

Action to the Community Development Center
2014 Annual Report



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Contents

Letter to our supporters.....	3
Our projects.....	4
Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.....	5
Cactus blooming.....	8
Legal counsel.....	10
Who we are.....	12

Action to the Community Development Center 2014 Annual Report

Letter to our supporters

When a person with disabilities living in Vietnam looks out on their opportunities in life, the options are not always clear. The inequalities faced by people with disabilities lead to challenges beyond the disability itself, in the form of societal limitations. As ACDC seeks to dissolve these injustices in order to pave the way for a barrier-free society for all, 2014 was met with challenges, hope and progress.

The past year saw ground-breaking strides forward for ACDC and the disabled community. With awareness of rights spreading throughout the community, ACDC has provided council for rapidly growing numbers of people with disabilities, giving the advice they need in order to gain education, get married, find careers, or receive any other type of support sought. We have brought empowering knowledge and services to women who previously had no access to reproductive health, offering tools to change lives forever. After tireless advocacy, 2014 also saw the ratification of a United Nations mandate to universalize and ensure the rights of all persons with disabilities. We are surely on the road forward in securing justice and dignity for all those living with disabilities in Vietnam.

It is with pride and a positive outlook that I want to share with you our work in 2014. The encouraging progress of the year was all made possible through the support of our dedicated staff, donors, volunteers, and friends in the community.

Thank you,

Courtney Schultz

Information Communication and Reporting

Action to the Community Development Center

Our Projects



Promoting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Background

In Vietnam, people living with disabilities represent an estimated 15.3% of the population (*NCCD*). Along with social stigmas and assumptions underestimating their abilities, this large portion of the population faces many obstacles directly affecting their quality of life. The literacy rate of the disabled population in Vietnam compare with that of the non-disabled population at 76% to 95% (*UNFPA*), and unemployment among the disabled community is at a staggering 14%; three times that of non-disabled (*UNFPA*). Disparities in these foundations of secure livelihoods are among the points ranking the issue of equality for people with with disabilities (PWD) of utmost importance for the national agenda.

In order to secure access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, ACDC works to promote equal rights for all individuals by providing access to free legal

advice and knowledge of how to assert those rights.

This fight for protection of rights begins with addressing the issue of justice, which is still

largely a foreign concept in Vietnam. For PWD, the idea that they are equal citizens and share the right to the same civil liberties as everyone else is a somewhat new idea in conjunction with that of justice.

“The promotion of fundamental freedoms of people with disabilities will result in significant advances in the human, social, and economic development of society.”

- CRPD, preamble (m)

To promulgate the rights of PWD, ACDC has taken steps to reach out to PWD through interviews, free legal council, and policy advocacy. In 2014, ACDC held extensive training workshops for disabled people’s organizations (DPO) operating

throughout Vietnam, all of which are led by members of the PWD community, themselves. ACDC’s efforts aim to strengthen the entire Vietnamese community by building capacity and confidence in securing rights for people living with all types of disabilities.

CRPD

With the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Action to the Community Development Center 2014 Annual Report

(CRPD) in Vietnam, the country sees itself a significant step closer to establishing a national action plan to support PWD.

ACDC's relentless advocacy, through engagement with local leaders, DPOs, and the public, was key in the 2014 ratification of the CRPD. ACDC developed guidelines to be implemented across local DPOs, promoting these guidelines through distribution of 1000 handbooks regarding policy advocacy, service accessibility, and trainings for DPOs and PWD. ACDC's adamancy and dedicated networking helped the huge push forward in making CRPD a reality in Vietnam.

By ratification of the Convention, the universality and interdependence of the rights of all people are to be recognized, without discrimination. To this end, the government signs on to address disability issues and recognize the value of contributions to society made by PWD as imperative in the advancement of society. To ensure this, CRPD obliges signatures to adopt legislation for implementation of equal rights and freedoms, while doing away with any existing laws and practices that allow for discrimination. These initiatives would include development and accessibility of universally designed goods, services, and facilities to meet specific needs of PWD.

PWD are to be included throughout the entire legislative process, including monitoring.

CRPD means the immediate adoption of effective measures to raise awareness, foster respect and combat stereotypes through initiating and maintaining campaigns upholding civil liberties and access to justice for all people.

“[We] undertake to ensue and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people with disabilities without discrimination of any kind.”

- CRPD (4.1)

Only once the value of PWD is recognized and their roles in the community brought to full potential through equal accessibility, opportunities, and rights, can society, as a whole, move forward. CRPD aims to make this dream of progress a reality by mainstreaming disability rights

through an integrated education system, vocational training, respect throughout the media, equal work and retirement benefits, marriage rights, and housing programs. CRPD ensures effective access to justice, as well as obligatory sensitivity training for those working in administrative justice. Beyond the national legal framework, effective implementation of the CRPD is only possible through active engagement of DPOs. When those living with disabilities, including children, are included in every step of decision-making processes of DPO activities, they will be empowered to speak for themselves, allowing a legal framework to materialize into realization of rights.

Action to the Community Development Center 2014 Annual Report



l-r: Dennis Curry, UNDP VN Assistant Country Director & Head of Governance Unit; Deborah Schoenmaeckers, UNDP VN Program Officer; Nguyen Thi Lan Anh, ACDC Director; Do Thi Hong Thuan, ACDC Project Coordinator

Cactus Blooming

Context

Although they represent a significant portion of the population, women in Vietnam living with disabilities face a number of neglected challenges. While the 2014 ratification of the CRPD brings hope for change, the institutional and social suppression of rights and

dignity limit the access to knowledge and capacity for self-confidence that women with disabilities (WWD) deserve.

Stifled educational and social opportunities affect all areas of a woman's quality of life, particularly in the realm of sexual and reproductive health. Without the resources to information regarding sexual health and reproductive services, WWD face increased risk of

Action to the Community Development Center 2014 Annual Report

STDs, HIV/AIDS, gynecological issues, sexual abuse, and other hardships that often accompany a lack of self-confidence and capacity to ensure personal security, which WWD deal with all too often.

Action

The sexual and reproductive injustices faced by WWD in Vietnam are inexcusable. To tackle these problems head-on, ACDC hosted a series of medical check-ups, consultations, and training workshops focused on sexual and reproductive health in the Thanh Oai and Quang Binh districts.

Supported by volunteers, donors, local governments and medical centers, ACDC carried out examination and consultation days for 200 WWD in both dis-

tricts. All necessary prescriptions and treatments were subsequently provided, as 75% of the patients were found to have gynecological and other medical issues including tumors, cysts, cardiovascular disease, fatty liver dis-



ease, ulcers, and kidney stones.

Each of the training workshops offered in these communities was filled to capacity with women eager to learn about pregnancy, motherhood, contraception, sexual satisfaction, and hygiene. The workshops aimed to increase knowledge, skills, and comfortability with sexual and reproductive health. Many of the women participating entered with a degree of shyness and naïvety regarding sexual topics, but were able to leave the workshops with confidence and comfortability in their own sexual and reproductive health. Through games, discussions, and trainings led by women who shared the experience of living with disabilities, participants learned about safe sexual practices, avoiding pregnancy,

Action to the Community Development Center 2014 Annual Report

maintaining a healthy pregnancy, and personal health and hygiene. Gaining a grasp on topics so directly affecting their personal well-being helped the women to walk away with a newfound awareness and empowerment in themselves.

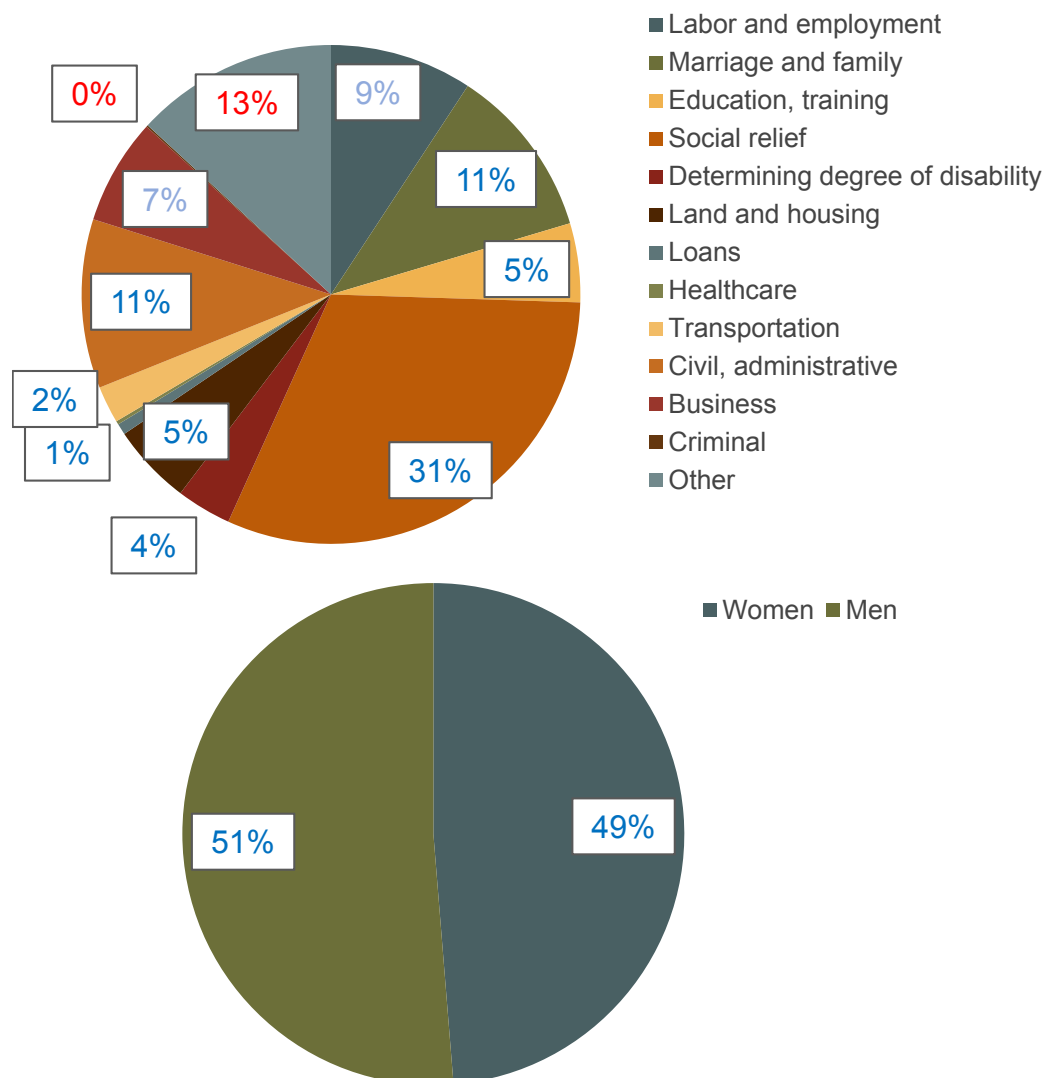
Action to the Community Development Center 2014 Annual Report

Legal Counsel

Offering free legal counseling to people with disabilities, ACDC has gained a positive reputation among a responsive PWD community. In 2014, ACDC provided 2,613 consultations to individuals living with disabilities in Vietnam. ACDC helps these citizens to gain access to the sponsors they need, marriage rights, university education, and vocational training for starting small businesses.

Consultations by Type

Consultations by Gender



Action to the Community Development Center 2014 Annual Report

Advocacy

Recognizing the diverse needs of our beneficiaries, ACDC strives to accommodate anyone seeking legal services by making them as accessible as possible. We do this in a direct way through consultations and legal action, as well as in the forward-moving, sustainable push of advocacy.

ACDC partners with DPO leaders and legal workers from more than 20 provinces across Vietnam, holding trainings, conventions, and mobile consultation trips to reach out to as many PWD as possible, regardless of location or accessibility. Through continuous cultivation of a network of PWD and DPOs throughout Vietnam, ACDC is a key player in leading a movement towards realization and assertion of equal rights for all those living with disabilities. This support has helped PWD to address societal issues, become aware of their rights, and strengthen capacity through legal support and an empowering community of PWD and supporting organizations.



Who We Are

Action to the Community Development Center is making swift and lasting strides towards the sustainable development of Vietnam's disabled community. Formed in 2011, the team at ACDC

Action to the Community Development Center 2014 Annual Report

is comprised of dedicated, competent staff and volunteers who understand and are invested in people with disabilities in Vietnam. ACDC believes in the empowerment and importance of contributions of this community, as it is only when the disabled community has equal rights that the people of Vietnam, as a whole, can reach their full potential. To make this vision possible, the people of ACDC work to create an inclusive and barrier-free community for people with disabilities.

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Tran Ngoc Tuyet Mai, HR manager Mai Thi Lien, accountant

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Nguyen Thi Binh, lawyer Tran Thi Hoai, administrator Nghiem Thi Thu Trang, research assistant

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Action to the Community Development Center
2014 Annual Report

Thank you!