

## **6 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY**

An analysis of the data collected directly from PWD in all the sections of this report are taken along three major dimensions. The first dimension is provincial, i.e. data are analyzed separately for each province, as each provincial sample is representative for the PWD population of that province only. Here, however, we also want to identify commonalities and variations, if any, of the comparative situation relating to PWD across the studied provinces of Thai Binh, Quang Nam – Da Nang, and Dong Nai.

The second key dimension in the analysis is between a group of PWD whose disability was probably caused by AO exposure, and another other group of PWD whose disability was caused by other factors (see the sub-section on the causes of disability). As mentioned earlier, one important aim of the study is to identify the difficulties and vulnerabilities of PWD who are considered (subjectively by the local authorities, communities, families and themselves) to be affected by Agent Orange. However, since it is not the purpose of this study to identify with any degree of certainty who precisely are victims of AO, we adopt here an alternative approach: examining the situation of people whose disabilities are reportedly (by local authority, community, family and themselves) caused by AO, and also those whose disabilities are congenital. As has been previously documented, contact with AO mostly led to birth defects and children with congenital disabilities. Thus, the difficulties of those with congenital disability are likely to be similar to those of AO-affected PWD. For convenience of analysis therefore, the PWD included in these two categories are hereafter named Group A. For PWD of other types, they are included in Group B for the purpose of analysis.

The third dimension is between three cohorts of PWD aged between 1 and 29, 30 and 49, and 50 and above. The purpose here is not only to see if there is any cross-generational difference regarding the situation of PWD in the samples. It also serves the purpose of giving us a clearer picture of the disability situation of each PWD cohort in the context of his or her specific historical periods of pre-1957; 1957-1976; and 1977-present. It should be noted that the second cohort were born during a period coinciding with the Vietnam War. AO was used in Vietnam during the decade spanning 1961-1971. In this survey, the majority of the cases whose disability was claimed to be AO-affected were located in the second and mostly the third cohort. We thus expect to see differences in terms of disability-related difficulties among the three cohorts as well.

Indeed, in the course of our analyses, any additional gender differential will be clearly noted.

### **6.1 Demographic characteristics**

#### **6.1.1 Age**

Table 9 presents the age structure of PWD in the three provinces at the time of the survey (From July through September 2006). We can see that there was a rather even distribution of

PWD across age cohorts, except for the case of Quang Nam – Da Nang and Dong Nai where there were higher proportions of PWD aged 19 or younger.

### 6.1.2 Gender

There were more male PWD in the samples across the provinces, compared to female PWD: 60 versus 40 percent in Thai Binh; 62 versus 39 percent in Quang Nam-Da Nang, and 58 versus 42 percent in Dong Nai. In general, we can say that male PWD accounted for about 60 percent of the samples. These proportions are relatively in line with the national figures in 2003 (63.5% of PWD were male and 36.5% were female).

**Table 9. Age structure of PWD (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN-DN	Dong Nai
1-19	16.4	23.0	29.9
20-29	14.3	11.0	17.4
30-39	15.0	14.6	14.3
40-49	18.8	15.8	14.8
50-59	19.3	18.9	13.1
60+	16.2	16.7	10.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1,822	1806	1869

### 6.1.3 Marital status

For PWD aged from 15 and above, questions on marital status were asked during the survey. While the Marriage Law requires that the minimum age for marriage should be 20 for a man and 18 for a woman, in fact, many people got married at much earlier ages, especially in rural and remote areas. Our survey data show a very high proportion of PWD at the studied provinces who were unmarried (Table 10). This high figure shows clearly how disadvantaged the PWD were regarding marriage. As shown in Section 8 of the report, PWD are considered by the community to be “unsuitable” for marriage, as they will not be able to support their own family; having and raising children; even creating further “burdens” for their spouses and other family members. For PWD with congenital disability, mental health problems, or considered dioxin-related disability, there was even a fear that their disability would be transmitted across generations.

There was a tremendously sharp disparity in marital status between male and female respondents, as shown in Table 11, with much higher proportions of married males compared to married females. For example, while nearly 70 percent of male respondents aged 15 and above in Thai Binh were married, the figure for females was just about 20 percent. A similar situation was also found in Quang Nam – Da Nang and Dong Nai.

**Table 10. Marital status of PWD (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN-DN	Dong Nai
Married	48.8	46.2	34.7
Widow	3.8	7.1	5.3
Unmarried	44.3	43.0	57.0
Divorced/separated	3.0	3.7	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1643	1521	1492

**Table 11. Marital status of PWD by gender (%)**

	Thai Binh		Quang Nam-Da Nang		Dong Nai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Married	68.1	19.9	60.7	22.1	43.8	21.5
Widow	1.6	7.2	3.2	13.7	2.6	9.1
Unmarried	27.2	70.0	33.2	59.4	51.0	65.6
Divorced/separated	3.1	2.9	2.9	4.9	2.6	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	986	657	950	571	879	613

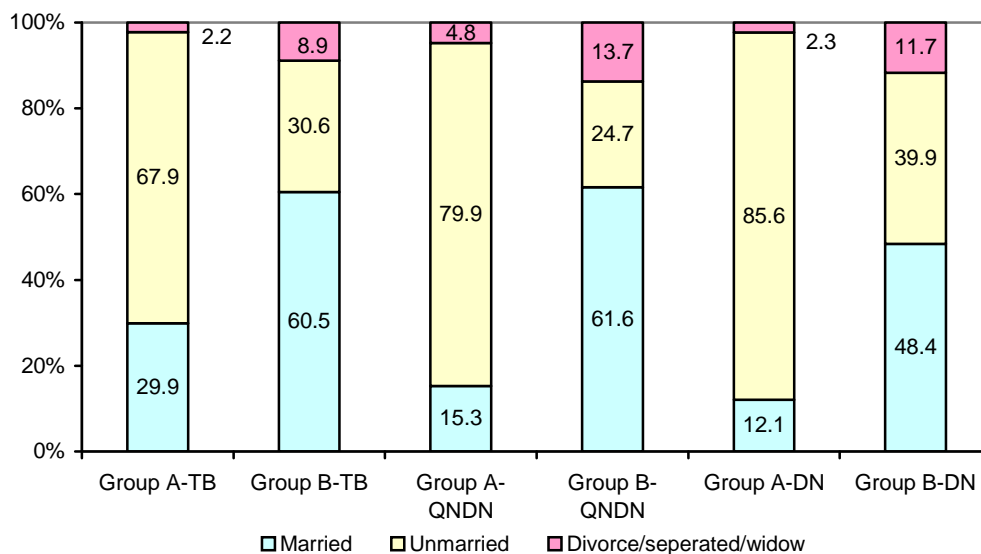
Conversely, unmarried respondents featured predominantly among females. In Thai Binh, the gap was between 70 percent of the females versus 27 percent of males. For Quang Nam – Da Nang, the gap was 59 percent for females compared to 33 percent of males. In Dong Nai, it was 66 versus 51 percent.

Clearly, the community’s perception of marriage needs for males with disability and their female counterparts were different. Marriage was, to some extent, a taboo for females with a heavy disability. Section 8 of the report pursues further analyses of such perceptions on marriage and having children of PWD from families and communities.

*Marital status of PWD in Group A*

It is quite clear from the data that the PWD in Group A are more likely to be unmarried, due to the severity of their disabilities. There is a common fear among community people that those PWD will produce children with congenital disability genetically. Thus, as presented in Chart 15, the proportion of married individuals in Group A was extremely low, particularly in Quang Nam – Da Nang and Dong Nai. Conversely, the proportion of unmarried PWD in this group was much higher than that of the other group. In Quang Nam – Da Nang, it was almost 80 percent. In Dong Nai, it was almost 86 percent.

**Chart 15. Marital status of PWD aged 15+ by Groups A and B (%)**



**6.2 Educational attainment**

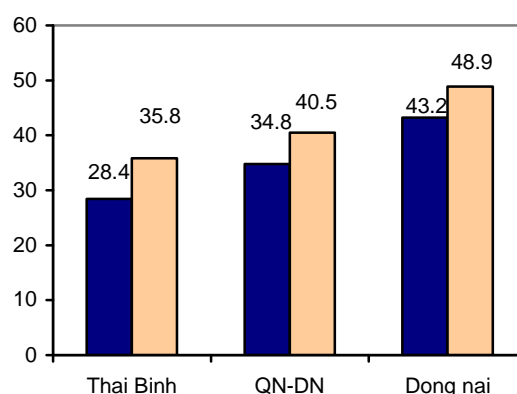
Disability is a clear obstacle for PWD in attaining an education. In the survey, questions regarding education and difficulties at school caused by disability were put to all the PWD aged between 6 (starting age for schooling) and 30 (age when most education, including higher education should be completed). The data shows that one in every three PWD in this cohort in Thai Binh and Quang Nam-Da Nang never attended school. The figure in Dong Nai province was much higher, close to one in every two (Table 12).

There is a gap in education between males and females. Compared to their male counterparts, more females with disability had never attended school at the time of the survey, and this differential was found in all the surveyed provinces. Thus, in Thai Binh, while the percentage of males with disability who had never attended school was already high, 28 percent, for females with disability, it was much higher, 36 percent. Similarly, in Quang Nam, the proportion was 35 percent for males and 41 percent for females. In Dong Nai, the figures are highest: 43 percent for males and 49 percent for females. In other words, of nearly every two females with disability we met in Dong Nai, one had never attended school at the time of our survey. Gaps in education between males and females were already found in other national surveys for the general population. It was reintereinted with our representative samples of PWD in the selected provinces (Chart 16).

**Table 12. School attendance of the PWD aged 6 to 30 (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN-DN	Dong Nai
Currently in school	24.9	27.4	21.3
Attended	43.4	35.3	33.0
Never attend	31.7	37.3	45.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	542	558	822

**Chart 16. PWD who never attend school by gender (%)**



Regarding levels of educational attainment, at the time of the survey, about 40 percent of PWD in the three provinces had achieved only education that was lower than primary level. This means they could at best know how to read, to write and do the most basic arithmetic only. Some had finished primary education but did not complete the lower secondary level of education. Those who achieved upper education attainment were very few, less than 10 percent in all the provinces. Those who got and completed higher education levels were particularly rare. For example in Quang Nam – Da Nang, there were only 4 PWD with a college degree. In Dong Nai, the number was only 2. None of the PWD in our survey of Thai Binh province had graduated from college or university (Table 13).

**Table 13. Educational attainment of PWD (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN-DN	Dong Nai
Below primary	39.7	40.9	41.5
Below lower secondary	27.0	29.1	32.3
Below upper secondary	18.9	17.4	16.1
Upper secondary	8.6	7.1	7.8
Vocational/under college	5.7	4.3	1.8
College graduate	0.0	1.1	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	370	350	446

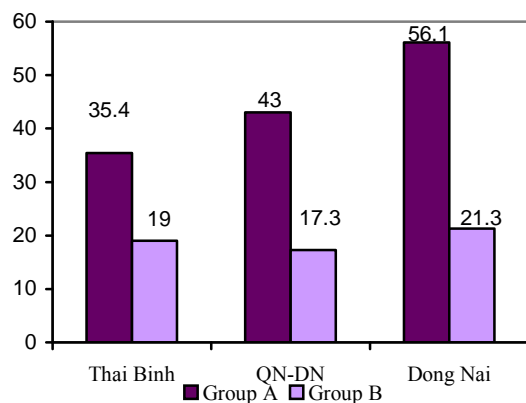
*Education of PWD in Group A*

The educational situation of PWD in Group A was even worse. Thus, while the proportion of PWD of other disability types who had never attended school was already high, the figure for PWD of the group of AO-suspected and/or congenital disabilities was about double in all three provinces (Chart 17).

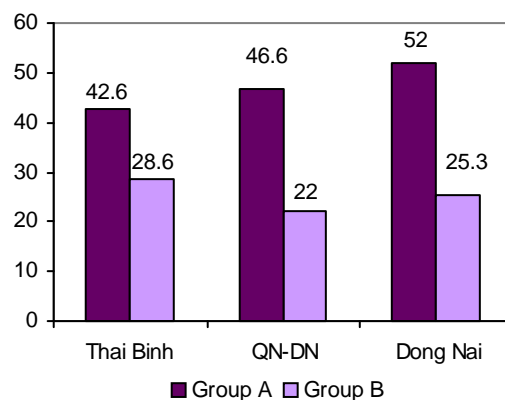
Education attainment levels of PWD in Group A were also frustrating, compared to the other group of PWD. Similar to the above situation, the proportion of PWD from group A who

only achieved an education that is below primary level was more than double in Quang Nam – Da Nang and Dong Nai. In Thai Binh, the gap was also large, 43 versus 29 percent (Chart 18).

**Chart 17. Percentage of PWD who never attended school by Group A/B**



**Chart 18. Percentage of PWD in Groups A and B having education below primary level**



### 6.3 Employment

For the cohorts of PWD aged 15 and above, the proportion of those currently working was low across all three provinces. One third of PWD interviewed in Thai Binh used to be employed, but by the time of the survey, they were no longer employed. Indeed, disability was the main reason given why they could no longer work. For Quang Nam – Da Nang and Dong Nai, the proportion was 30 percent and 27 percent. There were quite high percentages of respondents who had never worked in all of the three provinces. In Dong Nai, almost one in every two PWD aged 15 and above has never been in employment. In Quang Nam – Da Nang, it was one in every three. In Thai Binh, the proportion was almost 40 percent. As explained in the next section, disability was the major cause of their unemployment (Table 14).

**Table 14. Employment status of PWD aged 15+ (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN-DN	Dong Nai
Currently employed	28.0	35.9	25.4
Used to be	33.7	29.8	26.9
Never be employed	38.3	34.3	47.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1643	1521	1492

Compared to males, females in the samples had a more disadvantaged employment status, with less currently working, used to work, and never been employed. For example, in Quang Nam – Da Nang, while 41 percent of male PWD in the cohort were working by the time of the survey, for female PWD, the ratio was just 27 percent. Similarly in Dong Nai, 30 percent of males were working versus 19 percent of females. In Thai Binh, the gap was 31 percent for males and 24 percent for females.

Also, fewer females had been employed before the time of the survey. The data indicate that, except for Quang Nam – Da Nang, the proportion of

**Table 15. Employment status of PWD by province and gender (%)**

	Thai Binh		QN – DN		Dong Nai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Currently employed	30.9	23.6	41.1	27.3	30.0	18.8
Used to be	38.6	26.3	30.0	29.4	31.2	20.7
Never be employed	30.4	50.1	28.9	43.3	38.8	60.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	986	657	950	571	879	613

females who had been employed were about 10 percent less compared to their male counterparts in Thai Binh and Dong Nai. The gap between males and females was largest regarding the proportion of those who were never employed: 30 versus 50 percent in Thai Binh, 29 versus 43 percent in Quang Nam – Da Nang, and 39 versus 61 percent in Dong Nai (Table 15).

All these above figures suggest serious inequalities in employment between males and females. Analysis of the current occupational structure of PWD further highlights their employment disadvantage. As we can see in Table 16, there were quite a few PWD working as skilled workers in enterprises, employees of the government sector, teachers, intellectuals, or employers (here named workers/professionals/others), especially in Thai Binh. The majority of PWD were in the agricultural sector as farmers and the low-paid sector as unskilled workers. In Thai Binh and Quang Nam – Da Nang, less than 10 percent of respondents were in petty trade and the service sector. For Dong Nai, however, the proportion was much higher, about one quarter of PWD were working in these occupations.

**Table 16. Occupational structure of PWD (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN- DN	Dong Nai
Farmers	70.0	51.6	29.6
Unskilled laborer	18.7	25.5	33.5
Petty trade/service	8.7	9.7	25.1
Workers/professionals/others	2.6	13.2	11.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	460	546	379

**Table 17. Occupational structure of PWD by gender (%)**

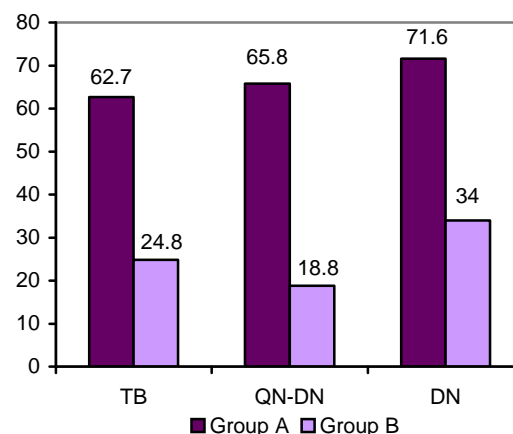
	Thai Binh		QN – DN		Dong Nai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Farmers	70.2	69.7	52.3	50.0	32.6	22.6
Unskilled laborer	19.0	18.1	28.7	17.3	33.3	33.9
Petty trade/service	8.5	9.0	4.6	22.4	23.1	29.6
Workers/professionals/others	2.3	3.2	14.4	10.2	11.1	13.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	305	155	390	156	264	115

Compared to males currently working, females in Quang Nam – Da Nang and Dong Nai were found more in petty trade and services (22 versus 5 percent and 30 versus 23 percent respectively). In Dong Nai, more males than females participated in the agricultural sector (33 versus 23 percent). Males in Quang Nam – Da Nang featured more as unskilled laborers compared to females (29 versus 17 percent) (Table 17).

### Employment of PWD in Group A

For PWD in Group A, it was even harder to get a job. Chart 19 shows a comparison between this group and the group of other PWD regarding the proportion of those who were never employed. In Thai Binh, about 63 percent of PWD in the former group had never been employed, compared to about 25 percent of PWD in the latter group. The gap in other provinces was even larger, 66 versus 19 percent in Quang Nam – Da Nang, and 72 versus 34 percent in Dong Nai.

**Chart 19. Percentage of PWD who had never been employed by Groups A and B**



## 6.4 Disability situation

### Multiple disabilities

As mentioned previously, in total, the survey covered 5,497 PWD aged from 1 to 70 years old living in 4,826 households in the surveyed sites, making a ratio of more than 1.1 people with disability per households. Nearly one in every three PWD in Thai Binh had more than one disability. For other provinces, the proportion was slightly less, about one in every four or five PWD. Compared to males, females having more than one disability featured more prominently in Thai Bin (32 versus 29 percent) and Dong Nai (26 versus 22 percent) (Table 18).

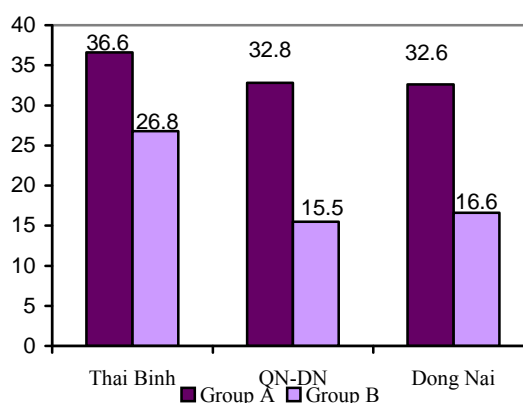
**Table 18. PWD with more than one disability (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN-DN	Dong Nai
Male	29.3	22.4	21.9
Female	32.2	22.9	26.1
All	30.5	22.6	23.6

### Multiple disability of PWD in Group A

The situation is more severe for PWD whose disabilities were likely to be dioxin related or congenital. Compared to other type of disability, PWD in Group A are likely to suffer more than one disability. Chart 20 illustrates that the proportion of PWD having more than one disability in the southern provinces was double that of the other group of PWD. In Thai Binh, the figure was also about 10 percent higher. Having multiple disabilities means more

**Chart 20. Percentage of PWD having multiple disabilities by Groups A and B**



difficulties and vulnerabilities in various areas of life, and this is what PWD in Group A are currently suffering, as shown in the other sections of this report.

### *Type of disability*

In our survey, for convenience of comparison, we adopted the classification used by the Vietnamese ministries. Table 19 presents the distribution of PWD by types of disability and province. As we can see, in all provinces, around a half of the respondents reported motor/moving disability. Hearing disability accounted for about 10 to 15 percent of PWD. People having a speaking disability comprised around 16 percent of the provincial samples.

**Table 19. Types of disability (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN - DN	Dong Nai
Motor	44.6	51.9	46.8
Hearing	15.5	9.8	9.6
Speaking	15.6	15.3	16.2
Vision	17.2	13.9	10.7
Learning	20.5	17.8	20.3
Mental	26.7	17.1	21.0
Others	4.4	5.8	7.7
N	1822	1806	1869

From 11 to 17 percent had vision disability. About one in every 5 PWD experienced learning disability. Mental illness was also serious, as the percentage of PWD suffering from it ranged from 17 to 27 percent, depending on the locality (highest in Thai Binh province).

Compared to males, in all the provinces females with motor disability accounted for a lower proportion. In contrast, the ratio of females with mental illness was significantly higher than that of males in Thai Binh (31 versus 24 percent) and Quang Nam – Da Nang (22 versus 14 percent). There were also higher proportions of females with learning disability compared to males in all the provinces (see Table 20).

**Table 20. Types of disability by gender (%)**

	Thai Binh		QN – DN		Dong Nai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Motor	49.2	37.8	55.4	46.2	49.5	42.9
Hearing	15.7	15.1	9.7	9.9	8.9	10.5
Speaking	14.2	17.7	15.2	15.4	15.4	17.4
Vision	16.8	17.8	14.9	12.4	10.2	11.4
Learning	18.0	24.1	16.6	19.7	17.9	23.7
Mental	23.6	31.3	14.0	22.2	21.3	20.6
Others	4.6	4.1	4.8	7.3	6.4	9.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1087	735	1111	695	1091	778

### *Type of disabilities for Group A*

Not only are PWD in this group likely to have more than one disability, the types of disability they have are also more serious and, in many cases, cannot be improved through rehabilitation. For example, the proportion of Group A's PWD suffering from learning (cognitive/intellectual) disability was triple that of PWD with other types of disability in Thai Binh, nearly fourth times higher in Quang Nam – Da Nang, and fifth times higher in Dong Nai (Table 21). The PWD in Group A were also more likely to suffer from hearing and speaking disability. During fieldwork, we encountered various cases of AO-suspected

disabled people, who are hearing-speaking impaired due to brain suffering caused by cerebral palsy.

**Table 21. Types of disability by Groups A and B (%)**

	Thai Binh		Quang Nam – Da Nang		Dong Nai	
	Group A	Group B	Group A	Group B	Group A	Group B
Hearing	17.5	14.2	13.9	6.9	14.1	6.0
Speaking	22.0	11.3	29.2	5.5	27.2	6.9
Learning	33.2	11.6	31.1	8.4	34.3	7.8
N	732	1045	750	1026	857	961

### *Age getting disability*

The majority of PWD in the studied provinces acquired their disability before the age of 40. Congenital disability was particularly widespread among the samples, accounting for around half the PWD in all three provinces. Early disability thus reduced or even prevented PWD’s education attainment and labor force participation. The data shows that before the age of 20, 67 percent of the sample in Thai Binh, 66 percent in Quang Nam – Da Nang, and 75 percent in Dong Nai were already disabled. By the time they reached 40 years of age, the figures were about 90 percent of the respondents in all the studied provinces. For the community and society in general therefore, a considerable proportion of the labor force was losing labor capacity. The consequences for the family was that many became dependents even before they could make an economic contribution (Table 22).

**Table 22. Age getting disability (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN - DN	Dong Nai
Congenital	48.0	46.0	50.1
1-19	19.0	20.2	24.7
20-39	23.6	24.3	16.5
40+	8.6	8.8	8.3
Not know	0.9	0.7	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1822	1806	1869

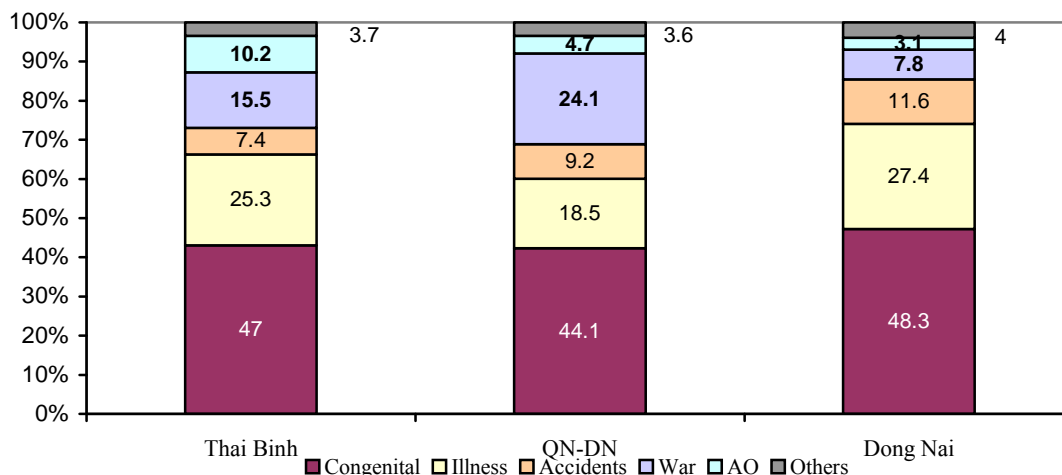
### *Cause of disability*

As previously stated, congenital diseases caused disability for close to half of the samples across the studied provinces. Three other main causes of disability included illness, war (including disability suffered by participating in combat or disability of civilians), and dioxin exposure. In the case of war-related disability, Quang Nam – Da Nang registered the highest number: nearly one in every five PWD. These provinces are well known to have suffered most during the Vietnam War. For Thai Binh, the proportion was close to one in every seven PWD (Chart 21). Thai Binh was the province where many men joined

I was assigned to Quang Tri in about 1966, then to Asau and Aluoi, where fighting was very intense. This area was right on the strategic route for the troops to approach Da Nang. I served in Quang Trung transportation brigade..... In the entire zone, trees had no leaves. They [US airplanes] sprayed herbicides, once in every fifteen or twenty days. Each C130 [planes] sprayed an area of four or five hundred meters on each side [left and right wings]. When they came, we got into our shelter, covering ourselves with clothes or blanket imbued with water as we did not have anti-poison gas masks..... We were exposed to many kinds of toxic chemicals. (Male, Thai Binh)

the army and became involved in battles in the South. Soldiers from Thai Binh were considered to be tough fighters with many injuries incurred, according to one explanation from a local war veteran. Memories of wartime and the U.S. spraying of herbicide remain vivid among ex-soldiers.

**Chart 21. Disability cause (%)**



The consequence of the war on disability prevalence is more obvious if we look at the differentials between males and females. War-related disability was found in 31 percent of males respondents in Quang Nam – Da Nang and 22 percent in Thai Binh. In Dong Nai, it was 10 percent. Figures for females were 5, 13 and 4 percent in Thai Binh, Quang Nam – Da Nang, and Dong Nai respectively (Table 23).

**Table 23. Causes disability by gender (%)**

	Thai Bin		QN – DN		Dong Nai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Congenital diseases	41.2	55.6	39.4	51.7	43.4	55.1
Illness	21.9	30.3	15.8	23.0	25.8	29.6
Accidents	9.1	5.0	10.8	6.6	15.2	6.5
War	22.3	5.4	30.9	13.4	10.4	4.1
Dioxin	11.2	8.6	4.1	5.8	2.6	3.9
Others	3.4	4.1	3.3	4.2	3.9	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1087	735	1111	695	1091	778

Agent Orange, or dioxin, is considered to cause severe conditions for the offspring of people who were exposed to it. The fact that considerable volumes of AO had been sprayed over the territory of the southern provinces by the US Air Force during the Vietnam War and some forms of disability found in the children of Vietnamese soldiers and civilians who had been in sprayed areas were identified by the government as evidence of dioxin-induced disability. While the debate about whether AO is the direct cause of disability of a high number of Vietnamese people continues, subjectively 10 percent of the sample in Thai Binh, 5 percent in Quang Nam – Da Nang, and 3 percent in Dong Nai were thought to be caused by it. If we

include people whose congenital diseases were likely to be AO related, then the proportion of AO-affected disability would certainly be higher.

### *Degree of disability*

Because our sampling frame was drawn from the official lists of PWD provided by the local authorities (at provincial and commune/ward levels), the majority of PWD selected in the survey were those whose disabilities were visible and serious. This was also reflected in the subjective ranking of PWD themselves when being asked to scale their disability.

Thus, in Thai Binh 95 percent of PWD self-classified as having a heavy or medium disability. The proportion for Quang Nam – Da Nang and Dong Nai provinces was similarly high, 95 and 88 percent, respectively. Only a minority of PWD in these provinces considered their disability as “light” (not serious) (Table 24).

The concentration of PWD with heavy/medium disability was roughly the same for both males and females, with slightly higher proportions of females in these categories compared to their male counterparts (Table 25).

Compared to other PWD, the proportion of Group A PWD who considered their disability as ‘heavy’ was even higher, as shown in Chart 22.

**Table 24. Degree of disability (%)**

	Thai Binh	QN - DN	Dong Nai
Heavy	58.5	52.0	51.3
Medium	36.0	42.9	36.6
Light	5.5	5.1	12.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1822	1806	1869

**Table 25. Degree of disability by gender (%)**

	Thai Binh		QN - DN		Dong Nai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Heavy	57.2	60.4	50.9	54.0	50.7	52.2
Medium	36.3	35.5	43.5	41.9	36.7	36.5
Light	6.4	4.1	5.7	4.2	12.7	11.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1087	735	1111	695	1091	778

**Chart 22. Heavy disability by Groups A and B (%)**

