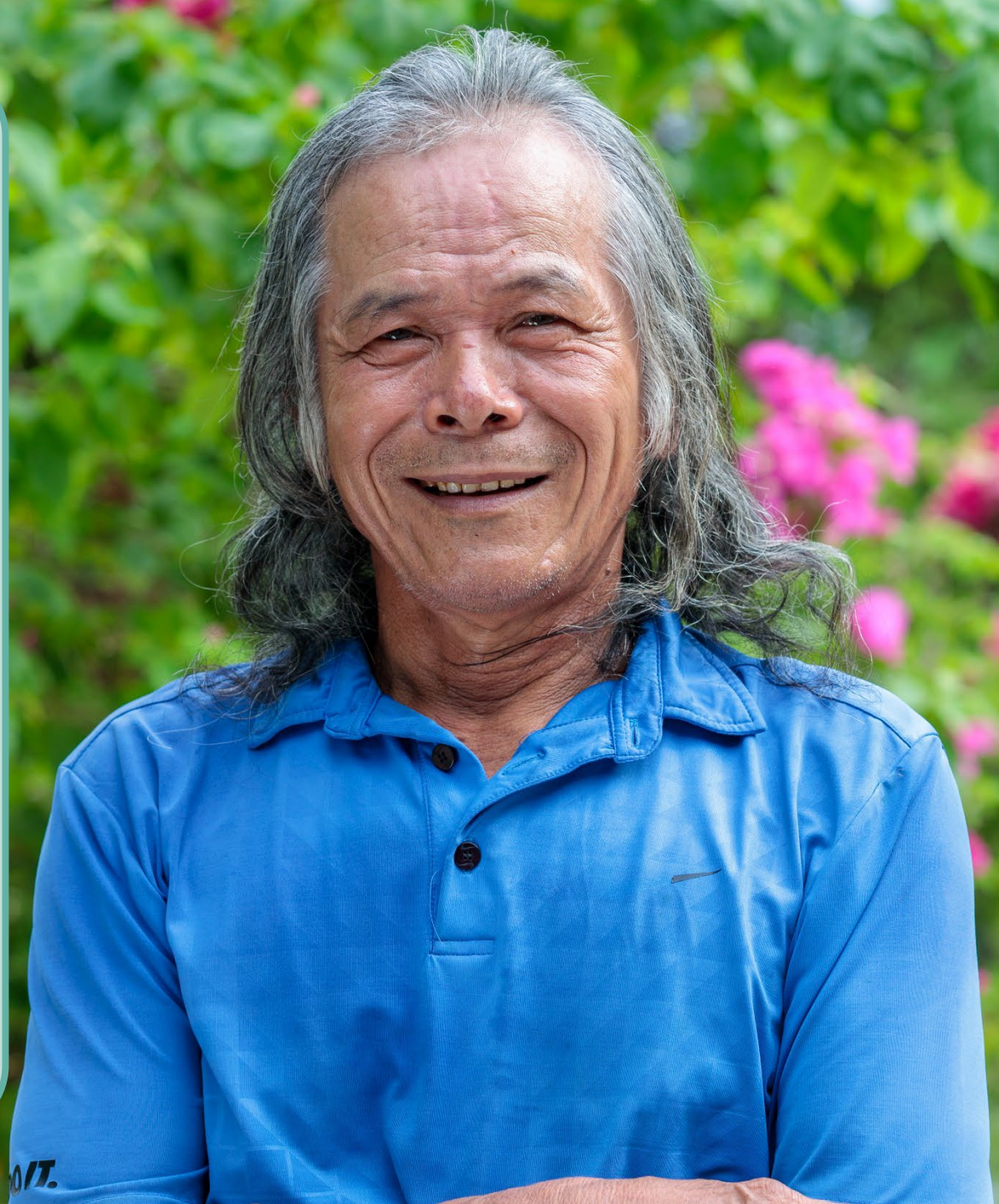




# **THU'S STORY (VIETNAM)**

**PRIMARY (3–6)  
CASE STUDY AND  
ACTIVITIES**

Photo credit: Phan Tan Lam/Caritas Australia



# THU'S STORY

## VIETNAM



Thu lives with his wife, Linh, in Vietnam. Many years ago, there was a war in Vietnam. Even though the war ended in 1975, poverty and inequality remain widespread and there are still 800,000 tonnes of unexploded land mines across the country.

Thu was just 12 years old when he lost his leg. One day, he was looking after his cows when he stepped on an unexploded land mine. Thu now uses a prosthetic leg to walk.

**“War is most terrible with great loss. At the end of the war, there are still consequences,” Thu says.**

Living with a disability in rural Vietnam presented many challenges for Thu, who worked mainly as a rice farmer.

**“It is hard to get a job in rural areas where people earn their living mainly from farming. However, local farming here depends on the natural weather... There is often drought in summertime and flood in rainy season. Life is therefore extremely difficult,” says Thu.**

In addition to being the breadwinner for his family, Thu cares for his wife, Linh, after she suffered a stroke.

**“She is my wife and we have been living together and depending on each other, I am the one to be there with her and for her,” says Thu.**

Determined to turn their lives around, Thu and Linh joined the Empowerment of People with Disabilities program, run by Caritas Australia’s local partner organisation in Vietnam, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD).

Thu looks after cows near his home in Quang Tri province, Vietnam. When Thu was 12-years-old, he lost his leg after stepping on an unexploded land mine. Photo: Phan Tan Lam/Caritas Australia

# THU'S STORY

## VIETNAM



**“Many people with a disability in Vietnam feel that other people would only look at their disabilities rather than at their capacities,” says Toan Tran, SRD Program Manager. “People with disabilities and their families have minimal opportunities to access health care services, education, income generation, vocational training and jobs.”**

The Empowerment of People with Disabilities program supports people living with disabilities to establish Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) so that they can access affordable loans. Through the VSLA, Thu was able to obtain a loan which he used to open his own barber shop.

Thu also joined an incense-making group. With the extra income from selling incense he was able to repair his house and fix his front yard to prevent flooding during the rainy season. Thu now plans to invest in livestock, such as pigs, ducks, or chickens, so he has multiple ways to earn a living.

Before he joined the program, Thu mostly stayed at home. The VSLA provides a welcoming and inclusive space for people with a disability like Thu and Linh to socialise, learn and support each other.

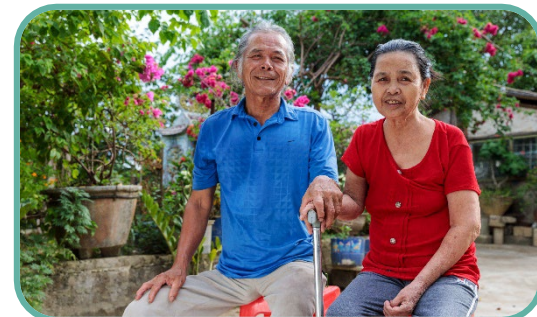
**“I think having a club is good, where people living with disabilities can join and help one another. Additionally, there are many meaningful activities from the project to support my family and others,” Thu says.**

For Thu, the greatest impact that the program has had is seeing the change in Linh’s physical and mental wellbeing. With the support of a physiotherapist, Linh can now walk short distances with the aid of a walking stick.

Caritas Australia’s partner also helped Thu to build an accessible toilet with a handrail so that Linh could use the toilet by herself. With his wife’s increased independence, Thu now has more time to focus on other activities, such as walking his grandson to school and working at his barber shop.

**“I am grateful to Caritas Australia for the help they give to people living with disability like me and my wife,” Thu says. “Thank you to Caritas Australia and the Australian people.”**

With your generosity, the Empowerment of People with Disabilities program was able to support more than 6,300 people in Vietnam in the last financial year.



*Along with your support, this program is supported by the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).*



Read Thu's Story (Vietnam) or watch the [film](#).  
'[A Day in the Life](#)' film is also available.

### TASK 1: DISCUSSION

- Why was it hard for Thu to provide for his family?
- What did Thu use his loan for?
- In addition to the loan, how else does the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) benefit Thu and Linh?
- How did Caritas Australia help?
- How will you share Thu's story with others?

**Curriculum links:** English, HASS

### TASK 2: KAHOOT! QUIZ

Test students' knowledge of Thu's story by playing the [KAHOOT!](#)

**Curriculum links:** English, HASS, Mathematics

### TASK 3: CLUBS

Thu said, "I think having a club [Village Savings and Loan Association] is good, where people living with disabilities can join and help one another. Additionally, there are many meaningful activities from the project to support my family and others."

What clubs are available at your school? Students can learn about the clubs and invite others to join them in attending a club. If there is no club that suits their interest, can they start a club?

**Curriculum links:** Health and Physical Education

### TASK 4: INCENSE

Thu learnt how to make incense. Incense burning is a common cultural and religious practice in many Asian countries, including Vietnam. A popular time to sell the incense is Tet Festival (Vietnamese New Year), the most important annual celebration in Vietnam.

Incense is also used in the Catholic tradition, although not as often at Mass now. There are many references to incense in scripture and the most common incense students might be familiar with is frankincense from the Christmas story. Research when, how and why incense is used in the Catholic Mass. You could invite your Parish Priest to explain the use of incense in the Catholic tradition and show the students the thurible.

**Curriculum links:** HASS, Religious Education

### TASK 5: CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING (CST) LINK – SUBSIDIARITY AND PARTICIPATION

#### Subsidiarity and Participation noun

- from the Latin word subsidium, meaning support or assistance
  - the idea that people and groups have the right to participate in decisions that affect them and, when they can't meet their own needs, other parts of society (e.g., the government) act according to their duty to assist with resources and support
  - an approach to common life that promotes participation and ensures people are architects of their own development
- A. How is the subsidiarity and participation demonstrated in Thu's story?



### **TASK 5: CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING (CST) LINK – SUBSIDIARITY AND PARTICIPATION (continued)**

B. How is supporting Project Compassion one way you can promote subsidiarity and participation?

For more teaching resources on Subsidiarity and Participation- refer to our [CST Toolkit](#)

**Curriculum links:** Religious Education

### **TASK 6: RE LINK**

*“Every human person is precious and has value that does not depend on what they have or on their abilities, but on the simple fact that he or she is a person, the image of God.”*

Pope Francis<sup>1</sup>

- How does this quote relate to Thu's story?

### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed ([Mark 4:30-32](#))**

Read the scripture and discuss.

From little things, big things grow! Thu started with a loan for a barber shop. He then went on to join an incense making group. He earned enough money to fix his house. Now he is looking at investing in livestock.

What small steps can your students take that will lead to a better life for themselves and for others?

**Curriculum links:** Religious Education

<sup>1</sup>[Pope Francis, speech 13 Dec 2021](#)

# THANK YOU

## PHOTO CREDITS

Thu's Story (Vietnam) – Phan Tan Lam/Caritas Australia

## PRIMARY STUDENTS

Learning about people not having what they need to live a healthy and safe life can be hard. If you are feeling worried or upset about anything you have learnt about through this resource, make sure you talk to your teacher or a trusted adult. They can share your concerns via our [website](#).

Do you have an idea for how Caritas Australia can improve our school resources? We would love to hear it! Please email [education@caritas.org.au](mailto:education@caritas.org.au)

## TEACHERS

For more school resources, please visit: [caritas.org.au/resources/school-resources/](https://caritas.org.au/resources/school-resources/)

Stay up to date with events and resources! Subscribe to [Caritas Australia's Education e-newsletter](#)



Caritas Australia gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program.