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INCLUSION OF VIETNAMESE WITH DISABILITIES PROJECT

Best Practices from Project Experience



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Edited by Dinh Thi Nguyet & Le Thu Ha
Designed by DansonMedia
CRS / Vietnam Program
No.1, Lane 7
Nguyen Hong St.
Hanoi, Vietnam
Tel: (844) 377 38 300
Fax: (844) 377 38 301
Email: crs@vn.seapro.crs.org
Website: www.crs.org/vietnam

CRS Mission

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is the official relief and development agency of the U.S. Catholic community, and currently works in 100 countries and territories worldwide.

In Vietnam, CRS supports poor and vulnerable communities to live with dignity, solidarity and justice. We work with partners from the grassroots to the national level in six program areas:

Agriculture/Rural Enterprise Development,
Education,
HIV and Health,
Climate Change and
Emergency,
Community Participation, and
Counter-trafficking.

In each of these programs, we aim to strengthen communities' links to social services and resources for achieving self-sufficiency.

Foreword

At least 1,000,000 Vietnamese children, or three percent of children at school age, live with some type of disability: physical, intellectual, visual and hearing impairments. Until recently, most children with disabilities were not able to attend school. For these children and older generations, educational exclusion has added to the social and physical barriers people with disabilities face due to limited awareness, an incomplete legal framework and support system.

Catholic Relief Services believes strongly that inclusive education in the child's local community school offers the best opportunity for social integration. CRS has supported the growth of an inclusive education model in Vietnam since 1995 through promoting the enrollment of CWD in regular schools and training teachers to use internationally-accepted inclusive methods of instruction. CRS' inclusive education projects have been supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) since 1998. The current Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities (IVWD) program began in October 2005 as a cooperative agreement between USAID, CRS, and World Concern Development Organization.

The IVWD project is built on the dual approaches of building comprehensive local models and promoting policy change. CRS and its partners aim to ensure equal opportunities in education, vocational training and job placement for people with disabilities in Vietnam. Children who were once left out from education and social interactions are increasingly able to enter school and to learn not only academic knowledge but also essential social and life skills. Their social inclusion is further strengthened with opportunities for higher education at secondary level, employment and vocational training that suit their needs and abilities.

With support from the Vietnamese Government and international organizations like CRS, people with disabilities in Vietnam are asserting their abilities and rights to equal access in education and employment. I am proud of the successful contributions that the IVWD project has made in the lives of thousands of children and youth as well as in promoting policy change for greater inclusion in Vietnamese society.

ACTING COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE,
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES – VIETNAM

CHIEF OF PARTY,
INCLUSION OF VIETNAMESE WITH DISABILITIES PROJECT



Andrew Wells-Dang

1. Background & General Information

The Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities (IVWD) project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) together with private and local contributions, is managed and implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and sub-grantee World Concern Development Organization (WCDO).

The project aims to establish a comprehensive support model for children and youth with disabilities from preschool level through secondary education, vocational training and job placement by piloting inclusive education and vocational training and employment in Ninh Binh and Quang Nam provinces and working on policy development at the central level. The IVWD project began in October 2005 and ends by June 2010.

Project Goal :

The project's goal is to facilitate the full participation of persons with disabilities (PWD) in all facets of life by ensuring equal access to education and employment and the enforcement of disability legislation at all levels to reaffirm PWD's rights to represent their own needs and interests.

The primary barrier for people with disabilities is not their impairments but the social barriers that they face, namely an inaccessible environment and restrictive attitudes. With the IVWD project, CRS and WCDO aim to remove these obstacles through engaging the education system, social services and communities.

Project Components

" Four main components have been designed for the project to provide a comprehensive model of support for children and youth with disabilities "

The IVWD project is designed with four main components to provide a comprehensive model of support for children and youth with disabilities as follows:

Inclusive education for children with disabilities (CWD)

This component serves children aged 3-16 and their parents. CRS supports interventions starting from early childhood and preschool age, continuing through primary school and junior secondary school level, and preparing the young people for vocational training and job placement.

Community-based vocational training and job creation for youth with disabilities (YWD)

The vocational training/employment component, managed by WCDO, serves YWD aged 16-30 by introducing a community-based model to provide necessary skills for YWD to access existing local employment, as well as business training for YWD to be able to live more independently.

Information technology training for students with disabilities

CRS entered into a partnership with the Hanoi College of Information Technology (HCIT) in 2007 and Van Lang University in Ho Chi Minh City in 2009 to provide specialized adaptive training for students with sight, hearing and mobility impairments; offer job placement and social counseling; and expose students to international-standard software, equipment and techniques in information technology that form an increasingly key component of the modern Vietnamese economy.

Disability awareness and policy change

At the central government level, CRS cooperates with relevant departments of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) to change public awareness towards the needs and abilities of PWD, to facilitate policy change, curriculum and manual development to mainstream disability issues into government policies and programs.

A Comprehensive Approach

Achieving full rights for PWD requires that communities, government agencies and civil society organizations work together to better understand needs and abilities of PWD, removing barriers in the environment and in prevailing social attitudes. The IVWD project addresses a wide range of issues facing PWD through both grassroots and systemic measures.

At the local level, by encouraging small businesses to train and employ YWD and by training teachers to respond to the unique needs of each child, CRS and WCDO encourage individuals, families, and communities to join efforts in providing quality support for the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities.

At the nationwide level, CRS emphasizes policy change, curriculum and manual development, and a rights-based approach to disability issues, supporting government agencies to create more equitable opportunities for PWD throughout Vietnam.

" CRS supports interventions starting from early age, continuing through primary school and junior secondary school level, and preparing the young people for vocational training and job placement.

The project establishes a strong linkage from the grassroots level to the central level to ensure practice and policy changes "



Teacher's support to a child with a hearing aid in her group work with non-disabled peers in Kim Son, Ninh Binh.

Photo by CRS

Project Stakeholders

In two focus provinces of Ninh Binh and Quang Nam, management responsibility lies with the Provincial People's Committee (PPC) and District People's Committees (DPC).

Coordination of education and vocational training activities is conducted by provincial Departments of Education and Training (DOETs) and Departments of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISAs), respectively.

A similar management structure is applied at district level to create strong coordination among sectors in supporting PWD, including health, education, and social welfare.

" The project emphasizes coordination among different sectors such as education, health and social welfare at provincial level. At the central level, CRS and WCDO aim to strengthen the joint commitment among relevant Ministries in supporting the inclusion of PWD "

Teacher's support to a student with hearing impairment during a group activity in Gia Vien, Ninh Binh.

Photo by CRS



Project Stakeholders

At the central level, CRS and WCDO work closely with MOET and MOLISA, including the National Coordinating Council on Disability (NCCD) to promote public awareness raising and policy development. Together with ongoing partnerships with other international and donor agencies working in this sector, this results in strong collaboration in national policy and resources development activities and a holistic sector approach. Inter-relationships among key stakeholders at the central level are reflected below:

- MOET facilitates the national implementation of inclusive education (IE) through further development of legislative documents and policy enforcement tools, human resource development and monitoring IE at local levels. The MOET Preschool Department, Primary Education Department, Secondary Education Department, and Higher Education Department are all direct CRS partners.
- MOLISA is the government partner for the vocational training/employment component. It cooperates in the production of an on the job training manual, the implementation of government decrees and policies relating to disability, and promotes lessons learned from the grassroots level to influence policy development.
- NCCD plays key role in coordinating central government agencies for disability policy mainstreaming and development.
- CRS and WCDO collaborate with other international NGOs working in this sector, such as Viet Nam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH) to implement a comprehensive support model in the selected provinces.



Mr. Frank Donovan, USAID Vietnam Mission Director visits the ITTP facility in Hanoi.

Photo by Richard Nyberg, USAID

Project Sustainability

CRS and WCDO have a demonstrated ability to work through existing organizations and structures to effect systemic change. The IVWD project focuses on the development of the human resources of government institutions; the strengthening of parents' groups of CWD as well as peer groups of YWD; and the mainstreaming of best practice into coordinated cross-sector disability policy. These approaches result in greater structural commitment within ministries (MOET and MOLISA), and at the provincial and local levels.

Main principles applied throughout the project implementation:

- Provide basic services of Inclusive Education and Vocational Training and Employment through replicable models in target provinces and districts that emphasize the mainstreaming of PWD.
- Promote policy reform with the active voice of PWD through individual sector activities which then feed into greater coordination and cooperation among disability sector stakeholders.
- Develop long-term capacity by investing in the development of human resources in government institutions, strengthening organizations of and for PWD, and mainstreaming best practice into coordinated, cross-sectoral disability policy.

" CRS and WCDO have a demonstrated ability to work through existing organizations and structures to effect systemic change. The IVWD project focuses on the development of the human resources of government institutions and partner organizations "

Engaging children with disabilities through singing activities to increase their inclusion and participation

Photo by CRS



Project Results

TABLE 1: **Project beneficiaries as of August 2009**

Location Number of beneficiaries	Quang Nam province	Ninh Binh province	National level	TOTAL
CWD enrolled in schools	710	1,325	-	2,035
Teachers and service providers trained	1,653	2,017	970	4,640
Parents and community members trained	1,558	720	-	2,278
PWD receiving VT and job orientation	175	134	-	309
Business and community support workers	109	63	-	172
PWD trained in information technology	-	-	204	204
TOTAL	4,205	4,259	1,174	9,638

2.Key IVWD Project Concepts & Activities

● Community Networks

" Community members and local authorities have demonstrated attitudinal change and developed activities in action plans on Inclusive Education and Vocational Training/ Employment "

CRS has taken key steps towards project sustainability by strengthening community involvement in Inclusive Education, increasing monitoring and support provided by core teachers, and policy mainstreaming. Inclusive education increases parents' and teachers' awareness of their responsibilities to children and involves them actively in helping and supporting them. Parents are mobilized to monitor and give feedback on policy implementation at schools and in the community. They also take part in advocacy and awareness-raising activities. Parents are also encouraged to organize their own activities to improve CWD access to school. They are involved in the learning of their child, working with teachers to develop teaching plans for CWD by identifying needs of each child and linking needs to school attendance to achieve long-term impact on the child's quality of life.

For vocational training and employment, there is a network of community support workers who take the role of grassroots facilitators to set up and support the relationship among local businesses, PWD and their families, and also government agencies. This is a key factor for the success of the program. With their insight and experience from the program implementation, these community support workers also actively make continuous surveys on the needs and opportunities for vocational training and employment, and promote the on-the-job support for other PWD in the communities. Throughout the program, networks of PWD and businesses were established, bringing new opportunities for each member to develop their knowledge and skills for work, and thus enriching their social relationships.

Local communities in Ninh Binh and Quang Nam provinces have increased their knowledge on disability issues through awareness training courses and thematic workshops for family members of PWD, businesses, community social workers and local officials.

The understanding of the importance of employment for PWD has improved. Through IVWD project activities, PWD have made significant changes in their personal and social lives. Their increased confidence makes a strong impact on the family members and the community. Individual community members and local authorities have demonstrated attitude change and developed activities in action plans on Inclusive Education and Vocational Training/Employment.



Training for primary school teachers in inclusive education in Hiep Duc, Quang Nam.

Photo by CRS

● Policy and Advocacy

The IVWD project promotes policy reform. This takes place in two ways: through activities that facilitate the self-organization of PWD and through coordination among disability sector stakeholders. CRS and WCDO link the local and national levels, channel experience from communities to the national level, and promote improved policy implementation and enforcement at all levels.

Policy development and implementation are carried out with the MOET and NCCD. CRS advocacy ensured that Inclusive Education is now part of the National Targeted Programs, with state budget allocations, at each educational level. MOET Decision 23 (2006), which officially regulates inclusive education in Vietnam, is now the foundation for education of CWD. The CRS-MOET book on Inclusive Education Management, published in January 2008, and the Handbook on Inclusive Education for Primary Education Teachers, published in June 2009 have been distributed to all 63 provinces. MOET used its own budget to print 5,000 additional copies of the book on IE Management and has plan to print extra copies of the Handbook to distribute nationwide .

Within the vocational training and employment component, the program has supported MOLISA to develop a practical reference material on community-based vocational training and employment for PWD that has proven to be effective for the program supporting PWD as well as other groups of people in disadvantaged circumstances. The material was well introduced in a national workshop and feedbacks on it showed that it was highly valued for its inspiring illustration and specific instructions about the model. Over 2,000 copies were distributed to the network of all the provincial Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs and other organizations working in vocational training/employment for PWD.

At the national level, the IVWD project has made inroads towards policy development and unification of a national model of IE for expansion throughout Vietnam. Advocacy activities have contributed to increased awareness and attention from the Government towards meeting the needs of CWD. The project design has utilized strategic opportunities to envelope in response to the national political environment; e.g. CRS contributed to the development of MOET National Action Plan on Education of CWD 2005-2010. Policy makers and community members have improved awareness on rights, needs and abilities of CWD to increase support programs and policies for CWD. In addition to a greater

" Collaboration between CRS and its partners results in important inputs to the process of national law development such as the Disability Law, the National Education Development Strategy , and the enforcement of policies regarding vocational training and employment for PWD. "



Provision of wheelchairs to YWD in Kim Son, Ninh Binh.

Photo by WCDO

emphasis on mainstreaming IE into general education policies, CRS and partners advocate for the government to integrate inclusion principles into disability law and general policies regarding children. Further issues anticipated for coordination and advocacy include: early intervention, community based rehabilitation, income generation and IE for CWD in post-primary school settings.

● Capacity Building

CRS has conducted capacity building training for core Education Department staff from all 63 provinces and cities in Vietnam, leading to basic knowledge and competency on Inclusive Education and educational management nationwide. Building on the foundations of support for IE in the MOET Preschool and Primary departments, the project has targeted new strategic players at the Secondary and Higher Education levels.

In the two focus provinces of Ninh Binh and Quang Nam, the project focused on building capacity for core teachers, principals and classroom teachers of preschools and primary schools, with 4,460 teachers, administrators, and local education officials nationwide trained on monitoring and consultation skills. With the same objective, 2,278 parents are now involved in activities organized by CWD Parents' Associations in the two provinces. The capacity to plan and guide policy reform and program development, with the aim to incorporate and institutionalize best practice in support to PWD, has been reached.



In the vocational training component, emphasis on capacity building has been applied well to all project stakeholders. 100% of the beneficiaries (over 300 PWD) are equipped with life skills through regular peer group meetings and training events. This has proven to have strong positive impact on their attitude and performance capacity in work and in their social life. About 50 core members of the PWD groups gained leadership training and ongoing support on their practice as leaders. This has helped the peer group network sustain well beyond the project life. Members of these PWD groups will potentially also become members of the local association network of PWD in the future. Social work training regarding disabilities issues, M&E and management have enabled the 40 community support workers and local government officials involved in this project, to improve significantly their understanding, skills and ownership in their work supporting PWD. In order to make more opportunities available to PWD in job training and employment, approximately 40 key members from VABED (VN Association of Enterprises of PWD) and local business owners have been trained in management and SIYB (a program on small business management and development).

Training for University and College lecturers on Inclusive Education by Prof. Chris Forlin organized by CRS and Department of Higher Education, MOET.

Photo by CRS

● Awareness Raising

A range of awareness raising activities including film development on Inclusive Education and VTE and public events such as Disability day have been organised to promote community awareness of rights, needs and abilities of PWDs. For instance, a series documentary films have been broadcasted on different VTV to highlight successes of PWDs when having access to education and vocational training programs.

Through IVWD project activities, community members have shown greater awareness and confidence in the ability of CWD to integrate into society. This change has occurred as a result of many factors such as: awareness raising workshops on disability policies held in the focus provinces, dissemination and awareness raising on PWDs' rights, needs and abilities, the importance of employment for PWD and benefits/difficulties of PWD during training, teaching methods and ways of working with PWD. Target groups for awareness-raising workshops include PWD, families, businesses, local staff and local officials. CRS and WCDO have also jointly organized awareness raising events on disability issues on both International and Vietnamese Days of People with Disabilities (December 3rd and April 18th).

Educational managers and staff in the MOET Secondary and Higher Education departments have increased their awareness of IE for CWD and respond accordingly through promotion of core curriculum, training materials, guidelines and study tours abroad and in Vietnam. Parents and community members of CWD in project focus areas are also active in planning and organizing awareness raising activities. Their active participation and ownership have increased since they developed plans themselves, with consultation from CRS staff.

Regarding Vocational Training and Employment, WCDO and MOLISA organized a review of On-the-job vocational training and awareness raising materials in Hanoi in December 2008. WCDO vocational training activities were shown on two occasions on national TV channel VTV1. Awareness-raising events and training courses in sign language, adult basic education, life skills, and social work were held.

" A series of awareness raising films on inclusive education and vocational training/job placement were developed by MOET and NCCD, within the framework of IVWD project, and shown on VTV "



PWD participating in the Vietnamese Disability Day (April 18th).

Photo by WCDO

• Direct Support through medical interventions

In order to improve conditions for CWD to attend school, CRS decided in to concentrate on assessment, treatment and provision of devices and operations for children with hearing impairments and children with vision impairment in current IVWD project areas.

Children with hearing difficulties face some of highest barriers to success in school. Most impairments can be treated and improve children's lives, especially to improve conditions for them to attend school. For example, hearing aids improve the hearing, communication and comprehension skills of the children. The CRS Health Intervention program for Health Intervention for hearing Impaired Children focused in Ninh Binh and Quang Nam provinces. To date, more than 450 children in Ninh Binh and Quang Nam have received successful treatment. CRS has provided children with hearing aids, glasses and treatment devices, but it has also conducted thorough assessments and follow-up visits to families over the course of several years as well. In this way, intervention can be tailored to the needs of each child and be linked to school attendance, achieving long-term impacts on the child's and family's quality of life.

For youth with disabilities, WCDO has made efforts in mobilizing resources from other organizations and individuals to provide medical examinations and hands-on rehabilitation instructions for more than 1,400 PWD. Also within this program, about 300 wheelchairs were provided to meet the needs of mobility impaired people, making their life much easier now.



Provision of hearing aids and usage guidance in Yen Mo, Ninh Binh

Photo by CRS

3. Success Stories

All four components of the Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities project have demonstrated positive and long-term impact on children, youth, peers, parents, teachers, and communities.

The cooperation and coordination between government institutions (MOET and MOLISA), disability sector stakeholders and provincial and district government agencies have given the project long-term capacity.

Through involving all stakeholders and members of the community, CRS and WCDO have reached the main objectives of the IVWD project and achieved long term impact on the lives of PWD and their families.



An inclusive class in Yen Nhan Preschool - Yen Mo, Ninh Binh.

Photo by CRS

Children with Disabilities

" Inclusion Really Is Possible! "

Pham Thi Bich Ngoc has experienced great changes in her schooling opportunities since Catholic Relief Services began the IVWD project in Ninh Binh province. Born with severe mobility difficulties in 1995, Ngoc had little chance to go out of her family or communicate with peers and other people in the community due to her movement and language constraints and her lack of opportunities for interaction.

Ngoc's mother was hesitant at first to take part in the IVWD project. By 2007, neighbors convinced her to join the Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities that CRS had initiated in her village. Ngoc's mother took part in rehabilitation training courses. With increased confidence and encouragement from other Parent Association members, she decided to enroll her daughter in a regular local primary school.

Ngoc is now in fifth grade at Yen Tu primary school. Her teacher, Ms. Mung, has gained increased knowledge and skills from training courses provided by CRS, and she is able to differentiate instruction and classroom activities to meet Ngoc's needs.

Ngoc demonstrates her intelligence in mathematics and uses a computer to help her to learn. "Before the training from CRS, I didn't know how to teach children with disabilities," says Ms. Mung. "Now I know how to create appropriate activities for children like Ngoc. I also ask the other students to help her and play with her. She is very happy to be around peers and to have the opportunity to learn like other children."



Ngoc demonstrating her great will in educational pursue.

Photo by CRS

Youth with Disabilities

Le Thi Le graduated from the USAID and Catholic Relief Services-sponsored Information Technology Training Program (ITTP) for People with Disabilities in 2008. She is now working at PWDSOFT, a computer company run by PWD in Hanoi, Vietnam, and has high hopes for her future career.

Le Thi Le was born in 1983 in Ninh Binh province. Although she graduated from the Vietnam National University, she couldn't find a job because of her physical disability. "Employers always looked at me anxiously during my job interviews. They said they were pleased with my test scores but were afraid that I could not do well at work. It was like they had a barrier in their minds."

Catholic Relief Services started the ITTP in February 2007 as a partnership with the Hanoi College of Information Technology (HCIT). The ITTP expands the "Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities" program to higher education. HCIT offers a one-year course in Software Engineering, with an international-standard curriculum of the NIIT (India), and shorter-term classes in basic computer skills for PWD. The program also facilitates job placement and increases employers' awareness of the capacities of PWD.

As of November 2008, 2004 students have successfully completed ITTP courses. The students complete long-term and training leading towards software certification.

Le Thi Le graduated from the second ITTP Software Engineering Class in September 2008. "Now I have a stable job at PWDSOFT," she says. "I like the friendly working environment here, where everyone helps each other to learn and improve. In the near future, the company will send me for further training at a course certified by Carnegie Mellon University."

" New Professional
Programmers in Vietnam "



Le supporting her colleague at PWD Soft.

Photo by CRS

" Toan became a peer group leader thanks to his hard work "

Toan is mobility-impaired. His family is among the poorest households in the commune. Although he stopped schooling due to his disability, Toan is an intelligent boy who is very eager to learn. He used to be very shy, due both to his disability and his family situation. Since he has joined the IVWD project, he has made significant progress.

Toan attended a six-month computer training course. "He is a fast learner, active and hard working," says his trainer at the computer shop. With strong determination and quick observation, Toan has quickly absorbed the basic knowledge of computing and easily performs all MS Office applications.

The IVWD project helps Toan with the following supports:

- A scholarship of 200,000 dong (US \$12.50) per month to cover the cost of a 6-month computer training course
- Financial support of 1,500,000 dong (\$94) for toilet modification
- A bicycle to travel to and from his job
- Life skills training including communications skills and leadership skills
- SIYB training (Start and Improve Your Business)
- Health checkups and counseling on social issues.



After the training, Toan got a job at the shop where he has been working since April 2007. Now he earns a monthly allowance of 250,000 dong (\$15.60) and a free lunch. He says: "I hope in the future I will be able to run a computer shop of my own."

As a mature youth, he was voted by his peers to be the leader of a group of youth with disabilities. Together with other key members of the group, Toan is working for the development of a peer group which could play a key role in the promotion of PWD movement. As a group leader, he provides a good example of PWD's ability and willpower to overcome all barriers to social integration. He also shares his experience and encourages other PWD to step up and walk out of their homes, and introduces them to IVWD project. The example of Toan brings hope and opportunity for other disadvantaged people in the community.

Toan happily and working in his computer shop.

Photo by CRS

Parents Involved in Supporting their Children with Disabilities

Doan Thi Tho's son, Ninh Duc Huan, is a five-year-old who had hearing problems since he was born. He was screened and assessed during the CRS baseline survey in Ninh Binh province in 2006 and was on the list of children to receive hearing aids through CRS program of Health Intervention for Hearing Impaired Children in September. On the day of the distribution of the hearing aids, Tho began waiting for the CRS staff very early in the morning. She was looking forward to receiving the hearing aid for her son so much that she was afraid to miss the CRS team.

Children with hearing difficulties face some of the highest barriers to success in school. Most impairments can be treated and children's life conditions can be greatly improved. CRS not only provides children with hearing aids and treatment devices, but also conducts thorough assessments and follow-up visits to families over the course of several years. In this way, intervention can be tailored to the needs of each child and be linked to school attendance, achieving long-term impacts on the child's and family's quality of life.

The trainers explained to Tho and to the parents and the teachers of the community how to communicate with proper pronunciation and respond verbally to a child who is learning to talk with the hearing aids. Tho said that since she has attended the CRS trainings, she had been hopeful about her son improvement and she tries to do everything to help him. "Before my child could not hear and talk, so I didn't send him to school. Now I know that the hearing aids can help him to hear and respond verbally. But I also learned from the CRS training that the hearing aids device can not do everything to make my child recover and talk. Children will develop if their parents are involved in their learning. Since I know that, I teach my son every day."

"I learned from the CRS training that a hearing aid can not do everything to make my child recover and talk. Children will develop if their parents are involved in their learning. Since I know that, I teach my son every day."
– Doan Thi Tho



Family participation in rehabilitation training for a child with mobility difficulty in Gia Vien, Ninh Binh.

Photo by CRS

Awareness Change on Accessibility in Lower Secondary Schools

“ Accessibility is not just for children in wheelchairs, but it also raises awareness for school staff, students and community leaders and people of their responsibilities for providing an inclusive education environment for children with disabilities ”

CRS and MOET selected five lower secondary schools in Ninh Binh province to pilot the first-ever secondary-level IE model in Vietnam. After attending a workshop organized by CRS and NCCD on accessibility issues for PWD in January 2008, Mrs. Luong Thi Kim Nga, a senior staff from the MOET Secondary Education Department, began to think about how to change the physical environment in lower secondary schools to develop an inclusive environment. Immediately afterwards, Mrs. Nga worked with architects and staff from the Institute of Construction and school principals from the five pilot secondary schools in Ninh Binh to discuss the issue of accessibility, with a focus on ramps to the main school building.

“Accessibility is not just for children in wheelchairs, but it also raises awareness for school staff, students and community leaders and people of their responsibilities for providing an inclusive education environment for children with disabilities” Mrs. Nga explained. With support from the project, architects created a simple design of the ramps and accessible toilets. At the same time, CRS and the MOET Secondary Department discussed with the leaders from five communes People’s Committees and educational managers at district and school levels to agree on the best option.



The proposed modifications adapt conventional architectural features of schools that create barriers to students with disabilities. For instance, the stage at the front of the classroom by the blackboard is removed in order to create a welcoming and accessible environment for all students. In April 2008, CRS organized a meeting with the participation of all five commune leaders and educational managers in Ninh Binh. The goal was to plan immediate activities to mobilize resources for the development of IE support rooms, including an accessible environment in these schools. These activities bring IE closer to the community.

Joint efforts by school and community to promote accessibility for students with disabilities in Dong Huong Junior Secondary School, Kim Son, Ninh Binh.

Photo by CRS

Teachers

In March 2007, the first thematic training on inclusive education for primary school teachers took place in Quang Nam province. The training aimed to provide class teachers with specific skills to identify CWD, their needs and abilities, design effective lesson plan for an inclusive class, as well as special skills such as Braille and sign language.

The unseasonal heat did not deter primary teachers from Hoi An, Duy Xuyen and Hiep Duc districts from attending classes for nine consecutive days. All three district Education Departments showed great support, which contributed to the success of the training.

Hiep Duc is the poorest district of the three. However, its participants showed outstanding enthusiasm, in particular Mr. Le Song Uyen who is the supervisor of primary education in the district. In spite of his busy working schedule, Uyen managed to monitor both classes taking place in the district on a daily basis. He attended training sessions in which a group of teachers practiced working with one student with disabilities, supervising and giving valuable comments.

Uyen responded quickly to all questions that arose, whether about content or logistics. He said, “This training is a great opportunity for primary teachers who are devoted to students with disabilities. I will do whatever I can to use the training to support a better future for children with disabilities in this area.”

Many officials might speak similar words, but Uyen translated these words into genuine action. Because of the commitment of local teachers and administrators like him, the IVWD project has been able to achieve not only successful training courses but also increased ownership by local partners. This is a key factor ensuring sustainability in the future.

“The training is a great opportunity for primary teachers who are devoted to students with disabilities. I will do whatever I can to use the training to support a better future for children with disabilities in this area.” - Le Song Uyen, Supervisor of primary education in Hiep Duc district



Active group discussion of Quang Nam primary teachers in an thematic training on learning difficulty.

Photo by CRS

Parent Associations

Anyone who has ever traveled to the place will not easily forget the rough, rocky and bumpy journey uphill to Que Luu commune, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province. In March 2008, Que Luu's parent association of CWD organized a festive community event in the form of a contest on knowledge about inclusive education and rehabilitation. The spirit behind this successful event is Ms. Phan Thi Mai, who put great efforts in mobilizing support from community members to organize the event successfully.

“I wish there will be many days like today for my child and her friends in this commune!” –Phan Thi Mai, mother of a student with mobility impairment

Mai is the mother of two children, one of whom has a mobility disability. During the initial training for Parent Associations in Hiep Duc in August 2007, she spent a lot of time convincing other parents of CWD that their children are capable of studying and advancing if appropriate care and support are given. This conviction comes from Mai's own experience that her daughter, who suffers from mobility disability that makes her look five years old at the age of 12, has already completed primary school with good grades. Mai explained, “This would not have been possible right from the beginning if I had not been patient and determined enough to carry her to school every day in the first two years”.



Engagement of parents of CWD and community members to promote inclusive education in Hiep Duc, Quang Nam.

Photo by CRS

Parent Associations

Mai was elected by the other parents in the Que Luu Parent Association to serve as vice-chair. In November 2007, when the former chair took up a job in the commune government, Mai was promoted to chair. When CRS and the local parent associations organized contests in knowledge about inclusive education and rehabilitation for CWD, Mai was actively involved in developing the activity plans and designing questions.

“Parents are always busy in the fields or in the market and it is really hard to bring them together for reviewing materials and practicing songs!” Mai said. “But I didn’t give up. And opportunity like this for children with disabilities will not happen every day!”

Her hard work paid off when the Que Luu contest was carried out successfully on March 15, 2008. Almost all members of the parent association showed their sound knowledge about inclusive education, disability law and rehabilitation. The commune hall was full of applause and excitement when each team performed their skits.

As the audience enjoyed their acting talent, Mai rushed to make sure that everything was ready for the next performance. Wiping the sweat off her forehead, Mai smiled and said, “I wish there will be many days like today for my child and her friends in this commune!”



Discussion of parents of CWD in an awareness raising training in Yen Mo, Ninh Binh.

Photo by CRS

"I myself see the project as very useful. The benefit not only showcases in the actual figures but also presents intangible aspects. What could measure all the positive changes in PWD, family members, local project staff, project partners, the community--and myself? I have grown up, better equipped with knowledge and skills." Dang Huong Giang, World Concern social worker

Dang Huong Giang, World Concern social worker involved in the IVWD Ninh Binh project, presents her own case study as a member of the IVWD project team in her own words:

"You may ask, if it's my job, what more needs to be said? Well, I myself am a person with a disability. My two legs are paralyzed and I have to walk on crutches. With great support from my family, teachers and friends, I successfully completed high school and also gained an in-service university degree. However, I somehow still felt inferior to others and desperate with my disability.

Then I was introduced to join training courses on how to start a self-help group of people with disabilities. I involved intensively in organizing and managing the Disabled Youth Club of Thai Binh province. In five years as chairperson of this club, I was able to do a number of things to help PWD. Among these was a small grant from the World Bank's "Innovation Day" initiative to promote reproductive health education for young PWD in Thai Binh.

Through my work, I came to know WCDO and its activities. When I applied for a job at WCDO, some encouraged me, others questioned my inexperience, my limited English and my disability. What a nice surprise! I was offered a job in the IVWD project. I was happy about this milestone in my life, and also worried if I could not complete the job.

My first trip to Ninh Binh was to accompany CRS and WCDO to the MOU signing ceremony with the People's Committee. The partners looked at me with wonder. Perhaps they wondered what is this PWD was doing here among the INGO group? Having heard that I was WCDO staff, they changed their surprise to questioning. With time and support of my colleagues, I learned how to do my job more easily. For the beneficiaries, I am a dear sister, and a nice peer. For PWD families, I am a friendly and sympathy project staff. They listen to me as I am the same as their children. For local partners, no more surprise or doubt. Now there is only their expression of concern and sympathy whenever I had to travel by motorbike with local staff in heat or in rain. Whether I work effectively or not, my supervisors know best.



Giang visits a vocational training session for YWD

Photo by WCDO

Social workers

“I myself see the project as very useful. The benefit not only showcases in the actual figures but also presents intangible aspects. What could measure all the positive changes in PWD, family members, local project staff, project partners, the community--and myself? I have grown up, better equipped with knowledge and skills. I can earn a living and support my younger brother in his university study. I also realize that no matter how much we desire to advocate disability issues, we have to do it efficiently to have positive results. This means bringing PWD to participate in and work with their full abilities on all disability projects. If we can do that, then we will really raise awareness in society.

Recently, I moved to Danang with my husband and am working as a temporary staff with WCDO. I work at my best and hope to continue my work for the benefit of people like me.”



Software engineering training for youth with disabilities following an international standard program - ITTP in Hanoi.

Photo by CRS

**" Cooperation with the Ministry
of Education in Promoting
Educational Continuity for
Children with Disabilities "**

Inclusive Education for children with disabilities requires continuous support and follow-up to achieve results in the development of the child. Therefore, children with disabilities will receive better education if there is a strong link between education levels from pre-school education, primary education and secondary education.

As part of the IVWD project component with the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Vietnam, CRS sponsored a one-day workshop on transition mechanisms and child profiles on September 20, 2007. The MOET Steering Committee on Inclusive Education of CWD hosted this workshop with 65 managers and educators from the Ministry and six northern provinces (Vinh Phuc, Hoa Binh, Ninh Binh, Phu Tho, Quang Ninh, and Bac Ninh), inclusive education specialists and representatives from NGOs including CRS, MCVN, VSO, Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children US.

With the involvement of three MOET departments and educational staff from participating provinces, the issue of higher education opportunity for CWD has been brought up for discussion, in an effort to create a continuity in education for CWD from preschool, primary, secondary and beyond. During the workshop, participants also shared experience and discussed necessary documents included in the child profile for transferring from one educational level to the next as well as supporting mechanism to children for school transition.

Group discussions with participation of educational level staff focused on identifying a number of documents of the child profile at individual educational level. All suggestions were very specific, detailed and practical. For example, Mr. Le Tien Thanh, Vice-director of the MOET Primary Education Department concluded that this level suggested including four documents in the child profile (birth certificate, health profile, individual education plan, and child progress record). At the end of the workshop, a list of required documents in the children profiles was agreed among all departments and each department demonstrate a strong commitment to complete the school transition profiles for CWD.

Partners

The initial outcomes of the workshop have opened up further steps for all stakeholders in identifying current gaps in school transition support for CWD as well as created an official discussion on how to promote higher educational opportunity at secondary level for CWD.

The workshop also recognized the initiatives of the three MOET departments and other organizations including INGOs for their joint efforts in promoting inclusive education and keeping track on the quality of IE of CWD in Vietnam.

This national-level workshop opened up a new period for developing and applying a countrywide standard transition mechanism and an official list of requested documents for the child profiles in inclusive education for CWD.



CRS and MOET organized a national workshop on school transition to ensure educational continuity for children with disabilities, organized by MOET and CRS in Hanoi.

Photo by CRS

4. Conclusion

CRS and WCDO began the Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities (IVWD) project in October 2005, with the Information Technology Training Program component added in February 2007. Some of the project's components will continue through June 2010. The above case studies illustrate all four components of the project:

- Inclusive Education for children with disabilities (aged 3-16)
- Vocational Training and Employment for youth with disabilities (aged 16-30)
- Information Technology Training for students with disabilities
- Disability awareness and policies change.

**PWD and enterprises attending the
“Start and Improving Your Business”
course.**

Photo by WCDO



The project's goal is to facilitate the full participation of persons with disabilities in the society and in all facets of life. The best means to achieve this goal are to ensure PWD equal access to education and employment and to promote policy change at all levels to reaffirm PWDs' rights to represent their own needs and interests.

CRS has engaged the education system, social services and communities to achieve the main goals of the project. The above success stories demonstrate how the project is impacting individuals, families, and whole communities.

To better understand the needs of people with disabilities and to achieve their full rights, government agencies, civil society organizations and communities need to work together.

To provide comprehensive support to PWD, it is also important to put high emphasis on coordination from local to provincial and central levels and among different sectors such as health, education, labor-social affairs and networks in the community.

" Through the IVWD project, CRS and WCDO have succeeded at:

Providing Inclusive Education,

Vocational Training and Employment through replicable models in target provinces and districts;

Promoting policy changes with the active voice of Vietnamese with disabilities through individual sector activities;

Developing long-term capacity by establishing good coordination and cooperation among disability sector stakeholders and government institutions. "



Enjoying a singing performance in an inclusive class.

Photo by CRS

The IVWD project is designed to generate replicable models to assist the Vietnamese Government in implementing its disability policies. The project's impact on manuals and curriculum development for trainings is already ensuring adoption and replication.

At the central level, the project's emphasis on policy change and curriculum development is creating more equitable opportunities for PWD throughout Vietnam.

Overall, the project's achievements to date indicate that many activities will serve as replicable models. Inclusive education and community-based vocational training are becoming widely accepted because they are carried out at multiple levels, from field-based activities to policy and curriculum development and planning at the central level.



National Workshop on Inclusion in Secondary Education.

Photo by CRS

“Inclusive education in local community schools, together with non-disabled peers, offers the best opportunity for social integration of children with disabilities!”

Dinh Thi Nguyet - CRS Inclusive Education Program Manager



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