

DelPHE project - proves success in teaching and research partnership development between UK, Bangladesh and Vietnamese institutions

Professor Md Abdul Wahab, lead partner, BAU

Bangladesh (BD) and Vietnam (VN) are both densely populated countries in South and Southeast Asia with common agricultural features of rice and fish production. Both countries are rich in vast flooded wetlands and aquatic systems which can play an immense role in poverty reduction and food security if they are properly managed.

A Commonwealth funded and British Council supported postgraduate distance learning (DL) programme in aquatic resource development (ARD) has been introduced to Bangladesh since 2005. Having seen the tremendous response from the in-service fisheries extension officers and resource managers of both GO and NGOs towards distance learning, a further project on 'Development of Postgraduate Distance Learning Programme in Aquatic Resource Development (ARD) for Bangladesh and Vietnam' was developed. The objectives are to consolidate the ongoing DL programme in Bangladesh and to explore the possibility of introducing the same programme in Vietnam jointly by the UK and BAU faculties. This is a higher education partnership development project, DelPHE - sponsored and administered by the British Council, with Bangladesh

Agricultural University (BAU), Mymensingh as the lead partner, with active support from the Institute of Aquaculture to work with the various institutions under VIFINET in Vietnam. The project started in September 2006 with successful cooperation among different partners.

Several cross visits to Vietnam (VN), Bangladesh (BD) and Stirling (UoS) have been made during the last 18 months to share, develop and strengthen experience and partnerships. Two major workshops/seminars and several meetings with the stakeholders and policy makers were held in VN to create awareness about the potential and benefits of DL in ARD for Vietnamese field level aquatic resource managers. Three collaborative research concept notes between VN and BD have been developed and will be implemented in coming months.

VN-BD collaborative research will be carried out in three very important areas: community based aquatic resource management; sustainable freshwater prawn farming; and environmental issues and sustainability of pangas farming. Bangladesh is quite advanced in the first two topics, from which



VN scientists and academics will be benefited, however VN has been very successful in culture, post harvest management and export of pangas. Bangladesh's pangas culture industry has been very successful over the last 10 years, but is confined to supply for local markets. Due to the inability of scientific management and increased feed prices the pangas industry in Bangladesh is now on the verge of collapse. In this situation the country can learn a lot from its neighbour VN on how they are coping with the challenges.

Cross country visits between VN, BD and UK have brought a number of reputed scientists and academic leaders' closer together to create better partnerships and share knowledge and skills that should lead to joint activities to solve the problems of aquatic resource management in the region and thus help alleviate poverty and ensure sustainable livelihoods through manpower development.