Greening Transport in Vietnam

South-South Facility Development Outcome Story

Towards a quicker, safer and heathier ride in Ho Chi Minh City

THE CHALLENGE:

Fast-growing Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) is Vietnam's principal economic hub and largest city with 8 million inhabitants. To move around, people have very limited public transportation options and rely heavily on motorcycles. On the road, the motorcycles, cars, and buses all compete for limited space. These conflicting flows of traffic lead to lower speeds and accidents. Furthermore, poor transport infrastructure slows economic growth and impacts air quality: more than 90% of children under the age of five suffer from respiratory illnesses[i]. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems can help address some of the urban transport challenges. When buses travel on dedicated routes, there is less interaction between vehicles and they can to travel faster. This results in travel-time savings, improved air quality and lowered accident risks. In Vietnam however, planners, policy makers, and operators had very little experience in designing or operating BRT systems.

AT-A-GLANCE

CHALLENGE

Traffic safety, congestion and air pollution are daily concerns for people living in Ho Chi Minh City with negative impact on quality of life and the city's economic growth.

SSF GRANT

$143,300

KNOWLEDGE RECIPIENT

Vietnam

KNOWLEDGE PROVIDERS

Indonesia, China, Colombia, Brazil

SDGS SUPPORTED

IMPACT

The expertise the Vietnamese officials gained from their peers during the knowledge exchange, directly informed a $124 million World Bank investment in HCMC's transport system. BRT development in that project is expected to result in travel time-savings, reduced air pollution and improved road safety by 2025.

THE EXCHANGE:

In 2010, Ho Chi Minh City's Department of Transportation requested support from the World Bank as they wanted to learn more about BRTs. The Bank responded with a South-South Facility grant through which Vietnamese officials could learn from their peers. Through study tours, Vietnam gained knowledge from Colombia and Brazil about mature BRT systems, and studied newer BRTs in similar, densely populated cities in China and Indonesia. Participants in the exchange did not only include officials from the departments of Transportation, Urban Planning, and Investment Planning, but also bus operators, development policy groups, and members of the Ministries of Planning and Investment, Construction, and Finance. The Vietnamese delegates learned from their counterparts how to plan, finance, design, and implement BRT systems, mitigate environmental and social impacts, and use limited land more efficiently, all integrated in the broader urban planning context. Le Hai Phong (Director of the Management and Operation Center for Public Transport) reflected: "Our experiences will shape the development of the BRT line on Vo Van Kiet Boulevard. This will help the city develop its public transport system".

THE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME, EIGHT YEARS LATER:

Immediately after the knowledge exchange, Vietnamese Government officials identified a major transit corridor within which to develop a first BRT. Consequently, the $124 million World Bank-financed HCMC Green Transport Development project was designed and launched in 2015. The project includes BRTs that are expected to increase the speed of buses circulation from 14 to 23 km per hour, resulting in 23-minute time saving per trip by 2025. As buses will use clean propulsion technology and a portion of commuters is expected to shift from motorcycles to public transport, it will reduce road congestion, pollution, noise levels and accidents in the city.

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[i] Bang Quoc Ho, Alain Clappier, Golay François. 2012. "Air pollution forecast for Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in 2015 and 2020." Air Quality, Atmosphere and Health Journal. Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 145-158.