



## Vietnam holds convention for 81 community GP teams

In 1998, Vietnam made history in the APO Green Productivity (GP) Program when it introduced GP in three communities, the first such project ever by a country (see APO News October 1999 issue for full story). The objective was to give impetus to the sustainable development of the villages, improve the quality of life of the people, and protect the environment. The Vietnamese Government was so taken by the results that it adopted the scheme for implementation in all villages throughout the nation. Four years later, in March 2003, 81 villages in 21 provinces have GP programs. On 20–21 March 2003, nearly 250 representatives from these villages met in Hanoi to showcase what they have achieved. The occasion was the “First National Green Productivity Team Convention” organized by the Vietnam Productivity Center (VPC).

Villages in Vietnam, as is probably the case of villages elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific, are beset with difficulties arising from poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and general ignorance about environmental protection and income-enhancement opportunities. Some examples seen in Vietnam are: animal, human, and solid waste pollution; wastewater pollution; lack of clean drinking water; improper use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers; inefficient cooking fuel consumption; and soil erosion. The GP program was implemented to resolve these problems, initially with technical assistance from experts deputed by the APO and now almost entirely from local experts facilitated by the VPC. The local experts were developed through counterpart training in similar past projects.

Much has been achieved by the 81 villages in their GP efforts; the list is long and impressive. For controlling animal waste pollution, clean pig- and cow-breeding facilities as well as biogas plants and composting units were constructed. Human waste pollution was checked through the provision of hygienic latrines, some with septic tanks. Water treatment facilities and drainage systems were introduced to fight wastewater pollution. Potable water was made available through improving well systems as well as setting up water treatment plants using flocculation or filtration systems. The people were trained in integrated pest management and the proper use of pesticides, encouraged to use biofertilizers, and engaged in natural farming. A high-yield and highly pest-resistant variety of rice was introduced. Measures to control solid waste pollution included instituting new environmental protection regulations; establishing a solid waste collection system; improving road systems to facilitate solid waste removal; and constructing landfills. Energy-efficient stoves for cooking were put in place in several villages. To supplement the villagers' income, new economic activities using local products were introduced. These included: the processing of agricultural and fish products; mushroom cultivation; worm, bee, pigeon, frog, and pig farming; and fruit and corn cultivation.



(L-R) Prof. Le Quy An; Dr. Nguyen Huu Thien, APO Director for Vietnam; Minister Bui Manh Hai; Mr. Tajima; and Ms. Hang

Tree planting to prevent soil erosion and concrete road construction to improve infrastructure were also undertaken.

At the National Green Productivity Team Convention, each province nominated one village (with the exception of one which nominated two) to make a special presentation to showcase its achievements. A competitive element was introduced with the conferment of awards in five categories.

The convention was accorded prominence by the presence of Vice Minister for Science and Technology Bui Manh Hai, APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima, and Prof. Le Quy An, President of the Vietnam Association for the Conservation of Nature and Environment, at the opening session. Vice Minister Bui Manh Hai, in his address to the delegates, said that the Ministry of Science and Technology “will pay more attention to planning policies and strategies and allocating resources for economic development in accordance with environmental protection.” Special focus will be given to technical research studies and new technology development for more effective utilization of resources for socio-economic development and for improving the quality of life of the people, he added.

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APO Secretary-General Tajima, who also spoke at the opening session, said that the success of the Vietnamese GP program at the community level had encouraged the APO to expand its GP-Integrated Community Development (ICD) program to all its member countries. For this reason, the APO had submitted to the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development a partnership initiative on GP-ICD and it is now making plans for its implementation throughout Asia and the Pacific.

Vietnamese Vice Premier Pham Gia Khiem told Secretary-General Tajima, when the latter paid a courtesy call at his office, that the GP program in Vietnam has contributed to poverty alleviation and environmental protection, the two key concerns of the Vietnamese Government, through increasing productivity, raising the people's awareness about environmental matters, and improving the quality of life of the participating communities. Vietnam will continue with this program to help develop its economy, he stated.

On the future plans of the GP program, VPC Managing Director Nguyen Thi Bich Hang said that the objective is to increase the number of participating villages to 600. Moreover, the National Green Productivity Team Convention will be held annually.

In conjunction with the convention, the APO held a multi-country workshop on "Green Productivity and Integrated Community Development" in Hanoi, 17-21 March. The 21 participants from 15 member countries wrapped up the workshop by attending the final day of the convention, which featured presentations by the following panel of distinguished speakers: Ms. Liana Bratasida, Deputy Minister for Environmental Conservation, State Ministry for the Environment, Indonesia; APO Secretary-General Tajima; VPC Managing Director Hang; Dr. Troung Manh Tien, Director-General, Department of Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Vietnam; and Dr. Leong Yueh Kwong, Director, Socio-Economic and Environmental Research Institute, Malaysia. 