

VIETNAM FOUNDATION

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Dear friends,

Welcome to another edition of e-letter.

A special warm welcome to all those members who joined the Foundation recently. Your endorsement is greatly appreciated. With the more heads and hands we have the more we can achieve for the disadvantaged in Vietnam. Unlike other NGOs that tend to spend a portion of donations on administrative tasks, our organization does channel 100 per cent of your donation toward projects in Vietnam. We therefore rely solely on volunteers in Vietnam and overseas branches to carry out our work. Your membership fees however help cover costs of bank fees, web site maintenance and accountant/auditor services and so on.

This e-letter outlines for you the activities that occurred in the last few months or are planned for the near future. As always your participation and support are not only welcome but highly sought for.

For any feedback or updated news on VNF activities, please reply to or join our mailing list via mail@vietnamfoundation.org.au

Visit by Professor N T Tong

In August 2004 our representative in HCMC, Professor Nguyen Thien Tong visited Australia and was warmly welcomed at a merry and fruitful gathering. Prof Tong was able not only to meet with many new members and directors of the Vietnam Foundation but also many friends whom he had not seen for many years.

New VNF branch in New Zealand

With the joining of Truong Ho Tuan in June 2004, a permanent resident in NZ, our Foundation now has an official representative in New Zealand. Initially Tuan, also a VNF director, is actively working on membership drive and exploring potential sources of donation. He has since June attended a couple of VNF meetings with foundation members.

New supporters in VN

Over the past few months, many of our directors have also visited Vietnam to

foster contacts with friends, representatives and partner institutions such as Tuoi Tre newspaper, Can Tho University, etc.

We are very fortunate to have now, in addition to Professor Nguyen Tien Tong, Ms Nguyen Thuy Hang and Dr Huynh Cong Hoai giving us a helping hand in Vietnam also.

Nguyen Thuy Hang completed her Master degree at Monash University in 2002 and is now working for a marketing company in HCMC. Huynh Cong Hoai lectures at HCMC Polytechnic University. Both Ms Thuy Hang and Dr HC Hoai have been active in the Sacramento Scholarship Program, which was initiated by Vietnamese compatriots living in Sacramento, California, USA.

So next time you visit HCMC, please get in touch with and say hello to these two new friends and helpers.

More disabled children helped by the Vietnam Foundation.

In 2001 the Vietnam Foundation donated the [Friends of Hue Foundation](#) in the USA 2000 USD towards its Corrective Surgery Program. Thanks to this contribution, [13 children of poor families and born with disabilities](#) such as cleft palate, twisted spine, clubbed feet etc were given free operation and rehabilitation.

Continuing with this support, in late 2004 the Vietnam Foundation donated further 770 USD toward the cost of operations for 7-year old Tran Thong, who was severely burnt in a house fire (*photo*), and 2-year old Chau Tuan, who was born with clubbed feet.



Fund raising activity with Hoc Mai.

In a fund-raising dinner organized by Hoc Mai in Nov 2004, Hoc Mai and Vietnam Foundation jointly conducted an auction of Vietnamese artworks and handicrafts. About AUD 650 was raised by the Vietnam Foundation on this occasion. This is a valuable addition to our ever hungry Vietnam Help fund.

Hoc Mai (Forever Learning) is another name of the Australia Vietnam Medical Foundation based at the Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney. Its main activity has been to raise funds for bringing Vietnamese doctors and nurses to Sydney for advanced training. It is planning to build a hostel for the families of patients at Hanoi Hospital.

Some of our members and directors of are also members and committee members of Hoc Mai.

Visit by the founder of KOTO

In its meeting in December 2004, our Board of Directors and members had an opportunity to welcome and hear founder Jimmy Pham describing his work with KOTO. KOTO, or Know One Teach One, is a unique training program for street kids and disadvantaged youth in Vietnam. It is managed by the Australia-based

[Street Voices](#) charity organization, which was set up by Jimmy Pham in 1998. Also set up with Street Voices was the KOTO restaurant on Van-Mieu street in Hanoi. What is unique about this restaurant is that it is a base which, over the past 4 years, has provided employment, training, shelter and support network for 150 homeless children who had previously lived in the streets of Hanoi. 45 children have completed an 18-month training program in the hospitality industry and found permanent employment with restaurants and hotels in Hanoi. The success of this model which provides a meaningful future for street kids who otherwise have none are to be duplicated in other cities, firstly in Hue. The Vietnam Foundation is considering some kind of support to this very commendable effort by KOTO in its restaurant service expansion to Hue.

ATO tax status

As a result of input from many of our members and directors, the Vietnam Foundation has now been re-endorsed by the Australian Tax Office as an Income Tax Exempt Charity. This means that we are not subject to any income tax for any kind of income (membership fees, donations, fund-raising, investments, etc) We are now putting every effort working toward being granted Deductible Gift Recipient status so that your contributions will be tax deductible.

Proposed new school building at Dinh Quan.

Following the completion of the [Ca Lui school, in Phu Yen province](#) we received many proposals for building new schools in DakLak, Tay Ninh and Lam Dong provinces.

In June 2004, with Tuoi Tre representatives our representatives visited 3 proposed locations in Dinh Quan district, Dong Nai province. Of these 3 sites we chose the Nguyen Binh Khiem primary school at Ap 7, Xa Phu Tan for further consideration. It is in a poor, new area, populated mainly by settlers from Northern and Central parts of Vietnam. The school is about 145km from HCM City. It currently consists of 3 wooden classrooms in dilapidated conditions (*photos*).



However it has to cater for 8 classes with about 240 school children. Therefore some local residents have to lend parts of their houses for use as temporary classrooms. There is thus an urgent need to build a new 4-classroom school. However the proposal currently submitted to us is to replace the existing wooden building with a 3-classroom, brick wall and metal roof construction. The cost quoted by the builder is 180M VND. Based on our own experiences with previous school projects and on assessments by independent building consultants we think that the quoted price is rather high. Therefore we are



currently negotiating with local authorities to revise the estimate and to see if local authorities and communities can contribute part of this building cost.

Proposed rest house at Tam Nong Hospital

Tam Nong is a district of Dong Thap province, part of the once very vast area called [Dong Thap Muoi \(Plan of Reeds\)](#). The area is subject to [annual flooding](#) which lasts from 3 to 4 months. Cultivated lands are therefore only productive for about half of the year. Local population has to expense vast amounts of resource toward flood prevention and post-flood restoration.

The Tam Nong Hospital is an old hospital. It has to cater for an ever increasing population living in the local and adjacent areas.

The proposal before us is to build a rest house (nha` nghi~) so that relatives of in-patients of the hospital have somewhere to rest while they care for their sick family members. The proposed building consist of eight 4mx8m rooms, of metal roofs and part brick, part metal walls. A 3mx5m toilet and washroom building is also included.

The total cost of these two structures plus 32 2mx1.4m metals beds for the rest house is estimated at 338 M VND.

We are requesting further information about the proposed project from the local authorities.

Proposed micro credit scheme for peasants around Tra`m Chim National Park.

Tram Chim National Park is also in Tam Nong district, Dong Thap province.

It is one of the [last remnants of the DongThap Muoi wetland ecosystem](#) which previously covers some 700 000 ha of the Mekong delta.

It comprises 7,740 ha that include large areas of seasonally inundated grassland, Melaleuca (tra`m) forest and open swamp.

The park stores water during times of flood and releases it only slowly as floodwater recedes. In doing so the park helps to [mitigate the negative effects of flooding on surrounding agricultural lands and communities](#).

The park is international of the most conservation in the one of the few rice still grows and feeding/breeding endangered water as the red-headed Crane Grus



regarded by many institutions as one important sites for Mekong Delta. It is places where wild is also the site for many bird species such cranes (Sarus antigone – *photo*,

courtesy of [BirdLife International](#).

The park is under enormous conservation challenges. Large areas of the park are being [invaded by an exotic plant species Mimosa pigra](#) (mai duong). The

invaded area has doubled each year and now covers more than 2000 ha of what was once seasonally inundated grassland.

The most important threat to the park is however [the peasants living in the buffer zones around the park](#). Due to poverty, lack of education and awareness of environmental protection issues, they have constantly encroached on the park. Hunting of protected species for food, chopping down of forest for firewood have been the only known ways of eking out a living for many people.

The proposal before us is to support a program which provides education, skill training and low-interest loans to these people so that they can engage on more productive activities such as raising cattle, pigs, ducks, fishes etc.

The fund needed for a program involving 50 to 60 family units is estimated to be 300 M VND.

We are still studying the feasibility of the program.

AGM

All members would have received by now the notice about our AGM.

Please make an effort to attend.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

May the year of the Rooster bring you much Peace and Happiness!