



Vietnam

Vietnam is located in Southeast Asia, and is bordered by Cambodia, China and Laos. Its coast runs along the Gulf of Thailand, the South China Sea and the Gulf of Tonkin.

Vietnam's landscape is hilly with thickly forested mountains, and the climate varies considerably from region to region. It is generally tropical, with a hot, rainy season and a warm, dry season. While Vietnam is a long country, it is only 50 km across at its narrowest point. It has two World Heritage sites: Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park and Halong Bay.

Controlled by France from the 1880s, Vietnam declared independence after World War II. However, France continued to rule until 1954, when it was defeated by Communist forces. Divided into Communist North and anti-Communist South (backed by US support), Vietnam suffered much conflict for 25 years and only became a unified country again in 1975, when Northern forces seized the South.

Vietnam is a one-party state, ruled by the Communist Party of Vietnam. In 2006, The National Party Congress opened up the economy to foreign investment and committed to bringing about national economic reform.

Development in Vietnam

Following the introduction of a market economy and private enterprise from the late 1980s, Vietnam has undergone rapid economic growth and social change. Poverty has declined from 60 per cent of the population in 1993, to under 10 per cent by 2010. Vietnam is likely to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, having sustained improvements in health, education and life expectancy. Foreign investment has grown significantly and Vietnam is now one of Southeast Asia's fastest-growing economies. Its ambition is to become a developed nation by 2020.

However, the disparity between urban and rural Vietnam is wide. The country faces significant challenges in ensuring that the benefits of growth are equitably

distributed and in preventing the growth of inequality. There were more than eleven million people living below the national poverty line in 2009.

Additionally, Vietnam faces challenges from corruption, economic shocks and global warming. Human rights, especially civil and political rights, remain an issue for Vietnam, as does the welfare of ethnic minorities, especially those in the Central Highlands and the Northwest Uplands regions.

Irish Aid's poverty reduction work in Vietnam

Vietnam became an Irish Aid partner country in 2007. In 2010, Irish Aid's bilateral support to Vietnam was nearly €13 million.

Irish Aid works with the Government in Vietnam to reduce poverty and inequality through programmes to improve basic services and social protection to the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society, especially amongst ethnic minorities. Since 2006, Irish Aid has contributed over 40 per cent of its Vietnam aid budget to the Government's *Programme 135*, which was established to assist the poorest communities in the country. As a result poverty rates in benefiting communes fell from 46 per cent in 2006 to less than 29 per cent in 2010.

Ireland also supports the development of a dynamic private sector, which is the main driver of economic growth in Vietnam, largely through knowledge transfer, and involvement with key institutions in areas such as health, the private sector and economic governance. In 2009, as a result of collaboration between Ireland and Vietnam, a sophisticated national level diagnostic centre was established for research into blood-borne viruses. Ireland also supports the Government of Vietnam to bring about inclusive economic development and improve State accountability to its citizens.

In view of Vietnam's rapid economic growth, it is expected that the balance of Irish Aid's programme in the region will shift over time towards Vietnam's less developed neighbours, Cambodia and Laos.

Comparison table

Source: UNDP, 2011 ¹	Ireland	Vietnam
UNDP Human Development Index Rank (of 187 countries)	7	128
Population	4.5 million	88.8 million
GNI (Gross National Income) per capita	US \$29,332	US \$2,805
Life expectancy from birth	80 years	75 years
Number of doctors per 100,00 people²	310	60
HIV prevalence³ (15-49 years)	0.2%	0.5%

¹UNDP Human Development Report 2011 (November 2011)

²UNDP Human Development Report 2010 (November 2010)

³UNDP Human Development Report 2010 (November 2010)

Facts about Vietnam Did you know...?

Full name:	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Head of State:	President Trong Tang Sang
Capital:	Hanoi (Ha Noi)
Area:	331,210 sq km
Major languages:	Vietnamese (official), English, Chinese, Khmer, some French
Major religions:	Buddhism, Christianity
Monetary unit:	Dong
Main exports:	Petroleum, rice, electronics, clothing, fish

Find out more

www.irishaid.ie - Learn more here about Irish Aid's work in Vietnam

www.undp.org.vn - the United Nations Development Programme in Vietnam

www.irishaid.gov.ie



Irish Aid

An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Irish Aid is the Government's programme of assistance to developing countries, and is administered through the Development Cooperation Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

You can visit the
**Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre,
27 - 31 Upper O'Connell Street,
Dublin 1.
Phone number: 01 854 69 20**

Organised visits to the Centre, including workshops, are available for school and college groups by arrangement.