



# CEFINEA NEWSLETTER

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INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES

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EDITOR: Prof. Dr. Lam Minh Triet

Phone : 84 8 865 1132, fax: 84 8 865 5670, email: qlkh-htqt@hcmier.edu.vn

## INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES AND THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION PROJECT VIETNAM - SWITZERLAND

*Catherine Brassaud*

The cooperation has established between the Institute for Environment and Resources (IER-CEFINEA) of the Vietnam National University of Ho Chi Minh Ville (VNU-HCMC) and the Laboratory of Environmental Chemistry and Ecotoxicology (CECOTOX) of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne.

The Institute for Environment and Resources (IER-CEFINEA) is about twenty years old. Created in 1982, the initially-called Department of Environmental Engineering was renamed "CEFINEA" in 1989. This name comes from the French "Centre pour la formation et l'information sur l'eau" and highlights the Institute's expertise at that time in the field of water supply for urban and rural areas, and waste and wastewater treatment.

The IER-CEFINEA, as we know it nowadays, has significantly increased its fields of expertise to natural resources management, environmental geology, water and air pollution control, environmental analytical chemistry, ecotoxicology, monitoring of air and water pollution and environmental impact assessment. And this, in its three domains of activity: research, teaching and service work. It has also become one of the three national centres responsible for environmental monitoring in Vietnam. IER - CEFINEA is in charge of the HCMC province and eleven other provinces of South Vietnam.

It is officially named Institute for Environment and Resources in 1996, one year after becoming part of the Vietnam National University of Ho Chi Minh Ville (VNU-HCMC) and shortly before starting its cooperation

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project with the Laboratory of Environmental Chemistry and Ecotoxicology (CECOTOX) of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne.

Building on the success of the first years of cooperation (1996-2001) and strongly supported by the VNU-HCMC and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (formerly the "environment branch" of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment - MOSTE), the IER-CEFINEA is carrying on the second phase of this cooperation project with the EPFL (2001-2004).

Funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC), the whole project aims at promoting sustainable development in South Vietnam through knowledge and technology transfer to the IER-CEFINEA. The first phase -- mainly dedicated to improving infrastructures, training scientists and developing research projects called "pilot projects" due to their innovative features -- enabled all the parties involved to build the basis of a fruitful cooperation.

While building on the activities developed since 1996, the project has taken a turn in 2001 by supporting IER-CEFINEA's scientific development as well as management strategies. Thanks to this support and the development of new skills, the Institute is now positioning itself to become a key organisation in its fields of expertise in South Vietnam.

This very unusual way of carrying out a cooperation project enables an increased efficiency of the knowledge and technology transfer. Indeed, it does not reduce the cooperation to offering an access to information and equipment, but it also offers means to manage at best this supply of new resources.