

## The Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health team at HealthBridge has been adjusting to the new virtual work-world, while continuing to prioritize our important projects aimed at improving health of women and children.

---

The Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health team at HealthBridge has been adjusting to the new virtual work-world, while continuing to prioritize our important projects aimed at improving health of women and children.

### Rapid Assessment:

With so much focus on the virus itself and the scale of morbidity and mortality directly caused by infection, it is also important to consider the impacts of containment measures such as wide-spread lockdowns and quarantine. HealthBridge Vietnam conducted a rapid assessment to try to understand the potential impacts of lockdown measures in the remote and mountainous districts of Son La province of Vietnam (where one of our projects is implemented). Vietnam was praised internationally for its efficient and effective response in the early weeks of the pandemic. To date, Son La province has not had a single case of COVID-19; however, the impacts of the lockdown were already apparent even after only a few weeks. We encourage you to read the executive summary of our rapid assessment, which can be accessed using the following link:

[https://healthbridge.ca/images/uploads/library/Rapid\\_Assessment\\_Summary\\_FINAL\\_September\\_4\\_2020.pdf](https://healthbridge.ca/images/uploads/library/Rapid_Assessment_Summary_FINAL_September_4_2020.pdf)

The findings can be summarized in a few lines:

- Essential services and life-saving interventions are disrupted, and mothers, newborns, and children are at risk of suffering or dying of treatable and preventable causes.
- Children are at risk of dropping out of school to instead work with their parents in the fields, especially Ethnic Minority children from the most remote regions of Son La
- Child marriage and early childbearing are huge threats exasperated by the pandemic and the associated lockdowns and economic hardships
- Food security became a serious concern even after only a few weeks of lockdown – families reported limited access to protein-rich foods
- Health communication about the pandemic has been extraordinarily effective. Awareness among community members, even in the most remote locations, is very high

### Staying Connected:

It is a challenge to stay connected with colleagues during such extraordinary circumstances. We delved into the digital world to explore new ways of connecting and working together, while separated by time-zones and thousands of kilometres. We conducted a webinar on adolescent reproductive health. This webinar was our first for the program and offered us the opportunity to share our learnings from Vietnam. Click to following links to access a summary of the webinar and a list of essential resources:

- Summary: [https://healthbridge.ca/images/uploads/library/ARH\\_Webinar\\_Summary\\_2020.pdf](https://healthbridge.ca/images/uploads/library/ARH_Webinar_Summary_2020.pdf)
- Resources: [https://healthbridge.ca/images/uploads/library/Resources\\_ARH\\_Webinar\\_2020.pdf](https://healthbridge.ca/images/uploads/library/Resources_ARH_Webinar_2020.pdf)

We conducted a 'virtual joint meeting' of the partners on the project Strengthening Health Systems and Improving Nutrition in Nepal and Vietnam. The meeting took place over a three-week period, with one meeting per week. We used breakout rooms, polls and interactive facilitation techniques to document the most important learnings from the project.

If you have any questions about the program and our work, we'd love to connect. Rebecca can be reached at [rbrodmann@healthbridge.ca](mailto:rbrodmann@healthbridge.ca).



**Rebecca Brodmann**

**Program Manager - Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health**