

BELIEVE IN ZERO[®]

Protecting the Vulnerable Children of Vietnam

**A Proposal Prepared for
UNICEF's Next Generation
October 2012**

Overview

Over the past 20 years, Vietnam has made impressive increases in social and economic development. But, these developments have put new pressures on the Vietnamese family. With an ever-widening gap between rich and poor, more people are moving to cities and migrating all over the country to find work. The resulting economic disparity and unemployment, rapid urbanization, migration, family break-ups, and the erosion of traditional values have contributed to an increased number of abandoned, neglected, abused and exploited children. UNICEF has been very active in Vietnam, particularly in the protection of children by improving public knowledge and understanding of child abuse and exploitation and other issues through research and studies, advocacy, communication and social mobilization involving children.

Current Situation of Vietnam’s Vulnerable Children

Millions of children in Vietnam face many challenges preventing them from realizing their full potential in life. The Vietnam Ministry of Labor estimates over 4.2 million children under the age of 16 — nearly 18 percent of all Vietnamese children — are either orphans, abandoned, disabled, victims of toxic substances, infected with HIV/AIDS, sexually abused, exploited and/or in conflict with the law. These children are also victims of human trafficking and kidnapping.

One major cause for these increased dangers is internal migration. Internal migration occurs when families migrate to urban areas to find work. The risks to children occur when parents who migrate are unable to find work and turn to criminal activities such as prostitution for their livelihood. Unfortunately, this exposure causes children to become both participants and victims to the crimes they witness such as prostitution and physical and sexual abuse.

These problems are intensified by the absence of a strong and effective child protection system. Currently, there is a lack of professional social work and protection services to support all vulnerable children — services such as preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation to caring for and treating victims. And where specialized services do exist, they are often fragmented or unregulated, unable to effectively and consistently protect and ensure the safety of these children.



UNICEF in Action

UNICEF Vietnam seeks to protect Vietnam’s vulnerable children by strengthening the protection systems around them. UNICEF advocates for legal reform with staff from law enforcement and justice agencies – including prosecutors and police officers. UNICEF’s efforts also include training both child protection staff (i.e. community workers and police officers) and children on issues of protecting children, being aware of dangerous environments and providing services to identify and prevent situations where children will fall victim to one or more of these dangers.

In partnership with the Vietnamese government, UNICEF is:

- a) developing a comprehensive legal framework for children and adolescents in need of special protection (CNSP) and other vulnerable children and adolescents including those from ethnic minority groups;
- b) strengthening government capacity in monitoring and analyzing the situation of CNSPs;
- c) improving awareness, behaviors and participation among the general public, civil society and children regarding child protection;
- d) improving justice for children; and
- e) creating a framework to reduce the vulnerability of children and protect them from abuse, violence and exploitation, including sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labor and HIV/AIDS.

As a result of this partnership, the Vietnamese government has committed to developing and improving Vietnam’s legal system for the protection of children in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international standards. The government recently approved a law that introduces a number of important reforms to the juvenile justice system guided by the principle (mandated by the CRC) that the best interests of the child should be the paramount consideration. One important reform is the deinstitutionalization of sex workers, including minors. But, although advances have been made to improve the protection surrounding children, an urgent need still exists to improving access and the quality of services and staff to protect children.



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The Impact of Your Support

Your support will aid in establishing a child-friendly justice system for vulnerable children by improving access to justice for child victims and witnesses of crimes and providing due process and proper alternatives to children involved in criminal activities. Training will also be provided to child protection staff (i.e. police, justice officers and community workers) to increase efforts for effective coordination and service delivery.

For example, an investment of **\$100,000** from UNICEF's Next Generation could support the following components of the program:

- Conduct trainings for street children - and other vulnerable children - to be more aware of their surroundings, develop life skills and child abuse prevention knowledge, and receive relevant protection services including counseling, emergency support, legal aid, and support for home reunion, recovery and reintegration.
- Increase knowledge and skills of local child protection officers in Ho Chi Minh City to provide effective community-based interventions on prevention and response to the needs of child victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation and street children.
- Establish child friendly justice structures in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) and Dong Thap province, including support for child friendly police interview rooms.

Impact of a Gift

At this time, I hope you will consider a gift to UNICEF's Next Generation Vietnam Project.

Your gift of **\$500** will support 33 community workers who will provide community-based education and reintegration services to 330 vulnerable children who are victims of crime and in conflict with the law.

Your gift of **\$1,000** will support 2 two-week training sessions for local police officers on child-friendly investigation techniques. These techniques are essential to helping police officers become more aware of issues facing children who are at-risk and to better address them in a more child-friendly approach.

Your gift of **\$2,500** will support a community-based child protection system to provide prevention and protection response activities for 4,000 at-risk, abused and exploited children and their families in Ho Chi Minh City. This system will leverage resources in local communities to assist in identifying vulnerable children and providing proper referrals to trained social workers and social service centers.

Your gift of **\$3,000** will provide one training session for 40 staff and community workers on case management, early identification and interventions to increase the quality of child-friendly services to ensure proper support and protection for vulnerable children.

Your gift of **\$5,000** will support 335 community workers to serve 3,350 vulnerable children by providing community-based education and reintegration services for children who are victims and in conflict with the law.

Your gift of **\$11,000** will support the construction of one child-friendly interview room appropriate for police to interview child victims, witnesses and juveniles in conflict with the law who are under 14 years or mentally unstable.

Your gift of **\$20,000** will support one social work service center providing early intervention and referral services for 2,400 vulnerable children.

Your support is vital to the expansion and success of protecting millions of Vietnam's vulnerable children by strengthening the support system around them. Thank you for your interest and concern for the children of Vietnam.

To make a donation, please visit: **www.unicefusa.org/nextgenvietnamproject**

Or send a check to:
(made payable to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF)

U.S. Fund for UNICEF
Attn: Casey Rotter
125 Maiden Lane, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10038

Thank you very much for your interest in UNICEF's life-saving work for children, and for your consideration of a gift to support UNICEF's program to protect Vietnam's vulnerable children. Together we can ensure the safety and protection of these children today in hopes for a brighter future tomorrow.



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The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) works in more than 190 countries and territories to save and improve children's lives, providing health care and immunizations, clean water and sanitation, nutrition, education, emergency relief and more. The U.S. Fund for UNICEF supports UNICEF's work through fundraising, advocacy, and education in the United States. Together, we are working toward the day when zero children die from preventable causes and every child has a safe and healthy childhood.