

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Vietnam lies along the east coast of Indochina Peninsula in north-south direction stretching as long as about 1,700 km and constituted socialist republic countries group with Laos and Cambodia. Having well over 73 million population, it stands out as a big country along with Thailand in this aspect. Though liberated itself from French colonialism after the end of World War II, the country was politically divided into north and south governments at the north latitude 17 degrees and has since experienced extreme hardship through the national liberation movement launched in 1960 and ensuing internal war until the unification of the divided countries in 1975.

The most urgent policy of the unified Vietnamese government upon the end of the internal war was recovery of food producing capacity to feed its people, for which massive efforts were made throughout the “Second 5-year Development Plan (1976 – 80)”, the first national development plan after unification following the “First 5-year Development Plan (1971 - 75)” before the unification, in resuscitation and expansion of cultivation land and development of irrigation systems. Afterwards, priority was shifted toward industrialization of the country with particular emphasis on heavy industries and socialization of the southern Vietnam (former South Vietnam). However, the efforts could not well succeed in achieving the target because owing to inefficiency characteristic of the state-run enterprises etc. the industrial production tended to be stagnant and socialization of the southern Vietnam faced a number of difficulties.

As a result of such slump in economic sector, the central government in 1979 decided to adopt “New Economic Policy” which subsequently was to evolve into the current Doi Moi policy. Facing the world epoch of the end to the cold war, coupled with national economic stagnation, Vietnam started to follow a path toward rapid market-orientation of its economy.

In December 1986 at the Communist Party convention, it officially adopted the Doi Moi policy in an effort to achieve rapid economic growth by economic re-structuring and external liberalization policy.

In the “Five-year Educational Development Plan (1996 – 2000)”, a part of the Doi Moi policy, development of human resources by higher education to meet the challenge of market-based economy is, along with comprehensive nationwide primary education, one of the primary issues. The Japanese government, in its official economic assistance programs for Vietnam, also places the greatest emphasis on the human resources development sector.

On the other hand, the Japanese government launched in 1994 and since then extended assistance in running the so called “Japan Center” in the NIS countries (New Independent States) which constituted the previous Soviet Union to afford the base to train people to run the market-based economy of these countries.

Under the circumstances, the Japanese government dispatched a project formation mission to Vietnam in July, 1998 with an aim to discuss setting up a similar center which would contribute to the same human resources development. The Vietnamese government, cordially welcoming the idea, proposed on its part to put it in the Foreign Trade University in Hanoi.

In response to this proposal, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) dispatched a Preliminary Survey Mission for Project-type Technical Cooperation Scheme in January, 1999 to work out a concrete plan of “Vietnam-Japan Human Resources Cooperation Center” (hereafter referred to as the Project). As a result of the discussion between the Mission and the Vietnamese party, it was considered that the centers be set up at both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh cities and technical assistance of the Japanese government by “Project-type Technical Cooperation Scheme” extended to support this undertaking.

Following this development, the Vietnamese government submitted to the Japanese government additionally a request of assistance in May, 1999 for constructing building and supplying training equipment under the Grant Aid Scheme to smooth out a path for implementing the foregoing Project-type Technical Cooperation. The Grant Aid, however, was decided to be extended only to the Hanoi center this time as the land has not been secured yet for the Ho Chi Minh center by the Vietnamese side. The Project-type Technical Cooperation Scheme in fact is being considered to be kicked off, not awaiting the completion of the facilities constructed by the Grant Aid Scheme temporarily using the existing facilities.