

**Vietnam Youth Association, Central Committee  
Vietnam Women's Union  
UNICEF  
World Bank**

**Results of youth consultation  
Hanoi, March 28-30, 2006  
Hochiminh City, April 1-3, 2006**

**Introduction**

**I. Background**

Vietnam is seeing a demographic shift in which youth will make up the bulk of the population in the coming years. Young people 12-25 years old are at present the largest cohort. Rapid social and economic change is undoubtedly providing adolescents and young people with many opportunities such as improved welfare, education and health care, and increased access to information. At the same time, such a process of change also places tremendous pressure on young people: changing lifestyles, increasing family breakdown and growing mobility, among other issues, are putting young people at risk.

In spite of the challenges, the past two years have witnessed positive changes in the policy environment around youth issues. The Youth Development Strategy and National Strategy on HIV/AIDS Prevention demonstrate growing commitment from the Government to youth issues. At the global level, the World Bank's annual World Development Report will feature Youth In Transition as the theme for 2006 and Vietnam has been selected as a 'spotlight' country for this publication.

In order to make sure that the voice and concerns of young people are raised and taken seriously into consideration at the policy development level, the Vietnam Youth Association and the Vietnam Women's Union, in collaboration with UNICEF, have conducted two youth consultations to seek young people's inputs on youth related concerns and strategies. In collaboration with the World Bank, the counterparts also included the WDR in the consultation agenda in order to collect young people's reflections on selected thematic areas of this year's World Development Report.

**II. Time, Location**

Hanoi consultation:

- Schedule: 28-30 March 2006
- Location: La Thanh Hotel, Hanoi

Hochiminh City consultation:

- Schedule: 01-03 April 2006
- Location: Hoang De Hotel, District I, Hochiminh City

### III. Contents

- Introduction to youth issues
- SAVY Report results
- Youth Development Strategy
- HIV/AIDS Prevention Strategies till 2010 and vision 2020
- Youth consultation on the WDR “Youth in Transition”

### IV. Participant profile

- A. At the HCMC consultation:** Total of 74 youth
- Youth in schools (pilot sites teaching healthy living skills)
  - Youth out of school (healthy living clubs)
  - Youth, workers working in processing zones, JVs
  - Ethnicities: Kinh, Ba-na, Xe Dang, Thanh, Nung. Kinh, Ba na, Xe Dang, Thanh, Nung
  
  - Gender           +Female: 29/73 (39%)  
                      +Male: 44/73 (61%)
  
  - Age groups:    + 12-15: 32 youth (44%)  
                      + 16-19: 25 youth (32%)  
                      + 20-28: 17 youth (24%)
  
  - Education level:    + Primary school: 8/74 (10%)  
                              + Lower secondary school: 38/74 (50%)  
                              + Upper secondary school: 22/74 (30%)
  
  - Provinces: Gia Lai, Kon Tum, An Giang, Kien Giang and HCMC
- B. At the Hanoi consultation:** Total of 59 youth
- Youth in schools (pilot sites teaching healthy living skills)
  - Youth out of school (healthy living clubs)
  - Older youth from Hanoi (ages 18-24)
  - Ethnicities: Kinh, Tay, Nung, Dao, H'mong
  
  - Gender           +Female: 28/59 (47%)  
                      +Male: 31/59 (53%)
  
  - Age distribution:    +26 youth ages 13-15  
                              +10 youth ages 13-17  
                              +10 youth ages 14-20  
                              +13 youth ages 18-24
  
  - Schooling:        + In school: 11/59 (19%)  
                          + Out of school: 48/59 (81%)

- Provinces: Hanoi, Hai Phong, Lang Son, Lao Cai and Quang Ninh

There were 116 participants in total with 59 in the Hanoi and 57 in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). Gender was fairly evenly distributed across both consultations and there were a total of 59 females and 57 males. These young people represented ten provinces and municipalities, including Hanoi, Hai Phong, Lang Son, Lao Cai and Quang Ninh in the North, and HCMC, An Giang, Kien Giang, Gia Lai and Kon Tum in the Central and South. Together these cover the North and Central Highlands, the Red River and Mekong Deltas, border and coastal regions, and rural, urban and high ethnic minority areas. There were 30 ethnic youth representing seven minority groups—Xe Dang, Tay, Nung, Dao, H'mong, Thanh and Bana.

The greatest proportion of youth who participated in both the Hanoi and HCMC youth consultations were young people ages 12-15. In Hanoi three of the five provinces brought only youth under the age of 16, while in HCMC well over half (32 of 57) of young people were ages 12-15. Both in Hanoi and HCMC there was one group of older group invited to participate. These older youth from Hanoi were ages 18-24 while in HCMC they were migrant workers ages 21-24.

Most of these young people were from difficult circumstances and especially among the Hanoi consultation participants mainly were out of school or had never attended. In Hanoi only 7 young people were still in school with an additional 5 either in continuing education or vocational training. In HCMC 22 of the young people were in school and another was in continuing education. Two-thirds of the youth at the HCMC consultation had at least lower secondary education and 11 of them, including all ten young migrant workers, had completed upper secondary. There were no university or college students. Excluding the older group in each location, participants came from lower secondary schools or healthy living clubs for out of school youth, both supported through the GOV-UNICEF project.

The majority of the participants were from poor households and some were neither in school nor working. Six of the 13 older youth in Hanoi had wage paying jobs and the older youth from HCMC were all young migrant workers employed in the processing zones outside of HCMC. Many other young people also participated in economic activities to help support their families, either working at home in agriculture or in the informal sector in petty jobs.

## **V. Methodology**

The youth consultations were conducted through participatory methods. Youth facilitators were used to guide all activities and were given training by UNICEF on leading small group discussions, managing the schedule and dynamics of the group and conducting other activities. Many strategies were used to ease young people into discussion key ideas, including writing things down and sharing in pairs. This helped make them more confident about sharing with a broader group. Sometimes topics or findings were presented to youth so they could first respond to an idea then try to personalize within their context or situation. Presentations of group ideas ranged from reporting out on flip charts, to role plays, to creating individual or group drawings.

Many ice-breakers, games and other activities were interspersed throughout the day to help youth get to know one another, increase their comfort in speaking out and otherwise energize the group.

## **VI. Program**

### Day one

- Brainstorm priority youth issues
- Discuss SAVY's results

### Day two

- Discuss Youth Development Strategy and action programs
- Discuss risk and protection factors related to youth development
- Discuss HIV/AIDS prevention strategy and action programs; IEC programs on HIV/AIDS

### Day three

- Introduction of youth consultations on themes of the World Development Report
  - + Health
  - + Employment
  - + Study
  - + Migrant workers
  - + Citizenship
  - + Others proposed by youth
- Identifying issues of interest to Youth for further discussion and proposing solutions

### Structure of consultations and discussion groups

Consultations in both Hanoi and HCMC followed the same structure. Each was held over a three day period with each day structured around particular themes or topics as outlined above. The first day opened with an introduction to youth issues in Vietnam using the Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth as a vehicle for introducing views and perceptions of different youth related concerns and behaviors. The focus of the second day was on two themes: firstly, on risk and protective factors in key youth environments; and secondly, on HIV/AIDS knowledge, perceptions and strategies for youth behavior change communication (BCC) and information, education and communication (IEC).

To initiate discussion on each of these areas there were presentations from relevant ministries on the Youth Development Strategy, the SAVY results, and HIV/AIDS. These were followed by three small group discussion sessions that focused on responses and reactions to SAVY results, youth views of risk and protective factors in different environments, and their knowledge or perceptions of HIV/AIDS. For the small group sessions, youth were primarily in mixed groups randomly assigned before each session. In the case of risk and protective factors discussion in Hanoi, youth were grouped by their home province. In the case of the HIV/AIDS discussion in HCMC, youth were grouped by age brackets. Facilitators and note takers for both consultations noted their preference for grouping in ways that allowed youth to discuss issues of common interest or relevance.

Discussions on SAVY results and HIV/AIDS were for the most part fairly structured, with each group responding to a set of key focused questions. On SAVY, the discussion centered around this question: “identify the findings which you somewhat expect, and those which surprise you as well as the results where you have divided opinion”. As young people discussed these findings, they were encouraged to elaborate with reasons and explanations. The discussions became very interesting with lots of dialogues/debates and interactions among the young people. This exercise showed that SAVY can serve as tool to promote discussion among young people, to help them reflect upon some of the youth issues. Some difficulties were experienced though: for example, a number of young people found it difficult to understand concepts of percentages, and the youth facilitators had to explain by using phrases like the majority or a small number of young people. Younger participants (12-13 years) found it hard to discuss topics such as marriage and relationships. However, a good dynamic was created and supported from the outset with the opening exercise to brainstorm youth issues followed by the discussion on SAVY. This laid a good foundation for the coming discussions in the rest of the consultation.

The discussion on risk and protection in Hanoi and issues was primarily generated by the youth facilitators and participants themselves. In HCMC this session was more structured, where the youth were provided with prepared factors to categorize as risk or protective factor. However, some groups also continued the discussion and based on their personal experiences, made their own additions to the risk and protective factors.

The consultants attended both consultations and were able to observe the plenary sessions and presentations in full and were also able to circulate during the group discussions to observe what groups were writing on flip charts. At the end of each day, the consultants met briefly with the note takers (in Hanoi the facilitators also joined this meeting) to collect key impressions and observations from the small group session. The consultants were also in active exchange with UNICEF officers who attended the event.

#### World Development Report focus day

Day 3 followed up the discussions which had happened during the preceding 2 days, drilled upon the issues already raised with some further degree of focus/prioritisation as well as going into the aspects (of these issues) which had not been covered. The day opened with a presentation from the World Bank introducing the World Development Report and five key youth transition themes—going to school, staying healthy, finding a job, leaving home and starting a family, and being a citizen. (Note: this happened at the end of the second day in Hanoi because of scheduling constraints). In Hanoi, groups were then divided randomly and each group was assigned one of the 5 transition themes to discuss.

In HCMC, youth were groups by province on the last day, with the migrant workers as a separate group that was further divided by gender. Each group reviewed the WDR themes then selected one or more areas of key concern to them to discuss in greater depth. Because the groups were given the freedom to identify the main area or areas of interest to them, the discussions were able to follow up on the discussions which had arisen during the preceding two days in greater depth and clarity. Migration was also introduced and addressed as a key issue in HCMC, with one group representing young migrant workers.

### Structure of the report:

The body of this report will present key findings and observations from the Hanoi and HCMC consultations. After a brief overview of the priorities and general impressions that emerged from the consultations, the sections that follow will explore more detailed findings of each major theme that was identified as a priority or that was highlighted through the presentations and activities. The central themes of family, work and employment, education, and reproductive health and HIV, and migration are examined at some length. Some additional health risks such as substance use and abuse and traffic accidents are also introduced. Each thematic discussion highlights youth voices in presenting key aspirations, challenges and obstacles and the solutions proposed by youth to address those challenges. The final section closes with a summary of key policy ideas proposed across each thematic area.

## **Key Results and Observations**

### General overview

Because of the active and participatory methods used and the focus and energy of the young facilitators and notetakers, the enthusiasm throughout both consultations was very high. Using a variety of presentation methods such as writing, speaking, role playing and drawing allowed a broader range of children to express their ideas. Young people were most active when considering themes and topics that were personally relevant. Overall, the young people in the consultations were not only enthusiastic, but many of them were both active in giving their opinions and articulate in sharing their voices. They were also clear about their concerns and needs, while still having lots of unanswered questions as they look to the future or near future. The consultations both afforded them the opportunity to contribute their voice, to learn from one another on shared concerns and to propose ideas for solutions to the challenges they face.

### Youth orientation and priorities

In the case of the Youth Consultations in Vietnam, youth expressed wishes and aspirations for their near future. Many of them articulated concerns about immediate needs or concerns such as access to school, family living conditions and relations, and finding a job. Older youth had clearer longer term aspirations, with sights set on being employed and gaining greater independence. Youth goals also tended to be very practical. For example, most young people were focused on finding a job with decent pay or staying in school.

Youth across the board shared strong feelings about their connections with the family. This was reflected in their drawings and role plays, as well as in their repeated reference to the family among protective factors in almost all contexts. This was also expressed both through a strong desire to help their family and in their struggle to respond to family and parental expectations while trying to make their own choices. They felt that what parents consider most important is often different from what youth prioritize for themselves. Thus, it was suggested that parents should pay more attention to children's thoughts in order to have more mutual agreement between parents and children so parents are a source of help rather than pressure for their children.

The conditions of the family environment were seen as closely intertwined with opportunities for or barriers to continued schooling, which was the highest priority and worry for most youth at the consultations. Contributing to the family and working toward a job that could provide the economic means to support a family of their own was also an important incentive for finding a decent job.

**In HCMC, priority youth issues ranked as follows:**

- 1) Schooling and studying
- 2) Family
- 3) Employment issues (including salary and stable income), friendship
- 4) Health, social issues
- 5) Housing, love

In Hanoi, the most popular concerns were learning well, job and employment, health and HIV, and entertainment and recreation.

During the consultations youth also expressed strong opinions and awareness of social issues and a good understanding of the risk and protective factors that affected them. Youth perceptions continue to be shaped by traditional social norms and mores and many of their views reflected the success of government messages or campaigns on what are labeled ‘social evils’, which include drug use, commercial sex and trafficking, with linkages to HIV/AIDS. Youth repeatedly demonstrated curiosity about what they did not know and expressed the need to have better knowledge and understanding about these topics in order to avoid risk taking behaviors.

Vietnamese youth, particularly the older ones, have also demonstrated increasing control of their lives and an increasing value on independence. These young people have migrated in search of better education and employment opportunities. They want to make their own choices about employment, relationships and marriage, and they aspire to have their own stable housing and to self-employment. On the whole, while faced with many different challenges and concerns over their schooling, family life and job futures, these young people also demonstrated resourcefulness and creativity in voicing solutions that can help improve their current situations and help them reach their goals.

Diversity of youth experiences and perspectives

Some key contrasts in youth outlook were evident between rural and urban youth. Many children from urban areas voiced concerns about leisure/recreation or a place (play fields) that they can meet and talk. They seemed to be anxious about having better social supports including good friends, good mentors and useful activities. Many of them were not working. In contrast, many rural children were out of school and working to support their family either in farm activities or through other work. While they would also like to go to school, harsh economic difficulties have forced them to take a more measured vision of their future.

Youth from the border provinces of Lang Son and An Giang also shared very exceptional perspectives on risk factors in their communities. Both groups demonstrated keen awareness of

border security issues such as smuggling, counterfeiting and cross border trafficking of women and children. Drug abuse, commercial sex and environmental concerns were also emphasized. In addition to these broader issues, youth from these provinces were also more worried about personal security threats such as theft and violence.

Gender differences also arose in a number of areas. In the final WDR session, young migrant women met in their own group. The women, in contrast to the male migrants, strongly prioritized reproductive health information and services as a top concern. In other areas, parental decision making on early marriage was a greater risk to continued schooling for ethnic minority and rural girls. The HCMC group discussing school environment also reported that females being looked down upon was a risk factor. Ethnic minority girls from Kon Tum further noted a gender imbalance whereby girls and women had greater responsibilities than men in both work and in the household.

Among the many results and observations from the youth consultations, ethnic minority youth and young migrants emerged as groups that have compounding vulnerabilities. These young people experience greater difficulties accessing information and educational and employment opportunities. Ethnic youth demonstrated strong aspirations for going to school, yet also described having more traditional and less educated parents who lacked awareness of the importance of education and the possibility of better employment and economic opportunities beyond agricultural work. Due to greater remoteness and poverty many children are also forced to stop school early and either help with family farming or get a job.

Young migrants in the consultations also expressed many of the same aspirations of other youth, such as the desire for a happy family and for stable employment. These young people worked hard to earn a living even as they described the numerous challenges they face in both living and working conditions that contribute to increased risk factors in family, health and employment. Although clearly it is not always easy, they were determined to make a difference in their life and to do their best to help their families.

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The following sections will explore in greater detail the voices of youth on key thematic areas which emerged from the youth consultation discussions in Hanoi and HCMC. The discussions on these issues span the 3-day event, through various activities such as the brainstorming session, the SAVY discussion, and risk and protective factors session.

### **Key theme: Family**

Family emerged as a significant priority of young people during the consultation. Young people talked about a wide breath of aspects from parent-child dynamics, family formation, risk/protective factors and vulnerability associated with poverty and alcoholism. An important observation is that young people found the discussion very close to home, passionately coming up with things they really value, cherish and desire, as well as laying out in a very frank manner what they think are barriers to their development. They generally perceived the family as an instrumental institution which provides a strong platform for their benefiting of opportunities

such as education, work and forming their own family in the future. Their voices on this topic represented powerful calls for action to strengthen the family, as well as to provide it with support to foster the welfare of the young people and help them realize their rights.

Because the majority of participants in the youth consultations come from difficult family backgrounds, discussions on family centered around the *need for a stable and supportive and happy family* environment with their parents. The family is seen by most of these young people as the most central and vital protective environment for youth development and well-being. As voiced plainly by one girl at HCMC: “Youth need love and attention from friends and parents/family. Parental attention is critical to future development.” During the discussions of risk and protective factors in the family environment, parental conflict and parental vices were the two main threats while *parental attention, love and communication* were the key protective factors.

**Key results of SAVY and youth responses: Family**

<b>SAVY result presented</b>	<b>HCMC youth response</b>	<b>Hanoi youth response</b>
8.9% said their families always have conflicts	Disagree. (Thinking that the figure should be higher )	Disagree. The figure should be higher.
Female get married earlier than male; the rate is higher in rural areas than in urban	Agree	--
90% of young couples living with families	Disagree. The figure could be lower (if it result reflected true youth desire rather than their reality).	Surprised. Think figure should be lower since youth now seeking more independence.

Youth across the board voiced the *strong desire to be heard and respected in their family*. In Hanoi they disagreed with SAVY findings that 68% of youth are respected by their families as completely unrealistic and thought that the a large majority of youth still struggle to have a voice within their family. Perhaps because of the make up of the participants, youth at both consultations strongly disagreed with SAVY’s finding that only 8.9% families suffered from frequent quarrels and conflicts, arguing that the number of youth experiencing *family conflict* must be much higher. The issue of family conflict was repeated often among different groups during the consultations.

“Youth need love and attention from friends and parents/family. Parental attention is critical to future development.” --young girl in HCMC

In HCMC, family formation was not really discussed. Older youth were squarely focused on earning a living as their first priority. In Hanoi, there was some talk of dating and relationships, but rural and ethnic minority girls stressed their hope to *avoid early marriage* or marriage to someone not of their own choosing. They faced the challenge of wanting to uphold social values of *parental decision making* and hierarchy on the one hand, and wanting to assert their own

aspirations. An example that sharply illustrates broad differences in urban and rural values, one girl from Hanoi said she wanted to meet someone and marry but her parents want her to have “success before marriage”; by contrast, a Dao girl from Lao Cai shared, “I want to go to school but my parents want me to get married; our parents have had little schooling so they are very traditional.” Ethnic minority girls spoke of the need to take charge of their situation and to find advocates to help educate parents about the importance of education and the lost opportunities that result from early marriage.

“I want to go to school but my parents want me to get married; our parents have had little schooling so they are very traditional.” –young Dao girl from Lao Cai

Leaving home was discussed in the context of older youth wanting *increasing independence*. A common view across all regions was that although most recently married couples live with their parents or in-laws due to economic constraints, they held the desire to move out on their own and be more independent. However, the lack of economic independence and adequate financial resources to acquire their own housing forced them to accept staying at home. For many youth, their employment aspirations are closely linked to their desire gain economic independence and stability so they can form their own family and support that family independently.

**Highlights of youth categorization of risk and protective factors: Family**

Risk factor	Risk or Protective	Protective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children follow bad examples of the parents</li> <li>-Undisciplined family</li> <li>-Family conflicts</li> <li>-Parents spoil their children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents impose their thoughts on children</li> <li>-In rich families, children are over-dependent on parents, however these children also have many opportunities for study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Family members know other members’ friends</li> <li>-Parents and adults should encourage the youth to say their thoughts</li> <li>-Youth opinions should be listened and respected</li> </ul>

In addition to their struggles with parental decision making and traditional social values, *alcoholism of the father* was strongly voiced by youth as an important factor endangering the home environment and youth well being. This not only threatens the father’s health, but also leads to physical abuse or violence toward the mother and children. Because the father is drunk a lot it also results in economic losses so that the mother and children must bear greater responsibility for doing the work of the household and for supporting the family financially. The alcoholic father and his impact on the family were portrayed in a number of skits performed during the consultations.

The Hanoi consultations went further and also raised concerns of parental adultery and gambling as threats to the family environment. These concerns were shared widely, including among youth from both urban and rural areas; however, the problem of alcoholism was stressed as a key risk among children in Central Highland provinces like Kon Tum and Gia Lai. They reported it was common for men to be drunk and beat up their wives and children which caused stress for children and drove them away from the family. Girls were also particularly concerned about the

inequality that their mothers had to suffer in the family which included domestic violence, and an imbalance in their share of household, farming work, and in the education of their children.

Although *being poor is a major disadvantage* that was raised mainly in discussions about access to school, and many children across all regions faced this challenge, poverty was a central concern of children in Kon Tum and Gia Lai. Youth from Kon Tum suggested that large family size may contribute to poverty and often led many parents to pull children out of school to help earn money for the family. When youth from each region were allowed to select their most important concern, youth from Kon Tum chose family. The needs they expressed were very heartfelt and basic—they wished for mutual care and support in the family, less hunger and having a stable shelter or home to help prevent sickness.

#### Solutions proposed by young people

Youth from all regions and ethnic minority group expressed a conscious and deep desire for a stable and loving family. Although these discussions about family did not specifically address policy mechanisms to help foster a more protective family environment, *strengthened family relationships* and *family responsibility* for children's welfare were seen by youth as a fundamental support in their well being and successful future. Young people suggested that parents and other adults in the family should be more open and patient so that children would be able to talk, share their ideas and thoughts in the family. This would help children to stay on the right track.

It is also crucial for parents to know that education is good for the future of their children and to hold sending their children to school as a top priority. Child's rights should be promoted not only to youth but also to parents. They suggested that if the family failed to adequately prioritize their children's needs, the community and the government should take action to ensure the best interest of the children. Older youth also focused on family relationships, but emphasized gaining *respect from parents* toward their decisions.

#### **Key theme: Work and employment**

Although work and employment was mainly a hot discussion issue for older youth in both Hanoi and HCMC, many younger people were also already involved in economic activities to help out their families and all participants agreed that having a stable job is the first priority of most Vietnamese youth. They voiced many concerns related to the lack of adequate or reliable labor market information, the mismatch between their training and employment opportunities, aspirations for self-employment and the lack of protections for migrant workers. Job security was closely linked with family, stability, and happiness, as many participants had been forced by economic hardships to drop out of school and start earning money to help the family. It was also closely linked with schooling, as young people were keenly aware that further schooling was important to greater economic opportunities in the future.

Among the participants, many out of school youth were also out of work, or at least were not in the formal sector. However, most youth from rural areas and poor families worked helping with tending livestock or agricultural work, or worked in petty jobs selling newspapers or lottery

tickets or helping in a small family business. There were some regional differences reflected in the consultations, as youth in Hanoi were surprised at the high result of SAVY on the proportion of youth who had worked to earn money, arguing that most children their age are in school. By contrast, the HCMC group felt the figure was much lower than their reality, where 70% had already worked.

**Key results of SAVY and youth responses: Employment**

SAVY result presented	HCMC youth response	Hanoi youth response
55% once worked to earn money	Disagree. Figure should be higher, especially in the rural areas. In one group, 70% were once working.	Surprised. Seems too high since most youth are in school and not working at the same time.
Stable job is the first priority	Agree	Agree
Optimism about the future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 77% think they will have opportunities to find wanted job</li> <li>- 59% think they will have a good income</li> </ul>	Not decided  Not decided	Not decided. Also think job/income security and happiness are two different things.

The *job aspirations* expressed by most of the youth in the consultations were very practical. For example, they wanted to get a stable job but did not focus on career goals. Perhaps because none of the participants attended college or university, many were already out of school, and many were from poor families, their concern was again more oriented on ‘earning money’ or *earning a decent wage* to help the family make ends meet, and not on higher order needs like job satisfaction or professional status. There was an awareness that getting a wage paying job is hard to do without proper education and most youth were realistic about their desires. For example, one out of school girl in Hai Phong shared her aim to be a hair washer and worried about getting enough customers to get by and earn a decent living.

“As a citizen, everyone wishes to have a stable job, income equivalent to the development of the country. I want to have a better life with good working conditions in order to contribute to the development of country and my personal life.” --worker from MTEX company, HCMC

Even youth working in agriculture or in informal sector jobs did not express a clear desire to be doing something else, perhaps because they were engaged in these activities out of necessity and did not see much personal choice in what they would do in the future. However, some rural youth, especially those with higher levels of education, indicated the *limited economic opportunities* in the countryside and their hopes to move to the city and find a good job there.

An interesting role play in Hanoi by one group ages 16-24 expressed the desire to be *self-employed*. It made a clear presentation of the many struggles and barriers to start up, manage and sustain a business. They suggested the help they needed to make it happen successfully would include a loan from the bank, training in management skills, learning about regulations,

and spiritual and material support from their family. A key message they communicated is that youth want to do something independent because being self-employed is motivating and would be worth not being able to make a high salary.

Few among youth looking for jobs talked about competition for jobs, perhaps because most of them are working in unskilled or semi skilled professions, but *job security* and *decent wages* was a huge concern. One worker expressed the concern over low wages associated with apprenticeship or probation periods while extensive overtime is also requested. Many more expressed the worry and risk of a *mismatch between their training and what employers desired*. Several youth expressed uncertainty about what training they should get or whether additional training would necessarily lead to better paying jobs. Interestingly, youth unemployment is high and rising in Vietnam and businesses are making the same complaints about the mismatch or at least poor quality of training and skills young graduates possess. This also echoes SAVY findings which report that more than one-third of youth who accessed vocational training could not find a job for which they had been trained

Many youth felt their *prospects for jobs were out of their control*, even if they invested in further training. For example, some described cases where businesses which had made agreements with training centers to hire worker have backed out at the last minute, leaving workers the training fee out of pocket as well as jobless. Young migrants in also HCMC talked about how employers in the industrial zones favored hiring workers with a HCMC household registration or even migrants from the north or central region believing them to be harder working or more reliable. Young migrants also felt vulnerable due to the lack of labor protections, which resulted in young workers facing difficult working conditions and not being fairly compensated according to labor regulations. Youth are further dispirited by examples of people who are hard working and study hard and still cannot find jobs.

*Unemployment* is an added threat particularly in rural areas and for ethnic minorities because the job market development and employment opportunities remain very limited in those regions. However, there is an added downside to this trend which can further *threaten education opportunities* for young people. Examples of people who are highly educated and still unemployed are often used by rural parents to dismiss the importance of continuing education and to argue in favor of early marriage or going to work directly on the farm.

#### Solutions proposed by young people

Young migrants in HCMC shared the aspiration of other young people of wanting to ‘have a good job’. They would like to have stable and well-paid jobs which would help them to have a good life as well as to support their families. Most of them said that their incomes were only enough to lead modest lives which mainly include food and accommodation with very limited entertainment activities. A key challenge to overcoming this is their *lack of reliable employment information*. In HCMC, they used the example of unscrupulous employment agents who might cheat them with false information. Young migrants also raised a number of concerns about *poor labor/working conditions*, such as long hours without overtime, and poor housing conditions as well as other social and health concerns that will be discussed in following sections.

Young female migrant workers in HCMC expressed the desire to step in *increasing their employability and income* by acquiring practical training such as computer skills or English skills. But most young people, especially in Hanoi, were struggling with what to do due to their lack of accurate information about the labor market and of what employer really want. Many youth seemed to believe that employers valued degrees and certificates. Yet they also expressed doubt about the value of extra vocational training in the face of an uncertain job market.

To address the need for better employment information and decision making, the youth suggested establishing *certified employment counseling and placement services* for young people, and especially for migrant workers. They are also interested in on the job training that will require *no extra fees*, or vocational programs that allow a *repayment plan* for paying back fees after getting a better job. Migrant workers had two additional propositions: establishing a mechanism to ensure employer *compliance with the Labor Code*; and having more active Trade Unions that could involve young workers in *productive activities*.

### **Key theme: Schooling and education**

Young people, both in-school and out of school, has identified education as among their top priorities. While young people reflected upon issues such as access and learning environments, a lot of the discussion was also closely intertwined with family economic situation family dynamics including parental decisions. The diversity of the youth groups provided various angles to the discussion. Young people also proposed solutions to some of the issues they raised, and this strongly demonstrated their sense of being empowered.

Because of the younger age of most participants in both Hanoi and HCMC and perhaps because so many of them had been forced, under various circumstances, to drop out of school early, there was a great deal of attention on the *desire for continued schooling*. Among the 5 provinces and 6 groups at the HCMC consultation, four groups focused on education and the school environment as their most important concern. In general, *education aspirations* were not specific as to level nor were they linked to fields of study or professional goals. There was mainly a keen desire to be in school, to stay in school, to return to school or to get continuing education and training opportunities. The youth in both consultations seems to clearly understand that higher levels of education could offer better opportunities in the future. While some youth aspired to be *good in their studies*, no one talked concretely about the requirements or challenges of going to college/university.

### **Key results of SAVY and youth responses: Education**

<b>SAVY result presented</b>	<b>HCMC youth response</b>	<b>Hanoi youth response</b>
Never going to school or dropping school is due to economic difficulties	Agree because youth stay home to help their parents	Agree
52% among those who have never gone to school are ethnic youth	Majority agrees. Some disagree because we have a universal literacy and this figure should be lower.	Disagree. Think maybe the percentage is higher because so many ethnic youth not in school.

The youth who attended these consultations face a multitude of difficulties in their *access to school* and the *quality of the school and learning environment*. A majority of youth in school feel the pressures of achievement, heavy curricula and unequal treatment by teachers. However, the greatest obstacle to continuing school is *poverty*, or the inability of families to pay the *high cost of schooling* and the need for children to *stay home and work*. A girl from Haiphong observed that there are a lot of illiterates in her community but that the fees charged by non-formal education programs are a major barrier to accessing continuing education. School fees are especially hard on families with many children, as raised by Kon Tum youth. Ethnic minority children were aware of government boarding school programs to increase their access through subsidized boarding schools, but noted that even with free tuition and school supplies many families could not afford the fees associated with room and board, so free tuition is not enough to ensure participation. In the HCMC consultations, access to schooling was also an issue strongly felt in the Delta by youth from both An Giang and Kien Giang, as illustrated in Box X below.

Thien dropped out of school after grade 1 to help his parents. He earns money selling lottery tickets and helping his father haul concrete on small construction projects. His family cannot afford to pay school fees but he would like to return to school if he had the opportunity.

--Thien, 14 year-old boy from An Giang

Trang's family is poor and she quit school to support her parents in raising three other siblings. She wants to come back to school but is afraid of not being able to help her family. She wishes to have a stable job so that she can attend evening school.

--Trang in Kien Giang

“Young people from Lang son and Lao Cai have a simple wish to continue their education but due to economic reasons and the perception of family and parents they cannot go to school.”

--message from ethnic minority girls as articulated by notetaker in Hanoi

*Distance to school* is another practical barrier for children in many communities, especially ethnic minorities who live in mountainous and remote areas. Ethnic minority children from Gia Lai say many young people drop out of school after lower secondary because there is *no upper secondary school in their commune*. In order to access continued schooling, youth have to travel far to the district or provincial center and attend boarding schools. Merely having a school nearby, however, is not enough to keep young people motivated and in school. A *poor school and learning environment* can also lead to dropouts.

“Teachers have little practical experience and only teach theoretically, so this disadvantages youth in learning well and being able to find work.”

--youth on consequences of poor teaching methodologies

Youth from all regions gave examples of *poor teaching methods and poor teacher attitudes*, such as teacher discrimination based on grades or wealth, or poor teaching methodology and teachers who are difficult to understand as key demotivating factors for young students. Ethnic minority youth from the Central Highlands had difficulties with *Vietnamese language*, which also reflects their ability to access learning in school and other information which are all in Vietnamese. One group in Hanoi made the connection to the mismatch between their education and having employable skills: “Teachers have little practical experience and only teach theoretically, so this disadvantages youth in learning well and being able to find work.” They used as an example how chemistry was taught with no accompanying lab work to demonstrate and practice concepts.

*Discrimination* or bullying at school and in the community was also repeated as a key risk factor in the learning environment in both consultations. In Lao Cai’s presentation on protective and risk factors in the school environment, six out of nine risk factors (each written by different youth) were related to discrimination, disrespect, marginalization and being looked down on by others. Discrimination and unequal treatment was raised by both ethnic minorities and Kinh participants in HCMC and concerned not only intolerance between ethnic minority and Kinh children, but also discrimination toward students by teachers based on affluence or academic performance. This also connects to their emphasis on friendship and mutual support and respect as key protective factors in both school and family.

Finally, *extra tutoring* was repeated as a factor contributing to a poor study environment. Students report that they are exhausted from study pressures and have no time for recreation they need to relieve stress. They were also concerned that extra tutoring increases the gap in learning opportunities for children from families who cannot afford it. There was a much stronger focus on this issue in HCMC. There, the group went so far as to question the ethics of teachers ‘requiring’ extra tutoring and allowing that to influence classroom instruction or how they treat different children.

For the most part, youth communicated the many ways in which they *do not have control* over their schooling or decision to leave school. Many young people from every region were out of school because of *parental decisions*. As mentioned in the earlier discussion on family, parental decisions in early marriage was also a key barrier voiced by young rural and ethnic minority women, especially in Lao Cai. One note taker in Hanoi voiced it clearly: “Young people from Lang son and Lao Cai have a simple wish to continue their education but due to economic reasons and the perception of family and parents they cannot go to school.” This was an urgent message delivered repeatedly by ethnic minority girls in the Hanoi consultation. One girl from a rural area was studying in Hanoi and was also called home on urgent business only to find her parents had set up an engagement party for her.

In one role play in HCMC, the key message was that youth felt like they should not be put in the position to choose between the trade off of getting a job to help support their family and giving up opportunities to pursue their studies. They felt that their parents and society should prioritize their education above other things and ensure that they were able to get one. Interestingly, older youth who do have some control over vocational training decisions seem to feel lost in the labor market and are both unsure of what they need educationally and afraid they cannot afford it.

Taking control over education decision and life aspiration: One Dao girl from Lao Cai stood out among the youth in Hanoi. She spoke of her struggle to avoid early marriage and her efforts to convince her parents to let her stay in school. She shared how she had gotten teachers and other adults in the community to intervene on her behalf and how she had aspirations to be a community leader after finishing college. In spite of generally lower education attainment and access to information of ethnic minorities overall, this girl was extremely focused and articulate and proactive in planning for her future and overcoming threats to those goals.

Solutions offered by young people

Youth in Hanoi and HCMC generated numerous ideas on how to improve access to school for the poor or continuing education for those already out of school. They also made many suggestions of how the school environment could be more support of positive social behaviors and better learning. The outcomes they wished to influence fell into four main areas: increased affordability, increased accessibility, improved quality of the school and learning environment, and more relevant activities. Many suggestions echoed the protective factors sought in the family environment such as mutual support, attention from teachers, and children being encouraged to express their thoughts.

**Highlights of youth categorization of risk and protective factors: Education**

<b>Risk factor</b>	<b>Risk or Protective</b>	<b>Protective</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Bad study results</li> <li>-Lack of family support</li> <li>-Teachers don't pay attention</li> <li>-Teaching methods bad in school</li> <li>-Discrimination between Kinh and non-Kinh</li> <li>-Females looked down upon</li> <li>-No solidarity among students</li> <li>-Being forced to attend informal studying</li> <li>-schools too far away</li> <li>-Lack of learning equipment</li> <li>-Poor study environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Overloaded in studying</li> <li>-Teachers set goals for students to achieve</li> <li>-Comparisons by teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Good compliments from teachers</li> <li>-Teachers pay attention to students</li> <li>-Teachers encourage children to express their thoughts</li> <li>-Outdoors and extra-curricular activities</li> <li>-Friends help friends</li> <li>-Good study environment</li> <li>-Attention from government</li> <li>-Talking to parents about importance of education</li> <li>-Pay more attention to ethnic children</li> </ul>

To improve the *affordability* of school for poor families and for youth already out of school, limiting or setting *ceilings on school fees* was proposed repeatedly. One boy described how the existing fee structure was already a strain on his family and any increases, as MOET was currently proposing, could force him to leave school. Older youth voiced the need for *subsidized fees* for vocational training and proposed an innovative solution. They suggested developing a *repayment plan* scheme for vocational training loans whereby young workers could repay the loans gradually after they had found employment.

Youth were realistic about their economic situations. Their solutions reflect the expectations of having to help their families and suggest ways to improve the *accessibility* of schooling for children fulfilling those responsibilities. Children out of school working to earn a living suggested the creation of *work-study opportunities* linked to school such as working to clean the school grounds as a way to help children who must earn a living to also continue going to school. Mobile classes were also proposed for ethnic minority children who do not have a school nearby or have to travel long distances to work in the fields. Older youth also proposed *volunteer literacy classes* that were tuition free. *Evening classes* were also suggested as a means for both drop outs and working youth to study and improve their skills after working hours.

Youth desires for an improved and supportive school and learning environment went beyond requests for better facilities and included *teacher attitudes* and *instructional quality*, as well as *recreation* and *extracurricular activities*. Many children would like to have a *secondary school at the commune level* so they would have a greater chance to get further education. Improving *school facilities* were also mentioned, including science labs, libraries, teaching aids, and especially having clean water and hygiene toilets. Describing outdated, highly theoretical and rote style teaching methodologies, youth also suggested *teachers should get training* to make the classes more interesting and exciting to the children. They also wanted teachers to be role models of tolerance and non-discrimination. Children in school as well as older youth spoke of the desire for *recreation and sports*, explaining that the rigidity and pressures of school, including break time, was high and thus they needed activities and time to choose their own activities to relieve stress and ultimately be more productive and motivated students.

Different groups of youth expressed the desire for ways to make their education relevant to their own needs or context. Older youth focused on finding jobs wanted *practical skills training* like computer skills and foreign languages. Ethnic minority youth shared the many barriers to education access in their communities such as long distances to school, teacher shortages, and other limitations in accessing information. They suggested establishing a public library in their community and sought other ways to *increase learning opportunities* for ethnic minority children outside of the formal school environment. Finally, younger children who wish to help create an environment at school that responds to their needs proposed having a *suggestion box* for students to safely express their views about the issues they care about.

### **Key theme: Reproductive health and HIV**

The discussions of reproductive health and HIV revealed that youth are curious about these topics and have the desire to learn more in order to understand rather than just fear certain threats, and to better protect themselves from risky behavior. Youth have also been shaped by strong social messages against social evils and they admirably strive to avoid these behaviors. However, they also expressed self-awareness that strong linkages of HIV with social evils like drug use and commercial sex work may also lead to greater stigma and marginalization of people with HIV. Youth were not only interested in getting reliable information, but were also interested in how they received it. They were active in proposing new and engaging strategies in

HIV BCC that used positive reinforcing images and messages about healthy practices and persons with HIV.

In Hanoi, facilitators noted that *sexual and reproductive health issues* were an attractive issue for youth but that they showed little knowledge of these topics. There were also some clear *gaps between knowledge and practice* that emerged. For example, while *condom use* is recognized in the prevention of pregnancy, STIs and HIV, perceptions of people who buy and carry condoms were not an encouraging sign for condom use or safe sex. Most youth in both Hanoi and HCMC could not reconcile their knowledge about effective condom use with their socialized association of condoms with negative behaviors. While there was some debate in HCMC, in Hanoi they agreed strongly with SAVY findings that the majority of youth perceive people who would buy or carry condoms as not a good person. In fact sexual practice in general was not really seen as a health issue by youth at the consultations but rather as a moral issue.

**Key results of SAVY and youth responses: Reproductive health**

<b>SAVY result presented</b>	<b>HCMC youth response</b>	<b>Hanoi youth response</b>
Youth having premarital sex is 7.6%	Disagree. Should be higher	Disagree. Some said higher, some said lower because of importance of virginity.
1/3 considered that premarital sex is acceptable if both are voluntary	Agree	Disagree. Should be higher.
55% consider that commercial sex workers is immoral	Disagree. Figure should be higher.	Disagree. Figure should be higher.
60% don't know about homosexuality	Nearly all disagree. Should be higher	--
Majority know contraceptive methods	Agree. Being taught in schools	Agree.

SAVY also found low levels of approval of *premarital sex* and very strong condemnation of *sex workers*. Interestingly, while youth views of sex workers were even stronger than the SAVY findings and reflect the socialization on ‘social evils’, in Hanoi, there was common perception that the proportion of youth who thinks it is OK to have premarital sex is much higher than the one-fifth to one-third reported in SAVY. A possibility is that this is due to the fact that sexual activity is still a very sensitive topic and those young people who have more liberal views about premarital sex were more vocal about expressing their views. There was stronger debate in Hanoi on the actual proportion of youth who have premarital sex. While many youth thought these percentages should be much higher in reality, there were disagreements by those who pointed out the strong *social emphasis on virginity* would prevent most youth from having premarital sex. By contrast, the HCMC consultation message was that youth have a lot more knowledge and experience and therefore many more are having sex before marriage.

Responses to the SAVY findings on perceptions of *persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)* were somewhat troubling. For the most part, youth strongly disagreed on the percentage of youth who would think a person who appears healthy could not have HIV, judging the number to much higher in reality because of strong negative associations of the disease. They also

acknowledged that while it was easy to say they might help a person infected with HIV, it was more difficult to do, especially because of the high level of fear of transmission and general stigma against PLWHA. Discussions on key information about HIV, including transmission methods, also revealed significant inaccuracies in knowledge, particularly among 12-15 year olds. (see Box X below)

**HCMC, Ages 12-15 years: Conceptions and misconceptions about HIV transmission**

- Manicure, shared toothbrush
- unsafe sex, not using condoms
- French kiss with HIV infected people
- Birth delivery (when mother in HIV+)
- Using non-sterilized medical equipments
- Homosexuality
- No gloves, mash when providing care to HIV+ people

These results show that youth are heavily influenced by anti-HIV campaigns and social messages that have frequently been linked to social evils. They also reflect responses to the images that have been used to date in government HIV BCC campaigns, showing scary and depressing images of persons with HIV/AIDS, and putting them along side images of drug use and commercial sex work. Not surprisingly, prostitution, drug injection, discrimination and using condoms were most mentioned when participants were requested to list the issues which they thought to be linked to HIV/AIDS. To see youth suggestions on how to improve the attractiveness and effectiveness of HIV IEC and BCC targeted toward youth, see Box X.

Youth responses to the prompt on the *linkages between HIV/AIDS and social evils* revealed that some youth were on gaining knowledge about HIV that could allow them to act responsibility and without discrimination. While one group seemed to naturally associate the two concepts, another group argued strongly that linking the two concepts increases *stigma and discrimination* against those with HIV/AIDS and explained the difference between individual choice to be involved with activities/behaviors the government categorizes as social evils, and having HIV, which is a disease that anyone can catch.

**Key results of SAVY and youth responses: HIV**

<b>SAVY result presented</b>	<b>HCMC youth response</b>	<b>Hanoi youth response</b>
Majority of youth heard of HIV (90%)	Agree	Agree
15% think that a healthy-looking person cannot be HIV infected. 30% and 20% for ethnic, rural think like this respectively	Not decided	Disagree. Think figures should be much higher because of general stigma and negative assumptions about HIV.
Majority know the effects of condom use but more than 50% think someone carrying condoms is not a good person	Not decided.	Agree.
80% say that will support HIV	Not decided. Easy to talk,	Disagree. Number would be

infected people but have to be careful	difficult to do it	much higher due to stigma against people with HIV
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Across different age groups, youth demonstrated certain *information gaps and curiosity* about the knowledge they should have in order to make safe and healthy choices. Adolescents ages 12-15 discussed HIV transmission and included deep kissing, sharing toothbrush and getting a manicure, revealing serious misconceptions about HIV. In HCMC, one group (ages 16-18) raised the sensitive issue of homosexuality. The group reported that it had little knowledge and wanted to know more about *homosexuality* and same sex relationships, how HIV transmission occurred in these relationships and what would constitute safe sex.

**Youth remake of HIV/AIDS BBC for youth:** Participants suggested a number of ways which would make communication targeted toward youth on HIV/AIDS more effective and attractive:

- Create attractive and appealing ads on TV
- Providing vivid evidences, data, pictures, presentation
- Short and easy to remember
- Use content that is real, close to daily life
- Integrate the issue into the game shows to encourage participation of young people
- Integrate the information into a soap opera
- Compose songs on HIV/AIDS and have then performed by famous pop singers
- Build a website which includes a forum for young people to discussion the issue
- Broadcast programs with real life stories of people living with HIV/AIDS
- Promote inter-personal communication with the participation of young people. The trainers/communicators should be trained carefully about HIV/AIDS.
- Integrate HIV/AIDS education into the formal school curriculum; teach children about HIV/AIDS at the lower secondary school (start at grade 6)

In general, the consultation participants were relatively young and unmarried so perhaps fewer were thinking about issues like contraception or were comfortable talking about it. Participants over 16 years of age actively participated in the discussion of the issue but children from 13-15 were shy about speaking out about sensitive issues like sexual activity or condom use. Many males in the HCMC consultation considered that sexual reproductive health was a *women's issue*. Except for the last small group session in HCMC no other groupings were by gender. In this last session, the young migrant group was split further by gender, giving us some important insights into gender specific concerns and priorities.

*Female migrant workers* put reproductive health issues along side labor and employment issues as a primary source of concern and anxiety. They described numerous factors that contribute to sexual reproductive health risks, including coed housing in dormitories and the lack of personal safety in the neighborhoods where they lived. The lack of sanitation and clean water also increases likelihood of infections while the lack of reproductive health information or services means these conditions go untreated. In particular, these young women also pointed to the poor people skills and sensitivity of male doctors that discouraged them from getting check ups or treatment.

Both male and female migrant workers pointed to the *lack of leisure and recreation* as a health risk. Without product outlets to relieve their stress from work or social activities to ease their boredom, loneliness or depression, they may easily fall into risky behaviors such as drug use or unsafe sex. This behavior would also increase their risk of being infected with HIV. Younger youth also echoed this desire for leisure and recreation as a way to relieve their intense study pressures and promote a healthier outlook.

There is a strong desire for more information across all different age groups. Adolescents focused mainly on the information they learned at school or through programs such as the health living clubs. Most agreed that parents rarely talk about reproductive health to children. Some participants said that their parents were too busy to talk to them. Or, because of conservative social norms, if they did, their favorite topic was reminding children about traditional moral values or about avoiding social evils. There was little conversation in the home to support understanding of healthy sexual choices and practices to help young people protect themselves from health risks.

Older youth largely reported the lack of accessible, affordable and quality health services for young people. Having youth friendly services including free health check for young people was something voiced repeatedly, especially as sexual reproductive health is still a very sensitive issue for young people. Young women were aware that they are particularly susceptible to reproductive health risks and were eager to have services from doctors who were more communicative and demonstrated greater sensitivity to female issues and care.

A resounding message from the young people across the consultations is that you must give youth the knowledge they need to make the right choices and avoid risky situations. Simply summarized by one young notetaker in HCMC, “Many in Vietnam think that sex education is giving youth the ‘key’ to certain behaviors/activities, but ‘it is better to give [them] the key rather than let [them] get lost in difficult situations.” Many also made references back to the need for supportive family relationships and friendships to help promote a healthy outlook and behaviors.

**Key theme: Substance abuse**

Youth perceptions of staying healthy were largely seen as staying away from ‘*social evils*’. While drug use appeared as a risk factor in numerous contexts, the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco were primarily limited to the first day of the consultations where some groups responded to SAVY findings on substance abuse. The impact of alcoholism on families was also raised a number of times, but this did not lead to further discussion about the drinking habits of young people.

**Key results of SAVY and youth responses: Stimulating substances**

<b>SAVY result presented</b>	<b>HCMC youth response</b>	<b>Hanoi youth response</b>
20% youth know drug users	Not agree. Figures should be higher	<i>[Hong Anh, I don't see anything in my notes for this, can you check VWU]</i>

		<i>Vietnamese notes and add if they have responses?]</i>
Easy to by alcohols, cigarettes	Agree	
43% male smokers	Disagree. Figure should be higher	
First time smoking is 17 years old	Not agree. Close to age 14 or 15	
Smoking, drinking is popular	Not decided. Only happen in part of the group	
50% drinking at least once	Figure should be higher	
First drinking age is 17	Not decided yet. Very high in rural area	

### **Drug use**

While there was relatively little focus on drug use or abuse on its own, many group discussions included drug abuse and increasing drug use as a risk factor in their community. Also, the participants disagreed with SAVY finding that 20% of youth say they know drug users, feeling the percentage is much higher in reality but that the sensitivity of the issue and connection to social evils is a strong factor for underreporting. On reasons for drug use, youth cited peer pressure and negative influence of friends. Young migrants also worried about turning to drug use and other risky behaviors if they feel stressed and depressed about their working conditions and lives. Many youth cited the ease of purchasing drugs as another cause of increasing drug use. In Hanoi, more rural youth than urban youth were familiar with where to purchase drugs. Young people at the consultations did not have much knowledge about specific substances and were curious to learn more about different drugs and the consequences of using them.

### **Drinking and smoking**

Youth cited the *wide availability* and the increasing production of alcohol and cigarette as making it easier for young people to use these substances. Most agree that the percentage of young male smokers (43%) reported by SAVY too low. They also observed that in their experience, young people start smoking very early at age 14 or 15.

*Alcoholism* of fathers was repeated as a risk factor in families from all regions and particularly in rural areas and with ethnic minority families. This was seen as a threat to family well being, economic stability and to some extent physical violence. However there was little discussion of drinking habits or condemnation of alcohol use per se. Although youth in HCMC thought that youth experimentation with drinking exceeded the 50% SAVY result, drinking was also reported as an activity that affects only some groups, but was seen as much higher in the rural areas.

*Smoking* became an interesting focus of discussion in HCMC when the presenter on SAVY findings and youth behaviors appeared to pose the idea that there were both benefits and risks associated with smoking and that youth needed to weigh those factors carefully before making decisions about whether or not to smoke. During the Q&A, there were many curious youth who asked follow up questions about the benefits of smoking. And there was some confusion among the younger adolescents about the message they were hearing. During the debriefing session that

day, the youth facilitators were concerned that there was not a strong message delivered to the group that there may be perceived benefits of smoking or many factors that lead young people to start smoking, but that the scientific research conclusively shows that smoking is harmful to health in many ways.

In Hanoi, the use of legal substances was also largely confined to responding to SAVY results with few other references to these as health risks. The priorities of youth are on school and work as productive activities that increase positive family and social environments. There was little attention on the health side of reproductive health and HIV risk—mainly a focus on avoiding social evils. Except for female migrants no one chose or identified health issues as key priorities on WDR day in HCMC where groups were given the freedom to define their own priorities. It is possible that if adolescents had the opportunity to discuss reproductive health in gender specific groups the discussion would have revealed more about SRH concerns.

**Another health issue: Traffic safety**

In responding to SAVY results on traffic safety and causes of road accidents, there was very strong consensus about motorcycle riding habits, helmet use and what was needed to change behavior. The group from An Giang included traffic safety as a third priority issue on the WDR day. They reported that many young people do not comply with traffic regulations, causing harm to others. The increasing of traffic accidents was also mentioned in connection to the young people’s practices such as drinking while driving and illegal motorcycle racing. There is strong agreement that young people mainly respond to compulsory requirements such as helmet laws that are enforced by police. Again, the risks were linked back to family environment, with some youth voicing the concern that some young people are spoiled by their parents who give them too much money that can allow them to participate in bad activities. Key suggestions for improving road safety included increased enforcement and fines and introducing traffic safety curriculum in schools.

**Key results of SAVY and youth responses: Traffic accidents**

<b>SAVY result presented</b>	<b>HCMC youth response</b>	<b>Hanoi youth response</b>
Mainly traffic accidents	Agree	Agree
54% once driving motorbike	Agree	Agree
25% wearing helmets	Agree	Agree
2 compulsory reasons: laws and traffic regulations	Agree	Agree

Like with sexual reproductive health and HIV, young people really wanted more information on specific substances, as well as the consequences of smoking. They were undecided as to the degree to which practices were influenced by parental practices but pointed to the negative consequences of drinking and alcoholism on the family. Their suggestions of how best to mitigate health risks of substance use indicate that strict regulation might be more effective than relying on IEC or BCC campaigns. The strategies proposed by youth on both substance use and traffic safety hinged on *legal regulations* and accompanying enforcement.

## **Key theme: Migration**

While the concerns of young migrants has appeared in the discussion of other central themes, because the majority of migrant workers in Vietnam are youth, and because the circumstances of migration often increase exposure and susceptibility to social and health risks, migration is highlighted here as an important youth theme. Young migrants have particularly limited access to information and services in all areas, including employment, training, health and reproductive health, and labor protection. Their living and working conditions are often unhealthy or unsafe and the lack of both family and social networks and of positive recreational activities means they are more at risk of both poor physical health and poor mental or spiritual health.

In particular, young migrants find it very difficult to access safe and reliable information on both employment and health. Because of the lack of good employment information or services, they are at best limited at finding better opportunities and at worse subject to exploitation by bad agents. They also spoke of being discriminated against by local employers who either required local household registration or preferred migrants from other regions who they believed to be harder working. The lack of household registration was described as a barrier not only to finding employment but also to finding safe and comfortable housing and to accessing other services. Young migrant women voiced serious concerns about the absence of information and accessible and gender sensitive services for reproductive health.

Housing and working conditions were additional concerns raised by young migrants. Both men and women focused on the lack of security and sanitation of the dormitories available to migrant workers and the young women raised health and safety concerns of having to stay in coed housing. Working conditions are also very difficult and perhaps because of their status as migrant workers, they described how labor laws and regulations are rarely enforced so they often do not get compensated for overtime or provided social protection services by their employers.

Young migrants are also away from the protective environment of family and social networks so face greater challenges in lifestyle change. However, due to their migrant status and often temporary household registration, they are not included in many mainstream social activities or programs. Their need for information is acute and they need both knowledge and supports on how to protect themselves and make good choices. Many described their shift work as inflexible, making it even more difficult for them to access opportunities for additional education or training. This also further limited their ability to participate in the few social activities available, and put them at greater risk of being influenced by risky behaviors.

Young migrants seemed to most clearly understand their rights and requirements. However, more than any other group, migrant workers also seemed deeply dependent on external entities to address their needs and did not currently have any individual means of safeguarding their vulnerabilities. They were eager for health centers to provide information and services on contraceptive methods and STDs and counseling on reproductive health. They saw the Labor or Trade Union as the bridge between employers and employees that can support workers and protect their rights. Young migrants also spoke of appealing to local authorities, such as the People's Committee, to draw attention on migrant issues of security, sanitation and housing.

## **Highlights of Key Policy Suggestions in each Main Themes**

### **Work**

- Increase reliable information and employment services and practically oriented vocational training linked to labor market demands.
- Address working and living conditions and lifestyle of young migrants as well as reproductive health information and services for young women.

### **Education**

- Increase affordability by reducing or limiting fees and facilitating accessibility for those already working or out of school.
- Increase quality by addressing the teaching and learning environment.
- Provide more space for young people to express their voices and concerns
- Make learning more practice-oriented and skills-based.

### **Health**

- Increase information and knowledge and provide youth friendly services
- Establish and enforce regulations for traffic safety and substance use
- HIV BBC/IEC recommendations (**see page X**)

### **Family**

- Strong need to change family dynamic and increase communication with children on educational priorities and on topics such as sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.
- Need to address abusive family behaviors such as alcoholism and domestic violence.

### **Ethnic minority**

- Improve parental awareness of the importance of education
- Improve labor market opportunities in rural and remote areas
- Address barriers to education access by providing comprehensive fee waivers, building more schools in communes and ensuring supply of teachers and textbooks

### **Migrant workers**

- Address need for safe, affordable and sanitary housing
- Provide reproductive health information and services for young women
- Ensure compliance with labor code to improve working conditions
- Provide leisure and recreation activities to offer productive outlet for stress and boredom

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