

# INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL PROTECTION SUPPORTING VIETNAMESE WORKERS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT & INTEGRATION (CDI)

## TABLE OF CONTENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	4
I. MAIN FINDINGS FOLLOWING CRITERIA .....	7
1. Timeliness .....	7
2. Availability .....	8
3. Accessibility .....	8
4. Sustainability .....	9
5. Creativity .....	10
6. Scalability .....	10
II. CONTEXT: COVID-19 IN VIETNAM AND IMPACTS ON WORKERS .....	11
III. OBJECTIVES, METHOD, SUBJECTS AND SCOPE OF DOCUMENTATION .....	14
1. Objectives .....	14
2. Methods .....	14
3. Subjects of the documentation .....	14
4. Scope of the documentation .....	15
5. Social protection and criteria .....	15
5.1 Concepts of social protection .....	15
5.2 Criteria .....	16
IV. RESULTS .....	17
1. Overview of actors' initiatives .....	17
2. Results by actors .....	18
a. Support by government .....	18
b. NGOs, CBOs, and individuals .....	23
c. Trade Unions .....	32
d. Other mass organizations (Vietnam Fatherland's Front, Women's Union, Veteran's Union, Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union) .....	37
e. Businesses and business associations .....	41
f. Multi-stakeholder networks and coalitions .....	44
V. DISCUSSION .....	47
VI. LESSONS LEARNED .....	48
VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	49

ANNEX 1: CASE STORIES .....	51
ANNEX 2: LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS AND ENTITIES .....	55
ANNEX 3: REFERENCES .....	57

## ABBREVIATIONS

MOLISA	Ministry of Labor Invalids and Social Affairs
CDC	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CBOs	Community based organizations
GVN	Government of Vietnam
(I)NGOs	(International) Non-governmental Organizations
WU	Women's union
VGCL	Vietnam General Confederation of Labor

## TABLES

*Table 1: Summary of actors and beneficiaries participating in the documentation*

*Table 2: Overview of multiple stakeholders' initiatives that support workers in response to COVID-19*

*Table 3: Need assessment of formal and informal worker during COVID-19*

## BOXES

*Box 1: The 62,000 billion social protection package of GVN to workers affected by the COVID-19*

*Box 2: A beneficiary of the 62,000 billion relief package*

*Box 3: Support by Center for Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI)*

*Box 4: Story of a worker who initiated support in response to COVID-19*

*Box 5: Support of the Trade Union of Hai Phong Economic Zone*

*Box 6: "ATM of free necessities" Ho Chi Minh City's Center of Youth Social Work*

*Box 7: Thai Ha Books with "Rice ATM"*

*Box 8: Mnet and Oxfam advocated for the government's relief package of VND 62,000 billion and monitored the implementation*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As COVID-19 was unleashed across the country at the beginning of 2020, the Government of Vietnam (GVN) rapidly took a number of large-scale disease prevention measures. However, the impact of the pandemic resulted in increased precariousness for both formal and informal workers.

Given workers' difficulties, multiple actors including the government, trade unions, other mass organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), individuals, businesses and business associations, along with multi-stakeholder networks implemented interventions that were responsive to the social and economic issues workers faced. Interventions were varied depending on actors' resources and the progression of the pandemic.

In an effort to demonstrate the overall support available to workers, the Center for Development and Integration (CDI) conducted the following documentation of various actors' initiatives during the pandemic.

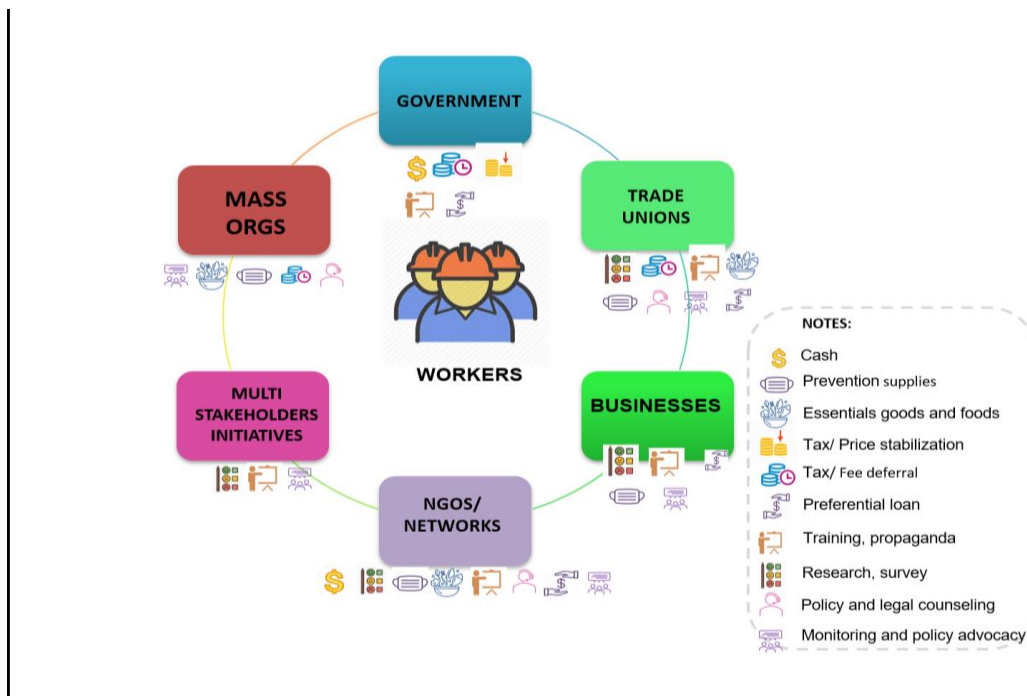
The study's goal is to document initiatives of key stakeholders' support to workers in the formal and informal sectors in response to the COVID-19 crisis, including two specific objectives: (i) to identify and map initiatives that support workers; and (ii) to share lessons learned and good practices actors in Vietnam and other countries in the region.

Following an analysis of the study's results, CDI identified six related actors who supported workers, including: (i) the government; (ii) the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (VGCL); (iii) other mass organizations; (iv) businesses and business associations; (v) multi-stakeholder initiatives and networks; and (vi) international and Vietnam-based NGOs, CBOs and individuals.

The type of support provided to workers can be grouped into the following nine categories:

1. Prevention supplies (i.e., medical masks, personal protective equipment (PPE))
2. Essential goods (foods, soap, ...)
3. Tax/Price stabilization
4. In-cash support,
5. Tax/fee deferral and preferential loan
6. Communication on COVID-19 and prevention measures
7. Job protection (training)
8. Policy and legal counseling
9. Monitoring and policy advocacy

Picture 1: Mapping of actors and their initiatives



The Government of Vietnam established a support package for displaced workers by Resolution No. 42/NQ-CP, dated April 9, 2020 and Decision No. 15/2020/QĐ-TTg. Survey results show, however, that migrant workers found it difficult to access support under this scheme due to: (i) criteria required for accessing support do not take into account the fact that most workers are migrants; (ii) some criteria for workers to receive benefits are quite strict, leading to a situation where many workers are severely affected by COVID-19 including sudden loss of job and income but cannot access support; (iii) problems accessing information about the scheme; (iv) difficulty in verifying documents that workers provide to demonstrate eligibility for support. Additionally, each provincial authority had its own support policies available for its citizens and workers, which were dependent on the resources it had available and the specific context of each province.

Other actors also implemented support programs for displaced and disadvantaged workers. Businesses, the VGCL and the trade union at all levels, along with NGOs are actors who had various initiatives to support workers, including in-cash and in-kind support and legal counseling, as well as engaging in policy advocacy and providing recommendations to the GVN. Businesses engaged in policy advocacy as well, but focused more on reducing their own tax burdens and the availability of preferential loans for themselves (not for workers).

Government and mass organizations' support were usually provided in-cash and in-kind, and focused on workers who were most disadvantaged with job loss, regardless of their migrant worker status. Mass organizations often lacked their own resources but mobilized funds and essential goods such as foods and masks from businesses and individuals to support people in

difficult circumstances. There was no systematic information available as to the scale and effectiveness of these different support programs.

Based on the findings, the following policy suggestions should be used in advocacy efforts with the government to support a post-COVID-19 recovery and to cushion the impact of similar events in the future:

- Most of the support provided was cash or in-kind. There was no support for the mental health care of workers. Trade unions and social organizations can support workers with mental health counseling and expand online counseling services.
- The Government may consider:
  - That the implementation of policies should be timely so that those who are in need receive support.
  - Adjustment of the eligibility criteria for the 62-trillion package so that more workers who are affected by COVID-19 can be supported. The government has considered removing the condition that enterprises which cannot afford to pay salary do not need to take one-month or more of consecutive leave.
  - To increase the amount of financial support for informal workers so that it is equal to formal workers.
  - More vocational training programs for workers so that workers have alternative livelihood strategies and are better at coping with job loss.
- VGCL and the trade union may consider: The pandemic also shows that workers are paid an insufficient salary, so they are overly dependent on overtime wages. Trade unions, therefore, need to promote substantive collective bargaining to increase wages for workers instead of only adjusting minimum wages. At the same time, it is also necessary to invest more in training to improve the skills and capacity of workers so that they can seek higher wages and better jobs.

## **I. MAIN FINDINGS FOLLOWING CRITERIA**

### **1. Timeliness**

Regarding the timeliness of support provided to workers, the Government reacted and acted early by organizing emergency meetings with relevant Ministries and agencies to propose support options for people and workers affected by COVID-19. In early April, at the beginning of the first social quarantine, the GVN issued Resolution No. 42/NQ-CP to support people facing difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The GVN followed this resolution with Decision No. 15/2020/QĐ-TTg, specifying Resolution 42 with regulations on the implementation of policies to support people facing difficulties due to COVID-19. Thus, it can be seen that the Government's policies have been formulated and issued in a timely manner, demonstrating the Government's responsiveness.

However, the implementation process still faced many inadequacies. The 62,000 billion support package could only be accessed by certain beneficiaries such as registered invalids, poor households, etc. There were very few workers who could access the support package. According to our survey, to receive support, the workers faced many barriers such as paperwork and procedures, and those barriers delayed the receipt of support. For example, in one case of an informal worker working as a street vendor living in the Long Bien area of Ha Noi, she started the process in May, but only in September 2020 did she finally receive the support. Additionally, all four of her family members completed support applications but only one received a subsidy of 1,000,000 VND.

The delays can be explained by several reasons including:

- This was the first time during a pandemic or similar event of this scale that the Government of Vietnam and related ministries developed and implemented a policy on emergency support/aid, faced with limited resources and complex issues facing beneficiaries. Therefore, although the policy was issued early, relevant agencies, especially at the local level, faced many difficulties in implementing and consulting with the policy-issuing agency.
- At the policy-making and implementation levels, there were different applications and understandings applied to the same beneficiary target groups. For example, mobile lottery ticket vendors were included in the subsidy beneficiaries. A Ho Chi Minh City ward officer said that there were several similar categories of workers in his ward that also could not work during the pandemic, but were attached to a fixed place and not "mobile, thus not eligible for benefits". However, according to a representative of the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, lottery ticket vendors, who are not attached to a fixed place are also in the eligible group of beneficiaries.
- Due to limited resources, subsidy eligibility requirements were very strict, the claim process was complicated, and difficult to verify, especially for migrant workers. Thus, it



led to prolonged beneficiary verification and delays in the disbursement of funds to vulnerable workers.

While other actors such as NGOs and mass organizations that mobilized resources from businesses and individuals had slower response and reaction times, because of their focus on a small-range of identified resources, support was carried out quickly and targeted to right people, which met the urgent needs of workers.

According to Mr. Vu Tien Loc - Chairman of Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) at the National Assembly session in October 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic showed that Vietnam's social protection system still has many gaps.<sup>1</sup> Although enrollment has increased 1.3 times over the past 5 years, only one-third of the workforce has participated in the social insurance system so far. In part, this shows that the informal sector of the economy is still sizable, and on the other hand also means that most workers have not received the necessary support when they needed it the most.

## **2. Availability**

During the pandemic, essential goods, particularly those such as masks, hand sanitizer, etc. became scarce and expensive. Social distancing and other regulations created difficulties transporting goods and travelling between locations. It led to the low availability of goods, services and healthcare equipment to meet the needs of workers affected by COVID-19.

The total amount of the GVN's 62000 billion support package was not immediately available, as it included both state and provincial budgets. Disbursement depended heavily on locally available resources and in order to use these resources, it had to be based on local expenditure regulations and budget plans during that period.

The trade union of Hai Phong Economic Zone said that although resources were available, the expenditure list regulations were not allowed to be used for emergency or cash assistance to workers. In other words, *"it has money but it can't spend it"*.

Regarding NGOs' initiatives mentioned above, resources were identified and utilized on a small scale. Thus, they can be considered an availability of resources.

## **3. Accessibility**

Complicated verification procedures of the GVN's relief package barred vulnerable workers from accessing it. Whereas, support from businesses, NGOs, CBOs, and individuals was much more accessible and required nearly no eligibility requirements from workers. Many workers could not access the 62,000 billion package because they did not know or have access to information about it. They expressed that it was difficult to get financial aid from the State, due to strict criteria and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://baodautu.vn/thuc-hien-goi-ho-tro-62000-ty-dong-con-lung-tung-d132579.html>

conditions. As a result, many workers who were seriously affected by COVID-19 were unable to receive support.

Meanwhile, workers who had some existing connection to CSOs and other organizations, were able to access to cash support and/or pandemic prevention supplies, as well as necessities - which were provided mainly by mass organizations, NGOs, businesses and organizations volunteering or individuals.

In the context of social distancing, there was effective support, but this also led to accessibility difficulties for workers. However, online labor law consultancy activities are one example of support that was effective for workers during social distancing. During the period between March and April 2020, the total number of questions that workers sent to CDI's consulting channels (Fanpage Facebook, Legal forum for workers, Group Facebook "[Connecting to make changes](#)", hotline, etc.) increased four-to-five times compared to the previous months. The questions centered around job loss and temporary resignation due to enterprises' inability to maintain production. Online counseling is an effective and timely platform for assisting workers in the absence of physical access, during a period in which workers are facing many problems affecting their work and life. Online legal counseling is an ongoing activity of CDI.

However, in terms of 'accessibility', social distancing also created many barriers. As mentioned above, restrictions on traveling and transportation of goods, resulting scarcity of goods, expensive goods in turn reduced workers' chances of accessing support.

In addition, with support such as training, or conducting surveys and assessments, it was not possible to directly access and interview workers and stakeholders. Instead, interviews were mainly implemented through phone calls.

#### **4. Sustainability**

COVID-19 was a sudden and strong shock to the economy and to all people around the world. Vietnam also could not avoid its spiral of influence. Due to the rapid onset of the crisis, most stakeholders were not well prepared and had to develop plans to support workers, as well as the economy.

COVID-19 was only one of the shocks that workers and economies had to face, alongside the context of the 4.0 technology revolution, automation and digitization in production industries. Therefore, workers were at risk of losing their jobs and having their incomes reduced. There is a necessity to support workers to have long-term alternative livelihoods. This support should not only help workers overcome the crisis caused by COVID-19 in the short-term, but also help them better adapt and respond in the long-term when faced with shocks and similar situations.

According to a report on the impact of COVID-19 on workers in the textile and footwear industry by CARE Vietnam, which interviewed 1280 migrant workers (originating from 56/63 provinces)

from 126 textile and footwear companies in five provinces, 21% of respondents 30 years and older said, “I am confused because I do not know what to do, over the past 15 years I have only worked as a seamstress”.

Thus, in order to have better coping abilities when faced with similar shocks, the first necessary thing is to improve workers’ capacity to seek and practice alternative livelihoods. Specifically, when workers lose their jobs, they have skills to find other jobs to maintain incomes and ensure livelihoods. More importantly, in order to find another job, employees must know more than one career and be equipped with transferable occupational skills, which they are continuously improving upon. If a worker is laid off, they already have the skills and experience of other jobs, and do not become vulnerable because they are dependent on only one type of job.

However, the survey results show that most of the support provided was short-term to help workers with their immediate needs such as cash, medical supplies (mask and hand sanitizer), foods and essential goods.

There was no long-term or sustainable support for employees, such as developing appropriate and effective vocational training and skills training programs that meet the needs of employees and society.

## **5. Creativity**

COVID 19 is an effective 'test' for both society and the economy. It tests resilience, sustainability and creativity of different stakeholders. Initiating “rice ATMs”, “essential goods ATMs”, “mask ATMs” that distributed essential goods, rice, and masks to workers, businesses and individuals showed their creativity during the pandemic. The breakthrough was not only in the application of technology but also in its approach to inclusiveness.

It is no exaggeration to say that, 'rice ATMs' 'essential goods ATMs' have helped' prevent hunger among thousands of people and workers during the social distancing period April 2020.

## **6. Scalability**

Some initiatives were widespread, not only in terms of scope but also among implementors. According to the research team, rice ATMs were one of the most widespread initiatives. Initiated by Mr. Hoang Tuan Anh - CEO of PHG Lock, rice ATMs were operated 24/24 at 204B Vuon Lai, Tan Phu district, Ho Chi Minh City from April 6, 2020. Many sponsors contributed to the maintain and replicate this model of ATMs to other places around the country. Social enterprises, NGOs, individuals and social unions learned and implemented this initiative.

Later on, many similar models which included ATMs for essential goods, masks and “zero” dong markets were implemented to assist workers and others during difficult times. Another initiative that was also widespread, was the initiative to call and advocate for landlords to reduce the room

rent and utility prices that they charged migrant workers. This initiative was mainly implemented by trade unions at all levels and NGOs working with migrant workers.

## **II. CONTEXT: COVID-19 IN VIETNAM AND IMPACTS ON WORKERS**

Originating in Wuhan city, China in December, 2019, the coronavirus quickly spread around the world including Thailand, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, and the USA (Wu, Chen, & Chan, 2020). With over 118,000 cases in more than 110 countries and territories and the potential risk of further global spread, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID-19 was a pandemic on March 11, 2020.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 infection in Vietnam unfolded in four phases from January to August 2020 with two outbreaks in March and July. The first phase occurred from late January to mid-February 2020. During this period, all reported cases had a clear travel history to China in common (International Labour Organization, 2020). The second phase, which began in early March and lasted until late April after a long stretch with no reported Covid-19 cases in Vietnam, saw the emergence of cases linked to travel from countries other than China that became new viral epicenters. As the number of infected cases increased significantly from 16 in the first phase to 153 in the second phase, the Government of Vietnam issued Directive 16/CT-TTg on March 31, 2020 stating that:

*“To carry out strict nationwide quarantine for fifteen days, starting from 01 April 2020 on the principle that each family isolates itself from other families, one village from other villages, one commune from other communes, one province from other provinces. People are asked to stay at home except for extreme necessity, such as buying food, foodstuff and medicine; emergencies; working at factories, production establishments, facilities trading in essential services and goods that are not subject to provisional closure. (Article 1, Directive 16/CT-TTg)*

When the government introduced the social distancing order, informal sector workers such as street vendors, scrap vendors, garbage collectors, informal motorbike taxi drivers (locally known as “xe om”), and taxi drivers were immediately affected. As they mostly lived based on their daily income with little savings, staying home meant losing income. They struggled to make ends meet in the time of COVID-19.

During the second phase, employment and income of formal workers began to decrease although business was conducted as usual.

*“The pandemic was a shock to Vietnam’s economy. The consumer market in service delivery, tourism, hospitality shrank. It was difficult to guarantee the employment for*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://time.com/5791661/who-coronavirus-pandemic-declaration/>

*workers in manufacturing sector in March due to a shortage of production materials* (Thủy, 2020).

The outbreak of COVID-19 had a severe impact in China and caused a shrinking market and shortage of production materials. Enterprises gradually turned to survival, typically cutting overtime and allowances for workers. Apart from hardship in terms of income, workers in other sectors including medical and other necessary goods sectors were at the frontline of the fight against the virus and faced a high risk of direct contact and infection.

Migrant workers faced a double challenge: their income and jobs were at risk (87.92% of migrants surveyed either lost their jobs or suffered an income reduction); or on the other hand, were separated from their families in their home villages for months due to social distancing measures. (International Labour Organization, 2020).

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on Vietnam's businesses and workers in all economic sectors. On the whole, the GDP growth in the first quarter of 2020 (3.82%) was the lowest growth in the last decade (GSO, 2020). Hospitality, aviation, retail, manufacturing sector including textile, leather, wood processing industry, and food services sector were hardest hit as they were labor-intensive sectors. Small and medium-sized businesses and household businesses were the first to feel the impact of the pandemic. About 74% of businesses were at risk of bankruptcy if the pandemic had lasted more than six months<sup>3</sup>. As of mid-April, General Office of Statistics estimated that the pandemic would have an impact on 5 million of workers and 84.4% of businesses in Vietnam<sup>4</sup>.

The third phase of the pandemic occurred between April 28 and July 19, 2020 which recorded no new cases in the community and marked the “new normal” in Vietnam. This phase underlined economic recovery and prevention of the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the economic impact of COVID-19 became more visible after some delay. Manufacturing sectors not only faced a shortage of production materials but also a reduction in demand. After a long period of social distancing, purchasing behavior and markets had changed significantly. Customers tightened their belts spending mostly on essential goods.<sup>3</sup> During this period, the pandemic severely impacted countries that served as commercial partners of Vietnam. Workers faced remarkable reductions in income as they “*worked less than 15 days per month for several months recently*”. According to the survey by Center for Community Health Research and Support (CCHS), as of June 2020, the number of workers in an industrial zone in the South decreased by 35%, while those who still worked at the zone found it hard to sustain a decent life in an urban area.

For informal workers, their jobs returned but “*the income returned to a level post COVID-19 that was much less than that of 2019.*” (Vendor, female, Hanoi)

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<sup>3</sup> Prime Minister's Board IV. Survey Report on Impacts of Covid-19 on Enterprise Performance. Published on 5th March 2020

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=382&idmid=2&ItemID=19576>

On July 20, after 99 days without a new case community transmission, Vietnam recorded a case in Da Nang. The period from July 20 to late August was the fourth period of COVID-19 in Vietnam. Containment measures were not applied on a national scale as before, rather, it was only applied where infected cases were detected. Informal workers could continue their job but were faced with significant reductions in income when customers cut their spending or had the tendency to shop online. (Kantar Worldpanel, 2020)

*“During this second peak of the pandemic, I couldn’t sell much.” (Vendor, female, Hanoi)*

*“People eat less and cut spending. They are afraid to go outside to buy. I couldn’t sell much.” (Vendor, female, Hanoi)*

A number of formal workers shared that the amount of work at firms was much less when compared to the first six months of 2020. A representative of the Trade Union of a Hai Duong business in textile sector shared, *“Businesses will run out of orders by the end of August, even orders for masking garments are no longer available, I don't know what will happen.”*

With the above-mentioned context, the GVN passed Decision 15/2020/QĐ-TTg in late March on the guideline for the implementation of the VND 62000 billion relief package for vulnerable people in the time of COVID-19. Among the six groups of beneficiaries that the decision targeted, three of them were informal and formal sector workers:

- Workers whose labor contracts were temporarily suspended or who must take unpaid leave for a month or more. This can be applicable for a maximum period of up to three months starting from April 1;
- Workers who lost their jobs but are not eligible for unemployment allowance or work without a labor contract and have lost their jobs;
- Workers with no labor contract who lose their jobs (vendors, household businesses; scrap collectors, garbage collectors; lottery ticket sellers; the self-employed)

In addition to the direct financial support from the government and government agencies, other stakeholders including associations of workers' representatives such as the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor and trade unions); representatives of employers and business associations such as Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI); Vietnam Textile and Apparel Association (VITAS), Vietnam National Textile and Garment Group (VINATEX), Vietnam Leather, Footwear and Handbag Association (LEFASO); networks or social organizations; community groups, multilateral programs and initiatives, volunteers and individuals also put a lot of effort into providing updates and prevention instructions and provide workers with support.

WHO representative, Kidong Park shared WHO’s view on Vietnam’s COVID-19 response:

*“You grasp information very quickly, share it transparently and in a timely manner, apply information technology quickly and effectively ... I want to spend time analyzing and*

*synthesizing lessons, experiences of pandemic prevention and control of Vietnam to share with the international community.”*

Multiple stakeholders took prompt and urgent actions to support workers during this difficult situation. In the above context, CDI has documented initiatives and actions related to social protection to support and help workers to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam.

### **III. OBJECTIVES, METHOD, SUBJECTS AND SCOPE OF DOCUMENTATION**

#### **1. Objectives**

The documentation was conducted with the following objectives:

- Identify and map social protection initiatives supporting workers in response to COVID-19 at the local level.
- Share lessons learned and best practices to support workers in response to COVID-19 conducted by local government, mass organizations, trade unions, businesses, individuals and relevant actors.

#### **2. Methods**

Qualitative methods were the main methods used for the documentation.

##### **2.1 Secondary data collection**

- Collect data from reports on the impact of COVID-19 on workers and supporting measures by MOLISA, mass organizations, INGOs, local NGOs, businesses, etc.
- Scan data from mass media including official websites of government offices, mass organizations, INGOs, local NGOs, businesses.

##### **2.2 Primary data collection**

- Conduct in-depth interviews and group discussions with actors and beneficiaries about support measures.

In-depth interviews were expected to complement secondary data collection, hence, assessment of opportunities and challenges for implementation of the supporting initiatives was developed.

#### **3. Subjects of the documentation**

Documentation focused on exploring actions to support formal and informal sector workers in terms of social protection. The above supporting activities can be an initiative of one of the following units:

- NGOs including local and international NGOs, CBOs
- Trade unions
- Other mass organizations (Vietnam Fatherland Front, Women’s Union, Veteran’s Union, Farmer’s Union, Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth’s Union)
- Businesses and business associations
- Multi - stakeholder networks and coalitions

- Government at central and local level
- Individuals

*Table 1: Summary of actors and beneficiaries participating in the documentation*

	No of units	No of units interviewed	Interviewees		
			Total	Male	Female
1. Local government	5	1	2	2	0
2. Trade Unions	11	2	2	1	1
3. Other mass organizations	5	3	3	0	3
4. NGOs, CBOs	16	8	8	1	7
5. Businesses, business associations	10	1	1	0	1
6. Multi Stakeholder networks and coalitions	3	1	1	0	1
Workers interviewed (23 formal workers, 32 informal workers)	0	0	55	6	49

#### **4. Scope of the documentation**

- Documentation was conducted on a national scale with in-depth interviews in megacities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and economic zones in Hai Phong, Hai Duong province, Bac Ninh province and Dong Nai province.
- The documentation was conducted between March and August 2020.

#### **5. Social protection and criteria**

##### **5.1 Concepts of social protection**

The concept of social protection is relatively broad, defined at different levels and target groups, depending on the organization.

According to the United Nations, Article 25, Charter of the United Nations 1948: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Social protection is understood as the set of public measures that a society provides for its members to protect them against economic and social distress that would be caused by the absence or a substantial reduction of income from work as a result of various contingencies (sickness,



maternity, employment injury, unemployment, invalidity, old age, and death of the breadwinner); the provision of health care; and, the provision of benefits for families with children.<sup>4</sup>

According to International Labor Organization:

*“Social security is the protection that society provides for its members through a series of public measures against the economic and social distress that otherwise would be caused by the stoppage or substantial reduction of earnings resulting from sickness, maternity, employment injury, invalidity and death; the provision of medical care; and the provision of subsidies for families with children (ILO 1984).”* (Justino, 2005)

The Asian Development Bank defines social protection as a "set of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption/loss of income."

In this documentation, the support for workers on social protection will be understood as programs, policies, by the State or by other stakeholders in society such as social organizations, individuals, businesses, and networks aims to *ensure that the people, in particular, the workers have the minimum income as well as the opportunity to access the minimum level of education, health, housing, clean water, and information.* With support to achieve living standards and minimum income, workers will be cushioned from unpredictable impacts of the COVID-19 on health and income.

## **5.2 Criteria**

The following criteria were taken into consideration during data analysis to provide a more thorough assessment:

### **a. Timeliness**

People in need of assistance can access support during a reasonable, acceptable waiting time, and at a time that is appropriate for the person receiving it.

### **b. Availability**

Availability is understood to be a functional, operational and adequate number of services, goods, and equipment for public health care for those in need. If the support is in cash, it is also sufficient in quantity.

### **c. Accessibility**

Initiatives are considered accessible when:

- Information concerning the support is shared openly and accurately on a number of communication channels with an understandable message. Privacy of beneficiaries' information is not compromised.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Event/social-protection/Rawlings\\_Overview%20of%20Social%20Protection%20\(poll\)\\_PCC15.pdf](https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Event/social-protection/Rawlings_Overview%20of%20Social%20Protection%20(poll)_PCC15.pdf)

- Physical space and infrastructure can be easily assessed by beneficiaries.
- Beneficiaries do not have to pay any cost to receive the support package.

**d. Sustainability**

Long-term support, helping workers not only meet immediate needs but also be more proactive in coping with post-pandemic difficulties to ensure employment, income and family life of workers.

**e. Creativity**

The support form is different from the support provided by other entities.

**f. Scalability**

The form of support is seen to be spreadable/scalable when many other actors in the society are inspired, and can replicate the support.

**IV. RESULTS**

**1. Overview of actors' initiatives**

*Table 2: Overview of multiple stakeholders' initiatives that support workers in response to COVID-19*

	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Trade Unions</b>	<b>Other mass organizations</b>	<b>NGOs, CBOs, &amp; individuals</b>	<b>Businesses and business associations</b>	<b>Networks &amp; Coalitions</b>
	<b>Support</b>						
1	Essential goods (foods, ...)		x	X	x	X	x
2	Prevention supplies (i.e. medical masks, PPE)		x	X	x	X	x
3	Tax/Price stabilization, reduced cost of living	X	x	X		X	
4	In-cash support, preferential loans	x	x				x
5	Communication on COVID-19 and instructions	x	X	X	x	x	x

	on prevention measures						
6	Job protection (training)	x	X			x	
7	Policy and legal counselling		x		x		
8	Advocacy and monitoring	x	X	X	x	x	x

- **Necessities/essential goods and foods** include rice, noodles, cooking oil, fish sauce, salt and daily food, and/or basic necessities goods.
- **Prevention supplies** include medical masks, masks, hand sanitizers, soap, i.e. PPE.
- **Price stabilization, reduced cost of living** for workers, may take the form of stabilizing prices, reduce electricity bills, and rent accommodation for workers.
- **Financial assistance** include in-cash support, tax deferral/preferential loans for workers to cover their cost of living.
- **Communication on the COVID-19 situation and instructions on prevention measures** include a variety of communication materials such as leaflets, videos on social media, printed newspaper, audio and visual communications.
- **Training** for workers and guidance to employers includes maintaining workers' employment status so that workers are not laid off or lose their jobs, such as rotating shifts and reducing overtime.
- **Policy and legal counseling for workers**
- **Monitoring and advocacy for policy interventions** with government officials and other relevant entities to provide timely support to workers.

## 2. Results by actors

### a. Support by government

#### Overview

The GVN passed a number of policies and programs to help employers and workers in response to COVID-19, including:

- Support the reduction of production and business costs: Directive 11/CT-TTg dated March 4, 2020 passed urgent measures to help businesses cope with COVID-19 and to ensure social protection. Resolution 22/2020/ND-CP, dated February 24, 2020, revised and included additional articles for Resolution 139/2016/ND-CP on October 4, 2016 on government regulations on license fees.

- Credit support and exchange rate regulation: Ordinance 01/2020/TT-NHNN dated March 13, 2020 regulating credit institutions and foreign bank branches to restructure repayment terms, exemption, reduction of interest, and keeping whole group of debt to support customers affected by COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support enterprises through fiscal policies: Decree 41/2020/ND-CP dated April 8, 2020 to defer payments on tax and land fee rentals to address the impact of COVID-19. The Decree applies to companies, individuals, and business households, particularly SMEs, to enhance cash flow shortages.
- Decree 41/NQ-CP dated April 9, 2020 on the Government's regular cabinet meeting in March 2020 and Official Letter No. 2698/BCT-DTDL dated April 16, 2020 of Ministry of Industry and Trade on electricity relief program in support of users affected by COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support for people, workers and household businesses: Support vulnerable people, households, businesses and firms influenced by COVID-19 by Resolution 42/NQ-CP and Decision 15/QD-TTg.

In addition to national policies, some local governments issued their own policies to support people living in specific areas facing difficulties caused by COVID-19, such as:

- The People's Council of Ho Chi Minh City's issued Decree 02/2020/NQ-HĐND dated March 27, 2020 under which financial support was given to workers in difficult circumstances due to COVID-19. VND 1,000,000 (about USD 43) per month was given to workers consisting of teachers and staff of private kindergartens, whose labor contracts were terminated and not eligible for unemployment insurance. The period for support was not to exceed three months.
- The People's Committee of Hanoi issued Directive 06/CT-UBND, dated April 7, 2020, to improve the efficiency of public investment and construction; support to stabilize production and business, and to promote social security for people impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, local government mobilized community participation and engagement. For example:

- The People's Committee of Ba Ria - Vung Tau province mobilized landlords and household businesses to reduce rents for workers and local businesses, in order to minimize costs during the pandemic.<sup>5</sup>

***Box 1: The 62,000 billion social protection package of GVN to workers affected by the COVID-19***

<sup>5</sup> <https://plo.vn/dich-covid-19/phuong-o-vung-tau-van-dong-giam-gia-thue-nha-mat-bang-cho-dan-899544.html>

*The 62,000 billion social protection support package passed under Resolution 42/ND-CP was among the government's primary policies to support employers and workers during COVID-19. The package was passed only nine days after social distancing measures were implemented. Resolution 42 was targeted at the seven groups of beneficiaries listed below:*

- VND 500,000 per month given to people with meritorious service to the country.
- VND 500,000 per month given to social protection beneficiaries.
- VND 250,000 per month given to people of poor and near-poor households.
- VND 1,800,000 (about USD 70) per month given to workers who have their contracts suspended or forced to take unpaid leave of one month or more because their employers do not have sufficient resources to pay workers' salaries.
- VND 1,000,000 (about USD 43) per month given to workers whose labor contracts are terminated and are not eligible for unemployment insurance, and workers without a labor contract who lose their jobs. The period of support will not exceed three months, calculated from April to June 2020.
- VND 1,000,000 per month given to household businesses.
- Employers facing financial difficulties who paid at least 50% of salaries in advance to their workers during their suspension of work from April to June 2020 will be given collateral-free, zero-interest loans by the Vietnam Bank for Social Policies.

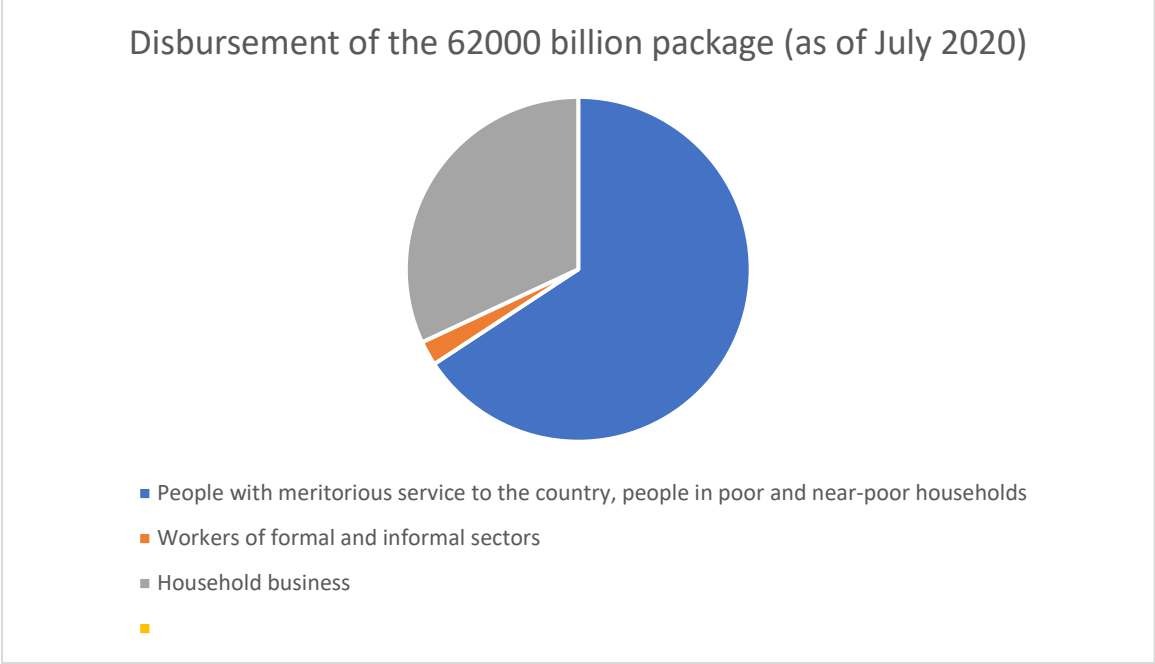
*The government issued Decision No 15/2020/QĐ-TTg dated April 24, 2020 providing implementation guidance for Resolution 42. The Decision consists of forms and applications that can be used by businesses and workers for submitting their applications. The decision states that based on the available list of beneficiaries, local authorities may disburse financial aid to people with meritorious service to the country, people of poor and near-poor households and social protection beneficiaries. Household businesses, workers with labor contracts and workers without labor contracts need to send their requests to local authorities. After that, it may take between 5 to 12 days for local authorities, the social protection office, and tax officers to verify and approve eligible beneficiaries.*

According to MOLISA, as of July 2020, 30% of the 62000 billion social protection package or equivalent to 17,500 billion, had been disbursed to those in need. Of this amount, 11,964,690 billion had been given to those with meritorious service to the country and people in poor and near-poor households; and about 5.800 billion that had been given to other targeted beneficiaries.<sup>6</sup> Approximately 402,466 workers received financial aid in the amount of VND 403,425 billion. As of September 2020, VND 48.9 billion of the relief package was disbursed to more than 36,000 workers who had their contract suspended or took unpaid leave, VND 58.4 billion was disbursed to workers whose contract were terminated and thus they were not eligible for unemployment

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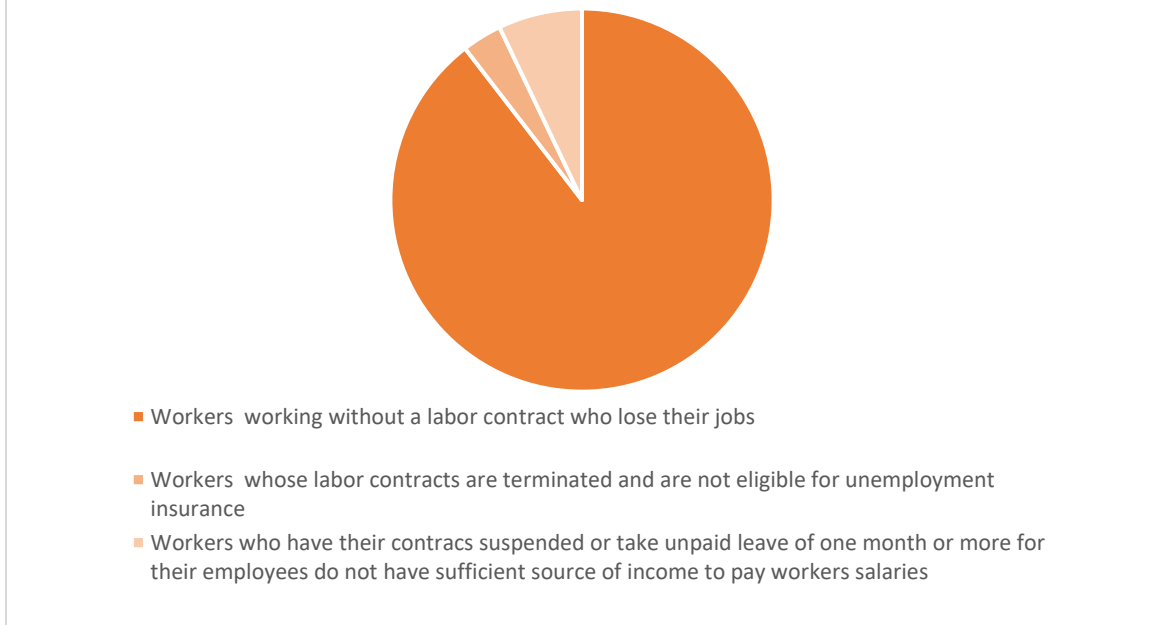
<sup>6</sup> <http://www.molisa.gov.vn/Pages/tintuc/chitiet.aspx?tintucID=222952>

insurance; and VND 617.7 billion was used to help more than 628,000 workers in informal sector who lost their job due to the COVID-19. The number of workers that received government financial aid was modest. A number of representatives of local authorities and trade unions shared that no workers with labor contracts received government financial aid of VND 1,800,000 per month, as of August 2020.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> The information collected was of respondents in Dong Anh district, Hanoi; Hai Duong province; and Hai Phong city.

Beneficiaries of the 62 trillion relief package (as of September 2020)



As it was easier to identify people with meritorious service to the country, people of poor and near-poor households, and social protection beneficiaries, local authorities tended to prioritize financial aid for these groups.

*“The commune has provided financial aid for people who have meritorious service to the country, people of poor and near-poor households.” (Officer, male, Hai Boi commune, Dong Anh district)*

Informal workers such as scrap collectors, vendors, and freelance motorbike taxi drivers, which had no labor contracts, were the last to be approved. Those who received support gave positive feedback about the relief package from the government.

*“I am happy that I have (received) something to manage and am comforted that the state budget is used to support those in poor circumstances.” (Informal worker, female, Ho Chi Minh city)*

*“It lifts my spirit. I don’t feel like I am left behind.” (Informal worker, female, Ho Chi Minh city)*

However, time-consuming and complicated paperwork devalued the government’s financial support. For migrant workers who did not have labor contracts, they were required to obtain verification of their employment status, income and proof of both their temporary and permanent residences. In order to obtain the necessary documentation, local people, specifically heads of their temporary residence, had to support workers with an information declaration and other verification.

*“The head of the ward where I stay now introduced the 62000 billion relief package to me. Thanks to his help, the procedure was simple. But when I went meet the ward officials to receive payment, I was asked to fix my papers due to some mistakes (Informal worker, female, Ho Chi Minh City)*

*“I registered to receive support at my temporary residence. I had to go back to my hometown and then to the temporary residence’s committee two-to-three times to get verification. My temporary residence already verified it for me, but my hometown did not. Until I got enough stamps from my hometown on my registration documents, it was already too late to submit them”. (Vendor, female, Hanoi)*

A number of formal workers were not eligible for financial aid due to strict conditions of the relief package. Decision 15/QD-TTg required that workers with labor contracts must agree with their employers (which, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, do not have resources to pay salaries) to suspend their contracts or take unpaid leave for a period of at least one consecutive month, from April 1, 2020. In fact, workers shared that businesses did not give one entire consecutive month leave to their workers. Their life fell into precariousness due to low working hours and income.

*“We have worked only a few days to half a month for several months, then have gone to work, then we take leave as the company suspends its production”. (Formal worker, female, Dong Anh district)*

**Box 2: A beneficiary of the 62,000 billion relief package**

*"My family has four people; I sell fruit while my husband and children work as motorbike taxi and cyclo drivers. All four of us have no labor contracts. In April, we all stayed at home due to social distancing. In May, the head of the street came to my home to introduce the government's relief package of VND 62000 billion and get the names and ages of four members of the family. As the head of the street introduced the package and verified that I was a vendor, I received VND 1,000,000 in September.*

*However, I am confused why my husband and two children are not eligible for financial aid. When I asked the officials of the ward’s committee, they explained that I was the only street vendor in my family and I just couldn't sell products in the month of social distancing - April.*

*"*  
*Mrs. Q., 52 years old, has moved to Hanoi for 25-30 years.*  
*Street vendor in Long Bien market, Phuc Tan ward, Hoan Kiem district.*

**b. NGOs, CBOs, and individuals**

**Overview**

During the pandemic, the majority of NGOs, CBOs, and individuals described in this report provided workers with essential goods and prevention supplies; updates and instruction on



prevention measures against COVID-19; encouraged stakeholders to join stabilization programs and reduce living costs; and some NGOs engaged in policy advocacy.

For example:

- Social Work & Community Development Research & Consultancy (SDRC) coordinated with the Board of Directors of a cooperative and the leaders of a self-help group to organize occupational health and safety (OSH) knowledge sharing sessions and distribute kits of preventive medical products to garbage collectors. The kit includes a face mask, rubber gloves, antibacterial hand sanitizer and dry hand gel.
- Center for Development and Integration (CDI) conducted a rapid assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on workers in textile and electronic sectors; encouraged landlords to reduce rent; collaborated with Oxfam in Vietnam and the Network of Action for Migrant Workers (Mnet) to advocate for the 62000 billion social protection package to be more inclusive; reach the right beneficiaries; coordinated with the Budget Transparency, Accountability and Participation Alliance (BTAP) to oversee the implementation of the government's support package for workers in terms of transparency, credibility; provided updates on the pandemic and prevention measures for formal workers on its Facebook group "[Connecting to make change](#)"; mobilized a number of businesses to join hands with the government to support workers (support for 50% of the minimum salary for workers).

**7 ĐIỀU CHỦ NHÀ TRỢ CÓ THỂ LÀM**  
 ĐỂ CHUNG TAY HỖ TRỢ NGƯỜI LAO ĐỘNG



Picture 1: Communication campaign of CDI to encourage landlords to join hand in supporting workers in response to COVID-19

- Light Vietnam and Mnet conducted a rapid assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on formal and informal workers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City; provided essential goods and prevention supplies, disseminated information concerning COVID-19 and prevention measures on Mnet’s Facebook page “[Xom di cu](#)”.
- Enda Vietnam collaborated with Vietnam Zero Waste Alliance with funding from GAIA to provide face masks and gloves to 2,100 private garbage collectors in Ho Chi Minh city.
- ActionAid Vietnam and the Aid for Social Protection Program Foundation Vietnam (AFV) provided support to 11 districts in 10 provinces and cities in the Cuu Long River Delta, Ha Quang (Cao Bang), Nho Quan district (Ninh Bình), An Lao district, Vinh Bao district (Hai Phong), Krong Bong district (Dak Lak), Lam Ha district (Lam Dong), Krong No district (Dak Nang), Their emergency relief package, valued at VND 1,651 trillion, included support for prevention supplies (face masks, hand sanitizers, soap, mouthwash); essential goods (rice, noodles, cooking oil, fish sauce, salt, milk, etc.) for poor households and households with disabled member(s), ethnic minority households, women and children in difficult circumstances in their project areas.
- The Song Foundation in coordination with the Women’s Union of Hoi An city raised more than 500 million VND through the program “Be strong, Hoi An” on social media. The

fund was used to buy medical facilities and devices for local health centers and other necessities for local citizens facing difficult situations.

- The Center for Community Health Research and Support (CCHS) organized a “zero dong” market for formal workers impacted by COVID-19 in an industrial zone. The program was funded by Target and Care International in Vietnam.

Before conducting the above-mentioned support, all NGOs and CBOs carried out rapid assessments to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 and the needs of beneficiaries. They all contacted local volunteers and partner organizations at the localities where workers stayed and worked to easily collect data and feedback from workers. They sought both cash and in-kind support and mobilized human resources to implement their interventions. Some organizations requested funding from their current donors, whereas, other organizations raised funds from interested individuals and other organizations. Assessments were maintained during the implementation of support.

Sharing the motivation to implement interventions to support formal and informal workers many organizations demonstrated their concern for those impacted by pandemic:

*“Social distancing and quarantine on a national scale in March and April were having crippling effects on workers. They were the most vulnerable. The unexpected outbreak of COVID-19 required organizations like ours to respond quickly.” (Project officer, female, Light)*

*“As COVID-19 unfolded and social distancing took effect, workers left factories and our projects froze. Our organization requested to organize activities to support workers in difficult circumstances and to lift the spirit of workers during the pandemic. CCHS developed a plan to make a “zero dong” supermarket. This can reach workers and through which workers can better understand the project. It is an opportunity to disseminate project information and encourage workers’ participation in the project activities later on. After the program, both the workers and employers look at our project with a new perspective.” (Project officer, male, CCHS)*

Conducting rapid assessments as soon as social distancing orders were implemented helped organizations quickly grasp the needs of workers and thus, provided them with practical assistance. Mnet’s survey results from March 25, 2020 to April 3, 2020 with informal and formal workers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City showed that these groups of workers all needed medical supplies including face masks, hand sanitizer, soap, and essential medicine. The group of informal workers were also in need of food such as rice, noodles, and cooking oil. Businesses operated on a rotational basis and workers were forced to take leave from work due to COVID-19, as such, the income of formal workers decreased. However, they largely could still afford food and basic necessities required for survival. Meanwhile, informal workers confronted mobility restrictions and loss of livelihood. (Mạng lưới hành động vì lao động di cư (M.net), 2020)

Table 3: Needs assessment on formal and informal workers in response to COVID-19<sup>8</sup>

No	Group of workers	Needs assessment					
		Medical masks	Dry hand sanitizers	Soap	Medicine	Gloves	Food (rice, noodles, fish sauce, cooking oil)
1	Formal workers (in economic zones)	x	x	x	x	x	
2	Informal workers in Hanoi	x	x	x	x	x	x
3	Informal workers in Ho Chi Minh City	x	x	x	x	x	

*“I can’t go out and work due to social distancing.” (Vendor, female, Hanoi)*

*“Light collaborated with the WU to collect data for needs assessment. The survey was done quickly in only two-to-three days.” (Project officer, female, Light)*

*“SDRC has been working with garbage collectors to understand the challenges they are facing. Sharing sessions on the benefits of COVID-19 prevention equipment and prevention measures are usually reminded by cooperatives and the self-help team of garbage collectors. With the collected information, SDRC has cooperated with Oxfam, businesses and other organizations to distribute masks, gloves, hand sanitizers, and small bottles of hand gel to garbage collectors so that they can bring to work.” (Project officer, female, SDRC)*

After the survey, organizations prioritized workers who had participated in organizations’ previous activities. Given the capacity of those organizations, support was allocated to those beyond the first beneficiaries. Depending on an organization’s capacity, the organization chose to help workers cope with immediate difficulties such as shortage of essential goods and medical supplies during the period of social distancing. With such immediate support, organizations ensured timely response to workers’ needs. There were organizations that provide long-term

<sup>8</sup> The assessment on the impacts of Covid-19 on migrant workers in formal and informal sectors was carried out between March 25 and April 3, 2020. The assessment had the participation of over 1870 migrant workers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

support for workers such as documentation support including identification paperwork so that workers can enjoy social security services, loan programs to regenerate jobs and income.

However, a few organizations continued their support of basic necessities and medical supplies for workers during the second wave of COVID-19. When asked about the support that they received in the second wave, most workers said that they “*did not receive any support.*”



*Picture 3 và 4: Essential goods were provided to workers in the informal sector, Hanoi*

*“Light responded quickly. Due to social distancing, I couldn't go anywhere. It was so difficult. I sent a letter to Light asking for help. A few days later, they brought rice, instant noodles, and everything”. (Scrap collector, female, Hanoi)*

All social organizations interviewed did not act independently but cooperated with local authorities and associations, mass organizations or groups of volunteers. Thanks to close partnerships with local organizations/entities and local volunteers, such organizations could approach vulnerable workers. Local volunteers and partners not only provided prompt information on developments of COVID-19 in the localities, but also acted as a connector between workers in need and NGOs.

*“Light had already worked with the Women's Union of Hanoi before so it was quite easy for us to contact them and ask for their support in data collection and distribution of support, even during the phase of social distancing.” (Project officer, female, Light)*

*“Volunteer groups play a big role because they are local people. They can easily grasp the circumstances of those in need, allocate the donation or support to the right beneficiaries.” (Project officer, female, SCDI)*

Besides, it is noteworthy that the implementation process ensures timely and transparent information sharing with donors and partners. Such practice of communication together with communication of real people and stories helped to build trust with donors and sponsors and importantly, draw the interest and participation of the community.

*“Support activities, the amount of grants and recipients are very transparent. Inspirational and true stories created everyone’s confidence in us.” (Project officer, female, SCDI)*

**Box 3: Support by Center for Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI)**

*Center for Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI) since 2010 has been working with people living with HIV, drug users, sex workers, transgender people, and people with tuberculosis, hepatitis C, malaria, drug use adolescents, disadvantaged children, and homeless people.*

*The support provided by SCDI to help people to cope with COVID-19 was divided into the three main phases:*

- *Emergency response in April: conducted needs assessment, provided essential and prevention supplies for the target group of SCDI (HIV-infected people, drug addicts, sex workers), then expanding to migrant workers and people in difficult situations. Each portion for an individual was worth VND 20,000 and each portion for a family was worth VND 300,000 dong.*
- *Recovery phase from last April to June: The assessment in the first phase revealed that families faced some other challenges. They could not afford their children’s tuition fees when they went back to school or afford to reopen their business. Therefore, SCDI conducted a second assessment on family and individuals to see whether they were qualified for the recovery phase. If the beneficiaries were still in difficult condition, the fund would continue to provide basic necessities. If their situation had improved, SCDI would help them recover their jobs, such as zero-interest loans to repair cars to continue motorbike taxi, to open small businesses, to find new jobs, to buy health insurance, etc.*
- *Sustainable development phase from July onwards: “One egg a day” fund to assist workers who had lost or did not have personal documents including identification with filing necessary paperwork. This intervention is based on the strengths of SCDI.*

*Concerning communication, “One egg a day”, the fund maintains a Facebook page “One egg a day” to post stories during the resource allocation. The page had about 4,900 followers as of August 2020. The sharing of stories increased the transparency and credibility of the fund, and at the same time attracts more attention and participation of the community.*

**Mỗi ngày một quả trứng - One Egg a Day**  
 23 April · 🌐

**TỪ CỨU ĐÓI ĐẾN HỖ TRỢ PHỤC HỒI VÀ PHÁT TRIỂN**  
 #Nạn\_nhân\_không\_triệu\_chứng  
 #Covid19

Ngày chấm dứt đợt cách ly xã hội thứ hai cũng là ngày "Mỗi ngày một quả trứng" (MNMQT) đánh dấu tròn 1 tháng kể từ khi khởi động chương trình hỗ trợ "Nạn nhân không triệu chứng" - những người có nguy cơ thiếu đói - bởi dịch Covid. MNMQT đã có mặt ở 11 tỉnh thành trong cả nước: TP Hồ Chí Minh, Hải Phòng, Hải Dương, Thái Bình, Hà Nội, Bến Tre, Cần Thơ, Bà Rịa – Vũng tàu, Đồng nai, Bắc Ninh, Khánh Hoà và Bình Dương. Hoạt động của MNMQT trong tháng đầu tiên là cứu đói bằng việc phát suất ăn cho người vô gia cư (TP HCM, Hà Nội, Hải Phòng, Hải Dương) và phát gói lương thực, thực phẩm cho các gia đình nghèo. Chương trình cung phát khẩu trang, nước sát khuẩn tay nhanh hoặc xà phòng sát khuẩn cho các đối tượng của chương trình.

Tính đến tối 22/4, MNMQT đã phát 4.000 suất ăn cho người vô gia cư, 2.178 gói lương thực-thực phẩm cho 2.174 gia đình (gia đình trên 5 người được nhận 2 gói) với tổng số nhân khẩu là 6.071 người. Gói lương thực có thể đủ cho mỗi gia đình ăn trong vòng 10 ngày đến 2 tuần. Số lương lương thực, thực phẩm đã phát là gần 22 tấn gạo, trên 2 tấn lạc, gần 2.200 lít dầu ăn, khoảng 10.000 chiếc khẩu trang, 600 kg cá khô, xấp xỉ 20.000 quả trứng, hơn 3.000 bánh xà phòng sát khuẩn và nhiều loại thực phẩm khác như nước, cà hộp, mứt, xi dầu.

Quy.đã nhận được 1.387 khoản đóng góp (1.382 khoản được chuyển hoặc nộp vào tài khoản, 5 khoản đóng góp tiền mặt tại HCMC được nhập vào tiền Quy.chuyển cho HCMC) với tổng số tiền 1.160.188.794 đồng. Trong thời gian từ 16/4 đến 22/4, Quy.nhận được 63 khoản đóng góp qua tài khoản với tổng số tiền 75.900.000 đồng (xin xem sao kê kèm theo) và 1 khoản đóng góp 2 triệu tiền từ bà chủ cho thuê văn phòng SCDI tại HCMC. Số tiền đã tạm ứng cho các đầu mối các tỉnh là 782.761.150 đồng. Với số tiền đã tạm ứng này, dự kiến trong mấy ngày tới có thể cấp khoảng 500 gói lương thực nữa.

Quy.cung nhận được đóng góp gần 1 tấn gạo cho Hà Nội, Hải phòng và Hải Dương. Cần Thơ đã nhận được 200 khẩu trang người lớn và 100 khẩu trang trẻ em. Bến Tre nhận được từ mạnh thường quân 100kg cá, 2.000 khẩu trang, 200 thùng nước ngọt 20 lít, 57 khối nước ngọt – kịp thời làm dịu đi cơn hạn mặn ở nơi đây... Hà Nội nhận được xấp xỉ 1.500 khẩu trang, 250 suất thực phẩm dành cho các gói gia đình, lương đồ ăn cho 2.640 bữa ăn cho người vô gia cư, vật dụng gia đình, một chiếc xe đạp dành cho bệnh nhân chạy thận, cùng nhiều vật dụng cho một em bé ra đời trong dịch.

You and 166 others · 14 comments 24 shares

Like Comment Share

*Picture 5: Update on Facebook page of “One egg a day”  
 As of August 2020, about 7,000 people received support from the “One egg a day”, 90% of whom gave positive feedback.*

Community groups and individuals mobilized support and resources from the community, such as mobilizing landlords to reduce electricity bills, rent or provision of basic necessities for the needy.

- "Free rice ATM" started by Mr. Hoang Tuan Anh - PHG Lock's Managing Director. Beginning on April 6, 2020, the rice ATM operated 24 hours a day at 204B Vuon Lai, Tan Phu District, HCMC). After that, this form was gradually replicated in Ha Noi, Hue, Da Nang, and Tay Nguyen. The first rice ATM in Hanoi was located at the Cultural House of Nghia Tan Ward, Cau Giay.
- Cat Tuong - charity at Ho Chi Minh city, young volunteers at Me Tri dormitory, and G9 volunteer group distributed free food and face masks to poor workers, the homeless, and lottery ticket sellers.
- "Xuan yeu thuong" volunteer group donated more than 3000 anti-droplet masks to doctors and nurses.
- Phan Thiet volunteer Association, "Canh Dieu" volunteer group offered CDC Binh Thuan VND 60 million in cash and medical equipment such as antibacterial hand gel, medical masks, vitamin C and so on for pandemic prevention.

Individuals and community groups mostly provided in-kind support including basic necessities and mobilized landlords to reduce rent and electricity bills.

*"As soon as the pandemic peaked in the first wave, we received antiseptic water bottles and masks, which were hard to buy. I really appreciated it." (Garbage collector, Ho Chi Minh City)*

*"In difficult circumstances, our income decreased as we worked only a few days a month. But life was much better when rent was reduced by VND 100,000 or 200,000." (Formal worker, female, Hai Duong province)*

**Box 4: Story of a worker who initiated support in response to COVID-19**

*Ms. Phong is the leader of a core group of workers in Hai Duong. For the last three years, she participated in worker group activities supported by CDI in the province.*

*COVID-19 had affected her work and her neighbors. Like others, she lost her income. Due to financial hardship, she mobilized other people in her neighborhood to encourage the landlord to reduce the workers' room rent. One person said, "The landlord won't listen, everyone has to be together."*

*After the first discussion, the landlord reduced the rent by VND 200,000 per month in April and May. After two months, all the rooms were returned to the original pre-pandemic price of VND 650,000.*

*At that time, workers still did not have much work, as their company was downsizing, and many people had been displaced. Ms. Phong encouraged workers to stay with her, "There is no place that has better rent than our room."*

*After listening to Phong's suggestion to continue renting to workers at a reduced price, the landlord disagreed, "If you can afford it, then stay, if not, then leave". However, Phong did not*



*give up, "if you do not reduce the rent, then everyone will move." In June, the landlord continued to reduce the rent for everyone there.*

*Since the breakout of COVID-19, the landlord had reduced the rent three times. Among 10 core worker groups in Hai Duong, no other group had such a proactive leader like Ms. Phong and had such a deep reduction in rent.*

*Even though Phong eventually moved to another place to live, she still returned to the inn and visited her old neighbors. She shared that, "in such difficult times, a little help will encourage everyone, they know that someone else cares for them."*

*Ms. Mai Thi Phong, leader of the core worker group in Hai Duong*

### **c. Trade Unions**

#### **Overview**

In the context of a complicated pandemic and sudden surge in prices for medical products in early March 2020, the VGCL issued a number of guiding documents:

- Official Letter No. 211/TLD dated March 6, 2020 on the list of manufacturers supplying COVID-19 prevention products.
- Official Letter No. 223/TLD on March 10, 2020, directing trade unions at all levels to carry out a plan on the prevention and fight against COVID-19 for workers and employers; to mobilize workers to join enterprises in their efforts = overcome difficulties; to coordinate with employers and to encourage workers to boost production; to improve labor productivity to prevent the spread of the pandemic, achieve economic growth, ensure income and jobs for workers.
- Official Letter No. 245/TLD, dated March 18, 2020, to allow for the delay of payment of the trade union fee for enterprises affected by COVID-19 pandemic.
- Decision 643/QD-TLD, dated May 22, 2020, regarding financial support for union members and workers affected by COVID-19. The recipients of the support, which was set at 500,000 VND were:
  - o members and workers who have lost their jobs, resulting in loss of income, equal to or lower than the base salary according to the current regulations (VND 1,490,000 per month);

- members in difficult circumstances and who are not in the list of beneficiaries of the government's COVID-19 support package;
- union members and workers who have received support from the government but face extremely difficult circumstances, such as female workers who are seven months or more pregnant or who are nursing children under six months old;
- workers who have a serious illness or have an elderly spouse or child/parent with serious illness;
- union members with disabilities;
- people who have suffered an occupational accident or disease and who have not received benefits.

Also, in March 2020, during the period when the Prime Minister issued Directive 15/CT-TTg and Directive 16/CT-TTg on social distancing, local federations in Ha Noi and Hai Phong, issued advisory documents to guide grassroots trade unions to pay salaries for workers. In addition, a number of trade unions advised employers on job protection measures for workers such as rotating leave.

In the first six months of 2020, local trade unions coordinated with businesses, organizations and individuals to support workers in general and workers in difficult circumstances with preventive medical supplies, necessities, cash, and discounts. Activities took place in the following forms: “zero” dong markets where goods were charged “zero VND”, rice/food ATMs and mobilization of landlords to reduce electricity bills and rent.

- The Labor Confederation of Binh Duong province, through the Microfinance Organization (CEP), deployed a support package for workers affected by COVID-19 with an interest rate of two percent per year, and a loan period of 6 to 12 months. Accordingly, the total amount of the support package was VND 50 billion. The borrowers were union members or workers in enterprises with trade unions that had their wages reduced by at least one-third due to COVID-19. Union members or workers who had worked at the enterprise for two years or more with a valid labor contract were eligible for support. The grassroots trade union selected participants according to the criteria agreed upon by the provincial labor confederation and CEP, and made a list to send to the CEP branch for appraisal and disbursement.

Trade unions utilized various social media platforms such as Zalo and Facebook to convey messages about pandemic prevention measures and to support interventions. In light of the COVID-19 resurgence in late July, trade unions communicated to workers about disease prevention and control, and Bluezone.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bluezone is a mobile application

The central trade unions, via grassroots trade unions, learned about the situation of enterprises, employment and workers' lives. When grasping the situation, trade unions directly communicated and distributed support to workers in the area. As a result, as of August 2020, local trade unions had provided the following support:

- Trade unions in Ho Chi Minh City provided support to 17,327 trade union members, workers. They had provided gifts to members worth VND 1.2 million for an amount of over VND 20,792 billion. They also mobilized landlords to reduce rent for 57,606 workers' rooms and mobilized 200 workers' rooms to be exempt from rental fees when businesses paused and/or reduced production. Additionally, the city's federation of labor supported 742 union members working as preschool teachers, in preschools, private youth groups, and as private nannies across the city with more than VND 890 million.<sup>10</sup>
- Binh Duong province supported 737 workers with approximately VND 3.7 billion from the capital aid loan support package for employment from the poor microfinance institution (CEP) and the provincial labor federation.<sup>11</sup> The fund for household's economic development (under the Hanoi Labor Confederation), disbursed nearly VND 44 billion, supporting 2,040 union members and other workers.<sup>12</sup> Approximately 1,249 people borrowed VND 25.9 billion to support business production and to improve income. In addition, employees also borrowed capital to support living their expenses. The support usually prioritized workers in more difficult circumstances, including: those who rented accommodation; families where both spouses lost their jobs; female workers who are more than seven months pregnant or nursing children under six months old; and disabled workers. Support items included basic necessities and medical supplies that were delivered directly to each employee. Recipients did not have to submit additional eligibility verification or incur extra costs to get assistance. In addition to immediate support for workers, trade unions also provided consultation and advice to businesses to assist them in better securing jobs for their workers through the pandemic. This was a long-term effort, given that post-COVID-19 recruitment would be relatively difficult for both firms and workers.

*“The union area came to the inn and gave each person two soap bars and five masks.”*  
(Formal worker, female, Hai Phong)

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.hcmcpv.org.vn/tin-tuc/tren-20-792-ty-dong-cham-lo-ho-tro-doan-vien-nguoi-lao-dong-bi-anh-huong-dich-covid-19-1491866020>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.congdoan.vn/tin-tuc/hoat-dong-cong-doan-3569/cong-nhan-gap-kho-khan-co-the-vay-5-trieu-dong-voi-lai-suat-cuc-thap-514576.tld>

<sup>12</sup> <https://nld.com.vn/cong-doan/ha-noi-tang-cuong-ho-tro-von-cho-nguoi-lao-dong-20200908212937939.htm>



Picture 6: 40.000 face masks were given to workers at Trang Due and Nomura economic zones in Hai Phong. (Tuoi Tre News)

Trade unions proactively communicated in easy-to-remember, easy-to-understand forms and answered workers' questions about the pandemic, prevention and control measures through social network platforms such as Facebook and Zalo. This form of communication is considered to be creative and relatively effective, particularly when it was difficult to hold meetings with large audiences during social distancing. Worker feedback on these communication channels showed room for further improvement.



Picture 7: Guidance on COVID-19 prevention at workplace – Livestream session on Facebook page of the Trade Union of Hai Phong Economic Zone

*“Not everyone has access to trade union information on Facebook. The livestream session sharing about COVID is too long, so viewers cannot watch it all. After the session, it would be better if the union could remind the viewers about the main points and provide a summary.” (Formal worker, female, Hai Phong).*

***Box 5: Support of the Trade Union of Hai Phong Economic Zone***

*The Trade Union of Hai Phong Economic Zone consists of 202 local grassroots unions, representing 131,066 union members and workers.*

*During the second period of COVID-19, this trade union had quickly carried out an assessment on the employment situation in the area. The assessment of 245 enterprises initially identified 3,156 cases of workers losing their jobs, 404 workers with expired labor contracts, 1,543 workers taking unpaid leave, 505 workers whose contracts were terminated ahead of schedule, 174 cases of workers with suspended contracts and 530 cases of workers who were not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Approximately 15,624 workers outside the province had to take leave and could not return to their jobs due to the implementation of the social distance instruction of the Prime Minister and the City People's Committee. Enterprises implemented policies for workers to ensure Clause 3, Article 98 of the 2012 Labor Code. Workers support 156 out of 1,597 cases of difficult workers affected by COVID-19.*

- *The regional trade union organized 12 working sessions with the Korean and Japanese Business Associations, along with firms with a large number of workers affected by the COVID-19. They provided guidelines and suggested policies about job protection for workers, such as reducing overtime, rotating worker schedules, and supporting businesses to recover production post COVID-19.*
- *Mobilized resources from businesses to directly support essentials and medical supplies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among workers. The Trade Union of Hai Phong economic zone mobilized 40,000 masks from Honda and more than VND 180 million from other businesses to support disabled workers on the day of the disabled April 18.*
- *Used social media (Facebook, Zalo) to disseminate information on prevention measures against COVID-19. Approximately 105 articles were posted on the Fan page of the Trade Union, attracting over 286,000 hits. Two online sharing sessions on COVID-19 pandemic prevention and electronic health information declaration were held with more than 65,000 views.*

*The results showed that there were no firms who had workers take temporary unpaid leave. The rate for workers who took leave and waited for work ranged from 50-70%. Enterprises isolated from other provinces in Hai Phong were also supported with food and accommodation expenses.*

Hai Phong's economic zone trade union proved to be a proactive actor when recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on employers and workers. At the beginning of the first outbreak, trade unions worked with businesses and offered them various forms of consultation and guidance on labor policies. Trade union advice and guidelines were based on the understanding that enterprises were also confused about labor policies during the period of social distancing; they had difficulties in business and production due to the COVID-19; and post-COVID recruitment would be difficult for both workers and businesses.

Trade union officials also considered the availability of financial resources as a challenging concern:

*“Trade union budgets cannot be used to finance COVID-19 support. This pandemic is unexpected and the purchase of masks to support workers requires the city's approval. As such, I mainly mobilized the enterprises to participate, contribute budgets, join hands to prevent and fight COVID-19.” (Officer, female, Trade Union of Hai Phong Economic Zone)*

**d. Other mass organizations (Vietnam Fatherland's Front, Women's Union, Veteran's Union, Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union)**

**Overview**

In general, other associations and mass organizations including the Fatherland Front, the WU, the VU, the Youth Union, and the Farmer's union all joined the efforts to prevent and combat the pandemic, and support people in need. Mass organizations actively provided workers with updates about the pandemic and prevention measures, supported basic necessities and preventive medical supplies (masks, hand sanitizer). The WU advocated for landlords to reduce accommodation rent and electricity bills, and coordinated with social organizations or businesses to provide cash assistance to workers.

In the face of the complicated and unpredictable COVID-19 pandemic, on March 17, the Chairman of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Fatherland Front called for domestic and foreign agencies, organizations, enterprises, individuals, people overseas to participate in supporting COVID-19 pandemic prevention. The local Fatherland Front Committees received cash and materials to send to the frontline forces engaged in pandemic prevention work, including physicians, the police and the military. They presented gifts to households directly affected by the pandemic and people in isolated areas to assist in the fight against COVID-19. In the first six months of 2020, the Vietnam Fatherland Front mobilized more than 1,900 billion VND to support the prevention and control of diseases in the country. The Fatherland Front and other associations and unions mobilized the contributions of many social groups in various localities. For example, in Binh Thuan province, agencies, organizations, individuals, businesses and philanthropists contributed 5,731,615,805 VND. In addition, the provincial Vietnam Fatherland Front Committee

received goods and other necessities, including 50,000 medical masks, 3,000 cloth masks and 32,075 tons of rice.

The Central Presidium of the Women's Union issued document No. 4128/DCT-TG, dated March 9, 2020, to propagate the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. For the second wave of the pandemic, the Women's Union issued Document No. 4621/DCT-TG, dated July 27, 2020, to the Standing Committee of Women's Unions in provinces and cities. The document directs the Women's Union to continue to advocate for members and women more broadly, especially poor women, to receive masks and personal hygiene products. Local association levels held specific activities such as:

- The WU of Nghe An donated, supported and gave gifts to 30 female members in difficult circumstances (people with long-term sickness, serious illness, or single women raising children) in Hung Yen Bac communes, Hung Yen Nam and Hung Trung, Hung Nguyen district. Each member received 20kg of rice, total rice support for this occasion is 600 kg, worth VND 9 million.
- The Women's Union of An Ninh Commune, Soc Trang province launched a "Face mask making group" with seven members, which made over 700 face masks for women's union members, women and people in poor households.
- Vietnam WU gave VND 100 million to support women in the commune of Son Hong, Huong Son district to borrow money for economic development. Accordingly, 10 households in Son Hong commune with extremely difficult circumstances were loaned money to buy cows. Each household was supported with a loan of VND 10 million.
- The WU of Hanoi collaborated with Light Vietnam to send their recommendation letters to landlords in Hanoi to exempt or reduce rent payments for workers.

The Youth Union encouraged its members and local youth to support the Vietnam Fatherland Front, to respond to the call of the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee; to actively join the Party and State's efforts to combat COVID-19. The Union disseminated information among young people and others about the pandemic on many channels, including social media and flyers; mobilized resources and organized the distribution of masks and, antibacterial hand sanitizers. The Central Vietnam Youth Union together with PepsiCo Vietnam Food Company and Suntory PepsiCo Vietnam Beverage Co., Ltd cooperated to implement the program "Million meals" to offer meals to the poor and people in difficult circumstances during COVID-19 in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. A number of local youth unions worked with organizations and businesses to support young workers who lost their jobs or were in need of basic necessities or cash.

- Over 115,000 free face masks were distributed to people in Binh Duong province for the first two weeks of the "Month of Youth". More than 103,104 leaflets on prevention measures were handed out to people.

- The Youth Union of Da Nang encouraged individuals and entities, mạnh thường quân to contribute essential goods and prevention supplies for those at the frontline of the fight against COVID-19.

The Farmer's Union at all levels, in addition to keeping members updated about COVID-19 prevention and control measures, supported farmers agricultural production, which was difficult due to the impact of the pandemic.

- The Farmer's Union of Quang Ninh province assisted farmers in "rescuing" Van Don oysters, clams, Tan An egg, Hoanh Bo guava, among other products. Many districts cooperated with medical clinics to distribute medical supplies (masks, hands washing water, etc.).
- The Farmer's Union of Thuy Nguyen district and Hai Phong city gave more than 1,000 face masks, 300 bars of soap to their members worth a total amount of VND 6,5 million.
- The Farmer's Union of Ninh Binh province provided capital for members and farmers to develop production through extending loans in the recovery phase, disbursing VND 5,980 billion of funds Support farmers in seven districts and cities for 124 households implemented 15 projects such as "intensive freshwater fish farming", "breeding cows", "breeding pigs", "production and trading of handicraft wooden products", etc.

Like trade unions at all levels, other mass organizations performed multiple support and diversified forms of communication to convey information on the pandemic and prevention measures to people. Information was conveyed in the form of videos, leaflets, pictures or infographics on many live channels and online via social media such as Facebook and Zalo.

*“Workers work day and night shifts so we have to flexibly arrange the communication schedule.” (Officer, female, Women’s Union of Hai Boi commune)*

*“Workers work day and night shifts so we have to flexibly arrange the communication schedule.” (Officer, female, Women’s Union of Hai Boi commune)*





*Picture 8: Member of WU disseminated information on COVID-19 and prevention measures*

From March 2020 to August 2020, local mass organizations coordinated with each other and collaborated with individuals and businesses to distribute support to workers in the area, especially essential items and medical supplies. The coordination among many stakeholders created great human resources. Support by mass organizations was open to all or was distributed according to some requirements. Those who faced with extremely difficult circumstances or participated with the associations before had better access to such support.

*“The WU has targeted people living in the commune under difficult circumstances due to COVID-19 to distribute support. The union does not separate or discriminate whether someone is a local person or migrant worker.... Last time, the WU mobilized its members to contribute and each person contributed about VND 100,000 - 300,000. The businesses supported more than 200 bottles of hand sanitizer, more than 1000 medical masks.”*  
(Officer, female, Women’s Union of Hai Boi commune)

**Box 6: "ATM of free necessities" Ho Chi Minh City’s Center of Youth Social Work**

*At first, the Center only distributed masks and hand sanitizer to people in need in the area. After realizing that people not only needed medical equipment for pandemic prevention but also food and other necessities during this difficult period, the Center proposed to build an ATM with a variety of items to support vulnerable people.*

*The Center's ATM, which operated from April to June, was located at 5 Dinh Tien Hoang Street, Dakao ward, District 1. The majority of the recipients were lottery ticket sellers and scrap collectors. Lottery ticket sellers and scrap collectors often live together in a neighborhood. One person received and told others so that the program was well known.*

*There were also lottery ticket sellers who lived far away, more than 10 km from the ATM site. ATMs were open from 9am to 6pm. Thus, the lottery ticket sellers could still get in line and received the support package at the ATM after returning the tickets to lottery agents at 4:00 pm.*

*The location was open in the center of District 1, so it was easy to identify for those in need of assistance. The program was also supported by students from the Polytechnic School with facial recognition technology and the University of Humanities with communication on social networks.*

*Mr. Huyen, an officer of Ho Chi Minh City’s Center of Youth Social Work*



Picture 9: "ATM of free necessities" Ho Chi Minh City's Center of Youth Social Work

In the second wave of COVID-19 in Vietnam, the above units mainly maintained communications about measures to prevent COVID-19.

*"WU considered the mobilization of small funds with preferential interest to finance workers' jobs and income recovery but the mobilization was quite challenging." (Officer, female, Women's Union of Dong Anh district)*

*"The price of masks and necessities in July - August were not as high as in March and April, so the association did not focus on distributing masks and hand sanitizer in the second wave of COVID-19, but mainly implemented communication." (Officer, female, Women's Union of Hai Boi commune)*

#### e. **Businesses and business associations**

##### **Overview**

Some businesses choose to provide support for basic necessities and pandemic prevention supplies for the workers at their enterprises' premises. Some businesses extended support to people in difficulty due to the influence of COVID-19.

- Free "Rice ATM" made by Hoang Tuan Anh – CEO of PHG Lock. Rice ATM was operated 24/24 at 204B Vuon Lai, Tan Phu district, Ho Chi Minh City from April 6, 2020. The model was then expanded to Ha Noi, Hue, Da Nang, Tay Nguyen.
- Grab supported its drivers with food including rice and noodles.
- Phu Gia Khang Corp in coordination with commune Women's Union, Petrosetco, suntory Pepsico provided support to the homeless, the unemployed, those temporarily out of work or in difficult circumstances in certain areas.
- Hung Thinh gave 2 trillion with rice and medical protective clothing for Da Nang.

- Unilever Vietnam sponsored pandemic prevention products for the community and a team of medical doctors.
- Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP), Vietnam Textile and Apparel Association (VITAS), Vietnam Leather, Footwear and Handbag Association (LEFASO) and its member enterprises sent their recommendations to the Standing Committee of the National Assembly and the Prime Minister to request support from the Government to overcome difficulties during the pandemic.<sup>13</sup> The recommendations emphasized the following topics:
  - Proposal to Government to spend the unemployment insurance fund funding 50% of the minimum wage among workers who are underemployed, and leaving enterprises to pay for the rest 50% to ensure the minimum income among employees.
  - Proposal to postpone the payment of Corporate income tax (CIT) in 2019 among businesses, and postpone the payment of Value added tax (VAT) of all kinds until 2020

Through coordination with local authorities and mass organizations, businesses could identify people in need of support in order to reach them. The authorities and mass organizations in some localities supported human resources and logistics for businesses to provide support.

Prompt support from enterprises for essential necessities and medical supplies were implemented both in the first and second peak surge of the pandemic. Some firms distributed medical supplies and basic supplies to their workers. To businesses that provided broad support to the community, they distributed items in the spirit of "get what you need" and, therefore, did not create complicated eligibility conditions. Recipients were only required to be present and bring identification. The majority of the support available primarily responded to immediate effects of the pandemic.

Concerning difficulties in the process of mobilizing community resources, a business representative shared that:

*“This social work activity is not to create revenue. Information is posted publicly on the website or personal Facebook then people transfer or items to take place. Only at that point, we knew how enthusiastic everyone was.” (Business representative, female, Hanoi)*

**Box 7: Thai Ha Books with "Rice ATM"**

*Inspired by the idea of the free "rice ATM" in Ho Chi Minh City, Thai Ha Books Company initiated the first rice ATM in Hanoi from April 12 to April 30, 2020. After this rice ATM was*

<sup>13</sup> [lavietnamtextile.org.vn/summary-of-impact-of-covid-19-to-vietnam-textile-garment-sector\\_p1\\_1-1\\_2-2\\_3-718\\_4-4155\\_9-2\\_11-10\\_12-1\\_13-35.html](http://lavietnamtextile.org.vn/summary-of-impact-of-covid-19-to-vietnam-textile-garment-sector_p1_1-1_2-2_3-718_4-4155_9-2_11-10_12-1_13-35.html)

*established, the company participated in supporting installation of ATMs in many other provinces (Bac Ninh, Hai Duong, Hai Phong, Dien Bien, Phu Yen, etc.).*

*The company's staff worked voluntarily and didn't think much about the chances of being infected with COVID-19 when they first started this program. To reduce the risk, the organizers checked-in with their departments, distributed masks and used disinfectant.*

*Two "rice ATMs" in Hanoi were located in Nghia Tan and Bac Tu Liem wards, where the company's offices and headquarters are located. The company's motivation for choosing these two wards as the place to build the rice ATMs came from a desire to support local vulnerable people. The company coordinated with local authorities to implement the project. People's Committees of Nghia Tan and Bac Tu Liem wards helped mobilize more human resources from other departments, such as the police and mass organizations to disseminate information on the program to local inhabitants, especially those in need.*

*The support was based on the spirit of "take what you need", and as such, did not require recipients to go through the verification procedures. Persons wishing to receive rice would receive 3 kg of rice every 24 hours. To ensure a person would receive only once every 24 hours, the organizers required the recipients to present their ID.*

*After more than 10 days of organizing, the support program attracted mass media (press, television), so information about the program was widely spread beyond Nghia Tan and Bac Tu Liem. The organizers estimated that about 60 - 65% of recipients came from areas other than Nghia Tan and Bac Tu Liem.*

*"At first, the organizers arranged to provide rice for 1000 people a day. The ward and district announced its radio system and used word of mouth to reach wider groups and especially, those in need. Then the news on our rice ATMs spread nationwide after a few days. Thus, the number of recipients grew much larger. From April 18, the number of recipients doubled".*

Therefore, the recipients of rice from the ATMs expanded, not only to migrant workers in the two wards, but also from other areas.

When asked about the sustainability of the rice ATM, a representative of Thai Ha Book said that this program was part of the social work of the company, in collaboration with individuals and local authorities to support people in a difficult situation.

*"We planned that the rice ATM would operate until April 30, 2020 when social distancing was eased. We did not have the intention to provide long-term support."*



*Picture 10 and 11: "Rice ATM Gạo" of Thai Ha Books at Nghia Tan Ward, Hanoi (Credit: Trần Cường)*



## **f. Multi-stakeholder networks and coalitions**

### **Overview**

Businesses, NGOs and others organizations cooperated and coordinated to provide support items including basic necessities, medical supplies, cash, and advocacy. For example:

- Care Vietnam collaborated with Mastercard to provide financial aid to more than 800 formal and informal female workers in Hanoi through the mobile app Jupviec.vn. Care then worked with Light Vietnam and the Women's Union of Dong Anh district to contact informal female workers. Each worker could receive a maximum of 3 million VND through a bank account transfer.

- Ford co-organized “Live & Learn” and members of the PVC pickup club raised funds with the aim of giving masks, hand sanitizers, and essential foods to disadvantaged groups in cities.
- The Migration Network (Mnet) and Oxfam advocated for policies to support workers under the Government's social security package worth VND 62 trillion. They also monitored the implementation of the government's support package for workers, ensuring publicity, transparency, accuracy and distribution.

In order to implement the above support, organizations all conducted rapid assessments about the impact of COVID-19 on workers. Organizations all coordinated with partners such as Care in collaboration with Light, Dong Anh Women's Union, Mastercard, and Jupviec.com to provide cash support to formal workers and worked with the toepiece company to target informal workers in Dong Anh district and Hanoi. In addition, Mnet worked with Oxfam to advocate and monitor policy implementation.

In-kind support was offered as soon as the social distancing measure began. Recipients did not need to undergo complicated procedures to prove their circumstances or effects of COVID on their lives. Workers received timely and simple instructions throughout the process when they registered for financial support. For example, the cash support provided by Care Vietnam in collaboration with Mastercard, only required workers to register on a list and submit a copy of identification. After one month, they received the aid.

A representative of Mnet shared her thoughts about the sustainability of Mnet's support:

*“Both cash support and items such as essential goods to meet the immediate needs of workers contributed to the long-term goal, which is the improvement in the social security for workers”.* (Representative, female, Mnet)

***Box 8: Mnet and Oxfam advocated for the government’s relief package of VND 62,000 billion and monitored the implementation***

*When information about the Draft Resolution 42/NQ-CP was issued, Mnet and other members met and participated in developing policy recommendations, specifically with the following six key components:*

- 1. The Government must ensure that workers without a labor contract and migrant workers in the informal sector, including (1) domestic workers, (2) street vendors, (3) waste collectors (4) porters at wholesale markets, (5) motorbike taxi drivers, (6) taxi drivers, and (7) workers in the service sector are eligible beneficiaries.*
- 2. Formulate preferential credit policies for these groups with favorable interest rates, reschedule debts and reduce interest rates for current commercial loans.*

3. Provide information and guidance on how to self-protect from infection risks based on the specific working environment of workers in the informal sector and provide waste collectors with personal protective equipment.

4. Budget support for migrant workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic should be calculated and funded from the local budget based on where the migrant workers are currently working (the destination).

5. Officials from the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs and local authorities where the migrant workers work and reside should proactively determine a set of basic criteria to identify the rightful beneficiaries of the policy. The identification of criteria and beneficiaries, and the implementation of the support package should be consulted and coordinated with social organizations. This will mobilize effective participation and contribution from knowledgeable organizations that are actively involved with the most vulnerable groups, and thus ensure that those who are most affected receive the support.

6. Some criteria to consider when identifying the workers most in need for the support package: (1) no labor contract, or had their contracts terminated due to the pandemic; (2) currently earning less than the minimum income as regulated; (3) currently renting accommodation in the locality (for migrant workers); (4) currently have their working hours reduced or are unemployed due to the pandemic; (5) have a bank loan for small business; (6) with a family member suffering from a critical illness; (7) working under high risk of infection; and (8) basing on the real number of people living in the area, not on the number of people with residential registration.

Resolution 42/NQ-CP on April 9, 2020 mentions support for freelance workers. The "employee who does not have a labor contract and loses their job will be supported VND 1,000,000 per person per month according to the actual impacts, but not more than three months. It was applied for the period from April to June 2020". This marked the efforts of Mnet and members of advocacy.

After this success, Mnet continued to work with the Department of Social Protection, the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs to develop a "Manual for the Process of Implementing Support Policies for People in Difficulty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Resolution 42/NQ-CP of the Government and Decision 15/2020/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister." The manual is the reference for government agencies, stakeholders in the process of providing assistance to people affected by pandemic for effective and efficient implementation of the policy.

To date, Mnet and Oxfam are continuing to monitor the implementation of the VND 62000 billion support package by the Government through the application of M-score.

Talking about the advantages, a representative of Mnet said that their organization's members in particular, as well as the network in general had built relationships with a number of lawmakers

in the labor field during the work and exchange process. In addition, the group also has in-depth knowledge from their previous efforts with both formal and informal workers, so it was easy and quick to make specific and practical recommendations.

The rapid assessment shows that most of these workers groups are now suffering from reduced working hours or job loss, substantial drop in income or even total income loss.

The domestic workers mostly work on an hourly basis and do not have labour contracts, so they do not have any long-term job commitments and do not receive any compensations when they lose their job.

The group of street vendors who sell goods that are not considered essential are not allowed to continue their businesses when the policy of "social distancing" is being implemented. Ms. T. a member in a self-help group in Phuc Xa ward, Ba Dinh, Ha Noi shared "*Since the pandemic started, my selling things on street shrank and now stopped to prevent the virus spread. I know it's necessary to do that. But my family's income totally relied on it. We are not selling anything now and no one hires us to do anything for money. We are living hardship day by day on very little*".

*Picture 12: Story on the effects of COVID-19 on workers, particularly those in informal sector, featured in Oxfam and Mnet's policy brief*

## **V. DISCUSSION**

### **1. Timeliness**

Almost all actors responded quickly to COVID-19's impacts. Allocation of essential goods and preventive supplies to workers was carried out during the second wave of COVID-19 when the price of these goods skyrocketed.

It is noteworthy that the government quickly enacted a relief package of VND 62000 billion to support the vulnerable. However, the package was not provided to formal and informal workers when they needed it most, which resulted from complicated eligibility and verification procedures.

### **2. Availability**

Trade unions and other mass organizations prioritized the needs of those with special conditions such as expectant mothers and the disabled. NGOs and multi-stakeholder initiatives tended to contact and allocate support to the workers who they used to work with.

Given organizations or individuals' limited resources, actors decided to extend and/or expand support. Thus, it was probably the majority of workers who did not receive any support.



### **3. Accessibility**

The provision of essential goods and medical supplies through “rice ATMs”, “mask ATMs”, etc. was the most accessible among different interventions as it did not require extra cost in terms of time and cash from workers.

### **4. Sustainability**

The majority of interventions responded to the immediate needs of workers at the beginning of COVID-19. However, such responsive support contributed to the improvement of social protection for workers in the long term.

### **5. Creativity**

Creativity was not only in the application of technology devices but the organization of the support. The case of “rice ATMs” initiated by individuals was one of the outstanding interventions where technology was used and the organization of the ATMs was made to be more inclusive. The ATMs were implemented with the motto “take what you need”, thus, there was no complicated eligibility for the beneficiaries.

### **6. Scalability**

A number of interventions such as allocation of essential goods, financial support, mobilization for rent reduction were common among actors. Meanwhile, interventions in terms of policy advocacy towards favorable support were only implemented by Mnet and Oxfam.

## **VI. LESSONS LEARNED**

- During the period of social distancing, mass organizations found it difficult to reach workers, especially those in other provinces. Workers themselves also faced mobility limitations.
- NGOs targeted groups of beneficiaries that they worked with in previous activities but found it hard to reach beyond those groups due to limited financial and human resources.
- A number of formal and informal workers found it hard to access information on online communication channels including social media:

*“Not all workers can get access to information shared by the trade union on Facebook. The livestream session lasted too long to keep watching. The trade union should provide a summary with important points to remind the audience.”*

(Worker, female, Hai Phong)

- Workers, especially informal workers such as street vendors, had difficulty accessing and using technology when receiving and transferring money via internet banking accounts or using mobile apps.
- When sharing about the challenges of implementing the above activities, a trade union official said that finding available resources was a significant challenge:

*“Trade union budgets cannot be used to finance COVID-19 support. This pandemic is a new thing, the purchase of masks to support workers requires comments from the city. As such, I cannot take the initiative. Mainly mobilized from the budget of enterprises, ... mobilizing enterprises to participate, join hands to prevent and fight COVID-19.” (Officer, female, Trade Union of Hai Phong)*

- The majority of support to help workers was to cope with immediate needs. There was little long-term support, such as vocational training for workers so that they could have alternative livelihood options and are better able to cope with job loss or other economic shocks. The economic shock caused by COVID-19 is only one such shock.
- Due to the unexpected development of COVID-19, it is crucial to conduct rapid assessments to grasp the situation of the pandemic, its impacts and needs of beneficiaries. A quick survey is needed to grasp the situation and needs of the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries’ feedback should be sought during the implementation of the support so that measures are timely and tailored to their demands.
- Information sharing with relevant stakeholders including partner organizations should be conducted in a transparent and timely manner.
- Connect and make use of available resources: local authorities, local mass organizations, or volunteers.

## **VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Thus, many research results show that workers, especially migrant workers, are vulnerable groups and suffer many negative impacts caused by the COVID 19 epidemic. They have also received supports from a wide range of stakeholders, from governmental, corporate, mass organizations, non-governmental and non-profit organizations, to community organizations, charity individuals and groups, with a variety of assistance forms. However, the research results also show that there are still many shortcomings and barriers that make the supports not effective and many workers really have difficulty, but they cannot access to the support.

Stemming from the main findings of the research, the team asked for permission to make a few recommendations to stakeholders, with the expectation that the support will be more effective, and, more importantly, ensure the support will be more sustainable in long-term

- The government may consider:
  - Implement policies so that they are timely and reach those in need.
  - Adjust the eligibility conditions of the 62-trillion package so that more workers who are affected by COVID-19 can be supported. The government has considered

removing the condition that workers in enterprises that cannot afford to pay salary do not need to take one month or more of consecutive leave to be eligible, which is a positive step.

- Increase the amount of financial support for informal workers so that it is equal to that of formal workers.
- Expand vocational training programs for workers so that workers have alternative livelihoods and are better at coping with job loss.
- Most of the support was cash or in-kind form. However, there is no mental health care support for workers. Trade unions and social organizations can support workers with mental health counseling, and expand online counseling services.
- VGCL and trade unions should consider:
  - The pandemic shows that workers are paid a low (basic) and insufficient salary, so they are overly dependent on overtime wages, which puts them at risk when it is cut or reduced. Trade unions, therefore, need to promote substantive collective bargaining to increase wages for workers instead of simply adjusting the minimum wage.
  - At the same time, it is also necessary to invest more in training to improve the skills and capacity of workers.

## **ANNEX 1: CASE STORIES**

### **1. Initiative by multi-stakeholder – Mnet and Oxfam**

Mnet and Oxfam engaged in pro-worker advocacy for the government's relief package of 62 trillion VND, and monitored the implementation following the package's approval.

When information about the Draft Resolution 42/NQ-CP was issued, Mnet and other members met and participated in developing policy recommendations, specifically with the following 6 contents:

1. The Government ensures that workers without a labor contract and migrant workers in the informal sector, including (1) domestic workers, (2) street vendors, (3) waste collectors (4) porters at wholesale markets, (5) motorbike taxi drivers, (6) taxi drivers, and (7) workers in the service sector are eligible beneficiaries in the Government's social assistance policy for people affected by COVID-19.

2. Formulate preferential credit policies for these groups with favorable interest rates, reschedule debts and reduce interest rates for current commercial loans

3. Provide information, and guidance on how to self-protect from infection risks based on the specific working environment of workers in the informal sector, provide waste collectors with personal protective equipment.

4. The budget support for migrant workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic should be calculated and funded from the local budget where the migrant workers are currently working (the destination).

5. Officials from the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs and local authorities where the migrant workers work and reside should proactively determine a set of basic criteria to identify the rightful beneficiaries of the policy. The identification of criteria and beneficiaries, and the implementation of the support package should be consulted and coordinated with social organizations. This will mobilize effective participation and contribution from knowledgeable organizations that are actively involved with the most vulnerable groups, and thus ensure that those most affected receive the support.

6. Some criteria to consider when identifying the workers most in need for the support package: (1) no labor contract, or had their contracts terminated due to the pandemic; (2) currently earning less than the minimum income as regulated; (3) currently renting accommodation in the locality (for migrant workers); (4) currently having reduced working hours or are unemployed due to the pandemic; (5) having a bank loan for small business; (6) with family member suffering from a critical illness; (7) working under high risk of infection; and (8) basing on the real number of people living in the area, not on the number of people with residential registration.

Resolution 42/NQ-CP on April 9, 2020 mentions support for freelance workers. The "employee who does not have a labor contract and loses their job will be supported VND 1,000,000 per

person per month according to the actual impacts, but not more than 3 months. It was applied for the period from April to June 2020”. This marked the efforts of Mnet and members of advocacy. After this success, Mnet continued to work with the Department of Social Protection, the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs to develop a “Manual for the Process of Implementing Support Policies for People in Difficulty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Resolution 42/NQ-CP of the Government and Decision 15/2020/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister.” The manual is the reference for government agencies, stakeholders in the process of providing assistance to people affected by pandemic for effective and efficient implementation of the policy.

To date, Mnet and Oxfam are continuing to monitor the implementation of the VND 62000 billion support package by the Government through the application of M-score.

## **2. Initiative by Trade Union – Trade Union of Hai Phong Economic Zone**

**The Trade Union** of Hai Phong Economic Zone consists of 202 local grassroots unions, representing 131,066 union members and workers.

During the second wave COVID-19, this trade union had quickly carried out an assessment of the situation of the employment in the area. The assessment at 245 enterprises initially identified 3,156 cases of workers losing their jobs, 404 workers with expired labor contracts, 1,543 workers taking unpaid leave, 505 workers whose contracts were terminated ahead of schedule, 174 cases of workers with contract suspension and 530 cases of workers not eligible for UI benefits. 15,624 workers outside the province had to leave and waited for their jobs due to the implementation of the social distance instruction of the Prime Minister and the City People's Committee. Enterprises implement policies for workers to ensure Clause 3, Article 98 of the 2012 Labor Code. Workers support 156 out of 1,597 cases of difficult workers affected by COVID -19.

- The regional trade union organized 12 working sessions with the Korean and Japanese Business Associations, and firms with a large number of workers affected by the COVID-19, providing guidelines and suggest policies on job protection for workers such as reduction of overtime, rotate working ... and supporting businesses to recover production post COVID-19.
- Mobilized resources from businesses, directly support essentials and medical supplies to prevent pandemics for workers. The Trade Union of Hai Phong economic zone mobilized 40,000 masks from Honda, more than VND 180 million from businesses to support disabled workers on the day of the disabled April 18.
- Used social media (Facebook, Zalo) to get the information on prevention measures against COVID-19 across. 105 articles were posted on the Fan page of the Trade Union zone, attracting over 286,000 hits. Two online sharing sessions on COVID-19 pandemic prevention and electronic health information declaration were held with more than 65,000 views.

The results showed that there were no firms that had workers take temporary unpaid leave. The rate for workers who leave and wait for work ranges from 50-70%. Enterprises isolated from other provinces in Hai Phong are supported with food and accommodation expenses.

### **3. Initiative by Ho Chi Minh City's Center of Youth Social Work**

"ATM of free necessities," Ho Chi Minh City's Center of Youth Social Work

At first, the Center only distributed masks and hand sanitizer to people in need in the area. Realizing that people not only needed medical equipment for pandemic prevention but also food and other necessities during this difficult period, the Center proposed to build an ATM with a variety of items to support vulnerable people.

The Center's ATM, which operated from April to June, was located at 5 Dinh Tien Hoang Street, Dakao ward, District 1. The majority of the recipients are lottery ticket sellers and scrap collectors. Lottery ticket sellers and scrap collectors often live together in a neighborhood. One person received and told others so the program was well known.

There were also lottery ticket sellers who lived far away, more than 10 km from the ATM site. ATMs were open from 9am to 6pm. Thus, the lottery ticket sellers could still get in line and received the support package at the ATM after returning the tickets to lottery agents at 4:00 pm.

The location is open and right at the center of District 1, so it is easy to identify for those in need of assistance. The program is also assisted by students from the Polytechnic School with facial recognition technology and the University of Humanities with communication on social networks.

### **4. Case of Individual - Ms. Mai Thi Phong, Hai Duong**

Ms. Phong is the leader of a core group of workers in Hai Duong. She used to participate in worker group activities supported by CDI for the last 3 years in this province.

COVID-19 had affected her work and her neighbors. Like others, she lost income. Seeing that, she encouraged other people in the neighborhood to suggest the landlord cut the rent. One person says, the landlord won't listen, everyone has to be together. After the first discussion, the landlord reduced the rent by VND 200,000 per month in April and May. After two months, all the rooms were charged at VND 650,000 as pre-COVID-19.

At that time, workers did not have much work to do, the company was downsizing, many people had to be displaced. She encouraged those staying with her: "There is no place with good rent as our room."

The landlord disagreed, "if you can afford, then stay, if not, then leave" right after listening to Phong's suggestion. But Phong did not give up, "if you do not reduce the rent, then everyone will move." In June, the landlord continued to reduce the rent for everyone there.

When the COVID-19 broke out, the landlord had reduced the rent three times. Among 10 core worker groups in Hai Duong, no group had the rent cut deep.

Even though Phong moved to another place to live, she still returned to the inn and visited her old neighbors. She shared that, "in such difficult times, a little help will encourage everyone, they know that someone else cares for them."

## ANNEX 2: LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS AND ENTITIES

STT	GROUP OF ACTORS	ORGANIZATION/ENTITY
1	Local government	People's Committees of Hai Boi commune and Kim Chung commune
2		People's Committee of Ai Quoc Ward, Hai Duong City, Hai Duong province
	Trade Union	Trade union of Hanoi
		Trade union of Hai Duong city
		Trade union of Ho Chi Minh city
		Trade union of Hai Phong Economic Zone
		Legal Consultancy Center of Dong Nai Trade Union
	Other mass organizations	Vietnam Fatherland's Front
		Women's Union of Dong Anh district
		Farmer's union of Quang Ninh province
		Farmer's union of Hai Phong city
		Farmer's union of Ninh Binh province
		Da Nang Youth Union
		Ho Chi Minh City's Center of Youth Social Work
		Central Vietnam Youth Association
	Social organizations (INGOs, NGOs)	ActionAid Vietnam
		Care International in Vietnam
		Oxfam Vietnam
		Enda Vietnam
		Sống Foundation
		Light Vietnam
		Center for Development and Integration (CDI)
		Center for Community Health Research and Support (CCHS)
		Live & Learn Vietnam
		SDRC
	Businesses and business associations	Hung Thinh
		Phu Gia Khang Corp
		Thai Ha Books
		Unilever Vietnam
		Grab Vietnam



		May 2 Company, Hai Duong
	Network	Migration Network (Mnet)
		Budget Transparency, Accountability and Participation (BTAP)

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