

MPED SUCCESS STORY — VIETNAM

This article is part of a series written to highlight some of the success stories from FCM's Municipal Partners for Economic Development (MPED) program. MPED projects seek to improve local governance and economic policy development around the world while, at the same time, emphasizing the importance of gender equality and environmental sustainability. From 2011 to 2014, the District of North Vancouver, Canada, worked with the City of Soc Trang, Vietnam, to support and improve local economic development (LED) in the City.

Planting the seeds of change... to build trust between the City and local farmers and businesses

In the City of Soc Trang, relationships between local businesses and the City are in a developmental phase, and meetings between the two parties happen mainly on an *ad hoc* basis. The Young Businesses Association has been established for just three years. "Farmers and businesses don't really trust local government," says City of Soc Trang chairman, Mr. Ngan. "Building a relationship is important, and it takes time. We at the City need to show our commitment."

Redefining the role of local government involves building new types of relationships and gaining the trust of farmers, businesses and, ultimately, of citizens. "Our project with the District of North Vancouver has helped us gain experience of planning for local economic development and of creating relationships with businesses," says Ngan. "It provides us with a good framework and means we are no longer improvising."

"The City's Small and Medium-Size Enterprises Marketing Strategy, which was also developed with support from the District of North Vancouver, is tied to our five-year Socioeconomic Development Plan," he adds. "However, that plan is driven by our local businesses. It is a very interesting mechanism to help coordinate our efforts with them".

The City's relationship with the approximately 1,000 businesses in Soc Trang is very important to spur economic growth and community development. "Local governments should know their local businesses, what their needs are and what challenges they face," says Mr. Ngan.

"Our role at the City is to create favorable conditions for local businesses to thrive and expand. Their successes directly benefit our community."



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