

FINAL EVALUATION

VIE/024

Strengthening the Management of Vietnam's
National Blood cold Chain

PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Country	Vietnam
Long project Title	Strengthening the Management of Vietnam's National Blood cold Chain
Short project Title	National Blood cold Chain
LuxDev Code	VIE/024
Version of the Report	July 2013

RATING OF THE PROJECT BY THE EVALUATION MISSION

Global rating (Effectiveness)	3 On a scale of 1 (excellent results, significantly better than expected) to 6 (the project was unsuccessful, or the situation has deteriorated on balance).
Rating using other evaluation criteria	Relevance: 2 Efficiency: 4 Sustainability: 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This mission was the final evaluation mission for project VIE/024 - Strengthening the management of Vietnam's national blood cold chain and was carried out by an international expert (Dr Jean-Claude FABER) together with a national expert (Prof. Bach HOA), from 19 to 30 March 2013.

The objectives of the mission were to analyse:

- the results and the specific objective reached at the end of the project, compared with its logical framework and its project document ;
- the results achieved in terms of capacity development ;
- the project's management and monitoring ;
- the project evaluation based on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and cross-cutting aspects (Gender Equity, Governance and Environment) ;
- critical issues such as:
 - policy development on strengthening the National Blood System and establishing a National Blood Transfusion Service,
 - success rate in building up a Blood cold Chain system around four respectively five Regional Blood Transfusion Centers,
 - rolling out to other (not yet covered) regions and extent of coverage,
 - integration and management regarding the Hanoi Core Statement,
 - economical aspects of the Blood cold Chain Equipment,
 - status of the counterpart contribution (human resources, maintenance and training material).

Finally, the final evaluation was expected to formulate its conclusions and give recommendations at different levels to overcome future challenges at the National Blood System and the National Blood Transfusion Service, specifically on Blood cold Chain and Blood cold Chain Equipment.

The project rationale was to improve the quality and safety of the storage and the transportation of the blood and blood components, thus improving directly the quality and the safety of the blood products to the patients. The objective was not only to provide the Blood cold Chain in replacement of the "old" equipment provided through the two former projects of the Luxembourg Cooperation in 1995 and 2001 (or through other funding), but also to improve and help build the capacity of the national counterparts in managing the Blood cold Chain in terms of maintenance and organisation.

This project was intended to serve as a "model" to help the national authorities to develop a more general maintenance policy (extended to all pieces of equipment of different nature) and to progress towards a global quality management policy.

One of the project aims was also to explore how the project's achievements could be "rolled out" to other provinces or newly designated Regional Blood Transfusion Centers and their associated hospitals with their patients.

The mission collected the available project documentation and interviewed the main stakeholders, at the National Institute for Haematology and Blood Transfusion, in the Regional Blood Transfusion Centers and in some of the hospitals supplied by the Regional Blood Transfusion Centers to perform blood transfusion. It should be pointed out that due to time constraints only some central and provincial hospitals could be visited and no time was left to visit any district hospital.

Project's description and general objectives:

The project was implemented as a "joint venture" between the National Institute for Haematology and Blood Transfusion, the current five Regional Blood Transfusion Centers and the VIE/024 project. It started officially on 1 January 2008.

The total Luxembourg budget was initially 2 700 000 EUR complemented by a local contribution of 270 000 EUR. On 20 August 2008 the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs authorised a budget extension of 400 000 EUR for the procurement of additional Blood cold Chain Equipment, including accessories and training services following the assessment made by the World Health Organisation and Mr. Laurent Mangenot.

Acting on behalf of the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, LuxDev was the implementing agency and was responsible for the procurement of the equipment and services.

Acting on behalf of the Ministry of Health, the National Institute for Haematology and Blood Transfusion was the implementing agency for the Government of Vietnam and monitored the project implementation and provided feedback to the Ministry of Health.

A project implementation group was set up and was co-chaired between the National Institute for Haematology and Blood Transfusion and the present project and comprised the following members: the Directors of the four initial Regional Blood Transfusion Centers, the Director of the Haematology and Blood Transfusion Hospital, Ho Chi Minh City, a representative of the World Health Organisation, a representative of the World Bank and the project's Chief Technical Adviser.

The project VIE/024 - Blood cold Chain or Strengthening the management of Vietnam's national Blood cold Chain continued activities of the previous two phases, rectifying their weaknesses by giving a more logical orientation.

The project's hardware part placed "lege artis" an important number of Blood cold Chain Equipment: 204 pieces of active refrigeration (150 blood bank refrigerators and 54 freezers), 272 pieces of passive refrigeration (transport boxes) as well as 203 voltage stabilizers.

The institutional and geographic distribution and deployment of the Blood cold Chain Equipment have been carefully prepared and followed up. Important and wide gaps in the Blood cold Chain have been filled in a certain number of health care institutions, which play quantitatively and qualitatively a crucial role in the health care system and in the blood system in Vietnam. 237 hospitals have been equipped with Blood cold Chain Equipment. All of them are supplied by the existing five Regional Blood Transfusion Centers: the latter play an important role in the sustainability efforts (assistance in management, maintenance and repair of the Blood cold Chain Equipment). Therefore their technical staff underwent intensive specialist training at the manufacturer's production site. The Regional Blood Transfusion Centers were provided with technical workshops, including necessary working tools in case of an intervention on the Blood cold Chain Equipment.

The project's software part developed numerous initiatives. Learning and training materials were developed and are now available in Vietnamese. Courses and workshops were organised for the staff in the hospitals (end-users, technicians, managers and directors) and were repeated for refreshment. The lack or absence of quality culture in the hospitals was a major obstacle for these educational activities and partly evaporated the achieved results in terms of awareness and training. Amongst others, this resulted in a lack of compliance with written procedures, Standard Operating Procedures and guidelines as well as absence of proper documentation, performance assessment and supervision in the hospitals.

Despite undisputable progress, significant stress challenges remain in the context of the Blood cold Chain, which may constitute a risk for the sustainability of the achievements, such as low quality culture, continuing training needs, calculated obsolescence of the Blood cold Chain Equipment, insufficient tropicalisation of the equipment, continued dependency on manufacturers in relation with advanced maintenance and complicated repairs, compartmentation culture with its different facets, complicated decommissioning, uncertain budget availability for spare parts and replacement of equipment, etc.

The project's institutional part did not deliver the expected results. This has different reasons, most of them are external to the project as the important issues around the National Blood System and the National Blood Transfusion Service as the sole blood supplier in the country, are to be taken forward by national instances and unfortunately this has not yet happened.

The efforts undertaken since 1995 to build up and maintain an adequate Blood cold Chain in Vietnam should now come to an end and should benefit from a phasing-out. This extended support should provide a very limited number of Blood cold Chain Equipment for a few strategic sites, offer further training refreshment opportunities, continue lobbying for a National Blood System respectively a National Blood Transfusion Service and the tools and structures necessary to set it up and grant assistance for a few issues which continue to hinder the development of the blood transfusion medicine in Vietnam (systematic switch from small volume blood donations to standard blood donations of 450 ml, focused strengthening of hygiene).

In summary, the final evaluation mission comes to the following conclusions:

- the project has implemented to date the needed activities to provide the Blood cold Chain Equipment in good local and technical conditions ;
- planning of activities was done carefully and based on a logical approach ;
- some activities could not be undertaken for different reasons (necessary expertise for institutional strengthening not constantly available inside the project team, decisions and actions outside of reach of the project, etc.) ;
- the project has respected the principles of harmonisation and alignment and put in place the mechanisms necessary to ensure a maximum of ownership by the national counterpart ;
- there was an encouraging participation in the project activities by the national counterpart, in financial and human nature ;
- the capacity building activities have been manifold (organisation of training events, publication and distribution of manuals for end-users, for technicians, for management teams) ;
- the project has organised special focused capacity building activities by training 10 engineers in the factory of the Blood cold Chain Equipment manufacturer with the intention to use these trainees as "focal points" to ensure adequate support by the Regional Blood Transfusion Centers to their associated hospitals ;
- the network around the four Regional Blood Transfusion Centers (plus the Ho Chi Minh City Haematology and Blood Transfusion Hospital) and their hospitals needs to be further developed in strengthening their activities (like monitoring, training, technical support to hospitals, management teams, using the data base, informing and feeding-back, etc.). This "model" should be extended to the nine "new" Regional Blood Transfusion Centers and later also to the four planned Regional Blood Transfusion Centers.

Finally, major lessons can be learned from the project VIE/024 for future "blood projects" in other partner countries, especially on priority setting and the chronologic sequence of interventions.