

## **Inclusion of ethnic minority children in Vietnamese education: Lessons learned from a pilot project**

**Ms. Nguyen Thi Bich (Save the Children)**

A study by Save the Children (SC) in April 2010 focused on learning outcomes in reading and mathematics for children from the following groups: Kinh, Hmong, Thai, Van Kieu, Pako, and small numbers of others. The results, in brief, indicated that ethnic children were behind or far behind the majority Kinh (Vietnamese) children in both reading and maths.

Save the Children is introducing a pilot program in Quanh Ninh and Dien Bien provinces, working with one ethnic group each school, in bilingual classes (the ethnic groups are Thai, H'Mong, Dao, and San Chi).

The program objectives are to support young ethnic minority children to establish a strong foundation in their mother tongues, to create a good "bridge" to Vietnamese and then use both languages for life-long learning. Objectives also include to maintain and preserve local cultural identity; and to advocate for policy changes to promote the use of ethnic minority languages for quality education.

Program strategies include: creating an oral language bridge in L1 and literacy in L2; recruitment of more local language speakers to support teachers to design lessons and support children's learning; using the children's L1 to introduce academic concepts. Vietnamese language teachers to teach Vietnamese, using second language teaching methodologies. Curriculum, textbook and materials adaptation to be more appropriate in local contexts and build on the children's own knowledge and experience.

Progress to date includes; Revision of national curriculum in the pilot areas, development of lesson plans from preschool to grade 3, together with teachers, teaching assistants, education officials; replication in 5 provinces. There have been many training workshops of teachers, teaching assistants and staff from MOET, and new materials have been developed.