



Breaking The Cycle To Achieve Sustainable Development in Gia Lai

Implementing Period: 4/2026 - 3/2029

Program context

The Central Highlands represents one of Vietnam's most significant development challenges, where ethnic minority communities continue to face multiple and overlapping barriers to health, education, employment, and social inclusion. Though rapid demographic and economic changes have transformed the region, many ethnic minority communities have found themselves at a disadvantage in accessing the resources, skills, and opportunities needed to participate fully in this changing context.

Understanding that lasting change requires long-term investment in people and communities, the Centre for Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI) began its work in the region in 2018. Starting with grassroots health initiatives, SCDI began supporting a network of indigenous youth leaders, laying the groundwork for stronger community participation and local leadership.

Still, many of the challenges faced by local communities are interconnected and often emerge across the life course. Limited access to quality maternal and child health services contributes to poorer early childhood outcomes, including high rates of stunting in some areas. As children grow older, barriers to education and skills development can reduce opportunities for participation in the formal workforce. Faced with limited pathways to employment, some young people leave school early, enter marriage at a young age, or begin family life before they are fully prepared to do so. These factors can contribute to the persistence of poverty and inequality across generations.

Breaking this cycle requires coordinated interventions across multiple stages of life. Gia Lai province, particularly remote communes such as Ia Tul and Phu Tuc, starkly illustrates this compounding crisis, making it the critical focal point for intervention. While government investments have contributed to important improvements in education

and social services, significant gaps remain. Building on existing efforts, a comprehensive life-cycle approach can help ensure that children, adolescents, and young adults have access to the support they need to thrive.

This vision is at the heart of Breaking the Cycle in Gia Lai. By focusing on critical stages of development, from maternal and child health to secondary education, vocational pathways, and employment readiness, the program seeks to strengthen opportunities for ethnic minority children and young people to realise their potential. Through investments in health, education, skills, and community support systems, the project aims to break cycles of intergenerational poverty and promote greater social and economic inclusion.

The need for such interventions is reflected in national and local data. Ethnic minorities make up 15% of Vietnam's population but account for 79% of its poor (World Bank & Australian Aid, 2022*). Disparities in human capital are evident from early childhood, with stunting rates reaching 35% in mountainous areas compared to the national average of 24%, while only 32.7% of ethnic minority women receive adequate prenatal care. In Gia Lai, only 5% to 16% of children in communes such as Ia Broai and Ia Kdam continue to high school or vocational training. Underage marriage in Krong Pa district increased from 17.9% in 2017 to 26.8% in 2021, reaching 68.3% in Ia Mlah commune.

Gia Lai is also a province where SCDI has maintained long-standing partnerships and community-based interventions for eight years through malaria elimination, tuberculosis, and community development programmes. The existing Community Momentum and Action Team (CMAT) network provides a strong foundation for expanding community-led initiatives in education, nutrition, youth development, and employment, ensuring that future interventions build upon established trust, local knowledge, and community leadership.



*According to the "2022 Vietnam Poverty and Equity Assessment" by the World Bank and Australian Aid



Focused populations

The program focuses on the following populations:

- Children aged 0–18 from poor, near-poor, and ethnic minority households
- Young people aged 15–24
- Pregnant women and children within the first 1,000 days of life
- Parents and caregivers
- Community members participating in the CMAT network

These groups face a range of interconnected challenges, including:

- Early school dropout and limited access to further education or vocational training
- Limited vocational, life, and employability skills
- Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy
- Child malnutrition and stunting
- Limited access to information, digital skills, and online safety knowledge
- Barriers to social support services and employment opportunities

Through a people-centred, community-led approach, the program seeks to strengthen opportunities for learning, healthy development, and decent employment while fostering long-term community resilience and social inclusion.

Our blueprint for action

Overarching Goal
To increase the employment rate among youth in the project target areas within Gia Lai Province.

SO1. Improve employment readiness and vocational capacity for youth aged 16–24, contributing to increased motivation and self-confidence while minimizing teenage pregnancy.

SO2. Enhance school completion rates and educational quality for students across all levels by eliminating barriers to education and developing essential soft skills.

SO3. Develop evidence-based and practice-driven sustainable development plans to build a solid foundation for future community development efforts.

A1.1.
Provide career guidance, vocational training, and job placement connections for ethnic minority youth.

A1.2.
Enhance life skills, digital skills, and reproductive health education for adolescents.

A2.1.
Reduce dropout risks and increase educational access for ethnic minority children.

A2.2.
Strengthen the roles of families and schools in supporting students.

A3.1.
Improve nutritional care and child development during the first 1,000 days of life.

A3.2.
Strengthen community capacity and local coordination mechanisms through the CMAT network.

Rationale 1.1.
Youth in the project target areas have limited access to career information and lack vocational and job-seeking skills, leading to restricted employment opportunities and sustainable income.

Rationale 1.2.
Ethnic minority adolescents are facing risks of early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and a lack of digital skills and adaptability in a rapidly changing social context.

Rationale 2.1.
The rate of students continuing their education after lower secondary school is low; many are at risk of dropping out due to financial hardships and a lack of motivation.

Rationale 2.2.
The companionship of parents and teachers is a decisive factor in maintaining education and ensuring the comprehensive development of children.

Rationale 3.1.
Malnutrition and stunting remain major challenges for ethnic minority children, carrying long-term impacts on their future health, academic performance, and productivity.

Rationale 3.2.
Ensure program sustainability by building a core community team capable of connecting residents with education, healthcare, and social development services.

Expected results

A1.1

Provide career guidance, vocational training, and job placement connections for ethnic minority youth.

R.1.1.1. 400 youth gain access to information regarding vocational training.

R.1.1.2. 300 youth are introduced to and participate in market-driven vocational training.

R.1.1.3. 6 career orientation events are organized, attracting around 900–1,000 youth and their families.

A1.2

Enhance life skills, digital skills, and reproductive health education for adolescents.

R.1.2.1. 108 community-led communication sessions on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) are conducted.

R.1.2.2. Approx. 1,200 adolescents get access to information about sexual and reproductive health.

R.1.2.3. 15 soft skills training courses are organized to enhance adaptability and motivation for at least 300 youth.

A2.1

Reduce dropout risks and increase educational access for ethnic minority children.

R.2.1.1. 3,000 students receive essential "Back-to-School" support packages to ensure enrollment in the new school year.

R.2.1.2. 216 school-based extracurricular sessions on life skills, digital skills, and SRH are conducted.

R.2.1.3. 6 inter-provincial learning exchange activities are organized.

A2.2

Strengthen the roles of families and schools in supporting students.

R.2.2.1. Approx. 1,200 parents/caregivers participate in communication and capacity building sessions.

R.2.2.2. Parent-teacher networks are established across 10 implementing schools.

R.2.2.3. 20 capacity-building training workshops are conducted for 150 teachers.

R.2.2.4. 24 school-led initiatives are implemented to improve the learning environment.

A3.1

Improve nutritional care and child development during the first 1,000 days of life.

R.3.1.1. The "First 1,000 Days of Life" community intervention package and toolkit are successfully designed, piloted, and applied with active local participation.

R.2.1.2. 384 community communication sessions on childcare during the "First 1,000 Days of Life" are organized.

R.2.1.3. 4 community-driven childcare initiatives are supported for implementation.

A3.2

Strengthen community capacity and local coordination mechanisms through the CMAT network.

R.3.2.1. 18 capacity building workshops for CMAT are conducted.

R.3.2.2. 90% of CMAT members demonstrate full competency in project implementation.

R.3.2.3. 36 commune-level and 288 total village/commune coordination and briefing meetings are successfully organized.

R.3.2.4. 18 village-level coordination mechanisms/groups are established and operating smoothly.

Key stakeholders

Implementing organizations

SCDI - Centre for Supporting Community Development Initiatives

CCS - Central Highlands Community Supporting Social Enterprise Company Limited

Harmonrise - Harmonrise Social Enterprise

Stakeholder Coordination Framework

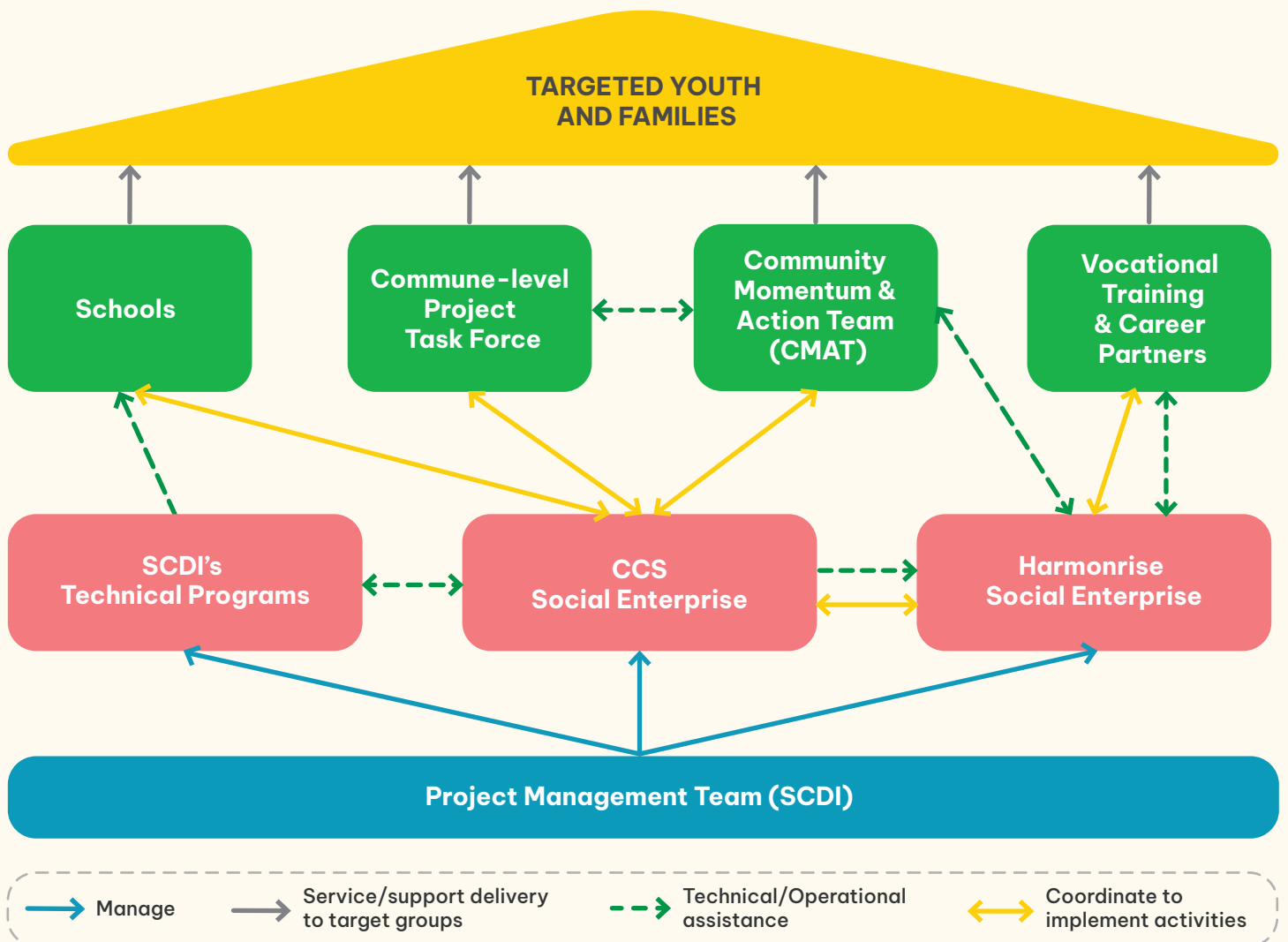
Local partners

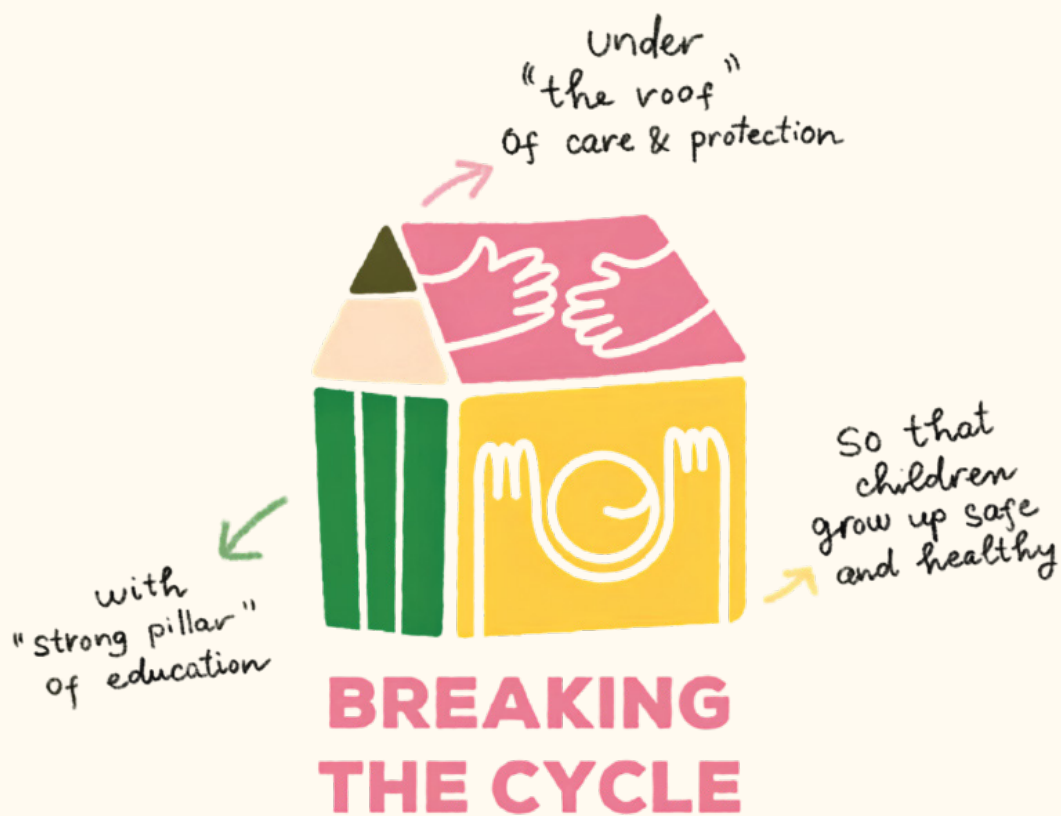
Government agencies

- Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee
- Gia Lai Department of Health
- Gia Lai Department of Education and Training
- Gia Lai Center for Disease Control (CDC)
- People's Committees of Phu Tuc and Ia Tul Communes

Community and technical partners

- Local schools
- Commune health stations
- Youth Union
- Women's Union
- Employers and vocational training institutions





CENTRE FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

No.9, Alley 165/30 Thai Ha Str., Dong Da Ward, Hanoi, Vietnam

scdi@scdi.org.vn • www.scdi.org.vn

Connect with us on      @SCDIVietnam