

NON-STATE ACTORS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN DEVELOPMENT -  
ACTIONS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES (MULTI COUNTRY) FOR NON-STATE ACTORS

# Best Practice Vinh City: Community Participation in Upgrading the Old Collective Housing Areas

- short version -

Thematic Area: Peoples' Participation in Planning and Decision Making

Country of Origin: Vietnam

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This project is co-funded by the European Union.



A Project implemented by the consortium: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., Thailand Environment Institute (TEI), Local Government Development Foundation Inc. (LOGODEF), United Cities and Local Governments for Asia and Pacific (UCLG-ASPAC), Association of Indonesian Regency Governments (APKASI), Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN), and National League of Communes/Sangkats of the Kingdom of Cambodia (NLC/S).



## ABOUT DELGOSEA

The Partnership for Democratic Local Governance in Southeast-Asia (DELGOSEA) was launched in March 2010 and is co-funded by the European Commission and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) of Germany through the German Ministry of Development Cooperation.

DELGOSEA aims to create a network of cities and municipalities to implement transnational local governance best practices replication across partner countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. It supports the role of Local Government Associations (LGAs) in providing and assisting the transfer and sustainability of local governance best practices replication by local governments. Most importantly, through the exchange of best practices in the region, DELGOSEA intends to contribute to the improvement of living conditions of disadvantaged groups in Southeast-Asia by helping increase their participation in local planning and decision-making.

In the first phase of project implementation, an intensive research was done to determine Best Practices (BP) in local governance in each of the five participating countries. A consortium of international local governance experts and representatives from the LGAs reviewed and selected 16 BPs out of the submitted 27 BPs.

The project concentrated on the following four thematic areas while selecting best practice examples from the five countries:

1. Peoples' participation in planning and decision-making;
2. Institutional governance;
3. Inclusive urban public services;
4. Fiscal management and investment planning.

The following short descriptions BP is one of the selected 16 BPs in the area of people's participation in planning and decision making, provided by Vinh City in Vietnam.

Starting in January 2011 through August 2012, DELGOSEA will continue to collaborate with LGAs and local governments to transfer best practices replication. The pilot cities/municipalities could modify or improve the original best practice to their local context. The LGAs in the five participating countries will closely consult and guide the selected pilot local governments on the transfer and implementation of BP replication.



<b>Country</b>	Vietnam
<b>Local Government:</b>	Vinh City
<b>Type:</b>	Municipality
<b>Best Practice:</b>	Community participation in upgrading the old collective housing areas.
<b>Aspect of Governance:</b>	People's participation in planning and decision-making
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### Summary

The Best Practice (BP) example of Vinh City is a good case of city development with sustainable effects not only for the city infrastructure, but also for the living conditions of the people and first and foremost, on the improved democratic local governance. This BP is about the complex upgrading of the 142 designated housing areas and of the complex city infrastructure in two wards at Vinh City. The wards were initially poor slum settlements until they turned into a modern housing area with adequate infrastructure. The inhabitants accomplished this better condition with the support from the city's government and through a collective savings scheme. The approach was bottom-up, mobilising the strength and power of the inhabitants of the housing area as follows:

- The participation of people in decision making from early stage of urban planning process.
- The participation of community in primary data collection for urban planning.
- The participation of people in urban planning appraisal and approving from commune level to municipality level.
- The participation of community in the process of construction implementation and monitoring.

Specific results of community participations into the urban planning in Vinh City were:

- The master plan was approved by the government.
- The detailed plan of wards and communes were approved by the city government, with citizens' concurrence.
- The community has gradually become aware of the need to save land to build public spaces and green areas, and to participate in the urban planning and development process.

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- Using investments from the community, several projects were carried out to demolish old and downgraded condominiums, to give way to parks and cultural houses.
  - Land owners gave up 20,554 square meters of land to give way to infrastructure projects throughout the city.
  - Resources were invested by residents, as well as Vinh's citizens who are now living in other cities.
  - Between 2000 and 2007, with a total budget of 165.32 billion dong, the following were built or improved: 408.717 kms of road; 64.899 kms of drainage system; 206 public buildings, such as health care stations and cultural houses; 379,894 square meters of pavement.

From 2008 to 2009, and with a budget of 23.45 billion dong, 2,648 trees were planted along roads, and greenery areas of offices and schools were improved. Vinh City is one of the cities that have succeeded in the mobilization of community participation in urban planning, from the preparation to publicizing to the implementation of the reconstruction program.

## **Background and Objectives**

Experiences from many countries have shown the strong and huge impact of community participation in the planning and implementation of government programs. Aware of this, the Vietnamese government has issued many legal documents on the mobilization of community participation in urban planning. Cities in Vietnam have responded and thus successfully mobilized communities in many fields, such as residential area building, urban infrastructure, and the creation of social service.

Vinh City is one of the cities that have succeeded in the mobilization of community participation in urban planning, from the preparation to publicizing to the implementation of the reconstruction program. At present, there are 142 poor collective areas in Vinh City that need to be upgraded according to living standards of the community. The city is populated with 295,000 inhabitants.

Spread around 104.96 square km, Vinh City has also been certified as grade 1 city of Nghe An province. Its economic indicators are:

- Industry and construction: 42%
- Service, commerce, and tourism: 56%
- Agriculture and fishery: 2%
- Average economic growth: 16.5%
- Average income per capita: US\$1.90 a year.



## A. Innovative Elements

The old approach was not feasible—it did not suit the market economy nor meet community requirements. Since the local government faced many difficulties in the planning and implementation, and the communities' desire to be involved in the process was high, the bottom-up approach was adopted. The community was asked to participate in the urban planning process.

The model aimed to promote the role of the community in urban planning and development. It mobilized resources and strengthened the cooperation from economic sectors and the community. It aimed to improve the living quality of people and achieve sustainable urban development. Aside from the support from the community, the model strengthened the cooperation between the provincial and city governments and civil society organizations. Flexibility was allowed in the implementation of state regulations.

General results achieved:

- The living condition, comfort of inhabitants, and the environment have improved.
- The city's social, political, and economic status has improved, too.
- The urban landscape looks better.
- The community has become aware of their role and responsibility to participate in the urban development process.

Specific results achieved:

- The master plan was approved by the government.
- The detailed plan of wards and communes were approved by the city government, with citizens' concurrence.
- The community has gradually become aware of the need to save land to build public spaces and green areas, and to participate in the urban planning and development process.
- Using investments from the community, several projects were carried out to demolish old and downgraded condominiums, to give way to parks and cultural houses.
- Land owners gave up 20,554 square meters of land to give way to infrastructure projects throughout the city.
- Resources were invested by residents, as well as Vinh's citizens who are now living in other cities.
- Between 2000 and 2007, with a total budget of 165.32 billion dong, the following were built or improved: 408.717 kms of road; 64.899 kms of drainage system; 206 public buildings, such as health care stations and cultural houses; 379,894 square meters of pavement.
- From 2008 to 2009, and with a budget of 23.45 billion dong, 2,648 trees were planted along roads, and greenery areas of offices and schools were improved.



**How these achievements have benefited the people is best illustrated by what happened in Cua Nam and Ben Thuy wards below.**

➤ Community house project in Cua Nam ward

Cua Nam, which has an area of 200 hectares, has 16 residential groups with 4,100 households or 14,200 inhabitants. Group 6A, with an area of 1,900 square meters and 29 households, includes low-income people living in slums. The task of the Ward People's Committee is to eradicate the dilapidated houses, with the help of the people and under the technical support of volunteer architects and ACVN.

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights supported a loan of US\$40,000 and founded the Community Development Fund. The people contributed to the construction investment fund for infrastructure and housing.

The People's Committee formed a steering committee, while the community elected a representative who would collect their contributions. Each household contributed based on its income and capacity. The contributions were put into a community savings account. A report on the progress of the project and collection is made every meeting.

According to the regulation of Nghe An province, each lot for house construction must have a minimum area of 50 square meters. However, households protect and help each other, even adjusting their lot boundaries, so they can have equal cuts of 47 square meters to construct their houses on. Their foundations and walls are shared, thus lessening their expenses on materials and human resources 30% less.

➤ Housing project in Ben Thuy ward

The area includes 110 households living in dilapidated houses. The inhabitants are construction workers with low-income. The People's Committee of Ward formed a mission team to discuss with the community and get them to agree to the project plan. Since the area is too small and can only accommodate 69 households, the community discussed and agreed to move the rest of the households to other places. Households invested themselves to build houses that have separate foundations and walls. Funding for both projects was collected from those living in the collective housing areas and a loan from the overseas fund.



## B. Involvement and Activities

In 2003, the law on land was revised, and the Democratic Regulation on Locality was issued, providing that the people have the right to participate and monitor the planning and urban development process. Implementing the government regulation, Vinh City organized to gather the people's suggestions and ideas in the process of preparing and implementing plans. The process included:

- Prepared master plan for the project; three times adjustment, and final approval.
- Implemented detailed project planning at a 1/2000 scale, then a 1/500 scale.

The implementation process was discussed in many meetings with people and civil society organizations:

- Government and civil society organizations organized campaigns and propaganda to collect ideas, money, and other resources for the project.
- In the project funded by the people themselves, the community selected their representative to monitor, manage, and report the financial issues to the community every month.

The activities were further conducted as followed:

- Community participation in drafting building design and specific planning.
- Voting a community representative in the implementation process.
- Setting up a transparent procedure in the operations and implementation.
- Cooperating with the construction company and volunteer architects.

## C. Sustainability and Replication

The model achieved its intended political, economic, socio-cultural, and environmental results. It is supported by the community and, therefore, sustainable. Because this urban planning model involved the community, it will be feasible to implement in other cities in Vietnam as well as other Southeast Asian cities. It has no big requirements in organizing technical and budget support.

The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the implementing consortium under the lead of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. and can in no way be taken to reflect views of the European Union.

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