

**Presentation on Vietnam's legislations, policies and practices
in protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disability**

*Bangkok Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South East Asia
31/3-3/4/2009*

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Royal Thai Government for inviting us to this workshop. This workshop is of great significance to many countries in the region that still suffer a lot from consequences of past wars since it provides us with numerous opportunities to exchange ideas and share experiences in addressing problems arising from victims assistance. With a hope to make a humble contribution to the workshop and provide other participants with some of information regarding Vietnam's efforts in this area, I would like to focus my presentation on Vietnam's legislations, policies and practices in protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disability (PWD).

According to the statistics published by the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs of Vietnam, disabled people in Viet Nam currently account for 6.34% of the population, or around 5.3 millions, out of which 82.27% live in rural areas, while 12.73% live in urban areas. The percentage of male disabled people is 7.54% exceeding that of female ones which is 5.19%. Notably, war-related causes account for 25.56% of disabled people.

With the consistent policy of considering the people, including the disabled, the ultimate objective and driving force of any social and economic development policy, the first Constitution in 1946 and its successors in 1959, 1980 and 1992 all affirm disabled persons are citizens, society's members, having full rights and obligations of a citizen, enjoying together with other citizens social achievements. Accordingly, disabled persons are entitled to assistance from the society, to enjoy their right to equality and to actively participate in society's activities. At the same time, all acts of discrimination and maltreatment are strictly prohibited. In concretizing the Constitution, Article 3 of the Ordinance on Disabled Persons in 1998 stipulates that *"The State encourages and creates favourable conditions for disabled persons to exercise on an equal basis their political, economic, cultural and social rights and develop their abilities to stabilize their life, integrate themselves into the community and take part in social activities. Disabled persons are assisted by the State and*

society in healthcare and functional rehabilitation, in creation of suitable jobs and are eligible to other rights as prescribed by law". The Ordinance also stipulates responsibilities of State, society and family vis-à-vis disabled persons, rights and obligations of disabled persons, covering a wide range of issues such as health care, education, vocational training and employment, cultural and sport activities and the use of public utility works of the disabled persons. The Government and related Ministries have issued many documents giving guidelines for the implementation of the Ordinance. In addition, numerous sectorial laws such as Labour Code, Law on Education, Law on Vocational Training, Law on the Protection, Care and Education of Children, Law on Judicial Assistance, Law on Technology and Information, etc, also have chapters, sections and articles on entitlements, policies and solutions on the provision of assistance for persons with disability. Vietnam is currently working on the Law on the Handicapped as well as studying next steps to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

Under this legal framework, many organisations of and for disabled persons have been established and are vigorously developing at national and local levels. The National Coordinating Committee on Disability (NCCD) was established in 2001 with 30 members, including Ministries and agencies at national level. In 2003, Viet Nam Association of Businesses and Enterprises of Disabled Peoples (VABED) was set up. There are also nearly 300 societies, associations, organisations, clubs, groups of and for disabled persons at national, local and grassroots levels.

In practice, many activities in areas of advocacy, training of personnel and assistance for disabled persons have been undertaken in recent years, contributing to the increased awareness of families, communities, local governments, and disabled persons themselves on their equal rights in participating in social activities. Disabled persons gradually acknowledge their status as recognised by the law, overcome their complexes to become socially included and have made positive contributions in political, economic and social lives of the country.

It is estimated that around 10,000 persons with disability in Vietnam have received livelihood allowance from the State and are cared for in over 400 public and non-public social protection facilities.

In the last 10 years, over 300,000 disabled people enjoyed functional rehabilitation through corrective surgeries and received free corrective devices; over 20,000 people with mobility disability have been provided with devices such as wheelchairs, prosthetic limbs; tens of thousands of children have undergone corrective surgeries and received rehabilitation assistance. Apart from 30 corrective and rehabilitation centres and facilities, the community-based rehabilitation network has been developed in 46 out of 64 provinces and cities, providing training to 74.1% of families with disabled persons and assisted 44.2% of disabled people in social reintegration. Almost all national and provincial hospitals have rehabilitation wards. At present, the ratio of disabled people accessing health services is 63%.

With regard to education and vocational training, Viet Nam is developing an integrated education model, converting textbooks into Braille, developing a system of sign languages and unified the writing system for the blind. The number of children with disabilities enrolled in secondary and tertiary education increases each year, many of them excel in their studies. Up to now, there are approximately 100 vocational centers for persons with disabilities and 35,000 people receive vocational training.

Hundreds of billions of VNDs funded under the National Target Programme on education and training have been invested in infrastructure and equipment for vocational training of disabled persons. After attending vocational training, 70% disabled persons have been employed in businesses and enterprises.

In order to improve the access of disabled persons to public works and means of transport, the Ministry of Construction has put into practice a set of standards and criteria for public works accessible to the handicapped since 2002, under which many public works, transportation, cultural and sports facilities have been built and modified to better suit persons with disabilities.

To better ensure the right to health of the disabled, the Sports Association for the Handicapped has been established and consequently sport movements are developing in over 40 provinces and cities. Vietnam's handicapped persons are being able to participate in international and regional competitions held for the handicapped worldwide.

However, there are still many challenges in protecting the rights of Vietnamese persons with disabilities, especially the poor, namely discrimination and stigma against the disabled still exist in education, at the work place and in community activities. Vietnam is committed to overcoming these challenges in the upcoming time. However, this is a task that requires not only efforts and willingness but also financial assistance. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to international organizations, NGOs and other donors for their great support given to Vietnam over the past year and call on them to continue their financial contributions to Vietnam in this field.

Thank you very much for your kind attention./.