



World Vision
SINGAPORE

Lives Changed Communities Transformed

Hpa-An, Myanmar

Background

Hpa-An, our programme area, has been riddled with poverty for decades. It is in the capital of Kayin State in southeast Myanmar. As a border region, many villagers often migrate to Thailand in search of work, leaving their children behind. This, coupled with a limited understanding of child rights, has resulted in many children in Hpa-An growing up neglected and uncared for, and vulnerable to child labour and trafficking.

Poor families also struggle with the cost of education. As a result, many children drop out of school to find work instead. In the long term, these low levels of education and economic difficulties have affected the community's ability to break out of the poverty cycle.



HPA-AN
AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (ADP)
TOTAL POPULATION: 25,332
NUMBER OF FAMILIES: 63,453
Women: 47,963
Girls: 3,618
Men: 8,784
Boys: 3,855

ADP start date: 1 October 2003
ADP end date: 30 September 2018

How the Journey Began

World Vision began work in Myanmar in 1997, when the country was one of the epicentres of the HIV epidemic in Southeast Asia. In 2002, our work expanded to the Hpa-An area, in light of the population's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Hpa-An, with its close proximity to Thailand, has a very mobile population who often crossed the border for work. Early interventions focused on the prevention and care of HIV/AIDS as well as other cross-border problems like trafficking. In subsequent years, key development interventions went into the following areas: education, health and nutrition, economic development, community capacity building and child protection.



Health and Nutrition

Low levels of public expenditure on healthcare in Myanmar affected the quality of healthcare received by the Hpa-An community. Health facilities and maternal and neonatal healthcare services were lacking. Pregnant women did not have access to proper delivery services. Malnutrition among young children was common as there was limited knowledge on infant and child feeding practices.



“Before the sessions, I did not understand why my child fell sick every month. After the sessions, I learnt how to better care for my child who is no longer malnourished.”

– Daw Win New, 38

Over the years, World Vision improved the quality of healthcare services for more than 20,000 people in Hpa-An:



8 health centres

were provided with medication, medical equipment and facilities such as hospital beds, water tanks and solar deep freezers to store medication



36 Community Health Workers

were recruited and trained to help more than 1,400 people, through pre- and post-natal home visits



19 Village Health Committees

were established and trained to lead and develop action plans to improve the community's health

In addition, to promote maternal, new-born and child health knowledge, health education sessions and events were organised. World Vision also distributed vitamin supplies and carried out vaccinations. Young children benefitted from growth monitoring sessions and mothers were taught the importance of nutrition and good feeding practices.

To ensure that the impact of such interventions will last, community health workers were trained and village health committees were established. These groups of people will continue to maintain and increase the community's access to quality and improved healthcare on a long-term basis.

As a result of World Vision's interventions, the **prevalence of underweight children was reported to be at 12%, a great improvement from 2014**, where 30% of children under 5 surveyed were not well nourished.



Economic Livelihood

Though agriculture is the main economic activity in Hpa-An, productivity was very poor due to a lack of proper resources. Farmers lacked the relevant skills, knowledge and tools. As one-third of the programme area experiences flooding every year, harvests were affected. Poor access to markets and business knowledge also prevented families from earning income. When emergency needs arise, villagers were sometimes forced to take out loans with high interest rates. This, coupled, with poor savings practices, caused many households to be caught up in a cycle of debt.

In light of these needs, World Vision’s interventions focused on improving their agriculture productivity and savings practices:



1,005 households were provided with livestock and trained on improved farming techniques



822 households benefitted from chicken vaccinations



20 community animal health workers were trained



317 families accessed savings and credit services through 11 Village Saving and Loan groups

To further ensure that families can earn enough income and provide their children with nutritious food, homestead gardening was introduced. Households were supported to plant green vegetables such as bitter melon, cucumber and okra in their backyard. As a result:



Animal mortality rate in the community was **reduced by 50%**



Average yearly income increased significantly, from approximately **S\$460 to S\$1,320**



Local farmers are trained on how to vaccinate their livestock



CBO members showcasing their development plan for the community

Sustaining the Good Work

In the past, community leaders were not equipped with leadership skills and had little knowledge on their role in community development. As such, they were not taking ownership of their community’s progress.

To encourage greater involvement of community leaders in Hpa-An’s development, **19 community-based organisations (CBOs)** made up of **445 members** were formed. World Vision equipped members with leadership and financial management skills, and empowered them to form a community action plan.

This plan was used to help CBOs approach local authorities for targeted help. Thereafter, they also learnt to write proposals to request for funding support for local development projects within Hpa-An.

As a result of building the capacity of the local community, CBOs were able to get government funding for vegetable growing and animal raising businesses in vulnerable households, as well as building new roads that provide a safer way for children to go to school.

Even as World Vision transitions out of Hpa-An, CBOs will increasingly be empowered to continue with poverty alleviation and development work in the community.





Education and Child Protection

When World Vision first started working in Hpa-An, there were hardly any pre-schools. Those available were in dilapidated conditions. Although primary school education is compulsory, buildings lacked proper sanitation facilities and furniture. Teachers were also not formally trained. The poor quality of education provided little incentive for students to continue attending school. Parents did not understand how education contributed to the development of a child.

Furthermore, parents commonly migrated to Thailand in search of work and their children were left behind with grandparents or caregivers who had little knowledge or ability to care for them. The community also lacked awareness on the rights of children. Boys and girls were expected to work at a young age to support their families. Many dropped out before secondary school, following in their parents' footsteps to migrate to Thailand for work. There, they faced poor working conditions and faced the risk of being trafficked.

ECCD centres are built to provide children with a strong foundation for their future development



To give children a brighter future, World Vision's interventions focused on providing greater access to quality education:



More than 1,500 children benefitted

from the construction and renovation of 11 new Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres



More than 2,800 children benefitted

from the renovation of 25 primary schools and training of 42 primary school teachers

Beyond literacy and numeracy, World Vision also educated the community on child protection and life skills:



11,680 people, including about 6,000 children

benefitted from child rights and child protection awareness sessions



19 Child Protection and Advocacy Groups

formed and trained

Children and youth were equipped with life skills on how to make good judgements, manage emotions and communicate ideas. They were also supported in running public education campaigns and events to advocate against human and organ trafficking. This provided an opportunity for children to express their views, contributing to the development of their self-esteem, cognitive abilities and social and leadership skills. On the legal front, citizenship rights were also attained for children through application of birth certificates. This allowed them to access government welfare services that they had lacked previously.

"Now, I can make the right decisions and am enabled to lead and improve the lives of children in Hpa-An!"

- Lin Lin, a youth leader who recently became a school teacher

To care for children holistically, food is provided in ECCD centres



Nan Su's Bright Future

With just one primary school in her village, Nan Su had to walk more than an hour to another village more than 6 km away to attend middle and high school.

Her family was dependent on her father's seasonal income as a fisherman, and her parents sometimes could not afford to support her education.

Though she faced many difficulties, Nan Su desired to become a teacher and was determined to continue her education. Despite the distance, she persisted and tried to attend school regularly even as her family struggled to get by.

When World Vision started our development journey in Hpa-An, Nan Su's family was identified as among the most vulnerable. As part of World Vision's livelihood interventions for vulnerable families, they received two piglets and were trained to rear and sell these pigs. In doing so, they could earn additional income.



Nan Su teaching her brother to read



With the additional income, Nan Su's parents purchased a bicycle for Nan Su to ride to school. Instead of having to walk more than an hour to get to school, she took less than 20 minutes on bicycle. This gave Nan Su more time to study and placed her in a better position to complete her education and fulfil her dream!

Nan Su is 17 years old now and has graduated from high school. She intends to enrol as an ECCD teacher and attend training organised by World Vision for ECCD teachers. Her family is also more economically independent today. She is grateful towards World Vision and thanks all our donors for giving both her and her family hope and an empowered life!

**Thanks to donors like you,
Nan Su and other children
in Hpa-An ADP now have
fullness of life!**

**We couldn't have done
it without you!
Thank you!**

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