

Project

Improving reproductive health and preventing child marriage in Vietnam

Son La Province



Son La is a mountainous and remote province in the Northwest of Vietnam, 320km away from Hanoi. The province's population is 1.3 million. It is home to 12 different ethnic minority groups, who account for more than 80% of the total population, mainly **Thai people (54%)**. The majority of the population reside in rural and mountainous areas (86%).

In recent years, although the living standards of the local population have shown gradual improvement, a number of challenges remain. As of 2024, the proportion of households classified as poor was estimated at 19%^[1].

Limited access to and utilization of healthcare services such as antenatal care and facility-based deliveries is a persistent challenge in Son La. Early marriage^[2] and adolescent pregnancies also remain key concerns, undermining children's rights and posing serious risks to health, education, and future opportunities. These issues highlight the urgent need to strengthen sexual and reproductive health services, especially for adolescents and youth.



^[1] Provincial data as of December 31, 2019.

^[2] Early marriage refers to being married when either or both spouses are under the age of marriage when men are under 20 years old and women are under 20 years old.

Project Introduction

The “Improving reproductive health and preventing child marriage in Nepal & Vietnam project” was funded by the Government of Canada and other donors and implemented between 2021 – 2025. In Vietnam, the project has been implemented in six communes: Chieng Bom, Tong Co, Chieng Den, Chieng Ngan, Chieng Sinh, and Chieng Le in Son La.



Project Goal

The ultimate project goal is to improve health & gender equality and reduce the incidence of early marriage among women and adolescent girls in vulnerable communities in Vietnam.



Project Partners

- The Administration of Maternal and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Health (MoH)
- National Center for Health Communication and Education, MoH
- Son La Provincial Department of Health
- Son La Center for Disease Control (CDC)

Project Activities

1

Supporting comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in 6 schools to improve adolescents' knowledge of sexual and reproductive health

2

Organizing and supporting community education sessions to raise awareness among local men and women about reproductive, maternal and child health (SRMCH) and to address gender and cultural barriers to health

3

Strengthening the capacity of government and health system stakeholders to design, deliver and monitor high-quality health services that are gender responsive and inclusive

Project Outputs

Comprehensive Sexuality Education



- **91** school teachers and **26** core students received training on adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) and communication skills,
- **7,989** students in the 6 project schools were reached through CSE and mass education events,
- **6** adolescent sexual and reproductive health information corners set up in schools.

Supporting Community Education Sessions



- **34** community educators received training on ASRH and communication skills,
- **330** community education sessions on ASRH and gender equality for **7,375** local residents.



Strengthening the capacity of government and health system stakeholders

- **27** healthcare workers received training on gender responsive and youth friendly provision of ASRH services,
- **8** health facilities were provided with medical equipment, communication and education materials.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Improved Knowledge and Attitudes among community members



52% Baseline

Endline 90%

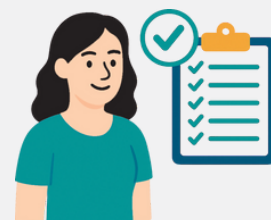
% of community members who could name two causes of unwanted pregnancy **increased by 38%^[1]**



There was a **13% increase among men** and **7% increase among women** who agreed that women have the right to refuse sex



There was a **18% increase among men** and **7% increase among women** who agreed that it is acceptable to discuss contraceptive methods between two partners



When answering 7 questions about confidence in making decisions about SRH more than **90% of women** answered feeling confident for each question

85% Baseline

Endline 98%

Men

90% Baseline

Endline 97%

Women

79% Baseline

Endline 97%

Men

92% Baseline

Endline 99%

Women

Improved Health Systems and Increased Use of Health Services



% of women/adolescent girls who attended 4 antenatal care services as per protocol in the past year **increased by 7%**

73% Baseline

Endline 80%



% of women/adolescent girls who received postnatal care services in the first week after birth in the past year **increased by 10%**

67% Baseline

Endline 77%



At the end of the project, **5 health facilities** scored a maximum **8/8**, and **2 health facilities** scored **7/8**, as measured by infrastructure, equipment and communication materials, human resources and waste management domains

^[1] increases are represented as percentage point increases

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Improved Knowledge and Attitudes among Students



42% Baseline

Endline 68%

% of boys and girls who could give correct answers to four key questions about conception **increased by 26%**

% of adolescents who could identify 2 causes of unplanned pregnancy **increased by 36%**

49% Baseline

Endline 85%



Boys and girls who had heard of emergency contraceptives **increased by 48% and 29% respectively**

Boys

39% Baseline

Endline 87%

Girls

59% Baseline

Endline 88%

Boys and girls who knew when to use emergency contraceptives **increased by 43% and 38% respectively**

31% Baseline

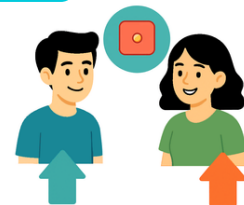
Endline 74%

Boys

49% Baseline

Endline 88%

Girls



Nearly 100% of boys and girls agreed that a girlfriend has the right to refuse sex



94% of boys and girls agreed that it is acceptable to discuss contraceptive methods between two partners



The percentage of adolescent girls who reported feeling confident that they could ask their partner to use birth control or else they would refuse to have sex increased by 16% from 76% to **92%**



When answering 4 questions about confidence in making decisions about SRH, over **80% of adolescent girls** answered feeling confident for each question

Reflections from Participants



Phuong Thao, a female student, Boarding high school for ethnic minorities in Son La

"Now I feel confident and comfortable discussing my period, contraceptive methods, love and safe sex with my friends and teachers."

A 17 year old male student at Chieng Sinh high school, Son La

"When participating in the extracurricular activities on reproductive health, we learned about limits in a romantic relationship which avoid unwanted events from happening, and shared this information around us. I learned about contraceptive methods, and ways to protect us from sexually transmitted diseases."

Teacher Long, Chieng Bom secondary school, Son La

"In the school year 2023 - 2024, one 9th grade student intended to stop school to get married. We talked to him, his friends, and family to understand his situation, then encouraged him and his family to continue studying. He is currently studying vocational training in Hanoi. The project has proven to be essential in safeguarding children's futures and preventing similar situations."



Mr. Anh, Chieng Den, Community Educator

"While participating in the training about reproductive health for adolescents, I have learned a lot about reproductive health and communication skills, and I feel more confident speaking in front of a large crowd, especially because of what we learned from the training sessions. So far, I have reached about 200 people in the community. All of them were very sociable and expressed a willingness to make positive changes in their behaviors. Also, for the first time, we have used our communication

training to implement education sessions in a novel and more interactive way in the village, through organizing games and group discussions. This mode of education was a lot more fun for the participants and resulted in active and open participation."