Vinh City (population 230,000) is the political, economical, social and cultural capital of Nghe An Province in North/Central Viet Nam. A harsh climate, frequently affected by the dry/hot ‘Laos’ wind and life-threatening storms from the South China Sea, coupled with poor quality soil for agriculture, has marked Vinh as one of the poorest provincial cities in the nation. The tumultuous events of the past century have deeply scarred Vinh. The city was extensively bombed by the French and later by the Americans. Following the unification of Viet Nam in 1975, East Germany contributed to the city’s rebuilding.

Today, the city appears as a low-rise carpet of buildings set into a landscape structured by rice paddies, the dominant Highway 1 and its parallel railroad line, both of which link the north (Hanoi) of the country to the south (Ho Chi Minh City). The Lam River defines the eastern edge of the city, part of the area is flood-prone; the western edge is defined by the silhouette of mountains which run the length of Vietnam’s border with Laos. Social realist architecture and boulevards of the late 1970s and 1980s define the core of the urban fabric in a dominating manner.

Light industry (textiles, agriculture and seafood processing), commerce, education and administration services form the economic base. Urban infrastructure is outstripped by population growth as evidenced by insufficient water supply, solid waste collection and liquid waste management. In contrast with other provincial cities, Vinh has not significantly benefited from the ‘Doi Moi’ (economic renovation).

The Agenda 21 Programme works towards achieving more sustainable urban development through strategic action planning and disseminating lessons to other cities.

Priority issues

- Methodological discussion around the Master Plan, encouraging strategic planning and coherence in investment projects
- Improvement of solid waste management, including a sensitisation campaign, plot projects at ward level and alternative disposal options
- Revitalisation of public housing scheme of Quang Trung and adoption of participatory management approaches
- Targeted training on environmental planning and management issues for the People’s Committee and for community leaders

Main dates of the Project

April 97 Start Local Team
September 97 Public Housing Consultation
March 98 Urban Strategies Consultation
April 98 Solid Waste Action Plan
January 99 Imagining Vinh’s future identity
March 99 Urban Pact No. 1
April & September 99 Solid waste training with ENDA
January 00 Project document on Quang Trung housing revitalization
March 01 Partners’ workshop on Strategic Project - Urban Pact No 2
2002 Danida upscaling and replication of social waste demonstration activities.
June 02 Community Development activities in Quang Trung Estate
September 02 Institutionalisation workshop - Urban Pact No 3

Bilateral and multilateral partners

Several actors are linking their activities in Vinh to the Localising Agenda 21 initiative. These include, among others, several Vietnamese Government Ministries (Economic Development and Planning Department and Economic Development Strategy Institute of Ministry of Planning and Investment, etc.), NGOs (ENDA), community based organisations, national academic and training institutions (University of Hanoi), and international organisations (UNDP). The People’s Committee of Vinh City ensures coordination at the local level.

Core funding for the Localising Agenda 21 Programme is provided by the Belgian Development Cooperation, Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIC). A consortium of Belgian universities, municipalities, consultancy firms and NGOs, provides support to project activities. UN-HABITAT ensures coordination and management, assisted by a Steering Committee.

Local Teams complement the existing institutional framework for urban planning and management. They consists of members of the Municipality, the Central Government and NGOs. The Teams are focal points for information.