



Friends of Vietnam Orphanages Inc.

Liên Hiệp Những người bạn của trẻ em mồ côi Việt Nam

REPORT TO DONORS FOR 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR

CONTENTS

Our Donors

Project Summary

Project Details

Central Vietnam

North Vietnam

Central Highlands & Coast

Saigon & Mekong Delta

Travelogue

Central Vietnam

North Vietnam

Central Highlands & Coast

OUR DONORS

Overview

Since 2011 I have taken annual leave from work to ride across Vietnam and assist communities through our tiny registered charity *Friends of Vietnam Orphanages Inc.* I pay for my own holiday. The guarantee to donors is that **every** donated dollar goes to direct assistance in Vietnam. It's a "barefoot charity model": one ride; one man; one motorbike. Our local project partners are the key. They help with each project and are mostly the traditional breadwinners of Vietnam – the women. They are also uni student groups and nuns, both Christian and Buddhist.

Our Committee thanks people who helped us assist communities in Vietnam:

Monthly contributors

Family and friends who made monthly contributions: **Clive, Vytas, Michael & Adrienne, Geoff & Rachelle, Hayden & YẾN, Helen & David, Patrick H.**

Donors

Our Friends who gave donations were **Amanda, Dennis, Karna, Julie & Jan, Paul & Suzette, Aranda Men's Group, Richard Donnelly, Graham Williams, Antony Ladomirski**, Vietnamese-Australians **Kim Huỳnh**, Beyond Bank (via Community Reward Scheme) and others.

Board & Advisers

Our board, **Julie, Dennis, Geoff** and **Clive**, provided encouragement and support. I also regularly consult our Australian-Vietnamese cultural advisers **Loan & Tiệp**. They are very patient in explaining Vietnamese method and custom to Westerners.

Local Interpreters

Our volunteer interpreters and "fixers" in Vietnam included **Châu, Tam, Hiệp, Xoan**. Interpreters help to negotiate each project, fix any problems and ensure completion.

Local Project Partners

We rely on local project partners. These monastic, volunteer or social groups spend their valuable time. This requires detailed local knowledge, visits and negotiations with people in their homes. We get a "multiplier effect" from time contributed by these helpers. Our project partners in Vietnam (dropping titles such as "Sister" for simplicity) were:

- YẾN (in charge) and Quế (assisting), Thiên Ân orphanage, Cần Thơ.
- Bích Hường (host) and Kim Anh (in charge), Sisters of Charity (Mother Teresa of Calcutta's order), orphanage and single mothers shelter, Mai Âm Tình Mẹ, Bình Dương.
- Mùi (in charge), Linh An orphanage and single mothers shelter, Lâm Hà, Lâm Đồng Province, near Đà Lạt. Tu Hội Nhập Thể Tận Hiến Truyền Giáo order.
- Lâm and helpers, Nha Trang, managing our medicines supply project to the southern coast.
- Hue Lasan uni social club, serving Vân Kiều people in Bản Khe Ngài, Đắkrông, near Khe Sanh, Quảng Trị.
- Bắc Ái Vinh (Vinh Sisters of Charity order), serving Phong Nha villages.
- Hiệp and Hope Connection volunteer group, Kỳ Sơn village, Nghệ An.
- Legion of Mary (Legio Marie) women's group, Thạch Long & Thạch Sơn village, Hà Tĩnh.
- Xoan, English teacher, Hậu Lộc High School, Hà Tĩnh.
- Lành (in charge), 19.5 Shelter for Severely Disabled, Vinh Sisters of Charity, Xã Đòai.
- Kính (deputy), Phát Diệm Holy Cross order, serving the poor around Phát Diệm.
- Phuong Lien, St Paul De Chartres order, serving disabled and poor in Saigon.
- Loan, Director, SPDC convent in Buon Me Thuot, running the Vi Nhan Disabled Children's School for indigenous kids.

- Street Singers Group, Dong Nai, assisting An Vu orphanage in Binh Phuoc province.
- Dr Trong and other medical volunteers Oanh and Cong, Gia Lai province.
- Danang Uni Christian student volunteer group for Protection Centre No 5.

To summarise, the help from monthly contributors, donors, board members, advisers, local interpreters and local project partners enables us to take Australian friendship to Vietnam, to carry out both small and large local projects, at orphanages and villages.

On behalf of Friends of Vietnam Orphanages Inc, I wish to express thanks to all, for generous donations to the fund, practical help, moral support and good counsel.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Kabaila', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Peter Kabaila,
Public Officer**

PROJECT SUMMARY

Every dollar you donated went to direct assistance in Vietnam.

During this financial year we carried out a wide range of projects. Projects partnered with students and other volunteer groups provided engagement with charity work in orphanages and disadvantaged families, particularly in highland tribes. 100% of every dollar donated went to direct assistance in Vietnam, because we have \$0 admin cost. This financial year, donation income was \$14,553. We spent half a billion Vietnam Dong (\$30,000 AUD) on projects summarised below. As in past years, our project manager and partners in Vietnam were essential to the success of the projects.

Million VND	\$1000 AUD	PROJECT
		CENTRAL VIETNAM
25	1.51	Quang Nam – Dai Loc village, chickens + food by Christian uni student group.
9	0.6	Danang – SPDC school for disabled children for autistic class.
10	0.6	Danang – SPDC shelter for elderly women, commodes and colostomy bags.
25	1.51	Xa Doai – 3 disabled children’s shelters by Thuy & volunteers.
10	0.6	Ha Tinh – 2 water filter machines for Thach Son Kindergarten by Xoan.
12	0.72	Ha Tinh - Half year school fee for 9 students - by Xoan.
10	0.6	Ha Tinh – chickens, secondhand furniture for disabled couple by Chi Hue.
25	1.51	Ha Tinh – chickens and soup for 20 families by Hospital Soup Kitchen group.
20	1.20	Ha Tinh – Bicycle for 12 children in 10 villages Thach Ha District – by Nam&Hiep.
5	0.30	Ha Tinh – Mai Am Thien An – by Hien
		NORTH VIETNAM
32	1.93	Phat Diem villages – chickens and food parcels for 20 families by Sr Kinh.
		CENTRAL HIGHLANDS & COAST
5	0.3	Nha Trang Uni - assist 3 disadvantaged uni students by Chau.
10	0.6	Nha Trang - Educational supplies to orphanage run by elderly couple by Chau.
20	1.2	Kontum children’s shelter no 2 – school materials, hygiene supplies, food.
13	0.78	Kontum children’s shelter no 2 – solar hot water for children’s showers.
10	0.6	Ngoc Reo village, Dak Ha - children’s homestay shelter – food for 30 families.
7	0.42	Ngoc Reo village, Dak Ha - children’s homestay shelter – school material for 40 children.
23	1.39	Ngoc Reo village, Dak Ha - children’s homestay shelter – welding cabinets and fixing around the building.
12	0.72	Pleiku La Salle School – Books for study and school library.
30	1.81	Pleiku 7 villages with lepers – Dr Trong volunteers, food for 100 lepers.
12	0.72	Pleiku 7 villages with lepers – Dr Trong volunteers, medicines for 3 months.
25	1.51	Buon Me Thuot SPDC & La Salle Monastery Schools – purchase pigs.
0	0	H’Rat village, BMT - pig raising for 11 indigenous households.
10	0.6	Buon Me Thuot SPDC Disabled Childrens School – autistic children’s classroom supplies and printer.
18	1.08	Pleiku – Medicine supplies for 5 months to 10 villages with leprosy by Dr. Trong.
25	1.51	Dakdoia - Gia Lai with notebook, school bag, sandals and lantern for 200 children.
17	1.02	Dakdoia - Gia Lai with medical treatment for a Bana girl got bone infection.
10	0.60	Dakdoia - Gia Lai with health check and medicine for 200 children.
25	1.51	Quang Tri – Van Kieu indigenous village. Food+blankets+mosquito nets for 50 families by Hue uni student group.
18	1.08	Quang Tri – Van Kieu indigenous village. Water supply well.
		SAIGON & MEKONG DELTA
15	0.9	Binh Duong – Mai Am Tinh Me single mum’s shelter.
10	0.6	Can Tho – Thien An orphanage.
498	30	TOTAL (exchanged 1.66M/\$100)

PROJECT DETAILS

CENTRAL VIETNAM

\$1500

Quang Nam – Dai Loc village, chickens + food by local volunteers



25M. Arriving in Danang I met people from Dai Loc village in the neighbouring province of Quang Nam. They guided this project, obtaining a list of the 20 poorest households who got 30 chickens each and one 25kg bag of food. Volunteers organised food parcels for the elderly and disabled. Chicken raising is a great project. It requires clients to work, giving them an occupation. It improves household income and nutrition.

\$545

Danang – SPDC disabled children's school by student group.



9M. The Disabled Children's School is one of the activities run by SPDC (Sisters of St Paul De Chartres). We funded educational aids for autistic and deaf children. These were selected by one of the teaching nuns. The student group involved were 3 English speaking seminary students (studying for parish priesthood in NZ).

Teacher demonstrates teaching aids.

\$600

Danang – SPDC shelter for elderly women without support.



With students and some residents.

10M. The elderly women's shelter is one of the activities run by SPDC (Sisters of St Paul De Chartres). It is on an older and rather dilapidated campus. The shelter houses 30 women in dormitories around a beautiful courtyard garden. We funded some commodes and a supply of basic medicines.

\$1500

Xa Doai – 3 disabled children’s shelters by Thuy & volunteers.



Thuy’s volunteers visit the disabled shelter.

25M. All three shelters are run by the Bac Hai (Sisters of Charity order of nuns).

Our project partner of 6 volunteers visited each shelter and organised a supply of essential food and hygiene supplies requested by the nuns:

1 ton of rice, 6 boxes x 18 litres fish sauce, 6 boxes x 30 milk cans, 2 bags x 100 nappies, 6 x mop and bucket sets, 6 boxes x 12 litres cooking oil, 6 boxes x 20 litres laundry liquid, 6 boxes x 1.4 litres shampoo, 1 box x 30 litres bodywash.

\$600

Ha Tinh – two water filter machines for Thạch Sơn Kindergarten, by Dung.



Children drinking from the filter machine.

10M. Dung, a local school teacher, she is teaching at Thạch Sơn Kindergarten. Last year we funded 7 bicycles for 7 children who are from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is a typical small village school in a fishing area, where effected by sea water with high PH level in water. The fresh and clean water is needed for children here.

We supplier two water filler machines which provide hot and cold water for 100 children in the school.

\$720

Ha Tinh - Half of year’s school fee for 9 students - by Xoan.



Student Hung with certificates of merit at school.

12M. Xoan, a local school teacher, has organised encouragement for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who study well. We provided half of the year’s school fees for 9 students as an encouragement award for each student. Plus 4M help for 2 uni students.

\$600

Ha Tinh – chickens, wheelchair and mattress for disabled couple.



Kính and his wife are an elderly couple. He was an unwanted child who was given to a mentally ill single woman. He is married and has 5 sons, three of whom died in different accidents. Two died in Thailand where they were working. Kinh had a stroke when the third one died and became blind. His wife is his carer and is disabled by mental illness.

Chi Hue, who carried out this project, is in the local women's charitable group (Legio Marie).

We bought 40x 2 month old chickens, feed 25kg, commode wheelchair (\$169 = 2.8M), massage mattress (\$48 = 0.8M), food and medicines.



\$1080

Bicycles for students in Ha Tinh villages by Nam and Hiep.



Nam, Hiep and Dong are three men who were school mates and now help us run a project each year in their home province of Ha Tinh

With our interp, they located and visited disadvantaged families in their local villages and provided encouragement awards of bicycles to 12 school students. \$1.08k = 12 M. Each bike cost \$90 (1.5M).

Nam delivered bicycles for the children.

\$1.39

Ha Tinh – chickens for 20 families by the Hospital Soup Kitchen

group.



Our project partners are contributing chicken for families at Hương Đô village.



Nường with her chicken project

33M. In the Vietnamese hospital system, local volunteer groups run soup kitchens for the patients. Kien and Ha of The Ha Tinh Hospital volunteer group that provides soup for patients visited 20 disadvantaged families in nearby mountain villages. They organised chickens for the people to raise.

Our volunteers drew up a list of 20 families across three mountain villages, 50km from the city. There, people mainly cut timber from the forest to sell illegally. They also make charcoal.

The group inspected the chicken housing and drew up a household list. Typical are Nuong, carer for disabled husband and 2 kids; Hoa, mentally ill parent raising 3 children; Hong, single woman with bone marrow cancer; Hoa, woman raising 6 grandchildren of a deceased son and Minh, a blind single mother.

\$300

Single mother shelter in Ha Tinh.



5M. This shelter provides accommodation, career and look after for women who have pregnant without marriage. These women were not accepted by their families and society. After giving birth, they normally will give their baby for the shelter and the shelter will find home for the baby.

This project, we provide things the shelter needs for 4 single mothers and their babies.

NORTH VIETNAM

\$1900

Phat Diem villages – chickens and food parcels for 20 families by Sr Kinh.



32M. Sister Kinh of the local Holy Cross convent continues her mission to disadvantaged people around Phat Diem. She knows the people well because the mission includes her home village, as well as the surrounding area.

We provided 20 families with chickens to raise.

Sister Kinh also delivered food to 10 homeless elderly/disabled women living in a group house.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS & COAST

\$1200 Kontum children's shelter no 2 – school materials, hygiene supplies, food.



The children helping with our project.



Children with big smile for photo shot.

20M. Six shelters were run by nuns of a monastic order that is only for indigenous nuns, who serve only the indigenous villages. We chose the biggest one that there is the biggest number of children to help.

From our funds, we provided:

- Rice, 250kg (3M).
- School supplies of boxes of coloured and writing pens, chinks, pencils and sharpeners, erasers, assignment books and colouring books, chalk boards (8M).
- Hygiene supplies of soap bars, laundry powder, floor cleaner, toothpaste/brushes, cleaning liquids, nappies, plus cooking oil and seasoning (9M).

\$720 Kontum children's shelter no 2 - solar hot water for kid's showers.



Solar hot water unit on the roof.

13M. We provided a 250 litre solar hot water system to improve the children's living condition and health with hot showers for children, especially for the little ones.

\$600 Ngoc Reo village, Dak Ha, children's homestay – food for 30 families.



Woman with babies gathering to get our contribution.

10M. Ngoc Réo – Dak Ha is one of the ethnic villages in Kontum which is looked after by the local order of indigenous nuns.

We provided food packets for 30 families in the village with assistance of sister Vút.

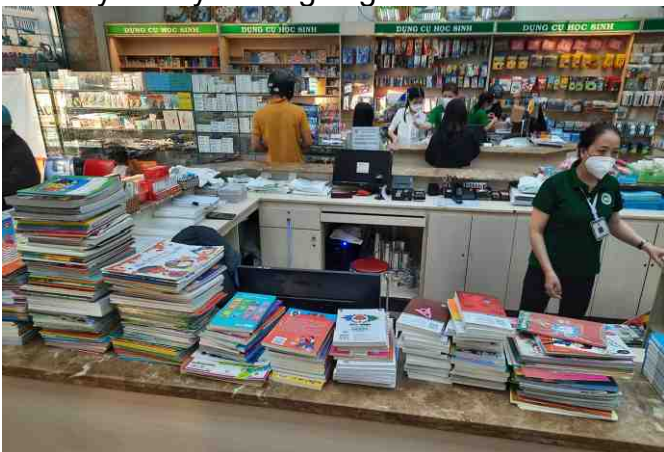
\$720 Pleiku La Salle School – Books for study and school library.



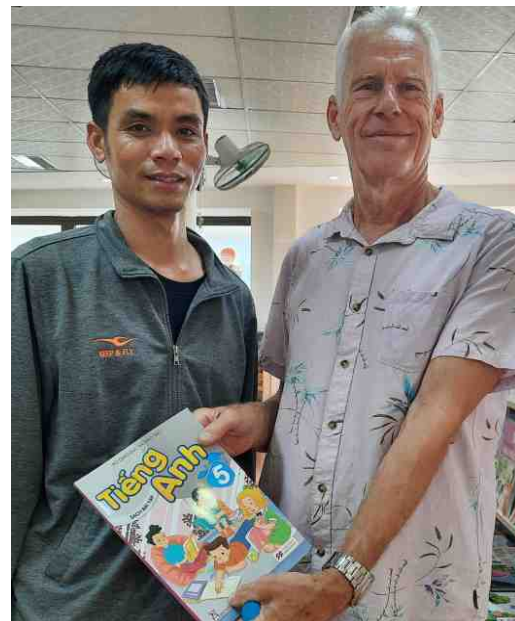
Primary library undergoing renovation.

12M. Thường is one of the brothers in the La Salle monastery which runs a free primary school, solely for indigenous children.

One residential block houses around 40 students from remote farms. They board during the week and return home on weekends.



We funded 100 second-hand books, which were half of the RRP (2M). Thuong then selected 500 educational booklets and books from a large educational bookshop (10M). Our library book project totalled \$720.



With brother Thường

\$1,020

Bone marrow infection treatment for Đào, 6 years old.



Dr. Linh is checking Đào's infection.

17 M. Đào is a 6 years old Ba Na girl. Đào's leg became infected last year. She had surgery to treat infection in Gia Lai hospital, but it became more serious so she was sent to Sài Gòn hospital and then home. Now she has deeper infection into the bone with possible amputation.

Dr. Trong helps to send her to a big hospital in Saigon to get treat and we provide hospital fee for her.



Đào's infection on her leg.

\$600

Dakdo, Gia Lai - health check and medicine for 200 children.



Dr. Trong and Dr. Linh are doing health checks. Oanh is dispensing medicine.

10M. Dr. Trong and his team; includes Dr. Linh, Oanh, an accountant with pharmacy training, and Công, an indigenous Sê Đăng nurse.

Dr. Trong organised his team to do a day of health check for 200 children and elderly people in four villages; Angleh, Đak ioh, De klanh and De thung.



Dr. Linh is checking on the girl.

\$1,510

Sandals, school bags and stationery for 200 ethnic minority children from four villages in Gia Lai.



Children gather from from four villages.



25M. Our project partner is Oanh, an accountant, she has followed Dr Trong to do weekly health checks and wound treatment for leprosy people for 6 years.

She is very good assistant for Dr Trong. During that time Dr Trong has taught her about medicine and now she is studying a pharmacy course.

Oanh chose the most disadvantaged villages and organized people to gather in a communal house in one of the four villages.

We provided 200 school bags, 200 pair of plastic sandals and 2000 notebooks for 200 children.

\$1800

Pleiku 7 leper villages - Dr Trong volunteers, food for 100 lepers.



30M. Each of the 7 villages in this project is very small.

Each village has around 10 to 20 related households.

In total there are around 100 lepers across these villages.

We funded food parcels for 100 lepers for 30M (\$1,800). Each parcel had the usual rice bag, oil, fish sauce, seasoning powder and noodle packets. The food was purchased by Dr Trong's wife who also sorted it into bags.



Lepers collecting food parcels.



\$720

Pleiku 7 leper villages - Dr Trong volunteers, 3 months' medicines.



Our project manager checking blood pressure.

12M. We funded about 3 months' supply of medicines.

These were the usual suite of paracetamol, multivitamins, antibiotic (Cephalexin), antihistamine, indigestion tablets and the like. No designer drugs here.

All these medicines are available locally for a low cost, so Oanh, the medical volunteer, was able to buy a good supply with our budget of 12M (\$720).



\$1500

Buon Me Thuot SPDC & La Salle Monastery Schools – purchase pigs.



This nun hand raises the pigs and is attached to them..

25M. We provided some financial backing by purchasing our pigs from the SPDC convent School for Disabled Children and their neighbour the La Salle Monastery school. Both support education for the poor.

(\$1500)

H'Rat village, BMT - pig raising for 11 indigenous households.



Pig being unloaded from truck



Piglets are kept in the "tiger cage" in the yard.

(25M). Our project, to provide 11 disadvantaged households with a pair of piglets each, is a good reinforcement of Sister Huong's mission to improve the life of the people of H'Rat village.

Actually, 10 families live in the village and the 11th family lives on a coffee farm.



\$600

Buon Me Thuot SPDC Disabled Childrens School – autistic learning.



This boy is learning arithmetic

10M. Vy Nhân is a Disabled Children's School run by the SPDC order. This school provides free education and home stay for disabled indigenous children.

This year we funded educational aids for autistic children.

\$1,100

Health checks and medical treatment for 80 lepers, with 4 groups coordinated by us. Three villages in Gia Lai Province.



18M. For health checks and medical treatment of 80 lepers our project manager visited Gia Lai Province villages of Kon Tuk and G'r Oi (60 lepers) and Doong Ro (20 lepers). We provided 15M medicines and 3M transport (\$1,100 AUD).

We partnered with 4 groups:
Dr Trong and his two assistants Cong and Oanh did checkups, treatment and medicine.

Thuy fundraised 50M (\$3,000 AUD) for food parcels and children's treats.

Three La Salle brothers organised 150 food packets for 80 lepers and 70 disabled or poor people and 300 packets of treats for children.

Local village leaders drew up the lists of lepers, disabled and poor in the three villages



\$1,900

Help a student home stay in Kon Tum Province village of Ngoc Reo.



Wardrobes

31M. This village house has 3 indigenous nuns who provide board for 40 school students from surrounding farms. Families send their children to this home stay, so they would be cared for, attend school and study well.

Our project manager brought a welder and his assistant .They worked for 10 days, weather-proofing the outdoor storage areas with polycarbonate glazing, making 20 wardrobes and shoe racks for the girls. For 20 boys, they made hanging rails and shoe racks. 13M materials, 10M labour, 1M transport.

We then provided school materials for children. 6.4M materials. 0.6M transport.



Kids holding their school materials

\$1500 Quang Tri – Van Kieu indigenous village. Food+blankets+mosquito nets for 50 families by Hue Uni student group.



Student group carry supplies to the village.



Children gather for games and activities.

25M. We do a yearly visit to this remote village of Van Kieu (Bru) indigenous people. Their livelihood is slash and burn agriculture and reforestation.

I plan to return during a better growing season with a thousand nitrogen-fixing *cay tram* tree seedlings (Queensland wattle).

We had a large uni student group who fundraised for this project to home visit 50 households in a mountain village and provide each with: sticky rice 20kg, 30 noodle packets, fish sauce 1 litre, sugar 1kg and a winter blanket.

As part of the student engagement, students visited each household, organised children's games and activities, sent photos and had a great time escaping from their studies for a day trip.



Home visit

\$1300

Quang Tri – Van Kieu indigenous village. Water supply



Old meets new: indigenous house next to a road construction bulldozer and elec windmill.

22M. With our uni student volunteers we scoped a simple water supply project for the village.

Construction was an underground bore and pump to bring water to the surface. An above-ground stainless steel tank holds the water. People from the village come to fill up containers to bring water back home.

The water bore contractor had a guarantee that the bore will be deep enough for the water to be “sweet”.

One of the students will return to monitor and record the work.



People in the village are getting water from the well.

\$300

Assist 3 uni students in difficult circumstances by Chau.



Trang, Linh, Luyên from the left.

5m. The three students in Nha Trang are:

- Linh - studying occupational therapy; one of 7 siblings.
- Luyen - studying communications; father died from cancer after treatment costs bankrupted the family; mother a fisherman.
- Trang - in Year 10.

They get training and support by working at a restaurant. They received some money to pay for study materials and medical expenses.

\$600

Educational supplies to orphanage run by elderly couple by Chau.



10m for Thien Tâm Orphanage in Nha Trang.

Bike parts to repair 15 old bicycles: \$169 = 2.8M

Cassette: 6

Brake Cable: 6

Rim: Vành xe

Spoke: 1

Pedal: 3

Cleat: Cá

Tubes: 8

Tire: 8

Chain: 6

Crankset: 1

Books: \$ 90 = 1,5M (school books for 5 children)

Medicine: \$ 48 = 0,8 M

(dewormer, cotton swabs, bandages, vitamin, thermometer, povidine)

Food supplies: \$ 300 = 4,9M

100kg rice, 50 chicken eggs, 12 litre cooking oil, 24 tins condensed milk, 10kg of sugar, 12kg laundry liquid, 6kg chicken powder, 4kg seasoning, 4kg dishwashing liquid. 3kg beef.



SAIGON & MEKONG DELTA

\$900

Binh Duong – Mai Am Tinh Me single mum's shelter by Ngoc.



Four boys left by their single mothers at the orphanage.

15M. Former Hue Uni English student Ngoc was our local contact for this project. For some years, we have been visiting this Sisters of Charity of Calcutta shelter for single mothers and babies.

As in past years our volunteer accompanied the nuns to the local market where they chose what the shelter needs.

Essentials we provided this year were:

10 brooms/shovels, 2 blenders, large cook pots, ladles, stainless steel bowls, toilet plunger, draino, chopsticks, kitchen knives & scissors, 10 watering cans, 2 vacuum flasks, 5 elec mozzie rackets, cleaver, 5 mops, 80 bras, 40 panties, 35 boys undies, sanitary pads, children's medicines (usual cough syrups, multivitamins, antihistamines).



\$600

Can Tho – Thien An orphanage shelter



10M. We have been visiting this shelter for years. It is run by two lay nuns, Yen and Que, with some French Vietnamese funding. The shelter emphasis is on education and a safe social environment for the children. Our volunteer group was run by Anh Thu, a 3rd year student at Can Tho Uni.

We provided essentials: Soy sauce, instant noodles, sugar, milk, pasta, green beans, pepper, seasoning, oil, fish sauce, floor cleaner, laundry powder, toothpaste, toothbrushes.

TRAVELOGUE 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR

CENTRAL VIETNAM

QUANG NAM – DAI LOC VILLAGE, CHICKENS + FOOD BY LOCAL VOLUNTEERS

Our first project in Central Vietnam was a simple chicken raising project for disadvantaged households in a village.

I love chicken raising as an activity to help people:

- Vietnamese traditional customs include chicken raising. They know how to raise chickens.
- The project requires people to become involved and contribute work.
- Chicken raising gives people an occupation.
- It also improves household income and nutrition.

After arriving in Danang, today I met some people from Dai Loc village in the neighbouring province of Quang Nam. They guided this project, obtaining a list of the 20 poorest households who got 30 chickens each and one 25kg bag of food.

Volunteers then organised food parcels for the elderly and disabled. These were our usual bag of rice, cooking oil, fish sauce, seasoning powder and cartons of milk. Total project cost was 25M = \$1,500.



Chickens delivered by motorbike



Chickens being distributed to disadvantaged families.



Sick and elderly arrive to collect food provisions.

DANANG – SPDC DISABLED CHILDREN’S SCHOOL & NURSING HOME

Danang is mainly Buddhist. But during the French occupation the Sisters of St Paul De Chartres (SPDC) were established in the rural outskirts. As the city grew and land became very valuable, local government tried to take the land. But the SPDC, being well-connected and muscular Christians, opposed it. Finally, the city planners agreed to use some of the resumed land for a public park, reserving one corner for a Mary shrine. This has become a sacred site, believed for many miracles. It is popular with the Christian minority in Danang as a place of prayer.



Like the Buddhist temples and other Christian monasteries, the SPDC use their income sources to cross-fund their charities, managing finances in the typically opaque Vietnamese way. They run a Montessori kindergarten on a business model. This cross-funds their Disabled Children’s School and nursing home.

Through these impressive women, some of whom speak both French and English, I met several seminary students. They were preparing for a mission to serve as parish priests in New Zealand. They helped to carry out this project.

DISABLED CHILDREN’S SCHOOL

This needed educational aids for autistic and deaf children. The school is staffed by nuns trained in teaching children with disabilities. Sometimes an overseas-trained teacher volunteers. A staff member went with us to an educational supply shop to select educational play items for the classrooms. We provided 9M = \$545 funding for these items.



The well-appointed SPDC main campus has been built in the French style.



Classroom in the Disabled Children’s School.



Children's birthday display board in the deaf children's classroom. There are 16 deaf children.



Time and countries of the world display in the deaf children's classroom.



Teacher demonstrates teaching aids

SỞ SỐ HỌC SINH		
MẦM NON	110	KTTT 61 KTVD 20 KT 29
TIỂU HỌC	153	KTTT 75 KTVD 26 KT 52
	19	
HƯỚNG NGHIỆP	30	
TỔNG CỘNG	312	

Display board with student numbers in the SPDC schools: Kindergarten: 61 intellectually disabled, 20 movement disabled, 29 other disabilities. Primary school: 75 intellectually disabled, 26 physically disabled, 52 other disabilities. Job training (16 yrs +): 30.



Conference over design attributes of a commode.



Partially sighted, deaf girl concentrating on her colouring in.



Mobility therapy area.



Classroom student photo board with "Today, how do I feel?" sign.



In class with teacher.



Boy pinning coloured beads.



Intellectually disabled children with carers.



Prosthetic limbs for physically disabled children to practice walking.



Wheelchairs lining walls of a passage.



Necklace threading toy.

ELDERLY WOMEN'S SHELTER

This is another of activity run by the SPDC. It is on an older and less renovated campus. The shelter houses 30 women in dormitories around a beautiful courtyard garden. The nuns identified a need for commodes (we provided 5).

The Commode Conference

It wasn't simple. First, I was sent with a photo of a commode to a supply shop. They could not match the product in the photo. So, I purchased 2 designs and had them delivered by the supplier to the nursing home.

On arrival, I found a group of nuns gathered in conference around a commode. It was being assembled by the supplier. The nuns were discussing the design attributes of the commode. One model was prone to rust (chromed steel frame). The other model was rust free (aluminium frame) but it was not height adjustable. Upholstery was also discussed. The nuns rejected both designs.

After much deliberation, I suggested the commodes be returned to the supplier. Also, that one nun (the one who works directly with the carers) go to the shop and choose a commode. This nun also asked for colostomy bags. So, the problem was solved. The manager (who did not need to know details about commodes and colostomy bags) was satisfied. The next day the items were delivered to the nursing home. This project total was 10M = \$600.



Final choice by our client!

Conference over design attributes of a commode.



Resident catching up by video call in the courtyard.



Award certificates from local officials are common across Vietnam. Here, the awards honour nuns by including titles “Soeur” (French) and Nu tu (Vietnamese) for the women’s shelter.

1. Trên 70 tuổi có hộ khẩu Đà Nẵng
 2. Nghèo khổ không có tài sản để mưu sinh
 3. Không có con cháu để nương thân
 4. Không bệnh truyền nhiễm, tâm thần
 5. Tự nguyện đến sống ở Mái Ấm Tình Thương
 6. Khi nhập Mái Ấm yêu cầu Phường, xã hoặc người bảo hộ đem đầy đủ Hồ sơ:
- * Bản tóm tắt lý lịch cá nhân
 - * Đơn tự nguyện của đương sự
 - * Phiếu khám sức khỏe
 - * Giấy báo tạm vắng
 - * Hộ khẩu, CMND (công chứng)
 - * Thẻ BHYT
 - * Sổ hưởng chính sách xã hội, kèm theo thủ tục chuyển đến Phường Mỹ An, Quận Ngũ Hành Sơn, TP Đà Nẵng
 - * Giấy giới thiệu của Lao Động Thương Binh và Xã Hội Phường, Quận

Admission rules: the woman must be a Danang resident who is over 70; poor (no property); with no children or grandchildren to look after her; not infectious or mentally ill; admission to be voluntary; must have permission from local government.



Sister-in-charge shows a typical dormitory.



With residents and students on the courtyard verandah.

NORTH VIETNAM

PHAT DIEM VILLAGES – CHICKENS FOR 20 FAMILIES & FOOD PARCELS BY SR KINH

Our target group in Phat Diem is mostly villagers who live alone. Many are single elderly women with disabilities. This project, carried out in the early morning before the heat of the day sets in, was handled by Sister Kinh of the local Holy Cross convent, as she continues her mission to disadvantaged people around Phat Diem. She knows her people well. The mission includes her home village, as well as the surrounding area. We provided 20 disadvantaged households in this area with 30 chickens each to raise, with a 25kg bag of feed.

Total project cost was 32M = \$1,900.

A TOWN PLANNING STORY

Following brutal enforcement and inevitable collapse of earlier collective farm experiments, the villages around Phat Diem were typical of the next attempt to socially engineer a model society. This was by building model villages. Many of our client group are the remnant residents of these failed model villages.

The farming model was called V-A-C or *vườn-ao-chuồng* (*garden-fishpond-animal pen*). This was a garden (actually a tiny family farm) with a vegetable garden to provide food for fish pond and animals; fish pond to support the water for garden and ducks; and animals to provide fertiliser for the garden.

In hindsight, this simple model for subsistence living was unlikely to succeed in a rapidly urbanising society. Wage employment soon became more attractive than subsistence farming. Communities were gutted as young people moved away from the subsistence villages. They sought higher wages: first in local mining; then in cities; then finally by moving overseas.

Each household had a rice plot on a collective farm. The rice plots are now privatised. The 1970 date stamp on the concrete water tank is the only tangible reminder that a family farm was originally part of the war-time Communist 5-year plan to sanitise society (yet again).



Two single women stand at the 1970 date stamped water tank of their V-A-C family farm.



Villagers arrive to collect their chickens to raise.



Group with Sr Kinh and feed bags.



People leave with chickens

GROUP HOUSEHOLD OF 10 WOMEN, PHÁT DIỆM.

This group household has 10 women without family support. They are allowed to use an old house in the city. They mainly rely on local goodwill. Sister Kính visits each month. She usually tries to bring some food. Each woman keeps her own food supply.

During this visit we funded Sister Kính to purchase and divide up food provisions: 15kg rice, 1kg sugar, 0.5kg seasoning powder and 1 litre fish sauce.



Household of 10 elderly/disabled women with food parcels delivered by Sr Kinh

PROFILE OF SISTER KÍNH



Sister Kính is one of the original nuns at the Holy Cross convent in Phát Diệm and second-in-charge of 400 sisters. She has a good heart and visits disadvantaged people in the surrounding area. Most are Buddhists. She agreed to carry out a food relief and chicken raising project in the Phát Diệm area.

Sister Kính is always smiling. But when she happily raced off on her motorbike to lead me to her village, I lost her in about 5 minutes. Only a phone call brought her back. She was so distracted, I wondered whether she was trying to get through her daily rosary chant while riding. My suspicion was confirmed when she took off again and crashed into a motorbike on a corner. Shaken and disappointed with the damage on her new shoes, she jumped back on and continued the journey. When she returned to the convent, she got no sympathy. The sisters say Sister Kính rides too fast and needs to slow down.

Phát Diệm is a small town, famous for the stone Cathedral that is the core of a Christian temple complex. To the north is the bishop's house with a large plaza. To the south is the historic La Salle French monastery. West is the seminary. Further south is the Holy Cross Convent with 400 sisters. The only clash is a tall tower with speakers for Communist Party propaganda. This competes with the church gong.

So Phát Diệm has all the infrastructure of a large Christian centre. But most of the Christians have left as refugees for the south, escaping persecution. The remnant Christian population is about a thousand, a quarter of the population in Christian villages further south. Most of the population are Buddhist settlers from other areas.

Sister Kính was born in 1968 at the start of the war. She had a tough childhood on the edge of starvation in a nearby village. She was born into a big family with 7 brothers and sisters. As children they had no rice. When mother gave birth to Kính's little sister, mother became seriously ill and the children became the carers. Then the father died.

By 1974, farms were confiscated and collectivised by the Communists. The result was starvation. After cutting rice, people hid some rice in the fields and returned at night to steal it for their families.

One of Sister Kính's earliest memories was from this time when at the age of 6 she played the role of Mary in the May Day ceremony during the rice harvest. This was a performance in which flowers were brought to Mother Mary. After this, she succeeded in getting some rice by begging. She would sing the Mary song for people and they would give her some rice.

Sister Kính's mother walked with her when she was 12 years old to a village 5km away, to show her the road and how to buy harvested rice to take home for threshing. After that, she would go by herself to the village, buy the rice and cart 15 or 20kg on her head back home. She would then thresh all the rice by grinding it in a large stone pestle to sell on the street. The leftover rice powder was then boiled up into a soup for the family.

Mostly, the family ate rice mixed with cassava or sweet potato. If a fistful of fish was caught in the hand net, this was mixed with a lot of salt to flavour the rice. One egg with a lot of salt would flavour the rice for all the family to eat. The family did not eat meat at this time.

After the war around the 1980s the food and clothing fabric coupon system was operating and Chinese rice was given to the ordinary people. The rice was often not fresh and had insects in it. In the convent only the old women were given this rice allowance by government officials.

Sister Kính's older brothers and sisters all stopped school to take turns to look after their mother and youngest sister.

Sister Kính stopped school at the age of 13 in middle school and followed the exodus of people leaving her home village to work in the Nari Thái Nguyên gold mines, 60 km from Hà Nội. She worked in the mines for three years and sent money back to support her mother. At the age of 16 she returned home.

Every time a new mine starts up, whole villages empty out as people join the rush to make their fortune. The sex industry follows the short mining booms and some of the men return to their villages infected with HIV. This has happened in Sister Kính's home village as well.

Sister Kính then joined 18 local girls who tried to move into the convent with the 30 elderly sisters in the convent at Phát Diệm. But the Communists were closing the convents. This period was *chạy giặc*, of people escaping the Communists to move south. Old women were allowed to stay but young entrants were not permitted by the Communists. The theory was that after the old women died the convents would all close. At night the officials raided the convent to expel any young women. All the girls escaped out into the fields or hid in a dugout under the convent floor.

Every girl was given a new name by the nuns. When the Communist officials questioned people in the village about any of the nuns, the villagers would not recognise the name. That was how Lan lost her name and became known as Kính in the convent.

But Communist persecution of Christian communities had been even more severe in the 1945 to 1954 period. Communists came to kill the men and then raped all the women. There are many ghosts at the convent from that terrible period.

At Phát Diệm the La Salle monks were expelled to the south and their school was confiscated to be turned into a government school. Seminaries were disbanded. This story was repeated all over Vietnam. Some convents and seminaries moved south.

When Sister Kỉnh came to the convent there was not enough food to eat. So, the young girls wove sleeping mats to sell on the street. Other sisters went out to work in the fields to get some food.

Even though Communist persecution continued to around the year 2000, Sister Kỉnh joined the convent at the age of 18 and was part of the first class of young women to be accepted there. They were all from farming families and did not go to school.

After the war there was not enough clothing. You could see a lot of patches on people's clothing. Some nuns had only one sandal. So, they used to walk to the church with the sandal tucked under an arm. Then they wore the sandal in church and returned to the convent barefoot.

In 1993 at the age of 25, Sister Kỉnh and all the other women that were in the same class at the convent went back to finish high school.

Later Sister Kỉnh was sent to train as a kindergarten teacher. The Holy Cross sisters are in every diocese in Vietnam. Their main work is to help in the parishes with housekeeping for the priests, religion teaching and choir training. Kindergartens are the main businesses of the nuns across Vietnam. But they also run farms, convent pharmacies, medical centres, craft industries, souvenir shops, orphanages and shelters. In fact, anything that helps sustain them.

In 2013 Sister Kỉnh was sent to mission at Hòa Bình (near Hà Nội). Most of the community were Vietnamese but there were also indigenous Mường people.



The Phát Diệm Christian temple complex at twilight.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

THE RIDE TO KONTUM

The Central Highlands is the mountain region between Saigon and Danang. It has five provinces (Kon Tum, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Dak Nong and Lam Dong). This trip I visited villages in three of these provinces in a 1,500km ride. After a fall/surgery in Belconnen, I tried to preserve the knees and back by leaving the very hardy, but aging, Yamaha Taurus scooter which has done over 50,000km. Instead, I took the Suzuki GZ 150 mini-cruiser (soft riding on roads; but not made for dirt tracks).

The Danang to Kontum ride is across two mountain passes. Someone in the road construction team left out the concrete reinforcing. So, there are deep cracks. Slabs of concrete occasionally bounce under the wheels of passing trucks.

Kontum is unique in using the local Ba Nah language as a common language for its 29 highland tribes.

KONTUM CHILDREN'S SHELTER NO 2 (BA NAH PEOPLE)

Kontum is unique in Vietnam because it has a monastic order that is only for indigenous nuns, who serve only the indigenous villages. The order was created in 1949 by the French bishop Jean Sion Kham. Some of the 200 nuns in the province run live-in shelters for children in the city. There are six shelters. Or they live in small households in highland villages to house and teach children and provide medical help. This order also provides an opportunity for more women to gain security and education in the monasteries.

Children in city shelters come from families where a parent has died, or left, or where families have so many children that they have a few to spare and send those to the nuns, to reduce strain on the family.

At the Kontum children's shelter no 2 (called Vinh Son, a Vietnamisation of St Vincent's), we provided \$1,920 of school materials, hygiene supplies, food and solar hot water. The shelter buildings are a bit run down. The 5 nuns that run 14 staff to look after their 165 children are relaxed and highly organised. The children appeared alert, enthusiastic, happy and super-organised with all their chores of cooking, sweeping the yards, feeding younger children and the like. They ate meals with enthusiasm. This was a contrast to the new Vietnamese middle class children, who are seen complaining to their parents, eating fast foods, watching the adults fuss around them and setting up for diabetes in later life.

Teaching and organising children is a high energy occupation. Sister Nguyet, second in charge and only 33 years old, took me through a detailed inspection. Her boss, aged 50, was away at management meetings.

From our funds, we provided:

- Rice, 250kg (3M).
- School supplies of boxes of coloured and writing pens, chalks, pencils and sharpeners, erasers, assignment books and colouring books, chalk boards (8M).
- Hygiene supplies of soap bars, laundry powder, floor cleaner, toothpaste/brushes, cleaning liquids, nappies, plus cooking oil and seasoning (9M).
- Vietnamese manufactured solar hot water system for the little children's shower room (12M).



Teenagers at the shelter on kitchen roster



Cooking lunch



Large free range chicken pen



Some of our clients



The little kids having a mid-morning snack.



Young teenagers doing their laundry.



The children helping with our project.

The children helping with our project



Breakfast before school (with enthusiasm)



Supervised meal for the little ones



Little boys table at breakfast



Masked up for kindergarten



Sunday volleyball organised by a teacher



Sister Nguyen, a local Ba Nah



Entry sign

After school tutoring room

NGOC REO VILLAGE STUDENT HOMESTAY (BA NAH PEOPLE)

The sisters then directed me to Ngoc Reo village, Dak Ha. The village is only 15km from Kontum city. But to reach the village, a mountain pass has to be crossed and this makes the village quite remote. There, three nuns run a homestay for 40 indigenous students whose families work in coffee farms. These farms are too far from schools. So, the children live in a group under the care of the nuns. I inspected the place and looked at a project for next year, to give each child an individual storage unit for their personal belongings.

We funded food parcels for 30 disadvantaged households, mainly single women who took their babies and children to work with them on the coffee farms. This project was 10M (\$600).



Half of the kids at the home. The other half were at school as education is run in two daily shifts



Women arrive to collect our project



PLEIKU HISTORY

Going south, the main road is a smooth ride into Pleiku, the capital of Gia Lai Province. The province is named after its largest highland tribe, the Jarai. Like the other Central Highland provinces, the capital city is full of ethnic Vietnamese, running businesses and government. The local indigenous people labour on farms, sometimes living in shacks on these farms. They are rarely seen in town.

As an aside, Pleiku was significant in Vietnam War history. The 1965 VC attack on Pleiku airbase killed some US servicemen. The USA retaliated by escalating the conflict and bombing the DMZ (border area). The historical lesson should have been clear: Don't f**k with the US, or you'll get smacked. In a local catastrophe ten years later, the VC attacked again. People tried to escape the conflict, but up to 100,000 were stranded or killed as they tried to escape.

This trip was in April. So, every main village street had government sponsored flags and banners to mark "Victory Day" public holiday. This celebrates the capture of Saigon and shameful treatment of its people. Businesses and properties were grabbed by VC officers. Local men were executed or sent to "re-education" camps. "National Victory Day" is known by overseas Vietnamese as "National Day of Hate". Even in 2022, just mentioning the ruling party in a conversation in a negative way can land a person in gaol for three or four years.

In two of the provinces I visited, Kontum (Ba Nah people) and Dak Lak (Ede people), the dominant indigenous group is acculturated, learning to grow rice and speak Vietnamese. This is normal village life. But around Pleiku I visited lepers living on large coffee farms in dire poverty.



Pleiku city at sunset



Leprosy farm labourers meet us at a village

LA SALLE INDIGENOUS SCHOOL

The La Salle monastery runs a free primary school, solely for indigenous children. Following the Vietnam War, La Salle monastery schools and properties were confiscated by the State. Now, the old generation of French trained monks are gone. Young Vietnamese men join the monastery and find patrons to lease land to the school. This way, the monks obtain government registration for their school. It is maintained entirely from donations.

One residential block houses around 40 students from remote farms. They board during the week and return home on weekends.

Brother Thuong speaks good internet-taught English. He showed me the small library which was undergoing renovations. We funded 100 second-hand books, which were half of the RRP (2M). Thuong then selected 500 educational booklets and books from a large educational bookshop (10M). Our library book project totalled \$720.



Entrance murals depicting Jarai customs



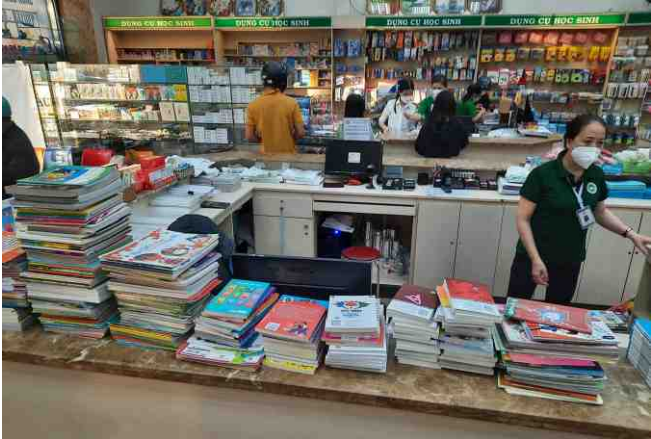
Monument to the famous Vietnamese writer and educator, Truong Vinh Ky



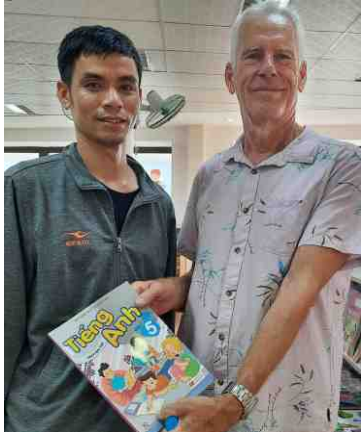
School grounds



Primary library undergoing renovation



Our library book purchase



With Brother Thuong at the bookstore

DR TRONG'S LEPROSY OUTREACH

At Pleiku I met Dr Trong and his volunteer team. Dr Trong works at Gia Lai General Hospital emergency department. But on his days off, he and his volunteers run an outreach. They travel to 7 small remote villages, treating lepers and carrying out medical checks for villagers. In total the group regularly treats 100 lepers. Officially, Vietnam is free of leprosy. The WHO gives free leprosy meds, but governments don't distribute them in remote areas.

The team members are:

- Dr Trong, born into a big family of 12 siblings. First career was a musician. He still has some of the muso character, appearing laid back when he chats with people. He has done this volunteering for 30 years. He does the patient consults.
- Dr Linh, a young hospital doctor whose day job is in gastroscopy.
- Oanh, whose day job is book keeping for a building company. For 6 years she has assisted Dr Trong, dispensing medicines and carrying out blood pressure checks.
- Nam, a monk who cleans and dresses people's wounds. He has been doing this for a year.
- Cong, Jarai interpreter and male nurse.

Travelling in a van on weekends, the team chat, joke, doze off and stop at the roadside for a quick meal and coffee. But the minute they arrive at a village, they all know their jobs. Local people are waiting for the monthly visit. Each person in the team quietly swings into action. Oanh begins unpacking the meds. Dr Trong starts his consults. Nam sets up a bench for wound dressing. The infected and dead skin on lepers' feet needs to be removed, revealing raw flesh underneath. This is then cleaned and dressed. It's all done without any bureaucracy or fuss, and puts the villagers at ease. Then the team quickly pack up and go to the next village on their regular circuit.



Local children come out to see the arrival of Dr Trong's van at the village



L to R: Brother Nam (wound dressings); Cong (nurse and Jarai interp); Dr Linh; Dr Trong; Oanh (medicine dispensing and blood pressure checks).



The team at work

OUR PROJECT: FOOD & MEDICINES

Each of the 7 villages in this project is very small. Each village has around 10 to 20 related households. In total there are around 100 lepers across these villages. We funded food parcels for 100 lepers for 30M (\$1,800). Each parcel had the usual rice bag, oil, fish sauce, seasoning powder and noodle packets. The food was purchased by Dr Trong's wife who also sorted it into bags.

We also funded about 3 months' supply of medicines. These were the usual suite of paracetamol, multivitamins, antibiotic (Cephalexin), antihistamine, indigestion tablets and the like. No designer drugs here. All these medicines are available locally for a low cost, so Oanh was able to buy a good supply with our budget of 12M (\$720). Medicines were being dispensed with care and it appeared to us that there should be enough for about 3 months. Thank you Rasa for your contribution to this.



Our food project being stacked at a village



Some of the medicines we funded



A relative pushes a leper's wheelchair. Our food project is in her traditional Central Highlands woven grass back pack.



Lepers collection food parcels.

LAN 2 VILLAGE

The village is inhabited by K'rai people and has 16 households with lepers. There is no visible government support. Franciscan monks built the houses, probably 15 years ago. Houses are basic but usable huts. The Baptists arrived in the last year or so and built a little tin church/meeting house. The Franciscans also built the 4m x 4m treatment room in which Dr Trong's team sets up.



Woman with no fingers takes our rice and food bag back home along the village main street



Typical house exterior



Feet wounds being treated



Leper house interior: prosthetic legs on bed; Uncle Ho next to the Virgin Mary and Christ.



LANG TANG VILLAGE

The village has 20 lepers. There were no medical consults, but we met the villagers and dropped off the food parcels.



JRI VILLAGE

The village has Ba Nah and Jarai people. It has 22 lepers and all of them are attached to, and live on a coffee farm where they work as labourers. The village “leader” (nominated by local government) is B’Lak (pronounced “black”).



Typical house, jack fruit and banana tree plantings.
Farm labourer's motorbike, hoe and woven grass back pack

PA BOONG VILLAGE

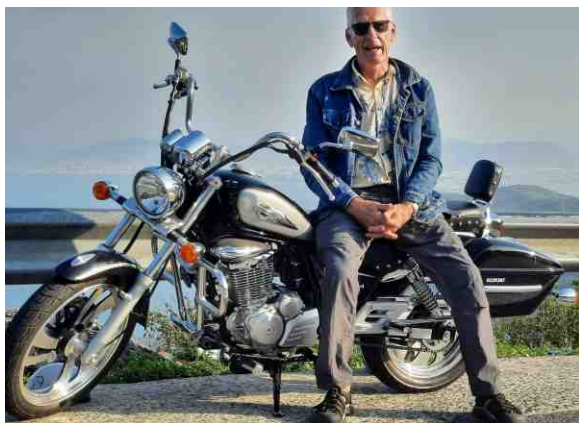
The village has 14 lepers, and again, we just greeted people briefly and dropped off food parcels. This included food parcels for transfer to Vong Chep village. This has 30 lepers and is even more remote.



Villagers stand with Dr Trong's volunteers for a photo

BUON ME THUOT, DAK LAK PROVINCE

I left the Ba Nah speaking area of Kontum and Jarai speaking area of Pleiku to ride south into the Ede language province of Dak Lak.



SUPPORTING EDUCATION BY BUYING PIGLETS

There, the St Paul De Chartres (SPDC) convent had raised 7 piglets. This was for our project to provide disadvantaged families in one local Ede indigenous village. The aims were to give people an occupation of raising the local variety of mountain pig, with an opportunity to improve nutrition and improve household income.

The SPDC Vi Nhan Disabled Children's School charges some fees to cover costs. But it provides free care and education for children at risk and to indigenous disabled children. There are 12 nuns and a large team of employed teachers. There are 40 disabled children who board and another 200 disabled children who attend the day school.

The convent neighbour is the La Salle monastery who run a school for 185 boys. The monastery had raised 15 piglets for our project. The monastery has 5 monks and over 10 staff to teach the boys. Like its neighbour, the La Salle boys school uses fees from the wealthier families to provide free education to boys from poor families.

We provided a little bit of support to both schools by buying their pigs, and got 22 piglets at a good price of 25M (\$1,510). This was a very reasonable price because the dark coloured mountain pigs are hardier, more disease resistant and easier to raise than the factory farmed white pig.



This nun hand raises the pigs like her babies. They are very tame.



Children at the SPDC Vi Nhan Disabled Children's School have a beautiful garden setting.

H'RAT VILLAGE, BMT

Sister Loan, manager of the SPDC convent. is in charge of everything there. She has shown quite a bit of flexibility in providing her senior sisters with some lifestyle choice. Loan permits Sister Huong to live at her parents' home to care for her aging parents. Loan also has given Sister Huong the mission to carry out a monthly pastoral visit to a local indigenous village. This is because Sister Huong lived in Kontum and became familiar with the life and customs of indigenous villages.

Our project, to provide 11 disadvantaged households with a pair of piglets each, is a good reinforcement of Sister Huong's mission to improve the life of the people of H'Rat village. Actually, 10 families live in the village and the 11th family lives on a coffee farm.

The local village leader (nominated by local government) was contacted to prepare a household list and get the people ready. Our convoy of 2 motorcycles was followed by a truck carrying pigs and an 800cc Suzuki van crammed with half a dozen nuns. Evidently the nuns wanted an outing to experience the mission.

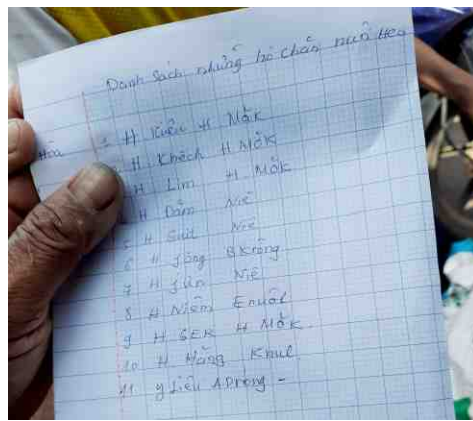
Arriving, we briefly met the village leader who had the list and his wife, who manned the pig distribution at the truck. Sister Loan lined the recipients up and like principal at speech night, gave the locals a pep talk. This was about how the piglets were being funded. But if the piglets died (got sick or went into the cooking pot), then there would be no more pigs next year. But if the pigs were big and healthy, then Peter would come back from Uc (Australia) with more pigs for the people.

I am sure the locals did not much care whether Peter came from Uc (Australia), the Soviet Union or the moon. But they listened politely.

That was the last of the organised atmosphere. Because when the pigs began to be grabbed by the men for transfer into bags brought by the people, all hell broke loose. Piglets ran around in the truck, squealing loudly and trying to jump out or evade capture. People crowded round the truck so they would not miss out. Eventually, however, all the piglets were caught and despite trying to bite their handlers and everyone else, got transferred into bags and loaded onto motorcycles. One bag had a hole cut for the pig's snout to stick out to help it breathe. Another man decided to start burning ventilation holes into his bag with his cigarette after putting 2 piglets into it. Then they all took off on old motorcycles, rattling over the dirt roads, holding bags containing pairs of piglets.

Once the confusion settled, our group were invited to visit the piglets in their new homes. I asked to see two houses. The first house had a 20 year old woman, married last year with one child. Her glamorous wedding photo posters on the wall provided a stark contrast to the village setting. This was a basic village home and I took photos of the interior, exterior, yard and piglet pen.

The second home was that of a young farm labourer with his wife and 4 children. They all work on a pepper farm during the day and shell cashew nuts at night for some extra income. This project seemed a success. With the nuns piling back into their van, I left to meet them at the convent.



Cigarette burn vent holes in piglet bag

Sisters piling into their incredibly useful van



Rice harvest drying out on concreted yard



Kitchen pots at side of the house



Glamorous wedding photos



House interior



Piglets getting used to their new home



Animal pen in a typical village house yard



Farm labourer's home with welcome mat and green tea offered for the guests. Cashew nuts for shelling in the evening are on the floor.



Piglets are kept in the "tiger cage" in the yard

BUON ME THUOT SPDC DISABLED CHILDRENS SCHOOL – AUTISTIC LEARNING

Sister Lien, who supervises the class of autistic children, asked for a black and white laser printer so she could print out assignment sheets in the classroom (4).

There is a problem in Vietnam with people wanting the latest complex technology, and then abusing the equipment until it needs to be thrown out into the street. They then ask for a replacement.

So, this time it was suggested to the good sister that when (not “if”) the machine breaks down, it should be sent out to be repaired, rather than ask for another one.

I also agreed to fund 6M to pay for some learning materials for the autistic children. So, this project total was 10M or \$600.

Below are examples of learning materials I saw at the SPDC sister school for disabled children in Danang.



Teacher helping a boy to sort images of garbage into recycling, landfill and green waste bins.



Activities in classroom.



Autistic girl practicing colour sorting.



Autistic boy matching beads with numbers.
Boy pinning coloured beads.

QUANG TRI – VAN KIEU INDIGENOUS VILLAGE BY HUE UNI STUDENT GROUP.

In the past I did a yearly visit to this remote village of Van Kieu (Bru) indigenous people. Their livelihood is slash and burn agriculture and reforestation. I plan to return during a better growing season with a thousand nitrogen-fixing *cay tram* tree seedlings (Queensland wattle).

FOOD+BLANKETS+MOSQUITO NETS FOR 50 FAMILIES

We had a large uni student group who fundraised for this project to home visit 50 households in a mountain village and provide each with: sticky rice 20kg, 30 noodle packets, fish sauce 1 litre, sugar 1kg, a winter blanket and a mosquito net.

As part of this student engagement, students visited each household, organised children's games and activities, sent photos and had a great time escaping from their studies for a day trip. Our project cost was 25M or \$1,510.

WATER SUPPLY WELL

With our uni student volunteers we scoped a simple water supply project for the village.

Construction will be an underground bore and pump to bring water to the surface. An above-ground stainless steel tank will hold the water. People from the village come to fill up containers to bring water back home.

The water bore contractor provided a guarantee that the bore would be deep enough for the water to be "sweet".

The students undertook to send one of their group to return to the village to monitor and record the work. This project cost was 22M or \$1,330.



Home visit



Student group carry supplies to the village.



Children gather for games and activities.