



EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES SUPPORT

Background

Vietnam has been undergoing a transition in epidemiology. Mortality patterns are now similar to those of industrialized countries in that preventable injuries and non-communicable chronic diseases are the leading causes of death for all people between the ages of 1 and 50 years old.

The nascent Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system is only present in several larger cities in Vietnam (only 10 out of 64 provinces). It faces numerous difficulties, including: the lack of adequately trained EMS and trauma-care medical professionals; shortages of EMS equipment, supplies and vehicles; an inefficient EMS response system and organizational structure; and, limited access to technical expertise in EMS.



The key issues for EMS development in Vietnam are increasing the availability of emergency response vehicles and equipment, and building the capacity of medical professionals working in the system.

Counterpart International has been assisting Vietnam to improve its EMS system since 2001. Starting with a successful pilot project in Ha Noi, Counterpart's EMS program has been expanded to five other provinces: Hai Phong, Hung Yen, Thua Thien Hue, Da Nang and Khanh Hoa. The program has developed a comprehensive package of interventions which focus on capacity building for medical professionals in EMS.

These interventions include US and Vietnam-based EMS Training of Trainers programs and roll-out trainings for medical professionals. The program has also helped to improve the EMS infrastructure through partnerships that secure additional medical equipment, ambulances and communication apparatus. We have targeted technical assistance efforts to improve EMS procedures, service quality and organizational capacity.

Results to date

With support from the United States Agency for International Development, the United States Department of Agriculture, and The Atlantic Philanthropies, Counterpart has achieved significant results over the past six years of operation:

- The successful trauma care training program trained and certified 21 Vietnamese doctors as EMS instructors. Four EMS training centers were established, and an additional 600 medical professionals were trained in trauma and emergency care.
- Seven new ambulances were donated to strengthen provincial emergency vehicle fleets.
- Nearly US\$2 million worth of medical equipment and supplies were donated to improve the response capacity of emergency rooms.
- Public awareness and government support of the 115 system (EMS call system) increased significantly.
- Emergency call response times were significantly reduced in Ha Noi, Da Nang and Hai Phong.

A key achievement of this program has been the increased awareness of the government, health management authorities and medical professionals in Vietnam of the value and importance of the EMS system. This awareness helps to build and maintain support for continued efforts to improve the EMS system in Vietnam.