

## **Pilot EQA scheme in Vietnam and Zambia**

IFCC played a supporting role in helping to introduce external quality assessment (EQA) into Vietnam. It has since played a more significant role in introducing a pilot EQA scheme into Zambia.

### Vietnam:

The project in Vietnam was a collaboration between two IFCC Full Members societies – the Vietnamese Association of Clinical Biochemists (VACB) and the Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists (AACB). IFCC supported the project and provided financial assistance for the supply of EQA materials.

The VACB recognised the need to introduce an EQA scheme in clinical chemistry as a means to improve the analytical quality of Vietnamese laboratories. The AACB has extensive experience of running EQA in Australasia and agreed to provide that expertise to VACB.

Preparation was a key component of the project. This involved a survey of need conducted among Vietnamese laboratories; discussions to gain the support of the Ministry of Health; visits by VACB personnel to Australia for training; and visits to Vietnam by AACB personnel to prepare the detail of the project and to help train participants.

A pilot project demonstrated conclusively that the introduction of EQA reduced the between laboratory variability in the results obtained for measurements made on the same sample. The Ministry of Health accepted the benefits of EQA and has provided funding support to enable continuation of EQA. The current scheme is run under the direction of VACB with AACB providing expertise as required.

### Zambia:

The project in Zambia was established after a request to IFCC from its Full Member the Biomedical Society of Zambia (BSZ) to establish a pilot EQA scheme in the country. IFCC invited Renze Bais from Australia (a key person in the Vietnam project) to be project lead and it was pleased when Randox Laboratories Ltd agreed to be partners by providing EQA specimens and software support.

As in Vietnam the preparation stage was important. The Ministry of Health in Zambia agreed to the project; a survey was performed to identify needs; and training was provided to the laboratories in the project. It was agreed to concentrate on core chemistry analytes in the pilot study.

The project encountered some hiccups along the way with logistics and the timely availability of equipment, reagents and consumables in participating laboratories. However, the pilot did succeed in demonstrating improved analytical quality and it served as a valuable educational exercise for laboratory medicine specialists in Zambia.

At the time of writing there are discussions between BSZ and the Ministry of Health to agree the future provision of EQA in Zambia, including expansion into areas such as infectious disease, which are of particular importance in the country.