

# ADRA Vietnam

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## TRANG DO

Trang Do has been working in ADRA Vietnam since its inception.

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The Adventist Development and Relief Agency Vietnam (ADRA Vietnam) is a non-governmental organization that has consistently and actively operated for more than thirty years. It has implemented over 200 development and relief projects, with a total budget of U\$12,500,000, benefiting more than 4,500,000 direct and indirect residential populations in communities across the country's various sectors.<sup>1</sup>

ADRA Vietnam is part of the global Adventist Development and Relief Agency network, the humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>2</sup> With a presence in more than 130 countries, ADRA seeks to identify and address social injustice and deprivation in developing countries.<sup>3</sup>

ADRA Vietnam assists vulnerable communities and people with special needs, improving their opportunities and quality of life.<sup>4</sup> Its programs and activities are implemented through strong partnerships with local authorities and civil society organizations in order to develop their capacity to achieve long-term sustainable change.<sup>5</sup> In line with ADRA International,<sup>6</sup> its current focus areas are sustainable livelihoods, health, education, water, sanitation, climate change, and disaster management.<sup>7</sup>

With the motto of "Justice. Compassion. Love," ADRA Vietnam's purpose is to "to serve humanity so that all may live as God intended." It accomplishes this purpose through the organization's values of connection, courage, and compassion.<sup>8</sup>

## History

"ADRA's initial involvement in Vietnam began in 1988 with a series of shipments of medicine and medical supplies to Vietnam from ADRA in the United States." ADRA Indochina was officially established to oversee ADRA's work in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam in July 1989 with headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand.<sup>9</sup> Dennis Tidwell, country program director, noted that he "spent about half of [his] time traveling to Cambodia, Laos, and



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Vietnam to contact NGOs and government officials to start up ADRA projects.<sup>10</sup> He also “drafted memorandums of understanding with each government and successfully registered ADRA in each country.”<sup>11</sup>

“In 1992 ADRA Indochina was divided into three discreet and independent implementing country operations: ADRA Vietnam, ADRA Cambodia, and ADRA Lao PDR. ADRA Vietnam posted its first full-time expatriates in Hanoi in 1993 with [a] continued formal presence since that time,” noted to Tidwell.<sup>12</sup> Tidwell also noted that “between 1989 and 1993, ADRA’s activities in Vietnam expanded into small relief and development projects [in the] southern provinces under the administration of the former ADRA Indochina office located in Thailand.”<sup>13</sup>

ADRA’s first project in Vietnam was a feeding program at a senior citizens’ facility in Ho Chi Minh City’s Phu Nhuan district.<sup>14</sup> Church members at the Phu Nhuan Seventh-day Adventist church volunteered to help with the project funded by ADRA Japan.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1990s, ADRA Vietnam not only improved community healthcare through its project funding of hospitals and healthcare worker training, but it implemented the Cow Bank project.<sup>16</sup> With this project, ADRA Vietnam loaned a female cow to a family. After one year, the family returned a female calf to ADRA Vietnam and kept the mother cow to generate income. In time, ADRA Vietnam would loan the grown calf to another family who would repeat this cycle and then begin their own livelihood project.<sup>17</sup>

In the early 2000s, ADRA Vietnam expanded its reach to serve at-risk youth and those with disabilities. Some projects offered vocational training for visually-impaired adults and provided revolving loan funds for them to start their own businesses.<sup>18</sup> These projects also offered braille lessons so they could be included in the standard education system.<sup>19</sup>

In the second decade of the 2000s, ADRA Vietnam implemented the projects relating to climate change adaptation including climate resilient agriculture and renewable energy.<sup>20</sup>

## Specific Projects

During the 1980s & 1990s, ADRA Vietnam projects focused on community health and community development initiatives including upgrading health facilities and improving water, sanitation, and hygiene.<sup>21</sup> Between November 1988 and February 1989, two shipping containers of hospital equipment and medical supplies sponsored by ADRA International were shipped to Vietnam. One was sent to Hanoi and one to Ho Chi Minh City. The distribution was in support of and partnership with the Vietnam Ministry of Health. Between January 1990 and December 1992, the Long An Primary Healthcare project was conducted, the first major project of ADRA Vietnam. It provided training and up-graded clinics funded by AusAID, and served 150,000 beneficiaries.

Between April 1992 and March 1995, the First Cow Bank was kickstarted in Thanh Hoa, Quang Ngai, Dong Nai, Song Be, Tay Ninh, Dong Thap, and An Giang. It targeted a population of 12,000 poor women, youth, and the disabled individuals. Vocational training was provided to people with visual impairments, ex-drug addicts,

jobless women, and former prostitutes in nine projects spread between Phu Nhuan Khanh Hoa, Yen Bai, Dong Thap, Soc Trang, An Giang, and Phu Yen.

The Dong Van Water Project was conducted from September 1999 to August 2000, funded by AusAID and ADRA Australia in collaboration with DELISA. This project helped create a pathway leading to a cave where there was a reliable clean water source for residents of the Sang Tung commune. This project also included the construction of water tanks and cement rainwater catchment jars for other communes.

ADRA Vietnam projects in the first decade of the 2000s focused on education and creating opportunities for less advantaged people. From November 2003 and June 2004, the Confidential Hotline and Internet Counseling (CHIC) for reproductive and sexual health was set up. It delivered better information access to the young people of Cao Bang. Operation of CHIC was extended in 2007 and 2008.

From June 2007 to June 2010, ADRA Vietnam implemented the Relating Adults and Youth (READY) for Health Project in Cao Bang. With a budget of US\$420,000, it offered better health for adolescents in this northern mountainous province of Vietnam. Between 2006 and 2009, the Sight Impaired Social Inclusion Initiative (SIMSINI) Project was conducted in several phases. A total of US\$60,000 was allocated for the opening of braille and vocational training classes for vision-impaired people and children in Ha Tay and Nam Dinh. Beginning in July 2009, the LICEEM (Literacy Classes Empowering Ethnic Minority) Project strengthened the capacity of the Cao Bang Provincial Women's Union and improved the social status of ethnic minority women through awareness and educational activities for three years. The Cow Bank during this period was extended to an additional eight provinces nationwide. This project provided vulnerable families with sustainable assets that provided incomes.

During this time, sixteen relief operations were also conducted nationwide and assisted those individuals and households most effected. In 2006, ADRA Vietnam responded to Typhoon Xangsane by providing ADRA's housing support packages. These packages, containing roofing sheets and construction materials, helped 107 families repair their homes and supported 535 individuals.<sup>22</sup>

After 2010, ADRA Vietnam adopted an increasing focus on local leadership and good governance in every project executed, promoting efficient use of resources and project sustainability. Long-term projects included the Sustainable Livelihood Development Project in Cao Bang Province and the Livelihood Improvement for Building Resilient Communities Project in Vinh Long Province. The Sustainable Livelihood Development Project was funded by ADRA Australia for a total of \$605,000. The Livelihood Improvement for Building Resilient Communities Project was partially funded by MFAT (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade) for a value of NZ\$700,000. The rest of the funding was based on resources of ADRA Vietnam.<sup>23</sup>

The Climate Resilient Agriculture and Renewable Energy for Sustainable Livelihood Improvement (CARE) Project, funded by ADRA Germany, ADRA Austria, and ADRA Netherlands, had two phases. Phase I (July 2015-December 2016) consisted of a pilot project to expand the existing sustainable livelihood development project (SLDP),

promoting climate resilient agriculture and renewable energy and actively contributing to sustainable livelihood development in the Bao Lac district. Phase II (July 2017-June 2020) sought to improve gender equitable livelihoods for poor ethnic minorities through economic empowerment and renewable energy application in the Bao Lac district, Cao Bang Province, Vietnam.

ADRA Vietnam operated the Community and Economic Development for Livelihood Improvement Project (CEDLIP) funded by FORMIN through ADRA Finland from January 2015 to December 2017. The project aimed to develop the livelihoods of marginalized ethnic minority communities in the Cao Bang Province (Bao Lac) in a sustainable and participatory manner. It employed a community-led and people-centered approach by replicating the Community Development Club model.

From October 2016 to September 2019, ADRA Vietnam focused on the Community Empowerment on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Project (CEM) for building safety and resilience funded by ADRA Australia. The program increased the safety and resilience of marginalized ethnic minority communities through improvement of preparedness and response mechanisms by engaging local authorities and communities in reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change in the Bao Lac district of Cao Bang Province. It directly benefited 500 households.

ADRA Vietnam, in partnership with the Hanoi Center for Women Development Support, implemented a two-year pilot project called the Youth Empowerment Through Skills Training (YES Center). Funded by ESPRIT through ADRA Austria and HOPE 87, the project empowered youth, especially girls and young women, by strengthening their skills and voices for economic self-reliance and leadership roles in poverty alleviation initiatives in Vietnam.

Initiated by ADRA Australia, ADRA Connections are short-term volunteer trips that aim to connect volunteers from many countries with people or local communities for improvement projects. The volunteers, who are youth, adults, seniors, or children with their parents, have raised funds to support specific projects in Vietnam. They travel to Vietnam and spend 5-7 days working with local people to implement their project. Since 2012, ADRA Vietnam has benefited from more than twenty connection trips with volunteers from various countries including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, Finland, and Korea.

Projects have included renovations of houses for members of the blind associations in Nam Dinh and Thai Binh provinces, and the construction of dormitories, playgrounds, and other school renovations for ethnic minority children at schools in the Cao Bang Province. Water system construction for an ethnic minority community also took place in the Cao Bang Province. In addition, projects in other provinces included dyke construction and school renovations in the Vinh Long, and health checks and water filter system implementation in Tay Ninh.

After 2012, ADRA Vietnam diversified and extended its partner network. From October 2012 to December 2014, the HIV-AIDS Prevention Awareness Program, ADRA Vietnam's first corporate social responsibility project in which it partnered with a large construction company, empowered over 5,000 staff and neighboring residents

with knowledge and tools. Between March 2013 and February 2014, ADRA Vietnam collaborated with ADRA Laos for a regional Climate Change Adaptation project. ADRA Vietnam continues to connect with various entities such as corporate donors to implement the Child Sponsorship Program which enables children living in poverty to continue their schooling. In 2020, ADRA Vietnam responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing food packages to vulnerable people in partnership with the Women's Union in Hanoi.<sup>24</sup>

## Role and Place in Vietnam

When the Socialist Republic of Vietnam began its Reform Policy in 1986 and opened its door to the world,<sup>25</sup> ADRA was among the first INGOs to return to Vietnam to help rebuild the war-torn country.<sup>26</sup>

In the 1990s, the Ministry of Health greatly appreciated ADRA Vietnam's assistance valued at US\$2,000,000, which improved community health care via five renovated and improved hospitals, funding medical equipment and healthcare worker training.<sup>27</sup> ADRA Vietnam's Cow Bank model, begun in southern Vietnam during this time, was so successful it expanded across the country.<sup>28</sup> "The Ministry of Labor Invalid and Social Affairs applied this model in their poverty reduction program. Some INGOs and local associations imitated this model and integrated in their programs."<sup>29</sup> In the early 2000s, when the economic situation in Vietnam had improved remarkably, ADRA Vietnam offered practical life skills for at-risk youth and disabled children and adults.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout ADRA Vietnam's history, it has been among the INGOs that responded quickly to disaster relief activities. ADRA Vietnam provided tons of food, medicine, and essential items to the victims of flood, typhoon, and drought nationwide.<sup>31</sup>

Since 1993, ADRA Vietnam has been active in all of ADRA's core portfolios with more than 200 projects in more than 50 of Vietnam's provinces.<sup>32</sup> ADRA Vietnam has experience with a range of international donors including AusAID/DFAT, CIDA (Canada), DANIDA, and NZAID/MFAT.<sup>33</sup> In addition, ADRA Vietnam has implemented programs funded by various private donors, special interest groups, and the ADRA network support offices including Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Germany, Austria, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, and South Korea.<sup>34</sup>

## Formal Operation

ADRA Vietnam held a Permit for Operations issued by the People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM) from 1993 through 2015. It was upgraded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Registration for Establishment of Project Office in 2016, valid through 2021.<sup>35</sup>

## Directors

Dennis Tidwell (1989-1992 as ADRA Indochina Director and 1993-1996 as ADRA Vietnam Director); Roger Kopitzke (1996-2001); Jeffery Wright (2001-2004); Stephen Cooper (2005-2006); Oscar Domato (2006-2011); Hector Carpintero (2011); Phillip Graovac (2012-2015); Elidon Bardhi (2016-2017); Nguyen Kim Mai (2017-2018); Quentin Campbell (2018-)

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