

# Focus In and Scale-Up

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*Using Evidence-based Outcomes to Transform the  
Work of Partners and the Quality of Life for Families  
and Communities*

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Thrive Networks designs and tests innovative financing and service delivery models to bring reliable sanitation, water systems and education to underserved communities in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

With over three decades of experience, we have built a reputation for high-quality research and crafted trusted relationships with local partners.

The evidence-based outcomes from our projects are being utilized by government agencies, the private sector, and local civic organizations to scale-up proven solutions to dramatically improve the health and living standards of families across entire communities and regions.

*Thrive Networks approaches our 30th year with a tremendous legacy of delivering sustainable sanitation, water, health, and education services to underserved communities in Southeast Asia. Our investment in programs that produce evidence-based approaches and solutions that we are scaling-up to reach tens of thousands of families.*

Since joining the organization in May of 2017, I have been impressed with Thrive's strong reputation, based on the pillars of evidence-based outcomes and trusted partnerships. This annual report features numerous examples of our staff's innovative efforts to design financing and business models that deliver sustainable solutions with partners in government, the private sector and community-based organizations.

Our strategy for the immediate future is to focus-in and scale up. We have much to share from our research and pilot programs that can be adopted by other outstanding organizations around the world. Focusing now on scaling-up our proven approaches in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia will position Thrive Networks to become a global leader to improve the standard of living and health of millions of people across the globe.

At Thrive Networks, we integrate rigorous third party research and assessments into our programs, making us a valuable resource to funders and implementing partners who share our commitment to delivering sustainable solutions. Our recent research into the effect of household subsidies on the uptake rate for hygienic latrines provides actionable insight that we have shared so that our partners learn alongside our staff and become experts capable of applying the lessons learned from our research to their own work, at a far larger scale.

Expanding the involvement of the private sector and individual households is essential to scaling-up sanitation and water system connections. Access to affordable financing is a stubborn obstacle. Thrive Networks is leading research and piloting innovative methods for using output-based subsidies and rebates to create attractive markets where none have existed before.

Today, Thrive Networks is equipping government agencies with research and information to effectively implement policies and invest resources to create lasting improvements in underserved communities. Our staff is training community-based organizations to take leadership in shaping their own futures based on proven approaches and technologies to address their clean water and sanitation needs. And, we are piloting new finance delivery schemes that allow families to invest in their health and improve their standard of living.

Thank you for your support of Thrive Networks' work. As you read through the 2016 Annual Report, you will find that a great deal has been accomplished in the past year. With your continued involvement, we can scale-up the delivery of affordable sanitation and clean water services to support healthier families and build vibrant communities in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos today, and around the world tomorrow.



**Lynn Foden**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Melinda Griffith**  
Board Chair

# Output-Based Aid – Building Accountability into Sanitation Systems for the Poor

Output-Based Aid (OBA) is an innovative model to expand access to basic services for the poor and to ensure sustainability. Under traditional aid programs, the donor provides funding to implementing partners before the work begins. OBA delivers payment based on verified results after implementation. The donor and service provider agree on a payment level that is profitable to the service provider and cost effective. The service provider mobilizes funds to pre-finance the work. The OBA model builds in accountability, design to meet the needs of users, and incentives to encourage delivery of “last mile” services – the final, and often most expensive, leg of a delivery network.

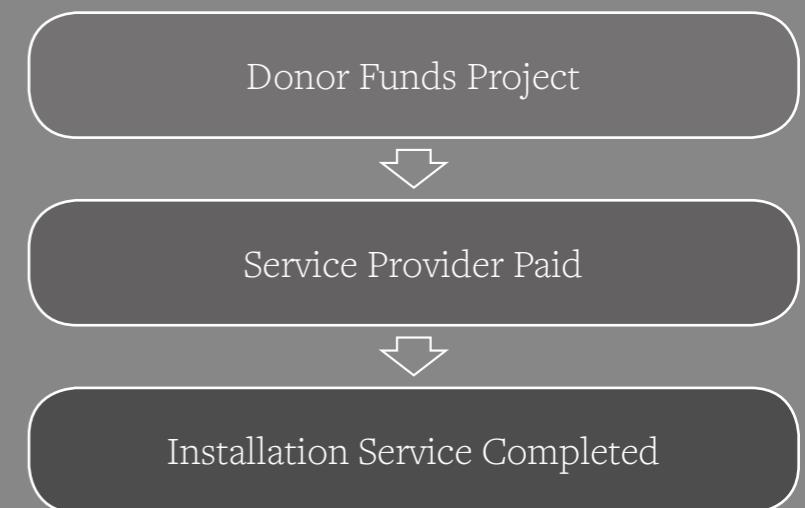
## OBA LESSONS LEARNED

**Water Supply:** Paying for each new household connected to an existing system incentivizes utilities to deliver “last mile” coverage, which often includes poor households.

**Sanitation:** Small rebates paid to households upon verification of properly built and used latrines encourages the poor to build hygienic latrines now, not later.

**Cost:** OBA delivery costs are far lower than other approaches, while both leveraging local investment and reaching large scales.

## TRADITIONAL INPUT-BASED APPROACH



## OUTPUT-BASED APPROACH



# Demonstrating Sanitation Ecosystems for Government Scale-Up

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Thrive's Civil Society WASH Fund program – WASHOBA – focuses on integrating our proven OBA model into government systems and readying it for scale-up.

*Thrive Networks' WASHOBA sanitation program has so far completed 31,860 latrines for the poorest households.*

*17,000 - Vietnam*

*2,100 – Laos*

*12,760 - Cambodia*

In Vietnam, this program design was based on ten years of testing and refining our sanitation business 'ecosystem'. The four year WASHOBA project allowed Thrive to further refine the roles and relationships of implementers from Departments of Health, the Women's Union and private latrine suppliers in this ecosystem.

WASHOBA also focused on delivering evidence and presenting results to advocate for sanitation policy change, and for phased-in government budget for OBA.

One approach utilized for such advocacy is to promote "champion" provinces and celebrate achievements in national forums, stimulating a sense of competition and buy-in for all provinces. Government and WU champions are highly effective as trainers and at encouraging their peers to get on board.

Another successful example of advocacy under WASHOBA was to present data

demonstrating that after 30 months, the uptake rate for hygienic latrines achieved under the program was four times faster than the Government of Vietnam's National Target Program (NTP). Under WASHOBA, 16,000 latrines were built in four provinces, while only 4,000 were built in four provinces under the NTP. This statistic helped to stimulate great interest in OBA for sanitation among actors in the sector.

Under WASHOBA, examples of some Vietnamese provinces committing their own resources to an OBA approach include:

- Ben Tre Province: \$22 subsidy provided for each poor household that builds a latrine
- Thai Nguyen Province: 200 KG of cement allocated for each poor household building a latrine
- Three Provincial People's Committees committed to phase in provincial budgets for output-based sanitation



## SANITATION

# Testing Public-Private Sector Sanitation Models in Cambodia

**2,415** latrines have been constructed under the Civil Society WASH Fund 2 program, leveraging a **\$12,075** investment by the Government of Cambodia.

Thrive Networks is combining government advocacy and a revenue-generating commercial model to expand sanitation delivery in Cambodia. Under the program, the government covers the full subsidy for underserved households and private sector partners cover the costs of the performance based incentives in the sanitation ecosystem.

Thrive Networks is testing this approach in 30 communes in Prey Veng province. The provincial Department of Finance has allocated budget to the commune fund that provides \$5 out of a total \$18 rebate to every household below a certain income threshold that builds a latrine. Funding from the Australian government is covering the \$13 difference. By working closely with government partners, we expect that the Commune Council will be able to cover the total rebate within the next three years.

# Data Collection Helps Laos Deliver Sanitation Equitably

Sanitation services reach approximately 62% of households in Laos; however, the discrepancy between urban and rural settings remains high, with 87% of urban households using a proper toilet compared to only 48% in rural areas.

To help local authorities focus limited resources where the need is greatest, Thrive Networks developed a simple and transparent poverty identification system using four indicators: (i) housing conditions, (ii) primary income (iii) economic hardship and (iv) assets. This approach identified 3,796 potential beneficiary households that met the criteria in target villages.

To further expand access to improved sanitation, Thrive Networks and The Ministry of Health's National Center for Environmental Health and Water Supply (Nam Saat) signed an agreement in May 2016 to expand Community-Led Total Sanitation, hygiene promotion, and sanitation marketing in ten districts in Sekong and Champasak provinces through financial incentives at both the household and village levels.

# Vietnam Women's Union Mobilizes CHOBA 2

Launched in July of 2016 with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Community Hygiene Output-Based Aid (CHOBA) 2 program is dramatically increasing the number of households reached with financing and education about hygienic latrines by expanding the role of Vietnam Women's Union (WU) members as community mobilizers.

As a network that spans the country, WU members are an effective force for getting accurate surveys of existing sanitation practices and educating families about the health benefits of investing in hygienic latrines. WU members have successfully mobilized loans and aid funds for household use from provincial and commune government sources, and the WU mobilizers provide guidance to the project management board, giving the women a voice and a role in the success of each installation. A stipend is paid to the WU volunteer for each verified installation. CHOBA 2 is promoting a nationwide sanitation conversation through these key activities:

- Train WU members to conduct promotion. Negotiate commission payments for demand mobilization from suppliers.
- Engage private companies and manufacturers in WASH and other sectors to expand the product mix and pay commission payments for WU promoters.
- Build up a market coordination mechanism to connect suppliers with customers through WU's network. Collect customer reviews to evaluate product/service quality to develop the WASH market more sustainably.

In the coming year, through workshops, landscape analysis reports, and detailed pilot designs, Thrive Networks will support government agencies and other organizations with the lessons from these pilot projects.



One WU mobilizer offered this reflection on her experience.

*“Before CHOBA, I did not have much knowledge or communication skills. But now, I see clear improvement; now I am more confident to talk. There are also changes in my family. When I got married, my mother-in-law managed the household finances. Since my participation in the CHOBA project, I have my own voice and my mother-in-law trusts me. She allows me to make decisions about finances and any other thing. My mother-in-law even said that, “I feel very proud about Hanh.”*

*Since I started to mobilize people, I see that the sanitation and environment has been much improved. There is no more garbage spreading on the sides of the road. I feel happy knowing that I helped improve the rural sanitation in my commune.”*

# Increasing Women's Influence in the Household

*"When the wife made the decision, the latrines were more hygienic."*

Through our OBA approach, Thrive Networks has reached over 150,000 households in Vietnam with hygienic latrines. A key factor in this success is Thrive's partnership with the 5,000 Vietnam Women's Union volunteers who deliver the program. Women's Union volunteers focus explicitly on reaching the poorest 40% of households, and importantly, they directly target women with information and access to credit. Thrive conducted a study to understand whether and how our rural sanitation program (CHOBA) in Vietnam increases women's empowerment in the household.

The study included 517 households, in which we had data on whether the decision to install a latrine was made by the wife, the husband, or jointly. Using quantitative analysis, the study found that without CHOBA, the wives would be the sole or joint decision-makers in 45% of the households. Thanks to CHOBA, this rate increases to 69% of households. The most significant elements of the program that had positive effects on the wife's decision-making role in latrine purchase included:

- When a Vietnam Women's Union Mobilizer informed the wife about what type of latrine is hygienic
- When the Vietnam Women's Union assisted the wife in obtaining and processing a loan for the latrine



## CONCLUSION

Empowering women with practical information on latrine options, costs, and recommendations for masons increased her influence within overall household decision-making. Women demonstrated higher levels of interest in the health and privacy aspects of the latrines while men gave greater weight to costs. The greater the role of women in the decision, the more hygienic the latrine construction and maintenance.

# Complementary Interventions

Thrive Networks wanted to understand how sanitation marketing (SanMark) and OBA subsidies affect latrine uptake and whether or not subsidies to underserved households might decrease latrine uptake by better-off households.

Together with the Water and Sanitation Program of the World Bank, we examined the differences in latrine uptake across three income levels in 120 villages in Cambodia exposed to an OBA subsidy (rebate and discount), SanMark alone, or both interventions combined. The study found

that the availability of subsidies to households with lower incomes increased latrine adoption among all households. Meanwhile, there was no evidence of pro-poor subsidies acting as a disincentive to wealthier households to purchase and build latrines.

## Advancing Fecal Sludge Management in Vietnam

As part of its research grant under CHOBA 2, Thrive Networks' is joining the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) to pilot technical and service delivery options to address the lack of rural fecal sludge management (FSM) in Vietnam.

While hundreds of thousands of septic tank latrines have been built in rural Vietnam over the past decade, there are currently little to no systems in place for emptying and safe disposal. Thrive Networks will work with the Vietnam Women's Union, the Ben Tre provincial government, and

local stakeholders to develop a delivery ecosystem capable of providing high quality and sustainable FSM service. If suitable technical options are identified in the feasibility study, a pilot project will follow to inform a national FSM policy to support government agencies in the future.



Latrine coverage across income levels and intervention type

	Sanitation Marketing	OBA Subsidy	Both Interventions
Wealthiest households	18%	7%	25%
Median households	29%	22%	33%
Poorest households	8%	17%	33%

**RESEARCH:**

## Nudging a Hand Washing Habit

When was the last time you gave a child a nudge? For example, that gentle prompt to change a behavior such as sitting up straight. Can visual nudges at school, such as reminders painted on a walkway, influence children's hand washing behavior? And do the effects of nudging last over time? Through deworming studies and surveys in 3,119 schools in four provinces of Vietnam, we found that 85% of schools have hygienic latrines and, when soap is available, nudges do have a significant impact on hand washing behavior.

### PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OBSERVED WASHING HANDS (with hand washing station located close to the latrine)

	Without Nudges	With Nudges	Percent Increase
Boys	37%	65%	28 percentage points
Girls	51%	77%	26 percentage points
All Students	43%	70%	27 percentage points

These results are just one piece in a complex puzzle Thrive Networks is working to better understand in order to promote healthier behaviors.



## WATER SYSTEMS

# Delivering Last-Mile Clean Water Services

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Water programs reach underserved and drive operating efficiencies by making payments to service providers for each new household connected to a rehabilitated water supply network. Properly structured financial incentives can promote “last-mile” service delivery by creating a market attractive to private sector.

With financial support from Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Thrive Networks connected 7,041 households in Vietnam and 350 households in Cambodia to clean water systems in 2016. Most are piped village water system with metered household connections. A smaller number are school-based water systems. Thrive Networks transfers ownership and management of these water systems to government or private operators once they are operational.

With funding from Grundfos, Thrive Networks completed five projects delivering safe water to 2,758 households. Training was conducted for ten enterprises and six sessions to raise awareness about clean water and sanitation. Negotiations were completed to assign costs per connection with a local clean water provider for the Que Thuan project, funded by Andersons, and a main pipe was installed at the Dai Tan project.

# Digital Monitoring & Evaluation System Receives High Marks

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Thrive Networks successfully launched a digital monitoring system this year to provide accuracy, efficiency, and high-quality reporting. Donors, including Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, reviewed and gave positive feedback about the system.

Thrive Networks' digital monitoring effectively saves time and reduces reporting errors. We developed a database for 240 water schemes funded and built by Thrive Networks within the last 15 years, and the database identified numerous challenges and provided insight for future strategy for Thrive Networks' Water program.

National and provincial counterparts in Vietnam (NCERWASS and PCERWASS) are eager to apply the digital monitoring system to their work in order to increase integrity and productivity, find and reduce water leakage, and improve their services to rural households. We intend to hand over the system and provide technical assistance to local counterparts in Ben Tre province to set up digital water network management for PCERWASS.

In the coming year, use of the digital monitoring system will expand to other projects in Cambodia and Vietnam, such as the Private Sector Innovations project and Fecal Sludge Management research. We will use it to implement quality assurance for WASH projects and expect to become more efficient at internal monitoring for project management, conducting an internal audit, and monitoring trips to the field. It will also support plans to conduct evaluations and consumer satisfaction analysis, focusing on WASHOBA projects.

# Smart Incentives Encourage Private Sector to Build Rural Water Systems

Through the \$1.6 million Private Sector Innovations Project, The Government of Australia is supporting the Government of Vietnam's efforts to mobilize private investment using output-based incentives. Thrive Networks' East Meets West program, alongside the Australian Water Association and provincial governments, has attracted five private enterprises in three provinces to compete in a bidding process to build and maintain rural water systems where households cannot afford the cost.

Smart subsidies are paid to private installers when all target households in the service area are connected to the scheme and have water with sufficient pressure and quality.

Thrive Networks calculated the full life cycle cost of construction, management, maintenance, and depreciation of rural water schemes, and then used a life cycle revenue

model to project the total income over the life of the scheme.

The difference between the full life cycle costs and revenue is covered by the output-based subsidy. The subsidy is designed to incentivize private investment in a market that, without intervention, is not attractive enough.

When the subsidy is agreed upon, enterprises bid for the project through a competitive tendering process. The winners then finance and construct the schemes.

## Innovations in Public/Private Partnerships

Thrive Networks signed Memorandums of Understanding with Ha Nam and Son La provinces to pilot public-private water supply ecosystem models that will use an OBA approach to provide subsidies for investment in rural water schemes.

The Australian Water Association (AWA) is taking the lead to provide the technological innovation component in Son La province. The bidding process will select private enterprises to deliver 3,000 new household water connections (1,000 household connections in Son La and 2,000 in Ha Nam).

In preparation for the bidding process, the following steps have been completed or are underway:

- i. Project locations have been selected in each province
- ii. A baseline survey was conducted in Ha Nam
- iii. Consultants have been contracted to manage the competitive bidding process to select private enterprise service providers

# Simple Health Solutions Keep Children in School



Keeping children in school is the best way to improve their opportunities for financial security as adults. However, when a child's body is fighting a helminth infection, attending school can become physically impossible. The worm infection interrupts the body's ability to absorb nutrients, causing anemia and malnourishment that can impair the child's mental and physical development. With no energy or strength, paying attention in the classroom or simply getting to school becomes an insurmountable obstacle.

In November 2016, 715,812 primary students (98% of all enrolled students) in more than 3,000 schools across four provinces in Vietnam were given a safe, effective, and low-cost medication to cure infection by intestinal parasitic worms. This is the second round of the mass drug administration (MDA) to fight soil-transmitted helminth infection in children and was made possible by a four and a half year, \$2 million grant from the Dubai Cares charitable foundation to Thrive Networks.

The deworming program has trained 7,900 health service providers and teachers with additional funding from The Vietnamese Ministry of Health and Vietnamese Health Environment Management Agency; the National Institute of Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology; and the Ministry of Education and Training. A major objective of this program in Vietnam is to assess if integrating hygiene education in schools with school-based deworming can further reduce infection rates.

Positive results of this research will provide the evidence base to scale up a nationwide integrated deworming and hygiene education program that will help to combat soil transmitted parasitic worms, protecting the health of students throughout the country so that their academic dreams become reality.

# SPELL Scholarships Keep At-Risk Students in the Classroom

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Poverty is the single greatest threat to ending a child's education early. SPELL – Scholarship Program to Enhance Literacy and Learning – is a holistic approach that helps students from the poorest districts in Vietnam graduate from high school.

In 2016, 1,536 girls and 775 boys received scholarships for school fees, books, uniforms and intensive academic tutoring. These students performed well and achieved the following:

- 97.3% of 9th grade SPELL students were accepted into secondary school
- 93% of 12th grade SPELL students graduated, matching to the national average
- 35.2% of 12th grade SPELL students were accepted to university, maintaining the trend of 35% in 2015 and an increase from 25% in 2014.

SPELL also supported training programs on teamwork and presentations skills for students. The program develops youth who are motivated to improve their communities. Almost 92% of SPELL students attended volunteer activities in 2016.

In 2017, SPELL continues to aim for high student graduation and achievement rates and plans to provide laptops for 30% of students.



## COMPASSION HOMES

With small individual grants, Thrive Networks constructed 23 new, quality, Compassion Homes in 2016 to shelter 117 people. Some of these homes were built for families of SPELL Scholarship students (including Giay Khen pictured above) and reinforced efforts to keep children most at risk of dropping out in the classroom and on to graduation.

# The Gift that Shelters a SPELL Scholar

Miss Nguyen Thi Tien Linh grew up with her mother and aunt in one of the poorest households in Binh Sa commune, Thang Binh district, Quang Nam province. At 49 years old, Linh's mother works hard as a farmer on a 1,000 meter rice field to provide for Linh and an aunt, who cannot work due to a disability. As the only income earner in the family, sometimes Linh's mother takes additional jobs as a day laborer to make extra money. Still, Linh's mother knows that her daughter's education is the key to Linh having an easier life than she has had. She works every day to keep Linh in school.

When Linh was accepted to the SPELL Scholarship program as a 5th grader, the family lived in a small brick house. Because they could not afford mortar for the walls, light came through between the bricks and water flowed inside the house whenever it rained. In 2013, the tin roof blew away in a typhoon. Thrive Networks replaced the roof, but the house continued to deteriorate. Eventually, a wall fell down. With the tin roof too low, the house became unbearably hot in the sunny season.

Local staff recognized that Linh was at risk of having no shelter and knew that this could cause her to drop out of school. The Compassion Home program intervened to build the family a new house with two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen area, latrine and veranda. It is much sturdier than her old house, with finished brick walls, a cement floor, tile roofing, wooden framed windows, doors, and an electrical system.

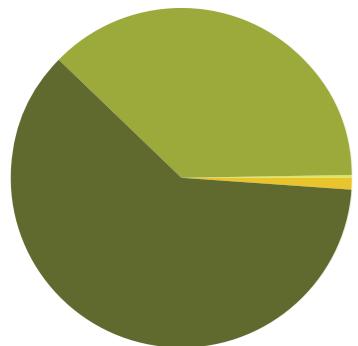
Linh does not take the support her family has received for granted. Ranked an average student in 2009, Linh advanced to become an excellent student with the support of the SPELL. What can a young student achieve with a safe roof over her head and a small scholarship? In July, Linh was accepted into the Economic University and is on her way to college.

The family is overjoyed and Linh's mother called EMW's office to express her sincere thanks. A bright future to Linh and her family!



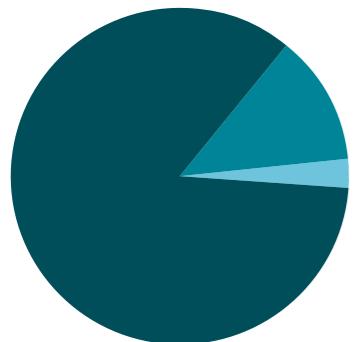
# Financial Information

## Year Ended December 31, 2016



### REVENUE

Grants	\$ 4,305,585	61%
Contributions	2,644,349	38%
Contract Services	24,150	<1%
In-Kind Contributions	59,550	1%
Total Revenue	\$ 7,033,634	



### EXPENSES

Program Services	\$ 7,119,812	85%
Management and General	1,044,123	12%
Fundraising	224,254	3%
Total Expenses	\$ 8,388,189	

### KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

In 2016, Thrive Networks established several key research partnerships, including one with the Institute of Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney (ISF). ISF's existing researchers in the region have been well received nationally and internationally.

Under WASHOBA, efforts continue to improve technical and monitoring skills for people involved throughout the program's implementation.

Twenty-three training courses were provided on data collection, monitoring tools, and verification techniques. More than 50% of the participants were women.

Thrive Networks Water presented the research results of several studies at these international events in 2016:

STOCKHOLM WATER WEEK

BRISBANE WASH CONFERENCE

CSO WASH LEARNING EVENT IN HANOI

TOILET BOARD COALITION MEETING IN MUMBAI

# Major Donors

Thrive Networks acknowledges the individual and institutional donors who make our work possible. We are deeply grateful for your commitment to improving the health and well-being of underserved communities in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

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Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Barbara Morgen and Eric Hemel

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University of South Carolina Athletics

Hai Duong Women's Union

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Preventative Medical Centres *Vietnam*

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