



Australian Government
Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research

G'Day, Mate: ACIAR Vietnam Alumni Stories



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Foreword

HE Ms Robyn Mudie
Australian Ambassador to Vietnam

Agriculture has long been a key part of Australia's cooperation with Vietnam. The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1973, and agricultural science was one of the first areas in which we worked together.

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) program places capacity building of individuals, organisations and systems to perform agricultural research effectively at the heart of our bilateral cooperation for agricultural development.

As Ambassador, I am impressed with the opportunities that the ACIAR program opens to our partners for capacity development, through both formal scholarships and on-the-job learning in research projects. Those who have returned from Masters and PhD studies in Australia under ACIAR scholarship schemes join a large pool of over 70,000 Australian alumni in Vietnam, representing a wealth of knowledge, expertise and influence. They play an important role in Vietnam's socio-economic development while nurturing the relationship between our two

countries. This has been even more important since the establishment of the Australia-Vietnam strategic partnership in 2018.

It is my pleasure to present to you this first publication of 'G'Day, Mate: ACIAR Vietnam alumni stories'. In this book, you will meet fascinating alumni, whose stories reflect the unique experience they have had while enjoying Australian education, Australian culture and the Australian lifestyle.

These alumni are from many different walks of life, but all share a passion and commitment to build the connection between Vietnam and Australia, while performing their unique work in agricultural research. I can proudly say that they all have become ambassadors for the enduring friendship between our countries.

I hope you enjoy reading these inspiring stories as much as I did.

Robyn Mudie
Australian Ambassador to Vietnam

Introduction

ACIAR Alumni strategy

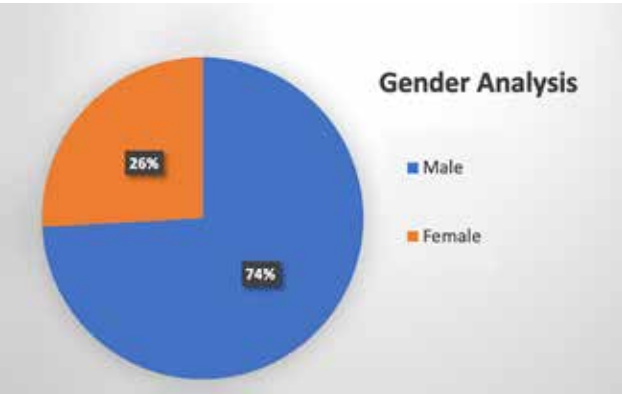
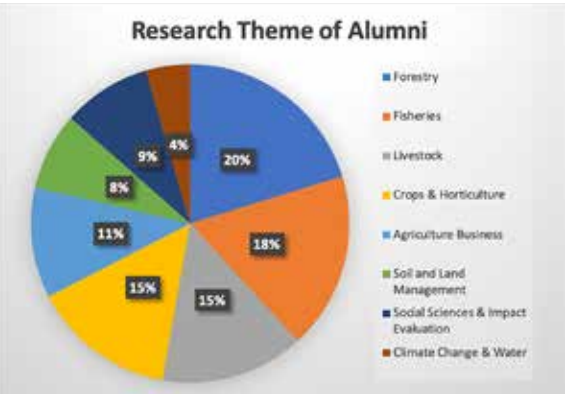
ACIAR is Australia’s specialist international agricultural research for development agency. ACIAR builds the capacity of individuals and institutions in developing countries to carry out agricultural research through informal networking and learning at a project level and formal scholarships.

At the core of its Capacity Building program, ACIAR delivers the below three following fellowship schemes:

- **The John Allwright Fellowship (launched in 1986)** – supports researchers who are connected with ACIAR projects to complete a postgraduate degree at an Australian University.
- **The John Dillon Fellowship (launched in 2002)** – provides leadership and management training for mid-career researchers working on an ACIAR project.
- **The Meryl Williams Fellowship (launched in 2019)** – provides leadership and development training for female scientists in ACIAR partner countries.

In early 2020, ACIAR launched an Alumni Engagement Strategy for the period of 2020–2024. The aim of the Strategy is to engage with ACIAR Alumni, to build the skills, knowledge and networks of agricultural researchers and scientists, and to contribute to positive development outcomes in the agricultural research for development sector. Activities under this strategy mapped out three key themes: *Connecting* alumni, *Celebrating* their achievements and *Promoting* key alumni in ACIAR partner countries.

In Vietnam, since 1995, ACIAR has supported 89 alumni to gain postgraduate qualifications in Australia. To date, these fellowship programs have had tremendous effects on participants. After returning home, ACIAR alumni achieved works that are more significant across a diverse range of disciplines and sectors, within governments, research institutions and the private sector. Many alumni are now key managers, senior experts and researchers in ACIAR partner institutions. Some have become policy-makers in government agencies, others are now change-makers in their home institutions.





From all parts of Vietnam, the ACIAR alumni are influencing their local context with their Australian training and experience. They create opportunities, influence delivery of project outcomes or the adoption of research findings, and lead with their new knowledge and skills.

In line with the Australian Alumni in Vietnam Strategy 2016–2021 and the ACIAR Alumni Strategy, ACIAR Vietnam has also started developing an action plan to further engage with and support our alumni. In May 2019, ACIAR Vietnam successfully organised the first alumni gathering under the new Capacity Building program. From this event, three regional coordinators were identified and are willing to step up to facilitate new initiatives to *Connect*, *Celebrate* and further *Promote* their achievements.

About this booklet

In line with our global alumni strategy, ACIAR Vietnam compiled this booklet with a collection of stories from our alumni. We approached a group of alumni who are diverse across field, experience, gender and age. We also invited a professional agricultural journalist – Mr Chu Minh Khoi – to interview the alumni and write-up their stories. Mr Khoi is an experienced journalist at the Vietnam Economic Times and has been very interested in ACIAR projects and people. Mr Khoi said *‘Each story is unique! I could feel the pride when the alumni talked about their experiences with ACIAR and their time in Australia’*.

With 18 stories, the booklet seeks to increase the visibility of ACIAR change-makers, showcase their achievements in agricultural research, and preserve their lessons learnt while studying in Australia. Although the booklet is only a snapshot of the alumni community, it reflects the

ACIAR vision of building and sustaining a vibrant global network of agricultural professionals, with links to ACIAR, Australia and each other.

Join us to explore more about ACIAR alumni through their career experiences and stories.

This booklet aims to bring together and celebrate the diverse ACIAR alumni community. We thank the 18 alumni who shared the stories in this booklet and thank all our alumni who have greatly contributed to the creation of people-to-people links, as well as institutional links between Australia and Vietnam.

Key milestones

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1995 | The first John Allwright award for Vietnam was given to Mr Nguyen Le Hung, a scientist of Nong Lam University, who recently retired from Nong Lam University at the position of a Vice Rector. |
| 2003 | The first John Dillon award for Vietnam was given to Dr Chu Doan Thanh from the Research Institute of Fruits and Vegetables, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Dr Thanh is now an expert at the National Foundation for Science and Technology Development (NAFOSTED), the Ministry of Science and Technology. |
| 2019 | The first alumni workshop under ACIAR’s new Capacity Building program held in Khanh Hoa province. |
| 2020 | Four Vietnamese female scientists were selected in the first cohort of ACIAR’s new Meryl Williams Fellowship. |



Positive impressions of an Australian Professor

San Tram Anh

- Scientist
Sub-institute of Agricultural
Engineering and Post-harvest
Technology
- John Allwright Fellow, 2012–2016
- John Dillon Fellow, 2020

Dr San Tram Anh was born in Dong Nai province. Now residing in Ho Chi Minh City, she works at the Sub-institute of Agricultural Engineering & Post-harvest Technology (SIAEP). After graduating from university, she defended her biology dissertation at the University of Science, Ho Chi Minh City, in 2010. Following this success, in 2012–2016, she defended her biology doctorate at the University of Queensland (UQ), Australia, majoring in Post-harvest Technology with a John Allwright scholarship from ACIAR.

Dr Anh says she will be forever grateful to the highly respected Professor Daryl Joyce, who guided her through writing her doctor's thesis. Recalling the first time she met Professor Joyce after arriving in Australia, she was surprised at how ordinary and friendly such a renowned professor could be. Professor Joyce and his wife gave her a tour of Brisbane and friendly told her he was only an 'adviser' and not a 'supervisor'.

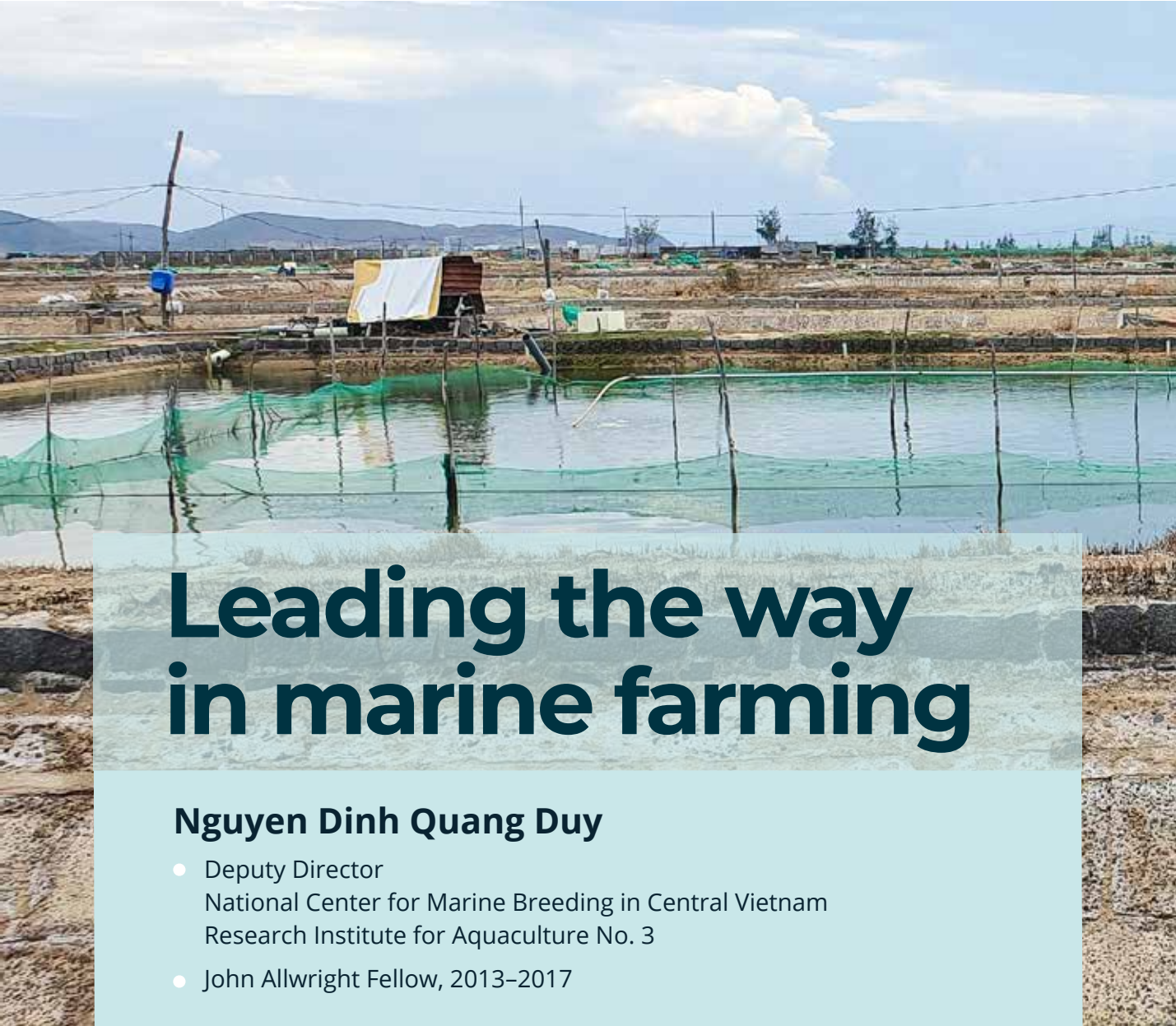


Reflecting on the hardships experienced over four years of graduate school, Dr Anh was unsure she would reach the end, but thanks to Professor Joyce's kind and compassionate guidance, she not only completed her degree, but also enhanced her ability to learn and research. Meeting the down-to-earth and wise Professor Joyce made the memories of her youth in Australia unforgettable.

After completing her degree, she returned home to continue working at the SIAEP. Dr Anh's current job mainly involves analysing fruits and vegetables for enterprises and household businesses who need to verify it is of high-quality. She is also responsible for transferring the preservation technology of agricultural products to companies and households. She continues to participate in many ACIAR projects, most notably the *'Enhancing mango fruit quality in Asian mango chains,'* and the *'Improving smallholder farmer incomes through strategic market development in mango supply chains in southern Vietnam'* ones.

'Thanks to what I learned in Australia, I can identify the preparations and apply the technology for fruit processing to maintain their high-quality and improve their preservation time, while still meeting the demands for high-standards and consumer safety,' Dr Anh shares.





Leading the way in marine farming

Nguyen Dinh Quang Duy

- Deputy Director
National Center for Marine Breeding in Central Vietnam
Research Institute for Aquaculture No. 3
- John Allwright Fellow, 2013–2017

When participating in ACIAR project on sand fish, I always want to develop this fish in a sustainably commercial way, helping farmers improve their livelihood.



Working at Research Institute for Aquaculture No.3 (RIA3), Dr Nguyen Dinh Quang Duy has been conducting numerous scientific research on aquaculture including the ACIAR sea cucumber project. In 2013, Dr Duy received a John Allwright scholarship for a doctoral program in Australia.

Dr Duy defended his doctoral dissertation at James Cook University in 2017, with the central principle being his successful research on sea cucumbers. After finishing his course in Australia, he returned to work at RIA3, and immediately connected with his supervisor to plan for the ACIAR project in Vietnam.

The main objective of this ACIAR project is to investigate factors affecting the growth and survival of sea cucumbers. They then built a VietGAP process of co-culture sea cucumbers with other marine valuable species. Notably, with advice from Australian experts, Dr Duy and his colleagues at the National Centre for Marine Breeding in Central Vietnam researched the



value chain co-culture model of babylon snails, sea cucumbers and sea grapes. The model has achieved high productivity, in detail: 3.1 tons/ha for babylon snails, 3.5 tons/ha for sea cucumbers and 3.8 tons for sea grapes. This method brings farmers about 300 million VND/ha/crop (A\$18,700), which is three times higher than if they did not use this model. Additionally, this integrated system can control toxic substances, and prevent sea cucumbers, babylon snails and sea grapes from suffering common diseases. The model has been widely transferred to farmers in Khanh Hoa and other south central coast provinces.

‘When participating in the ACIAR project, I always wanted to develop sandfish in a sustainably commercial way, helping farmers improve their livelihood’ Dr Duy shares.

Over the past few years, Dr Duy has taken the lead on many scientific research projects, including:

- research on completing the technology of reproduction of sandfish

- building technology of pond-culture of sandfish at large scale in some south central coastal provinces
- applying molecular genetics and quantitative genetics to improve growth of babylon snails
- breeding whiteleg shrimp (*Penaeus vannamei*), etc.

Following these significant contributions to the industry, Dr Duy has been appointed as Deputy Director of the National Centre for Marine Breeding in Central Vietnam, RIA3.

Dr Nguyen Dinh Quang Duy received the Innovation Partnership Grant as part of the Australian Government's Aus4Innovation program, for his white teatfish research. White teatfish is one of the most rare and valuable sea cucumbers.

The art of arguing with your supervisor

Luu Thi Ha Giang

- Researcher
Research Institute for Aquaculture No.1
- John Allwright Fellow, 2015–2017

Luu Thi Ha Giang is a young scientist with remarkable achievements and experience in research. After graduating from the Vietnam National University of Agriculture majoring in Biotechnology, she was successfully recruited at the Research Institute for Aquaculture No1 (RIA1), an agency specialising in aquaculture research, where she still works to this day.

In 2014 Ms Giang got involved in the ACIAR project *'Developing technologies for giant grouper (Epinephelus lanceolatus) aquaculture in Vietnam, the Philippines and Australia'*, which was executed in RIA1. Ms Giang mainly worked in the laboratory, studying the molecular genetics of giant grouper broodstock.

Seeing her potential, Dr Nguyen Huu Ninh (then Deputy Director of RIA1) informed Ms Giang about the John Allwright Fellowship and encouraged her to apply, but she had reservations. When reading the requirements, she was apprehensive because of her lack of confidence in her English capabilities and work experience. Furthermore, her biggest concern was her young child, as she was not sure how she could balance family and study time. However, she decided to take the risk and apply.

In 2015, with the support of Dr Ninh and Professor Abigail Elizur of Sunshine Coast University (USC), Queensland, Ms Giang was successful in her application for a master's, majoring in Marine Science. Ms Giang was shocked when she first attended the course because of the difference in language, culture and the study methods. When comparing the two, Ms Giang says *'In Vietnam, students go to class and take an examination. Whereas in Australia, students have to read materials, do research, write, outline and plan how*

to conduct experiments by themselves, all before the supervisors comment on the research and data analysis methods. At the time, I was at a loss on how to study'.

When she finished her degree, Professor Wayne Knibb, her supervisor, sang her praises, after watching Ms Giang transform from a very shy girl who always nodded and said 'yes' to everything he said, to a strong-willed individual who was able to argue and defend her viewpoint. Ms Giang expresses *'This is the difference between study methods in Australia and Vietnams educational systems. In Vietnam, students passively acquire knowledge from teachers; when sitting an exam, they must answer the questions in exactly the same way it was taught, in order to score high marks. Whereas in Australia, students are free to discuss, exchange their thoughts and are actively encouraged to express their own opinions'.*

The knowledge, experience and skills Ms Giang gained at USC have effectively supported her work. She has grown from a timid student into a confident aquatic scientist. Recently, in early 2020, she successfully proposed the project *'Research on the development of Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) in connecting growth traits in common carp for breeding'* of the National Foundation for Science and Technology Development under the Ministry of Science and Technology. This is Ms Giang's first national project as Project Leader.



Students have to read materials, do research, write, outline and plan how to conduct experiments by themselves, all before the supervisors comment on the research and data analysis methods.





Crusading for development in gender equality

Nguyen Thi Thu Hien

- Officer
Department of Ethnic and Religion,
Vietnam Women's Union
- John Allwright Fellow, 2016–2018



“Two years in Australia changed my mindset. I learned many humanitarian values, including respecting people differences and supporting vulnerable groups in society.”



Nguyen Thi Thu Hien has been working for the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) since 2003. She is one of the few ACIAR scholarship fellows who studied a master's degree in Gender and Development.

Ms Hien has worked with ACIAR on two projects, namely *'Increasing the income of women farmers through the safe production and marketing of indigenous vegetables in Vietnam, towards more profitable and sustainable vegetable farming systems in Northwestern Vietnam'* and *'Strategic approach to market and consumer research in China and the Mekong'*.

She recognised the opportunities that ACIAR creates for project officers to improve knowledge and skills, through capacity building training courses. When Hien was granted a John Allwright scholarship, she decided to major in Women's Studies at Flinders University, Adelaide, South



Australia. *'Two years in Australia changed my mindset. I learned many humanitarian values, including respecting people differences and supporting vulnerable groups in society. I also became more open-minded. I gained lots of added-values, as well as obtaining a qualification and building up capacity.'* Ms Hien says.

After returning to Vietnam, Ms Hien continues her work at the Department of Ethnic and Religious Affairs at VWU. *'The course in Australia helped me logically organise my knowledge about gender, which I find extremely helpful when I consult on VWU's activities relating to ethnic women, who are vulnerable and suffering from inequality'* Ms Hien says.

One of her most arduous but proudest achievements since graduating was to mainstream gender into the governmental master plan for *'Socioeconomic development of*

ethnic minority and mountainous areas in the 2021–2030 period'. The National Assembly approved this plan at the 9th Parliament session XIV in May 2020 and it is now part of the *'National target program on socio-economic development for ethnic minority and mountainous areas 2021–2030.'* Gender equality has become one of the ten major projects. It is proposed to integrate into the project, the remaining sub-projects to implement the entire program's sustainable development goals.

To get this result, VWU, Ms Hien and her colleagues put in a lot of effort to advocate and persuade the government and the National Assembly with arguments and scientific evidence of the gender inequality situation, and the gap between Kinh women and ethnic counterparts. The plan will be implemented in the next ten years, hoping to bring the fundamental changes to ethnic minorities' lives, including diligent and creative women.



Resolving issues by asking the right questions

Phan Thuy Hien

- Director
Research Centre for Cultivation and Processing of Medicinal Plants
- John Dillon Fellow, 2012



Now I pose questions for issues that need to be resolved, and then seek the answers. Additionally, I learned how to plan and design research carefully before starting.



Dr Phan Thuy Hien graduated as an engineer in plant protection at the Vietnam National University of Agriculture. She has been working at the Research Center for medicinal planting (part of the National Institute of Medicinal Materials) since 1997.

Dr Hien met Professor Lester Burgess in 1999 when he was the Project Leader of an ACIAR project in Vietnam, as well as Head of Faculty for Agriculture, Food and Natural resources at the University of Sydney, Australia. In the year 2000, she participated in a three-week training course about disease-causing fungi in plants, along with 11 other specialists from Vietnam. In 2001, she received a scholarship under the Vietnamese Government's 322 program to study at the University of Sydney under the direct guidance of Professor Burgess.

In 2004, Dr Hien finished her doctoral program and returned to Vietnam. At this time, Professor Burgess was starting a new project with ACIAR, the 'Diseases of crops in the central provinces of Vietnam: diagnosis, extension and control'. Dr Hien was employed as a Coordinator. Four years later, she continued this role for the ACIAR project 'Increasing the safe production, promotion and

utilisation of indigenous vegetables by women in Vietnam and Australia' (2008–2012), which took place in Phu Tho and Lao Cai provinces.

In 2012, Hien was awarded a John Dillon scholarship for a five-week leadership and management training course in agricultural research.

'Participating in the training courses in Australia changed the way I think about scientific research. Now I pose questions for issues that need to be resolved, and then seek the answers. Additionally, I learned how to plan and design research carefully before starting' Dr Hien shares.

In her current role at the National Institute of Medicinal Materials, her research focuses on planting as well as disease management of medicinal plants. The institute is a partner of ACIAR and her field of research is a part of ACIAR's ten-year strategy in Vietnam.

With all of her professional accomplishments, Dr Hien was appointed as Head of the Department of Cultivation and Plant Protection, then Deputy Director, and then Director of the Research Centre for Cultivation and Processing of Medicinal Plants.



Applying statistical knowledge

Phan Sy Hieu

- Deputy Director
Analysis and Forecast Division, Centre for Informatics and Statistics
- John Allwright Fellow, 2006–2011





Through interacting with my instructors, especially Professor Steve Harrison from the University of Queensland, my knowledge about statistics, statistical math, and mathematical models were further consolidated.



Dr Phan Sy Hieu has over 22-years of experience doing statistical work at the Centre for Informatics and Statistics at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. From 2003–2006, he investigated statistics for the ‘Study on native tree species’ project, sponsored by ACIAR. At this time, two Australian specialists – Professor David Lamb and Dr Sharon Brown introduced the John Allwright scholarship to Dr Hieu and encouraged him to pursue a doctoral program.

Dr Hieu went to study in Australia from 2006–2011. *‘The lecturers in Australia provided a diverse, multidimensional method to learning science. Through interacting with my instructors, especially Professor Steve Harrison from the University of Queensland, my knowledge about statistics, statistical math, and mathematical models were further consolidated. This was the basis for writing my thesis and publishing international articles’* Dr Hieu says.

Currently, Dr Hieu’s main job is to provide statistics on the import and export of agricultural, forestry and fisheries products to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The statistics aid the decision-making for the whole industry. He also writes reports on import/export statistics every month,

makes forecasts every quarter, and produces policy newsletters every year. *‘I have applied much of my knowledge from studying in Australia to handling statistics. For example, processing and choosing statistical data, recording data and writing science newsletters on automating various steps in doing statistics’* Dr Hieu shares.

Additionally, Dr Hieu participated in the collaborative efforts of a few international organisations, including: ACIAR, ActionAid, International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Thanks to the recommendation of Geoff Morris, former Country Manager of ACIAR Vietnam, Dr Hieu has been producing statistical reports for OECD for many years.

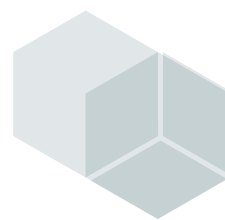
Dr Hieu says *‘In Vietnam, people who have studied in Australia and other countries have a strong foundation of knowledge on statistics. However, there is a shortage of government funding and resources for statistics, statistical analysis, and studying mathematical models. Therefore, the knowledge application of this subject can only be on a small scale. A lot of what was learned in Australia has not been used for national statistics, leading to a waste of resources’.*



I've learnt and applied leadership skills

Nguyen Viet Hung

- Regional Representative for East & Southeast Asia International Livestock Research Institute
- John Dillon Fellow, 2014



The packed training weeks, and an effective study plan provided me basic knowledge in managing and developing a research group, dealing with conflicts and challenges, providing appropriate prioritisation and long-term vision.



Dr Nguyen Viet Hung, Regional Representative for East & Southeast Asia at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), was awarded the John Dillon Fellowship (JDF) in 2014. JDF is a scholarship for leaders and young scientists in the field of agriculture and economics from partner countries, who have participated in ACIAR projects. JDF offered Hung the chance to go to Australia for a course in leadership skills and agriculture. He found the program well organised, with a combination of training, study tours, and social events. He attended a leadership training course at the Business School of Melbourne, visited farms and ACIAR headquarters in Canberra to learn more about research management.

During the training and on field visits to agriculture organisations and farms, Mr Hung was surprised to see over 400 cows managed by just three or four workers; and 500-hectare wheat farms with only two working farmers. Comparatively, in Vietnam, small households often have difficulty managing only a few cattle. He was also impressed that the local government and universities provided help for some farms

to open offices all around the world to promote export of Australian products with the best prices.

Dr Hung had not received training in management or scientific management, so while he was used to combining learning, with doing, the leadership training of ACIAR at the Business School of Melbourne was very beneficial to him. *'The packed training weeks, and an effective study plan provided me basic knowledge in managing and developing a research group, dealing with conflicts and challenges, providing appropriate prioritisation and long-term vision. I also found ways to manage groups using my personal experience'* Mr Hung shares.

With the management and organisational skills, he learned from the JDF program, Dr Hung has started to lead and strengthen ILRI in Vietnam. In the past six years, ILRI has done many useful research projects for livestock, and provided recommendations to the authorities for comprehensive and appropriate policies. This has contributed to the sustainable development of livestock on household farms in Vietnam.

A portrait of a middle-aged man with dark hair, some grey at the temples, and glasses. He is smiling and wearing a light-colored button-down shirt with a small, repeating geometric pattern. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

“ After the course,
I was able to
apply these skills
to planning and
managing human
resources as well
as sharing my
experiences with my
colleagues.

”

**Boosted future thanks to
scholarship in Australia**



Vu Dinh Huong

- Director
Southern Centre of Application for Forest Technology & Science
- John Allwright Fellow, 2011–2016
- John Dillon Fellow, 2020

Dr Vu Dinh Huong has worked at the Forest Science Institute of South Vietnam since 1997. His current position is Director of the Southern Centre of Application for Forest Technology and Science, Forest Applied Sciences and Technology of South Vietnam, *the Vietnamese Academy of Forest Sciences*.

After working as the science coordinator for the ACIAR project *'Optimising silvicultural management and productivity of high-quality acacia plantations, particularly sawlogs'*, he decided to apply for the John Allwright Fellowship (JAF), and successfully pursued his doctoral program on forestry at the University of Tasmania from 2011–2016.

Dr Huong has joined many projects in collaboration with international organisations from countries including Japan, Finland, and Australia. However, the ACIAR projects stood out to him, as they are committed to human resource development. Project officers with potential and passion all have the chance to join training programs in Australia.

Sharing his favourite aspects of the JAF, Dr Huong mentioned:

- This excellent program helped him to be a part of a global and innovative science community. ACIAR has a vast network and close partnership with many prestigious universities in Australia, so they always manage to find the right teachers, people, and study environment for each student. After finishing their studies, almost everyone can successfully defend their thesis, apply their knowledge back home, and gain many achievements. ACIAR is selective about its students. Only people with the appropriate capacity,

expertise and qualifications may receive the scholarship. *'I can confirm that this is the best scholarship and training program in the field of agriculture for Vietnamese students'* Dr Huong says.

- Students can study and live with no worries thanks to the financial support from this scholarship.
- ACIAR has a unique post-studying support program providing a close support to make sure the returnees continue researching and reintegrating with the working environment in Vietnam, something that other programs do not offer.

Dr Huong believes that it is thanks to the knowledge gained from his studies in Australia, he has successfully completed so much scientific research with his colleagues. He has published four scientific articles in a number of prestigious international journals. Each article is the culmination of many scientific achievements, whose research lasted for a long time. For example, there is one research that took him more than 20 years to conclude. These articles are a testament to his expertise in international scientific research, contributing to the achievements of the Forest Science Institute of South Vietnam as well as Vietnamese science in the eye of international scientists. *'I was also part of the leadership training and management in scientific research program in Australia. After the course, I was able to apply these skills to planning and managing human resources as well as sharing my experiences with my colleagues. ACIAR's capacity-building program has helped me advance in my career and achieve all that I have today'* Dr Huong says.



Knowledge about quantitative analysis has enabled me to have a more objective perspective in research, instead of mainly researching and drawing qualitative conclusions.



Quantification of household economy

Pham Thi Ngoc Linh

- Director
Head of Science & International Cooperation Department
Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development
- John Allwright Fellow, 2000–2004
- John Dillon Fellow, 2012

Dr Pham Thi Ngoc Linh works at the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD). She was a part of the John Allwright Fellowship from 2000–2004. In the discussion below with ACIAR Dr Linh shares some of her memories from the program.

You have studied abroad in Australia twice now. Can you share these memories?

I joined an ACIAR project in 1999, when Vietnam had opened to the world markets for not long, so information on the agriculture market was minimal, and the application of mathematical algorithms to quantify economic models for agriculture in Vietnam was very primitive. That ACIAR project helped the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development build capacity for the agricultural market and information system. My boss at this time was Mr Dang Kim Son. He cared deeply about human resources development. He recommended the John Allwright Scholarship to me. Then I applied successfully the scholarship to pursue doctoral program at the School of Agricultural and Resource Economics, the University of Western Australia. My doctoral thesis was on *'Impacts of globalisation and trade liberalisation on small households in the Vietnam livestock sector.'*

The second time I studied in Australia was in 2012 when I joined a leadership training program for scientists under the John Dillon Fellowship.

How did you feel when you received a scholarship from ACIAR?

When I got the news, I was delighted, but full of worry too. I was concerned about leaving my family to study far away and how I would carry out the research. Luckily, I felt more comfortable after meeting many teachers who warmly and wholeheartedly offered to help. I had many friendly friends around. Furthermore, the learning environment in Australia was excellent, so my worries disappeared immediately. My supervisor was Associate Professor Dr Michael Burton, who was a very dedicated teacher. He was very busy but he still spared an hour at lunch every day to instruct me. Another lecturer, a friend at the university named Professor Donna Brennan, was project leader of an ACIAR project that I had engaged in. She encouraged and helped me a lot to overcome some mental difficulties during

this time. I was able to get into gear and start learning and writing my thesis quite quickly.

Did you feel supported by ACIAR's scholarship while you were abroad?

It is my understanding that many people who get a scholarship from the government still have to work part-time to make ends meet. ACIAR's scholarship helped me financially, so I did not have to worry about this. Even people who brought their entire family with them could receive additional help from ACIAR.

Can you share a few things about living in Australia?

I rented a house near campus with two other students who were also studying abroad. We had a lot of fun living together like a family. We cooked Vietnamese food with each other every day. Students from our faculty would meet very often to have breakfast by Swan river. We liked to eat and share knowledge as well as any difficulties in doing research. All of this made unforgettable memories.

How have you applied what you learn in Australia into your work?

Along with the world integration process, the approach to researching and applying scientific achievements of Vietnam has also been much more open.

What I learned is very applicable to the needs in our country. Specifically, knowledge about quantitative analysis has enabled me to have a more objective perspective in research, instead of mainly researching and drawing qualitative conclusions. Thanks to the knowledge I gained in Australia, I am capable of creating different agriculture models in agriculture, analysing chain values of product categories, giving predictions for production, the market etc. These reliable scientific research has contributed to consultation to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

What are your thoughts on ACIAR's support for agriculture in Vietnam?

Vietnam has received help from many partners, but I think ACIAR is our most persistent supporter. Since becoming a country with a middle-income level, many countries reduced or withdrew funds from Vietnam, but ACIAR continued to support agricultural research projects in Vietnam.



Fisheries in Vietnam - Learning from Australian scientific achievements

Tran Dinh Luan

- Director General
Directorate of Fisheries
- John Dillon Fellow, 2011



ACIAR has supported our country's fisheries in researching various aquaculture subjects, especially those that are compatible in both Vietnam and Australia.



Dr Tran Dinh Luan, Director General, Directorate of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, shares about his collaboration and scientific research on fisheries in Vietnam and Australia.

Can you share your memory of studying in Australia?

In 2011, I took part in the John Dillon Fellowship program in Australia. This excellent program trained young officers in leadership and organisational skills, suitable for each unit and organisation. The study program consisted of many modules, combining theory and practice. In the very first week of the course, we learned about leadership and management methods, organising teams, encouraging productivity, and inspiring creativity in staff to contribute to the organisation. In the process of learning, we were able to visit different research institutes and meet head specialists of different fields: preservation, genetics, fisheries cultivation etc. to share information, acquire knowledge, and form long-term partnerships. Upon returning to Vietnam to continue work, our contacts allowed us to maintain the relationship between the two countries, mainly in the field of fisheries.

What do you think are the differences between Vietnam and Australia's methods of organisation of research on fisheries?

In Australia, businesses, research institutes and schools manage their own research-for the most part. The government will support people who come up with great ideas. The research process in Australia is transparent, which is why schools and research institutes actively seek collaboration with businesses. Therefore, most research results link to businesses. Once the research is complete, businesses can immediately apply the effects to their production process. In Vietnam, the research process is going through changes. Instead of giving tasks, the government is moving toward requesting research from research institutes. The government is also including businesses in scientific research.

How is the scientific research collaboration between Vietnam and ACIAR?

ACIAR has supported our country's fisheries in researching various aquaculture subjects, especially those that are compatible in both Vietnam and Australia. For example, grouper, lobster, sea cucumber, abalone etc. These are the species with high economic value. Thanks to the partnership, our fisheries industry has benefited from the scientific achievements that Australia has transferred to us. We have completed research on the technological processes of several new fields, including sustainable farming, waste reduction and rice-shrimp farming.

In terms of building and developing policies, ACIAR's funds have helped us create laws on fisheries, and a number of decrees. This supports research specialists in proposing policies appropriate to Vietnam's conditions, in compliance with international laws. The fisheries research collaboration between Vietnam and Australia is also heading toward green growth; reducing waste, reducing environmental pollution, and helping the fisheries industry attain sustainable growth.

Do you have any proposals to Australia or ACIAR in supporting Vietnam's fisheries?

In Vietnam's fisheries and agriculture industry, the application of science and technology is a crucial step in reducing production cost and increasing productivity and quality. Australia has achieved a lot in terms of science and technology, which can help Vietnam reduce research time and meet existing demands. Our collaborative research on lobster, giant grouper, sea cucumber, and abalone have yielded results, but it is not enough. We want ACIAR to continue supporting the fisheries industry to complete the research on the breeding of these species and many more species for farming. Aquafeed accounts for 60% of cost in aquaculture. I hope that ACIAR will collaborate with Vietnam's fisheries industry to research further on low-cost feed to reduce production cost and increase value for seafood products. Additionally, ACIAR should consider collaborating with Vietnam to carry out research related to 4.0 technologies. For example, blockchain could be used for seafood commodities from farming and processing to consumption for better values.

How to have it all: study abroad, raise a family and start an enterprise

Le Thi Hang Nga

- FocusGroupGo Vietnam
- John Allwright Fellow, 2016–2017

“ I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to study and acquire practical knowledge in Australia. ”

Born in the small town of Quang Ninh province, Le Thi Hang Nga graduated from the Faculty of Linguistics and Culture, Vietnam National University in 2009. Nga went on to work as an intern and project assistant for international NGOs in Vietnam for two years. She then participated in two ACIAR projects: AGB/2008/002 (2011–2012) as an Interpreter and Project Assistant and AGB/2012/060 (2012–2015) as a Coordinator and Social Research Assistant.

With a strong passion for religious culture, during this work Nga would always try to talk to the Thai, H'Mong and Muong people in order to understand their culture, lifestyle, religious beliefs and agriculture, as well as their aspirations for life. 'These factors determine the success of agricultural projects, and officers must appreciate local people's culture and requirements, to adjust activities suitably, instead of forcing them to follow the projects guidelines' Nga says.

Nga received encouragement from ACIAR project leader Dr Oleg Nicetic, to participate in social

studies related to ethnic minority, as well as find a masters course in her field of interest. Thanks to this recommendation, Nga gained an ACIAR scholarship, and the opportunity to study a master's in Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development at The Australian National University. Nga's studies in Australia equipped her with valuable knowledge as well as unforgettable experiences. While she found her major in social sciences required a lot of reading, and the academic materials were hard to read, thanks to the experience she had gained previously, she managed her time so that she could read and fully understand each essay assigned to her. Nga compared the experience to preparing for a marathon; she ensured the length of the route did not scare her.

As well as the hard work that Nga was putting in to compiling her master's thesis, she was expecting her first child. At one stage, she attended a field trip to Moc Chau, Son La province to gather data for analysis, where she stayed with two H'Mong families for two weeks



in a remote village without any modern facilities. Additionally, the research topic she chose was quite sensitive: usury situation among H'Mong community. 'Thanks to support from the ethnic community, my professor and colleagues, I overcame these difficulties and finished my thesis with flying colours, just two days after giving birth' Nga says.

After completing her master's degree in Australia, Nga took a break for a year to focus on her family. Nga and her husband then founded a private social enterprise, specialising in agriculture and rural development consultancy. To this day, her business continues to work closely with ACIAR, implementing projects that support ethnic minorities living in mountainous northern areas of Vietnam, to develop their livelihood.

'I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to study and acquire practical knowledge in Australia' Nga says. She has been able to use this experience to develop her enterprise and join ACIAR in bringing a better life to poor, ethnic minorities.



DAI MATE: ACIAR VIETNAM ALUMNI STORIES

Many impressions of Australia



Dang Kieu Nhan

- Director
Mekong Delta Development Research Institute
- John Dillon Fellow, 2013



What I liked the most is that people in Australia rarely use the term 'agriculture'; instead, they call it 'primary industry'



Dr Dang Kieu Nhan, Director of the Mekong Delta Development Research Institute, Can Tho University, has participated in many ACIAR projects in the Mekong River Delta. Two most notable among them are the *'Research and develop microbiological fertiliser BioGro (2008–2011), Climate change affecting land-use in the Mekong Delta: Adaptation of Rice-based Cropping Systems – CLUES' (2011–2014)* and *'Improving the sustainability of rice–shrimp farming systems' (2018–2019)*. Dr Nhan was granted the John Dillon Fellowship (JDF) in 2013. Below is some sharing about his exciting experiences from the program.

Can you share three most interesting things about the training program in Australia?

- Thanks to the JDF I had the chance to study in many fields, visit lots of places and meet a wide range of people. I learned about leadership skills, scientific publications, scientific research management, and saw firsthand how Australian farmers manage their farms. What I learned about leadership and management are applicable to my work in Vietnam.
- I was able to explore cultural and famous spots like the Sydney Bridge and Sydney Opera House. I also saw a few kangaroos.
- Finally, the most memorable experience was getting to visit the Australian Parliament in Canberra. I was surprised and fascinated by the debate between the Representatives and the Prime Minister and other government members. Interestingly, regular people can enter and watch these debates themselves.

What did you like most about Australian agriculture?

What I liked the most is that people in Australia rarely use the term 'agriculture'; instead, they call it 'primary industry'. This

is because they consider agricultural products as inputs of the industries, through value chains with high industry value. I would like to see this concept applied in Vietnam.

What was the greatest difficulty you faced during your time in Australia?

The most challenging part for me was the language. My colleagues from other countries also faced this problem. The professors at the Department of Economics, University of Melbourne spoke very quickly, and we were not used to their accent. We had to try very hard to understand.

How has ACIAR helped you to develop your career?

Being part of ACIAR projects, and participating in training programs in Australia, my leadership and management skills have improved a lot. Additionally, I know how to write and present a scientific report, when to be deductive and when to be inductive. I also had the chance to join the ACIAR alumni network and join study-abroad at the Australia network. Now, I am confident in my management role at the Mekong Delta Development Research Institute. Thank you so much, ACIAR!



A portrait of a middle-aged man with dark hair, smiling. He is wearing a light brown blazer over a light blue and white checkered shirt and a red striped tie. The background is a light blue gradient.

Appointed head of alumni

Nguyen Huu Nhuan

- Deputy Dean
Department of Economics and Rural Development,
Vietnam National University of Agriculture
- John Allwright Fellow, 2011–2015



Associate Professor Dr Elske was my inspiration for communication and development for social change. This was an important approach that helped me do better research for agriculture improvements among ethnic groups.



Dr Nguyen Huu Nhuan began his career as a Researcher at the Centre of Agricultural Extension Volunteers (CAEV), which belongs to the National Institute of Agricultural Planning and Projection. He has been fortunate enough to study abroad in Australia twice.

From 2006–2007 he came to Australia to get a master's degree in Natural Resource Economics, at the University of Queensland. After graduating and returning to Vietnam, he became a Lecturer at Vietnam National University of Agriculture (VNUA).

He had the opportunity to meet Associate Professor Dr Elske van de Fliert on her visit to the University to discuss the collaborative effort for the project *'Improved upland production systems and agriculture market engagement in the Northwestern highlands of Vietnam'*.

Dr Nhuan joined the project, then received the John Allwright scholarship from ACIAR for a doctorate program at the University of Queensland from 2011–2015.

'Associate Professor Dr Elske became my mentor while I was writing my doctoral program thesis in Australia, as well as my boss in the AGB/2008/002 project in the Northwestern region of Vietnam, sponsored by ACIAR. She was my inspiration for communication and development for social change. This was an important approach that

helped me do better research for agriculture improvements among ethnic groups,' Dr Nhuan says.

Having successfully defended his doctoral program thesis in Australia, Dr Nhuan returned home with the recommendation of becoming Deputy Head of Quantitative Analysis Faculty and he is currently Deputy Dean of Department of Economics and Rural Development, VNUA. In the past five years, Dr Nhuan has continued to be a part of different projects sponsored by ACIAR in the Northwestern region of Vietnam. Some of his notable projects include:

The research for development of agricultural value chains from Son La, Lao Cai and Lai Chau provinces; development of cattle production in Dien Bien province; and improvement of food safety in pork value chains in Hung Yen and Nghe An provinces.

Dr Nhuan was appointed Head of the Australia–New Zealand alumni group at VNUA, which has more than 60 lecturers who have received a master's or doctorate at various universities in Australia and New Zealand. With the funding from the Australian Alumni Foundation, Dr Nhuan and his partners completed the project *'Increasing agriculture extension capacity, for sustainable development for ethnic groups at Tuan Giao district, Dien Bien province.'*

Bridging the gap

Luu Ngoc Quyen

- Deputy Director
Northern Mountainous
Agriculture and Forestry
Science Institute
- John Dillon Fellow, 2016

Dr Luu Ngoc Quyen is now Deputy Director of the Northern Mountainous Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute (NOMAFSI). He successfully defended his doctoral thesis in France in 2012. NOMAFSI and Dr Quyen have participated in a number of ACIAR projects, for example, *'Developing and promoting market-based agroforestry and forest rehabilitation options for Northwestern Vietnam'* and *'Improving maize-based farming systems on sloping lands in Vietnam and Laos.'* are the two current ones.

In 2014, he took part in some NOMAFSI projects funded by ACIAR. From this experience, he learned about the scholarship programs, including the John Dillon Fellowship. This scholarship provides mid-career agriculture scientists and economists from ACIAR partner countries with the opportunity to develop leadership skills through a six-week training course in Australia.

The below photos are about Dr Quyen's experience in Australia with five other John Dillon 2016 Fellows, and what he applied for his institution's work after returning to Vietnam.



John Dillon 2016 fellows visiting the University of Tasmania (UTAS) and some of the University's research institutes.



Discussing with UTAS's professors on field.



Meeting the Northern Territory Farmers Association (NT Farmers) in Darwin.



Meeting to discuss with a Vietnamese farmer, specialising in producing vegetables in Northern Australia. Here, NT Farmers introduced a group of more than 100 Australian households with Vietnamese origin to a transport company, that they were able to share, to deliver their products to supermarkets in southern Australia, some 3,000km away from Northern Australia.



Each household's product has their own packaging design. The company collects, prepares and packs according to these designs.

6



Dr Laurie Bonney, student's professional instructor and unofficial tour guide and driver. He was considerate and smiled all the time.

7



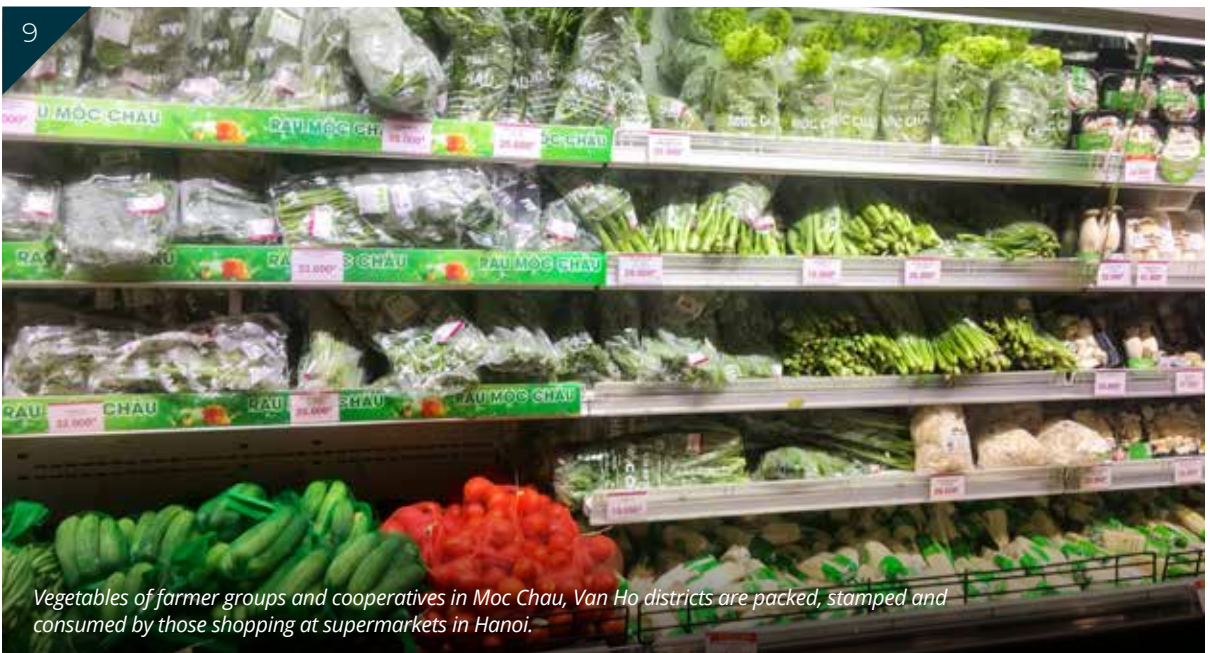
After returning home, Dr Quyen and NOMAFSI applied the model of engaging farmers and businesses that he learned on the trip, to the projects. In the picture, farmers of Van Ho vegetable cooperative are discussing the plan of production and connecting with supermarkets.

8



Products are collected and gathered at the cooperative leader's house to be prepared, packed, stamped and delivered.

9



Vegetables of farmer groups and cooperatives in Moc Chau, Van Ho districts are packed, stamped and consumed by those shopping at supermarkets in Hanoi.



'These alumni are from many different walks of life, but all share a passion and commitment to build the connection between Vietnam and Australia, while performing their unique work in agricultural research. I can proudly say that they all have become ambassadors for the enduring friendship between our countries.'

Robyn Mudie

Australian Ambassador to Vietnam

Sharing knowledge internationally



Do Thi Thanh Truc

- Researcher
Institute of Agricultural Science
for Southern Vietnam
- John Allwright Fellow, 2012–2016



I took advantage of my time in Australia, even during breaks, to attend intensive talks of the faculty and to exchange with my colleagues in the project.



Dr Do Thi Thanh Truc comes from Sa Dec, Dong Thap province. Since graduating from Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, she has been working for the Department of Soil Science, Institute of Agricultural Science for Southern Vietnam (IAS). In 2004, she participated in several ACIAR projects, including the project of *'Sustainable and profitable crop and livestock systems for Southcentral coastal Vietnam'*.

After receiving recommendations by the Project Leader and Partners, she was granted a master's degree course at Murdoch University, Australia, in 2012. A year later, she was offered a scholarship for a doctoral degree thanks to the suggestion of her supervisor, who was also the Project Leader of the ACIAR project.

As a doctoral student at the Department of Environment, Dr Thanh Truc had the chance to access new research methods. Her classmates came from different countries such as Cambodia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. Recalling her weekly academic seminars Dr Thanh Truc says *'We presented*



our fields of study, questioned and learned from each other. I took advantage of my time in Australia, even during breaks, to attend intensive talks of the faculty and to exchange with my colleagues in the project. In addition to knowledge about research in my field, I also learned from my fellows' research and ACIAR projects implemented in other countries'.

After returning to Vietnam in 2016, Dr Thanh Truc continued to work on IAS and ACIAR projects. She applied what she learned during four years in Australia to her work and obtained numerous achievements. She also participated in many projects in Vietnam, including research on balanced fertilisation for cashew in Southern Vietnam (2015–2018); Use of Nano fertiliser for cultivation (a Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology's national project in 2016–2019 in Southeastern and Central highlands. Now, Dr Thanh Truc is the Coordinator of a national project on aquaculture – the use of catfish waste as micro-organic fertiliser (2018–2020).



Learnt to be careful in research




Vu Anh Tuan

- Director
Southern Hau River Sub-institute for Fisheries Research
- John Allwright Fellow, 2002–2006

Dr Vu Anh Tuan has been working for Research Institute for Aquaculture No.2 (RIA2) since 1998. His current role is Director of Southern Hau River Sub-institute for Fisheries Research belonging to RIA2. From 2002–2006 he studied his doctoral program at Charles Darwin University (Northern Territory, Australia). He was granted the John Allwright Fellowship for master of science (MSc) in 2002. During his studies, he found that Australian universities allow students to transfer from masters to doctoral program. His proposal was evaluated by the University Council and approved by ACIAR. This allowed him to progress directly to a doctoral program and extend his studies.

During his time at Charles Darwin University, Dr Tuan found he had to rewrite his research proposal to meet his Supervisors' requirements. He was lacking in knowledge on aquaculture nutrition, and as professionals at the university were not highly specialised in this field, they advised him to see nutrition experts at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Dr Tuan was advised to rewrite his research proposal by his professor, Dr Geoff Alan who was also ACIAR's advisor, from Port Stephens Fisheries Centre, NSW who he had previously met in the ACIAR office in Canberra. Following the instruction of his three supervisors, he revised it several times, but Dr Alan was still unsatisfied and required further improvement. *'I was stressed as I had strictly followed the instructions of professionals and reviewed my proposal many times, but they were still not*

 **The course equipped me with useful knowledge about aquatic feed, effectively supporting my career.**



satisfied. However, thanks to their thoroughness, I have trained myself to be careful when conducting scientific research' Dr Tuan says.

After finishing his course, he returned to Vietnam and was assigned to be manager of the Bac Lieu Fisheries Research Institute then director of director Southern Hau River Sub-institute for Fisheries Research. Since then, in cooperation with ACIAR, Australian Government, and Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology, Dr Tuan and his colleagues have carried out more than ten scientific research projects, all of which are related to his field of study in Australia. Over the past five years, he led two national research projects on seabass and cobia.

'The course equipped me with useful knowledge about aquatic feed, effectively supporting my career. I am genuinely grateful to ACIAR, my advisers, Dr Alan and staff at Charles Darwin University' Dr Tuan emphasises.

Changes and improvements in education gets promotions

Dr Van has undertaken many formal training programs: Bachelor of Animal Science, Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry (1986-1991); master's in veterinary science at the Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine in Japan (2000-2002); and a doctoral program in Animal Science at Iwate University in Japan (2002-2005).

He has been lecturing at Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry since 1991, where he is now the Dean of Faculty of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine.

In 2005, Dr Van participated in the ACIAR project 'Improved beef production in Central Vietnam' and 'Sustainable and profitable crop and livestock systems for south-central coastal Vietnam' in 2007.

In 2010, he received the John Dillon Fellowship (JDF) for a five-week training course in Australia. Continuing to participate in many ACIAR projects, he was the coordinator for the project 'Developing productive, sustainable and profitable smallholder beef enterprises in central Vietnam'. Since 2019, he has been part of building and executing the project 'Goat Production Systems and Marketing in Laos and Vietnam' as the project leader in Vietnam.

Below Dr Van shares his views of the training program in Australia, from a Fellow and Lecturer perspective.

When you were a John Dillon Fellow, what was your impression of the study and living environment in Australia?

I was very impressed with the Australian training method that flexibly combined multiple modes of communication. It encouraged students to be proactive, especially in presentations, discussions, going on field studies etc. I enjoyed the fresh and open feeling of living there and found that Australian people were very earnest.

During field studies, even when we had not made an appointment, people remained considerate and professional.

When it comes to Australia, people usually think of kangaroos, but for me, I think of the eucalyptus trees. I was happy to catch sight of koalas in the park sometimes. This wild animal is friendly to humans. When approached by one, I noticed they had adorable eyes.

What was the biggest challenge while studying in Australia?

Even though the program only lasted for five-weeks, the biggest challenge was adjusting to the food. In the program, there were students from Europe, America, and Asia. I found that the food was mostly European. Vietnamese people are used to eating rice, and in the first two weeks, of the food provided, we were only able to eat bread and milk, so we craved rice a lot. When we shared that we missed Vietnamese food, the chef cooked rice and Vietnamese food. Even though it tasted different, it was a truly remarkable meal.

As a university lecturer, how has Australia changed the way you think?

University training in our country is heavy on theory and light on practice, whereas training in Australia is a right combination of theory and practice. In the last few years, I have made changes to my faculty's teaching approach, to combine the elements of a real job with university training. Vietnamese practice usually focuses on the technical aspects without much consideration for soft skills. I reflected on what I understood as distinguished from the ACIAR projects and JDF program and actively contributed to implementing soft skill programs at the faculty.

I did not believe that university training in Vietnam cared about career guidance for students, post-graduation. Whereas ACIAR

Nguyen Huu Van

- Dean
Faculty of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine
Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry
- John Dillon Fellow, 2010

❧❧ **ACIAR scholarship alumni have the opportunity to join ACIAR projects, creating a continuation of professional growth.**



scholarship alumni have the opportunity to join ACIAR projects, creating a continuation of professional growth. Using this model, we invite specialists and businesses to help students train in soft skills. Students can also take on an internship at the affiliated businesses. This way, even when students are still studying, the majority have been proposed work after graduation.

With these improvements to the program, inspired by my time in Australia, I continued to advance professionally. From Lecturer, I was promoted to Vice Dean of Faculty, and this year, 2020, I have been made Dean of Faculty of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine.



COVID-19 cut course short, but still created worthwhile memories



I look forward to seeing other alumni and learning from them, which will help me be more engaged with the network and together build an united ACIAR community



Vu Hoang Yen

- Officer
Department of Agricultural Economy,
Ministry of Planning and Investment
- John Dillon Fellow, 2020

Ms Vu Hoang Yen graduated from the Faculty of Economics and Rural Development, Vietnam National University of Agriculture (former name: University of Agriculture 1). She has been working at the Department of Agricultural Economy, Ministry of Planning and Investment since 2007. In 2008, she received the U.S.A government Fullbright scholarship for a master's degree. After returning to Vietnam, Ms Yen continued her work and started to participate in ACIAR projects. She is a John Dillon Fellow of 2020.

The unexpected outbreak of COVID-19 across the world negatively affected her training program. The course duration shortened from six, to just two weeks. Her leadership training had two modules, with theory and field trips. Including visiting farming systems and research institutes in Australia. However, the second module came to a halt because Australian agencies and enterprises were forced to shut down or restrict visitors.

Ms Yen said she acquired valuable knowledge and formed many memories during two weeks of theoretical learning. She made new friends coming from other countries, and everyone was friendly and loving, like family members, but unfortunately, they had to separate even before the course's ended.

'One day we suddenly received the announcement that Vietnam

was due to suspend international air routes. At that time, the other Vietnamese students and I were very bewildered, as we did not know if we could buy flight tickets to get home. Thanks to our Australian friends' support, we were able to get the last tickets for the final flight, departing at 4am the following day. Our friends from other countries did not rush to return home, because their country had not announced an international flight suspension order yet. When they learned that we had to leave so quickly, they were very sad. The night before the flight, my friends organised a small party and we chatted until midnight. The trip was short and unfinished, but it gave us unforgettable experiences of friends, unity and love' Ms Yen shares.

The authorities did not allow Ms Yen and other Vietnamese fellows to go home immediately after landing. They spent two weeks in the quarantine zone and encouraged each other to stay safe for getting home safely. After being tested many times. Fortunately, the results were all negative. Yen was extremely excited to be a part of this Alumni Book by ACIAR. *'ACIAR is dedicated to building an alumni community. I look forward to seeing other alumni and learning from them, which will help me be more engaged with the network and together build an united ACIAR community'* says Ms Yen.



John Dillon Alumni

No	Name	Organisation
1	San Tram Anh	Sub-institute of Agricultural Engineering and Post-harvest Technology
2	Nguyen Xuan Ba	University of Agriculture and Forestry, Hue University
3	Phi Hong Hai	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences
4	Phan Thuy Hien	Research Centre for Cultivation and Processing of Medicinal Plants
5	Nguyen Viet Hung	International Livestock Research Institute
6	Vu Dinh Huong	Southern Centre of Application for Forest Technology and Science
7	Mai Anh Khoa	Thai Nguyen University
8	Chau Minh Khoi	Can Tho University
9	Dang Kim Khoi	N/a
10	Doan Duc Lan	Tay Bac University
11	Pham Thi Ngoc Linh	Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development
12	Tran Dinh Luan	Directorate of Fisheries
13	Nguyen Khoi Nghia	Can Tho University
14	Dang Kieu Nhan	Can Tho University
15	Luu Ngoc Quyen	Northern Mountainous Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute
16	Chu Doan Thanh	National Foundation for Science and Technology Development
17	Dam Thi Van Thoa	Vietnam Women's Union
18	Tran Minh Tien	Soils and Fertilizers Research Institute
19	Le Anh Tuan	Nha Trang University
20	Dinh Van Tuyen	N/a
21	Nguyen Huu Van	University of Agriculture and Forestry, Hue University
22	Vu Hoang Yen	Ministry of Planning and Investment

John Allwright Alumni

No	Name	Organisation	University in Australia
1	Bui The Anh	Research Institute for Aquaculture 1	Deakin University
2	San Tram Anh	Sub-institute of Agricultural Engineering and Post-harvest Technology	University of Queensland
3	Nghiem Quynh Chi	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	University of Tasmania, Hobart
4	Le Van Chi	Research Institute for Aquaculture 3	Queensland University of Technology
5	Nguyen Quang Chon	Institute of Agricultural Science for Southern Vietnam	University of New England, Armidale
6	Nguyen Huy Chung	Plant Protection Research Institute	University of Western Sydney
7	Pham Hung Cuong	National Institute of Animal Sciences	University of Queensland
8	Dang Phuoc Dai	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	Southern Cross University
9	Luu Duc Dien	Research Institute for Aquaculture 2	University of New South Wales
10	Nguyen Dien	Jameric Ltd. Co.	Queensland University of Technology
11	Ngo Thi Diu	N/a	Jame Cook University
12	Nguyen Viet Don	National Institute of Animal Sciences	University of Tasmania
13	Tran Lam Dong	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	University of Tasmania
14	Nguyen Dinh Quang Duy	Research Institute for Aquaculture 3	James Cook University
15	Cao Truong Giang	Research Institute for Aquaculture 1	University of The Sunshine Coast
16	Luu Thi Ha Giang	Research Institute for Aquaculture 1	University of the Sunshine Coast
17	Bui Thi Lien Ha	Research Institute for Aquaculture 2	Queensland University of Technology
18	Duong Nam Ha	Vietnam National University of Agriculture	Tasmania University
19	Tran Nguyen Ha	Vietnam National University of Agriculture	University of Sydney
20	Tran Thanh Hai	University of Agriculture and Forestry, Hue University	University of Tasmania

No	Name	Organisation	University in Australia
21	Vu Manh Hai	Division for Water Resources Planning and Investigation for the Central Region of Vietnam	Flinders University
22	Tran Xuan Hanh	NAVETCO National Veterinary Joint Stock Company	University of Queensland
23	Nguyen Thi Thu Hien	Vietnam Women's Union	Flinders University
24	Phan Sy Hieu	Centre for Information and Statistic, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	University of Queensland
25	Huu Hong Hieu	Can Tho University	Australian National University
26	Tran Thi Tuyet Hoa	Can Tho University	University of Queensland
27	Nguyen Hai Hoan	Vietnam National University of Forestry	Griffith University
28	Do Huu Hoang	Institute of Oceanography	University of Queensland, Brisbane
29	Pham Van Hung	Vietnam National University of Agriculture	University of Sydney
30	Nguyen Phi Hung	Northern Mountainous Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute	University of Sydney
31	Nguyen Le Hung	Nong Lam University	University of New South Wales
32	Tran Duy Hung	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	University of Queensland
33	Trieu Thai Hung	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	University of Tasmania
34	Vu Dinh Huong	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	University of Tasmania
35	Vu Van In	Research Institute for Aquaculture 1	Sunshine Coast University
36	Ho Le Phi Khanh	University of Agriculture and Forestry, Hue University	University of Tasmania
37	Tran Doc Lap	Nong Lam University	University of Western Australia
38	Nguyen Van Liem	Plant Protection Research Institute	University of Western Sydney
39	Pham Thi Ngoc Linh	Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development	University of Western Australia
40	Tran Duy Long	Fruit and Vegetable Research Institute	University of Sydney
41	Nguyen Tuan Minh	Fruit and Vegetable Research Institute	University of Queensland
42	Dang Duy Minh	Can Tho University	Australian National University
43	Le Thi Hang Nga	FOCUS Group Grow	Australian National University
44	Nguyen Bao Ngoc	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	University of Tasmania

No	Name	Organisation	University in Australia
45	Nguyen Hong Nguyen	N/a	University of Queensland
46	Tran Thi Thanh Nhan	Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development	University of Western Australia
47	Nguyen Huu Nhuan	Vietnam National University of Agriculture	University of Queensland
48	Nguyen Thi My Phung	N/a	University of Queensland, Brisbane
49	Nguyen Hai Quan	University of Agriculture and Forestry, Hue University	University of Tasmania
50	Dao Ngoc Quang	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	University of Queensland
51	Le Xuan Sinh	Can Tho University	University of Sydney
52	Le Son	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	Southern Cross University Lismore NSW
53	Tran Van Son	N/a	University of Southern Cross
54	Le Thanh Son	National Institute of Medicinal Materials	Newcastle University
55	Tran Cong Thang	Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development	University of Western Australia
56	Nguyen Thai Thinh	Agricultural Science Institute for Southern Coastal Central of Vietnam	Murdoch University
57	Pham Thi Hanh Tho	Center for Agrarian Systems Research and Development	University of Canberra
58	Nguyen Dat Thuan	Field Crops Research Institute	James Cook University
59	Do Ngoc Thuy	National Institute of Veterinary Research	University of Queensland
60	Pham Thi Thuy	N/a	University of Adelaide
61	Tran Thanh Trang	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	University of Tasmania
62	Do Thi Thanh Truc	Institute of Agricultural Science for Southern Vietnam	Murdoch University
63	Le Anh Tuan	World Vision Việt Nam	James Cook University
64	Vu Anh Tuan	Research Institute for Aquaculture 2	Charles Darwin University
65	Tran Thanh Tung	Department of Plant Protection in Ho Chi Minh City	Australian National University
66	Dinh Van Tuyen	N/a	University of Queensland
67	Tran Duc Vuong	Vietnam Academy of Forest Sciences	University of Tasmania

The first ACIAR Vietnam alumni workshop in 2019











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