I. Project Context

Vietnam shows an impressive track record of economic growth and poverty reduction over the last 25 years. At the time that the Education For All – Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) endorsed Vietnam’s Education For All (EFA) Action Plan in the year 2003, making Vietnam one of the first FTI partner countries, Vietnam’s GDP per capita was US$491 and the poverty rate was about 30%. The GDP per capita has more than doubled since then and the poverty rate is less than half of what it was at that time. With an estimated population of 87 million people, Vietnam’s growth and poverty reduction represents sustained success in living standards that is even more impressive than similar growth records of neighbors Cambodia (population 14 million) and Laos (population 6 million).

The development of human resource productivity and innovation is at the center of Vietnam’s Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) 2011-2020. Together with macro-economic stabilization and strengthening infrastructure, the principles of innovation and productivity growth are central themes in Vietnam’s development agenda. Decisive action in this regard is being taken at all levels of the education system, from early childhood to university and science and technology. The translation of national development mandates into specific actions for the education sector is further outlined in the Vietnam Education Development Strategic Plan (2011-2020) and the EFA Action Plan 2003-2015 (Review and Update 2012).

II. Sectoral and institutional Context

Vietnam has made significant advances in quantitative indicators of access to primary education. It is one of the world’s best performers among low income countries in terms of progress. The primary completion rate, using the standard UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) definition accepted for EFA monitoring, is almost 100%, with parity between girls and boys. This phenomenal progress has come about in part due to high government commitment towards the education sector that is backed up by strong social support and long standing cultural valuation of education. The Government of Vietnam (GOV) has made a strong push to increase public expenditures on education from less than 3% of GDP in 2000 to 5.6% of GDP in 2009. Spending for basic education (primary and lower secondary) accounts for 52% of education expenditures. At the primary level, one of the driving forces behind the increase in education spending has been a school construction program that ensures that now every commune has at least a satellite primary school.

Vietnam has also worked towards equity, making a concerted effort to improve the quality of educational inputs for primary school in disadvantaged areas. These efforts have been supported by the recently concluded Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children (PEDC) project and the ongoing National Targeted Programs. A powerful but simple policy of targeted financing has been used to ensure that every primary school in Vietnam is provided with certain minimal conditions - the Fundamental School Quality Level (FSQL) standards. FSQ standards cover a range of inputs including infrastructure, didactic materials, school organization, and
teacher qualifications. PEDC covered 4,751 schools in 227 disadvantaged districts across 40 provinces. This $244 million project (2004-2010) received donor support from IDA, Australia, Canada, Norway and the United Kingdom. One very important consequence of the PEDC program is the central and local level institutional knowledge and individual capacity to execute projects in conformance with internationally accepted procurement and financial management practices. The FSQL index for the whole country reached 71.9 in 2009/10, which still leaves a gap for the last 28% of schools to be brought up to minimum standards. National Targeted Program resources continue to be directed towards school construction and other inputs for the remaining targeted areas that need the resources.

The central remaining challenge facing Vietnam’s education sector is to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly for disadvantaged groups. The construction of schools, the provision of textbooks and other educational inputs do pose logistical challenges and resource constraints. The Government continues to channel efforts to meet this challenge, often with the help of donor partners and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, in order to inculcate children with superior thinking and problem solving skills, and to develop lifelong habits to carry into adulthood, Vietnam seeks to bring about a large-scale pedagogical renovation. This renovation seeks a systematic improvement in the teaching-learning process in the classroom and the supporting management and community relationships. To bring such a change about for the entire education system is a grand but necessary ambition. A number of small-scale initiatives have been implemented during the past ten years in Vietnam to pilot qualitative changes and in-depth pedagogical renovation, but they have not been able to ignite a process of sustained and systemic change.

Lasting and systemic improvement in educational quality for the disadvantaged requires a comprehensive, focused package of pedagogical interventions that will have an impact on the entire daily life of the school. The program needs to be of sufficient scale, with appropriate targeting and multiple positive feedback loops of support and communication across the country in order to become self-sustaining and generate the required ‘tipping point’ for systemic change to occur.

III. Project Development Objectives

The project development objective (PDO) is to introduce and use new teaching and learning practices in the classroom targeting the most disadvantaged groups of primary students. New practices refer to superior teaching and learning processes, where cognitively engaged children learn to be independent and innovative thinkers. This project’s focus on pedagogy complements other investments in school infrastructure and full day schooling.

IV. Project Description

The proposed project seeks to bring about a substantive reform in the teaching and learning process of the classroom. The following elements for learning success form the core of the proposed intervention: (i) Student-centered learning, (ii) Cooperative learning, (iii) Active and reflective learning, (iv) Linkages in knowledge building, and (v) Empowerment of the community. Provided in a combined and dedicated package, this SCALE forms an ambitious program of pedagogical and administrative reform that has the potential to truly revolutionize the education system in Vietnam, and provide an example for other countries to follow.

The proposed Vietnam Escuela Nueva (VNEN) project is an adaptation of the well known and extensively researched Escuela Nueva (EN) program in Colombia. In 2009, Vietnam piloted the EN pedagogy of child-centered, group-learning and contextualized methodology under the PEDC project in 48 classrooms across six provinces in Vietnam. The ensuing Vietnam Escuela Nueva (VNEN) model, implemented by trained teachers, has been implemented in full since the beginning of the academic year in September 2011. The project seeks to scale up VNEN potentially to the entire primary education system in Vietnam while prioritizing resources towards disadvantaged communities. The project is composed of four components that together will help bring about systemic change while prioritizing disadvantaged communities.

- **Component 1: Material Development for Pedagogical Renovation** to finance (i) the development of learning guides and other materials and (ii) capacity building for material development;
- **Component 2: Training and Provision of Materials** to finance (i) development of training materials and delivery of training and (ii) provision of materials;
- **Component 3: School Level Support for VNEN Implementation** to finance (i) campus grant and equipment for VNEN direct activities and (ii) campus grant for school lunches in remote communities; and
- **Component 4: Project and Knowledge Management** to finance (i) project management and (ii) knowledge management classroom assessment and impact evaluation.

V. Financing (in USD Million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Loans/Credits/Others</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borrower</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA-FTI Education Program Development Fund</td>
<td>84.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. Implementation

The project will be administered by a Project Management Unit (PMU)—mainly staffed by MOET employees, supported by consultants for specific assignments—to be set up in the Department of Primary Education and headed by the Director of the Primary Education Department.

This project includes three sets of items to be procured: (i) Printing of materials such as training materials and learning guides; (ii) Equipment for schools – computers, photocopying machines and digital cameras; and (iii) Furniture for seating children in the VNEN model and minor repairs/rehabilitation. The first two of these items will be procured by the PMU and the last item will be procured at the school level. Training for teachers and school managers will be managed by the PMU with help from consultants and MOET’s Department of Teacher Training and TTIs.

Provincial level administration will be the responsibility of a Provincial Project Steering Committee headed by the Provincial Director of Primary Education with consultants to support administration at the Provincial level.

VII. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forests OP/BP 4.36</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pest Management OP 4.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VIII. Contact point

World Bank

Contact: Suhas D. Parandekar
Title: Senior Education Economist
Tel: 458-7622
Email: sparandekar@worldbank.org

Borrower/Client/Recipient

Contact: Mr. Le Tien Thanh
Title: Director General, Dept. of Primary Education
Tel: (84-4) 869-2479
Email: ltthanh@moet.edu.vn

Implementing Agencies

Contact: Mr. Le Tien Thanh
Title: Director General, Dept. of Primary Education
Tel: (84-4) 869-2479
Email: ltthanh@moet.edu.vn
IX. For more information contact:
   The InfoShop
   The World Bank
   1818 H Street, NW
   Washington, D.C. 20433
   Telephone: (202) 458-4500
   Fax: (202) 522-1500
   Web: http://www.worldbank.org/infoshop