

East Asia Vision Program: Vietnam

Summary of results

March to December 2013



Eye health in Vietnam snapshot

- There are **385,800** people aged over 50 years who are blind and **1.66 million** with low vision.
- Visual disability represents **13.8 per cent** of all disability in Vietnam, where the prevalence of disability is relatively high.
- Provincial Prevention of Blindness Committees have been established in most provinces but **need more support** to function effectively.
- The eye care workforce **needs to be expanded** to meet eye health needs in Vietnam.

The East Asia Vision Program

The East Asia Vision Program (EAVP) is a three year program (2013-15) funded by the Australian Government, and implemented through Vision 2020 Australia's Global Consortium. It involves Consortium members working together with country partners in Vietnam, Timor-Leste and Cambodia to reduce avoidable blindness and low vision.

Regional results

The following results represent the combined achievement of the Consortium organisations working in Vietnam, Cambodia and Timor-Leste as part of the East Asia Vision Program:

- 692 individual training activities were completed to improve the skills of those working in eye health
- 12 people graduated with new specialist (e.g. ophthalmologist) and general (e.g. eye nurse) qualifications. More people will graduate from these longer-term training courses during the remainder of the Program.



Program partners

- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Education and Training
- Vietnam National Institute of Ophthalmology
- provincial authorities in Thai Binh, Nghe An, Son La, Hai Duong and Ninh Binh
- Universities in Hue, Thai Binh, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City
- NGOs, including those working in disability

Consortium members involved

- Brien Holden Vision Institute
- CBM Australia
- The Fred Hollows Foundation
- The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists

Vision 2020 Australia Global Consortium

Established in 2009, the Global Consortium is a partnership of Australian eye health and vision care organisations involved in implementing programs in Asia and the Pacific.

Consortium members use comprehensive and harmonised approaches to support the development of quality eye care and vision-related disability services in close partnership with local governments and organisations.

For more information, visit the Vision 2020 Australia website: www.vision2020australia.org.au



An Australian partnership working to eliminate avoidable blindness and reduce the impact of vision loss in our region

Leadership and collaboration

The East Asia Vision Program partners in Vietnam achieved the following in 2013:

- A reciprocal commitment was reached between the Thai Binh Provincial Health Department and Thai Binh Medical University to support field practice of eye health trainees and eye health training of District health staff.
- Collaboration has been established between eye health and other areas of the health sector as well as with schools in Hanoi, Nghe An and Son La Province to improve low vision support for school children.

Training of eye health personnel

- 265 individual training activities to improve eye health skills were completed (see section below). This training was primarily in clinical/technical areas. It included teaching school teachers how to screen students for low vision and training health staff in testing patients to see if spectacles or other treatment is needed (refraction training).
- A small number of people graduated from training as new eye health professionals, including in optometry for eye examinations and in cataract surgery. The first optometrist graduate is now working at the Hanoi Medical University and the VNIO. More will graduate from longer training courses during the Program.

Building capacity of eye care professionals

During 2013, the East Asia Vision Program helped build capacity of eye care professionals in Vietnam by conducting a range of training activities.



- **241** clinical and technical training activities
- **18** 'train the trainer' training activities
- **6** management, communication and leadership training activities

Delivering eye care

In 2013, 4,612 patients were screened and those who required treatment for low vision (412 patients) received it in Son La, Nghe An, Hai Duong, Hanoi and other areas. Most of this screening was carried out among school students. Treatment for low vision, particularly among school students, is a cost effective way of preventing progression to blindness.

A model for delivering eye care services that ensures they reach the poor and vulnerable, with a focus on poor women, children and people with a disability, continued to be established in Nghe An and Son La provinces. Provincial government management structures were established to allow the roll out of this best practice, and this work will continue in 2014.

Introducing optometry in Vietnam

In 2013, the development of the curriculum and training of teaching staff occurred for the first optometry education program to be offered in Vietnam. The course, anticipated to be called the Bachelor of Optometry and Vision Science, is expected to commence in 2014 at the Pham Ngoc Thach Medical University in Ho Chi Minh City.

Introducing the optometry profession in Vietnam will reduce the huge work burden on eye specialists, allowing them to focus on advanced treatment and care. It will also increase the capacity of the health system to respond to the eye care needs of the country.

Improving eye care data

The Vietnam National Institute of Ophthalmology (VINO) Low Vision Centre database was established. The plan to link this database with their Health Information System will be implemented in 2014. This will be an important step in improving data collection which can inform national eye health planning in Vietnam.

Note: The EAVP also involves activities to increase the research capacity of eye specialists. Results will be available from 2014.

Reaching all people



Three training modules in eye health were developed or upgraded in 2013 in Vietnam.

They all included some training on the provision of eye care services to people with a **disability**; ensuring **women** have **equal access** to eye care; and making sure **children** are treated and cared for appropriately during service delivery.

Reaching women

- 62 per cent of screened and 45 per cent of treated patients in Vietnam were female.
- Females completed more training activities to increase their skills than males.

Reaching the poor

- 32 per cent of the patients screened were in Son La province, one of the poorest in the country.
- In Nghe An province, 1,401 of the patients screened were females from impoverished backgrounds.

Reaching people with a disability

- 11 per cent of patients screened and 5 per cent treated in Vietnam had a disability. This shows they were able to access treatment.

Reaching children

- A training course in protecting children from exploitation or abuse was held for staff from VNIO, several hospitals and associations.