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# *Case study*

## ChildFund Vietnam

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## Supporting the multiple roles of coaches

Skilled and dedicated coaches are critical for the delivery of high-quality programming. Coaches have varied and complex roles, they serve not only as teachers and role models to participants in the programme, but also serve as the crucial link between the programme and the community. On top of this, ChildFund's approach of constant feedback, upskilling and the provision for further learning opportunities, means that the benefits of the curriculum and the programme are not limited to the children and adolescents participating. The experiences coaches gain from the programme help them grow into better coaches and give them opportunities for personal development that they would be hard pressed to find elsewhere in the community.

### ChildFund overview

ChildFund Australia is part of ChildFund Alliance, which has a presence in 53 countries. Pass It Back is led by ChildFund Australia on behalf of the ChildFund Alliance. Pass It Back started in Laos in 2013 when ChildFund piloted an initiative in five villages of one district in rural Laos. The pilot was a multi-sport initiative and included rugby, takraw, football and volleyball. The monitoring and evaluation showed that 70 per cent of participants in rugby were female while in other sports they made up only 10–30 per cent. This could not be explained by the design of the pilot. Follow-up investigation showed that what differentiated rugby from other sports was that the coaches were professionals from the sport federation (Lao Rugby Federation), while for other sports coaches were amateurs, and that half the coaches were females while for other sports it was mostly males.

This experience provided the intuition for what could be a S4D initiative with the potential to include girls. In 2015 a training of coaches took place, with 20 participants from Laos and 20 from Viet Nam, to form community-based coach networks that could implement the programme, which was co-created by ChildFund, Asia Rugby and Women Win.

When the intervention started in Viet Nam, rugby<sup>1</sup> was a new sport in the country. This made children curious to try it and made it more accessible for girls, thanks to the absence of gender norms around the sport. Some girls said that the experience with Pass It Back was the first occasion in which someone invited them to play and they were happy to be involved. In response to this positive feedback, ChildFund developed several curricula centred around rugby to involve both boys and girls.

### Curricula

ChildFund's work with partners uses several curricula:

- 1. Pass It Back:** The main curricula are directed to children aged 11–16 and composed of four modules: understanding gender, planning for future, being healthy and feeling safe. Each module has 16 sessions of 90 minutes, taking place once or twice a week, so that, overall, it takes two years to complete the four modules. After two years, participants 'graduate' but may continue within sports pathways, usually supported by the national federation. Since there were no sports federations in Viet Nam at the time the programme started, the graduates formed their own government-registered rugby clubs to continue playing.
- 2. Pass It Back Lite:** These curricula are directed to children aged 9–11, with 10 sessions on 'rugby values on and off the pitch' and 'Sustainable Development Goals' and serves as preparation for the main Pass It Back modules.
- 3. Event-based curriculum:** This was, for example, used in Japan during the Rugby World Cup. Children from programme countries, including Viet Nam, travelled to Japan to learn about the SDGs and engage in cross-cultural learning during eight sessions delivered over four days.
- 4. Reconnect:** These curricula were developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage participants to follow government hygiene advice and keep healthy. It is designed to follow health protocols, but still allows children to come together and be part of a peer support network. Reconnect is delivered in two phases. Reconnect Rapid is used in the immediate period of activities being run, which allows children of

**Table 1: Participant breakdown by area, gender and disability**

Group			Methods			
District	Communities	Teams	Female	Male	Disability	Count
Kim Bôi	9	94	55.8%	44.2%	3%	1160
Tan Lac	6	52	51.6%	48.4%	6.5%	665

6–18 (in age-appropriate groups) to come and go as they are able. Over time, this transitions into Reconnect Teams, which has regular player engagement with coaches over a 10-session curriculum.

These curricula are accompanied by periodic competitions typically coinciding with mid-season and end of season; these games are an occasion to bring together children from different areas and to expose them to new friends and experiences. The curricula are all based around the five World Rugby values: integrity, passion, solidarity, discipline and respect. Boys and girls are put in separate teams, and male coaches coach boys while female coaches coach girls. However, if a child wishes to participate in a team that is different to their sex, for example a girl wishing to play in a team with boys, then the programme will accommodate this, if all parties agree.

The Pass It Back/Reconnect curricula are now implemented in four countries with four partners – an adaptation of Pass It Back, called Get Into Rugby, is also implemented in Fiji and Samoa by partners. This case study focuses on Viet Nam, one of the original two countries to implement the Pass It Back programme.

### ***Viet Nam and Pass It Back***

In 2018 Viet Nam was a country of 97 million people of which 23 per cent were under the age of 14 (compared to 42.5 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), 28 per cent in South Asia, 20 per cent in LMIC East Asia). It had PPP GDP per capita of 7,765,<sup>2</sup> and has relatively low levels of poverty, with 1.9 per cent of the population under the \$1.90 per day poverty line, 6.8 per cent under the \$3.20 and 23 per cent under the \$5.50 (e.g., compared to 15.2 per cent, 52.4 per cent and 83.4 per cent respectively in South Asia). It has a relatively high educational outcomes, with a high lower-secondary completion rate at 97.7 per cent compared

to 44.3 per cent in SSA, 78.7 per cent in South Asia, and 85.5 per cent in LMIC East Asia. Further, it has less than 2 per cent of children out of primary school, compared to 19 per cent in SSA, 7.3 per cent in South Asia, 3.5 per cent in LMIC East Asia (WDI, WIDE). Vietnamese education also fairs well against higher income countries, for example, it outscored the UK in science in the 2015 PISA.<sup>3</sup> However, there are wide disparities in educational achievement with 60 per cent of the poorest quintile completing lower secondary compared to 98 per cent of the richest, as well as large socio-economic and location-based difference in higher level PISA achievement (WIDE).

An interesting feature of Vietnamese context is the high level of internal labour migration: 13.6 per cent of the population are internal migrants, while only 2.9 per cent are international migrants.<sup>4</sup> These migrants are young, as 85 per cent are aged between 15 and 39 and have an average age of 29. They move mainly alone (62 per cent), instead of with family members (31 per cent) and thus often leave their children behind with relatives (ibid.). For example, “4.8 per cent of those aged 60 and above are grandparents living in ‘skip-generation households’ with just their grandchildren” (ibid., p. 7).

It is in this context that ChildFund launched Pass It Back in Viet Nam. It operates in underserved communities, in rural areas, where many children have parents that have migrated for work. In Viet Nam, Pass It Back is the only S4D programme in the areas where it operates. It started in 2015 in one district (Kim Bôi) but as of 2020 operates in three area: Kim Bôi, Tan Lac Districts and Hanoi. In 2019, there were 1,826 children participating in the Pass It Back curricula, with the majority of these in Kim Bôi district. There were more girls than boys in both Kim Bôi and Tan Lac, and a total of 78 children with disabilities participating in the programme (see *Table 1*). All four of the Pass It Back modules are used in Viet Nam. The case

## Box 1: Parental engagement and addressing concerns

- Parents are afraid of children getting injured, and don't know who will be responsible for their medical treatment if they get injured. Part of a coach's role is to explain that it is ChildFund who would pay any expenses.
- Some parents don't understand the programme and think it is only about rugby and so see it as a waste of time. Describing the life skills component is an essential part of explaining the programme to parents.
- The Being Healthy module raises sensitive topics around sexual health, so explaining why these subjects are taught and how they benefit the child is critical to ensuring parental buy-in.
- Parents expect children to spend time on housework or chores, especially girls during the harvest season, so may be reluctant to let their children participate. Sometimes coaches will postpone a session during that period to encourage children to help out at home. However, children participating in the programme also develop better time management skills and are often able to do both. Overcoming the initial reluctance of parents in this case is the main obstacle.

study focuses on the activities of the programme in Kim Boi district as it is the largest and longest running of the programmes in Viet Nam.

### **The roles of coaches: Community engagement, teaching and learning**

Coaches are foundational element of Pass It Back's approach as they are the link between the programme and the community. Coaches are typically aged between 16 and 25, have to be from the community, and must undergo a competitive recruitment process which vets their social skills and coaching potential (prior experience of coaching rugby or life skills is not required). Each year, the programme runs two rounds of coach recruitment. Before Covid-19 ChildFund counted 80 coaches in Viet Nam. Each coach pair is responsible for a minimum of two, and a maximum of seven, teams, resulting in as many as 10 sessions per week.

### **Community engagement and player recruitment**

The first task of coaches in the community is to recruit players. To do this, coaches visit schools and communities to explain the programme and ask children to participate. Schools make an ideal platform in Viet Nam because of the high levels of enrolment and completion. Once coaches identify participants, they often go house to house to seek consent from parents for their children to join the programme. This ensures that parents know about the programme: as a female coach noted, "they [parents] don't really understand what knowledge and skills children can learn from this programme". There are also Parent Days, where coaches explain the programme to parents/guardians attending the event and provide direct experiences of the programme through play-based activities. This also ensures that parents are comfortable with sending their children to the sessions (see Box 1). This is especially the case for girls' participations and for the Being Healthy module which teaches children about sexual and reproductive health and is a sensitive topic.<sup>5</sup> In Kim Boi, all players and coaches are from Muong and Dao ethnic groups and are encouraged to use their own languages during session delivery to facilitate learning.

Beyond this, coaches often work or volunteer in other

positions in the community such as village health worker or village leader and may also belong to groups such as youth or women's unions (mass organizations in the Vietnamese Government system). This gives these coaches a greater platform for engaging communities and provides them with a better understanding of the issues children may face.

### **Coaches as role models**

Being close to the age of the players helps create a bond with participants which is useful, especially for reproductive health and violence modules, and makes players feel more comfortable. In addition, coaches become relevant role models that children can aspire to become. Coaches are also the same gender as their participants in most cases, so that especially in the Being Healthy module children feel comfortable and have a role model of their own sex (especially important for girls in overcoming traditional gender norms).<sup>6</sup> For instance, coaches may be called Brother or Sister by children, who feel that the coaches treat them like friends. Children often go to coaches for advice or to talk about their problems. Thus, beyond coaches as teacher (teaching the curriculum), the role of coach as role model and confidant is also important to the success of the programme. For example, in the case of girls, it contributes to creating new gender norms, where they see that women too can work and be leaders in the community.

### **Empowerment and learning: Training, compensation and growth**

While the curricula are targeted at the children and adolescents that participate in the programme, it is clear that training received by coaches as well as delivery of the curricula has important positive implications for coaches as well. For instance, most coach recruits have no coaching or life skills experience, but they are trained in this once they are recruited. In 2015, when the programme first started, ChildFund organized the first coach training with 20 coaches from Viet Nam who were pioneers in the country and didn't know the sport. Since then, many coaches have been through the training process and the programme has grown in recognition, especially

within communities, but also internationally.

The first training session lasts 10 days and culminates in a rugby and a life skills assessment. It is then followed by regular monthly coach meetings and reaccreditation training every six months on different curricula, which takes eight days. In addition to these two regular training sessions per year, coaches receive short-course or ad-hoc training on child safeguarding, and monitoring and measuring impacts, as well as refresher trainings to review modules and training/coaching skills. If a coach fails the first attempt at the exam in the initial training, other coaches are sometimes asked to help them to revise and the coach is then given a second chance at the assessment. After passing the assessment the coaches are given a certificate, which enables them to conduct sessions of that specific module. They are also trained in first aid skills as part of this training, to ensure they can deal with any minor injuries that occur on the playing field. The rugby component of this certificate is recognized as a World Rugby Get Into Rugby coaching qualification by the international federation.

Coaches work part-time for the programme so that they can combine it with other income-earning activities or study. They are paid a stipend (though less than the typical USD217–260/month earned in a factory). Some coaches felt that it was more "like taking a volunteer job because the allowance is limited so it's not sufficient for a living" (female coach), so the ability to work on the side was necessary for many. This side work is often limited to mornings as most afternoons are dedicated to coaching, which usually take around 3 hours per day but may take as much as 5.5 hours a day (including preparation, reporting, buying snacks, etc.).<sup>7</sup> This stipend payment will soon be taken under a government structure whereby the payment would go through the administrative oversight of the government, but the coaches will continue to be managed by ChildFund.<sup>8</sup> In terms of other work, coaches may be village leaders or health workers, and many have some farm work on their own plots to do.

ChildFund also offers non-financial incentives such as recognition, personal growth, opportunities and network supports to coaches. For example, ChildFund

## Box 2: Gender empowerment through coaching

“Before my dad made all decisions in my family, but now I can make my own decisions.

Female coach

“In my neighbourhood, it’s often harder for girls and women to engage in the public sphere. When participating in this programme, girls and women can get support and participate in public activities and can thus develop further.

Female coach

“The community now recognise me as a woman with a paid job and good skills as well as knowledge although I had just completed secondary school. Before, I was very stressed and annoyed with people telling me that what one could do if she only completed secondary school. Since I joined the programme, I have won recognition as someone who has been able to do a lot of things.

Female coach

supports training for international certificates such as the World Rugby Level 1 Certificate on First Aid, Refereeing and Coaching (First Aid: 2, Refereeing: 2, Coaching: 10). Some obtain higher level positions with the community-based network in supervisory roles. For example, all eight new programme positions (district coordinators and programme community leaders) were filled by coaches who received further training for these positions (e.g., in computer usage). These opportunities would otherwise be hard to come by in the community, where many people work on their own farms or migrate for factory work.

Coaches largely have positive perceptions about their role in the programme. Recurring themes include the applicability of skills learnt as a coach to other areas of life, feeling grateful to have had an opportunity to develop those skills, and feeling more confident and empowered. In terms of skills learnt, some of those highlighted by coaches were leadership skills, resilience, task management, public speaking and interpersonal skills. The feedback received after observations carried out by senior coaches and coach group leaders was something coaches pointed out as being very valuable to their improvement and continued learning. Female coaches in particular spoke of a sense of empowerment

(see Box 2), and a belief that gender norms around women becoming wage earners were changing. This links to a broader sense that the programme contributes to empowerment for girls, in particular. Nevertheless, despite these benefits, ChildFund has found it hard to manage the diverse expectations of coaches for many reasons, including migration (many young adults migrate internally to find work) and the level of compensation. However, the coaches that stayed were those that were committed to their work and had developed a passion for rugby and coaching.

### **Ensuring quality: A ‘bad’ coach is worse than no coach**

While coaches are participants in the programme and their learning is a key part of the programme, it is critical that they meet the standard expected. A ‘bad’ coach may leave a bad impression about the programme on children, so, to ensure that only good coaches remain, coach contracts are renewed on an annual basis and a structured performance management process is put place. For quality assurance for implementation, there are also several rules that the coaches must conform to. As coaches raises issues with these rules, they are updated annually to try to achieve a balance between requests

and delivery standards. There are always exceptions to the parameters in place.

For example, in Pass It Back:

- A coach pair can have a maximum of seven teams.
- A coach pair cannot conduct more than six sessions for each team in a month.
- Children are divided into two groups: 11–13 and 14–16.
- Teams can be no larger than 16 players but need a minimum of 12 players, and sessions must have a minimum of 10 players in attendance.

These are in place to ensure the quality of the sessions, but some coaches found that they were sometimes restricting. For example, if 17 players want to join the programme, coaches do not want to say no to one child, especially when there are not enough player to form another team. Observations are carried out by senior coaches and coach group leaders on a regular basis. Two coaches often run sessions together, providing ample opportunity to ensure that these rules are adhered to and that coaches are performing their jobs well. Coaches often note that the feedback from these observations is invaluable in helping them improve.

Coaches must follow the strict safeguarding protocols and code of conduct, and will be asked to leave the programme if they violate it. Some safeguarding protocols in the code of conduct include:

- Coaches must check playing fields before playing to ensure they are safe. They should also check that players have cut their nails and taken off their jewellery before playing.
- Coach must not shout at players or scold them or hit them. They must carefully check the playing field and ensure the playing field is safe before carrying out a rugby session, reporting any risks or incidents to the programme immediately. They must know first aid and how to deal with unexpected situations.
- A coach who has consumed alcohol cannot carry out a session, to avoid any improper actions and/or words.

<sup>1</sup> All rugby content is built around tag rugby, a non-contact form of the game.

<sup>2</sup> In current international \$.

<sup>3</sup> Jerrim, J., 'Why does Vietnam do so well in PISA? An example of why naive interpretation of international rankings is such a bad idea', Education Data Lab, 9 July 2017, <<https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2017/07/why-does-vietnam-do-so-well-in-pisa-an-example-of-why-naive-interpretation-of-international-rankings-is-such-a-bad-idea/>>, accessed 5 May 2021.

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO Bangkok, 'Overview of Internal Migration in Viet Nam', 2018, <<https://bangkok.unesco.org/sites/default/files/assets/article/Social%20and%20Human%20Sciences/publications/vietnam.pdf>>, accessed 5 May 2021.

<sup>5</sup> For less sensitive curricula, coaches often ask children to bring home consent form with information about the programme and ask parents to sign their consent without a coach visit where there is already a relationship in place.

<sup>6</sup> As noted, if a child wishes to participate in a team that is different to their sex, for example a girl wishing to play in a team with boys, then the programme will accommodate this.

<sup>7</sup> There is fruit allowance for each rugby session of VND 40,000 (USD1.7).

<sup>8</sup> In Viet Nam, it is common practice for NGO funds to be run through government systems and provides sub-national governments with detailed oversight of what it costs to deliver this type of initiative.

# for every child, answers

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