

CASE STUDY

Stopping Trafficking Before It Starts

In Vietnam, a USAID-assisted education alliance helps vulnerable girls improve their life options.



Pacific Links/Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao

The ADAPT program in Vietnam encourages community and parental involvement to limit obstacles that prevent girls from attending school. For example, participants in An Giang province's Chau Phu district received bicycles to help them make the daily trek to schools, which are up to five miles away.

CHALLENGE

Low levels of education, limited economic opportunity, and low social status can leave women and girls vulnerable to human trafficking. In Vietnam, where the costs associated with primary schooling pose a great financial burden on poor families, severe poverty limits educational opportunities for girls. Girls who have dropped out of school must often help their families bear financial burdens, yet with limited education and no vocational skills, they find few options for work. These girls are prime targets for traffickers, who lure them across the Cambodian border with promises of jobs as nannies or waitresses in Phnom Penh and other parts of the country. Once in Cambodia, they may be trapped in brothels and forced into prostitution.

INITIATIVE

Prevention programs must address the factors that put specific groups and individuals at risk for human trafficking. Since 2005, USAID has worked to prevent trafficking of girls and women in the Mekong Delta by improving their life options. The An Giang/Dong Thap (ADAPT) Alliance is a girls' education program implemented by the Pacific Links Foundation (PALS), International Children Assistance Network (ICAN), and East Meets West Foundation. ADAPT provides scholarships, vocational training, and job placement services to at-risk girls in three Vietnamese provinces along the Cambodian border. The scholarship program supports the same recipients year after year, covering the cost of their school fees, supplies, and after-school tutoring from their entry into the program in 4th or 5th grade until their graduation from high school. For girls who have already dropped out of school, ADAPT works with local businesses to provide vocational training and job placement services that cater to the local market, enabling participants to pursue stable employment with reasonable wages. For women and girls who have escaped prostitution, ADAPT provides comprehensive reintegration services — including counseling, vocational training, income earning opportunities, and health care — to prevent them from being trafficked again.



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Stopping Trafficking Before It Starts *(Cont'd.)*

The program encourages parents to get involved and helps families find solutions — for instance, by providing bicycles to students who must travel long distances to school.

RESULTS

ADAPT builds on USAID's extensive experience in vocational training and education for effective trafficking prevention. Its education effort is modeled on a successful PALS project in central Vietnam that transfers cash to families with disadvantaged children as long as they remain enrolled in school. ADAPT mandates high levels of community and parental involvement and strives to limit the obstacles that prevent girls from attending school. For example, the program provides bicycles to participants whose distance from school would otherwise limit their attendance. Of the 495 scholarship recipients the program supports, ADAPT records a dropout rate of only 11.6 percent, lower than the provincial average. Similarly, the vocational component provides job placement and trains participants on workplace culture to facilitate a smooth transition and increase job retention rates. To reduce the likelihood that returned trafficked victims will be trafficked again, ADAPT helps their parents find stable sources of income.

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