

# RECOGNISE THE STRENGTH OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN REDUCING DISASTER RISKS!

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**UP** Women ♀ Girls  
The InVisible Force of Resilience



*Stories from Viet Nam*





# RECOGNISE THE STRENGTH OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN REDUCING DISASTER RISKS!

## *Stories from Viet Nam*

*For more information on the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, read the following policy brief:*

Gender Equality in Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction in Viet Nam. United Nations Viet Nam and Oxfam, March 2012.

Available at: <http://www.un.org.vn/en/publications/>

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# FOREWORD

## WOMEN AND GIRLS: INSPIRATIONAL VOICES FOR RISK REDUCTION

“Women have the power to shape our destinies in ways previous generations couldn’t imagine.”

This observation about women and girls as a force for positive and structural change was made by the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Women in the World Summit held in New York in March 2012. It stresses the potential and strength of an often untapped or unrecognized resource; the brave and strong women in our world, in your family, in your community.

Women play a crucial role in Viet Nam. Not only do they comprise almost half of the country’s population, they also play crucially important roles in the household, in the rural and urban economies and in society as a whole. Almost 14 million women are organized under the Viet Nam’s Women’s Union that is active in every province, district and commune of the country and has a wide range of programmes for the advancement of women.

With disasters affecting Viet Nam annually, in combination with a particular vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change, it is essential to recognize women and girls as dynamic actors in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Taking into account

important social and economic differences of women and girls, it is time to recognize fully their roles, concerns and contributions in households, communities and the workplace and reflect them in related national policies and actions.

Far too often women and girls are portrayed as passive ‘victims’ of disasters, ignoring their multiple talents, capacities and contributions to risk reduction. However, there are numerous examples of strong women and girls who - with men and boys together - work on building the resilience of their family, their community and their country. One by one they are a living proof of the inherent strength and capabilities but too often an ‘invisible’ part of the community.

This book aims to raise awareness on the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment. It aims to tell the story behind the larger issues and show the visible force behind lasting change. For example, how a girl saved her father’s life from drowning; how a woman is devoting all her time and energy into teaching ethnic minority children how to better protect themselves; how girls express their concerns for an uncertain future in their own innovative way; how working with women in disaster preparedness and response can

achieve better results, and through many more truly inspirational stories. It hopes to inspire the reader to take action now for the future generations to come.

Enjoy!



# A VISIBLE AND EMPOWERED WOMAN IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo: Care International/2012

This is the story of Ms. T.; a poor woman aged 50 years old. She is a single head of household and also a person with a disability. She had spent more than 40 years living in the poor, degraded and isolated coastal commune of Nga Bach in the province of Thanh Hoa.

“The community I am living in has long suffered from floods, storms and drought. During the flood season most of the households here have no electricity or running water because of the damages caused to the electric lines. It is also difficult to have sufficient water for cultivation because of the sea water and salt intrusion into the fields. The commune has a high rate of unemployment and the youth are migrating to the main cities for a job.

When I was young, during the war, I had an accident that affected my back bone. As a result I couldn't work and had to fully rely on my parents, sister's and brother's income. Few years ago my parents died, my sister and brother got married and left the house. I ended up staying alone.

When Storm No. 7 hit the commune in 2004 my house was damaged and the roof was totally destroyed. Floods also damaged my cupboards, table, chairs, and beds and all my food was completely lost... At that time I wished I had a husband to share my distress with him.

In 2011 thanks to the Community-Based Disaster Risk Management project supported by CARE and the Women's Union I had the opportunity to participate in several trainings and workshops on how to deal with disasters, reduce risk and prevent diseases during floods and storms.

I learned many things about disasters and what I could do before, during and after floods and storms to regain control of my life.

Together with the Viet Nam Women's Union, I helped to plan and organize 18 information sessions for other women in the nine villages of my commune. I also participated in performing plays on disaster risk reduction and disease prevention.

Through the project I was able to support other single women like me and other vulnerable people in the community. I gained knowledge and skills on disaster prevention but also training and organization of awareness raising activities in my community.

I found my life more meaningful, looked at things more positively and forgot my loneliness and sorrow. I even became an agent of change by mobilizing other women in the neighboring commune of Nga Bach.

I thought that the awareness raising activities on disasters and the prevention of diseases were very useful and practical for all members of my community; women, men and children. I now believe that if at the time of the storm I had some knowledge on DRR my house would not have been damaged like that.

With the support from CARE we also have more safe water points and new roads that could be used during emergency time to evacuate people more rapidly.

People in the community participated in the construction of the evacuation roads by dedicating their time and money to buy the cement.

When the storm No.2 hit our commune in 2011 I followed the messages I had learnt from the project, like listening to the radio, repositioning



Photo: Care International/2012

some food stocks in my house and fortifying my house against the strong winds. I also supported other people to be evacuated to safer areas and helped them to protect their houses. Thanks to our joint work in the commune, when the storm came people were safe and no houses were damaged.

The project changed my life and brought benefits to 30,000 people living in the three coastal communes of the district of Nga Son where I live. I was proud to have contributed a part to the success of the project and now people in my commune have gained the tools and skills to be better prepared to respond to the next storm and floods.”



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*The story is related to a Community Based Disaster Risk Management project implemented by CARE International and its partners in the province of Thanh Hoa. CARE is a leading relief and development non-governmental organization fighting global poverty. The project was funded by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO). ECHO is one of the world's largest providers of financing for humanitarian aid operations. Through its disaster preparedness programme (DIPECHO), it assists vulnerable people living in the main disaster-prone regions of the world in reducing the impact of natural disasters on their lives and livelihoods.*



## RAISING EXPECTATIONS



Photo: Oxfam/Hoang Yen/2012

**L**e Thi Ngoc Mai, 42 years old, and her husband 45-year-old Doan Van Su from Hai Duong commune, Hai Lang district in Quang Tri province started to raise pigs in 1997. It was an important income that expanded their agricultural production and helped the family of six children out of poverty.

Nevertheless, during a severe flooding in 1999 her family lost 30 pigs due to the rising water level as well as an epidemic after the flood.

Although Mai and her husband realised that they needed a better pigpen so the pigs would not be affected by flooding, they had to wait until 2006 to have enough money to build a new and better pigpen on higher ground.

However, even with the new pen, the flooding levels in the following years kept on rising and rising and the ground level of the pen was still not high enough.

It wasn't until 2011 when Mai's family was selected to receive support from an Oxfam-funded pilot biogas project aiming to improve environmental protection in the village.

It convinced the family it was the right time to invest in their pig raising business. Mai therefore borrowed VND25 million, which was half of the total needed investment of VND50 million (US\$2,500) from the bank to build a flood resistant pigpen.

While other families keep only a small number of cattle during the flood season, Mai still wants to raise the same amount of pigs throughout the entire year.

Currently her family has nine sows. Averagely, every four months, she has up to 20-30 piglets. Mai can sell ten piglets for VND10 million (US\$500) at total, which can give her a return of more than 30% minus the costs.

Despite similar profits with rice-farming, Mai's family still prefers pig-farming as it requires less labour, makes use of feed from other crops like cassava and sweet-potato leaves, can be done all year round and has no impact from floods.

"Since we finally managed to build this big and improved pigpen, I've never been worried about the floods anymore," Mai said.



**OXFAM**

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This is part of a pilot CBDRM programme in Quang Tri which has been launched by Oxfam in collaboration with Disaster Management Centre, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

## ENSURING WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER DURING FLOODS



Photo: Save the Children/2011

When her house became completely inundated because of a severe and long-lasting flood in the Viet Nam Mekong Delta in October-November 2011, Ngoc, 29 years old, was forced to move and live in an improvised house without proper access to clean water.

Tran Thi Ngoc, her husband Nguyen Van Xuan, 31, and their two children, 7 and 1 years old, were among the 391 families from Binh Hoa Trung village, Thuong Thoi Hau A commune in the Hong Ngu district of Dong Thap province, that were affected by a flooding that caused widespread devastation.

Houses and schools but also rice fields, fruit

orchards and fish ponds became entirely submerged with water levels stagnating for more than two months. Access to water, food and basic social services was cut off, especially for female headed households, landless people and other vulnerable families.

People had to live in temporary houses or with their relatives for four to six weeks. "During the flood, my house was totally under water and we had to build a temporary house," Ngoc said. "We became reliant on my parents. Our neighbours also gave us rice and old pans to cook."

A joint United Nations-NGO assessment mission carried out in October 2011 in Dong Thap and An Giang provinces identified the urgent need for clean water and sanitation facilities, particularly for vulnerable groups.

When the floods occurred, people started to drink surface water without treatment or relied on recycled petrol and oil containers to store their water.

Ngoc confirms: "The cans I used are made from oil bottles and were the only ones for sale. I don't know if they are safe or not but I bought them because they were cheap and I had no money to buy better ones."

To ensure safe water storage, Save the

Children with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and in close cooperation with the Dong Thap Red Cross, provided Ngoc and her family with two water containers, including water filters.

The water containers of twenty and fifty litres both come with a lid to avoid pollution and are distributed together with water treatment tablets. People, especially women as the main users, are also provided with clear and easy instructions on how the water has to be disinfected.

Ngoc immediately started using the two containers: "I am so happy with the new water containers. They are very useful. They are big and have caps keeping water clean. I use the big one to store water for daily use and the small one for carrying water."

Dr. Ian Wilderspin, UNDP Viet Nam Technical Specialist for disaster risk management stated that: "UNDP is working closely with NGO partners to help ensure that the needs of all members of disaster affected communities are met; through dialogue with women especially we understand better the needs of their households and therefore tailor our humanitarian response, so that it is more effective. Such dialogue will guide more effective and professional disaster response and recovery operations and ensure that



Photo: United Nations Viet Nam/Shutterstock/2011

affected people can recover quickly, easily and with more dignity.”

Overall, more than 645,000 people were affected by the 2011 Mekong flooding with 156,000 houses damaged or destroyed. Eighty-five percent of all casualties were children. The economic damage was estimated by the Government of Viet Nam at US\$193 million.

Every year, UNDP actively seeks for funding support for disaster response and recovery operations if needed. Due to their comparative advantage and experience in the country, NGO partners are utilized to provide the specific support to the most vulnerable.



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The efforts were part of a larger emergency response operation carried out by Save the Children with support from UNDP in November 2011. Over 10,000 families and children, particularly women and vulnerable groups, in Dong Thap and An Giang provinces have received water containers, floating school backpacks and life jackets.

# THE LITTLE GIRL LÀNH CHANGED HER FATHER'S THINKING AND ATTITUDE



Photo: Plan International/2011

As part of my role for Plan's project on disaster risk management I organized communication and training activities in Nam Son village, Gio Linh district.

After the typhoon hit Quang Tri province in 2010, I went back there to meet the villagers and see how they had faced this disaster. When I arrived, I was told an amazing story about Lanh, a 10 year-old girl.

The day before the storm Lanh's teacher told the children at school to go home early. On her way home Lanh kept thinking about what she had learnt with Plan, her teacher Duy

and the children's club she was part of. She remembered about safe spaces, dangerous areas and how she should react in case of a disaster. As soon as she got back home, she said to her father:

"Daddy, a big storm is on its way. We must protect our house and get ready to move out."

Cu, her father looked at the sky and said: "Aren't you a bit young to tell your father what to do? Look how bright the sky is! It's not going to rain!"

But Lanh continued: "No, Daddy, it's true! The weather forecast announced that the storm was close to the coast and would hit our province tonight."

Her father said: "If your mother and you are scared, please go. I will stay here."

Lanh and her mother started to pack all their valuable items in nylon bags and put them out of reach. Then they went to her aunt's place. Hang's house was better prepared since it's made from concrete and located in a higher area.

But Lanh's father didn't come with them. Although the wind was strong, he stayed at home, thinking the rain wouldn't be that heavy.

In the evening, the rain fell harder and harder and the river level rose significantly. On the local radio warning messages were broadcasted in an endless loop. People living close to the river were forced to evacuate.

Lanh phoned her father and begged him to leave their house: "Daddy, I know I'm still a little girl but please listen to me this time. Please come to Hang's house. We can always replace items but we only have one life! We cannot live without you."

Thanks to her advice he finally left the house and joined his family at Hang's place. That night, they fell asleep surrounded by the noise of heavy rain.

When they woke up it had stopped raining and everything was silent again. Lanh and her parents returned home and were shocked when they saw their house. Half of it had collapsed. But her father's first reaction was to look at his daughter and say:

"My daughter has grown up. Who taught you such useful things?"

"My teacher," she said.

"I'm glad you listened to them! Who knows what would have happened if you hadn't persuaded me to join you."

Although Lanh and her family needed to renovate their house they felt lucky to be safe. For me, it was a relief to know that Lanh's father had been spared thanks to prevention work with children. Better safe than sorry!



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*Project: Capacity building for institutions and vulnerable communities to improve disaster preparedness, mitigation and response in Quang Tri, Viet Nam – funded by DG-ECHO.*

# THE TEACHER OF H'MONG CHILDREN LEADING IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo: Save the Children/2011

Teacher Hoàng Thị Hồng Nhãn is the Director of the Hong Ca School sub branch, about 8 km into the forest area away from Hong Ca commune, in the north-west mountainous region of Viet Nam. Her leading role in Disaster Risk Reduction has greatly contributed to a safer community and helped children escape from the serious dangers of flood and landslide disaster in the region.

“I cannot sleep during the raining days; fearing children would be killed in a flood or landslide.” Ms Hoàng Thị Hồng Nhãn, the Principal of Hong Ca school said, pointing out the mud piled in the back of her school, after a big rain: “Our school leans on the slope of a high

mountain. During the raining days, children are scared to go to school, because they have to pass flooding streams and have to learn in classrooms which risk being affected by a land slide.”

Hong Ca School was built on a small flat land, under a big mountain, mixing rock stone with soil. The area used to be densely forested with great biological diversity. It was in a stable ecological state for many years, with the small ethnic minority group, the H'mong people living there for generations, through traditional cultivation and cultural practices.

In recent years, however, deforestation, the reduction of biodiversity and environmental degradation has exacerbated the Commune's exposure to natural hazards.

The current changing climate also impacts negatively on the commune. The communities are facing more frequent and more intense flash flooding, landslides, erosion and crop loss.

In the rainy season, when the water is high in the streams, the roads to the school become blocked. Teacher Nhãn and her colleagues have to help the children pass through the dangerous conditions.

When the water level becomes too high, some

children cannot go home. Here, the teachers will buy food for the children and remain with them in the school, waiting for the water levels to reduce.

Teacher Nhãn was an active participant in the Save the Children Disaster Risk Reduction Project. She engaged in the trainings on Risk Reduction knowledge and skills and encouraged all the teachers to practice school planning for Disaster Risk Reduction and organize training of those knowledge and life skills to the school children. Teacher Nhan also lobbied the district authorities to design and build a wall to stop land erosion and reduce the danger of land-slides affecting the school.



Photo: Save the Children/2011



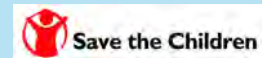
Photo: Save the Children/2011

Teacher Nhan became the voice for change. She had the chance to go to Hanoi, with a group of children to talk about their experiences, they got a lot of attention and interest from parents and teachers of better-off schools. It was an opportunity for the children in Hong Ca School to share mutual assistance; the poor children in Hong Ca got more chance to receive warm clothes from friends and parents in Hanoi.

The school was visited by a delegation of international experts during an international conference on climate change in April 2012. Teacher Nhan and the children had the opportunity to share their experiences and show the activities carried out by the school, including evacuation drills for land-slides and games and quizzes to raise awareness about disasters.

Nhãn has become famous in the community and she now leads activities to link the school with wider community involvement and better planning for disaster reduction and climate change actions

With project support from Save the Children, Teacher Nhan has grown to be a recognized figure, leading the community in reducing the risk of disaster. Her active role has been a good example of women leading the way in positive change.



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*Save the Children (SC) is an international NGO which has been active in Viet Nam for more than 20 years. Save the Children works to promote every child's right to survival, protection, participation and development. Since 2003, Save the Children has piloted and expanded child-centered, community-based disaster risk reduction programming in communities throughout Viet Nam. Yen Bai is one of the focus areas for Emergency preparedness, disaster risks reduction and climate change adaptation strategy in Viet Nam.*

# LIFTING UP CHILDREN'S VOICE ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN VIET NAM



Photo: UNICEF/ Viet Nam/2012/Bisin

**H**oang Mai Trinh, 15 years-old: “That’s not fair! As children, we have nothing to do with global warming, yet this is what we inherit from our parents and grand-parents. Young people are the next generation. They are exposed to new concepts and trends, they can definitely come up with new ideas to cope with issues of

their times. They should be listened to as much as adults when it comes to climate change!”.

The young girl is one of a group of six young people aged 13-17 that were trained in filming and engaged in discussions around the theme of disasters and climate change, at a workshop in the coastal province of Quang Bing, in central Viet Nam, from 18 to 20 May 2012. The three-day training was supported by UNICEF, in partnership with Viet Nam’s Youth Union – one of the country’s largest mass organisations - and with funding from Norway.

The young people also planned, scripted and filmed a 6-minute video telling the story of a fishing community in the province, where a number of homes and a school were washed away by more frequent and devastating storms.

The film not only focuses on climate change-induced challenges increasingly faced by coastal communities of Viet Nam, but also on possible ways to fight against the odds and how communities and children can be part of the solution.

## **A difficult legacy for Viet Nam’s next generation**

During the workshop a number of discussions and brainstorming sessions around climate change, disasters and sustainable

development took place. Trinh and her female peers were among the most active in the discussions.

According to scientific data, Viet Nam ranks 13th of 170 countries deemed vulnerable to the impacts of climate change over the next 30 years, and is one of 16 “extreme risk” countries, due to its high level of poverty, dense population, exposure to climate-related events, its reliance on flood- and drought-prone agricultural land.

In addition, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified the Mekong Delta as one of three ‘extreme’ global hotspots in terms of potential population displaced as a result of mean sea level rise. By 2050, as many as one million people risk being displaced in the Mekong Delta.

In Viet Nam, as in other developing countries, children and women are among those hit the hardest by the emerging impacts of climate change, although they have the least responsibility for its causes.

The types of climate risks confronting children and women are diverse, ranging from direct physical impacts, such as cyclones, storm surges and extreme temperatures, to impacts on education, psychological stress and nutritional challenges.





Photo: UNICEF/ Tran Phuung Anh/2012

### Agents of change

Illustrating the vulnerability of Viet Nam to disasters, in 2011, a series of tropical storms and typhoons filled the Mekong River to record levels, causing widespread flooding. “The Mekong Delta floods cost 89 lives, 75 of which were children. In other words: those who have least contributed to climate change are suffering most from its consequences. Since almost one in three people in Viet Nam are children younger than 18, this is a population group to be reckoned with,” says Ms. Lotta Sylwander, UNICEF Viet Nam’s Representative. “Yet Viet Nam’s children and

young people have knowledge on global issues threatening our planet, they are ready to bring about social change.”

### Adaptation solutions

During the filming exercise, the young people had the opportunity to interact with communities directly impacted by climate change-induced disasters and conduct investigations on the issue.

They interviewed fishermen in the commune of Nhan Trach and Quang Binh province’s Committee for Disaster and Storm Control – whose role is to look at disaster preparedness and ensure availability of early warning systems. They also talked to workers at a dyke construction site meant to protect the village from upcoming storms and typhoons, and to young people involved in a reforestation project, which is one of the most effective forms of coastal protection.

“We don’t think the government is listening enough to young people. They should do more of it. We hope through the video our voices will be heard by our leaders. We also hope this film will contribute to raise awareness of climate change in Viet Nam and let everyone know they can take action to reduce the impact it will have on our lives,” said Hoang Mai Trinh.

As the impacts of climate change globally and in Viet Nam continue to accelerate, women and girls are in a highly vulnerable position. They are disproportionately affected by climate change-induced natural disasters. More needs to be done to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable women and girls, harness their capabilities and encourage women and girls’ participation in the decision making process to build national resilience to disasters and climate change.



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*The climate change video is the outcome of a three-day training that was supported by UNICEF in April 2012, in partnership with Viet Nam’s Youth Union – one of the country’s largest mass organisations - and with funding from Norway.*

# WOMEN TAKE LEADING ROLE IN PREPARING COMMUNITIES FOR DISASTERS



Photo: SRD/2012

**M**any women are leading the fight to protect their communities against disasters – using their local knowledge to develop disaster early warning systems and household action plans.

Thua Thien Hue is a province in Central Viet Nam comprising both mountains and coastal plains. In recent years the frequency and severity of disasters – including typhoons, floods, droughts and forest fires – has significantly increased. The impact on local people has been devastating, threatening the lives of the poor and vulnerable along with their livelihoods. Women in particular play a major

role when disasters strike - both before and after the emergency.

Taking children, elderly family and animals to safety, and the storage of food and other essential items is often the sole responsibility of women. Additionally, they are often the primary carers of those who are injured or ill after the event and play a significant role in clean up efforts.

Despite their critical roles, many women have fewer opportunities than men to participate in technical training to enhance their skills in reducing disaster risk.

In response, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD) is partnering with local communities to help them better prepare for and manage disaster risk. Because of their significant role in times of disaster, women have been at the core of project activities.

Actions have included community development of a disaster early warning system, workshops to share experiences and develop personal disaster action plans, and the establishment and training of village emergency response teams.

Ms. Pham Thi Cuc is a 50 year old mother of three adult children, in Thanh Phuoc village, Huong Phong Commune, Huong Tra in central

Viet Nam. She is just one of the women participating in the project, and through her story she highlights the importance of disaster preparedness.

“A few years ago, my family was hit during the night by a big storm. We were in the upper house since that part was strong and had a metal roof, but the wind was so strong that it blew the metal roof away and it nearly hit my head when we were hiding under the wooden bed. At that time I was pregnant and so scared – we had no plan for what to do in such a bad storm. I just prayed for the morning to come so that we could move to my brother’s house which is safer than ours.

Some years later when I was pregnant again we were hit by a very bad flood. We created a temporary shelter in a higher place but we did not have any clean water or any wood to make a fire to boil water or cook food. It was very bad for my family.

Because of my experience in past floods and from attending the training courses, I now have a plan for my family for the flood season. Firstly, we prepare wood and store it in a high dry place, as well as food, water, oil lamp and other equipment. I think it’s very important for families that have one-storied houses like mine to be well-prepared for floods and storms.

Sharing experiences and information is critical to help keep the whole community safe.”

By harnessing the grassroots knowledge of local women, and combining it with technical training and resources, communities facing disaster in Thua Thien Hue have a more stable future.



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*‘Community based disaster risk reduction and management in Thua Thien Hue’ is a project of the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD) and is funded by Caritas Australia. It is providing the skills and resources required to plan for and cope with disaster, as well supporting people to adapt their livelihood to the changing environment.’*

# WOMEN IN VIET NAM ARE CRUCIAL IN MANGROVE PLANTATION AND AS TEACHERS OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



Photo: Viet Nam Red Cross/Quang Tuan/2012

With support from Vietnam Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) over the past few years, thousands of women have planted hundreds of thousands of mangrove samplings in 100 selected communes in the northern, coastal provinces of Quang Ninh, Hai Phong, Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An and Ha Tinh.

Subsequently, the mangrove trees have been nurtured in nearly 9,000 hectares and are now protecting hundred of kilometres of sea and river dikes, annually protecting lives and livelihoods of coastal communes.

At the beginning of the mangrove plantation and disaster risk reduction project, there was limited guidance on gender equality and women's empowerment in disaster risk reduction activities. Few, if any women were members of the Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CFSC) at the provincial, district or commune levels.

"In 1997, I started my participation to the project work, I observed only one female member of the CFSC at commune level because the Women's Union is its member at commune level. I did not receive any guideline for women participation and empowerment. There are some improvements now but it is not enough," Tao, IFRC project manager said.

The more than 50 percent of women from the local communes participated in training courses organised by the Red Cross with support from mangroves experts in mangrove planting techniques and knowledge of mangrove plantation.

Many are skilful in planting rice, so they can learn and plant mangroves seedlings more easily than men. In May 2012, 40 women in Dong Hung commune in Hai Phong province participated in the training and the actual planting of 10 hectares of mangroves. The participation of women reached 80 percent.

Mangroves are extraordinary species to protect sea dikes and coastal people, fishing boats and their properties from immediate devastating impacts of typhoons, storm surge and sea waves.

Mangroves planted by VNRC also contributed to climate change mitigation and to climate change adaptation. "I am happy to be invited by VNRC to plant mangroves. It is a hard work but I want to do it because we understand long term benefits of mangroves and think of our children who will benefit from it," said Ms. Huong from Kien Thuy, Hai Phong.

Since 2001 the project extended its objectives to focus on teachers and children to build up their disaster preparedness capacity in order to reduce deaths of children during disaster time and to promote children and teachers' roles as disseminators of disaster preparedness at home and at their communities.

Children take a small booklet home to share with parent and sisters about how and what to do before, during and after a hazard event. This is one appropriate approach to disseminate DP to household levels in Viet Nam while building up DM capacity of our future generation. Over 15,000 teachers in 200 selected primary schools reaching potentially half a million children and their families



Photo: Viet Nam Red Cross/2011

were introduced to knowledge on disaster preparedness, protecting their lives, properties and facilities before, during and after a disaster event.

Ninety percent of the teachers involved with the project were women. They have contributed a lot of their time and effort to organize extra

training courses and competition events for their students to understand how to deal with disasters in order to reduce their risks.

“I am very happy and excited to use the participatory approach to train children in disaster preparedness introduction. Our children are very happy with this training and competition by singing songs and dramas on disaster risk reduction from schools to provincial levels,” said the director of An Nhat Dong, Phu Yen province. The school girls are also involved in swimming classes.

The project evaluation report in 2011 recognized the important roles of women in mangrove plantation and risk reduction (DRR). “The gender equality was started by our organization in 2003 with a gender training package for gender capacity assessment, women-friendly volunteers programme design etc. Up to date we are equipped with our guidelines on gender mainstreaming into disaster risk reduction and beneficiary communication,” said Tao, IFRC project manager.



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*The Mangrove plantation and disaster risk reduction phase 2011-2015 of VNRC is being implemented in 150 selected communes of ten provinces of Viet Nam Quang Ninh, Hai Phong, Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Hoa Binh and Vinh Phuc with support of Japanese Red Cross/IFRC. The project aims to build up community resilience to impacts of natural hazards and climate change of selected communes.*

## WOMEN IN RURAL VIET NAM TRAIN FOR A RAINY DAY



Photo: UN Women/2011

The Viet Nam Women's Union building in Viet Nam's Binh Dinh Province is afloat with music, as traditional songs about the province, the seasons, fishing and farming drift through its rooms. Yet those singing know that the life they celebrate is under threat. Each has gathered here to discuss plans and actions for tackling disasters. Viet Nam is badly affected by climate change, with floods and other natural disasters becoming more common

and intense each year. They prove particularly devastating in rural parts of the central-south provinces, such as Binh Dinh and Phu Yen; and since these are also among the poorest provinces, villagers here are particularly vulnerable.

Training projects in Binh Dinh have been operated by the Viet Nam Women's Union since 2010 with the support of UN Women, and today, fifty participants — female and male — are planning how best to prepare their villages and hamlets for floods. As they break into teams for discussion, the trainer asks each to consider how groups may be differently affected, such as men and women; the young and the elderly; or those who are less mobile because they are ill, or heavily pregnant.

Thanh, 48, is the head of the Women's Union group in her village and a farmer; she is a mother of four, and weaves for additional income. Coming from a village with a population of 2,000, she says that natural disasters kill between one and three people there each year. "The training is very useful for me," she says. "I have some knowledge of disaster preparedness, but I know I need to know more."

The training has largely taken place through day-long community-level workshops with a focus on flood and typhoon preparedness. Some longer sessions have also been held

at district and provincial levels. The project also introduced disaster management themes before the workshops began, using creative outreach techniques.

By adapting a successful model from Latin America, the project introduced many of the villagers to disaster reduction issues through customized radio soap stories. Approximately 80 percent of households own radios in Viet Nam, and they are popular with women listeners.

This is one of the country's first programmes to address and encourage female participation in disaster risk reduction. As the participants acknowledge, women have long been excluded from decision-making in this area of community life, even though they may be worse affected by extreme environmental conditions, compared to men.

For example, although women usually manage the small plots of agricultural land in each family for income or sustenance, land titles are usually given to the men. This means that following a disaster, many women cannot independently ask for social policy funds to reconstruct their houses or re-establish their livelihoods. They are also more at risk of harm during flooding because, while boys are taught to swim at an early age, girls rarely are.

Thanh says that by raising the voices of local



Photo: UN Women/2012

women, the training has already changed her community for the better. Because of this project, for example, the People's Committee of Tuy Hoa City in Phu Yen has appointed the Women's Union as a regular member of

the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control, which is the main body for decision-making about natural disasters.

"The pilot project will be scaled-up over the next four years in Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Hue, and other parts of the central-south region since we are seeking women's systematic involvement in decision-making processes regarding climate change and disaster preparedness at local level," said Suzette Mitchell, Country Representative of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

With time and training, women like Thanh are becoming more confident about the knowledge and the insight that they can bring, at local and policy levels. And this can only work to keep their communities safer when the rainy season arrives.



Since 2010, UN Women has provided funding and technical

assistance to Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) to implement the project 'Enhancing the capacity of women to cope with climate change: Empowering grassroots women to cope with natural disasters'. The project was implemented in Phu Yen and Binh Dinh, two coastal provinces in south-central Viet Nam regularly affected by storms and floods.

## A HUMBLE COW BRINGS HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE...



Photo: ADRA/Monica Chong/2012

**N**guyễn Thị Hàm is a 50 year old single woman, living on her own in the province of Tay Ninh. Like so many other poor households around her, she lives in very basic conditions. Her house is a dilapidated shack made of straw, mud and scrap metal. When it rains heavily, Ms Ham needs to leave her home and seek shelter elsewhere as her house often floods. Under any severe weather conditions, her safety would be at risk and her house would most certainly be destroyed.

Sadly, Ms Ham doesn't have enough money to improve her living situation. Due to a health condition, Ms Ham is unable to work and she does not have any children to support her. Her sister had been kind enough to loan her a

small piece of land to build her house, however they themselves are struggling to make a decent living.

ADRA in Viet Nam heard about Ms Ham's case and invited her to participate in their Cow Bank and Community Development (CBCD) project which aims to enhance the livelihood security of poor households in Tay Ninh province. This means that they'll be able to improve their living conditions and opportunities for the future.

As part of the project, Ms Ham was provided with a nine month old female cow and livestock husbandry training so she learns how to care for the cow. All participants of the project are also involved in Community Development Clubs, where they meet to discuss and aim to resolve social issues such as access to clean water, health, education, environment protection and women's and children's rights.

The cow loaned to Ms Ham will be a significant asset for her. When the cow is old enough to breed and has a baby calf, which can be returned to the cow bank and loaned to another family, the original cow is hers to keep. That's an asset worth about US\$1000.

"I love my cow. She is part of my family, since I don't have one of my own. She brings me hope for a better future and better living conditions. It's not safe where I live now, especially when it

rains heavily. It will take a few years, but I want to have 3 or 4 cows and then I will sell one to build a new and safe home that I can live in for the rest of my life."

For now, Ms Ham will still be able to make a modest living selling vegetables, which she is able to grow and fertilise with manure from her cow. The CBCD project also supports its participants with small income generation initiatives, so Ms Ham will be able to receive the kick-start she needs to start a small business. With the ability to save a little money, she hopes that she can gradually make improvements to her house so that she doesn't have to live in such poor and insecure conditions.



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Over the past two years, ADRA in Viet Nam has loaned over 400 cows to impoverished households and people with disabilities in the south of Viet Nam. Most of them have no savings and live in very poor conditions. Although the project is aimed at improving livelihood security of its participants, it indirectly plays a valuable role in disaster risk reduction for these families. The ownership of a cow is a significant asset and can be sold in order to build a safe house, providing better protection from severe weather conditions when they occur.



## WHEN SHOWING DETERMINATION, ANY WOMAN CAN DO THE SAME



Photo: Oxfam/My Dung/2011

**M**s Huynh Thanh Dao, a member of a poor family, was living with little influence in her family's decisions. But her determination made her dream come true through taking a leadership role in managing the commune's Women's Union and facilitating Oxfam's DRR project activities, and finally, she graduated from the faculty of sociology at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City in 2011.

Growing up in a poor family in Tien Giang province in the Mekong delta which is a highly flood-prone region, Huynh Thanh Dao had to leave home very early and got married at the age of 19, by that time only finishing the ninth grade. While her first baby was delivered and

earning money was hard enough for her and her husband, communication between the couple was also a difficult and tiring experience for her. Dao had almost no voice since every decision in her life was made by her husband.

However, when Dao became 23 an accidental event led to a major change in her life. She became the commune Viet Nam Women's Union secretary after her literacy and very beautiful handwriting were acknowledged. Since this milestone Dao participated more frequently in the Women's Union's social activities as well as other community activities.

Five years later – in 2006, when the Oxfam's VANGOCA project was initiated, women were encouraged to get involved in all activities, such as training workshops on community-based disaster risk management and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns.

Dao has become an active project volunteer gaining more opportunities to develop herself and her experience by directly participating in project activities including training on leadership and management skills. As Dao said: "I now feel confident enough to organize meetings for women in the area and I am much more fluent in public speaking."

Moreover, participating in Oxfam's project was a real turning point for Dao as she attained

her dream of receiving a higher education. "What changed my life was when I participated in training courses on building capacity for women," she revealed. "I realized that women must have more courage, determination and intention to strive." Finally, Dao completed high school education and just graduated from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City, majoring in Sociology last year. She no longer waits for her husband's decision but makes any decision together.

Dao has also been elected as the Vice Chairwoman of the Women's Union of Phuoc Lap commune, Tan Phuoc district. She is now in a better position to further advocate for gender equity, especially women's rights and roles in local disaster preparation and response activities.



**OXFAM**

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A five-year project on Participatory Disaster Management within

VANGOCA programme was implemented in 24 communes of five districts with a population of approximately 265,000 people in Tien Giang and Dong Thap provinces since May 2006. The project aimed to reduce flood-relating risks for rural men, women and children, promote gender equality and build knowledge, skills and capacity.

## BRINGING SAFETY TO SCHOOL



Photo: Save the Children/2011

Her name is Nguyễn Thị Minh Thuy, a young teacher, working in the Education Department of Tran Yen District, Yen Bai Province. With support from her husband and her colleagues, she has been empowered in disaster reduction in many schools in the District, and brought new development of education in emergency into real practice.

“At the beginning, my husband was suspicious when I spent too much time traveling to schools in the remote mountainous region instead of staying in the Education Department and taking care of my children and family,” Ms Thuy said, pointing out to the disaster map of Tran Yen District.

“I then decided to invite him to visit me and the school children to see how children in that remote place are facing great danger from floods and landslides. After that visit, my husband truly changed his attitude and became a strong supporter for our work on disaster reduction.”

Tran Yen District is located in the north-west region of Viet Nam, 150 km North West of Hanoi, and 35 km from Yen Bai City. The district is very prone to disasters such as floods, landslide, whirlwind and drought.

Through the child focused disaster reduction project from Save the Children, teacher Thuy had the opportunity to participate in training on disaster reduction.

She quickly recognized her potential for raising awareness in communities and schools on the risk of disasters.

After the training, Thuy started regular visits to other schools in the District to teach on disaster reduction and to organize clubs for children and teachers to learn and exchange information and experiences with disasters. Even in the rainy season when the water is high in the rivers and sometimes blocking the road to school, teacher Thuy still reaches schools to bring new knowledge and skills to schools and communities.

Thuy regularly participates in provincial meetings with local authorities to discuss the disaster situation. She prepares simple lessons for school teachers to use in their classes.

She also organizes cross visits so schools and communities can visit each other and share experiences on disaster reduction. Thuy also encourages all the teachers and children to better plan for disaster reduction activities and has piloted several initiatives for safer schools, such as school flood roads and fences to protect the children.

The Director of the District Education Department Ms. To Thi Anh is very proud when talking about her: “Teacher Thuy has built a strong network between the Education



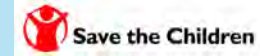
Photo: Save the Children/2011



Photo: Save the Children/2011

Department with the schools through active involvement of teachers and students in disaster awareness and reduction; I am very impressed to see children practicing evacuation and making contests on disaster reduction.”

Teacher Thuy has become a trusted and experienced friend to many schools in the province where she’s now called with pride the Disaster Reduction Woman.



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*Save the Children (SC) is an international NGO which has been active in Viet Nam for more than 20 years. Save the Children works to promote every child's right to survival, protection, participation and development. Since 2003, Save the Children has piloted and expanded child-centered, community-based disaster risk reduction programming in communities throughout Viet Nam. Yen Bai is one of the focus areas for Emergency preparedness, disaster risks reduction and climate change adaptation strategy in Viet Nam.*

## A VOLUNTEER-DAY IN GIAO THUY, NAM DINH, A RED CROSS EXCURSION FOR POOR CHILDREN



Photo: Viet Nam Red Cross/2012

**M**y name is Hoang Duc Hung. I was born in Hanoi. I am a 13-year-old student that is now studying secondary school in Singapore International School in Hanoi, Viet Nam.

On Sunday 9 September 2012, I have volunteered to go on an excursion in Giao Thuy district, Nam Dinh to donate student notebooks and money for poor children. First of all, I would like to talk about the excursion. The trip was really nice. We visited some places in the district. To me, the most exciting activity was crossing the mangrove forest.

People in Giao Thuy are regularly faced with storms and floods, damaging and even breaking dams and affecting people's

properties and lives. To better protect the communities from strong sea waves and storms from the sea the Viet Nam Red Cross (VNRC) has planted the mangrove forest.

Besides protection, mangrove trees also create new income for the communities living around it. Since mangroves feed on salt water the trees attract fish, crabs and other small sea life. Local people can make an extra living out of fishing and finding crabs.

When crossing the mangrove forest by small boat, I could see how hard the local people work to plant and protect the forest. Mr. Tuan, a VNRC officer who has a lot of experience in this forest for more than 10 years, gave us some background information about the forest. He used to go down to the field himself and teach the people in Giao Thuy how to plant and protect those trees.

When I walked in the muddy forest I understood how hard it is for the people to plant this forest. The ground is very muddy so it is really slippery and there are also a lot of seashells lying all over the place so we need to move slowly so our feet would not be cut.

I had a chance to meet some really nice people during the trip and also make friends. Some of them really care about me, so it made me feel

good to be around them. The food was really delicious, even better than in Ha Noi.

But as written before the main reason why we came here was to give presents to the poor students in Giao Thuy, specifically those with a disability. I was shocked to hear that those children only have 10,000 VND and 300g of rice per day. I was lucky to be born in a wealthy family. We have more than enough money to spend on food, school fees and medical expenses and even have some extra to go to the movies. But what a big difference with the children in Giao Thuy. It made me realize we should care more about all the poor, not just simply sharing. From my point of view, the people who can afford it need to donate more money, time and effort and do some more charity work so that children like in Giao Thuy have a better life. I hope more people will share my wish so we can make this world and our country a better place.



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*The Mangrove plantation and disaster risk reduction phase 2011-2015 of VNRC is being implemented in 150 selected communes of ten provinces of Viet Nam with support of Japanese Red Cross/IFRC. The project aims to build up community resilience to impacts of natural hazards and climate change of selected communes.*

## MY LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE!



Photo: UNDP/Bach Phuong Lien/2011

**M**y name is Bach Phuong Lien; I work for the Center for Training and International Cooperation (CTIC) of the Viet Nam Academy of Water Resources, in Hanoi. I was a member of the consultant team selected by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development/ UNDP-funded project “Institutional Capacity Strengthening for Disaster Risk Management”. It was my great honor to be a part of this team and one of the most interesting experiences I have ever had in my working life.

I worked with CTIC alongside Government and UNDP colleagues to develop a ‘training package’ aimed at Government staff working at different administrative levels in the country. We divided the package into three

modules: Module 1, which focuses on training skill development, Module 2 on technical knowledge of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and Module 3 on coaching and facilitation practice.

As one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, it is vital for all people to equip themselves with knowledge and skills that help them to live more safely. Disaster reduction requires the whole society, including men, women and children to be involved and to contribute.

The project gave me opportunities to travel many places in Viet Nam, from Cao Bang to Da Nang, Nha Trang and Can Tho, where I met many people working in the field of disaster reduction.

One of my concerns was to ensure the full and active involvement and participation of women – both as trainers and trainees in the training courses – I was pleased as we managed to have about thirty percent of the trainers who were women. During the courses, I recognized the enthusiasm of trainees - especially the female trainees - for the new concepts, in sharing their perspectives and their passion in conveying what they obtained to their community. I recall one female trainer from Can Tho, who was four months pregnant during the second module of the course; due to her delivery time it wasn’t possible for her

to continue in the next module. She cried a lot and had to be comforted and persuaded to pause after giving birth and promised another chance later to continue her involvement!

In addition to my involvement with the training courses, I also helped to complete the ‘Training Materials on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation’ and was very proud to have this material approved by the Government for use throughout the country in their training programmes.

I can never forget my role in helping to implement this project. I am so happy and proud to have contributed to the success of the project in particular and to helping in my way, to reduce the risks from disaster for people in my country.



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Over the last two years, UNDP has supported MARD in the implementation of a large scale training programme on disasters and climate change at the national level and in three pilot provinces Cao Bang, Can Tho and Binh Thuan. As a result a set of Government approved training materials on DRM and CC is now being utilized in various projects and training events. UNDP has consistently promoted a minimum of 30% women participation in the training and has utilized established and experienced female and male trainers.

## DOING LAUNDRY IS NOT SOLELY THE WORK OF WOMEN



Photo: Oxfam/My Dung/2011

In North village, Tan Thanh commune, Thanh Binh district in Dong Thap province, the family of 37-year-old Nguyen Thi Hanh Tuyen and Mr. Pham Van Son who is 39 used to experience an unbalanced work division amongst themselves. While Tuyen rarely had free time, her husband Son was just wandering around not doing much. However, things changed.

Since 2006, Oxfam provided support for implementing DRR related works such as analyzing vulnerabilities, risks, and capacities of the community, and developing community action plans. Following the community actions plans, men and women of the working communes participated in training sessions on disaster risk reduction, swimming classes,

gender and humanitarian leadership including men and women's role in disaster risk reduction work and facilitation of "Living with Flood" clubs.

Gender equality, roles of men and women in emergency response and risk management events, sharing roles and responsibilities in household works before, during and after disasters were discussed in the sessions facilitated by the "Living with Flood" club facilitators.

Both Mr Son and Ms Tuyen became members of the "Living with Flood" club and attended a series of sessions of the club and gender equality training sessions which had a great impact on Mr Son's daily life. His gender awareness was not only raised, and waits for a disaster but he also put it into action. He was the first man in his village that broke traditional norms by doing laundry in the public water channel.

Gradually as Son kept doing this "eccentric" task it became more and more a familiar scene to everyone in the village. A new norm that the men should share in the housework burden with his wife was created and shared by other men attending similar trainings.

"If I do not take the initiative to change people's stereotype about housework for women, who would?" Son said.

Happily acknowledged by Tuyen: "Life becomes less of a burden and much more a pleasure. There is also a better understanding and communication between us. We have more time to devote to community activities."

Ms Tuyen and Mr Son have actively shared their knowledge and skills on disaster preparation along with knowledge on gender equality. Due to their pioneering and active participation in the community Mr Son and Ms Tuyen now have a better reputation and are an example couple in the village.

Mr Son has been elected to be the village head whilst Ms Tuyen is member of several local associations. In such positions, they have even more chances to continue their pioneer work and promote gender equality and sharing roles in disaster preparation and risk management and plenty of the village's activities even though the VANGOCA project ended.

Provash Mondal, Oxfam Humanitarian Programme Coordinator: "It's important that both women and men in the family understand and realise the needs of women and men during emergency and in the normal time; respect and trust each other, which helps to create a fellow feeling, and share workloads like Mr Son and Ms Tuyen."

Ever since Oxfam's project in the area there has been a lot of positive transformation in

the community especially on gender equality issues.

In the past, domestic violence where men beat up their wives was a common norm. However, things have improved gradually and peace has returned to many families.



**OXFAM**

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*A five-year project on Participatory Disaster Management within VANGOCA programme was implemented in 24 communes of five districts with a population of approximately 265,000 people in Tien Giang and Dong Thap provinces since May 2006. The project aimed to reduce flood-relating risks for rural men, women and children, promote gender equality and build knowledge, skills and capacity.*

## BIG WAVES THREATENED THE COUPLE'S HAPPINESS



Photo: Tran Thi Thuy Binh/IPS Asia-Pacific

People in the centre of Viet Nam live 1000 km far away from the Mekong Delta, however all of them are facing the risk to lose their homes when the sea-level rises.

More than ten years ago, many couples were dating in the northern beach of Nhon Ly, 22km far from Quy Nhon, the capital of the Binh Dinh province (in the centre of Viet Nam). “On that day, there is a coffee shop at the beach, young couples often visited here,” said Dinh Thi Thu Huong, 50 years old. “Because of the fresh air, and several people even brought their beds to sleep on the beach.”

Nowadays, tourists can hardly find any traces of the romantic days. In Ly Hung village, there

are black spots of garbage, broken concrete and bricks on the beach that used to be full of white sand. It is the remnants of the devastating waves that caused landslides and destroyed many houses in the coastal area. “The wave distorted houses, two rows or even four rows of houses disappeared along the beach,” recalled Huong. “I remember that crazy waves destroyed about 80 - 90 houses.” In the past, Huong’s house was behind two other houses, and now her home is next to the sea.

Huong’s ancestors have lived here for four or five generations. However, she has never heard such a terrible story. “In the past, even in winter, waves didn’t beat on the shore strongly,” recalled Huong, who often went fishing with her husband: “The sea level was at the boat parking area.” Each time, after carrying fish from the boat to home, she was exhausted. Yet the woman who spent almost all her life here only walked to the edge of the sea for three minutes.

In the old days, the sea was the matchmaker of lovers and now seawaves threaten the happiness of many families. “In winter, a mother who lived in the urban area visited her daughter who gave a birth. After witnessing the danger of big waves, she requested her daughter to divorce immediately and then come back home,” Huong said. The mother’s fear was easy to sympathize with because there was only a single path to connect

with the transportation system of Nhon Ly commune. When the sea level rises, the village was submerged in the water and isolated totally.

When we talked with Huong and other villagers, we heard about unusual changes of weather and waves. Maybe they understood that it would be more difficult to earn money by fishing. Most of the fishermen spent their savings on their children’s education with the hope that their children would have a better life. “We have a hard life and we desire that our children’s lives will not be hard ,” said Huong who had two sons studying in the city. “Twice a week, we go fishing for three or four days and then transfer about 2-3 million VND (96 – 144 USD) for our children’s expenses.”



Photo: Tran Thi Thuy Binh/IPS Asia-Pacific





Photo: Tran Thi Thuy Binh/IPS Asia-Pacific

Because young people and adolescent have studied outside of the village, there are mostly old people here. They have spent hours sitting in front of their houses and looking at the sea. “There are only old and middle-aged residents in the hamlet,” said Gia Thi Lam who lived near Huong’s house and whose house was less than four meters from the sea. She said: “Our couples do not know what to do, if the authority supports us to resettle, we will go.”

Ly Hung hamlet is one of the four coastal areas affected directly by the sea level rise – the main impact of climate change in Nhon Ly commune. The three remaining areas are Ly Hoa, Ly Chanh and Ly Luong.

In 2010, Nhon Ly had six hurricanes of level 6-7 and five tropical cyclones in the East Sea. Devastating waves, strong winds and storms have caused a big loss of property. “Just in

the three days (November 28-30), in Ly Hoa village, 19 houses were flooded from 0.7 to 1.2 metres,” said Nguyen Thanh Danh, Vice President of Nhon Ly People’s Committee: “In Ly Chanh village, six houses were flooded and then destroyed.”

According to Nhon Ly People’s Committee, the total loss in 2010 was 3.6 times higher than the total budget of the commune of the same year (436 million VND – about 20,970 USD). Nhon Ly has 163 poor households and 149 sub-poor ones (about 16.3 percent of the total number of households).

Currently, Nhon Ly has about 286 households (about 12 percent in the commune) that need to be removed and 100 households which are at risk of being eroded and need to be removed when there is a typhoon.

With Nhon Ly, Quy Nhon city also has two coastal communes affected by coastal erosion - Nhon Hai and Nhon Chau. The main livelihood in the three communes is fishery and seafood processing. “Coastal erosion directly affects human life because most of the residents live in the erosion area,” said Dinh Van Tien, Deputy Director of Binh Dinh Department of Natural Resources and Environment and Director of the Climate Change Coordination Office. “If you do not pay any attention, you will lose individuals, houses and property.”

“From 2000 to now, we have been impacted by flood tides,” said Pham Van Hung, the chairman of Nhon Hai People Committee.

“In 1998 and 2001, typhoons destroyed or demolished 52 houses.” Nowadays, the village has 60 percent of its population in the list of endangered households (82/143 households) and 39 households which have registered for resettlement.

Meanwhile, the year 2003 - 2004 was the worst years for Nhon Chau island commune. “Every year, it took 2-3 rows of houses (80-90 houses),” said Do Van Sang, Director of Quy Nhon Land Development Center - the unit in charge of resettlement for endangered households. “The local authority could not respond well.”

Quy Nhon is one of three Vietnamese cities taking part in the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN). Nhon Ly commune was selected as a case study to evaluate the threats, capacity and state of vulnerability caused by climate change (at the community level) of Quy Nhon city.



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*This story was written for the ‘Climate Change: A Reporting Lens from Asia’ series produced by IPS Asia-Pacific (www.ipsnewsasia.net under a media programme with the Rockefeller Foundation.*

## DOWN UNDER



Photo: Le Thi My Dzung

**M**y name is Le Thi My Dzung. A few months ago I received a scholarship from the Australian Government to study for a two year Masters of Environment (with a major in climate change) at The University of Melbourne in Australia. I am writing this in the library of the University now! Every day when I wake up in the morning, here in Australia, I feel happy to be a student again and I treasure my experience of realizing my “life-long” learning pursuit! I want to share with you my story of how I came to be here.

In 2010, I joined Oxfam, an international NGO – to work in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) after 4 years of working with the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization in the education section; it was quite a change for me and I recall my colleague there telling me shortly after I joined that: “Your eager spirit to learn and study new things helps you to acquire knowledge effectively and fast.”

I then went on to work for Oxfam for more than two years in DRR and CCA, which further motivated me to work in the development field, especially in order to “work with others to overcome poverty and suffering” as stated in every out-going mail from my work email account: Oxfam’s mandate.

Furthermore, during my field trips to the Mekong Delta - one of the areas most affected by climate change and rising sea level - I often met vulnerable, poor people and learnt how their lives and livelihoods are affected by the impacts of disasters and climate change. One question constantly came into my mind: “How can I help these people to improve their livelihoods and to cope with the dramatic climate changes?”

The demand for expertise in an inter-disciplinary approach to environmental issues in Viet Nam as well as my career development path thrust me to acquire continuously knowledge and skills in this area.

In early 2011, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in collaboration with UNDP

established a working group in order to support the implementation of the Government’s Community-based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) programme. This is a forum where CBDRM policy makers, as well as practitioners from different levels can share their experience and knowledge on CBDRM, through information sharing in meetings, conferences, training workshops, write-shops and by email correspondence.

I participated actively in this network and benefited from the experience and support of senior CBDRM practitioners as well as government officials. This experience also helped me to sharpen my advocacy skills and I learned how to work with other people from national and sub-national levels to help to scale up Oxfam’s work at the ‘grass root’ level.

This wide range of working levels helped me to gain practical skills, such as assessing the capacity and vulnerability of commune members and local authorities in DRR/CCA as well as helping to design effective adaptation strategies at different levels.

Moreover, this experience helped me to understand deeply about DRR/CCA, especially CBDRM and convinced me to undertake further studies in this area and shape my career path. The multi-disciplinary approach and integrated format of the Graduate Environmental Degree, here in

Melbourne, will enable me to build a strong academic foundation to understand complex environmental problems and concepts of sustainability.

Upon my return to Viet Nam, I am confident that my study at The University of Melbourne, where I have been able to engage in a diverse community of leading scholars, practitioners and talented students, will enable me to achieve my professional and personal goals.



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*UNDP has been very instrumental in the establishment in February 2011 of the CBDRM Technical Working Group, chaired by the MARD Disaster Management Center and comprised of technical experts from NGOs like Oxfam, CARE, World Vision and others, with the main objective to establish a Government-led mechanism for technical support and systematic information sharing and dialogue that will contribute to the efficient and effective implementation and coordination of the CBDRM program.*



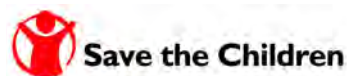
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Web: [www.unicef.org/vietnam](http://www.unicef.org/vietnam)



**United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**  
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Web: <http://www.unwomen-eseasia.org/Vietnam/index.html>



**CARE International in Viet Nam**  
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Web: <http://www.care.org.au/vietnam>



**Save the Children**  
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Web: <https://plan-international.org/where-we-work/asia/vietnam/>



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