HOW UNICEF WORKS FOR CHILDREN IN VIET NAM

2017-2021

unicef VIET NAM | for every child

About UNICEF Viet Nam

UNICEF Viet Nam is one of over 190 offices of the United Nations Children's Fund in the world and part of the United Nations System in Viet Nam working in close collaboration with all UN agencies. Guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF has a universal mandate to promote and protect the rights of all children, everywhere – especially those hardest to serve and most at risk.

UNICEF is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from governments, multilateral donors, individuals, businesses and foundations around the world. Our global reach and proven track record distinguish us among world organizations working with children and young people. We have the authority to influence decision makers and the broad range of global and local partners to turn the most innovative ideas into reality.

For every child, Hope

Since 1975 in Viet Nam

UNICEF's mission *in Viet Nam is to make sure* **every child** *in the country is* **healthy**, **educated** *and* **safe from harm**, *therefore having the* **best start in life** *and* **a fair chance** *to reach her or his* **full potential** *and benefit from the country's prosperity.*

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70 YEARS FOR EVERY CHILD

UNITING FOR THE MOST DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN ACCROSS THE WORLD SINCE 1946

UNICEF: THE AGENCY FOR CHILDREN | **THE DEVELOPMENT DECADES** | **CHILD SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT**

1946

11 December
The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund is created by the General Assembly to provide supplies and assistance to children after World War II.

1947 – 1965

UNICEF's first Executive Director, Maurice Pate:
"There are no enemy children."
Sweden

1947

The first UNICEF National Committee is established, and UNICEF prints its first greeting card.

1953

UNICEF becomes a permanent agency in the United Nations system.

1954

American entertainer Danny Kaye becomes UNICEF's 'Ambassador at Large'. Thailand

1959

The United Nations adopts the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.
A tuberculosis test, India

1965 – 1979

UNICEF Executive Director Henry Labouisse:
"The welfare of today's children is inseparably linked with the peace of tomorrow's world."
Accepting UNICEF's 1965 Nobel Peace Prize, Norway

1975

The Mark II water pump is invented,
transforming village life.
India

UNICEF is the first United Nations agency to have formal partnership with
Viet Nam in July 1975
following the reunification of the country.

1978

World leaders vow
'Health for All'
through the delivery of primary health care.
Syrian Arab Republic

1979

The United Nations declares the International Year of the Child to increase awareness and spur action on children's rights.

1980 – 1995

UNICEF Executive Director James Grant:
"We need to give children's essential needs a 'first call' on society's resources."
The launch of Operation Lifeline Sudan

1982

The Child Survival Revolution is launched with GOBI: 'G' for growth monitoring, 'O' for oral rehydration therapy, 'B' for breastfeeding and 'I' for immunization.

1984

UNICEF and partners work to fight famine in the Horn of Africa and Sahel regions.

1988

UNICEF supports children affected by war and HIV/AIDS.
A former child soldier, Democratic Republic of the Congo

1989

'Education for All' means girls as well as boys.
Meena, an animated South Asian heroine

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70 YEARS FOR EVERY CHILD

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'RECOGNIZING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS' | THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS | THE EQUITY AGENDA

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, enters into force in 1990 and becomes the most widely and rapidly accepted human rights treaty in history.
Children rally for children, Ecuador

UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy: **"When the lives and rights of children are at stake, there must be no silent witnesses."**
A school, Somalia

At the United Nations Special Session on Children, child delegates address the General Assembly for the first time. New York

UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake: **"The next steps of our journey will depend on our willingness to adapt to the changing world around us … to infuse equity throughout our programmes and the post-2015 targets…"**

UNICEF launches the "Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS" campaign to put children and their needs at the forefront of the global fight against the disease.

UNICEF celebrates the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and activates its 2014–2017 Strategic plan, a road map for realizing the rights of every child, particularly the most disadvantaged.

CRC@25 CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

1989 | 1990 | 1994 | 1995 – 2005 | 2002 | 2004 | 2005 – 2010 | 2005 | 2010 – PRESENT | 2010 | 2011 – 2013 | 2012 | 2014 | 2015

The first-ever World Summit for Children is held.
UN Headquarters New York

UNICEF and UNESCO invent the 'school-in-a-box'.
Refugee camp, United Republic of Tanzania

UNICEF and partners organize a record-breaking humanitarian response to the tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman: Building results-based programming and partnerships to **"unite for children".**
Visiting an earthquake victim, Pakistan

UNICEF takes a lead role in the international response to earthquake devastation in Haiti, focusing on child health and nutrition in the aftermath.

The turmoil of the Arab Spring, the outbreak of extreme hunger in the Horn of Africa and the crisis in Syria pose major challenges for UNICEF and other humanitarian actors.

UNICEF hosts the first Forum of the Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities, to mainstream disability rights into child-focused policies and programmes.

The era of the Millennium Development Goals comes to an end and the Sustainable Development Goals become the centrepiece of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Widening inequalities

Despite Viet Nam's rapid progress towards economic prosperity and human development, disparities for children are still driven by ethnicity, gender, place of origin, and disability.

Since the mid-1980s and the Doi Moi reforms, Viet Nam's economic growth has propelled the country to lower middle-income status by increasing revenues and halving poverty. However, the dynamic economy can hide a widening gap for the country's 26 million children with serious effects on children's nutrition, health, education and protection. More children are vulnerable and face difficulties in accessing services and support. This situation prevents those disadvantaged children from living their lives to the full and contributing to Viet Nam's future.

As Viet Nam maintains its socio-economic development, the government requires policies that are relevant to the needs of children and the implementation of those policies needs to be more effective to address inequities affecting children and laws that fully comply with child rights standards. Integrated services reaching the most vulnerable children also need to be of better quality and making use of innovation. Strategic partnerships can also boost achievements for a more inclusive society and sustain the economic prosperity of the past three decades.

100 children under 5 **die every day** of preventable causes, with the figure **3.5** times higher among ethnic minorities in northern mountainous areas

1.9 million children under 5 are **stunted** and will suffer from permanent **physical** and **brain** damage.

More than **1 in 4** children are victim of **abuses**

3 million children are deprived of **clean water**

Among the **1.3 million** children with disabilities, only about **1 in 10** attend secondary school

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Turning a vision into action

UNICEF develops a common action with the government of Viet Nam to reduce disparities and bring about an inclusive, non-discriminatory and caring society that protects the rights of all children, including the most marginalized and vulnerable ones. UNICEF speaks out for the rights of every child everywhere in the country, in communities with local leaders and in the capital city when the government decides on new laws and national policies, and approves budgets.

To achieve these goals, UNICEF uses evidence and good practices to advance policies promoting child rights. It also supports Viet Nam to invest more in children and families by designing social services with high impact for children. UNICEF advocates to have child related government agencies adequately financed and staffed with trained personnel with good technical skills. UNICEF also works with other stakeholders, such as civil society and businesses, to support child well-being through child-friendly policies and action and to promote the Child Rights and Business Principles (CRBP).

In all its work, UNICEF emphasises the following:

1. Evidence based advocacy and global best practices

Improving the quality of data on children and how it is used is a priority for UNICEF in Viet Nam. UNICEF uses knowledge and information to influence decision making and offers technical advice to the government to improve legislation as well as plans and budgets focusing on children.

2. Capacity development and innovation

A core part of UNICEF's work is to help enhance the skills, knowledge and competencies of government departments to plan, deliver, monitor and evaluate quality programmes and services for children. UNICEF recognises the value of innovation, to employ new technologies and to pursue proven approaches to advance children's rights.

3. Strengthening partnerships

UNICEF encourages the government to collaborate with civil society organisations and businesses, building on each other's strengths to help respect, protect and provide for children.

4. Integrated delivery

Traditionally, different departments deliver different child services. However, a child's needs are inter-connected in terms of health, education, nutrition or protection. UNICEF therefore promotes an integrated approach to service delivery encouraging everyone to work better together in the interest of children.

What is an evidence-based advocacy?

A fundamental aspect of UNICEF's approach is that recommendations are based on evidence, rather than opinion. Where possible, independent data from existing research on children is supported by pilot studies conducted in country by UNICEF and partners. Local experience has been shown to be more persuasive than global trends. For example, pilot programmes have been conducted in three provinces in Viet Nam to test an integrated model for early childhood development. The learnings from these programmes will support recommendations for nationwide implementation.

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UNICEF Viet Nam 2017-2021 Programme

Every five years, UNICEF conducts an analysis of the situation of children in Viet Nam and develops a strategy for the next cycle. The strategy for 2017 to 2021 builds on the successes of its work to date while identifying and addressing unresolved Millennium Development Goals and aligning with the global Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

The new programme aims to have the rights of all children upheld and respected, regardless of ethnicity, gender, origins, disabilities or poverty. It is structured into three components, spanning UNICEF's work on child survival and development, child protection, education, participation, social policy and governance, partnerships and communication.

1. Advance policies to protect children

Although the country has lifted more than 30 million people out of poverty, evidence shows that this has not benefitted everyone in the country, particularly disadvantaged children. In fact, poverty still tends to increase among the disadvantaged groups, especially for ethnic minorities. Foreign direct investments and trade are important for Viet Nam's development, but it's unlikely that those measures alone will succeed in improving the lives of the most marginalized people if not accompanied by progressive policies, robust budget allocation and adequate human resources to address inequities. Maltreatment, child prostitution, child trafficking and sexual abuse persist, yet there are extremely limited quality child protection services and social work is yet to be recognised as a vital profession.

In addition, education for marginalized children is still frequently deficient and they remain at risk from malnutrition, poor sanitation and a lack of safe drinking water. Gender equality concerns such as child marriage among ethnic minority girls and boys and teenage pregnancy must be tackled.

Violence continues irrespective of economics

Viet Nam's economic development does not correlate with a decrease in violence against children, which remains a major issue. Many families, particularly those in rural areas, face new pressures brought about by socio-economic development. Rapid industrialization and urbanization have led to a widening gap between rich and poor. As a result, many are migrating to poor urban areas in search of work, often leaving families behind. The stress of unemployment, coupled with family separation and the erosion of positive traditional values, have contributed to an increased number of abandoned, neglected, abused and exploited children.

For every child, Protection

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"Relevant policies for children and effective implementation"

To address these issues and work towards a more equitable society, UNICEF's efforts focus on having more public investments for children as a key strategy to achieve national development, which is reflected in policies and decisions that the government takes in all spheres and at all levels of society. UNICEF promotes the improvement of the current social protection system to increase families' capacity to take care of their basic needs and overcome difficulties they may have to access health care, school and other services.

UNICEF works to eliminate all forms of violence against children by building on the new Child Law coming into effect in 2017. This spells out the responsibility of the government to allocate resources for children at risk and it introduces for the first time an approach that covers both the prevention of violence against children before it happens, and responding to violence when it happens.

UNICEF encourages the need to review the Law to address gaps and issues not covered, such as the definitions of the age of a child and children in special circumstances. It also provides technical advice for the policies and procedures that support the Child Law as well as looking at emerging issues such as online child protection. UNICEF's work helps articulate the details of the Law in other forms of legal documents and to make plans more child-sensitive and fair.

While the legal foundation is discussed, UNICEF works with relevant government departments and provincial authorities to build a child protection system that responds to the multiple causes and forms of violence. An important component of this endeavour is working towards the recognition and employment of professionally trained social workers. These front line workers in rural areas and in large cities are often the first point of contact to support children and families. Devoted resources from the State budget are required to provide this service to children nation-wide and in particular in hard-to-reach and hard-to-serve areas.

Climate change and Disaster risk reduction

Viet Nam remains one of the countries most affected by climate change. Extreme weather happens more often and is more intense. When a natural disaster strikes, children are often impacted heavily and particularly those already living close to the vulnerability threshold. The effects of extreme weather are compounded by environmental degradation. For a large number of people who live in disaster prone regions and who are already living in poverty, a strong typhoon and an extended drought is often too much for them to cope with. UNICEF works to improve the government's ability to reduce the risks, plan for natural and other disasters, and ensure that vulnerable populations are better prepared to withstand climate change shocks. Buiding resilience to these shocks within families and communities is paramount in this context.

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2. Give children the opportunity for the best start in life

Evidence shows that investing in a child's early years gives significant return for their long-term mental, physical, and emotional development. This investment entails the combined provision of good nutrition, health care, safe drinking water, an environment with good sanitation, psycho-social stimulation at a young age, protection and social welfare. These are the building blocks for the next generation of Vietnamese people to take an active role in the country's development and benefit from the prosperity, but gaps in these blocks still exist for children in Viet Nam, particularly those living in disadvantaged communities. While access to education has increased and child mortality has been reduced nation-wide, specific groups of children still face considerable challenges. Although ethnic minorities account for 15 per cent of the total population, the rate of mortality of children under five among this group is 3.5 times higher than for the Kinh majority.

Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) recognises the benefits in adopting a comprehensive approach to meet this range of needs of all children – regardless of their ethnicity, gender, origins, disabilities or poverty – while also acknowledging the importance of caring for mothers, both during and after birth.

Within this programme, UNICEF's ambition is for Viet Nam to be the very best place for a child to be born, grow healthy and educated, be safe from harm and realise his or her full potential. It cooperates with national and local partners to develop and demonstrate effective integrated models, with a focus from conception through to age four.

To help integrate early childhood development, priority is given to:

- improving local healthcare, child protection and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems, with the support of community workers
- promoting with parents the importance of play, early stimulation and learning and supporting pre-primary and primary schools to offer quality, inclusive learning environments
- increasing the access of vulnerable children to early childhood development services and encouraging cross-sectoral coordination
- educating expectant and new parents on the importance of maternal health, and how to care for and keep their child healthy and safe from harm.

What is stunting?

Stunting refers to a lower than expected height for age. Stunting – or chronic malnutrition – happens over time and often goes undetected. A child who is stunted can appear to be normally proportioned but that child is actually shorter than normal for his or her age. The first 1,000 days in the life of a child is a time to lay the foundation for learning and for achieving in the future. When a child doesn't get the right food and enough food starting from birth, the brain doesn't fully develop and science has shown that this will delay mental development, reduce cognitive capacity and lead to other physical and mental concerns which will affect the child for the rest of his or her life. Stunting is case in point for the importance of a holistic approach to childhood development as it is not only affected by nutrition – including breastfeeding – but also by unsafe water supply and sanitation, which can lead to diarrhea, and disease also play an important role. Stunting remains a prevalent issue in Viet Nam among ethnic minorities but also for children from the Kinh majority.

For every child, Health

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3. Spread awareness of child rights and inspire action

Many people in Viet Nam are unclear about the specific and dominant child rights violations in the country. This lack of awareness prevents individuals, businesses and non-governmental groups from taking action to protect children and it limits the resources available to address vulnerabilities and inequities. UNICEF recognizes that everyone in society can play an important role and our decisions can have positive impact for children if we are better informed. Whether we are a government official, a business leader, a civil society worker or any individual, we can all take action in our own sphere to promote and protect the rights of children, and our contributions to the well-being of children can be financial as well as non-financial.

UNICEF partners with a broad range of influencers to increase public awareness of inequities and social norms affecting children. With the right knowledge about challenges that children face, people are inspired to help improve children's lives and to make a contribution for a better society. This is achieved through country-wide awareness campaigns, public advocacy initiatives and community-based platforms, for example, working with mass organisations such as the Youth Union. Social media is used as a powerful tool for public engagement.

In Viet Nam's dynamic economy, businesses have a great impact on children, directly and indirectly. UNICEF encourages businesses to strengthen their knowledge, commitment and capacities to respect and support children's rights. UNICEF also seeks new opportunities for private-sector fund-raising and engage with the government and civil society to increase spending on priorities for children.

For every child, Participation

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In conclusion

Since 1975 UNICEF has worked in Viet Nam to help children, and its strategy has evolved with the nation's development and progress into a lower-middle income country.

The 2017 - 2021 programme has the ambition to help make the society more equitable, a society where the reality of all children in the country is fully understood and where gaps are addressed as a matter of priority in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Providing children with the best start in life through quality health care, clean water and sanitation, and education, as well as protection from violence, exploitation and abuse is UNICEF's focus. UNICEF has the mandate to work closely to support the government yet it has the independence to advocate and promote new ways of meeting the needs of children, especially for those in hard to reach regions and in poor urban areas. UNICEF also engages with other partners and businesses to promote child-friendly corporate social responsibility.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT UNICEF IN VIET NAM

Head Office: Ha Noi
Partnership Office: Ho Chi Minh City
Number of Staff: 68
Annual Planned Budget: US$ 14.4 Million
Representative: Youssouf Abdel-Jelil
Deputy Representative: Lesley Miller
Communications Manager: Louis Vigneault-Dubois

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For every child,
Hope

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VIET NAM

Green One UN House
304 Kim Ma, Ba Dinh District
Ha Noi - Viet Nam
Tel: +84 4 3.850.0100
Fax: +84 4 3.726.5520
Email: hanoi.registry@unicef.org
Web: www.unicef.org/vietnam

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About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

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