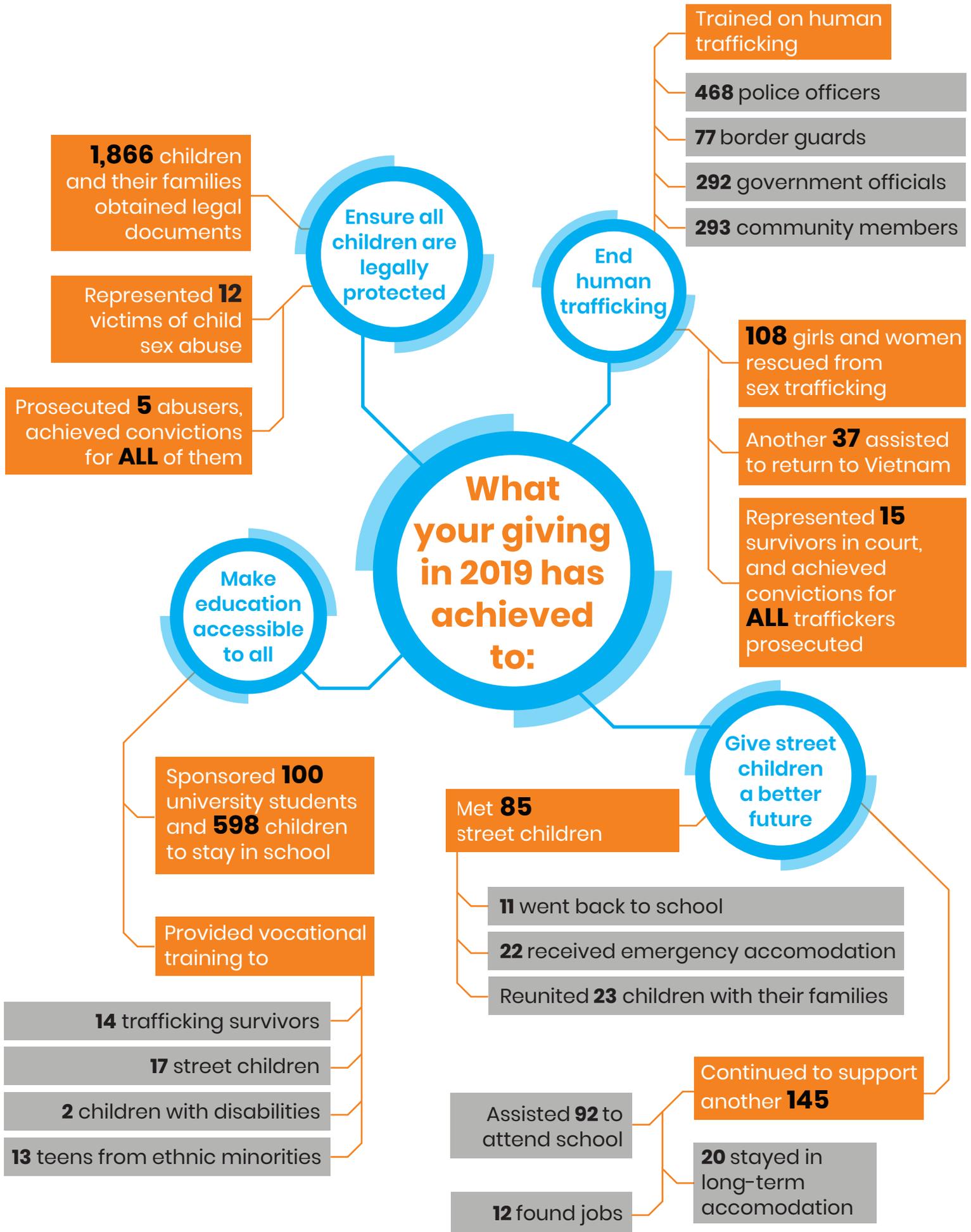




2019

has been a great year of impact

Your support this year has directly contributed to changing the lives of over 6,000 children and young adults. With your support, children have had access to education and training, shelter, psychological assistance and nutrition or been rescued from their places of slavery. Your contribution has affected change in the lives of many through other services, such as the nearly 2,000 people who now have their identity documents and, therefore, access to their basic rights.



All victims of crime now have legal protection

Blue Dragon’s work with the Vietnamese government throughout 2019 has led to legally enshrined protections for victims of crimes. Prior to this change, the law allowed for the alleged perpetrators to have legal counsel during all stages of the prosecution of the case, whereas this right was not clearly regulated for the victims. This was particularly damaging for victims of child abuse and human trafficking who could be left without any legal advice or representation.

“It made the victim more vulnerable. They were not just victims of crime but also victims of an unjust legal system,” says Ta Ngoc Van, Blue Dragon’s chief lawyer.

The new Circular introduced in late 2019 means that lawyers can assist children and victims of trafficking throughout the case, protecting their rights, ensuring they do not have to testify in person in court, and making a compensation claim on their behalf. For Van, this means victims “now have a tool to protect themselves from injustice”.



Job placement results keep getting better and better

Street children and victims of human trafficking often come from underprivileged backgrounds, may have a low level of education, and carry the burden of deep trauma. Helping them to overcome these challenges so they can attend vocational training and access the job market is always a challenge. This year, however, more youth are attending Blue Dragon’s career preparation workshops, more finish their vocational training courses and, ultimately, more get their first jobs.

What has changed?

“We noticed the children struggled to commit for so long and often didn’t finish the courses, so we changed the courses to tailor them to the kids,” says Lan, a social worker who works with former street children and teens from ethnic communities. Thanks to this, more children finish the courses and even enrol in others afterwards to continue learning.

Blue Dragon’s relationship with vocational training centres and private companies that hire these teenagers has also changed. “We realised they needed to understand the children and where they come from. Now we work with them more closely, teach them how to support the children and what to expect.”



This shift in our approach has brought better results for human trafficking survivors. Many of the women and girls we rescue from sex trafficking come from ethnic communities, which frequently means that 'Kinh', the official Vietnamese language, is not their mother tongue. This used to be a barrier for them, so now Blue Dragon focuses on improving their language skills before they attend training courses. This gives them the confidence and skills they need to understand and succeed.



Moreover, because they have been in slavery, these young women need very specific but also very diverse types of care. Aware of this, psychologists, social workers, teachers and volunteers at Blue Dragon have enhanced their collaboration, working as a team to tailor their support to the girls' needs. "Now the machinery runs smoothly and we understand them better," says Phuong, a social worker.

Achieving justice for children and victims of trafficking

Blue Dragon has represented in court an increased number of victims of both child abuse and trafficking. In 2018 we represented 12 victims in 10 cases, convicting 18 traffickers; this year we have represented 15 victims in 13 cases and convicted 24 traffickers. This is at least partly thanks to our efforts in training and mentoring police, who can now more effectively arrest traffickers and investigate cases. It is also a result of Blue Dragon's collaboration with the Ministry of Public Security and other agencies to widen the definition of trafficking in the new Penal Code.

Child abuse is finally being recognized in Vietnam and reported to authorities. In 2018, Blue Dragon represented six victims in four cases, resulting in the conviction of four abusers. In 2019 we have represented 12 victims in five cases, resulting in the conviction of seven abusers. The conviction of the principal of an ethnic minority boarding school who had abused multiple victims was particularly significant.



reports of child labour exploitation in sweatshops

With your support, Blue Dragon has been working to stop the trafficking of children from Hue province in central Vietnam and Dien Bien province in the north-west into garment sweatshops in Ho Chi Minh City since 2005. Our comprehensive approach, working to educate source communities, ensure children stay in school, and rescue and rehabilitate victims has been very successful.

From rescuing dozens of children a year we are now proud that in 2019 no children were trafficked from the communities with whom we work. The number of children dropping out of school to work has dropped to zero in three of the schools we work with, and reduced to a handful in the other schools.

We are now cementing these gains by ensuring local community leaders and government officers have the skills and commitment to continue this work.

Greening Blue Dragon's operations

During 2019 Blue Dragon has developed a robust Environmental Policy to ensure our activities are environmentally friendly. This document is the result of a collective effort from all of Blue Dragon's staff.

These efforts to be more environmentally friendly are already bearing fruit... literally! For the past six months, we have been growing many of our own cabbages, lettuces, pumpkins and other vegetables, free of chemicals.



15 years transforming the lives of children in crisis

This November marked 15 years since Blue Dragon started working in Vietnam. Throughout this time, the support of people like you has enabled Blue Dragon to take part in the revision of three laws, rescue nearly 1,000 human trafficking survivors, and serve more than 550,000 meals, among other achievements.

The most beautiful accomplishment of these 15 years of effort, however, can not be measured with numbers. That is seeing how the first children Blue Dragon assisted have grown up to become outstanding citizens and adults. So much so that 10 of them are now members of Blue Dragon's staff, determined to do everything in their power to ensure no child in Vietnam has to endure what they had to 15 years ago.

Diep was once a boy in Blue Dragon's care. Fifteen years ago, aged just 14, Diep decided to quit school, leave home, and move to Hanoi so he could work and support his family. While working on the streets, he met Blue Dragon. And he hasn't left since. At the beginning, he supported other staff, so he could observe and learn their job. Then he became a social worker, and has been on the job for the past decade. "Blue Dragon is my second family. The support I got here changed my life. I want to help other kids in situations like mine," he says.

