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## World Bank Invests in Reforming Vietnam's Education System

Envisions Greater Support as Vietnam Recovers from the Economic Slowdown

Press Release No:2009/441/EAP

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**Washington DC, June 23, 2009** – The World Bank today recognized Vietnam's progress in modernizing governance, financing, quality assurance and public financial management in the higher education sector and approved US\$ 177 million to support the further development of the country's primary and higher education systems.

*"The approvals today will help Vietnam finance education reforms critical to the country's future competitiveness."* said **Victoria Kwakwa, the World Bank Country Director for Vietnam**. *"The economic crisis is a golden opportunity for Vietnam to reform its education sector as this will put the country on a firmer footing to come out of the economic crisis and to create a firm foundation for long-term growth."*

Vietnam has experienced rapid and consistent growth and poverty reduction since launching its transition towards market mechanisms in 1986. The education sector in Vietnam has expanded accordingly, with exponential growth in the upper levels of education. A policy of introducing cost-recovery in higher education has resulted in a rapid increase in tuition fees, which is helping Vietnam expand the sector rapidly without creating a heavy burden to the state budget. At the same time, these rapid changes may have strained the capacity of the poorest households to pay and have certainly challenged the sector's ability to deliver high-quality education services.

In light of these challenges, the US\$ 50 million from the credit approved by the Bank's Board today for the first operation in Vietnam's Higher Education Development Policy Program, aims to enable the sector to continue expanding the number of places, while ensuring equitable access to relevant study programs.

*"This new program will support the development of a modern higher education system, where universities and colleges have greater managerial autonomy but are also required to be more accountable for the quality of the services they provide,"* said **Mr. Jeffrey Waite**, who has led program development on the part of the World Bank's East Asia and Pacific Region.

The World Bank also approved US\$ 127 million for the School Education Quality Assurance Program for Vietnam, which pays special attention to disadvantaged primary education students by supporting the Government's full-day schooling reform program. It will provide support to improving policy framework, human resources, and school facilities and resources for the implementation of the program.

The World Bank also approved today two other Vietnam projects: a coastal cities project aimed at reducing river pollution in **Quy Nhon City** and a project aimed at building capacity to manage the vast bulk of polychlorinated biphenyls in the country. Funding of US\$12 million from the World Bank-administered Global Environment Facility will support both projects.

For more information, please go to the Projects and Programs section, at our website: [www.worldbank.org/vn](http://www.worldbank.org/vn)

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