



Blinding Trachoma in Vietnam

The International Trachoma Initiative (ITI) is dedicated to eliminating blinding trachoma, the world's leading cause of preventable blindness.

Trachoma can be prevented and cured with inexpensive, time-limited treatment. ITI's work is grounded in the WHO-endorsed strategy called SAFE: **S**urgery for trachomatous trichiasis (TT), **A**ntibiotics (Pfizer-donated Zithromax) to treat active infection, **F**ace-washing to reduce transmission, and **E**nvironmental improvement through access to clean water and better sanitation.

Blinding trachoma is a disease of poverty that affects 63 million people, mostly women and children, in 56 countries. Building on trachoma elimination success in Morocco, ITI currently works in 15 of the countries most affected by trachoma, including Vietnam. ITI has had a country office in Vietnam since 2000 when the country's Trachoma Control Program was launched in 53 endemic districts of the 21 Northern and Central Coastal provinces.ⁱ

By the end of 2007, active trachoma was eliminated as a public health problem (prevalence rate under 5%) in Vietnam. Trachoma control activities are now focused on surgically treating severe TT cases (mostly among the elderly), clearing a backlog of over 20,000 TT surgeries, and reducing TT recurrence rates. Vietnam is on target for trachoma elimination by 2010.ⁱⁱ

TRACHOMA IN VIETNAM



Vietnam Population: 86,116,559ⁱⁱⁱ

Vietnam Rank on Human Development Index: No.105 of 177 countries^{iv}

Infection:

- 210,800 Vietnamese have TT^v, the advanced stage of trachoma.
- There are 53,500 severe cases of TT in Vietnam, which need immediate surgery.^{vi}
- 153 of the 1,003 communes in Vietnam are still trachoma-endemic.^{vii}
- At the end of 2007, the Trachoma Control Program experienced a sharp reduction in trachoma infection rates in children under 9 years old, dropping from a range of 7% - 27%^{viii} to less than 5%^{ix} in all endemic project districts.

ITI Activities:

- ITI supported the administration of 56,000 Zithromax treatments in 80 endemic communes in Vietnam in 2007.^x
- ITI-supported partners performed 6,518 TT surgeries for patients in 19 communes in Vietnam in 2007.^{xi}

- ITI assisted the Ministry of Health in planning, monitoring, and especially in increasing awareness about the trachoma problem in the country. ITI also raised in-country funds for the national effort of eliminating blinding trachoma in Vietnam by 2010.^{xii}
- A National Trachoma Control Goal is to clear the TT backlog during the three remaining years of the program at a rate of 20,000 surgeries per year.^{xiii}

Opportunities:

- The Vietnam Ministry of Health's goal to eliminate trachoma in 2010, first set in 2000 and re-emphasized in the National Blindness Prevention and Ophthalmology Conference in December 2006, shows the government's commitment to the elimination of blinding trachoma.^{xiv}
- With continued assistance of ITI, SAFE interventions have been performed in 299 communes of five provinces – Thai Binh, Hai Duong, Bac Ninh, Hoa Binh and Ha Tinh.^{xv}
- Access to the antibiotic Zithromax expanded from 141,375 treatments administered in 2000^{xvi} to over 2 million treatments by the end of 2007.^{xvii}
- 850 out of 1,003 endemic communes have reached “Graduated” status, which means that active trachoma rate is under 5% and TT cases are under 0.01%.^{xviii}
- About 98% of the children screened in project districts had clean faces in 2007.^{xix}

Challenges:

- Three times as many women suffer from TT and ensuing blindness than men.^{xx}
- The TT backlog remains a challenge, as it requires intensive effort to mobilize resources for surgeries and services to the targeted groups.^{xxi}
- Severe TT cases in Vietnam are scattered throughout the country, and this increases the cost for surgeries.^{xxii}

To speak to ITI's country representative in Vietnam or for more information on trachoma control in Vietnam, please contact Geoffrey Knox at +212-229-0540 and gknox@geoffreyknox.com or communications@trachoma.org.

The International Trachoma Initiative (ITI) is a non-governmental organization working to prevent, treat and ultimately eliminate blinding trachoma. Building on success in Morocco, ITI currently works in 15 countries in Africa and Asia. ITI is a major proponent and facilitator of the SAFE strategy to prevent and eliminate trachoma through Surgery, Antibiotics, Facial cleanliness and Environmental improvement. ITI, created through a public-private partnership of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Pfizer Inc, collaborates with international agencies, governmental, and non-governmental organizations to build targeted support—including Zithromax[®] donated by Pfizer—for expanded implementation of the SAFE strategy, operational research and program evaluation, education and advocacy. <http://www.trachoma.org>

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- i “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.
- ii Ibid.
- iii “CIA World Factbook.” United States Central Intelligence Agency. < <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vm.html> > accessed 20 April 2008.
- iv “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.
- v Vietnam Ministry of Health Survey on Trachoma Trichiasis Rates in 23 Provinces, 2005
- vi “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.
- vii Ibid.
- viii Ibid.
- ix “Viet Nam Trachoma Data Form (2008).” World Health Organization Alliance for the Global Elimination of Blinding Trachoma, Twelfth Meeting. Geneva, Switzerland: 28-30 April 2008.
- x “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.
- xi Ibid.
- xii Ibid.
- xiii Ibid.
- xiv Ibid.
- xv Ibid.
- xvi “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2007.” International Trachoma Initiative. <http://www.trachoma.org/cpropdf/Vietnam.pdf> accessed 20 April 2008.
- xvii “Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.
- xviii Ibid.
- xix Ibid.
- xx “Trachoma in Vietnam Brochure.” International Trachoma Initiative.
- xxi Trachoma Expert Committee Fact Sheet 2008.” International Trachoma Initiative.
- xxii Ibid.

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