

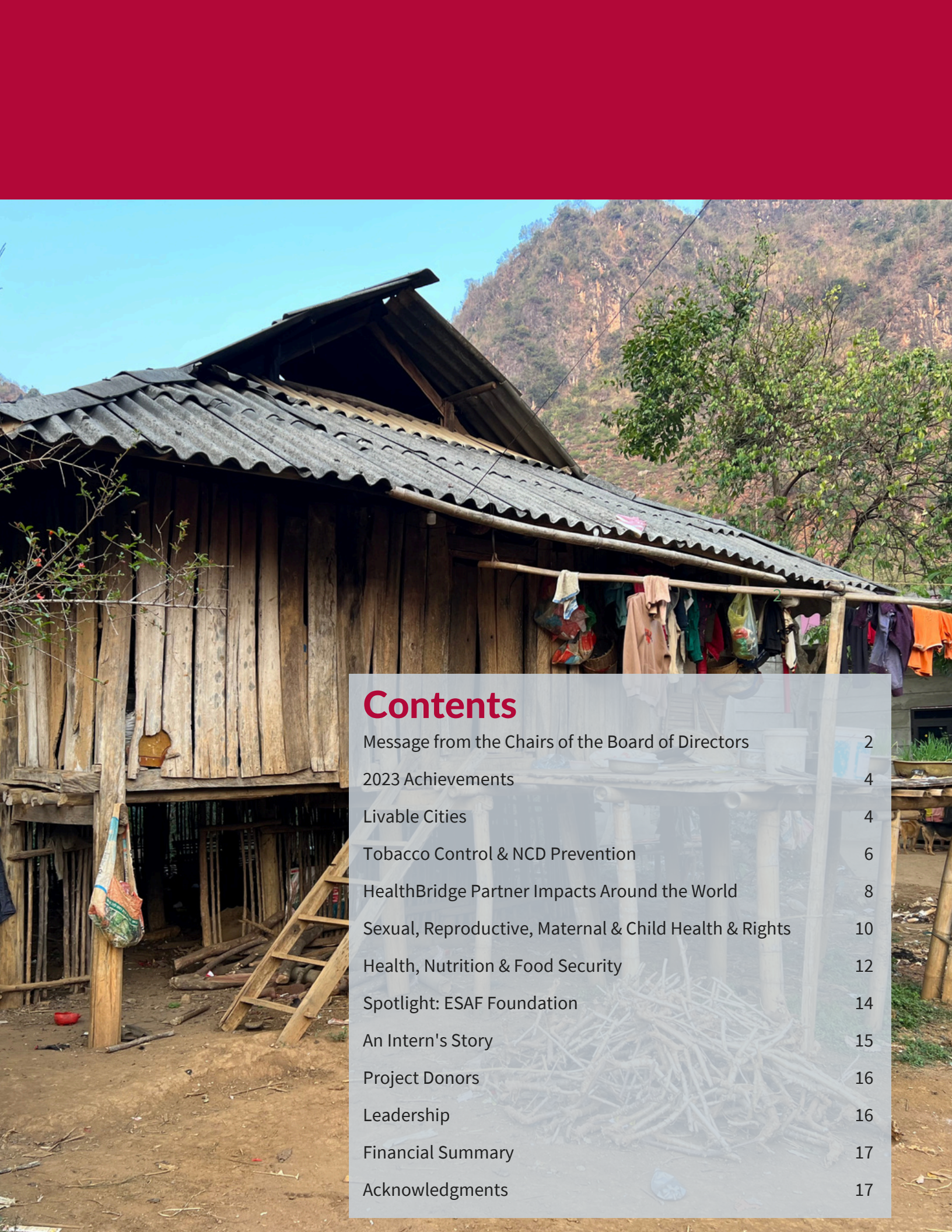


Annual Report 2023



Health and well-being for all people and communities.





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A Message from the Chairs of the Board of Directors



Photo Courtesy: Trish DeFazio



Photo Courtesy: Eva Rathgeber

The heart of Healthbridge is its people, those who work and volunteer to make an impact nationally and internationally. We honour and give thanks to our staff, volunteers and Board members. Pamela Lee, HealthBridge's longtime office administrator retired at the end of 2023 after more than 20 years of dedicated service. We wish her happiness in her retirement.

The past year has been busy for HealthBridge; work flourished in all programs in collaboration with international and local partners. The Livable Cities program had a number of successful ventures, including supporting bicycle infrastructure in Vietnam. HealthBridge worked in cooperation with GIZ and the World Resources Institute to help make bicycling a safe and attractive daily transportation choice for people of all ages and abilities, and to encourage urban planners and designers to prioritize and integrate bicycle-friendly infrastructure into city development plans.

In Uganda, HealthBridge and Advocates for Public Spaces (APS) highlighted the importance of making markets hygienic to encourage more frequent visits from customers. This led to the introduction of stalls with improved design, contributing to increased satisfaction for both customers and vendors. Recognizing this success, Kampala Capital City Authority has pledged to expand this initiative to other markets. The Tobacco Control & NCD Prevention program continued to strengthen smoking bans in public spaces and indoor areas. HealthBridge Vietnam worked with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism to train 120 inspectors to monitor and enforce the law. The Vietnam office also explored possibilities for establishing a health promotion fund.

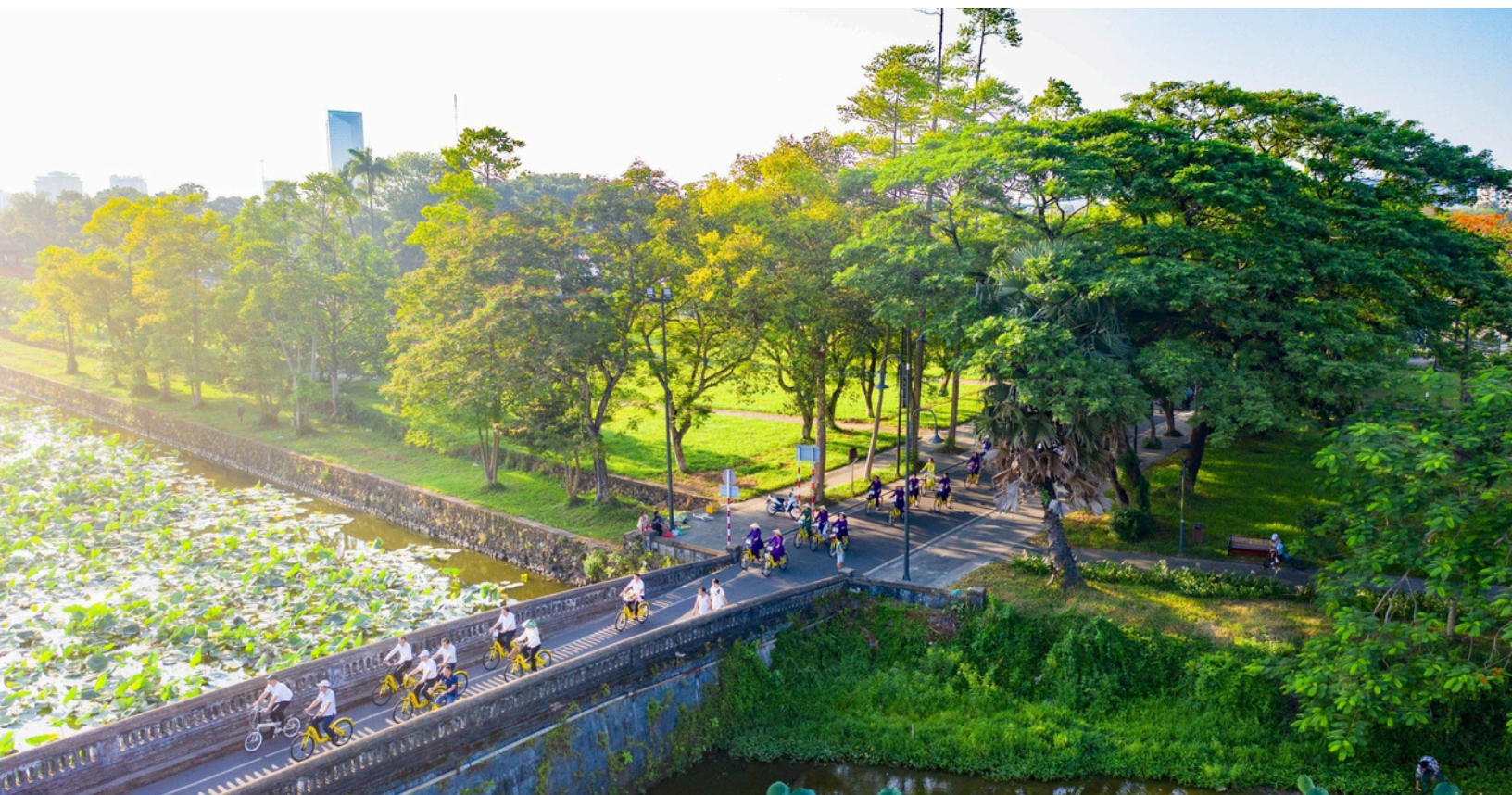
In the Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health & Rights program, HealthBridge and partners have worked to improve reproductive health and prevent child marriage in Nepal and Vietnam. In Nepal we have strengthened Mothers' Groups that meet monthly to discuss reproductive and maternal health issues. Rural Nepali women often lack key information and agency, which impairs their ability to make decisions about family health and wellbeing. The Mothers' Groups reach women with important information about reproductive and maternal health and raise awareness of the services available to women. In Vietnam, the team trained youth from the community for data collection during the Midline Check-in to learn more about challenges and opportunities of the project. The learnings from the review will be used to refine the activities in the coming year of the project and to inform future projects.

Important work has also been done on improving sexual and reproductive health and rights in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Hundreds of doctors and mid-level providers have been trained to improve services in sexual and reproductive health care as well as to provide support for sexual and gender-based violence. In Vietnam, HealthBridge's Nutrition & Food Security program has advocated for the addition of informative labels on food, allowing consumers to compare products and know what ingredients are contained in the foods they

buy. In India, we have introduced new farmers' markets in various areas in order to establish a stronger connection between the community, local farms, and markets.

We would like to thank and congratulate all the hardworking and dedicated HealthBridge staff, board members and partners for their commitment to improve the lives of people and communities around the world.

Trish DeFazio & Eva Rathgeber
Chair & Past Chair, HealthBridge Board of Directors





Livable Cities



What We Do

We improve the livability of cities for the most vulnerable by ensuring access to healthy transportation, healthy foods, parks and public spaces.

How We Work

We work with local groups in low and middle-income countries to strengthen the policies and programs needed to make cities livable.

2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

Supporting Bicycle Infrastructure in Vietnam

In Vietnam, bicycles were historically the main mode of transport, which have declined in use due to the rising ownership of motor vehicles. As a result, urban transport policies normally neglect the bicycle. Meanwhile, global transport emissions, primarily from road and urban transport, contribute significantly to negative environmental impacts. Bicycles offer a practical, eco-friendly, affordable, and healthy transportation alternative.

With Vietnam's urban population projected to rise, ensuring safe and accessible bicycle infrastructure is crucial. Developing comprehensive bicycle infrastructure alongside public transport initiatives will enhance urban transportation efficiency, safety, and sustainability. The newly introduced Technical Guideline for Bicycle Infrastructure Design in Urban Areas in Vietnam was developed in partnership with GIZ, World Resource Institute, and HealthBridge Vietnam. The Guideline aims to combine international insights with local experiences to make bicycling a safe and attractive daily transportation choice for people of all ages and abilities. Further, the Guideline seeks to encourage urban planners and designers to prioritize and integrate bicycle-friendly infrastructure into city development plans.



Kristie Daniel
Program Director

Kasubi Market Uganda

Access to fresh produce through local food markets is essential for the health of individuals and communities, providing food security and fostering community cohesion. HealthBridge and Advocates for Public Spaces (APS) conducted research in 2019 on Kampala's markets to understand their quality and impact on the community. The study highlighted the importance of making markets more hygienic to encourage more frequent visits from customers. The Kasubi Market, commissioned in 2020, hosts over 1,400 vendors but faced challenges, such as maintaining cleanliness, due to the poor quality of vendor stalls. APS initiated a pilot project to upgrade stalls, consulting vendors to create better, more visible, and accessible displays. After replacing stalls with improved wooden designs, customers reported increased satisfaction, and vendors experienced business growth due to better organization and increased space. Kampala Capital City Authority officials were impressed and pledged to expand this project to other markets. These improvements contribute to the ongoing popularity of markets and contribute to a cleaner public space that benefits the local economy and the community.

ESAF's Beach for All Campaign

In 2023, ESAF conducted Beach for All campaigns across various districts in Kerala, Southern India, to make beaches accessible for people with disabilities. ESAF gained support from local government, resulting in government funds being allocated for accessible infrastructure on beaches. In Thrissur, Malappuram, and Kozhikode, \$900,000 was earmarked jointly by municipal governments and the Department of Tourism for constructing accessible walkways, children's parks, toilets, and sitting areas benefiting approximately 3,100 families. A community meeting at Vatanappally Beach in Thrissur gathered input from 121 locals, including 64 people with disabilities, leading to promises of accessibility improvements and an \$800,000 allocation for inclusive facilities. In Kochi, the Beach for All campaign prompted local government support and will influence future beach development policies. Malappuram's Vakkad Beach secured \$16,000 for walkways and restrooms, while Kozhikode's Kappad Beach received funds for wheelchair ramps and future infrastructure development. In Trivandrum, efforts to make Shankumugham Beach accessible for children with disabilities have begun, with construction underway on various amenities. This work is particularly noteworthy given the lack of attention generally given to the special needs of those with disabilities in South Asia.



Tobacco Control & NCD Prevention



What We Do

We aim to reduce the death and illness caused by non-communicable diseases, of which tobacco and alcohol use are major risk factors.

How We Work

We work on policies and practices to create enabling environments that reduce the risk factors for non-communicable diseases.

2023 ACHIEVEMENTS



Nguyen Thi An
Country Director, Vietnam

Enforcing smoke-free laws in Vietnam

In Vietnam, smoking is prohibited in public spaces and indoor areas. However, enforcement faces many challenges and most restaurants are still filled with tobacco smoke. To promote enforcement of the law, HealthBridge Vietnam collaborated with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism to train 120 inspectors nationwide who are responsible for monitoring and enforcing smoke-free laws. HealthBridge Vietnam has continued working with the Ministry to provide tobacco control workshops to owners of hotels, restaurants, coffee shops and other venues. It is hoped that the workshops will encourage the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism to organize similar workshops. Improved enforcement of non-smoking laws would protect the public and venue staff from toxic second-hand smoke in popular venues. After all, tobacco control laws need adequate enforcement mechanisms to be effective.

The road to establishing a health promotion fund in Vietnam

In Vietnam, low taxes and thus prices on tobacco and alcohol, and the absence of taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages, results in increased consumption of these harmful products. This, in turn, contributes to non-communicable diseases among the Vietnamese population, imposing significant health, economic, and societal burdens. In response, Vietnam enacted a Tobacco Control Law mandating a dedicated tax for tobacco control and allocated state funds for alcohol control in the Alcohol Control Law. Despite these measures, there is a lack of clear budgetary allocation for health promotion. To explore possibilities for establishing such a health promotion fund HealthBridge Vietnam is reviewing international experiences and best practices on earmarking mechanisms for health promotion funds.

In November 2023, HealthBridge Vietnam organized a technical meeting on health promotion. The workshop involved thirty delegates from key government agencies. Together with the WHO and other organizations, HealthBridge shared best practices and international experience in establishing, implementing and managing a health promotion fund. HealthBridge Vietnam is also collaborating with the Ministry of Health to conduct research on financial mechanisms and policy and legal documents for health promotion to provide evidence for policymaking. If successful, the creation of a health promotion fund would support the ability of the population to stay healthy—and serve as a model in the region.

Scaling up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance (SUN CSA)

In 2020, the government of Vietnam approved the National Targeted Program on Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas from 2021–2030 (NTP–SEDEMA). Nutrition is one component in the program. However, the implementation of health and nutrition activities has been slow. In this context, SUN CSA Vietnam, of which HealthBridge is a core group member, arranged a discussion with the National Assembly’s Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs, the government agency in charge of monitoring the NTP–SEDEMA, to discuss how the delay of implementation affects the health and nutrition of ethnic minority children and mothers. From the dialogue, the National Assembly’s Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs proposed a comprehensive and participatory assessment of the NTP–SEDEMA. HealthBridge accompanied the expert team to conduct the assessment in the rural and mountainous Son La province which is home to many ethnic minority groups. The expert team met provincial leaders, health staff, and mothers to hear their feedback. Findings from the assessment were presented at two high level meetings and were included in the report submitted to the National Assembly. As a result, government has strengthened efforts in implementation of NTP–SEDEMA which would improve nutritional outcomes for a historically underserved and marginalized population.

HealthBridge Partner Impacts Around The World



Photo: Beach for All campaign

Mmofra Foundation is a civil society organization in Ghana which has worked for 26 years to promote family-friendly public spaces and outdoor learning programs. Mmofra Foundation has worked with HealthBridge over the past six years to develop policy documents, build a community of advocacy groups and engage with stakeholders on the importance of safeguarding public spaces in Accra. This fruitful partnership has also resulted in the creation of innovative models of child-friendly outdoor play and learning facilities which are now being used by other civil society organizations in Ghana.

GHANA

TANZANIA

In 2023, Urban Planning for Community Change (UPC) worked closely with the Arusha city council in Tanzania and the local community in the Lemara Ward to build a model community park in Lemara. The park allows the community to access green space, build social connections, and engage in physical activity. Partnership with HealthBridge has supported UPC to nurture relationships with other HealthBridge partners in Asia and Africa and expand visibility to other international like-minded organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Farmers Markets Coalition.

In India, ESAF Foundation works to empower the poor and marginalized, especially women and children. ESAF has organized regular farmers' markets to enable smallholder farmers to sell their produce directly to customers and also provide city dwellers with fresh and nutritious produce. One farmer from Kochi shared, "As a woman, I'm thrilled to be part of ESAF's weekly farmers' market, which empowers women like me to sell our home-grown produce directly to the community, cutting out intermediaries. I'm grateful to share nutritious food from my home, inspiring others to adopt healthy eating habits and start their own home gardens".

Many people with disabilities are prevented from accessing the sea due to beaches that are not inclusive. ESAF initiated the Beach for All programme which turned beaches in Kerala into accessible venues for people with disabilities. As one beach-user shared, "The situation where our wheelchairs cannot roll is prevalent on the beaches here; hence, making the beaches wheelchair-friendly is essential." The result of the Beach for All campaign is that 38 beaches in Kerala now have barrier-free facilities.

INDIA

UGANDA

Advocates for Public Spaces (APS) is a voluntary association working to promote and protect the availability and quality of public spaces in urban areas in Uganda. They work to increase access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, fresh food markets, urban fresh air and non-motorized active transport. In 2023, APS participated in the Kampala Open Streets event to promote sustainable transport systems by planning a popular walking and cycling event. APS also installed a bicycle rack in Kampala's city center to serve the many cyclists who park their bicycles there. Promoting active transportation such as cycling is important for encouraging physical activity and reducing the climate impact of cities.



Photo: Bicycle rally in Kampala, Uganda

NEPAL

In the mountainous and remote Karnali Province of Nepal, child marriage is still commonly practiced. Mothers' Group meetings in the region are supported by International Nepal Fellowship and provide a space for sharing reproductive, maternal and child health information. The meetings include young women and mothers in remote areas where they learn, for example, the importance of accessing sexual and reproductive health services, the negative impacts of child marriage, and healthy reproductive health practices such as proper birth spacing. One young 19-year-old mother shared that since joining the group *"I have learned about the importance of sexual & reproductive health education and services. I have also become aware of the risks of child marriage, and I will advise others not to engage in it. I have opened a Chhori Surakshya Khata (Daughter Protection Bank Account) for my daughter and I will provide her with a good education and allow her to marry after she is an adult and is financially independent."*



Photo: Mother's Group meeting in Kalikot, Nepal

SERAC-Bangladesh supports the mobilization of 100 Community Action Groups consisting of a total of 1,000 youth volunteers who are known as Projonon Shasthya Bondhu or Reproductive Health Friends. These youth provide community education sessions in underserved communities of Dhaka on topics concerning SRHR, including preventing early marriage. These sessions on early marriage have successfully persuaded some parents not to marry their underage daughters. The impact was highlighted by 16-year-old Tabassum who narrowly avoided an early marriage thanks to one of the youth community sessions. After her parents attended an educational session Tabassum updated the youth volunteers, stating *"I will be returning to school in January. Thanks to Projonon Shasthya Bondhu for their guidance, convincing my parents through the awareness sessions, and making my future days more promising"*.

BANGLADESH

VIETNAM

Community educators in Son La, Vietnam travel from village to village to reach the most remote and marginalized villagers with important information about maternal and child health and nutrition. In partnership with CDC Son La, HealthBridge has provided training for a group of community educators on the importance of nutrition in the first 1,000 days – from conception to two years – including topics such as breastfeeding, food hygiene, complementary feeding and nutrition for mothers. The community educators not only deliver education sessions for villagers, they also organize food demonstration sessions to introduce delicious and nutritious recipes to mothers and caregivers. The community educators take great pride in their work. One shared *"I feel happy when mothers and other participants enthusiastically engage in the training. The children enjoy tasting the sample meals prepared by us. They want to join the next training and even bring their bowls to eat."*



Photo: Students participating in CSE in Vietnam

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) teaches adolescents about the physical, emotional and social aspects of sexuality and relationships and improves their critical thinking, communication and decision-making skills. In six schools in the remote Son La province of Vietnam, CSE sessions have already reached nearly 8,000 students. To engage and empower students, HealthBridge Vietnam organized a training of trainers for students on adolescent sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and communication skills. These students then organized peer education sessions in their communities, and supported their teachers who deliver CSE. A 9th grade student who participated in the training shared *"For me, it is crucial to share information about SRH. Child marriage and unwanted pregnancy still occur in our community. We should speak about these issues and take action to prevent them from happening. Once we organize a session in one class, we gain confidence to carry out the next ones in other classes."*



Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health & Rights

What We Do

We improve sexual, reproductive, maternal & child health and rights among people living in vulnerable situations.

How We Work

We address the root causes of gender inequality and strengthen policies and practices that promote sexual, reproductive, maternal & child health and rights, including through the engagement of men, boys, family members, and community.

2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

Improving sexual and reproductive health and rights in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Access to high quality sexual and reproductive health services remains a challenge in Dhaka, especially for adolescents and residents of underserved urban areas. The “Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Dhaka” project has achieved several key milestones that exceed initial targets. Working with local partners, we have trained 341 doctors and more than 200 mid-level providers to improve their ability to provide needed care. This includes menstrual regulation, post-abortion care, family planning (including long-acting reversible contraceptives), and care for sexual and gender-based violence. The partners are now supporting 161 facilities and service delivery points to provide essential, high quality sexual and reproductive health services to underserved populations.

Among the supported sites are 100 community-based General Practitioners’ (GP) chambers. The partners have taken the innovative approach of working with GPs in urban Dhaka because underserved groups are less likely to access SRHR services from health clinics due to factors such as travel distance, operating hours, and perceptions of privacy. In addition to supporting GPs to deliver expanded services, we also aim to develop important linkages between GPs and government authorities in order to establish mechanisms for accountability, reporting, and provision of SRHR commodities. This highlights how the project’s collaboration with GPs not only improves community-based access to quality SRHR services but also has significant transformative potential for the health system.



Cassandra Morris
Program Manager

Improving reproductive health and preventing child marriage in Nepal and Vietnam

The “Improving reproductive health and preventing child marriage in Nepal and Vietnam” project reaches remote and underserved communities in the mountainous Karnali province of Nepal and rural Son La province of Vietnam with important information about sexual, reproductive, maternal and child health (SRMCH) and the negative consequence of child marriage and early childbearing. When raising awareness of such sensitive and important topics, it is crucial that the information comes from a source that is trusted by the community.

One of the strengths of this project is that most of the implementing team is from the community. The project Team Leaders and Community Facilitators in Nepal and the Community Educators in Vietnam are all residents of the project catchment area. This means that the team has a first-hand understanding of the local culture. Community Educators in Vietnam travel to villages in their commune to deliver education sessions in the local ethnic minority language, Thai. Team Leaders and Community Facilitators in Nepal join the monthly Mothers’ Group meetings to discuss important SRMCH topics with new and expecting mothers in their community.

This approach has proven to be successful, as the project has found that nearly 70% of men and women in both Nepal and Vietnam who participated in education sessions had essential knowledge of the SRMCH topics discussed. Engaging local people to implement activities in their own communities has proven effective at fostering community participation and reaching residents with culturally appropriate SRMCH information.



Health, Nutrition & Food Security



What We Do

We support healthier food systems to address food security and malnutrition.

How We Work

We address the double burden of over and under nutrition through a food systems approach, strengthen food systems towards resilience, and improve child feeding practices, including breastfeeding.

2023 ACHIEVEMENTS



Behnoush Ahranjani
Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist

A big win for nutrition labelling in Vietnam

In Vietnam, access to ultra-processed, calorie-dense and unhealthy foods is contributing to the ever-growing burden of obesity and non-communicable diseases. Putting informative labels on food has several benefits. Nutrition labels allow consumers to know what ingredients a food product contains, making it easier for them to compare and choose products. The Ministry of Health in Vietnam recently issued a Circular on nutrition labeling, aimed at providing consumers with essential nutrition information for foods and drinks. This Circular, effective from February 2024, mandates the inclusion of nutrient contents on labels for all foods manufactured, sold, imported, or circulated in Vietnam by January 1st, 2026. These nutrients include energy, protein, carbohydrates, fat, sodium, total sugar (for soft drinks and processed milk with added sugar), and saturated fat (for fried foods). This is the first time ever that nutrition information and health warnings are required by law.

Introducing farmers' markets in India

HealthBridge's partner ESAF introduced new farmers' markets in India in the cities of Trivandrum, Kochi, Thrissur, Malappuram, and Nagpur by establishing a connection between community farming sites and markets. This allows small-scale farmers to sell their produce directly to consumers without intermediaries. The objective of this model is to encourage local governments to create public markets or farmers' markets in all neighbourhoods. To date, 12 farmers' markets have been introduced. In Nagpur, ESAF succeeded in setting up a stall in a weekly market to sell organic vegetables that were harvested from a community farm. The governments of Thrissur, Kochi, and Kozhikode are now waiting for approval from city councils to identify lands that could be dedicated for farmers' markets in the Draft Master Plans. The impacts of these markets include a better rural-urban connection, more access to fresh, healthy foods, and an increased number of attractive public spaces.

Food demonstrations in ethnic minority communities in Son La

Son La, a rural province in Northern Vietnam, is home to many ethnic minority communities. Due to various socio-political issues, undernutrition among children remains a persistent problem. Traditional knowledge about good nutrition and its impact on health has been largely erased by the heavy marketing, low (and subsidized) price, ease of use, and widespread availability of ready-to-eat meals, instant foods and highly processed snacks. Often these highly-processed and low-nutrient foods replace nutritious home cooked-meals and even breastfeeding, which can contribute to malnutrition. Food demonstrations were introduced in two communes in Son La, to provide hands-on demonstrations of cooking quick, easy, healthy and nutritious meals for children. The demonstrations provided an opportunity for mothers and other caregivers to learn new recipes and (re)learn how to use a variety of nutrient-rich, energy-dense and local ingredients. These events also encourage engagement and involvement of all caregivers in child feeding including fathers and grandparents. The sessions also included other child feeding topics such as breastfeeding, food hygiene and age-appropriate feeding practices to provide holistic information on nutrition. This practical and communal approach to sharing information about nutrition and child-feeding practices encourages the whole community to share the responsibility for improving health and nutrition outcomes.

Spotlight: ESAF Foundation

HealthBridge Partner, ESAF Foundation

ESAF Foundation is a not-for-profit organization formed as a response to the development gaps in society. Driven by the vision to build a just and fair society, ESAF's interventions are based on an integrated development model that focuses on creating livelihood opportunities for the underprivileged. Since its inception in 1992, ESAF has been engaged in transforming the lives of the poor and marginalised in different states of India. ESAF has impacted more than 5 million lives. ESAF partners with city governments, government agencies, community bodies, and national and international agencies, to deliver lasting changes to the poor and marginalised, especially women, children, and people living with disabilities.



Photo Above: Accessible farming program

The eight strategic areas that the ESAF Foundation primarily focuses on are: Education, Youth and Child Development, Environment, Skills and Livelihood Development, Farm Sector, Urban Initiatives, Healthcare, Disaster Preparedness and Management, and Sustainable Tribal and Rural Development. Livable Cities is one of the important programs implemented by ESAF with HealthBridge's technical and financial support. The program aims to improve the quality of cities by ensuring access for the most vulnerable to public transportation, fresh and healthy foods, and parks and other public spaces.

Since 2008, ESAF's initiatives have sparked widespread discussion about the significance of parks and other public spaces in India. ESAF has effectively collaborated with city governments to implement barrier-free infrastructure, thereby facilitating the use and accessibility of open public spaces by people with disabilities, women, older citizens, and families. Additionally, ESAF has been instrumental in establishing car-free streets in India, showing how even crowded, polluted cities lacking outdoor public space can promote recreation and socialization by temporarily freeing street space from cars.

The Beach for All and Open Streets campaigns are ESAF's flagship initiatives that promote beach accessibility and car-free streets to transform unattractive spaces into popular public places. The policy interventions resulting from the Beach for All campaigns led to the addition of accessible and child-friendly infrastructure at 38 beaches in the state of Kerala, India. ESAF has organised 16 large open-street events and 467 cycle days in Indian cities with the support of HealthBridge and city governments. In addition to bringing changes in policy, these open-street activities have resulted in the addition of provisions in city master plans for converting streets into car-free zones.

Most recently, ESAF has succeeded in launching wheelchair accessible farming programs in schools and has initiated mapping fresh markets across nine cities to assess their status. ESAF continues to advocate for better conditions for walking, improved public transport systems, and open public spaces. In addition, ESAF provides data to support informed policy discussion and action towards developing and upgrading markets that sell fresh, healthy food that nourishes people's health, the environment, and local economies.

[Learn more about ESAF Foundation at: www.esafindia.org](http://www.esafindia.org)

An Intern's Story

By Emily Meier

My path into the global health world has by no means been a linear one. I graduated with a Master of Science degree in Applied Human Nutrition from Mount Saint Vincent University in 2023 and hold a Bachelor of Human Nutrition and International Development degree from the University of Guelph. During my Master's degree, I had the opportunity to relocate to Cambodia and collaborate with a local NGO on a workplace lactation support project. While there, I fell in love with Southeast Asia and knew I wanted to pursue global health work and hopefully eventually find my way back to this geographic area.

During the final summer of my Master's program, I was fortunate to be selected as a summer practicum student and receive the Tim Stone Memorial Award for 2023 at HealthBridge. One of the things that initially drew me to HealthBridge was their community-centered approach to development projects. Instead of imposing solutions from a far-off western country, they prioritize local expertise and stakeholder engagement, ensuring projects meet the genuine needs of communities and foster sustainability. Working with a smaller NGO has provided valuable insights into program implementation at various levels, fostering a holistic understanding of project dynamics. This is an experience that my previous work with larger NGOs and organizations had not afforded me.

A highlight of my internship was the flexibility to engage in diverse projects, blending both sexual and reproductive health and rights and my nutrition expertise. This dynamic allowed for continuous learning and growth, and ultimately enriched my understanding of both fields. During my internship, I was able to leverage my nutrition background to conduct a literature review of successful nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions in low- and middle-income countries, which is now being expanded upon to create a concept note for a potential project. Additionally, my love for quantitative data found expression in analyzing baseline data for the "Improving sexual and reproductive health and rights in Dhaka, Bangladesh" project. Despite working remotely from Halifax, I appreciated the collaborative environment fostered by my supervisors across Canada.

When I reached the end of my Master's degree I was left with the question many new grads face - "What's next?". I had been working part-time as a research assistant for an independent consultant in the global nutrition sector but I wanted to gain more hands-on experience working with NGOs. That is when I came across another HealthBridge opportunity for a Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) intern based at HealthBridge's office in Hanoi, Vietnam. While my main research and work focus had previously been on nutrition, I have a personal interest in SRH, and was drawn towards the fact that the opportunity had a nutrition component, which prompted me to apply, and ultimately accept this role. Now I am very glad to be back with HealthBridge as the SRH Intern for the Vietnamese team in Hanoi, allowing me to both return to Southeast Asia and continue to hone my skills in global health. I am contributing to project development, implementation, and dissemination in both SRH and nutrition.

I am extremely grateful to HealthBridge for both internship opportunities they have given me, and for the ongoing support from such a tightly knit team. Regardless of geographic location, I am supported by an amazing team. As I embark on this next chapter with HealthBridge, I am reminded that sometimes the most impactful adventures start with a simple question: "What's next?".



Photos: Emily Meier with HealthBridge Vietnam staff on International Women's Day



Project Donors

Thank you to our generous donors for their contributions to the "Improving reproductive health and preventing child marriage in Nepal & Vietnam" project.

In the third year of the project, education activities in the communities and in schools were in full swing. Teachers and community educators received refresher training on important sexual and reproductive health (SRH) topics along with training on engaging facilitation techniques. A variety of education materials were developed and distributed in communities, schools & health facilities including posters, booklets, fan shaped leaflets, and flipcharts. Health workers in Nepal attended a skilled birth attendant training, and in Vietnam health workers were trained on SRH topics and counselling skills to improve the delivery of SRH services in their communities. We are deeply thankful for the donors who have supported us for many years. It is with such dependable support that we are able to forge strong partnerships in the communities we work with and flexibly address needs as they arise.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the following donors for their support. To donate to HealthBridge, visit <https://healthbridge.ca/donate> for more information.



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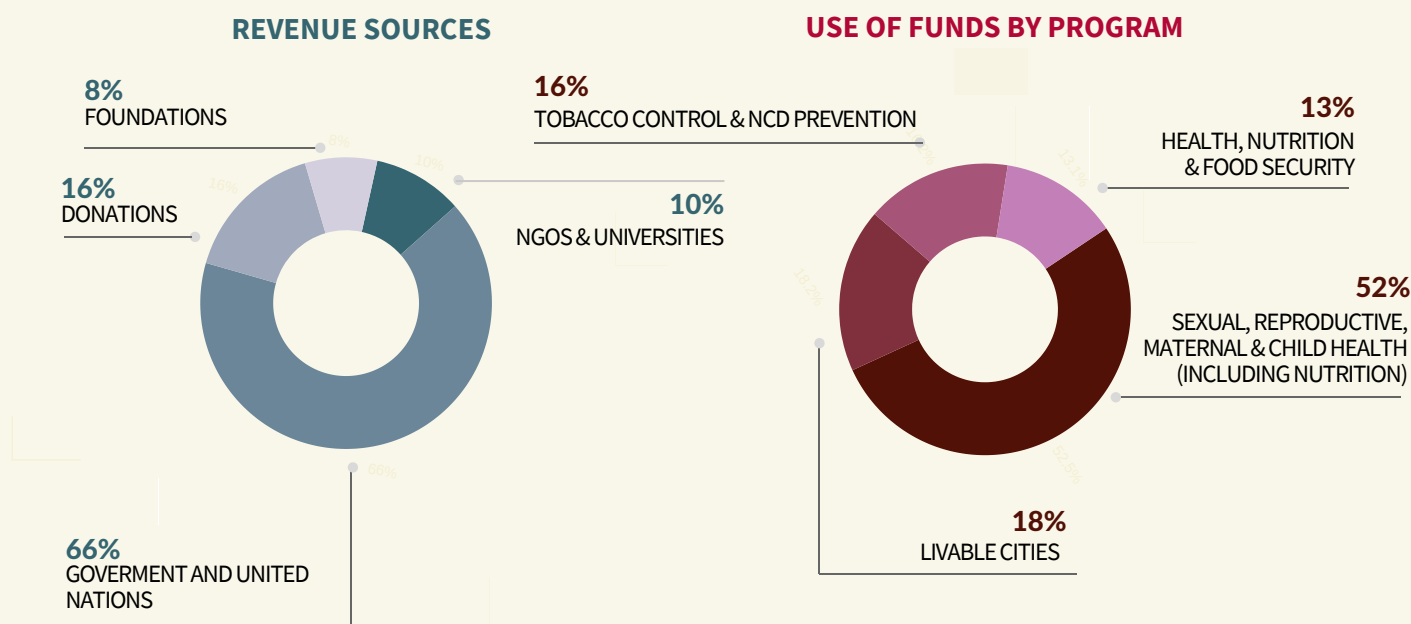
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Financial Summary 2023

The following is an excerpt from HealthBridge's audited financial statements. For more information, please visit www.healthbridge.ca.



Acknowledgments

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Institutions

Global Designing Cities Initiative
GIZ
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Muntaha Ahmed
Shweta Pant
Tamara Udugama

Tim Stone Memorial Award

Emily Meier



HealthBridge works with partners and communities worldwide to improve health and reduce health inequities through research, policy and action.



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