



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

VIETNAM

FIRST PERSON

Stitching Toward a New Life

Vocational training helps one disabled girl open a successful sewing shop



Photo: World Concern

“I spent four years on an old wheelchair to sell balloons on the street,” says Hien. “Never before I thought that my life would change until I received support from the project. I am now running my own sewing shop. I feel confident and hopeful because I have integrated into the community.”

Born into a poor family in Vietnam, Li Thi Bich Hien developed polio early on, which left her legs paralyzed. Her disability prevented her from attending school until she was eight, when a teacher enrolled her in a free evening course, but she soon dropped out to help her mother at home. When she was 14, she began attending a literacy class, but again, Hien had to drop out so she could earn a living by street vending.

One day, Hien enrolled in USAID’s vocational training program for adolescents with disabilities to learn how to sew. Due to her paralysis, Hien had more difficulties in her apprenticeship than others. However, with commitment and hard work, Hien overcame this obstacle and finished her apprenticeship with distinction. USAID also provided Hien with sewing machines so she could open her own shop at home.

Hien has become quite accomplished at satisfying her customers’ needs. Her shop continues to attract more and more patrons, and she now earns enough income to cover her basic needs.

“Before I never thought that she could learn skills,” said her father. “This project has changed her life.”

“I spent four years on an old wheelchair to sell balloons on the street,” says Hien. “Never before I thought that my life would change until I received support from the project. I am now running my own sewing shop. I feel confident and hopeful because I have integrated into the community.”