

Low-cost technology for young people with vision impairment

Vietnam – Nhat Hong Center for the blind and visually impaired

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

This project offers various free services to the blind, including Inclusive Education, a higher education programme, and vocational and career training. It also develops low-tech teaching devices, such as drawing kits, flash cards, and apps that can be downloaded from Google Play Store.

“To be blind is not miserable; not to be able to bear blindness, that is miserable.”

—John Milton, 17th century blind poet

FACTS & FIGURES

- In 2014, 262 children and juveniles participated in project activities, and of these 48 attended the Early Intervention Programme, 76 the Special Education Programme, 101 the Inclusive Education Programme, 21 the Higher Education Programme, and 13 the Vocational Education Programme.
- From 2012 to 2014, 390 children and juveniles with vision impairments received direct services from the project.
- Between 2012 and 2014 the project produced 1,709 copies of Braille books, 82 copies of large-print books, 104 copies of tactile books, 1,136 copies of audio books, 135 teaching devices, and 6 educational software programmes, among other materials.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

Many visually impaired children in Vietnam do not have access to the mainstream education system or other educational options, such as vocational training or information and communication technology (ICT). Thus, they remain dependent on their social network, such as their families and/or society as a whole. One reason for this exclusion is that the visually impaired often do not have the possibility to have adaptive educational materials and devices at hand, mainly due to a lack of financial resources.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

With the use of ICT, such as adaptive software and embossers that produce Braille, the project provides visually impaired young persons with educational and technical services. These children learn to develop their computer and communication skills and use ICT to learn other subjects at school and in daily living. The project is cost effective and can be revised easily to accommodate changes in the general education programmes. Rather than making specific devices for the blind, which would be expensive, the project chose to use regular computers, phones, tablets, etc., and instead created specific software and apps – all of which are freely available for download. The project also conducted various trainings for ICT teachers and associations for the blind.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

Currently, the Nhat Hong Centre's annual budget for ICT program is \$15,000 and it hopes to increase that figure to 20,500 in 2016 and 30,500 in 2017, especially through enhanced fundraising activities and the selling of developed services and products. From 2015 to 2017, 50 children with vision impairments will attend the Early Intervention Programme, 80 the Special Education Programme, and 120 the Inclusive Education Programme. Further, 30 will attend the Higher Education programme and 50 the Vocational Education Programme. In 2016 the ICT curriculum will be finished; more low-cost devices will be developed, as well as applications for Android and Apple devices; and more trainings for ICT teachers as well as for young persons will be held.



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