

FINAL REPORT TO DONORS FOR 2014 FINANCIAL YEAR

During the 2014 financial year we made improvements to orphanages and a community kitchen, assisted two households of nuns in tertiary study, improved water supply to a fishing village, and provided help to one indigenous village. We spent \$16,430 of the funds provided by our donors, as summarised below. (**items completed during the January 2014 Vietnam visit*)

EDUCATION

\$800* first payment of sponsored tertiary and school course fees for disabled students and orphans at An Binh Orphanage, Saigon.

\$900* paid for computers for An Binh Orphanage, Saigon. Two new computers were purchased and one computer upgrade with a printer and monitor. Organised by Phap Nguyen, IT volunteer in Saigon.

\$200* purchased library materials for An Binh orphanage. This was done as an outing to a bookshop with interpreter Nhung accompanying nuns from the orphanage.

\$500* helped to grow a student library at Huong Duong (sunflower) Orphanage, near Can Tho. Books, comic books, posters, a globe, and bookshelves were purchased. The project was organised by Hien (interpreter).

\$250* sponsored a student for her Blood Test Diploma at HCM. This was the final semester payment of the sponsorship by Dennis McManus for Thuy, who is attached to the convent at Huong Phuong.

\$450* provided computers and desks for a household of 13 nuns, attached to Holy Cross Order at Huong Phuong, studying university courses in Hue. This project was organised by Huyen, interpreter.

\$500* sponsored a student for English language degree at Hue. This project was sponsored by Leigh Kabaila for Hiep and by Clive West for Huyen, both attached to the convent at Huong Phuong.

\$400* covered interpreter's costs, a sim card, USB internet, and orphanage fund card printing.

\$400* purchased bicycles and blankets. Trang Nua (Vinh) shelter provides for 14 homeless children and is funded by the local convent. We purchased three bicycles and 10 winter blankets.

\$200 provided Internet to An Binh Orphanage. The money was transferred to Nguyen Ban Phap (HCM).

\$250 sponsored the nursing course undertaken by Hien, attached to Huong Phuong convent. The money was transferred to Hien at Danang.

\$800 second payment of sponsored tertiary and school course fees for disabled students and orphans at An Binh Orphanage, Saigon. The money was transfer to Chi Lich (nun in charge of the orphanage).

\$260* provided nursing study equipment for a household of 11 nuns attached to the Holy Cross Order studying nursing in Danang. Stethoscopes and blood pressure testing kits were provided. Chau (interpreter) coordinated this project.

MEDICAL

\$300* reimbursed post-operative care costs for Hieu Nguyen, an acid burn victim at An Binh Orphanage, Saigon. The money was given to Chi Lich, the nun in charge of the orphanage.

\$300* paid for personal and medical costs for Hieu Nguyen, an acid burn victim at An Binh Orphanage, Saigon. A personal bank account was set up for Hieu by interpreter Nhung.

\$200* provided acupuncture and therapeutic massage equipment for Kiem of An Binh Orphanage. Organised by Nhung, interpreter.

\$250* purchased essential infant care supplies and school materials for Buu Tri Temple Orphanage in Can Tho City. The shopping list was made by the nun in charge. Organised by Long Quach, who is associated with Lyneham Vietnamese temple.

\$80* contributed infant supplies for an adopted baby at Cau Giat (Nghe An). We previously sponsored this baby for the cost of a heart operation.

\$150 was spent on mattresses and pillows for a disabled child's room at Bo De Pagoda orphanage. This project was arranged for Megan, an Australian volunteer at the orphanage.

\$200 helped a family in Quang Binh who were severely burnt in a petrol electricity generator explosion. Managed by Trung Tran of Canberra.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

\$140* provided children's clothing for Hung Son indigenous village (about 150km inland from Cau Giat). We distributed clothing to the poorest children. This project was arranged by Thuc, a local priest.

\$400* was spent on chickens and piglets to raise; and blankets and rice to the poorest families in Hung Son indigenous village (about 150 km inland from Cau Giat). The assistance package consisted of two blankets, six pigs, 10 chickens and bags of rice. This project was arranged through Thuc, a local priest.

\$330 assisted three poor families at Hue. Based on budget estimate for 6.3M dong = \$330. Organised by Chau (interpreter).

\$2,700 was provided to three orphanages in Can Tho. The money assisted with the purchases of washing machines, soap etc. This initiative was organised by Hien (interpreter).

\$5,000 improved the water supply to Quỳnh Ngọc fishing village in Nghe An. Based on \$10,000 equipment purchase receipts, plus building cost, total \$15,000. The money was transferred to Thuc, the priest in charge of the water filtration plant.

\$470* purchased chairs and tables for Nga Nam soup kitchen, near Can Tho. A local volunteer group runs this kitchen to provide food for patients at the adjoining medical clinic, students and the poor. Organised by Long Quach who is associated with Lyneham Vietnamese temple.

OUR DONORS

I am grateful to our board, Hung, Loan & Tiep, Clive and Long. They have provided me with steady encouragement and support.

Thank you to our faithful weekly contributors Clive, Leigh, Michael and Adrienne, Geoff and Rachelle. Thanks also to our Australian Vietnamese friends Linh, Hung, Loan and Tiep, Long. There were also people, such as Jan & Julie, who committed to sponsor a particular student. These regular donations allowed us to sponsor courses for women and children from poor communities.

There were also large, one-off donations from John, Bernadette, Hoang, Dennis, Clive, Victoria, Ed and Karna. With this funding we were able to carry out 2 large projects. The first was \$2,700 assistance to three orphanages in the Mekong Delta. The second was improvement of water supply to a fishing village in Nghe An. We contributed \$5,000, which was a third of the cost of the water filtration plant.

Here are a few donor stories from this past year.

Hieu is a young woman who was a baby in her mother's arms when her Mum was attacked with acid. Throwing acid over a female rival's face is a popular way of getting revenge in Asia. The mother later died of her wounds. The baby, whose face was burned off, survived. When Maddy, an Australian teenager was volunteering in Vietnam she sent in a report and photos of Hieu. I put the information up on the web site. Next morning I got a call from John, who does volunteer work in Cambodia. John said that he was so affected by Hieu's situation, he would put up a large donation to the fund.

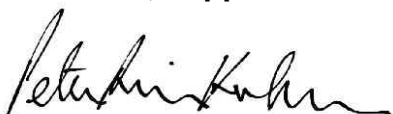
Many donations were for Hieu Nguyen's (an acid burn victim) medical expenses and job training. Hieu's case remains elusive and difficult. We gave some support to Hieu and also spent \$3,230 to assist An Binh, the shelter that provides for her after each surgery. We have also committed to providing similar levels of assistance for the next couple of years to An Binh Orphanage. We are working to find opportunities for Hieu in job training and an independent income.

Another day I took a mobile call from Singapore asking about the orphanage fund. First I thought it must be a marketing call. But then I heard the familiar Aussie accent. Hoang Ha grew up in Melbourne. He and his Singaporean partner were setting up a new Vietnamese restaurant in Singapore called "Mrs Pho". This is a pun on "pho" (pronounced "fer"), the classic Vietnamese noodle soup.

Still not sure whether this was a scam or genuine, I nevertheless prepared a written proposal for how money raised by the restaurant could be spent.

For the grand opening night of Mrs Pho, the owner offered all meals for free. People only paid what they thought the meal should cost. The restaurant donated all of the proceeds of their opening night to this fund. Following opening night the owners topped up the funds to an amazingly generous donation of \$3,000 Singaporean dollars (\$2,560 AUD). Thank you "Mrs. Pho". Please get a meal there and say "Hi" from us if ever you are in Singapore.

On behalf of Friends of Vietnam Orphanages, I wish to express gratitude for your generous donations, support and advice.



Peter Kabaila

OUR VOLUNTEERS

From time to time, someone travelling to Vietnam for a holiday finds our web site via an internet search. They want a chance to give, to help a village community or shelter. They are interested in genuine volunteering (not the cash-based volunteering businesses that have mushroomed in developing countries). Here are a few of their stories.

Susan is a retired teacher of deaf children. She moved to Asia where her husband is working. I put Susan in touch with local interpreters and orphanages. Susan taught deaf children at orphanages and plans to return.

Penny is Australian/Chinese/Vietnamese. Penny returned to her mother's home district in Saigon to have a holiday, find relatives and help out at an orphanage.

Megan travelled from Perth to Hanoi to volunteer at an orphanage. Megan later fund-raised for some mattresses and pillows for the disabled children's room there. We arranged delivery. Megan's concerns about corruption at an orphanage are in our blogs section (that particular orphanage has since been closed).

Anna is one of a group of English student nurses. They want to meet people and help children, as well as enjoy their holiday.

PETA AND SUE'S VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

Peta is a paediatric nurse and Sue is a teacher

Our time at the orphanage was a very rewarding experience and left us with many impressions that we will never forget in the week that we were there. The children are much loved and well cared for by the nuns and we were fortunate to establish a rapport with them.

Our week consisted of playing games in the playground, helping to feed the children at meals times and doing musical activities involving balloons and action songs in the recreational room. The children loved the music, games and stickers. We also provided bubbles every day which created lots of smiles and laughter. In the evenings we taught English to some of the nuns, a deaf lady and some of the children who attended school. We really enjoyed these sessions and finished our class each night with a fun game of fish!

Throughout the week the power was turned off in the village for repairs. They were told it was only going to be one day however that was extended to nearly 10 days. The orphanage had to rely on a generator which was only used during certain times of the day. Our last night we experienced a storm like no other. We have never heard thunder or seen lightening like it. The rain was bucketing down and the storm went for 5 hours. The generator cut out therefore there was no power which meant no fans in extremely hot conditions. Many of the children were scared and crying. But the next morning the rice paddy fields were full of water and the farmers were out fishing.

We were fortunate to see the local village, harvesting of the rice and the world heritage caves. We were also very privileged to be able to attend a special feast day religious service, followed by a big community lunch for 200 supporters and friends from the local community. After visiting the orphanage we have seen the difference the Friends of Vietnam Orphanages charity has made through their projects and contributions to the whole community.

Peta and Sue



Sue running an English lesson



Sue showing a dance



Peta with orphanage children

LETTERS FROM MADDY

A young woman who needs to help others; volunteering at an orphanage in Saigon

In June, Maddy, a young Australian woman, wanted to volunteer during a trip to Vietnam. I asked her to visit a refuge in Saigon. This orphanage is run by an elderly nun who shelters around 15 girls and women in a three room house. In particular, I asked her to visit H Quen, an indigenous woman with a disability who wishes to complete her medical course at technical college. Madeline's mission was to obtain information about how Australian sponsors might assist, particularly with education. Here is an extract from her travel diary:

Jul 6

Going to Sister Lich's orphanage house tomorrow!
Wow the days have gone so quickly.
Hope everything goes okay.

Jul 6

I made a draft of a questionnaire just to ask our client H Quen Nay.

Questionnaire:

Do you enjoy your lifestyle at the orphanage?
What are things you would like to improve your lifestyle?
Do you have an email, mobile phone number/ what are they?
For your studies, what do you need to improve your education? (e.g. laptop, stethoscope, textbooks). What is your next semesters study fee?
Where is your college?
Do you enjoy your studies so far?
Do you feel accepted in your college?
What would you like to do in your future?
How will this course help your life in the future?
Are you happy to be doing it?
What is your favourite part of your course?
What do you find difficult in your course?
What do you find easy?
In the orphanage where you live is there anyways that we can help?
Do you need anything special at your orphanage/ are you lacking in any items?
What is your favourite thing to do in your free time?
Do you know any English?
What else in life would you like to learn?
What is your dream for life?
Who inspires you, and helps you the most?

Is there anything else I should ask? I want to help as much as I can.
I'm so nervous.
I don't want to let you down!

Jul 7

Hello peter!

This morning I went to visit Sister Lich and the girls, as Sister will not be here this week.

I had an amazing time. The girls are all really beautiful and easy and fun to get along with. H Quen was totally beautiful and I am really happy to be working with her. And of course the rest of the girls.

Sister Lich had told me that H Quen will defiantly need a laptop, mobile, textbooks and pens and pencils. She asked me to ask you how in the future they will buy further textbooks etc for H Quen. The orphanage was made only for girls from 13- 30 getting an education. And once they have completed their course the nuns help them find a job but they must leave. There are 15 girls, but five are not meant to be there.

Not all the children are orphaned or disabled. Some have disabled parents, or live there because their parents won't look after them. But there are also a few orphans. Including a family of five (two young boys and three older girls). Their parents were killed from falling rocks in a storm. There is also a girl, (who is just wonderfully happy) who is there because when she was young her father murdered her mother with acid. The girl also became chronically burnt.

Sister Lich told me about the difficulties of paying for the rent and finding a good home for the girls. For many years they had no space or house. And struggled for food.

They are in big debt in the house and she stresses of the girls because she cannot help afford the rent and their education fees.

She is in a big hunt to find other sponsors for other girls and to help in there orphanage. I was so surprised about how happy the girls were and we had a total blast together. Knowing what they have been through and still seeing them smiling was just amazing.

Thank you so much for this experience. Tomorrow I start my "proper" work for you. Today was just fun and games. I'll be emailing you soon.

Many thanks
Madeline

Jul 8

Morning Peter.

My interpreter is a young woman who volunteered to help me when I wrote on a forum looking where to find English interpreters. She is very nice and we get along well. I have a laptop and have already started to take pictures. I can do my best getting stories of each person at the orphanage.

And I totally understand about the whole need-for-money situation. I can see that a lot over here.

I will try and determine a list of items for you and I think it would be really interesting (even just for my benefit) to get all the girls' stories, so I'll try definitely. Going back tonight once the girls finish there schooling.

I'll talk to you soon.
Many regards
Madeline

Jul 9

I have had a very hard day yesterday. Still ended up at the orphanage, though:

"Okay so I thought first of all I was unlucky to get my phone pick pocketed a few days ago. Luckily it was only a cheapy and I wasn't too phased just a little pissed off.

Though today I had a horrific run in with some guys on a motor bike. I was walking down one of the main roads just out of district one. With my camera strapped around my waist as a belt.

Two men on a motor cycle came up onto the path way grabbed me by my camera (which was locked around my waist) and dragged me 200m down the main road and left me in the middle of traffic laying on the tar bruised and bloody.

And sadly no one stopped to help me. (And I mean a seriously busy road) with broken shoes I had to walk my way home. Now sadly I could have been more of a victim as I am an alone travelling girl. But I am in a lot of shock and extremely horrified that people can do this.”

This was a post I made on a forum. The down low. Ha-ha going out to lunch with the girls at the orphanage.

Jul 9

Hey Peter I'm not too badly damaged.... well I'm taking care of it. I cannot walk well. But I'm surviving. I am adventurous still to go on! Even though I may be crippled. If something gets worse I will go to the doctor. It's a little infected but I don't think its anything to worry about.

Here are my notes so far:

About H Quen. She feels safe and as if An Bin orphanage is like a family to her. She is very grateful of the help from Sister Lich.

Her books change every semester and has no knowledge of the books she needs for the rest of her studies as it changes. Her study fees add to 10 million dong per year.

She goes to college by bus and says she feels accepted there.

Her dream is to have a pharmacy degree and go to her home town to teach and help her elders in choosing right medicines. Her village speaks a native language and the indigenous people there don not have knowledge of pharmacies.

She enjoys practical testing in her school, learning the differences of medicines and their uses. Though at her school there isn't enough funding to have many practicals. She finds it difficult to remember the Latin names of the medicines.

She needs to pass an English test to complete her course. And is keen to learn English. She wants to volunteer helping children when she is older.

Her grandmother inspired her to pursue her dreams because when she was younger her village was very driven by discrimination. Her parents did not want her and were going to abandon her. H Quen's grandmother fought for her life. And she is very grateful.

She needs a laptop, books, pens/pencils and mobile phone.

The orphanage is a very small house of three rooms. One kitchen, one sitting room and one large bedroom. The orphanage is situated in a small alley on the side of a very busy road in HCM city.

At the orphanage there are 15 residents (13 girls/women and two young boys).

The problems of these people range from deafness, blindness, amputees, orphans, poor girls from the highlands, acid burn victims, abuse victims and the list goes on. The girls age from 12 to 35. All attendees of the orphanage are there to pursue dreams in education and occupation. Sister Lich has an average of keeping the girls safe from 2/5 years until their course is completed. There is not enough money for the girls to stay after the education is done. And they must find a job and a new home.

Many girls do sewing, as well as, accounting, pharmacy; nursing, hairdressing, and finishing their schooling, with major and minor problems running in between the ages.

Sister Lich and her orphanage are not a recognised as a community service or organization. So she finds it very difficult to find sponsors and donations for the girls.

These difficulties range from debt from the housing, food supplies, and education tools etc.

The girls live off basic needs. But one thing that amazed me was the smiling faces and the kindness all of the girls had within their heart, even though they have been through very hard lives. Including attempts of murder from own parents, parental abuse, being poorest of the poor. Many girls grew up very sick, living with no clothes and starved etc. Parents recently dying, or parents being were victims of Agent Orange with cancers and discrimination.

The orphanage is low on food supplies and utensils, furniture. As well as education tools, reading books, note books, computers, English learning books, educational games, and many others. Sister Lich and the girls are in need and always looking for sponsors to help one more girl, or help the orphanage in a whole.

An amazing orphanage with amazing students. All the girls at the house are hard working and extremely grateful of Sister Lich's help.

Even though they live off the minimum, many girls are happy knowing that they will go somewhere in their lives and they are completing something that means a lot to them.

All the girls work very hard to chase their dreams. To reach the goal of education and jobs and independence.

Some of the girls there will never leave, or will be in a home for the rest of there lives because of their circumstances. But once again I am so surprised by their hope and love in their hearts. Beautiful women. Beautiful orphanage.

Jul 9

Hey Peter...

I'm fine, cannot walk very well but I had a good day's rest.

My injury left me a bit infected on my hips and knees. But if it gets worse don't worry, I will attend to it.

Have you got any other suggestions I can do at the orphanage? I'm not sure what else you want or need. What else would you like? I can create small stories of the women at the orphanage. But I feel a little stuck. Let me know

regards Madeline x



Maddy with H Quen



Meal with residents



Orphanage ground floor



EDUCATION

In the 2014 financial year we assisted education by course sponsorships and supply of educational materials. Typical projects were:

Student scholarships



An Binh Orphanage is a private facility run by Holy Cross Order nuns in Saigon. During the day, the orphans and disabled residents work or study. Our sponsors in Australia provide support to individual students in their study courses. Course fee receipts were emailed by Sister Lich (seated on the left) to receive payment. An Binh scholarships total \$800 per semester.



Hung, our board President, visits An Binh orphanage

\$900 on computers



At An Binh Orphanage, our interpreter and IT expert Phap kindly donated his time to upgrade the old computer with extra RAM, a printer and monitor donated in Australia. He also assembled and installed two new computers for the residents (one on each floor).

\$200 on a study library



For the study library at An Binh orphanage, we purchased English language posters, DVDs, inspirational books, textbooks and illustrated children's books. Disabled Australian Nick Vujicic was well known in Vietnam so his translated book was of immediate interest.

\$500 on student library



Huong Duong (sunflower) Orphanage, near Can Tho, is a private orphanage partly funded by an overseas French-Vietnamese organisation. It has about 25 boys and five girls. Construction of study room bookshelves and the purchase of library materials was managed by Hien (interpreter)



\$500 on student sponsorship



Leigh (centre) walks with his sponsored student Hiep, and her friends Tuyen and Huyen. All three women are attached to the convent at Huong Phuong and were completing the foreign languages degree at Hue university.

\$400 on school travel bicycles and blankets



Trang Nua (Vinh) shelter for 14 homeless children is funded by the convent. We purchased 3 bicycles so kids could get to school on time and 10 winter blankets.

MEDICAL

Our medical projects in the 2014 financial year included contributing to recovery from surgeries for Hieu, an acid burn victim, supplementing food for adopted babies, funding an acupuncture/massage kit for an orphanage, and helping burns victims in Quang Binh province.

Hieu's surgery recovery and expenses



Some of our friends will remember the story of Hieu, who suffered acid burns as a baby. The first of Hieu's series of facial reconstruction surgeries was in December 2013. The surgery was donated. We made post-operative care payments and set up a personal bank account with keycard access by Hieu, so she might cover some of her personal and medical costs

\$200 medical equipment



Acupuncture and reflexology (a form of therapeutic massage) is very popular in Vietnam. The equipment set was purchased by interpreter Nhung (who had also completed the course and knew the equipment range very well) so that Kiem, one of the nuns at An Binh Orphanage, could treat residents.

\$250 on infant supplies



Buu Tri Temple Orphanage in Can Tho City is a private orphanage partly funded by Buddhists and overseas sponsors. With Long as interpreter, we bought a three month supply of formula, nappies etc for the new infants in the photo. They were born during the Christmas period and were left at the Temple by unmarried mothers. We also obtained and purchased a list of school materials needed for one semester of years 1 – 5 next semester.

Baby supplies



We provided enough funds to an adopted baby at Cau Giat (Nghe An) to pay for a life saving heart operation. A year later I visited the family and purchased 2 months supply of milk formula.



\$260 on nursing study equipment



A household of 11 nuns attached to the Holy Cross order are studying nursing in Danang. Through Chau (interpreter) we purchased stethoscopes, blood pressure testing kits (three of each), a Vietnamese-English electronic dictionary and two Vietnamese texts for young men and women on how to live a healthy life.

\$200 helps burns victims in Quang Binh



We contributed to a local fund to help a family in Quang Binh who were severely burnt in a petrol electricity generator explosion (managed by Trung Tran from Canberra).

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Our community development projects in the 2014 financial year included visiting the poorest families in Hung Son indigenous village, and improving their household income; providing education incentives for three struggling families in Hue City; assisting 3 orphanages in the Mekong Delta and furnishing a soup kitchen in Nga Nam (Mekong Delta).

HUNG SON INDIGENOUS VILLAGE

After making some local contacts, we were guided to Hung Son (about 150km inland from Cau Giat). Our guide took us to the poorest children in the village. We distributed clothing to them. The clothing was Vietnamese made and purchased locally at a Hung Son market stall. We then interviewed households in the village. We drew up and costed a list of items to assist each household with income and survival. This assistance package was 2 blankets, 6 pigs, 10 chickens and bags of rice. This project was arranged through Thuc, a local priest.



At Hung Son indigenous village we distributed clothing to the poorest children.





Pigs and chickens were purchased and packaged for motorbike delivery to the village.



Chicken raising provides an occupation for this widow, and rice is her insurance against famine.



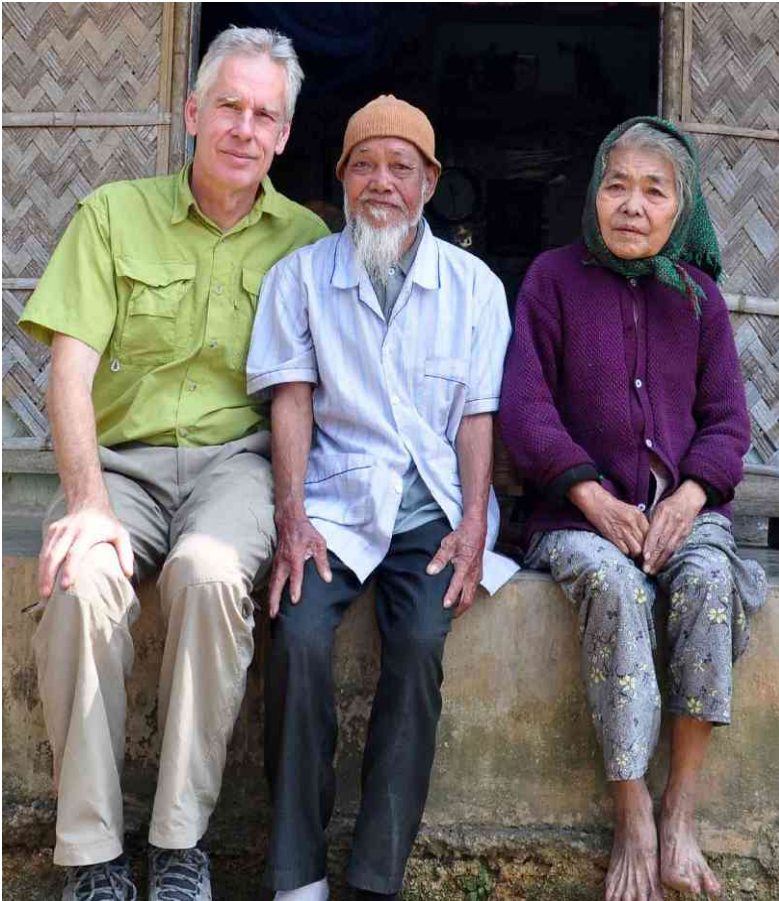
A blanket and rice helps a single woman with psychic problems.



Piglets for this woman to raise, and a blanket.



This mentally ill man's wife asked for piglets to raise for a good household income, as well as school study materials for her children.



This elderly disabled couple asked for piglets to raise income and rice to protect them from famine.

THREE FAMILIES IN HUE



A group of Vietnamese students in Hue City, Huyen, Hiep, Chau and Thuy, wished to assist us. I asked them to locate 3 poor local families and make a plan to provide for the children. Each family received education incentives in the form of school supplies, a study lamp, bicycle and children's books. Here is the "shopping list" organised by Chau:

4,05 M for 3 bicycles,
0.57M for 6 school bags
0.15M for 2 small tables for children's study,
0.27M for 3 study lamps,
1.3M for books, notebooks, pen

Later we helped with school fees. Each family's story, extracted from Chau's reports, is told here

DIVIDED HOUSEHOLD

This family is a man with two wives. Second wife lived with him and helped care for the children of the first wife. The children of first wife expelled second wife and her children from the house. The oldest boy of first wife has refused to care for the father because he is diseased. So second wife lives in a rented room nearby with her two children and prepares meals for her husband and takes them to him in the house nearby.

Second wife collects rubbish from the streets to sell plastic for recycling. The daughter is of school age (9 years of age). Neighbours have offered primary education for the daughter. Daughter has disabilities/illness that makes it difficult to keep up with other students at school.



Second wife rents a room for herself and her children. She collects rubbish from the streets for plastic recycling.

PLASTIC COLLECTOR

Father died and mother survives by collecting rubbish from streets to sell recyclable plastic. She has two children, Tram (girl aged 7 in grade one) and Cong (boy aged 4)

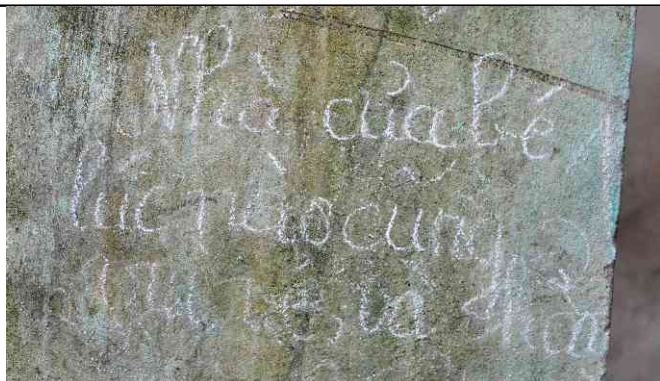
Mother suffers some mental illness and beats the children. Neighbours do not interfere because if anyone looks at her, she hits them more. Mother wants daughter to help her collect rubbish, but daughter is ashamed to work on the street and wants to go to school. Now that she is of school age, 7 years, neighbours have encouraged mother to let daughter go to school.



During our first visit to their home they were away, working. The mother and children collect rubbish from the streets for plastic recycling.



Home interior is set up with a shrine for the deceased husband



Daughter's writing on the front post of their home: "The home of the small child is a happy place."



Mother with daughter.

RESPIRATORY ILLNESS

This household's father has a heart problem. He gets income from light work, cutting decorations out of polystyrene foam. The wife's income is scrounging food scraps from neighbours to raise pigs in the house. All three children suffer severe asthma. The eldest, aged 19, helps Mum. The second is a girl in Year 11. The third is a boy in Year 8.

We were shown a large rice bag full of used Ventolin sprays, representing three months of use. The family's income seems to be mainly spent on keeping up a supply of Ventolin. I did not see how the polystyrene is cut, but if cut with a hot wire, then that would instantly explain the asthma.

The mother's income is collecting food left-overs from local people to raise pigs in the back of the house. Her husband raises money by cutting polystyrene foam to make decorations. All the children suffer from severe asthma. Family income is absorbed in paying for a sufficient supply of Ventolin (asthma medication).



Storage and pig sty are beside the living room.



This home has chronic sufferers of a respiratory illness. The cause is unknown.

THREE MEKONG DELTA ORPHANAGES

After contacting three orphanages near Can Tho, I asked my volunteer interpreter Hien to design and complete a project to assist them. Hien visited and interviewed their staff. She drew up a “shopping list” project budget of provisions and educational support. I transferred \$2,700 for these projects and Hien carried out the work. Based on her extensive experience of working with American organisations, Hien provided a full financial record and detailed report for donors. The following is extracted from her reports.

Project budget. Hoa Mai, Huong Duong, and Buu Tri Pagoda orphanages in Can Tho, Mekong Delta region.

600 AUD for 2 washing machines (for Hoa Mai and Huong Duong orphanages);
400 AUD for 1 fridge (for Hoa Mai orphanage);
150 AUD for 1 rice cooker (for Hoa Mai orphanage);
300 AUD for 20 sets of text books (for Huong Duong orphanage);
100 AUD for 20 sets of raincoats and slippers (for Huong Duong orphanage);
100 AUD for 100kg of washing powder (for all 3 orphanages);
50 AUD for 100 bars of soap (for all 3 orphanages);
500 AUD for 100 boxes of instant noodles (for all 3 orphanages);
100 AUD for 100 sets of hand towels, toothbrushes and tooth paste (for all 3 orphanages);
400 AUD for one-year school fee for 5 students at Buu Tri Pagoda

LETTER FROM CAN THO, MEKONG DELTA

Cô Dương Quý Hiền, volunteering for us at three orphanages in Can Tho

Hi Peter,

I am using donated money sent from Friends of Vietnam Orphanages Inc to buy supplies for three orphanages in Can Tho. I started by asking the manager of each orphanage to draw up a request for their most needed supplies.

For Huong Duong and Hoa Mai orphanages, they already have many things in stock such as soaps, tooth paste, instant noodles, towels, crayons, etc. The Buu Tri orphans are in greater need of supplies than the Huong Duong and Hoa Mai orphanages. So, I am giving more to the Buu Tri Pagoda orphans, who are in need of food (boxes of instant noodles) for this summer.

HUONG DUONG ORPHANAGE

I visited Huong Duong and Hoa Mai orphanages on June 8. The road in front of the orphanages is being dug to widen the national road. It may take months to complete the road. So, I travelled there by taxi and parked outside. We then carried in the supplies through a temporary access.

The children usually return to their home villages in June and come back in July for the next school year. But now, their main sponsors from the “Rayon De Soleil” Group are visiting them. So, I took a few photos of the children in their rooms. Ms Thuan, the Chief Accountant, happily smiles when receiving the gifts.

As the Huong Duong orphans have some kind of commitments from their French sponsors “Rayon De Soleil”, the children can individually write letters to their Godparents abroad (on Christmas), reporting on their achievements and asking for presents such as dolls, teddy bears, bikes and other toys. Their dormitory looks more comfortable than the housing of Buu Tri orphans. Each child has their own separate bed, with pillows, blankets and new clothes for holidays.



Access to Huong Duong orphanage.
Temporary access is via a walkway.



Huong Duong orphanage boys like to jump
on their beds in their dormitory.



Twins at the orphanage help unpack
donated supplies.



Mrs Thuan at Huong Duong orphanage
welcomes a washing machine

HOA MAI ORPHANAGE

Access to Hoa Mai orphanage is in the same situation as in Huong Duong orphanage. The taxi parked on the ground of a nearby company. We brought donated provisions over a narrow way.



Access to Hoa Mai orphanage. Our taxi arrives loaded with supplies.

In June, the children return to their home village, so I could only take a photo of the yard. Ms Lieu, Deputy Manager, highly appreciates the gifts. She has not put the electric rice cooker, the washing machine and the fridge in use until the children come back in July.

I emailed photos of thank-you notes from Hoa Mai orphanage. The note that I drafted for them has a complete list of the supplies purchased with your donations.



Mrs Lieu, manager of Hoa Mai orphanage, happy with delivery of the fridge.

BUU TRI ORPHANAGE

I visited the orphans of Buu Tri on June 5, not at the pagoda, but at their “summer house”.

There are more than 50 orphans at Buu Tri pagoda. From August to May, they go to school from 7am to 5pm and return to the pagoda only in the evenings and at weekends. That does not disturb the solemn religious activities at the pagoda. But in summer, they are too noisy to stay there. The Head Nun, Ms Tam Niem, has to move them to a “summer house”, which is 20 km far from Can Tho city. The house is an inheritance from her deceased parents. It is in a remote village, which is accessed by canoe more easily than by motorbike because the lane is too narrow and slippery in rainy season.



Supplies being loaded for delivery



Moving supplies from minivan to canoe

The supplies of 50 boxes of instant noodles, some boxes of washing powders, shampoos, textbooks, etc... was transported by a minivan to a river jetty. The supplies were then loaded onto canoe for the village. We arrived at noon. Having finished lunch, the children cheerfully welcomed us and carried the supplies home before it started to rain. The rain eased the heat of summer.



Children carry the donated supplies to their summer house

There are more things to tell about the orphans of Buu Tri pagoda. I am telling the story of my visit to help you to understand their situation.

Besides 50 children here, 6 more orphans are left at the pagoda because they are just a few months old. Most of the children are from 5 to 10 years old. They enjoy living in the wild very much. Playing around the village, washing in the rain, chasing each other on muddy ground, catching fish, snails, small crabs and insects by themselves to supplement their food supplies are their normal activities during summer.



Having a shower in the rain.

The children also have to review their studies with tutors in the village during summer. After lunch, they have a nap of about one hour. Girls sleep on the floor in the main room inside the house. Mosquito nets are hung all day but only used at night. Boys sleep in wooden beds in the attached hall at the end of the house. An elder boy about 14 years old helps to take care of the children, ordering them to lie in silence in order to sleep quietly. After a nap, they will have instant noodles as a snack. They consume about 2 boxes of instant noodles a day, for breakfast, tea time and supper. Each box contains 30 packets of 65 gram instant noodles.



Children finish their midday nap and wait for food.

The elder boys rarely sleep in daytime. They love going out to catch crabs and snails, boiling them and sharing together happily. They put their bikes in a warehouse filled with dry branches from trees, used as fuel for cooking.



Tam Niem – Godmother of the orphans at Buu Tri pagoda

Ms Tam Niem, the God Mother, is loved and respected by all children. It's herself who established this orphanage without any kind of paperwork for permission or license for her organization. She visits them sometimes during summer, bringing them food and supplies from the donations in the pagoda. There are some overseas sponsors for the children. For example, Javier, a Belgian man, visits his sponsored "godson" once a year. Each year his contribution is to pay for a holiday trip to the beach or mountains for all the children. No permanent sponsorship is assured for the orphans. They rely on individual donors from the pagoda, mostly from Buddhists. One source of donation promises to finance her to rebuild the house behind the pagoda into a multistorey building so that children could have enough rooms during summer.

I think that the Head Nun of Buu Tri Pagoda has to concern herself more with the basics such as school fees and food for the orphans, rather than toys and leisure items. She can't refuse any child who is left without identification in front of her door. That's really a burden for her, although there have been many donors since the orphanage was started.



Sharing cooked crabs.

One little girl suffers from nettle rash after playing on the muddy ground. Other boys said that she was bitten by worms. Poor her! She keeps on scratching because of itching through the whole body. If only there was a dose of anti-allergy medicine to relieve her itching immediately. Even the Head Nun and other women in the house can do nothing to help her. In my childhood, I did many times suffer from itching because of rash or insect bites. I feel so helpless seeing the miserable girl in her pain.

As the children walk bare foot around the house, they must have lots of worms and parasites in their bodies. Using the money you are sending, I am buying them worming medicine in August, after paying school fees for five orphans. If there still is some excess money, I will buy more notebooks and pens for them.

I have the impression that orphans at Huong Duong and Hoa Mai orphanages are luckier than the ones at Buu Tri Pagoda. They are in better care because their organisation is set up by overseas Vietnamese charities. Buu Tri orphans are under spontaneous management of one nun.

More information to think about : Huong Duong and Hoa Mai orphanages only accept children above three years old. That means they are raised by somebody from birth until being admitted into the orphanages. In my view they are not so much orphans as children of very poor families. At least they have relatives such as grandparents or uncles.

At Buu Tri pagoda, most children are left in front of the door from birth. Many suffer from blindness or disabilities due to poor care. They are not obliged to be vegetarians as nuns. Very few continue higher schooling until college. They grow up more wild than the selected children in other orphanages.



Head nun and children of Buu Tri pagoda.

One difference between the orphanages is that the orphans of Buu Tri Pagoda sleep on the floor while the ones at Huong Duong and Hoa Mai orphanages have their own bed for individuals. The ones of Buu Tri Pagoda don't have toys such as teddy bears and dolls. They don't write letters directly to their sponsors, such as the ones at Huong Duong and Hoa Mai orphanages do annually.

I'm really proud of this work. Your inspiration and help has enabled my contribution to these poor children.

I have attached photos of invoices and sheets of cost explanations. I made some translations of the complicated bills for your tracking. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me for further explanation.

That's it. God bless people for the donations!

Best regards,

Hiền

June 5th, 2014

Peter Kabaila / Friends of Vietnam Orphanages

Dear Peter,

Thưa ông Peter,

On behalf of Bui Tri Pagoda in Can Tho City, I would like to thank you very much for your gifts as follows:

Thay mặt Chùa Bửu Trì ở Cần Thơ, tôi chân thành cảm ơn các món quà ông tặng:

50 boxes of instant noodles / *mì gói*
40.5 kg of washing powder Ariel / *bột giặt*
8 bottles of shampoo Clear / *dầu gội đầu*
20 pieces of soaps Lifebuoy / *xà bông cục*
20 tubes of tooth pastes PS / *kem đánh răng*
14 tooth brushes / *bàn chải đánh răng*
10 towels / *khăn mặt*
10 raincoats / *áo đi mưa*
30 sets of crayons / *bút chì màu sáp*
19 sets of text books and exercise books / *sách giáo khoa*
And school fees for 5 students in August 2014 / *học phí cho 5 em*

These donations are valuable for our orphans, especially during this summer and for the upcoming school year in August 2014. We rely on the generosity of donors such as the Friends of Vietnam Orphanages. We wish you good luck and happiness forever.

Sự đóng góp trên vô cùng quý giá dành cho trẻ em mồ côi ở chùa, nhất là trong mùa hè này và cho mùa tựu trường sắp đến vào tháng 8/2014. Chúng tôi trân trọng cảm ơn lòng hảo tâm của các nhà tài trợ như tổ chức Bạn của trẻ em mồ côi Việt Nam. Kính chúc ông gặp nhiều may mắn và hạnh phúc.

Yours sincerely,

Trân trọng kính chào,



Example of documentation provided

VILLAGE WATER SUPPLY



Pulling up fish traps on the river at Quyen Ngoc

At Quỳnh Ngọc fishing village, near Cau Giat in Nghe An province, fish stocks are in decline and employment is uncertain. Many people risk drinking from local wells to save money. Illness, particularly among the very young, is the result. Thuc, the local priest, formed a plan to run a filtered water operation from his church.

I asked for plans and specifications. I then put the young priest in contact with Phong, a priest in Saigon who completed a chemistry degree at uni and had worked as an agent for a water filtration plant manufacturer (Watermax). Thankfully, Phong travelled to the village and supervised the installation. Local people volunteered in the building of the small factory, and local people work the filtration plant. The filtered water is then sold at a heavily discounted, affordable price.

Thuc says, "With this water filter system, we can provide water for the whole village, and create part-time jobs for at least 5 people. On a good day we hope to sell 3,000 litres, being 1,000 litres at 5,000 dong/20litre container to local farmers and 2,000 litres at 10,000 dong/20litre container to people outside the village. After we have paid the workers, electricity, freight and repairs of machinery and equipment, we hope to earn up to 200,000 dong (\$10 AUD) per day of operation, to pay off the loan. But we cannot build the plant without one-third outside funding."

True to his word, Thuc did everything I asked for, in terms of planning and cost estimates. So when I received photos of the completed plant in operation, I was happy to transfer the promised one-third contribution of the total cost.



Thuc standing beside technical consultant Phong at the partly assembled filtration plant.



Local children come to pour the first containers of filtered water.

NGA NAM SOUP KITCHEN



The Nga Nam soup kitchen in the Mekong Delta, is a group of local volunteers. They provide food for local patients, students on a tight budget and the town's poor. We provided stainless steel tables and plastic chairs for sit down meals at the soup kitchen. Organised by Long Quach who is associated with Lyneham Vietnamese temple.