

Fasevie: 14 Years of Research and Activities to Reduce Malnutrition in Vietnam

Claire Khoury¹, Chantal Monvois²

¹GRET-IRD Programme Fasevie,
National Institute of Nutrition, Hanoi, Vietnam

²GRET, Nogent-sur-Marne, France

Correspondence: Claire Khoury, Programme Fasevie,
GRET-IRD, National Institute of Nutrition, Room 223,
48b Tang Bat Ho Street, Hanoi, Vietnam
Email: khoury@gret.org

Since 1998, SIGHT AND LIFE has been supporting the Nutridev program, the objective of which is to help reduce malnutrition in vulnerable populations through a preventative approach. Nutridev programs have been established in Vietnam (Fasevie), Madagascar (Nutrimad) and most recently in Burkina Faso (NutriFaso). Nutridev is run by two French development partners, the NGO GRET, and the Research Institute for Development (IRD).

Fasevie, initiated in 1994, was concluded in January 2008 with a seminar in Hanoi, attended by over 120 people. After a demonstration organized in Saigon in mid-January with representatives of the 32 provinces of South Vietnam, the objectives of this seminar were to return the knowledge acquired by Fasevie to the national and international operators in the field of nutrition, and thus to contribute to the expansion of a strategy that has already been tested and validated on the national level.

Among the institutions present were the Ministry of Health, the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), the representatives of the

32 provinces of North Vietnam (People's Committee, Women's Union, Health Services), the national Women's Union, the partner enterprises, the French Embassy and notably the Ambassador of France, GRET, the IRD, WHO, the European Commission, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Over the course of the day, the operators gave a concluding report, speaking very favorably of the strategy developed. They also identified the paths to follow in the forthcoming expansion of the program.



School competition on nutrition



Group photo of the participants

Two days after the seminar, a workshop was organized as a continuation of the seminar, bringing together the principal players with the objective of working on defining strategies for new targets (women of childbearing age, school children, the elderly), in relation to the Fasevie experience.

Highlights of the Fasevie program

In partnership with NIN, the Fasevie program has helped to develop and circulate methods aimed at reducing the prevalence of malnutrition among vulnerable groups of the Vietnamese population: from 1994, infants; from 1998, schoolchildren – an initiative of SIGHT AND LIFE – and from 2005, women of childbearing age.

In the service of young children, Fasevie has validated a strategy combining the sale of fortified foods to complement the mother’s milk, at an accessible price for everyone, with nutritional education schemes for the populations. From 2004 to 2007, around 165,000 mothers received nutritional advice for their children, given by 4,000 volunteers from the Women’s Union.

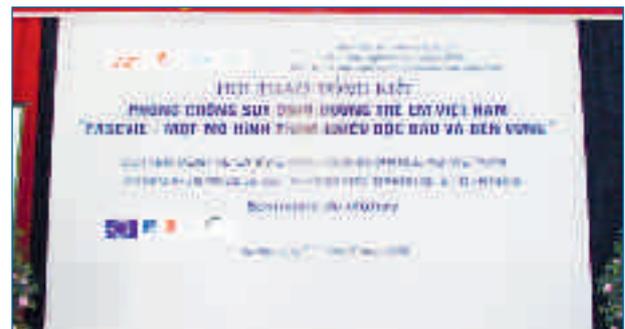
For schoolchildren, Fasevie has developed a strategy consisting of the sale of fortified biscuits, both by groceries under national jurisdiction, which sell them at low prices, and in a pilot program located at the very heart of schools, in combination with lessons on hygiene and health education given by teachers.

For women of childbearing age, a fortified drink has been developed in cooperation with an industrial partner, and for elderly persons a nutritional formulation for fortified gruel has been validated. The sale of these products at the local level has been accompanied by *ad hoc* messages about nutritional education.

This program of research activities, initiated by GRET and the IRD, has, over the years, been able to involve a growing number of local and international operators in the areas of science, technology and institutions.

A springboard for the future

For children under 2 years old, the expansion to six new provinces has already been financed by the Japanese fund to fight poverty via the ADB, in partnership with local authorities, with a view to a future expansion of the Fasevie strategy to the national level. The signing of this agreement between the ADB and the Vietnamese government is the best possible guarantee of a perpetuation of the strategy, known from now on as “Tabs.”



Invitation poster to Fasevie workshop

For school-age children, the results obtained in the pilot phase have convinced the local operators to continue the experiment, within the lower regions but also, and in particular, in the mountains, with ethnic minorities, among whom the level of malnutrition is especially worrying. SIGHT AND LIFE is continuing its commitment to the Nutridev team in the context of this new phase, known as “Nutrisco.”