

# PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN HA TINH AND THE TOWNSHIP OF LANGLEY

## PLANNING FOR LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT IN HA TINH CITY

### 1. Overview of the project

#### 1.1. Summary

Ha Tinh city is the provincial center of Ha Tinh province with an area 56,63 km<sup>2</sup> and population of 98,730 people (2013), consisting of 16 administrative units (10 wards and 6 communes). Ha Tinh City Center functions as the political, economic, cultural, and scientific-technical center of the province. It is the central hub of transportation routes in the province, home to Provincial departments and agencies, and the headquarters of the banks, businesses, and health care centers of Ha Tinh Province. The economic structure of the city in 2015 includes:

- Small industry-construction: 50%;
- Trade and services: 45%;
- Agriculture and fisheries: 5%.

In the period from 2006 to 2010, the city's economy grew at a rate of over 16.5% per year. This was 1.7 times higher than the average growth rate of the province as a whole.

However, Ha Tinh city, as a municipality in the developing stage, has been facing many challenges: planning systems that are not synchronized; increasing requirements for infrastructure development, including drainage systems, collection and treatment of urban solid waste, and other sanitation issues; vocational training and employment for workers, and career transitions for rural workers; and problems of economic development in industry, handicrafts, trade, and services.

To navigate to a model of sustainable development, Ha Tinh city should choose appropriate development strategies by having access to lessons learned of urban development in the world and in Vietnam, and adapt such good practices to the context of Ha Tinh province in general and the city of Ha Tinh in particular.

With the support of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN), the Township of Langley, and Trinity Western University, the People's Council of Ha Tinh city has developed its *Economic Development Strategy for the period of 2014-2020 with a vision up to 2030*, a document that provides a vision and a plan for the sustainable economic development of the city in accordance with the Resolution of the City Party

Committee. This demonstration project identified 3 main objectives: i) Building a strategic plan for the city's local economic development, applying survey methodologies and processes that foster a bottom-up approach, building a vision on ideas generated in the community with the key stakeholders ; ii) supporting vocational training for urban poor women; and iii) promoting cooperation between universities based in Ha Tinh city and the Township of Langley.

#### 1.2. Project methodology

To implement the project: Building a Strategic Plan for Local Economic Development, the consultancy team of Ha Tinh city and the Township of Langley used the following methods:

- *Collection of secondary data and materials:*
- *Investigation through a semi-structured questionnaire:*
- *A bottom-up consultation workshop*
- *The use of a consultant with specific expertise; the use of a clear research model and logical framework*

The draft logical framework for the development of the Strategic Plan and its implementation has been presented to the leaders and representatives of city's agencies and departments for their comments. In the political and cultural context of Vietnam; this bottom-up planning approach was seen as new and innovative. It raised a lot of interest and a large consensus amongst all stakeholders.



The process of developing this strategy began in early 2012, with the following procedures:

- Defining the strategic objectives and vision;
- Identifying feasible development targets;
- Developing a logical framework of the strategy;
- Building an action plan with identified resources needed to implement the strategy;
- Setting up a monitoring and evaluation framework allowing people to track the progress of implementation.

Vocational training was provided to women in Ha Tinh. This training included local study tours to rice pancake production facilities in Do Luong district in Nghe An province. The Ha Tinh Women’s Union was involved in restoring traditional rice pancake production by combining classroom learning and a learning by doing methodology to experiment with the industrial production of rice pancakes. These applied methods are very useful, cost-saving, and accessible to participants. Moreover, with the MPED supported equipment the trainees understood the benefits of rice pancake production in improving their income and livelihoods.

The involvement of the Township of Langley led also to a new relationship between Ha Tinh University and Trinity Western University. The two universities signed a Memorandum of Cooperation and organized volunteer missions to promote academic exchanges in areas such as English language training, sports, history, culture, philosophy, sciences, and arts.

### 1.3. Partners and stakeholders

The main actors developing the strategic plan included a group of Ha Tinh city leaders, while the project team of Ha Tinh city served as the coordinating unit, chaired by the Economic Department. Other participants included the Ha Tinh Women’s Union, the Cooperative Alliance, the Ha Tinh Business Association, and some small and medium-sized businesses and communities. The expert team from the Township of Langley, as well as experts from Vinh University provided technical assistance to the strategic planning process.

The vocational training component was coordinated and managed by the Ha Tinh Women’s Union. The beneficiaries are women making rice pancakes as well as their families who also benefit from increased income. The husbands helped the women with technical issues with the equipment and were also involved in other stages of making the rice pancakes. The Vocational Training Center of Ha Tinh Provincial Women’s Union provided technical assistance with experts on rice pancake production, marketing, food safety, and fire protection.

The University of Ha Tinh and Trinity Western University are the two main partners implementing the inter-university collaboration. The governments of Langley Township and Ha Tinh city act as a bridge for the relationship between the two universities, supporting them on issues related to policies, customs procedures, logistics, and communication for the delegations from Canada.

## 2. Project results

### 2.1. Project results

**For the first objective**, the city has achieved important results, particularly the overall strategic plan for economic development of Ha Tinh city in the period 2014–2020 and vision up to 2030. This vision is as follows:

*“Ha Tinh city is where to live and develop business in Ha Tinh Province and the North Central region; with harmonious development conditions between economic, social and environmental factors; having high adaptability to climate change conditions. “*

Twelve initiatives were proposed to implement the Strategic Plan. Consultation with key stakeholders in the community was done and all agreed to participate in the implementation of these initiatives. Ha Tinh city is now calling for investments for the identified initiatives.

An important result being achieved in this component is that Ha Tinh city has learned a new planning method — the bottom-up approach — which is consistent with the aspirations of local communities, and different from the traditional top-down approach applied so far at different



Bottom-up consultation for LED strategic planning with different stakeholders of Ha Tinh city.

levels of planning. The new method can be applied in all types of planning and in different areas.

**With the aim of supporting vocational training for poor women**, the rice pancake production model for women was piloted in Thach Quy ward and Thach Trung commune, and then expanded to Dai Nai ward and Thach Hung commune in the city. This interesting economic development initiative started at the beginning of the strategic planning process in January 2013. The initiative has provided the city with an economic model to improve the incomes of poor women. All together, more than 240 women were trained, two rice pancake producer groups were established, and two cooperatives were created and equipped with modern production lines to increase productivity in order to improve the incomes of the women participants.

**In the development cooperation initiative between Ha Tinh University and Trinity Western University** (Langley Township), the two universities initiated and developed a friendship and cooperation relationship. Two delegations of volunteers from Trinity Western University travelled to Ha Tinh to work with local students and teachers. They made a very good impression on the communities, especially high school students in the city. This relationship is the inspiration for learning English language in Ha Tinh city, and will be the motivation for economic development of the city. Trinity Western University called upon their Langley local community groups to donate good books for teaching and research to Ha Tinh University. Ha Tinh University is currently working with the province to complete the procedures to receive the donated books.

## 2.2. Compatibility with program crosscutting goals

Developing an overall economic development strategic plan for Ha Tinh is a pilot project with no adverse effects on the environment. It will have positive impacts for both men and women, and the main beneficiaries of the project are the business community and local people.

For the rice pancake production, the production methods were improved to ensure food safety and environmental protection. Implementers of this project are mainly women who are supported by their husbands in machinery operation. While the project beneficiaries include both men and women, women's rights are addressed and resolved in this manufacturing sector.

The cooperation project between the two universities, Ha Tinh University and Trinity Western University, is also promoting cooperation in training and in exchanges between the two universities without any harm to the environment. Beneficiaries are managers, officers, employees, teachers and students of the University of Ha Tinh, ensuring gender equality.

## 2.3. Success factors

The success of the Ha Tinh project is based on the following key factors:

**Internal factors** include high consensus between the city leadership, the business community, and stakeholders in applying a new planning and decision-making approach. In addition, the city project management board is composed of young and dynamic officers who are highly responsible and have a good command of the English language, making the exchanges between Ha Tinh city and the Township of Langley easier. The project has mobilized many stakeholders in the strategic planning process, especially the people and businesses. The city government has gained the support of stakeholders for project implementation because their interests, thoughts, and recommendations for economic development have been listened to and considered. In addition, similarities between the two cities also play an important role in the project's successes. In the process of selecting their Vietnamese city partners, the representatives of the Township of Langley realized a lot of similarities between the two cities, including location on major national highways, significant amounts of agricultural land within each city, and universities in both inner cities, among other things. These are considered by both sides to be very important factors in local economic development.

**External factors** include the positive technical assistance of expert groups from the Township of Langley, BC, Canada. With a lot of experience and enthusiasm to help Ha Tinh city, they brought a new approach of strategic planning for local economic development (LED) to the Ha Tinh project team. Through this project, the cooperation initiative between the two universities, Ha Tinh University and Trinity Western University, is being implemented and setting the basis for training of human resources for economic development. The close relationship between the two cities has contributed to



*Sample SWOT Analysis with Langley representatives and city stakeholders in strategic planning process.*

productive knowledge sharing during more than 3 years of project implementation. FCM and ACVN have supported the city's project management team in collaborating with the Canadian and local consultants, providing technical support, organizing logistics for the technical missions, and drawing good experience from Canada.

## 2.4. Sustainability of results

The project's sustainability is secured from the following angles:

The overall economic development strategic plan of Ha Tinh city has been approved by the People's Council of Ha Tinh and included in the document inputs to the Party Congress of Ha Tinh city in 2015. It provides a strategic direction for the economic development of the city in the next 5 to 10 years.

The rice pancake production project for women has been successfully achieved and will be replicated in other wards and communes in the city. The women in the two cooperatives are looking forward to producing other rice related products such as vermicelli, noodles, etc. Therefore, the model will be sustained with the internal resources of women involved.

The cooperation between Ha Tinh University and Trinity Western University is very promising. Ha Tinh will receive advanced technology from Trinity Western University for the training of high quality human resources in the context of a more competitive economy.

## 3. Sharing the experience

### 3.1. Lessons

To achieve the results of the economic development strategic plan and rice pancake production model for women, as well as university cooperation, the lessons to be learned are, first, to formulate a clear development vision and objectives; second, to survey and evaluate the real situation and the development trends of the local and regional economy; and, third, to predict the



*Opening the Canadian Room at the Ha Tinh University with donated books.*

impacts based on a consensus building process involving all stakeholders within the community. We applied the "bottom-up planning approach," organizing thematic discussions and meetings with different focus groups. During project implementation, specific objectives should be identified with specific and practical expected outputs. During the strategic planning process, initiatives with some economic development models should be developed to pilot the plan in order to provide accurate estimates of required funding and resources for the plan and to build inspiration for other activities; the women's vocational training project in Ha Tinh is a good example of this.

### 3.2. Good Practices

One especially good practice was the overall economic development strategic planning process of Ha Tinh city, with advisory supports of experts from the Township of Langley and Vietnamese consultants to Ha Tinh city. This was a formal process with effective methods to attract the contributions of stakeholders, including participation of the people and of businesses, two very important stakeholders in the city's local economic development.

The project promoting rice pancake production by women in the two wards and two communes is a good economic model because it was proposed and implemented by the women themselves. Results of this model are not only the improvement of the livelihood of every member's family, but also enhancement and consolidation of relations among the members.

The cooperative relationship between Ha Tinh University and Trinity Western University is an extension of the cooperation between the two cities. It shows that, during the process of project implementation, both parties are always thinking creatively to find opportunities for cooperation based on the actual conditions of the localities.

### 3.3. Success stories

During the process of developing the local economic development strategic plan, the city also implemented initiatives, chaired by the Ha Tinh Women's Union, to support poor women in economic activities to improve their living conditions and reduce the level of poverty. Rice pancake is a traditional occupation in Ha Tinh city. To date, there are 293 households from 12 wards joining this traditional production. However, rice pancake products were still manually produced by women with low income, therefore livelihoods had not yet been improved.

With the support of the MPED program, the Ha Tinh Women's Union implemented **the rice pancake production collaborative** pilot project in Thach Quy ward and Thach Trung commune in order to replicate to other wards and communes of the city. At the beginning, the Ha Tinh Women's Union held two training courses on

rice pancake production as well as other topics required to ensure food safety during production, fire prevention, processing, and marketing of products. The participants also joined a study tour to learn about the multi-functional rice pancake production machine with steam technology in Do Luong district, Nghe An province. The project also supported the purchase of two machine production lines for two production cooperatives in Thach Trung and Thach Quy, which significantly increased their productivity. The current capacity is 60,000 rice pancakes per day with the average income of 150,000–200,000 VND per person per day (previously, it was only from 1000–1200 cakes/ per day with income of 50,000 VND per person per day). The living conditions of the women have been significantly improved and the Ha Tinh Women's Union is preparing to expand this model to other wards in the city.

WEBSITE OF HA TINH CITY



*Preparation of rice pancakes in Ha Tinh City (women's cooperative supported by the MPED program).*

## Annexes

- Economic Development Strategy of Ha Tinh City in the period 2014–2020 with the vision up to 2030
- Project Plan
- Project Reports from two initiatives

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