

Dear *members and friends*,

Greetings and welcome to another edition of the VNF e-letter.

It has been some months since we wrote to you or saw you at our “Thương về quê Việt” fund-raising dinner in Canley Vale last February.

Since that time a number of our directors have, between their demanding normal jobs, squeezed in some visits to Vietnam in order to monitor and push along our various aid projects.

PCs for rural universities

As at this writing, we are undertaking a new task which on the surface appears quite simple but is in fact rather demanding: we are sending 120 PCs to Vietnam. To ensure that the PCs are well packed (to avoid damage in transit), correctly labeled and documented in all details (for Customs) and that they can fit in a 20 ft container (to avoid the need for an extra container and additional shipping cost) is a real challenge.

The PCs, slightly used but perfectly functional, were donated by the Australian office of Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), a large international IT company. The donation was the result of efforts by our friend Trần Tấn Tài, who works for the company. This is the second time that, through Tài's initiative, CSC Australia has made such a donation. In 2001, the company donated us 45 PCs and 2 printers which we then passed on to the Lotus College in HCMC.

We are sending the latest 120 PCs to two universities in the Mekong delta: An Giang University and Cửu Long University. Being relatively new and situated in rural areas, these two universities are in dire need of every

thing, from experienced academic staff to suitable training equipment. The PCs will therefore be valuable tools for their IT training laboratories.

Mr Mike Shove, the CEO of CSC Australia, met and presented certificates to Professor Võ Tòng Xuân (Rector of An Giang University) and Professor Nguyễn Phi Long (Vice Rector of Cửu Long University) at a ceremony at the Sheraton Saigon Hotel on 12 June 2006. The gathering was attended by our friends and representatives in Vietnam, staff from CSC, the two universities and the local press. Even though it was an Australian public holiday, Mr Mal Skelly, the Australian Consul General in HCMC also came to lend us his support and convey his greetings.



Prof NP Long, Mr Mike Shove and Prof VT Xuan



Prof. Nguyen Thien Tong, our representative in VN spoke at the ceremony

The cost of collecting and shipping these PCs to Vietnam amounts to around AUD 3000. A number of our supporters have planned various functions to raise funds to re-cover this cost. We sincerely thank CSC Australia for the generous donation and help with the packing and loading of the PCs to our container, Trần Tấn Tài for his dedication and support and the many people who contributed to the shipping cost or helped us overcome various logistical hurdles during the project.

Rest house for carers at Tam Nông Hospital

Many of you are well conversant with and have kindly contributed toward this project in Đồng Tháp province.

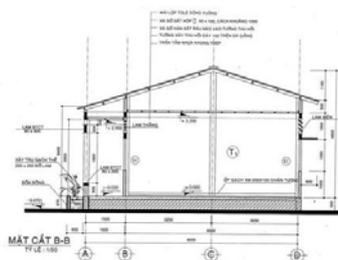
In consultation with a number of architects who have building experience in Vietnam, we have reviewed the proposed design of the rest house. As a result, we now have a modified design which aims for a more robust and well-ventilated structure.

The building now consists of four 8x8 m rooms with an attached toilet block. The total construction cost is expected to be about VND 450M of which we will contribute 360 M (or AUD 30 000).

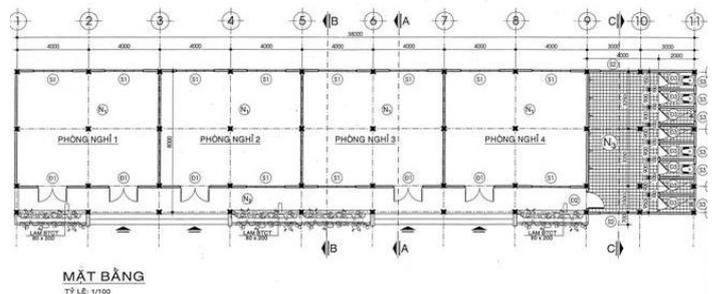
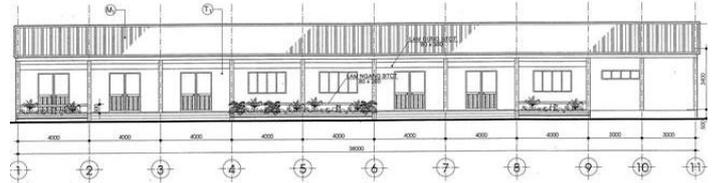
To ensure that all monies donated by our members and supporters are spent judiciously, our own representatives in Vietnam will personally call for tenders, select builder and monitor the construction process.

The building is to be built on re-claimed land on a river bank. The hospital and local people have contributed the land reclamation work and will be responsible for the supply of beds, light fittings etc.

We hope that by the end of the year the carers for the patients at the hospital will have a comfortable place for rest while looking after their sick family members.



Design drawings for the Rest house



Vetiver Grass for waste water treatment

For some time now we have been supporting the University of Cần Thơ in a pilot project which uses Vetiver Grass Technology for the treatment of waste water from a seafood processing plant.

The project involved directing waste water from the Cafatex plant in Cần Thơ into an area of about 800m² which was covered with rows of Vetiver Grass. Waste water was sampled for analysis at 24-hour intervals. The university found that the grass was able to remove, after 48 hours, 90% of Nitrate and 80% of Phosphate in the waste water. Smaller additional amounts of Nitrate and Phosphate were removed if the waste water was left longer in the grass area. The university is continuing with further tests to verify repeatability of these results and to determine the grass planting pattern, age of grass, etc. for best waste absorption.

We have also recently agreed to support a project which uses Vetiver Grass to treat domestic waste water from a re-settlement village in Tam Nông district, Đồng Tháp province. Being a very low area of the Mekong delta, a large part of the district is subjected to severe annual flooding. Therefore, many affected

families have been resettled to higher, artificially raised grounds. Domestic waste water from these crowded re-settlements is currently discharged directly to adjacent lower, dug-out grounds, creating stagnant, polluted ponds during the dry season, which cause a serious health hazard.

We are supporting the peasants in one of these settlements to collect and channel the waste water to a grass growing area. The grass will act not only as absorption filter for the discharged water but also as soil stabilizer, preventing erosion of the embankment of the settlement village.



Embankment where Vetiver grass will be planted to treat discharged waste water from the re-settlement village on the right hand side.

Định Quán primary school

Due to a new planning program by the Định Quán (Đồng Nai province) authorities, the school we originally chose will have to be relocated to a new and as yet unknown location. Therefore, we switched our support to the reconstruction of the two-classroom school at Đồi Mỹ, which is also in Thanh Sơn village, and in an equally appalling condition.



Front view of the school

We spent some time to carefully verify the total estimated cost of VND 203 M. We will contribute 120 M (or about AUD 10 000) toward the building construction. The local people will contribute the balance to cover ancillary works such as fencing, a toilet block and school furniture etc.

The respectable Tuổi Trẻ newspaper, who have been financing and managing many similar social aid programs of their own, will manage this project on our behalf. Construction will begin in August 2006.

It is expected that the youngsters at Đồi Mỹ will have a new, more pleasant and hygienic learning environment in the next school year.



School children in front of the school (side view).

“Thương về quê Việt” dinner

All those who attended our fundraising dinner in February agreed that it was a very enjoyable and memorable night. We planned the dinner for about 150 to 200 people, yet nearly 300 guests turned up. We deeply regretted that we had to turn away a number of people who came without prior booking because the restaurant could not fit in any more seats. Even some of our young family members had to forgo their seats and dinners for the benefit of our guests.



Distinguished composer Xuan Tien

Professor Bruce G Robinson of Sydney University showed the impressive work of the Học Mãi Foundation in the area of medical training for Vietnam. Ms Nhã-Ca Margaret Nguyễn, a Young Australian of the Year 2005, talked and presented a stunning photo collection of her visit to that country.

Many well-known and well-loved accomplished artists as well as talented young musicians contributed an excellent concert program, which included both traditional Vietnamese and classical Western items.

The distinguished composer Xuân Tiên, renowned for many favourite romantic Vietnamese songs, who for many years had not performed in public, dusted off his flute and came to share with us his captivating composition and performance. The willowy Vietnamese-speaking Eleanor Clapham, who studied classical Vietnamese music and opera in Hanoi and was affectionately given Vietnamese name ‘Hoàng Lan’ by her teachers, brought the house down with her beautiful rendition of ‘qua cầu gió bay’.



Clockwise from top left:

1. Professor Bruce Robinson, 2. Nha-Ca Margaret Nguyen, 3. Eleanor Clapham
4. Violinist Thuy Anh Nguyen and cellist Katherine Nguyen with our masterly producer Trung Quang Minh
5. Bach Trang playing the Vietnamese ‘dan tranh’

The exquisite photograph 'Buffalo Boys' by the late distinguished Vietnamese photographer Nguyễn Cao Đàm was hotly competed for during the auction. It went to the lucky bidder after a lively bidding contest for a record AUD 2500.

In addition to about AUD 3000 donated directly into our bank account, we raised more than AUD 14 000 on the night. All the monies raised will be used for our projects in Đồng Tháp and Đồng Nai provinces.



Mrs Nguyen Cao Dam and family with the donated photograph

The success of this fund-raising event was no doubt due to the valuable support that you have kindly given to us through various means such as publicizing the event to friends, going to the dinner, giving or sending in donations, donating items for auction, buying raffle tickets, contributing to the entertainment program, etc. We deeply appreciate your generosity and support. To all of you we offer our sincere, big thank you.

As a token of our appreciation for this support we will be sending you shortly a specially designed, limited-production, bookmark which is based on the 'Buffalo Boys' photograph. The Nguyễn Cao Đàm family not only kindly donated us a rare copy of the photo for auction but also gave us permission to reproduce it for the bookmark.

If you do not receive the bookmark in the post, it is more likely because either we do not have your postal address or the address that you wrote in the donation form during the dinner was illegible to us. Please drop us a line at

mail@vietnamfoundation.org.au

We love to have feedbacks from you.

Till next time

Peace and happiness!

Postscript: latest, unique donation

We have just received a special gift of fifty three-volume sets of short stories by Murakami Haruki (in Vietnamese) donated by Dr Phạm Vũ Thịnh who translated them directly from the Japanese originals. Dr Thịnh is a long-time member of the Foundation and a translator of Japanese and English literature. Murakami Haruki is an important contemporary Japanese writer with many novels and short stories already translated into more than 30 languages. He has been honoured with many prestigious awards; the most recent one is the 2006 Frank Kafka literature prize. To find out more about these books and Murakami Haruki please visit

<http://www.erct.com/Web/PhamVuThinH/>

These book sets are available for sale to members and friends of the Foundation at AUD 40 per set. The proceeds from this sale will be used to support our current aid projects. Please reserve your set early, by contact us on

mail@vietnamfoundation.org.au

