

Why join us?

Real-life stories from Intergenerational Self-help Clubs in Vietnam – a community driven development model which provides comprehensive social and health care services for older people in Vietnam





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Summary

This document brings together real-life stories of older people on how impactful of intergenerational self-help clubs (ISHCs) to their lives, their families and communities. This will help you seeing the lives of older people in rural Vietnam including their difficulties and the rewards that come after they join the clubs.

The lives of older people are not always easy especially in rural areas. Large numbers of older people and their families struggle with low income, have poor health due to limited knowledge of good health practices and less access to healthcare services. The ongoing mass migration of working-age adults to cities in search of jobs is likely to leave older people behind will increase the need of older people to take care of themselves as well as others and also for the rapid growing number of older old will need increased access to social and health care in their community.

In order to improve the lives of older people, a group of development organisations working on ageing joined force to pilot and replicate the ISHC development model in Vietnam since 2006. They are Vietnam Women's Union (VWU), Vietnam Association of the Elderly (VAE), Center for Ageing Support and Community Development (CASCD), Fatherland Front (FF), Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affair and HelpAge International. They have been working on ageing and development for more than 10 years and are members of the Vietnam Ageing Network.

The ISHC development model aimed to improve the quality of life for poor and vulnerable people in Vietnam. The ISHCs have been established in around 850 communities in twelve rural, coastal, urban and mountainous provinces. HelpAge and local partners work with the ISHCs, local partners and authorities to take forward actions to advocate for older people's inclusion in local and national development.

The ISHC has been established in 850 communities in twelve rural, coastal, urban, and mountainous provinces. The regular ongoing activities of the ISHCs have benefited an estimated **960,000 people** such as: improved health, livelihood, right and entitlement.

Today's challenges

Vietnam is facing rapid ageing. The population aged 60 and above was 10.45 percent (9,462,236) in April 2014 and is projected to double within the next 20 years as the result of sharp declines in fertility and mortality rate and increased life expectancy.

Many older people continue to work in their old age. This is not only to support themselves, but also to support others, especially their grandchildren, with or without support from adult children who have moved to cities in search of employment. Older people have become more visible in the communities. But older people remain poor, with 22.3percent living under the national poverty line (TCTK-VNCA 2014).

67.2 percent older people reported having weak and very weak health condition. Poor health exacerbates older people's poverty because it limits their ability to perform physical activities such as labor-intensive agriculture. Due to high cost of medicine, lack of awareness of health prevention and cost to reach facilities, very few older people undertake regular health screening. This leads to the increasing risk of having an earlier onset of chronic disease and disability which can lead to increase for long term social and health care. Non communicable diseases (NCD) continue increasing and hold the leading position for the burden of disease, implying higher risks of disability for older people. About 77percent of the NCD reported deaths occur among older people above 60 years old (WHO, 2011)

The rapid growth in older old, which will have increasing difficulties in their daily living due to high incidence of chronic diseases and social vulnerability will cause increasing need for higher level care, social and welfare services. However, the traditional family support system is under pressure due to the trend towards nuclear families, prevailing migration of children and increasing participation of women in the workforce. In Vietnam, the lack of long term care services, policies and financing places further strain on an already stressed family system.

With the rapid rise in number of older people, poverty and poor health status in old age will pose a major obstacle to reaching the Vietnam Development Goals. So it requires a new approach, appropriate with a low middle income country like Vietnam, to the way that can lead fulfilled and active lives in old age as well as support poor and frail older persons with daily tasks to remain at home as long as possible. An ISHC model brings the opportunities to support to address these challenges.

Agents of change: Intergenerational self-help clubs

ISHCs are community-based groups that promote long term healthy and active ageing. Clubs are multifunctional and make lasting improvements in the lives of members and their families. Establishing the clubs is affordable, the model is easily replicated and once established, the clubs are self-sustainable.

The clubs aim at sharing knowledge and improving older people's lives as well as maintaining their dignity. Clubs utilise the unique resources and skills older people have, to provide effective social support, to facilitate activities and deliver services.

The distinctive characteristic of the club is the balanced membership both in terms of ages and economic status. This means less vulnerable members can support more vulnerable members. It also promotes understanding and support between generations and genders.

This has helped them become successful and sustainable. As the largest portion of members are vulnerable, the project benefits many of the people who need help the most. However, the presence of wealthier, younger members makes the clubs more sustainable and effective, as these people can support the club in ways that poorer and older members cannot, for example financially or through physical volunteer work.

The clubs would then be responsible for carrying out the activities including capacity building, healthcare, livelihood, home care, daily living support and social bonding. They also advocate for older people's rights and help members' access existing rights and entitlements, such as health insurance and social assistance.

In addition, each club provides members with microcredit and training in income generating activities. Members use the loans and knowledge to increase their earnings and become income-secure.

The key to success of the club is the involvement of older people and the balanced membership both in terms of ages and economic status.

ISHC step-by-step: Tips to run an effective club

1. Local technical competence: To ensure effectiveness of the club, it is important to grow the capacity of club management boards (CMBs) so they have the technical ability to run the clubs. A series of training booklets are produced with the training modules of club and financial management, ageing and gender, livelihood and health promotion activities. Key to success is to simplify the materials to meet the needs and capacity of CMBs.

2. Selection process: To benefit the most needy people, the following process is suggested:

- **Members.** Priority is given to those aged 55+ and from vulnerable groups e.g., poor, near poor, ethnic minority, living alone, female and other disadvantaged people. Being a club member, it is also required time to attend the club monthly activities and willingness to help others. Each club has around 50-70 members.

- **CMBs.** Once the club is formed, members will elect/select the CMB members, comprising of 05 people to run the club. They act as a coordination unit between club members, local service providers and authorities. Member of CMBs are volunteer, trustworthy and able to show their capacity, strong commitment with the club

3. Monthly activities: The wide range of activities through the club monthly meetings motivates members to attend and contribute to the club. These include physical exercise, bookkeeping reporting, update on current affairs, training on income generating activities from agricultural experts, talks on various selected health topics by local health experts. In additions, regular home care and daily living support services are also provided.

4. Ongoing support to the CMBs: To enable CMBs to run the clubs smoothly, local project partners will provide ongoing guidance to develop their leadership and management skills. A regular monitoring visit and reflection session to CMBs is recommended to make sure the club activities are on the right track.

5. Self-generated funds: To continue operate the club without project support, it is vital to a club to generate fund by themselves. This include profit from the club income generating activities, membership fee, local raised fund, collective income generating activities.

Livelihoods

One is never too old to learn

Le Văn Thanh, 83

Households in rural north-central region of Vietnam largely depend on growing their own food. People grow vegetables, rice and grain crops such as corn and beans while some raise cattle and poultry.

But not too many people choose pigeon raising as their main source of income although it is popular for food and leisure. But Le Văn Thanh, 83, breaks the record of opening the pigeon market in a small village in Thanh Hoa province. He is well-known both in the village and nationwide.

- I live with my wife who is now in her 70s. We have eight children; some live nearby while some works in the city.



Chattip Sorulump/HelpAge International

- In 2010, I joined an international self-help club because it's a good place for people in our community especially older people like me to socialise with others. The club also provides fund to people in need with reasonable interest rates.

- With the grant (3 million VND or around \$140), I bought three couples of good-bred pigeons. Within a year, I was able to repay the loan and have some profits from the sale of pigeons.
- Actually I raised pigeons before joining the club, but only in small cages for household consumption and selling at local market. At that time I didn't have much knowledge on how to raise pigeons properly
- During monthly club meeting, there is always a guest speaker sharing technical skills in different livelihood topics. There are a lot of practical activities that we can apply. This is very useful for us.
- This knowledge sharing session is organized in coordination with local authorities and project partners. The club will invite people to share their experiences with club members such as healthcare, income generating activities and home gardening.
- I learnt a lot such as animal disease control and good hygiene. If I didn't join the club, I would not have opportunity to learn new skills and be able to make money from pigeons like today.
- My family income comes from selling pigeon to neighbours and the market in the district.
- Raising pigeons are one of age friendly activities. It's easy to raise and the market is lucrative. Older people should find livelihood activities that suit their ability and not being too much burden for them.
- Now I have more than 100 birds. My plan is to develop new breed of pigeons and try new types of birds. It's challenging, but possible if I've done research and study the market both for meat and leisure.
- People always ask me the secret of active ageing. I simply told them that just keep moving and learning.
- You can do anything as long as your health is good. Just like a bicycle, if you use it regularly, it's won't get rusty. So movement is important. Keep connecting with

Health care

Living a cheerful life

Nguyen Thi Phuc, 69

- “I live with my husband, Le Bong Phu, and he is 73. My son and his wife also live with us in Nghe An province. We have five other children and 13 grandchildren; some live close by and others live 6-7km away.
- “My family’s income comes from farming rice fields (720 m²), and raising cows, geese and chickens. I receive a pensions of VND1.6 million (US\$77) a month.
- “I have joint and bone problems, as well as high blood pressure. I felt pain everywhere and it was difficult to walk. I didn’t want to do anything. I was pessimistic and found everything boring.
- “In 2010, Vietnam Women’s Union and other local partners had set up an ISHC in our province. I joined the club since then.
- “My favorite club activity is physical exercise. There are exercise sessions at each monthly club meeting and weekly sessions held by smaller groups of club members. Members are also encouraged to exercise individually every day.
- “Before joining the club I also did physical exercise, because if I do not do physical exercise, I cannot walk.
- “But since joining the club, it has been more cheerful. I also practice new exercises introduced by the club”.
- “Now I feel very happy and cheerful. I never miss a club activity. I have nothing to worry about in my mind.

“I still feel pain sometimes but because I’m so happy, it’s gone. I look forward to the club meeting to do physical exercise, but most importantly to meet people; laughter and sharing releases the pain.”

- “Now, I became the club physical exercise trainer. I always encourage people to do regular physical exercise.
- “During 3 years with the club, I have already had 8 health check-ups which are organised by the club for its members.
- “From the first health check up, I have low blood pressure. With the consultation from the doctor, I know how to manage it.
- “At the club, they taught us how to care of ourselves. I learnt tips about nutrition and diet – such as avoiding alcohol and eating more fruit and vegetables, what to do to prevent some common non-communicable diseases, including low and high blood pressure.
- “I also share this new knowledge with my family and friends.
- “I am old, but I still want to join the club meetings and learn new knowledge. Even if I am too old to use some of the knowledge, I want to share it with my children and grandchildren.
- “My husband says he has noticed positive changes in me since joining the club. He told me I’ve changed a lot - more lively and more active - as I practice physical exercise more and asks him to join.”



Carolyn Canham (HeijAge International)

Volunteer based homecare

Tran Thi Tay, 84

- Tran Thi Tay, 84, lives with her son in Ao Cong village. In her younger days, Tay was an ethnic minority singer but due to health problems, she is unable to leave the house as she is immobile and blind.
- Tay was a member of the original ISHC in the area, before it grew too large and split into smaller clubs. She has been a member for around three years, and loved to be involved in club activities.
- Unfortunately, Tay hasn't been able to attend meetings for some time now. Instead, the club organises a home care volunteer to visit her at home. Phung Minh Thap, 65, volunteers his time to visit Tay twice a week. Tay is a member of the ethnic minority and her Vietnamese is not very fluent, so Phung spends time chatting to her in her native language about the activities in the village.
- Now that Phung visits regularly, Tay says she feels much happier and gives us a cheeky grin, a look she must have perfected as a singer in her younger days.



Miranda Simpson/HelpAge International

Psychosocial support

Vu Thi Lich, 71

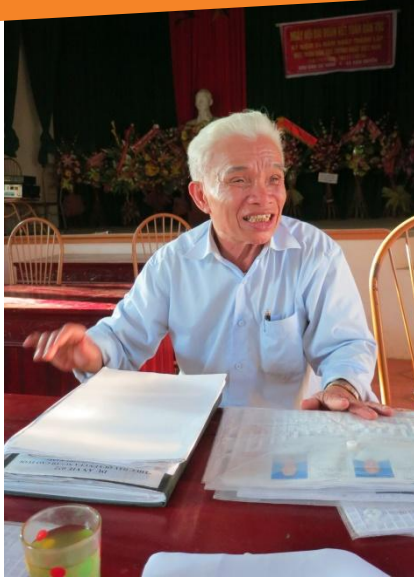
- "I live with my two grandchildren. My husband passed away ten years ago because of heart attack. I don't have any regular income - just selling vegetables and doing seasonal jobs.
- "In 2010, my neighbour who is a member of Van Son ISHC asked me to join a newly established club with her. But I refused because I had to take care of my grandchildren. It's very hard for me to nurture the two girls especially the older one who has a growth disorder.
- Although she's in her 20s, but she's very small and can't help herself or even express what she wanted.
- "But my neighbour kept asking me to join the club activities. She also came with other club members and shared with me how the club would better my situations. I can feel their caring towards me. Also because I felt so depressed about my life and didn't know how to cope with this, so I decided to join the club in 2012.
- "I have new friends whom I can share happiness or sadness. I'm not alone anymore. Volunteers from the club also regularly visit me and my grandchildren. They help me doing housework, talk to me, go to the market and buy food, raise chicken and farm vegetables.
- "I wish my younger granddaughter study higher education and the older one being healthy. I will need to be strong. The club is light at the end of the tunnel that helps me to fulfill my dream."



Charlip Szalung/HelpAge International

- The people in community since socializing prevents isolation and social activities can be enjoyable. And the club is the best place to meet and share your thoughts with friends and other people."

More advanced home care through paid care assistants



Pham Minh Tam, 70

Mr Tam became one of ISHC Management Board (CMB) since July 2010. With his outstanding

performance, he was elected to be the leader of the CMB in Dan Quyen Commune. “The significant activity that was brought to the commune by Intergeneration Self-Help club (ISHC) model is community based home care services.”

Older people have faced many difficulties due to high incidence of chronic diseases and Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs). To respond to the community health issue, the CMBs agreed to recruit home care volunteers to look after vulnerable people in the community. However, the volunteers have limitations in caring for older people with NCDs who need professional help.

“We have 6 home care volunteers who help 6 older people with their daily routine and basic personal hygienic care. With assistance from our home care volunteers, the older people were more comfortable and happier, but their health didn’t improve much.”

Older people have specific requirements: Professional Care Assistant is the solution

With the support from ROK-ASEAN project on community based care services sponsored by Korean government through HelpAge Korea, HelpAge International and local Father Land Front, the Dan Quyen 1 ISHC, one of the ten selected ISHCs to participate in the pilot project, decided to improve their community based care services so as to provide intensive personal care to bed-ridden and severely ill older people.

“Older people living with chronic or NCDs need an appropriate care support. They need a trained assistant or an expert to treat them. Because of that, we started to recruit paid care assistants to attend a training conducted by the health professionals.”

The recruited volunteers are retired doctors, nurses and health workers who live in the commune. The CMBs, with the agreement of ISHC members, manage to spend one part of the club operation fund to cover this health support services costs by giving each Care Assistants (CAs) 200,000 VND (\$9) a month and providing them home care facility kit. The care assistants have to submit their report to the CMBs once a month.

Community based paid home care model

Not only taking care of bed-ridden and ill older people, the CAs can mentor and provide technical support for the home care volunteers and family members to work with and support older people properly.

After the training, the care assistants are also capable to provide specific knowledge to educate the club members about disease prevention and self-care awareness during communication session in ISHC monthly meeting.

The care assistants visit at least 3 beneficiaries at least 3 times a week each to help with personnel hygiene, measure blood pressure, scale weight, do rehabilitative exercises, and oversee medicine taking. Each of beneficiary profile is recorded in the ‘individual database’ which includes general situation, NCDs, score of ADLs/IADLs abilities without assistance, current care support needs, gaps and solutions; the profile is updated in quarterly case management meetings.

“Since we have the CA, the bed ridden and home bound older people are better cared for in their own community. Together with the CA and home care volunteers, our club now can provide more comprehensive care services for those in need ”

Policy advocacy

Prior to the project, a rapid assessment was conducted in the project areas. It is found that older people expressed great interest in learning more about policies and programmes relating to older people but had very few opportunities to learn about them and have limited involvement in their design, implementation and monitoring. The local authorities also acknowledged they rarely interacted with older people. They said that this is the first-ever approach to mobilise older people for community-based development.

Good practices on policy advocacy

Ha Tinh Women's Union

- After participating in this project, we are more aware of population ageing issues including challenges that older people are facing. Most older people are willing to work to earn income for their family and themselves. However, they don't have many opportunities to work and/or access to credit to invest in livelihood activities", said Tran Thi Hong, Vice President of Ha Tinh Women's Union.
- Since the ISHC has been introduced, we found that when older people received loans, they make the best use of loans. They effectively manage their business and perform well-discipline in paying interest and capital. Through the loans, they improve their well-being, economic status and social participation.
- Based on this evidence on the ground, Ha Tinh Women's Union (HTWU) decided to change the policy to support more comprehensive and longer term approach for older people.

Following are age-friendly policies we have been promoting.

- **No age limit for loan funds:** The objective of lending service of Women's Development Fund altered. HTWU is no longer put age limit as a criterion for loans, but rather allocating loan regarding the needs and capacity of borrowers. Older women are also encouraged to obtain a loan to develop their income generating activities.
- **Access to credit:** HTWU works with the leaders of the Bank for Social Policies in provincial and district levels to help older people in need of loans. Some older people will use the loan to increase their agricultural production while some will set up their small-scale business.

"Among 2.200 club members, there are no reported cases of the delay in payment. Within three years, all of them are able to return both interest and capital to the club. This is beyond our expectation. Club members, especially older women, are very disciplined and committed."

- **Access to healthcare service:** All levels of Women's Union are working with local authorities, health centres and commune health centres to seek local resources and funding of medicines for club members. As a result of the periodic health examinations, about 25percent - 30percent of club members received appropriate treatment and medication after the diagnosis.
- **Age-friendly housing:** HTWU has been advising local leaders in order to build age-friendly houses for the older people living with disability, living alone and facing difficult circumstances.
- "Besides the changes in these policies and guidelines, HTWU has coordinated with Women's Union at district and commune levels to work closely with club management boards to provide any support needed by the clubs".
- "The [ISHC] model is a comprehensive model to acknowledge and promote the role of older people, especially older women in an effective and sustainable way. I can say that 100percent of club members has made positive changes in their lives.
- "Lastly I hope that there will be more support for the replication of the model. I strongly recommend the government to allocate resources to gradually replicate this model across the country."

Women Participation

Older women are accounted for the majority of the increasing older people population. They have worked hard all year round while still being considered a burden for the family. They still have needs and labor capacity or raise the income for their family and themselves. However they do not have favorable conditions including access credit and education.

Luong Thi Binh, 59



- Three years ago, my husband was hit by a motorbike on his way home after work. Since then he cannot walk and is bedridden most of the time. It was a turning point in our family and my life.
- My mother-in-law is 90 years old and my grandchildren are still young. So I became a single caretaker of the family. It's quite tough for me since we don't have any regular income.
- I joined an ISHC in my community. I found that it's a very good platform for women to share their needs, concerns, interests and aspirations. I learnt a lot especially technical skills in animal husbandry and agriculture.
- I became close friends with many of the club members. They visited me and my family for a chat and sometimes share food. We performed traditional dance together during special events. Due to this bonding, I forget all difficulties and feel cheerful. I have more confidence because I learn new things and participate more often in community activities.
- I used the loans from the club to buy two piglets. In coming months I planned to sell them at a local market. I will use the money for household expenses and save it for my grandchildren education as well as medicine for my mother-in-law and my husband.
- I received so much from the club. Now I want to give back. Even I'm poor, there are other vulnerable people out there. I share food with them. I visited when they're sick. The club really creates a chain of sharing among our community."

Le Thi Bo, 75



- As an older woman, I'm so glad when I was voted as one of the club management boards (CMBs) of Van Son ISHC. I'm happy that people trust me and acknowledge my values.
- My husband is 88 years old. He has health problems and mostly stays at home. Our children work in a city; they come home during festival or long holidays.
- Although my husband doesn't join the club activities, he's very supportive. He always says to me that we shouldn't let the age drawing a boundary for learning opportunities. He encouraged me to explore the world, see and learn new things like Uncle Ho (Ho Chi Minh), then use my knowledge to help others and our community.
- I joined the club in 2010 and borrowed 2 million VND to buy chicken and vegetable seeds. I sold the chicks and eggs and reinvested in more chicken. It's very easy to raise chicken; the eggs are good source of protein. Recently I also gave around 50 chicks and some eggs to my children when they visited us. I'm proud that I can support my family and not be a burden for them.
- I also realised the importance of home care volunteer from the club. Although I'm not a volunteer, I'm trying to take a good care of my husband, so they can be mobilised to help others who in need."

Intergenerational



Tran Thi Hong, 34, lives in Ao Cong with her husband and two sons aged 5 and 11. Hong's family makes their living by growing tea and rice. Farming takes up a lot of time and often Hong would go straight to bed after the day's work was done. As a result, she did not have any social activities and was shy.

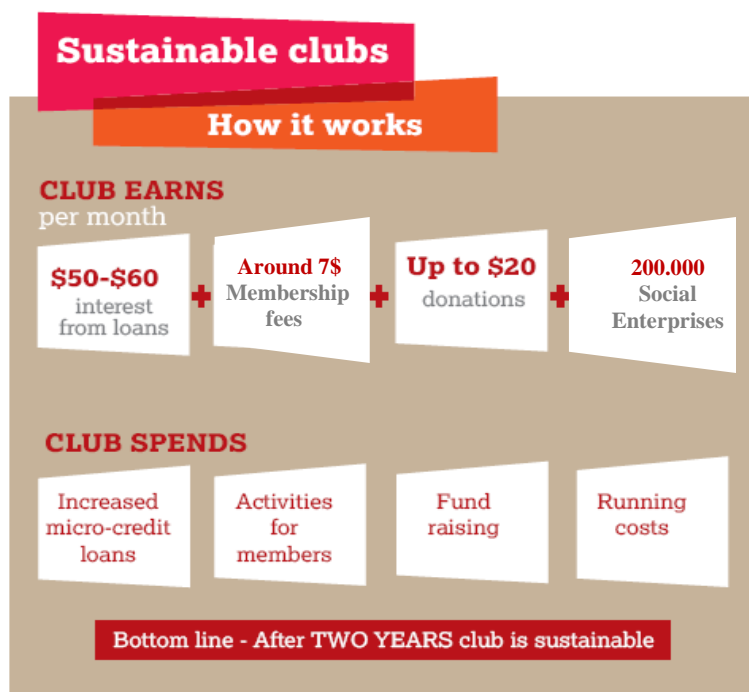
A year ago, Hong joined her local an ISHC. "In the beginning it was not easy for me, sharing occurs over time," she says. Through the club, Hong has been able to socialize with other members, the majority of whom are from San Chi ethnic minority group. "I have learnt that the San Chi people are very sincere," Hong notes that initially this was confronting sometimes but uses the feedback to improve herself.

Hong is now much more confident, "now I talk with the other women and get close to them. We share experiences and learn from each other", she says. "The financial situation of my family is also improved through training and the opportunity to learn new things." ISHCs are an important conduit to empower individuals, "when the club management board promote opportunities, I

participate. I put my opinions forward in the club meeting and I join in community activities such as cleaning the village road."

Hong's confidence has improved so much that in January, she was elected as head of the local chapter of the Women's Union. She now manages 44 women, all from the ethnic minority. In this role she provides information on topics such as family planning, and encourages and mobilizes local women to participate in events.

"In the future, I want to contribute more for my community, so my community can be stronger and healthier."



The model is sustainable because it:

- promotes local management and ownership of the ISHC from the start
- ensures the ISHCs have regular self-generated income (from loan interest, membership fees, local fund raising and ISHC's business), even after the project end
- enhances the interest and capacity building of ISHC management boards and local partner
- enables the ISHCs to have active and regular engagement of the broader community, local authorities, service providers and the private sector to garner additional and ongoing resources for their activities

Community Driven Development

Strengthening individuals and communities: Dan Quyen 1 ISHC

Dan Quyen 1 ISHCs has successfully improved the quality of life for older people. Keys to success are:

- **Multi-functional clubs**

After 4 years, the Dan Quyen 2 club has 70 members and is building on their strong base of community activities to generate funds to benefit disadvantaged people. The club provides a cost-effective and sustainable approach to empowering vulnerable people across a number of interrelated issues such as livelihoods, self care and healthcare, home care, social and culture, social support, self help and accessing rights and entitlements.

- **Regular self care and healthcare for members**

The ISHC ensure that twice yearly their members receive a health check-up from a doctor from the local health centre. “About 90percent of members attend the health checkup. Those who can’t attend may be unwell or visiting relatives”, said Mr Pham Minh Tam, Chairperson. In addition, members are invited to come early to each of the monthly meetings to have their weight measured and blood pressure taken. This is then recorded and monitored against previous months with any changes highlighting if further assistance needs to be sought. 85percent of the club members practice physical exercise at least 3 times a week, either individually or in group physical activities twice a week and before the monthly club meeting. In addition, the Club Management Board (CMB) make sure that their members will receive at least 4 communication sessions on self care, including healthy living, appropriate nutrition, prevention and management of common diseases especially NCDs; These sessions help the members to take better care of themselves and their family members.

- **Rights and entitlements**

The club provides a mechanism to ensure members and disadvantaged people in the community receive their rights and entitlements such as the social pension or social assistance for people with severe disability. Annually it reviews the age and difficulties of each club member and works with Association of the Elderly to ensure all club and non - club members who qualify can access their entitlements. The CMB also help disadvantaged people with paper works as needed. In addition, a number of sessions on laws and policies related to older people, the poor and gender issues are also organised. The ISHC also, as representative of their

members, raise their issues of concern to the local authority.

- **Income generating activities**

Over the last four year, the club’s Income Generation Supporting Fund of 100 million VND (about \$4,650) has grown by 34.6 million VND (about \$1,609). Mr Tam says “the Income Generation Supporting Fund is very important, it not only enables the members to access to micro credits/IGA inputs for their IGAs, but also brings a stable and regular income for the club, through monthly loan interest or IGA profit. As part of the income is added back into the Fund and the members are willing to contribute more, the older the club, the bigger the Fund. Thus, it enables more members to access to micro credit to increase their income and provide help for their family. So far, 42 members borrowed the club Fund and I am happy to see that the repayment rate is 100percent”.

- **Training and experience sharing**

Club loans are mainly used to raise cattle or poultry, start a small business or convenience store. These loans are supported by training and experience sharing, a powerful combination to ensure the ultimate success of income generating activities (IGA). The club has worked with local agricultural extension staff or agricultural school based in the area, to organise 8 technical transfer sessions about animal husbandry; and organized a number of events to share business experience among club members and the wider community.

To encourage cross learning, sharing and mutual support among borrowers, 5 IGA groups have been set up; Good IGA models are praised by CMB during the club monthly meeting. The club plans to recruit economic development volunteers who are good at IGAs to sponsor club or non club members in economic development, either in cash, IGA inputs, or technical support. “We are happy to see that our ISHC contributes to the local poverty reduction efforts; After 4 years joining the club, number of the members from poor and near poor households has reduced from 52 to 17”- Tam added.

- **Cultural performances and spiritual life**

“Cultural performance is our club strength. We have 5 club songs that every one in the club can sing. We also have one cultural performance group consisting of 8 members, who has a wide range of songs and

dances to perform for the club, and has been invited to perform for other groups in the community”. In the past 4 years, our club has managed to organize 4 trips for the members to visit spiritual and historical places. These activities help the members feel more confident, optimistic, happier and closer to one another.

- **Home-care services by volunteers**

5 club members are also home-care volunteers who visit 6 older people at least twice a week each. Often these older people are living alone or live with their older spouse, unwell and bedridden and value the assistance the volunteers provide such as befriending, cleaning the house, washing clothes, cooking, taking them to visit friends or buying food, ect.

- **Home care services by paid care assistant**

As one of the 10 ISHCs in Vietnam selected to participate in ROK-ASEAN project on community based care services, in April 2014, the club recruited Ms Tran Thi Tam, who is the retired nurse, to work as the club care assistant. Ms Tam help 4 older people with difficulties in both ADL and IADL due to non - communicable diseases (NCDs); At least 3 times a week, she comes and help each of them with personal hygiene, taking blood pressure measurements, overseeing the taking of medication, doing some rehabilitative exercises, ect. In addition, Ms Tam also provides on-going informal care training to the club 5 homecare volunteers and family members of the older people. For her service, the club pays her VND 200,000 per month (\$9). “The payment is not much, but I wants to help people”, Tam said. Tran Van Tu is 88, blind, low blood pressure, asthma, enjoys having home care services by both home-care volunteer and care assistant, said: “For many years I have not sang any songs, but now I do sing for them”.

- **Case management**

To make assessment of the needs of older people, identify care gaps and decide what to do to meet the remaining gaps, every month the Club Management Board meet with both home care volunteers and care assistant to review each home care case. Normally this meeting happens before the monthly club meeting. Sometimes the family members of the cared older people are also invited to join. “During the project, a part from the club case review monthly meeting, we also have the quarterly case management meeting at the district level. Representative from district Fatherland Front and Association of the Elderly and project staff also joined the quarterly meeting to help us address issues that are beyond our club capacity. One example is district Father Land Front already gave 12

wheelchairs for 12 home care beneficiaries. After the project, we will continue to have this meeting at the club level”- Tam said.

- **Living support services through self help**

Older people have various needs which require comprehensive support. Providing them with home care services are not enough. Many of them need rice, food, labour days, money for medications, house repaired, wheelchairs, ect. The club mobilizes these resources in their members and communities. During 4 years, 150 labour days have been mobilized to help repair house or rice cultivations and harvest. 17 million VND (\$ 790) have been raised through the Golden Heart Booklet to help 45 disadvantaged people, most of them are people with disability, young and older, living alone older people, including 6 home care cases. One example: the club provided Mr Tran Van Tu 20kg of rice, VND 500,000 (\$23) to buy food, 50kg of fire wood, a blanket, clothes; bricks, labour days and VND 300,000 to buy other materials for the courtyard improvement. In addition, the club also mobilized the district Father Land Front to provide him with an electricity fan valued at VND 520,000 (\$24).

- **Club income**

The club has a number of income sources to ensure it is sustainable. To join the club, members pay a monthly membership fee of 2,000 VND (\$0.90). The members also contribute for the club fund (14 million VND or \$651). Those members who are able to access loans are required to pay interest at a reasonable rate, about 1percent. Golden Sponsorship Booklet fundraising initiative provides further income to support disadvantaged members and build the loan fund so more members can access loans.

The club has now reached its maximum capacity of 70 members and more are waiting to join. Seeing the great benefits the club brings to the older people and the communities, the commune Association of the Elderly, with the support from the local authority, already raised local funding to establish more ISHCs in Dan Quyen commune. 01 ISHC was formed in 2014, 02 were be established in 2015 and 01 was founded in 2016. Mr Tam and the Club Management Boar members are now offering their experience and coaching for new Club Management Boards. “I am very happy to see our IHSC grows up stronger day by day with the support of all club members” - Tam said.

Replication

Generating funding for a replication: A case study from Thanh Hoa Province

Thanh Hoa province has been successful in leveraging government funding and community fundraising to replicate the model. The Thanh Hoa Association of the Elderly (THAE) - a chapter of the Vietnam Association of the Elderly (VAE) has led the way in this process.

In August 2013, the province had 80 ISHCs in 4 districts which are supported technically and financially by the project “Promoting the right of the disadvantaged older people in Vietnam”, which finished in March 2014. After the project, THAE received a number of requests from older people, local AE and authorities, for the model. How to have funding to establish more ISHCs to meet the demands of the older people? THAE starts to find the answer to this question.

- **Approaching local government**

To establish more ISHCs, funding is critical. First, THAE proposed the Provincial People’s Committee (provincial government) to approve the establishment of the Fund named “Fund for caring and supporting the role of older people” under the decision 3043/QĐ-UBND, with 60 percent of the fund raised will be used for the ISHC replication. Second, THAE submitted the “200 ISHCs replication plan during 2013-2016” to the local government which was also approved by the government under the decision 2666/QĐ-UBND in August, 1st 2013. Not only supporting the fund raising, the provincial government also provided THAE a certain amount of government budget for training, monitoring and management of ISHCs. Due to the economic crisis, during 2013-2014, the government stipulated that THAE is not to approach the corporate sector to raise funds. However there are other strategies that can be used.

- **Fundraising within the THAE network**

At present, Thanh Hoa has more than 414,000 members. Each member contributed 20,000 VND to the fund. One commune which already has ISHCs raised 130 million VND because donors, mainly the local people, can already see the benefit of the clubs and their activities in the community.

- **Fundraising within the wider community**

To generate support outside the THAE network, the THAE also called for support from other state departments, enterprises, individual donors who care about the ISHC model. Before, older people can only

contribute their money for orphanages or victims of carbon dioxin. This is the first time they can mobilize funds for themselves” – said Mr Le Bach Lan, President of THAE.

- **Fundraising model**

As well as the money raised, there are other indicators of progress to help older and disadvantaged people within the province. For example, the replications of the ISHCs are included in every AE district’s plan of action.

It is note that the fundraising is occurring in every level, commune, district and provincial level. However, as the Fund for caring and promoting the role of older people can only be established at a commune and provincial level, districts who would like to fundraise need to establish a branch of the provincial level fund. However, those districts who agree to establish a branch of the fund are eligible to be selected as a project site.

A very attractive fund raising mechanism has been set up, which stipulates that if the commune Fund can raise 15 million VND for an ISHC, then the district Fund will contribute 30 million VND, and the provincial Fund will contribute 5 million plus training, technical support, management templates as well as a weight scale and blood pressure gauge.

With this fund raising way, the THAE successfully raised funds within the AE network and the wider community more broadly. Up to December 2016, THAE have managed to raise around 30 billion VND (\$ 1.345.000) for the “Fund for caring and supporting the role of older people”

- **Full steam ahead in Thanh Hoa**

As of end of December 2016, nearly 03 years after the launching of the 200 ISHC Replication Program, 193 ISHC in 22/27 communes were established. In addition, THAE also coordinated with other related department to implemented many effective projects with various funding sources and able to established 238 ISHCs. In total, THAE managed to set up successfully 438 ISHCs. The ISHC model has energised the activities of THAE because it is more practical and closer to the needs of the people.

Mr. Le Bach Lan, “I am positive about the future” as he believes the government has an obligation to promote this community-based care model.

HelpAge Viet Nam – Who are we?



HelpAge International is a global network of organisations promoting the right of all older people to lead dignified, healthy and secure lives. Being established in 1983, it has grown from the five original members to more than 100 affiliates and many more partners in 65 countries across the world by end of 2015. We have a strong, value-based position which puts the experience of older women and men at the centre of our work.

Our vision

Our vision is a world in which all older people can lead dignified, healthy and secure lives.

Our mission

Our mission is to promote the wellbeing and inclusion of older women and men, and reduce poverty and discrimination in later life.

Our role

Our role is to work with older women and men in low and middle-income countries for better services and policies, and for changes in the behaviours and attitudes of individuals and societies towards old age.

The world we want is one where every older woman and man, everywhere, can say:

- **"I have the income I need"**
- **"I enjoy the best possible health and quality of life"**
- **"I am safe and secure, free from discrimination and abuse"**
- **"My voice is heard"**

Our works in Vietnam

In Vietnam, HelpAge has worked with local partners since 1997 and has established a HelpAge International office in Vietnam since 2011. Our work with local partners directly improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of older people in many of the country's poorest communities.



The strength and diversity of the HelpAge network partners in Vietnam are essential to our identity and values, enabling us to serve and empower older people in the country. We work with the Vietnam Association for the Elderly (VAE), Center for Aging Support and Community Development (CASCD), Vietnam Women's Union (VWU), Fatherland Front (FF), Vietnam Public Health Association (VPHA), Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Ministry of Health (MoH), UNFPA, WHO, National Assembly, researchers and others in the country.



Practical support and training are central to our work. With our partners, we provide assistance to large number of older people and their communities through the establishment and capacity building of the Intergenerational Self-help Clubs (ISHCs) and we draw on this learning and experience to influence national policy makers which indirectly reaching millions more



Our approach in working with local partners and communities on showing how by supporting older people to help themselves and their communities, can also benefits not only older people, but also wider society, especially their family and communities. Recognizing that the contributions of older people can be enhanced when they act together, we support community-level initiatives through the ISHCs to enable older men and women to take led in local development