



## What we do in Vietnam

- We're training young people to tell their friends how to avoid HIV and AIDS
- We're making sure thousands of minority ethnic children get a good primary education
- We're helping 35,000 children protect themselves against trafficking and abuse



Vietnam's change to a market economy has brought many benefits. The country is more stable than before and there's much less poverty. But the gap between rich and poor is getting wider. Children are especially vulnerable to being left behind. There are about 1.5 times more poor children than adults in Vietnam. Every third child still lives in poverty.

We're fighting for the rights of children who aren't benefiting from Vietnam's quick economic and social changes. Minority ethnic children are especially prone to being poor and missing out on their schooling. We're making sure many of them can get a good, free primary education.

Vietnam is under increasing threat from an HIV and AIDS epidemic. We're teaching young people how to protect themselves from the virus. We're also working to stop trafficking and abuse of children who cross Vietnam's borders. And when natural disasters strike, we're helping children and their families to cope.

### Save the Children in Vietnam

We first opened a Vietnam office in Hanoi in 1990. Today we work in the country's north, centre and south, in cities and in the countryside. We work with children and communities from both majority and minority ethnic backgrounds. Young people are helping us shape and

run all our projects. We're also working with the government and other organisations to build support for children's rights.

## **Key areas of work**

### **We're helping minority ethnic children get a better education**

Up to 98% of Vietnamese children enrol in school. But many of them still don't get a good education, particularly children who are poor and from a minority ethnic group.

In 1994 we set up our Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Programme in northern Vietnam. Today, we work in two mountainous areas where many people from minority ethnic communities are living in deep poverty. We want to help all the children here – especially girls – complete primary school and continue with a lower secondary education. We're working with children, their parents and carers, teachers and health workers, and local policy-makers to achieve this. Our programme reached 8,829 minority ethnic children last year.

Learning in their mother tongue is key to getting minority ethnic children out of poverty. Last year, 391 preschool children benefited from our community-based bilingual education pilot project. We trained 111 preschool and 120 primary school trainers in how to teach second languages in ways that are engaging and interesting for children. We've strengthened the role of mother-tongue teachers' assistants and made sure teaching and learning materials are relevant. Our preschool curriculum for minority ethnic children was formally introduced by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2007.

Our staff visit parents at home and run parents' education sessions. We've reached more than 65,000 parents so far. They now understand more about their children's needs and rights, and why it's important to send them to school. Parent groups have provided their time as volunteers to support schools, repair fences and make toys. With local help we have upgraded or built 19 classrooms over the past year.

Overall, the children we work with now have better teachers, friendlier schools and improved relationships with their teachers and classmates. They're more confident and enthusiastic, and feel more prepared for starting primary school.

### **We're helping children protect themselves from HIV and AIDS**

Care and support for children infected with or affected by HIV and AIDS has been a major focus for the programme in the past year. We reached a total of 87,153 children. We want all young people under 18 to have the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from HIV. Training children to talk to their friends about HIV is very effective. Last year, our peer educators talked to more than 103,000 other young people about HIV and how to avoid it. We trained over 300 new peer educators, and ran courses for 211 volunteers and 125 family group leaders on how to provide emotional and practical support.

We're also supporting poor children who are infected with HIV or who have relatives who are. In Ho Chi Minh City and Hai Phong city, and in Bac Giang and Long An provinces, our trained volunteers make contact with families living with the virus and offer them counselling and care at home. We've developed a course on income generation and savings. Over the past year, we helped 745 children infected with or affected by HIV and AIDS to stay in school by supplying them with textbooks, pens, paper or bicycles to get to school, or by paying their school fees. We made sure 59 children received health checks, treatment and, if necessary, hospital care. We also provided milk and food supplements to 147 children and medicine for 13 children.

We're working with local authorities to develop community-based care for children affected by HIV and AIDS. Children in our project sites have facilitated hundreds of education sessions. They prepared for the national children's forum by identifying problems, reflecting on issues through art performances, and developed their own messages for government and the community.

### **We're protecting children from harm**

Vietnam is one of six countries in the Mekong Basin that are part of a cross-border project against trafficking and exploitation of migrant and vulnerable children. During the past year, we've helped 35 trafficked Vietnamese children return to their families. We've provided counselling, paid for healthcare and given vocational training and support to develop small businesses. We've also supported training for more than 35,000 children and young people to give them the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from trafficking and unsafe migration.

We've enabled children to go to school by helping them get birth certificates and exempted from school fees. We've also provided textbooks and learning materials at the beginning of the school year and worked with local communities to ensure that migrant children receive free healthcare.

One of our key achievements is that children and adults now know much more about the threat trafficking poses. They're also more aware of their own role in tackling it. Our volunteer network has reduced the number of cases where parents sell their children.

### **We're getting children out of poverty**

Inequality is growing in Vietnam, and children are especially vulnerable to losing out. We want to know exactly how poverty affects children's development and opportunities. That way we'll be able to push for changes that can improve poor children's lives.

We're taking part in Young Lives, a 15-year international research project into child poverty in Vietnam, Ethiopia, India and Peru. We're following the development of 2,000 children who were one and 1,000 who were eight in 2001. By regularly interviewing these children and their parents, we're learning about how poverty affects Vietnamese children from birth until

they're teenagers. We'll use this information to show policy-makers how they can improve the quality of children's lives. It will also shape our own future work on child poverty. The second Young Lives survey in 2006 is providing us with great insights into the social forces that affect poor children and their communities.

More than 120 people, including 50 senior representatives of key organisations attended a meeting where we presented initial findings from the research. The meeting also got wide media coverage. Our findings strongly support the approach we're taking in our education programme, highlighting how important parents' education is to lifting future generations out of poverty.

## Emergencies

Vietnam is classified as the fifth most at-risk country in the world, and over the past year has had more than its usual number of typhoons and floods. We helped nearly 25,000 children after the flooding in Quang Binh in August 2007.

We've set up several projects in high-risk areas aimed at preparing and responding to natural disasters. We're also raising awareness about how to protect children during emergencies.



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