

Vietnam supports Germany in the fight against COVID-19



Handing over 1,000 protective masks to the DAAD in Bonn: Secretary General Dr. Dorothea Rüländ (right) with donor and DAAD-Alumna Thi Minh Chau Bui

Academic relations between Germany and Vietnam are traditionally close. Many DAAD alumni recall their time studying in Germany fondly and would like to support their host country during the coronavirus crisis. In Bonn, DAAD alumna Thi Minh Chau Bui today presented Secretary General Dr Dorothea Rüländ with 1,000 face masks; 5,000 masks had previously been donated by 450 Vietnamese Germany alumni. In April, the Vietnamese-German Centre of Excellence in Medical Research in Hanoi provided the University of Tübingen with 6,000 swab test tubes for use in a clinical study designed to develop a treatment for the coronavirus.

Vietnamese alumna Thi Minh Chau Bui completed a Master's degree in development management at Ruhr University in Bochum from 2012 to 2014. As a student from an emerging country she received an individual scholarship for a development-related post-graduate degree programme at a German university through the DAAD's EPOS programme. That was a turning point in her life, says the now 32-year-old, who today works as a project manager at the Gustav Stresemann Institute in Bonn. She donated 1,000 re-usable and washable masks produced in Vietnam to the DAAD in the coronavirus crisis, and met with DAAD Secretary General Dr Dorothea Rüländ to deliver her donation in person today. "I will always be grateful

to the DAAD for its support, which enabled me to gain a Master's degree in Germany. The 1,000 masks are just a small gesture to express my deep gratitude to the DAAD", said the alumna.

450 Germany alumni donate 5,000 face masks

Vietnam has been very successful in the current fight against COVID-19, and has seen no new infections for several weeks. But news of the coronavirus crisis in Germany and the shortage of face masks and protective clothing caused concern among many Vietnamese Germany alumni – so they decided to help. DAAD alumni Professor Nguyen The Hoang, deputy director of the 108 Military Central Hospital in Hanoi, and Dr Nguyen Phuc Hien, director of the Foreign Trade University campus in Quang Ninh, launched a campaign that raised the equivalent of around 12,000 EUR from Germany alumni, 450 of whom wanted to express their gratitude for “a great and unforgettable time studying and conducting research in Germany” and their “sympathies for the German people”, as the appeal for donations states. In early May, Dr Pham Manh Cuong of the Vietnamese Government Office presented the German ambassador to Vietnam, Dr Guido Hildner, and DAAD regional office director Stefan Hase-Bergen with 5,000 face masks. These will be given to the state government of Saxony, which will also cover the transport costs.



Official handover ceremony in Hanoi: On 7 May 2020, Dr. Pham Manh Cuong from the Government Office in Vietnam will present 5,000 masks to the German Ambassador in Vietnam, Dr. Guido Hildner, and the Head of the DAAD Hanoi Office, Stefan Hase-Bergen

6.000 swab test tubes for clinical study in Germany

In early April, the University of Tübingen launched a clinical study in cooperation with the Universities of Hamburg and Stuttgart to test a treatment for the coronavirus. However, the swab test tubes needed to conduct the study were not available in sufficient quantities in Germany. Help came from Vietnam: the Vietnamese-German Centre of Excellence in Medical Research (VG-CARE) in Hanoi supplied 6,000 test tubes for use in the study, which were shipped to Tübingen at short notice. The VG-CARE centre, which is located at 108 Military Central Hospital in Hanoi, conducts clinical research into bacterial, viral and parasite infections (viral hepatitis, viral/bacterial meningitis/encephalitis, dengue fever, malaria, respiratory and diarrhoeal diseases).

Successful scientific collaboration

The Institute for Tropical Medicine at the University of Tübingen and 108 Military Central Hospital have been cooperating in this field for over 20 years. In January 2018 their long-standing collaboration gave rise to the independent, non-profit institution VG-CARE. The DAAD has been funding cooperation between the two partners through its “PAGEL – Partnerships for the Health Sector in Developing Countries” programme since 2015. This funding forms a significant basis for the establishment and development of VG-CARE. “VG-CARE is one of the most successful scientific cooperation projects between Germany and Vietnam”, points out Stefan Hase-Bergen, director of the DAAD regional office in Hanoi. “This

long-term collaboration includes seminars for more than 60 young physicians, numerous Vietnamese researchers who trained and gained their doctorates in Tübingen, expert seminars and summer schools in Hanoi, and winter schools in Tübingen.”



After successful transport in Tübingen (from left to right): MD Bui Van Long (Military Hospital 108 / VG-CARE, Hanoi), Dr. Carsten Köhler (Institute for Tropical Medicine - University of Tübingen), Prof. Dr. Peter Kreamsner (Director of the Institute for Tropical Medicine), Prof. Dr. Thirumalaisamy P. Velavan (group leader at the Institute for Tropical Medicine and German VG-CARE Director)

Global networking in science and research

Driving the collaboration are Professor Dr Thirumalaisamy P. Velavan, group leader at the Institute for Tropical Medicine in Tübingen and German director of VG-CARE, on the German side and DAAD alumnus Dr Le Huu Song, deputy director of 108 Military Central Hospital and Vietnamese director of VG-CARE, on the Vietnamese side. Both are working to establish a sustainable internationalisation process in science and research through global networking, and are very proud of the cooperation on the study. Professor Dr Thirumalaisamy P. Velavan explains: “This clinical study is a placebo-controlled study of patients in Germany suffering mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19; it is designed to assess the virological effectiveness, safety and potential side-effects of hydroxychloroquine, and I am very pleased to have this support from Vietnam.” Dr Le Huu Song also hopes the collaboration will yield significant advances: “COVID-19 is currently a terrible problem in the world. Many are conducting research to protect humanity. We are therefore very pleased that our colleagues are carrying out a new project on treating the disease, and I hope it will be successful and the medications can be tested in the next phases.”

Central platform for clinical studies

With around 96 million inhabitants and a tropical climate, Vietnam is a hotspot for many infectious diseases. The Vietnamese-German Centre of Excellence on Infectious Diseases (VG-EXCEL) was set up as part of VG-CARE with support from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to conduct clinical research into infectious diseases in Vietnam and the ASEAN region. The centre is being expanded into a central platform for clinical studies performed by various German, Vietnamese and international institutions. Funded by the DAAD, the BMBF, the University of Tübingen, 108 Military Central Hospital, the National Foundation for Science and Technology Development (NAFOSTED) and the Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), the centre carries out a range of research projects.





The University of Tübingen, together with the Universities of Hamburg and Stuttgart, is carrying out a clinical trial with the smear tubes to test a drug against the corona virus

Large network of Vietnamese alumni

Relations between Vietnam and Germany, both in academia and in other fields of cooperation between the two countries, are often based on the excellent contacts between Vietnamese alumni and partners in Germany. Vietnam's close ties to the former GDR, in particular, as well as 45 years of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and Vietnam have resulted in a large network of several thousand Vietnamese Germany alumni. The DAAD works closely with these Vietnamese alumni and supports them through a wide range of programmes. □

Stefan Hase-Bergen/Britta Hecker/Barbara Westfeld (13 May 2020)

MORE INFORMATION

[DAAD – Information on the Corona virus \[https://www.daad.de/en/coronavirus/\]](https://www.daad.de/en/coronavirus/)