

Dear members and friends,

We are pleased to report to you in this newsletter the status of some of the projects that we have been helping in Vietnam. To ensure that all our aid monies go exclusively to the intended targets, these projects were subjected to vigorous scrutiny before being selected.

Apart from raising funds for and managing these projects, recently we have also initiated a number of social functions to strengthen friendship and to increase interactions among the Foundation members and supporters.

If you have any comment on our aid projects or suggestion on the type of activities that you would like to have, please drop us a line at mail@vietnamfoundation.org.au. We love to hear from you.

We thank you very much for your support, be it your cash donation for the aid projects, or your time or services for the various activities of the Foundation. We have no paid employees and rely entirely on our volunteers in both Australia and Vietnam. Therefore, every contribution from you is precious and is very much appreciated.

We look forward to your continuing support, and hope to see you more often in our future activities. If you do not receive this newsletter electronically, it is because we do not have your email address. Please let us know your email address so that we can communicate with you effectively.

With our best wishes! Peace and Happiness!

The BOD of the Vietnam Foundation.



Dr Nguyen Thien Tong, our representative in Vietnam, (left, front row) with the children of Kim Dong Primary School in front of their new classrooms at their opening on March 9, 2010.

VIETNAM FOUNDATION * Helping Hands from Australia

ABN 60 071 999 838 * CFN 15347

* www.vietnamfoundation.org.au

* mail@vietnamfoundation.org.au

* PO BOX 57 Sans Souci, NSW, 2219, AUSTRALIA

Kim Dong Primary School

The 3 classrooms at Kim Dong Primary School, which we raised funds for during our 'Truong Lang Toi' dinner in September 2009, were completed and handed over to the local community on March 9, 2010.

The school is located in Dak Ngo village, Tuy Duc district, Dak Nong province, in the Central Highlands. Dak Ngo is a new settlement located in an isolated area near the Cambodia border and about 150 km from Gia Nghia provincial town. The population consists mainly of ethnic minorities, specially the H'mong, who migrated from Northern provinces. These people settled themselves sparsely in the area and make their living by growing cash crops such as corn, cassava, cashew nuts, etc. Public facilities in the area are still basic: access to grid electricity is limited; the road network is poor and consists of dirt roads which are dusty in the dry seasons and very muddy in the wet seasons.

The school was first established in 2002 to provide education for the growing migrant population. Today it has more

than 1,000 pupils in 39 classes, with children of ethnic minorities making up more than 90% of the total. The school facilities are spread over 7 separate locations. It has however only 8 standard classrooms with a total area of 320 square metres and 6 temporary makeshift structures. Many young children have to walk long distances to get to their classes.

The three new classrooms, of 62 square metres each, were built to replace some of these temporary classrooms and will be used by about 200 pupils. The construction cost of the new classrooms was VND 277M, of which the Foundation contributed VND 264M. Tuoi Tre newspaper contributed the balance and the management of the project. The local population contributed labour for the clearing of the land, building ground works and classroom furniture.

The hand-over of the classrooms was reported in the local press at:

<http://www.tuoitre.com.vn/Tianyon/Index.aspx?ArticleID=367452&ChannelID=406>



1. Typical existing temporary classrooms.
2. The three new classrooms built with our support.

Mai Am Hong An' Orphanage

'Mai Am Hong An' (Blessed Sweet Home) orphanage is unique among many similar organisations. It owes its existence and growth to the generosity and tenacity of a remarkable woman: the paraplegic Vuong Ngoc Suong, who, at the age of 24, was rendered disabled by a fall while doing charity work. Despite her handicap, with boundless love, compassion and energy, Ms Suong takes into her care abandoned children. Some were abandoned because they were severely disabled, needing 24-hour care or thought by many as having no prospect of survival. Ms Suong cares for them, feed them, sends them to schools and some time even marries them off when they have grown up.

The orphanage was originally in only one location, Ms Suong's own home in HCMC. Due to the need to care for the growing number of discarded children, Ms Suong enlisted the help of her parents, turning their property in rural Tay Ninh into the second site for the orphanage. The original site now looks after about 12 children. The Tay Ninh site caters for about 30 younger children, aged from a few months to 16 years old, some of them severely disabled.

The Foundation helped the orphanage with the renovation of the living, sleeping and studying areas for the children at Tay Ninh site, providing them with ceiling fans, book shelves, beds, beddings and mosquito nets. In addition, we also helped the orphanage to acquire 20 piglets and to install a biogas system. The original piglets have produced a larger number of offspring, which are now the source of food and income for the orphanage. The wastes from these pigs are used as input for the biogas system, and are now the source of free, clean energy for cooking. The VND 8M investment in the biogas system has resulted in the saving of VND 10M off the orphanage's VND 18M fuel bill annually.

Our support for the orphanage amounts to VND 109M. Most of the work has been completed. Outstanding works include the renovation of the toilet block, furnishing the class room, and installation of a voltage regulator, which will help the orphanage, being far away from the main electric grid, lessen its dependence on energy produced from its highly polluting and costly-to-run diesel generator.



1. Ms Vuong Ngoc Suong with a young orphan.
2. The new bunk beds that we supplied for the children.
3. Before the beds were provided children used to sleep on bare floor.
4. Part of the biogas system.
5. Gas stoves fuelled by biogas.
6. Old wood-fired stoves used before the biogas system was installed.

'Village Chance' Project

The 'Village Chance' is a new project undertaken by Maison Chance, an organisation founded by the extraordinary Swiss painter Tim Aline Rebeaud. Visiting Vietnam as a tourist in 1992, Tim was so moved by the plight of the street children that the young artist returned the following year to help these children. With the support of her family, friends, and the proceeds from her own

paintings, Tim, at the age of 19, set up a place to house and care for the disabled and homeless children.

From its humble beginning, thanks to Tim's dedication, Maison Chance today is home for 50 orphans and disabled persons. It also provides free general education, vocational training and health care for these residents and about 200 poor children living in the neighbourhood.

The 'Village Chance' is built on a 3,513 square metres plot of land at the outskirts of HCMC and will consist of 40 residential units providing accommodation for about 125 disabled persons, a school for 180 students, sports facilities, physiotherapy facilities, medical centre, canteen, dining room, etc. The foundation stone for the project was laid in October 2009. Construction is now well underway and scheduled to be completed by early 2011. The total cost of the project is about USD 1.2M.

The Foundation lent Maison Chance a helping hand by sponsoring, in September 2008, Tim's visit to Australia. We organised our own fund-raising dinner in Sydney and took Tim to visit various community groups in Sydney and other cities, who in turn also held many other fund-raising functions for the project. Almost AUD 235,000 was raised from donors in Australia during Tim's visit, including our AUD 35,829 contribution.

In addition to the Vietnam Foundation's direct financial support to the project, a young member of the Foundation, Kim Anh Nguyen spent 6 weeks during April-May 2009 giving free computer training to Maison Chance's disabled residents. Some of these have now found employment with local companies. [At the same time, while in Vietnam, Kim also helped the 'Mai Am Hong An' orphanage setting up its web site]

You can see many photos of our 'Tim Vietnam' dinner taken by professional photographer George Bui at <http://www.quangduc.com/photo/tuthienxahoi/cotim/index.html>
See also the video clip at http://www.maison-chance.org/alpha/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=251&Itemid=45



1. Tim Aline Rebeaud at our 'Tim Vietnam' fund-raising dinner on 5/9/2008.

2. Kim Anh with the students of her computer course at Maison Chance in May 2009.

3. The 'Village Chance' under construction in March 2010.

Heifers for Soc Trang farmers

Like many other areas in Soc Trang province, An Khanh village in Ke Sach district has a high percentage of Khmer and Chinese ethnic minorities. Most of the villagers engage in agriculture and aquaculture. More than 20% live under property line.

In co-operation with Heifer Project International (HPI), a US NGO, the Foundation is supporting a project which aims to improve the livelihood of 44 families in this area. Each of the families is gifted with a heifer (young female cow). Two of the families are also gifted with a breeding bull each. In addition, the participant families also receive micro-credits to start cash crop production or small-scale business to supplement their incomes. The families are organised into self-help groups which have regular meetings to support one another and to be taught on topics such as livestock management, animal health care, agro-ecology, integrated farming, enterprise development, human nutrition, HIV, etc. The participant families are trained and helped for 3 years. When the original heifers produce offspring, the offspring are then passed on to new families. Similarly, micro-credits are provided as a form of revolving fund. When the original loans are paid off, the proceeds are used to on-lend to new families. With this process, the original outlays can be used to help at least 44 more families.

The Foundation contributed AUD 18,000 to the project. The selected farmers have had regular trainings since May 2008. Many of the cattle, which were handed over in June 2008 have produced offspring. Apart from tending their cattle, with the micro-credits many families have set up worm farms, raised pigs, ducks or started small-scale businesses such as incense making, mobile floating coffee shop, etc. Not only having their living conditions improved thanks to the cattle and the small-scale business, by participating in group activities, trainings and discussions, these farmers are more aware of other issues such as gender equity, health, environment and community co-operations.

1. Dr Nguyen Thien Tong and Dr Chau Ba Loc, then head of HPI Vietnam Office, with a participating family on the cattle hand-over day.
2. A self-help-group meeting to review their savings.
3. Farmers in a training/meeting session.



Nam Dong Training and Resource Centre

Nam Dong is a poor mountainous district, approximately 50 km west of Hue. It is close to the A Luoi valley which, during the war years, was heavily sprayed with Agent Orange.

More than 40% of the local population is ethnic Katu minority. They make their living mainly by planting rice, maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, vegetable, or raising buffaloes, cows, pigs, etc.

A high percentage of the children in the area suffers various kinds of mental and physical disabilities, including Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, etc. Some suffer multiple disabilities and many forms of learning difficulties.

There are limited services available for these children and their families. There is no government school specially catering for children with disabilities. Most of these children did not previously have the opportunity to receive adequate education and help to integrate into society.

The Office of Genetic Counseling and

Disabled Children (OGCDC), an NGO associated with the Hue College of Medicine and Pharmacy, started organising classes of special needs for these children. These classes not only require physical classrooms and appropriate training equipment, they also require specially trained teachers.

In conjunction with another NGO in France and a benefactor in the USA, the Foundation is supporting OG CDC to build a 100 square metres Teacher Training and Resource Centre. The centre will be equipped with a library and appropriate equipment and furniture so that it will be able to serve many purposes: an environment for training of teachers of disabled children, a counselling and education centre for families of children with disabilities, a centre for an Early Intervention Program, a meeting place for parents, etc.

The Foundation contributed USD 5,000 to the total project cost of USD 25,000. Construction is well underway and is expected to be completed later this year.



1. and 2. Disabled children in the Nam Dong district.
3. The Training and Resource Centre under construction in February 2010.
4. Architectural impression of the Training and Resource Centre when completed.

Paper Tole Art Class

Paper Tole is the art of making 3-D images from pictures printed on light-weight flexible paper. Usually 6 copies of the selected picture are required to make a Paper Tole picture. Sharp knives or scissors are used to cut the edges of the images to create the background and foreground details. Cut-out pieces are then mounted on a piece of cardboard using silicon glue and foam pieces into a 3-D picture, with a depth of at least 2-3 cm. The finished product could be mounted on a glass frame for wall-hanging .

To popularize this interesting art form, the Foundation organised a free Paper Tole course for its members during November 2009. The course was run by Mrs Thuy Anh, an accomplished artist in this art, in her own workshop, over 4 sessions, each lasting more than 3 hours. Mrs Thuy Anh also donated one of her Paper Tole artworks for auction in our 'Truong Lang Toi' fund-raising dinner. It was sold for more than AUD 2,000.

The Foundation wishes to thank Ms Thuy Anh for the her generosity, kindness and enthusiasm in donating her artwork and conducting art training for our members.

AGM & BBQ at Cabarita

Our AGM was held on October 18, 2009, in a natural surrounding: inside Cabarita Park, on the shore of the Parramatta River.

All the past directors were 'conscripted' for another year of service. The formal

meeting was followed by a delicious BBQ which was hugely enjoyed by almost 50 members and friends.

After the clean up, many stayed behind to enjoy a leisurely, pleasant stroll along the tranquil river, which lasted well into late afternoon.

Cherry Picking Adventure

Orange is about 260 km west of Sydney. Despite its name, Orange produces more apples, pears, apricots, cherries, grapes and many other kinds of fruits than oranges.

On December 5, 2009 twenty of the Foundation members and friends made a 3-hour bus trip to Orange, for a cherry

picking adventure. The 'gang' visited two orchards. All had a wonderful time. Each returned with many boxes full of fresh cherries, not counting the great amounts being consumed while picking was in progress.

Nobody dared to report any tummy upset incident.



1. Some members of the cherry picking 'gang' at a stop-over in Katoomba.



2. Some cherry picking enthusiasts were busy with their demolition work.

'Truong Lang Toi' Fund-raising dinner

*My village school, surrounding verdant foliage,
Gentle songs of thousands of birds.
Leading to my school, a pretty little dyke,
Winding gently through the green tree grove.
My village school, two simple thatch-covered
spaces,
On a dreamy square yard.
I can forget none of its moments,
My village school,
Where live the memories of my youth.
...
My village school,
I can forget none of its memories,
No matter how far away I am from my school.*

They are the lyrics of the beautiful song, 'Truong Lang Toi' (My Village School), by Pham Trong Cau. They seem to live in the heart and soul of every Vietnamese who grew up in rural Vietnam. And so, 'Truong Lang Toi' was the theme for the Foundation's annual dinner on September 5, 2009, which raised fund for the 3 new classrooms at remote Kim Dong Primary School, in Dak Nong province.

Entertainment for the evening was provided by many well-loved Vietnamese

artists in Sydney. Guest speaker was



Margaret Duckett, the CEO of the Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific (AFAP), who presented a brief summary of its works in Vietnam. The artwork auction items, donated by our generous benefactors, were well competed for.

A total of AUD 16,169 was raised on this occasion. The Foundation wishes to thank all members and supporters who attended the dinner, sponsored the event, gave donations or helped with the organising, especially the artists who donated free services and artworks.



1. Margaret Duckett being presented with a memento.

3. The lucky winner of the auctioned artwork with the donor artist.

2. Choral group in a passionate rendition of the 'Truong Lang Toi'.

4. A view of the dinner.