



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 59,000 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 the trafficking and abuse of children who cross Vietnam's borders. And when natural disasters strike, we're helping children and their families to recover.

Save the Children in Vietnam

We first opened a Vietnam office in Hanoi in 1990. This year we've joined together with three other members of the International Save the Children Alliance – Japan, Sweden and the US – to create a unified programme. 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. In the last year we worked directly with 103,000 children and more than 2 million children benefited from our education work alone. One of our priorities in the coming year will be to support the government in reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015.

Key areas of work

We're helping minority ethnic children get a better education

About 95% of Vietnamese children enrol in primary 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 three 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.

Learning in their mother tongue is key to getting minority ethnic children out of poverty. Building on our successful bilingual education pilot project, we've developed teaching and learning materials and assessment tools that are now used in all schools with children from minority ethnic groups in 40 provinces – that's more than 1.5 million grade 1 children annually. The children now have better teachers, friendlier schools and improved relationships with their teachers and classmates.

In terms of policy change, we've worked with the government to develop its inclusive education strategy and guidelines on teaching and learning minority languages, including their different scripts. Our curriculum, materials and bilingual education model was piloted in nine primary schools and the Ministry of Education and Training has now adopted it to use in all mountainous regions where the population is made up of minority ethnic groups.

We're helping children protect themselves from HIV and AIDS

Care and support for children infected with or affected by HIV and AIDS continues to be a major focus for the programme. In all, during the past year we reached more than 18,000 children through this work. On a national level, we brought 50 children from five provinces to meet senior government officials and tell them about the discrimination they face. As a result, the government has made it easier for children orphaned by AIDS to get regular allowances. We also supported 1,840 children directly by providing food, healthcare and education.

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. We trained 365 peer educators who went into 14 schools to talk to students about HIV and how to avoid it. We've also recruited 127 adult volunteers to work with children who are infected with or

affected by HIV and AIDS and their carers. 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.

Our model of direct work along with prevention and education work is seen as a way forward by partner organisations and other provinces. We're also contributing to a national action plan on children and HIV and AIDS.

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. Working with local children we've set up child protection committees that help children protect themselves from trafficking and unsafe migration. We've helped nearly 4,000 children get birth certificates which mean they can enrol in school and are less likely to be trafficked. We've also provided counselling, paid for healthcare and given vocational training and support so that families can develop small businesses.

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. In the coming year we'll be setting up child protection networks in 12 communes and carrying out a media campaign against the exploitation and trafficking of 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.

This year we launched our Phase 3 findings nationally and in the five project provinces. We also set up young journalist clubs to encourage children to conduct their own research and report on their findings. A forum we organised in Ben Tre province enabled 150 children to tell high ranking officials about their concerns for education.

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 few years has had more than its usual number of typhoons and floods.

When typhoon Kammuri struck in August 2008 we responded immediately, providing 15,200 children in the worst flooded areas with food and non-food items. We followed this up with rice seed, fertiliser and tools so that families could start feeding themselves again.

Just a month later, when typhoon Hagupit caused heavy flooding in Bac Giang and Quang Ninh provinces, we provided food and education materials so that children could get back to school.

We've set up several projects in high-risk areas aimed at preparing for and responding to natural disasters. We've trained trainers on search and rescue teams who've then gone on to train local people. And we're also training teachers and children to lead and participate in planning processes.



Save the Children UK
1 St John's Lane
London EC1M 4AR
Telephone +44 (0)20 7012 6400
Fax +44 (0)20 7012 6963
savethechildren.org.uk

Registered charity England and Wales (213890) Scotland (SC039570)