

# **Report on Activities in Vietnam**

## **Including Internet Needs Analysis for Vietnamese School(s)**

**11<sup>th</sup> November – 20<sup>th</sup> November 1998**

**By James Moody**

### **Introduction**

From the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1998 I was fortunate enough to travel to Vietnam to undertake some work on behalf of the Australian Vietnam Veterans Reconstruction Group (AVVRG). This report outlines the goals of the project and the outcomes of the Visit.

The project consisted of a number of Goals, continuing some of the work undertaken by the AVVRG in recent years. The first goal was to investigate the feasibility and cost of setting up Internet connections within schools in Vietnam. While collecting information I was also charged with teaching English at the schools and performing cultural exchanges with the students.

The visit also had the advantage of keeping in touch with Vietnamese contacts in Ba Ria, especially as the AVVRG was unable to send any other representatives this year. I took a number of gifts over to Vietnam, both for the Orphanage and for past contacts.

My trip also included a visit to Ho Chi Minh City, where I was exposed to some more of the Vietnamese culture. The timing of the visit coincided with the first Annual Vietnamese Telecommunications Expo where I was able to find out some more information on the Vietnamese Internet.

### **Activities**

While in Ba Ria, I was able to achieve all of my goals and at the same time experience a great amount of the Vietnamese culture and countryside. This section describes the activities undertaken over the duration of the visit.

### **Internet Needs Analysis**

During my stay in Ba Ria I undertook a needs analysis into connecting the Kim Dong School to the Internet. I was able to find out all of the information I required, with the help of students, some of the locals and the Ba Ria post office. The needs analysis is included in Appendix 1.

In Ho Chi Minh City I also visited the first Annual Vietnamese Telecommunications Expo, where I obtained a great deal of information about Internet Access Providers, Internet Content Providers and the layout of the Vietnamese Telecommunications Infrastructure. I also conducted some talks with Telstra Vietnam employees about the capabilities of the Vietnamese network.

It should be noted that it is possible to connect Ba Ria to the internet, but it is still reasonably cost prohibitive.

### **Teaching English**

While in Ba Ria I also offered to teach English to various groups. My offer was accepted and I was able to teach a number of people of different ages and backgrounds.

My first teaching experience was to take night classes for mature age students interested in learning English after work. I also took classes at the Kim Dong School for students in grades eight to eleven and taught simple words and songs to children in younger years. Finally, I was able to assist some of Ba Ria's doctors in English practice.

In all cases I found the teaching to be a rewarding experience and was pleased to receive a warm response from the different students.

### **Ben Suc Fishing Village**

I also visited the Ben Suc fishing Village on behalf of the AVVRG to maintain contact and to follow up a project undertaken there. I visited the school and delivered a present of teaching material to the students after talking to the students there. In addition, and in accordance with the cultural norms established by Kathryn Gow, I met the oldest man in the village to pay him my regards and to give him a gift from the AVVRG.

Afterwards I was taken to see the toilet facility that the AVVRG had funded in the fishing village and was able to confirm that it was in working order and of use to the population.

### **Ba Ria Orphanage**

On behalf of the AVVRG I also visited the Orphanage, which was funded by the group. I took part in the lessons of the students there and also brought some presents for the children, including soaps and other toiletry items. The students all remember the work of the AVVRG and were delighted to see that they were still remembered in Australia

### **Medical Books**

Due to the scarcity of some medical books in Vietnam, I also organised to take some books to the doctors over there - Dr Tan, Dr Dat and Dr Phuong. These books were donated by Medical students at the University of Queensland and were warmly received by the doctors.

## Surrounding Countryside

I had the opportunity to see the beautiful Vietnamese countryside and visited Long Dat, Long Hai and Vung Tau. Bushwalking in Long Hai was a wonderful experience and I was taken to ancient temples of a number of different religions.

I was also taken through the Viet Cong tunnels at Ba Ria which were used during the war. These were approximately 12km long and the visit was an amazing and sobering experience.

## Cultural Events

Upon my arrival at Ba Ria, I was lucky enough to meet Mr Long, son of Mrs Hong Xinh, who welcomed me to the country and invited me to eat with his extended family. He spoke fluent English and offered to show me around Ba Ria and the neighbouring area.

During my stay I was generously treated and experienced many aspects of Vietnamese life, including the cuisine, Karaoke as well as invitations to a number of Vietnamese homes and coffee shops.

I also took part in a number of cultural exchanges and taught Australian songs and Australian culture at schools in Ba Ria and Ben Suc. In return I learned Vietnamese songs to the delight of the children teaching me.

## Conclusion

This report briefly outlines some of the activities I undertook during my visit to Vietnam in November 1998.

Overall, the trip was an amazing experience – the people were friendly and generous and it opened my eyes to the wonderful ability of the human spirit to shine through adversity. I am pleased to say that I accomplished all of the goals of the project and was very fortunate to have been given this opportunity by the AVVRG and the QUT.

***I would like to thank Dr. Kathryn Gow of the QUT and the AVVRG for her support in the planning of the exercise and advice and contact addresses over in Vietnam.***

***I would also like to thank Anne and Ken Winterflood for their kindness and for accommodating me while in Ho Chi Minh City.***

***Finally, I would like to thank the QUT Chapter of the Golden Key National Honour Society for helping to fund the Needs Analysis and for their support throughout the year.***

## Internet Needs Analysis

### Introduction

This needs analysis outlines the feasibility of setting up the Internet in schools in Vietnam. This report was commissioned by the Australian Vietnam Veterans Reconstruction Group and was compiled after a visit to Vietnam in November 1998.

The report begins with an outline of the Vietnamese telecommunications infrastructure with an explanation of the different components. It then outlines the costs and equipment involved in connecting a school to the Internet, finally giving a overall view of the effect of this introduction of technology.

### Vietnamese Telecommunications Infrastructure

This section outlines the telecommunications infrastructure, which exists in Vietnam as of November 1998. Most of this information has been obtained from the first annual Vietnamese Telecommunications Expo as well as talks with Telstra Vietnam employees.

### Overall Layout

In July 1997 the Vietnamese government approved the introduction of the Internet into Vietnam, connecting to the rest of the world on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 1997. There are around 14,000 subscribers to Internet services in Vietnam, mostly enterprises or administrative agencies. In total, thirteen provinces, including the Ba Ria – Vung Tau province, have access to the World Wide Web, with the two largest access centres being Ha Noi and HCM City.

Internet users in Vietnam have to go through three providers; first an Internet Access Provider, then an Internet Service Provider and finally an Internet Content Provider. These are used as a number of firewalls to screen communications and are explained in more detail below.

There are only three Internet connections to the rest of the world, indicating that the majority of the Internet traffic is used for internal communications. These are listed below:

HCM City – United States	64 kbit/s
Ha Noi – Australia	256 kbit/s
Ha Noi – Hong Kong	2048 kbit/s
<b>Total</b>	<b>2368 kbit/s</b>

In comparison, the University of Queensland has a 104,800 kbit/s Internet connection.

### **Internet Access Provider (IAP)**

Any information, which is transmitted, goes through the Internet Access Provider, which controls all of the traffic between different service providers. It is the IAP, which connects Vietnam to the rest of the world.

There is only one Internet Service Provider in Vietnam, the Vietnam Datacommunication Company (VDC) under the management of Vietnam Post and Telecom Corporation (VNPT).

### **Internet Service Provider (ISP)**

The next stage in obtaining information from the Internet is through the Internet Service Providers. These are hubs which connect to the IAP and control access to services such as e-mail and the WWW.

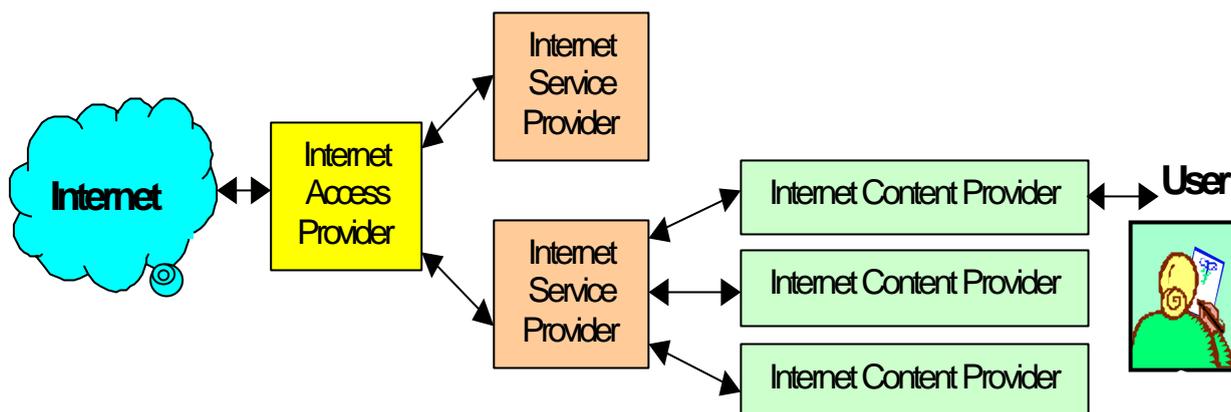
There are five ISPs in Vietnam, listed below:

<b>ISP</b>	<b>Subscribers</b>
VDC	9,200
Financing and Promoting Technology Company	3,700
NetNam	1,100
Saigon Postel	500
Army VietTel	Unknown
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,500</b>

### **Internet Content Providers (ICP)**

The Internet Content Provider is the last provider and controls the connection to the end user. They give added services to the user as well as giving a final layer for screening Internet Content.

There are nine ICPs in Vietnam; VDC, FPT, VNN, Post and Telecom Information Centre, Phuong Nam Co. (Vietnam Trade Fair and Exhibition Centre), Vietnam Tourism Administration, Vietnam News Agency and Cinet (Ministry of Culture and Information).



## Connecting Kim Dong School

This section outlines the feasibility of connecting the Kim Dong School to the Internet. It includes an analysis of both the Infrastructure needed and the cost of connection.

### Infrastructure

Most of the required infrastructure needed to connect the Kim Dong School to the Internet is already in place. The Ba Ria post office is able to supply a connection to the VDC Internet Content Provider. In addition, the necessary phone lines are already present in the school and are reputedly of a decent quality.

Apparently the school would also have enough room in which to place a connection to the Internet and I believe the employees of the Post Office would be able to maintain the connection.

### Costs

There are a number of costs associated with the Internet in Vietnam, including Set-up costs and ongoing costs.

Initially, the set-up costs of the Internet Connection involve the purchase of the computer and modem, as well as the one-off subscription fee to the ICP. These are shown below:

Item	Cost
Computer	AUD 1500
Modem	AUD 200
ICP Subscription	VND 450,000
Telephone Connection	~VND 100,000

The ongoing costs of the connection include the monthly subscription fee, the cost of connection per minute and the cost of the telephone calls. These are listed below:

Item	Cost
Monthly fee	VND 50,000 /month
Access fee	VND 400 /minute
Telephone Call	VND 1,000

The cost of Internet access in Vietnam is reasonably expensive, being 1.5 times as much as in Singapore and twice as much as in Japan.

## Remarks

Although all of the necessary infrastructure exists in Ba Ria to connect the Kim Dong School to the Internet, the costs are still reasonably prohibitively high. However, as more people subscribe to the Internet, these costs may come down.

There is also very small connection with the rest of the world. This, however, is likely to improve as more people subscribe, especially as schools and universities connect.

Upon consultation with some Internet subscribers, it is apparent that content is reasonably restricted by firewalls, normally restricting web pages containing certain words. Any communication with Vietnam through the Internet must ensure that they are not blocked by the firewalls.

## Conclusion

This report outlines the issues involved in connecting a Vietnamese school to the Internet. It includes the costs involved in setting up an Internet connection and the infrastructure required for that connection.

Overall, it is very feasible to connect a school such as the Ba Ria Kim Dong School to the Internet but the costs may be prohibitive.

***I would like to thank Ken Winterflood of Telstra Vietnam for his help in gathering information and the staff at the Ba Ria post office for the local information about the Internet.***