

# MY RIGHTS MY VOICE

## VIET NAM PROJECT OVERVIEW



PHOTO: NGUYEN THI HOANG YEN



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## MY RIGHTS, MY VOICE IN VIET NAM

- Children and young people in Viet Nam have huge potential to transform their lives and communities. With the right skills and support, they can be a driving force to break the cycle of poverty so many are born into.
- To help them achieve their potential, their right to education must be fulfilled. That is why Oxfam is running a three-year project in Viet Nam as part of the international My Rights, My Voice programme, to empower children (especially girls and those from ethnic minorities) to express their needs, and to promote dialogue and accountability between schools, authorities, children and parents.
- Working with local partners, we are building children's ability to claim their right to education, helping schools and communities meet their needs, and influencing national policy so all children receive an equitable, quality education.
- Working with children and young people, and those who influence their lives, My Rights, My Voice is empowering them to achieve lasting changes in policies, practices and beliefs, so their health and education needs are met – now and in the future.

## THE CHALLENGE

Viet Nam is making slow progress in improving the quality of education for its children, and how equitably access to education is spread among its people. In particular, children from ethnic minorities in remote areas are missing out on even basic schooling – putting them on a path of disadvantage for life. While three quarters of ethnic majority Kinh pupils meet standards in Vietnamese and maths, less than half of ethnic minority students do. Girls are affected in particular. Traditional attitudes value men over women, and society does not fully recognise girls' rights and ability to participate actively in decisions affecting their lives.

Viet Nam's government acknowledges problems over the quality of education. While the sector has theoretically been decentralised, schools' real autonomy remains very low. Excluded from recruitment

panels, head teachers cannot control the quality of their staff. There is little opportunity for schools to invest in improvements such as teacher training, books or learning materials. Resources are poorly-allocated, with low transparency and accountability at all levels fuelling corruption. Information about schools, especially planning, budgeting and monitoring, is not published openly. Teachers' high social status discourages children and their parents from questioning them. This has meant that school activities are based on teachers' interests, rather than on children's needs.

## OUR SOLUTION

My Rights, My Voice is empowering children to understand their rights and creating opportunities for them to communicate with decision-makers so they can help shape an education that meets their needs. In

the provinces of Lao Cai, Dak Nong and Ninh Thuan – among Viet Nam’s poorest and with the highest ethnic minority populations – we are working with our local partner Live and Learn and the Department of Education and Training, as well as a number of People’s Councils and Women’s and Youth Unions. The project promotes dialogue and accountability between schools and authorities, and parents and children – especially girls and ethnic minorities. It will reach 7,600 people directly and 25,000 indirectly (of which 50 per cent are girls and women, and 70 per cent from ethnic minorities). It works on three levels:

**Empowering children to express their needs**

We are building awareness among children – especially girls – of their right to education and their ability to communicate their needs. Through capacity-building events in schools and communities on gender equality and children’s rights, we are raising awareness among children and parents of the challenges facing them, and particularly those facing girls. Children also learn life

skills such as teamwork, communication, presentation, leadership and negotiation, so they can express their needs and claim their rights with teachers and the authorities. To make it fun, we hold summer camps and fairs where children can deliver their messages to teachers, education managers and policy-makers creatively through festivals, art, poetry, theatre, song, photography, mobile exhibitions, dialogue forums and social networking. We also run contests for children, parents and teachers to develop innovative ways of promoting children’s rights in schools and communities. At inter-school workshops, they can share learning with each other and decision-makers at different levels.

**Helping improve school management**

My Rights, My Voice helps teachers and education authorities interact with children and parents, including those from ethnic minorities. We are training school managers in communication, participatory planning (involving children and parents), budgeting



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and monitoring, and promoting child-centred teaching (more effective than traditional 'chalk-and-talk' methods). We are also helping parents and communities understand the value of schooling (especially for girls) and join in school decision-making, governance and monitoring – for example, through a Parents' Association Network. The project also organises policy dialogue between schools and district authorities on adapting teaching and budgets to better reflect local children's needs.

### **Driving policy implementation**

At a national-policy level, the project channels the voices of children, parents and schools to press for a more equal distribution of education funds. We are empowering communities to argue for their right to primary education, especially in ethnic minority areas often overlooked. We will also support government efforts to strengthen good governance and accountability in education, and are pushing for implementation of the decentralisation policy, so that schools can control key issues such as localised curriculum

development, budgets and staffing, and are openly accountable to pupils and parents.

### **A LASTING LEGACY**

My Rights, My Voice will enable children to understand their rights and communicate their needs to teachers, education managers and policy makers. Together with Parents' Associations, they will be able to hold teachers and school managers accountable for delivery of quality education that reflects pupils' needs, with special sensitivity to those of girls and ethnic minority children. The government's decentralisation policy will be better implemented, with budgets directly managed by schools, heads having a greater say in teacher recruitment, and teachers having the authority to develop child-centred teaching plans that reflect local needs.

Teachers and officials will fulfil their roles as service providers – so all children, including girls and those from ethnic minorities, can fulfil their own potential and help improve their societies.

### **FIND OUT MORE**

My Rights, My Voice is a three-year programme which aims to engage marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services. It is being jointly implemented by Oxfam GB and Oxfam Novib, and involves Oxfam Quebec in Niger. Working through our local partners in eight countries, My Rights, My Voice has significant funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

To find out more about the programme please mail us at: [mrmv@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:mrmv@oxfam.org.uk) or visit us at [www.oxfam.org.uk/myrightsmysvoice](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/myrightsmysvoice)

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