



Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped

FACT SHEET

Viet-Nam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH) is a tax exempted (501(c)(3)), developmental organization operating in Vietnam since 1990 with programs to improve the quality of life for Vietnamese with disabilities, through direct humanitarian assistance and through programs to promote the reform of laws and policies affecting the disabled.

Since the early 1990s, VNAH has been a recipient of support from the Leahy War Victims Fund (LWVF) and, over the years, has been an important contributor to the work of the Fund in Vietnam. VNAH has partnered with USAID, both through LWVF and through American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA), and other donors in programs improving mobility for the disabled, and building capacity of local rehabilitation service providers. VNAH works directly with the regional rehabilitation centers of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) but with the VNAH caseload handled separately from its general work. Starting with the center in Can Tho, in the Mekong Delta, VNAH now partners with five regional rehabilitation centers to provide services to needy disabled people across Vietnam. To date, over 120,000 prosthetic limbs, other assistive devices and wheelchairs have been provided to war victims and impoverished, disabled people by VNAH and its partners.

In addition to assisting the individual disabled regain mobility, VNAH has supported skills training, greater employment in mainstream jobs, and capacity building for service providers so as to effectively meet the needs of Vietnamese with disabilities. This included supporting two national skill training schools for the disabled, development of more inclusive employment services in 10 provinces in Viet Nam, and set up an Employer's Council on employment for the disabled, whose members included companies such as Ford Motor, AIG, NIKE and local corporations. All these resulted in gainful jobs for over 2,500 persons with disabilities through out Vietnam.

While these efforts and initiatives were badly needed and very welcome, it was clear that systemic change was needed in the face of the vast needs presented by almost twelve million Vietnamese with disabilities, VNAH recognized this need and directed its focus to a new challenge: assisting government agencies to develop and reform national policies so they can benefit most, if not all people with disabilities in Vietnam. Direct assistance to individuals living with disabilities would be continued with the support of private donors.

The first major step in this direction was in 1997, when the Committee on Social Affairs of the Vietnamese National Assembly invited VNAH to partner with the National Assembly in sponsoring a conference to review a draft of a new Ordinance on Disability

presented by the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs. VNAH agreed and fielded a team of American experts to the conference, which was widely viewed as quite successful.

In 1998, USAID granted VNAH funding from LWVF for this new endeavor, which continues until the present. With VNAH advice and technical support, the Vietnamese government agencies have achieved the following important steps:

- Development and enactment of the Ordinance on Disability
- Establishment of the inter-agency National Coordinating Council on Disabilities (NCCD)
- Development and enactment of the barrier-free access code and standards for public construction
- Development and enactment of barrier-free access standards and regulations for public transport
- Inclusion of disability concerns in the Vocational Training Law
- Development and approval of a 5 year national action plan on disability to be implemented in all 63 provinces of Vietnam.

Currently, with LWVF funding administered by USAID/Vietnam, VNAH is supporting government agencies in drafting the first disability law and in revising provisions in the labor code that affect employment of the disabled.

The above achievements in policy reform and implementation have directly **benefited around 3.6 million Vietnamese with disabilities** and indirectly impacted several million more.. These established stronger legal framework that protects the rights of the disabled and contributes to the sustainable development of Vietnam. These benefits will become even stronger with the completion and implementation of the new disability law.

These accomplishments also helped VNAH win the confidence of the host government agencies, and led VNAH to a new challenge: assisting in developing an enabling legal framework for Vietnamese civil society organization. VNAH has entered into formal MOUs with local government and National Assembly agencies to support the drafting of national legal documents governing Vietnamese non-governmental organizations. The support resulted in the draft law that was reviewed by the National Assembly in late 2006, as well as, sub-law regulations and guidelines. LWVF provided VNAH with seed funding, followed by ESF of the Department of State and other private donors, for this effort. VNAH supported travel by Vietnamese law drafters to study relevant good laws and practices in the U.S. and other countries, provided international technical expertise and support, and provided capacity building training for civil servants, practitioners and local NGOs.

VNAH is among the few international NGOs allowed to operate in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, an area usually off-limit to foreign assistance and visits. Since 2000, VNAH has provided several thousand prosthetic limbs and other assistive devices to war victims in the five provinces of the region. Many beneficiaries are from the ethnic minority

groups. VNAH has built 69 elementary schools, training and boarding houses, installed several drinking water systems and trained mid-wives for remote villages of the ethnic minority. Currently, VNAH is supporting the disabled people in Kon Tum, a province that borders Laos and Cambodia, with funding from the Ford Foundation.

The LWVF through USAID has helped transform VNAH from a small charity organization to a professional developmental NGO that is capable of implementing a wide range of developmental activities in Vietnam and Laos, and gaining funding from various public and private donors.

Other of VNAH's major past projects include:

- Mine risks education in Vietnam's DMZ area where UXO is still harmful, to prevent new injuries and accidents. Funding was from U.S Department of Defense and Department of State
- Introducing inclusive employment services and revision of legal document regarding employment of the disabled in Vietnam, with funding from the U.S Department of Labor.

VNAH's current projects include:

- Provide rehabilitation and social supports to the disabled and capacity building for service providers in Danang City, with funding from LWVF/USAID Health Program for Danang.
- Construct a rehabilitation center in Danang City and facilitate the transfer of expertise in rehabilitation medicine from the U.S to Vietnam. Funding is from ASHA/USAID and private donors. In addition, VNAH is assisting Vietnamese American and American organizations and individuals to support the disadvantaged groups in Vietnam. Every year, VNAH facilitates and organizes volunteer missions to provide services and training in Vietnam.
- Provide prosthetic limbs and other assistive devices and wheelchairs to poor Vietnamese living with disabled persons and training for rehabilitation technicians and health workers. Funding is from the Nippon Foundation (Japan) and the Freeman Foundation (U.S)
- Support disabled people in Binh Dinh and Kon Tum provinces with rehabilitation and social services and capacity building for local health workers, with funding from the Ford Foundation.

For more information, please visit www.vnah-hev.org