PMU capacity.* A first delay took place when the project director who was involved during preparation was replaced at project start. Secondly the PMU had little capacity, both quantity and quality to manage CD projects. It took about a year to hire the first consultants who could get the implementation started.
- *Changes in institutional context.* In 2016 a new Minister was assigned who introduced changes that delayed the project: firstly, procurement plans had to go up to the Minister's desk; secondly, the merging of ICD with another Department took time for the new manager to get accustomed to. At the same time, he was also the FCB Project Director. And thirdly, the decision that FCB was to become part of a new MOET umbrella PMU took time to revise after the parties involved agreed that this was not a good idea.
- *CD awareness in the beneficiary organisations.* For the regular Vietnamese organisation '*training = capacity development*'. The anticipated process of working towards the first batch of sub-project proposals appeared too ambitious, it took longer than expected. Delays took place at various moments:
 - Discussions on the criteria to be used to select concept notes and proposals
 - Long proposal writing phase – proposals go up and down – because of limited CD knowledge in the beneficiary organisations
- *Project procedures.* From the Belgian side delay was caused by the 2016 introduction of the "Guidelines for Grant Agreements"; additional answers had to be provided by the BOs to comply with these new rule. From the Vietnamese side the new Decree 16 introduced bidding thresholds of ± €800 and complicated bidding procedures. Because the co-management modality was chosen, for ICD not the regular modality, MOET procedures had to be followed for some key budget lines.

Because the project has only 1.5 year to go (including a closing phase of at least a few months), and the 21 sub-projects are eager to get started, the MTR suggests a pragmatic approach for the final phase of FCB. With the right focus and attitude from the key stakeholders – BTC Hanoi, BTC-HQ, ICD and the PSC – the project can provide valuable HRD and OD support to the beneficiary organisations. In addition, two other spin-offs are foreseen:

- The sub-projects, especially those with the universities, will provide MOET with information on how to carry out similar support activities in the future. The FCB consultants will organise workshops to discuss these experiences and generate guidelines for relevant Departments
- The seven Lead Teacher Training Universities (LTTU) that are part of the group of 21, will continue to be supported by a large World Bank supported programme aiming at performance improvement of these LTTUs and their role as models for other institutes. FCB will provide inputs to that process

And finally, BTC-HQ is suggested to consider the effectiveness of the revised strategy for non-project scholarships, as it may not achieve the desired effect. Integrating CD objectives in the regular sector support programmes and, in parallel having a separate scholarship programme, may prove more efficient and effective. The choice for stimulating a coherent approach to CD will also depend on the specific CD context in the respective countries. For the FCB lessons learned and the recommendations, see Chapters 10 and 11.

Project Data

Title of the intervention	Facility for Capacity Building (FCB)
Intervention number	NN 3013616
Navision Code BTC	VIE 11 888 11
Partner Institution	Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)
Duration of the intervention	54 months (72 months validity of the Specific Agreement)
Start of the intervention	2014
Contribution of the Partner Country	In kind
Belgian Contribution	6,200,925 Euro
Sector (CAD codes)	43081 – Multi-sector education/training
Brief description of the intervention	The Programme aims to strengthen the capacities of Vietnamese individuals and organisations in targeted areas with priority in the sectors specified in the ICP 2011-2015.
Global Objective	To contribute to the sustainable development and growth of Vietnam by facilitating Vietnam to become a knowledge-based industrialised country by 2020.
Specific Objective	The quality of human resources of Vietnam is enhanced through strengthening the innovative and management skills and capacities of Vietnamese individuals and targeted institutions.
Results	Result 1: Effective approaches and practices of training / capacity building are used by beneficiary institutions Result 2: Capacity for innovation and management is developed through master scholarships & follow-up Result 3: Management & professional skills are strengthened through short-term training and other embedded capacity building initiatives