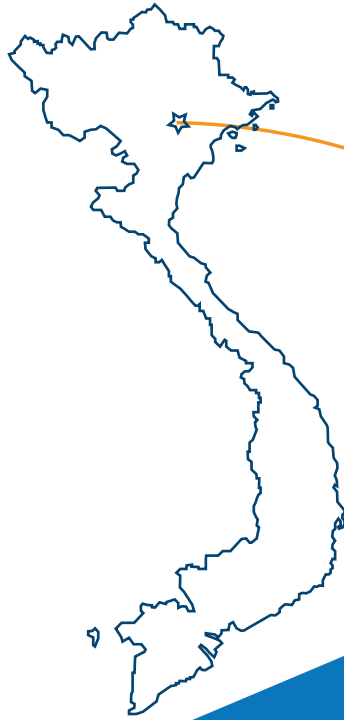


VIETNAM



CAPITAL:
HANOI



130,070 SQ KM
IN LAND SIZE

VIETNAMESE
DONG

LANGUAGES

VIETNAMESE

MAJOR INDUSTRIES:
ELECTRONICS
FOOD PROCESSING
CONSTRUCTION

82% NON-RELIGIOUS

POPULATION OF
95 MILLION



RELIGION

7.9%
BUDDHIST

6.6%
CATHOLIC

3.5% OTHER



FAVOURITE SPORTS:
SOCCER
VOLLEYBALL
BADMINTON



Opening ceremony at the Training and Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind



A student participating in the Therapeutic Massage Course

Geography

Vietnam occupies the eastern side of mainland South-East Asia. It extends across two climatic zones, with a moderate climate in the north, and a tropical climate in the south. Vietnam is a country of tropical lowlands, hills, and densely forested highlands, with level land covering no more than 20 percent of the area.

History

Archaeologists link the beginnings of Vietnamese civilisation to the late Neolithic, Early Bronze Age, Phung-nguyen culture, which was centred in the Vinh Phuc Province of contemporary Vietnam from about 2000 to 1400 BCE. The Chinese occupied Vietnam for 1000 years. Later came the French and a period of colonialism from which Vietnam was not to emerge until the second half of the 20th century.

Vietnam declared independence after World War II, but France continued to rule until its 1954 defeat by Communist forces under Ho Chi Minh. Under the Geneva Accords of 1954, Vietnam was divided into the Communist North and anti-Communist South. US aid to South Vietnam grew through the 1960s in an attempt to bolster the government – and led to what is known as the “American War” in Vietnam and the “Vietnam War” in the US. US armed forces were withdrawn following a cease-fire agreement in 1973.

Cultural

Vietnam is officially an atheist state. The Vietnamese Communist Party and State maintain control over the organisation of religious groups.

Chinese influence has permeated all aspects of traditional Vietnamese culture, such as calligraphy, silk painting, music, and theatre. Western influences became strong in the 20th century. There has been

huge economic development in the country over the past 30 years.

Family is the most important aspect of life in Vietnam. It is much more interdependent and tight-knit than what many Western cultures are familiar with. The cohesiveness and health of the family unit is often a main imperative. The “family unit” itself generally includes a larger link of relationships. Aunts, uncles, grandparents and other extended relatives often have very close relationships and provide a central support system. Three generations normally live under the same roof. Therefore, to live alone can be an intimidating experience for Vietnamese people.

AMS Projects in Vietnam – Training for the visually impaired

People who have been blind since birth face innumerable difficulties, most especially in countries such as Vietnam that have very limited resources for the visually impaired.

In Hanoi, the Training and Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind (TRCB) offers courses in Therapeutic Massage, Computer Proficiency, English, Business Management and Communication Skills to blind students from the many provinces of Vietnam, thus greatly improving their employment opportunities and capacity to live productive and independent lives.

In partnership with TRCB, the Marist Brothers have undertaken to support a three-year program of vocational training for young people and adults with vision impairments. It is anticipated that not only will the students themselves benefit from acquiring new skills and competencies, but that they will pass on their learning to others within their local communities and help break down the barriers they face on a daily basis.

The costs of this project include board and lodging for the students and the purchase of braille material and equipment.

Further reading/resources:

CIA World Fact Book (www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/)

SBS Cultural Atlas (www.culturalatlas.sbs.com.au)