



Vietnam Innovation Day 2006

Theme for 2006 competition is “**Disadvantaged Children and Youth**” with four sub-themes:

(i) Quality education for disadvantaged children and youth; (ii) Street children and youth; (iii) Out of school, out of work children and youth; and (iv) Participation and Empowerment of children and youth in decision making.

The program consists of two major events:

- Innovation Competition - an open competition, jury process whereby start-up funds are awarded to organizations proposing innovative ideas about “Disadvantaged Children and Youth” issues in Vietnam, and
- Knowledge Fora - leaders in the development community will come together to share their experiences around the theme of Disadvantage Children and Youth.

The event is co-organized by the World Bank, Ministry of Education and Training (Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children (PEDC) Project) and Youth Newspaper.

Definition of Disadvantaged

Disadvantaged relates to an individual not being able to take or provided with opportunity, such as access to primary education, further education or a job to provide independence and self-support, which is regarded as a fundamental right to all individuals within a community and greater society. For a child to be disadvantaged means the transition from early childhood to youth provides an uncertain future with possible developmental delay, little if any qualifications and limited opportunities for their progression. For a youth to be disadvantaged means the transition towards adulthood with limited skills and opportunities and a risk of reduced earnings or destitution.

To be disadvantaged creates the risk of children and youth not having access to, for example, housing, health care, and education. This may result in an individual feeling excluded from the community they live in, increasing urban migration and inability to participate or take social responsibility for their actions.

In recent years, Vietnam has experienced rapid development and provision of such services however some children and youth have not benefited from these recent developments and find themselves excluded, unqualified and/or disenfranchised from society. The result is disaffected children and youth with insecure futures.

Defining Children and Youth

Children are defined as between 4 to 14 years of age. A child has the fundamental right to attend and complete pre-school and primary education, be provided with health and social protection services for their development and well being and have a voice in the decision-making around them. Despite this fundamental right, many children particularly in the more remote and mountainous areas of Vietnam meet barriers to being provided equal opportunity and access. Many of these barriers relate to topography and the difficulty of targeting children and their families in distant localities. However, other barriers such as Vietnamese as a second language, gender, poverty, having no family and/or experiencing learning and development difficulties are significant factors for prevention of a child rights being fulfilled.

The definition of *youth* is complex and debatable but the most common one is that used by the Millennium Development Goals – spanning from 15 to 24 years. Youth is generally defined as a phase when a person moves from a time of dependence (childhood) to independence (adulthood). This transition involves several common shifts that present unique challenges:

- *The transition from school to seeking work* and independent sources of income.
- *The transition towards independence.* As young people grow and gain independence, they begin to take more control over their bodies and their actions. Greater independence means that they have greater opportunities for experimentation but are less protected from the consequences.
- *The transition to work.* Their decisions on when to do that, what kind of work to get into, what skills they develop, and where they work will have broad implications for them and for society.

So why should we put children and youth together in a single Framework?

Poverty: many income and non-income poverty indicators are much worse among children and youth; and today, these two groups represent the majority of the poor.

Unique Vulnerability: among the poor, children and youth are the most susceptible to increased vulnerability during periods of economic downturn and other external shocks (for example, as indicated by malnutrition, school dropouts to assist families, youth unemployment, violent behavior, etc.).

Highest Risk: both age groups represent the two periods of highest physiological and social risk in the life cycle. In early years, this is manifested by, for example malnutrition, neglect and child diseases resulting in possible development delays and learning difficulties. In adolescence and young adulthood, this is manifested by experimentation and greater risk taking, for example: high-risk sexual behaviour (for example, from HIV); crime; poor nutrition; smoking; and narcotics.

Childhood and youth are the two most productive and efficient periods for investing in human capital development. If investments are not made in the early years, the costs and consequences become enormous to the individual and society in later years.

Innovation Grant Themes

Sub-theme 1: Quality education for disadvantaged children and youth

For a country with GDP per person of \$430, Vietnam's record on basic education is impressive. Almost 92% of children are enrolled in primary school and the overall rate for girls is only a fraction of a percent behind that of boys.

However, many children face difficulties in accessing pre-school and primary school and/or maintaining attendance for the entire school year. These children for example, children in remote areas, from ethnic minority communities, living with disability and/or learning difficulties, and from migratory families, do not benefit from educational services and are at-risk of not having the same opportunities as other children. This may affect their development, their learning and their transition from childhood to youth.

Factors that contribute to educational disadvantage: Educationally disadvantaged children in Vietnam are put at risk by factors in the school, home, and socioeconomic environment in which they live. The most obvious risk factors are the following:

- Poverty and charges made on parents, resulting in non-enrolment, poor attendance, and dropout;
- Some children are not able to develop in the classroom because they have chronic health or nutrition problems or because they enter school with linguistic barriers;
- Households and communities do not always provide a positive climate for schooling (for example, there is a high demand for children's labour in some communities and there are inter-generational effects of poverty and illiteracy);

- Some children are particularly susceptible to changes in social conditions and economic downturns; many schools and teaching sites are incomplete or not organized for success in terms of resources, management, or teaching skills;
- The schools, particularly the satellite campuses, do not receive sufficient financial, institutional, human and material support and resources;

Even if children completes primary education, many are unable to progress to secondary education due of similar obstacles – gender, distance to school, economic, and disability. If the system has not allowed the child to complete primary education, there is often little support for a child or youth to develop vocational skills to safeguard his or her future self-sufficiency. This can result in subsistence living or force the individual to migrate to urban areas to find alternative means of living.

Sub-theme 2 - Street children and youth

The Vietnam Youth Association (VNVA) estimates that there are 50,000 children living and working on the streets. Many come from migrant families; others migrate to urban areas by themselves to escape the harsh conditions they face in rural areas in the hope of providing much-needed income for their families, as many as a quarter have run away from broken or abusive home environments.

They are vulnerable to risks of becoming a victim of sexual exploitation which puts them at risk of HIV/ AID, falling foul of drug abuse, coming into conflict with the law and many resorts to crime. Other adolescents face a more pernicious fate. Little is known about the true scale of the trade in women and children but indications are that it is on the increase – whether to be sold as ‘wives’ across the Chinese border or to work in slave-like conditions in brothels.

The traditional approach to managing street children has been to pick them up, detain them for a while, and then send them back to their families. But many have left home because of family problems and are unwilling to return, or their families are unable to care for them. As a result, they soon go back to the street to earn money either by begging or prostituting themselves. They are extremely vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse.

Sub-theme 3 - Out of school, out of work children and youth

The transition to a market economy in Vietnam involved a drastic modification of young men and women’s transition from school-to-work. Today, many youth enter the labour market out of economic necessity. Even though the potential to benefit from the country’s socio-economic successes of the past 15-20 years is great, youth in Vietnam face a series of new challenges. For example, inequality, polarisation and unemployment have appeared. The down-sizing of the public sector with disappointing levels of foreign direct investment mean that job opportunities are confined to the predominant agricultural sector where underemployment and poverty, though declining, are widespread.

In this context, the Vietnamese government has made the creation of decent jobs, the upgrading of skills and the fight against unemployment its priority, with a special focus on youth. Government policies have so far failed to redirect resources from general higher education to vocational training and greater technical skills.

According to Data from the 2003 National Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth, about 20 per cent of the out-of-school respondents report that their leaving school was due to the obligation to work for family survival, about 35 per cent were out of school but working, and another 25 percent of the respondents were neither attending school, nor working.

The fact that a large proportion of young people are not working and are out of school continue to put a heavy employment pressure on society. Each year Vietnam must create 1.5 million new jobs. The number of youth entering the labour market is estimated at 1.4 million each year. In addition, there are large numbers of young adults who are leaving military service. Many of them have not received vocational training and with few skills, face difficulties re-entering civilian society.

At the heart of the problem is the quantity and quality of work available to young people in Vietnam today. About two-thirds of youth aged 15-24 work on small family farms and in the informal sector with much of the work characterized by low quality, underemployment, insecurity and safety hazards. Many out-of-school youth are currently working to earn a living for their families in low paid jobs and petty trade.

Unemployment can lead to a life of violence, drug abuse, vandalism, and other problems. Early school leavers without regular employment may turn to risky avenues of income and livelihoods such as prostitution and crime and find themselves at risk of HIV/AIDS and human trafficking and child labors. The situation is worse for *street children*, disabled, ethnic minorities, orphans, and so on.

By reducing unemployment rates, providing employment services and enhancing the employability of youth will help to lift children and youth from the street, reduce the numbers of those resorting to street living, provide opportunities for the disabled and marginalised and thus reduce the risks disadvantaged children and youth face.

Sub-theme 4 – Cross-Cutting Theme - Participation and Empowerment of Children and Youth

Although children are formally citizens of nation-states and enjoy certain rights, youth is the period when individuals complete the transition to citizenship. In other words, by the time individuals are in their mid-twenties, they are usually subject to nearly the full set of citizenship rights and obligations (they pay taxes, serve in the military, and enjoy civil, political, and social rights to the extent their state allows). And they are participating in civil society organizations. This transition involves a significant development in the identity of youth.

They will face a world where adolescents and young adults feel excluded from having any say in the making of decisions that will greatly affect their individual futures, not to mention that of

their communities or country. When young people feel hopeless, they risk doing desperate things which are costly to themselves and to society at large.

For poorer youth in slums, townships, and the urban periphery, the formal rights of citizenship—such as personal security and education—are not enforced, and the relationship to the state is largely a battle against stigma and discrimination. For many of these youths, violence, instability, the absence of economic opportunities, and a poor sense of self and self-respect make membership in the broader society difficult.

Participation and Empowerment of youth (and children, where possible) as stakeholders, decision-makers and beneficiaries at all levels of development - from strategy to design of programs, from implementation to evaluation – is crucial as it relates to policies and interventions that directly affect their lives. This will ensure both their ownership of the development process as well as improve the effectiveness of interventions in reaching youth. It establishes the conditions by which youth have choices and opportunities to positively impact their own lives, as well as that of their families, communities, and country.

To achieve this, there is a need to incorporate their perspectives, their ideas and energy not just as beneficiaries of programs, but also as active participants in defining and carrying out such programs. They must actively participate in deciding and shaping what best helps them meet their unique challenges.

Timeline:

Proposals must be received by the World Bank Vietnam office by **5:00 pm on April 28, 2006**. All documents should be in Vietnamese and, if possible, English, and should follow the format outlined in the application form. Short-listed groups will be notified in mid May and invited to participate in the VID presentation in mid-June in Hanoi . If selected for funding, the winning group will be asked to follow additional steps to receive financial awards.

Eligibility Criteria:

The World Bank together with other donors and MOET will separately and independently select proposals for grant award in relation to the following categories:

- World Bank and other donors will award grants to innovative proposals from all Vietnamese individuals and groups, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local governments, and public and private development enterprises addressing the needs of youth or targeting both children and youth.
- MoET will award grants to innovative proposals only from organizations (not individuals), including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local governments, and public and private development enterprises addressing only the needs of children.

Grant awards are eligible for Vietnamese individuals and organizations. International organizations can only apply in cooperation with a Vietnamese partner bearing primary implementation responsibilities.

Participating organizations must meet the following requirements:

- Plan to complete the project within one year;
- Have acceptance within the community for the project or plan to obtain and maintain ownership by the beneficiaries;
- Include innovative ideas, approaches or solutions;
- Contribute to the national efforts in improving access to formal and non-formal education; access to the labour market; and including children and youth in community activities and the greater society; and
- Demonstrate an ability to implement the proposed project

Evaluation criteria:

Funding will be awarded to proposals that directly address the above themes and meet our criteria for being innovative. Our definition of innovation is the introduction of new formulation concept, services or new ways of doing things by successfully applying new ideas. Evaluation will be based on, but not limited to, whether the project meets the following criteria:

- Addresses well an issue within the specified themes and present a feasible solution for the issue;
- Is innovative;
- Has acceptability within the community or a persuasive plan to obtain and maintain ownership by the beneficiaries;
- Has feasible results and demonstrate sustainability
- Is different from what has been done or is currently being done;
- Has the potential to be replicated or expanded within the community or elsewhere.

It is planned that at least 30 World Bank and PEDC grants will be awarded through an open competition. The maximum award size is US\$10,000. Final awarded amount may vary in size and will be determined based on the needs of the proposals selected.

For further details please call 1900 – 1734 for automatic answering service or contact:

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