FoVO

Friends of Vietnam Orphanages Inc.

Helping disadvantaged communities in Vietnam

Report to Donors

2014 Financial Year

REGISTERED CHARITY · acnc.gov.au/charityregister



FoVO Vietnam Field Trip Key Map Red circles indicate some project locations.

REPORT TO DONORS 2014

Introduction

Friends of Vietnam Orphanages Inc (FoVO) is a small Australian charity providing direct assistance to disadvantaged children, families and communities in Vietnam.

The principal field visit during the 2014 financial year took place in January. During that visit projects were carried out in Sài Gòn, the Mekong Delta, Huế, Đà Nẵng, Nghệ An and other parts of central Vietnam. Further projects were completed during the remainder of the financial year through volunteer interpreters and local contacts.

Assistance included education and tertiary study, computers and library materials, medical and infant care, bicycles and blankets, assistance to poor families, livestock and food for village households, and practical equipment for orphanages and a community soup kitchen.

Two larger projects were completed later in the year. FoVO provided $2,700 for supplies and equipment for three orphanages in the Cần Thơ area, and contributed $5,000 towards a water filtration plant serving a fishing village in Nghệ An.

FoVO spent $16,430 on assistance and project delivery in Vietnam.

The work depended heavily on volunteer interpreters, local helpers and Australian donors. They helped identify needs, organise purchases, obtain receipts and photographs, and follow up projects after the field visit had moved on.

We thank our donors, committee members, volunteer interpreters and local helpers for their generous support, practical assistance and advice.

Peter Kabaila
Public Officer
Friends of Vietnam Orphanages Inc (FoVO)

REPORT TO DONORS 2014

Project Summary

How Your $16,430 Was Spent

NO.	PROJECT	AUD	MILLION VND
1	An Bình Orphanage, Sài Gòn — student scholarships	**$1,600**	31.1
2	An Bình Orphanage — computers, library and internet	**$1,300**	25.2
3	Hướng Dương Orphanage, Cần Thơ — student library	**$500**	9.7
4	Hướng Phương students — tertiary study sponsorships	**$1,000**	19.4
5	Huế household of sisters — computer and desk	**$450**	8.7
6	Đà Nẵng household of sisters — nursing study equipment	**$260**	5.0
7	Trang Nứa shelter, Nghệ An — bicycles and blankets	**$400**	7.8
8	Fieldwork support — interpreter, communications and project cards	**$400**	7.8
9	Hiếu, Sài Gòn — post-operative and personal assistance	**$600**	11.6
10	An Bình Orphanage — acupuncture and therapeutic massage equipment	**$200**	3.9
11	Bửu Trì Pagoda Orphanage, Cần Thơ — infant and school supplies	**$250**	4.9
12	Cầu Giát — infant supplies for adopted baby	**$80**	1.6
13	Bồ Đề Pagoda Orphanage — mattresses and pillows	**$150**	2.9
14	Quảng Bình — assistance to family injured in generator explosion	**$200**	3.9
15	Hưng Sơn Thai village — clothing, livestock, blankets and rice	**$540**	10.5
16	Huế — assistance to three disadvantaged families	**$330**	6.4
17	Three Cần Thơ orphanages — equipment, food, hygiene and education	**$2,700**	52.4
18	Quỳnh Ngọc fishing village — water filtration plant	**$5,000**	97.1
19	Ngã Năm soup kitchen — tables and chairs	**$470**	9.1
	TOTAL	**$16,430**	**318.9**

VND converted at the Reserve Bank of Australia average rate for the financial year, approximately 1.94 million VND = AUD $100.

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1. An Bình Orphanage, Sài Gòn

Student scholarships — $1,600

Description

FoVO continued education assistance for residents of An Bình Orphanage in Sài Gòn. The orphanage accommodated girls and women who were studying or undertaking vocational training, including students with disabilities and young women from poor rural families.

Two payments of $800 were made during the financial year towards tertiary and school course fees.

Project expenditure

- First scholarship payment — $800
- Second scholarship payment — $800

Total: $1,600
Course-fee requests and receipts were provided by Sister Lịch, who managed the orphanage.

Observation

Education was central to the purpose of An Bình. During the day residents left the house to attend school, college, vocational courses or work.

The students were undertaking a range of studies, including pharmacy, teaching, secondary school and vocational courses. Several had disabilities which made access to education more difficult, while others came from families unable to meet the cost of continued study.

Reflection

Regular scholarship payments allowed FoVO to support education over more than one semester rather than making a single one-off contribution. The arrangement also relied on course-fee receipts being provided before reimbursement.



Sister Lich, Peter and all the girls in An Binh orphanage.



A volunteer is teaching English to the girls at An Binh Orphanage.





Hieu after successful surgery

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2. An Bình Orphanage, Sài Gòn

Computers, library and internet — $1,300

Description

FoVO upgraded study facilities at An Bình Orphanage by providing computers, library materials and internet access.

The computer work was organised with Pháp, a volunteer IT specialist in Sài Gòn. Two new computers were assembled and installed, while an existing computer was upgraded. A printer and monitor donated in Australia were also incorporated into the system.

Project expenditure

- Two new computers and upgrade of an existing computer — $900
- Library books, DVDs, posters and study materials — $200
- Internet installation and supply — $200

Total: $1,300

Observation

The residents had asked for better access to computers and study materials. The new computers provided research and assignment facilities on both floors of the house.

The library materials were selected during a shopping trip with Sister Lịch, Sister Nhiệm and interpreter Nhung. Purchases included English-language posters, textbooks, illustrated books, DVDs and general-interest reading.

The aim was not only to provide formal study material. Some books and DVDs were selected simply because they were interesting or enjoyable.

Reflection

The project improved several parts of the study environment at once. Local IT help was particularly valuable because the computers could be assembled, installed and maintained using equipment and expertise available in Sài Gòn.





Peter is Showing photos from his laptop



. First time learning how to type on the new computer

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3. Hướng Dương Orphanage, Cần Thơ

Student library — $500

Description

FoVO provided $500 to improve the student library at Hướng Dương Orphanage near Cần Thơ.

The orphanage accommodated about 30 children, mostly boys, who attended local government schools. The existing library consisted of a small number of school books in an old bookshelf within a room also used for storage.

Project expenditure
Books, comic books, posters, a globe and bookshelves — $500
The project was organised locally by Hien, FoVO's volunteer interpreter in Cần Thơ.

Observation

During the January visit the library was identified as an obvious gap. The children spent most of the day at school, so the intention was to provide more interesting reading and study material for use after school.

Bookshelves and library materials were subsequently purchased and installed.

Reflection

The project did not attempt to alter the orphanage buildings or management. It concentrated on improving one part of the children's existing study environment with books and materials that could be used repeatedly.



Children are sharing fruits in the kitchen







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4. Hướng Phương Students

Tertiary study sponsorships — $1,000

Description

FoVO provided study sponsorships for four students associated with Hướng Phương Convent in Quảng Bình: Thuy, Hiep, Huyen and Hien.

Thuy was completing a Blood Test Diploma in Hồ Chí Minh City. Hiep and Huyen were studying foreign languages at Huế University. Hien was undertaking a nursing course in Đà Nẵng.

Project expenditure

- Final semester payment for Thuy's Blood Test Diploma — $250
- Semester sponsorship for Hiep and Huyen — $500
- Nursing course sponsorship for Hien — $250

Total: $1,000
The sponsorships were supported by individual Australian donors as well as FoVO funds.

Observation

The courses were practical qualifications which could later be used in community work. Thuy's blood-testing training, for example, could be useful in village medical screening. Hiep and Huyen were studying languages, while Hien was undertaking nursing studies.

The students came from religious communities with limited financial resources and were living simply while completing their courses.

Reflection

These were small education sponsorships rather than one large program. They reflected FoVO's continuing interest in helping young women obtain qualifications which could improve both their own opportunities and the work they later carried out in their communities.



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5. Huế Household of Sisters

Computer and desk — $450

Description

FoVO provided computer equipment and a desk for a household of 13 sisters attached to the Holy Cross Order at Hướng Phương who were undertaking university courses in Huế.

The project was organised with Huyen, who was assisting FoVO as an interpreter.

Project expenditure

Computer equipment and desk — $450

Observation

The sisters were living together while studying university courses. Access to a computer was useful for assignments, study and preparation of course work.

The equipment was shared rather than provided to one individual student, so it could assist several sisters undertaking different courses.

Reflection

A shared computer was a practical way of supporting a number of students at once. The project complemented FoVO's individual study sponsorships while providing equipment that remained available to the household.



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6. Đà Nẵng Household of Sisters

Nursing study equipment — $260

Description

FoVO provided nursing study equipment for a household of 11 sisters attached to the Holy Cross Order who were studying nursing in Đà Nẵng.

Thi, FoVO's volunteer interpreter, coordinated the project.

Project expenditure

Stethoscopes and blood-pressure testing kits — $260

Observation

The students had limited access to practical equipment during their nursing studies. Stethoscopes and blood-pressure kits allowed them to practise some of the basic procedures they were learning.

The equipment could also remain useful after their studies when the sisters returned to work in their communities.

Reflection

This was a small education project with a practical purpose. Rather than contributing only towards course fees, FoVO provided equipment the students could use while training and potentially continue using afterwards.





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7. Trang Nứa Shelter, Nghệ An

Bicycles and winter blankets — $400

Description

FoVO provided three bicycles and ten winter blankets for Trang Nứa shelter near Vinh in Nghệ An.

The shelter provided a home for 14 children and was supported by a local convent.

Project expenditure

- Three bicycles
- Ten winter blankets

Total: $400

Observation

The bicycles provided useful transport for children travelling to school. The blankets addressed the more immediate need for warmth during the colder northern winter.

Both were ordinary household items selected in response to practical needs at the shelter.

Reflection

The project was simple and direct. The bicycles could be used for several years, while the blankets improved everyday living conditions for the children.







REPORT TO DONORS 2014

8. Fieldwork Support

Interpreter, communications and project materials — $400

Description

FoVO spent $400 on practical costs directly associated with carrying out and documenting projects during the January 2014 field visit.

Project expenditure

- Interpreter costs
- SIM card
- USB internet
- Printing of FoVO orphanage fund cards

Total: $400

Observation

FoVO depended heavily on volunteer interpreters and local helpers. Although much of their time was donated, fieldwork also involved practical costs for communication, travel assistance and project administration.

Mobile phone and internet access were particularly important while travelling, allowing contact with orphanages, local helpers and people in Australia.

Reflection

This expenditure was recorded as part of FoVO's project work in 2014. It reflects the way the charity operated at the time, when a travelling fieldworker and a changing network of volunteer interpreters were used to locate, organise and document projects.

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9. Hiếu, Sài Gòn

Post-operative and personal assistance — $600

Description

Hiếu was recovering from facial reconstruction surgery carried out in December 2013. She had suffered severe acid burns as a baby and was living at An Bình Orphanage.

FoVO provided assistance with her recovery and personal and medical expenses.

Project expenditure

- Reimbursement of post -operative care costs — $300
- Personal and medical assistance — $300

Total: $600
The first payment was provided through Sister Lịch at An Bình. With the second payment, interpreter Nhung helped Hiếu establish her own bank account with keycard access so that she could meet some of her personal and medical expenses herself.

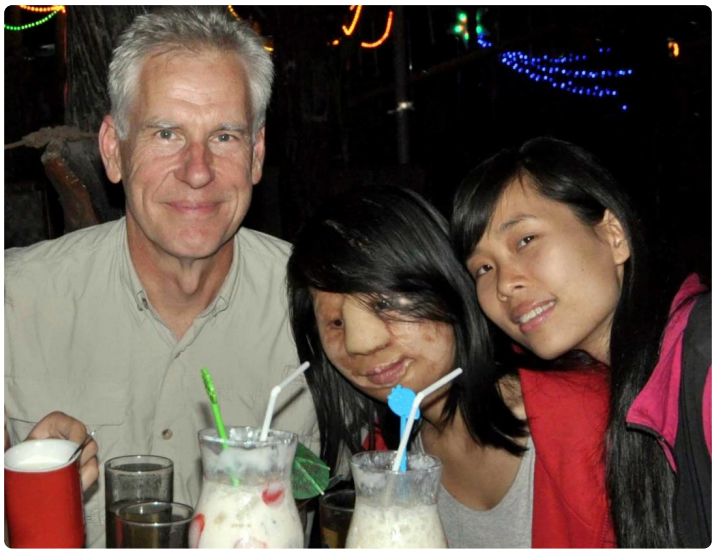
Observation

The reconstructive surgery itself had been donated, but recovery involved continuing expenses.

At the time of the January visit Hiếu was still recovering. There was also discussion about future vocational training or a small business which might help her become more independent, but no decision was made on that during the visit.

Reflection

The immediate priority was recovery from surgery. Setting up a bank account also gave Hiếu some direct control over the assistance provided for her own expenses.



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10. An Bình Orphanage, Sài Gòn

Acupuncture and therapeutic massage equipment — $200

Description

FoVO purchased acupuncture and therapeutic massage equipment for use at An Bình Orphanage.

Sister Kiêm had requested the equipment for treating residents of the household. Nhung, FoVO's interpreter, had undertaken similar training and knew the equipment required, so she organised the purchase.

Project expenditure

Acupuncture and therapeutic massage equipment — $200

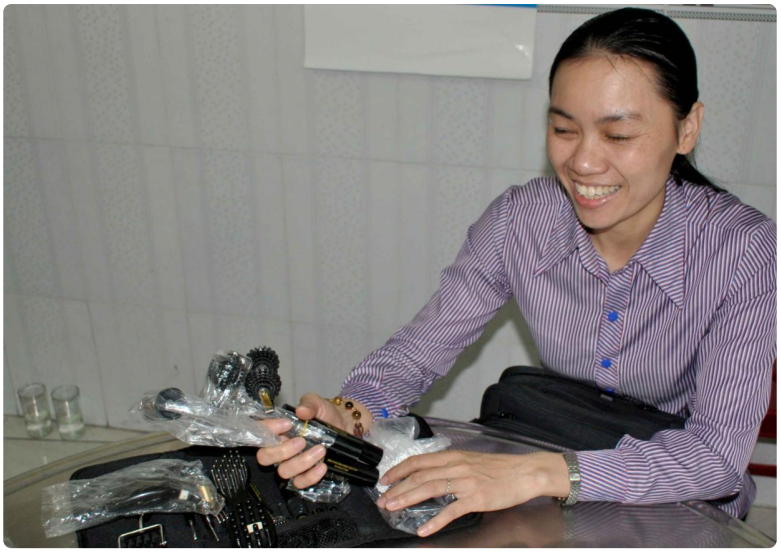
Observation

Acupuncture and therapeutic massage were commonly used forms of treatment in Vietnam. Sister Kiêm intended to use the equipment for residents at An Bình.

A separate request for similar equipment for another convent household was not funded.

Reflection

The project responded to a specific request from the person who intended to use the equipment. Nhung's familiarity with the treatment and equipment was useful in making the purchase.



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11. Bửu Trì Pagoda Orphanage, Cần Thơ

Infant care and school supplies — $250

Description

Bửu Trì Pagoda Orphanage was a Buddhist temple orphanage in Cần Thơ caring for about 80 children.

During the January visit two babies had recently arrived at the orphanage. The nun in charge identified infant supplies and school materials as immediate needs.

Project expenditure
A three-month supply of infant formula, nappies, wipes and related baby supplies, together with school materials for Years 1 – 5 — $250
The shopping list was prepared at the orphanage and the purchases were made locally with Long Quach assisting as interpreter.

Observation

The two babies had arrived around the Christmas period and required the ordinary supplies needed for newborn care. The orphanage also needed textbooks, teaching aids and stationery for primary-school children.

The goods were purchased and delivered to the orphanage during the visit.

Reflection

Asking the orphanage to prepare a list kept the project focused on immediate needs. Combining baby supplies with school materials allowed the same small project to assist both the youngest children and those already attending school.



REPORT TO DONORS 2014

12. Cầu Giát, Nghệ An

Infant supplies for adopted baby — $80

Description

FoVO provided $80 towards infant supplies for an adopted baby near Cầu Giát in Nghệ An.

FoVO had previously assisted with the cost of a heart operation for the baby.

Project expenditure Infant supplies — $80

Observation

This was a small follow-up contribution rather than a new medical project. The earlier heart treatment had addressed the major medical need; the 2014 assistance helped with ordinary infant care.

Reflection

A modest follow-up payment provided practical assistance to the family after the much larger issue of the baby's heart treatment.



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13. Bồ Đề Pagoda Orphanage

Mattresses and pillows — $150

Description

FoVO provided $150 for mattresses and pillows for the room of a disabled child at Bồ Đề Pagoda Orphanage.

The project was arranged through Megan, an Australian volunteer working at the orphanage.

Project expenditure
Mattresses and pillows — $150

Observation

The assistance was directed to a particular room and an identified need rather than being a general donation to the orphanage.

Having a volunteer at the orphanage provided FoVO with a local contact who could identify the need and arrange the purchase.

Reflection

This was a small practical project. Working through someone already at the orphanage allowed assistance to be directed towards a specific need without requiring a separate FoVO field visit.

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14. Quảng Bình

Assistance to family injured in generator explosion — $200

Description

FoVO provided $200 to assist a family in Quảng Bình who had suffered severe burns in a petrol electricity-generator explosion.

The assistance was managed by Trung Tran of Canberra.

Project expenditure

Assistance to the family — $200

Observation

The family faced immediate needs following serious burn injuries. FoVO's contribution was provided through a trusted contact who could arrange assistance locally.

Reflection

This was emergency assistance rather than a planned development project. A small charity could respond quickly because a contact was available to connect the donation directly with the affected family.

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15. Hưng Sơn Thai Village

Clothing, livestock, blankets and rice — $540

Description

FoVO visited Hưng Sơn, a remote Thai village about 150 kilometres inland from Cầu Giát in Nghệ An.

Assistance was directed towards some of the poorest village households and children. Cha Thuc, a local priest, helped arrange the visit and identify families needing assistance.

Project expenditure

- Children's clothing — $140
- Chickens, piglets, blankets and rice — $400

Total: $540
The household assistance included six piglets, ten chickens, two blankets and bags of rice.

Observation

The village visit involved going from household to household. The assistance combined immediate needs, such as clothing, blankets and rice, with pigs and chickens which families could raise.

Children's clothing was distributed to poorer children in the village.

Reflection

The project used several forms of assistance rather than providing cash. Rice, clothing and blankets could be used immediately, while chickens and piglets offered households something they could continue to raise.









Pigs and chickens packaged for motorbike delivery









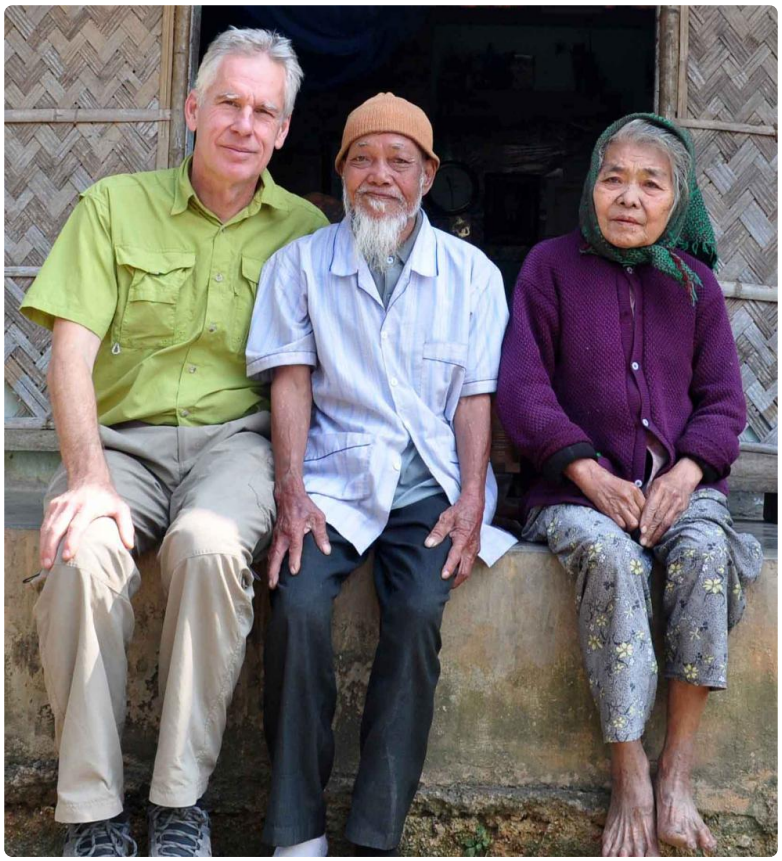


Piglets for this woman to raise, and blanket.









Piglets for this elderly disabled couple to raise, and rice



REPORT TO DONORS 2014

16. Three Families in Huế

Education assistance — $330

Description

A small group of Vietnamese students in Huế helped FoVO locate and visit three disadvantaged families with school-age children.

Thi organised a shopping list of practical education assistance for the households.

Project expenditure

- Three bicycles — 4.05M VND
- Six school bags — 0.57M VND
- Two small study tables — 0.15M VND
- Three study lamps — 0.27M VND
- Books, notebooks and pens — 1.3M VND

Total budget: approximately 6.3M VND ($330)
Assistance with school fees was also subsequently provided.

Observation

The three households had quite different circumstances. The visits showed that poverty could involve family breakdown, illness, insecure work and difficulty keeping children at school.

The bicycles, bags, tables, lamps and books were selected as practical items which could help the children continue their education.

Reflection

Local students were important to this project. They could locate the families, speak with them and help decide what assistance would be useful.

The project began with a simple aim — helping children with their schooling — but visiting the households provided a much clearer picture of the circumstances in which they were studying.

REPORT TO DONORS 2014

17. Three Cần Thơ Orphanages

Equipment, food, hygiene and education — $2,700

Description

After the January visit to Cần Thơ, FoVO asked Hien, a volunteer interpreter, to organise further assistance for Bửu Trì Pagoda, Hướng Dương and Hoa Mai orphanages.

Hien visited the orphanages, asked their managers to identify their most useful needs, prepared a project budget and subsequently purchased and delivered the goods.

Project expenditure

- Two washing machines for Hoa Mai and Hướng Dương — $600
- One refrigerator for Hoa Mai — $400
- One rice cooker for Hoa Mai — $150
- 20 sets of textbooks for Hướng Dương — $300
- 20 sets of raincoats and slippers for Hướng Dương — $100
- 100 kg washing powder for the three orphanages — $100
- 100 bars of soap for the three orphanages — $50
- 100 boxes of instant noodles for the three orphanages — $500
- 100 sets of hand towels, toothbrushes and toothpaste for the three orphanages — $100
- One year's school fees for five students at Bửu Trì Pagoda — $400

Total: $2,700

Observation

Hien found that the needs of the three orphanages differed. Hướng Dương and Hoa Mai already had some supplies and continuing overseas support, while Bửu Trì had greater immediate need for food and everyday provisions.

The purchases were therefore distributed according to the circumstances of each orphanage rather than divided equally.

Hien photographed the deliveries and supplied FoVO with invoices and detailed cost explanations.

Reflection

This was a much larger project than the small purchases made during the January field visit. It showed that a project could be organised from Australia when a reliable volunteer in Vietnam was prepared to visit the recipients, establish what was needed, make the purchases and provide a financial record.

REPORT TO DONORS 2014

18. Quỳnh Ngọc Fishing Village, Nghệ An

Water filtration plant — $5,000

Description

FoVO contributed $5,000 towards a water filtration plant at Quỳnh Ngọc fishing village near Cầu Giát in Nghệ An. Local priest Cha Thuc proposed the project because poor-quality local water was a concern and some households continued to use local wells to avoid the cost of purchased drinking water. The proposed filtration plant was much larger than FoVO's usual projects. Plans, specifications and costs were therefore requested before FoVO agreed to contribute. FoVO put Cha Thuc in contact with Phong, a Sài Gòn priest with a chemistry degree and experience with water filtration equipment. Phong travelled to the village and assisted with the technical side of the installation.

Project expenditure

Total cost of filtration plant — approximately $15,000 FoVO contribution — $5,000
The balance was provided from other sources.

Observation

Local people helped construct the small plant and were to operate it. The filtered water was intended to be sold cheaply rather than supplied free, with income helping to meet wages, electricity, freight, repairs and other operating expenses. The proposed capacity was up to about 3,000 litres a day. FoVO's contribution was not transferred until photographs were received showing the completed plant in operation.

Reflection

At $5,000, this was a very large commitment for FoVO at the time.

The project combined a locally identified need, outside technical advice, local labour and partial funding from FoVO. Requiring plans and costs, and making the contribution after the plant had been built, provided greater confidence before committing such a substantial amount.



Construction site progress photo of the water filtration plant.

REPORT TO DONORS 2014

19. Ngã Năm Soup Kitchen, Mekong Delta

Tables and chairs — $470

Description

FoVO provided stainless-steel tables and plastic chairs for the volunteer soup kitchen at Ngã Năm in the Mekong Delta.

The kitchen was operated by a local volunteer group associated with the town medical clinic. It provided meals for clinic patients and their relatives, students with little money and other poor people in the town.

Long Quach helped FoVO visit the kitchen and organise the project.

Project expenditure

Stainless-steel tables and plastic chairs — $470

Observation

About 40 local people volunteered at the kitchen, generally working in small rotating groups. Rice and vegetables were prepared for large numbers of inexpensive or free meals.

The existing arrangements for serving meals were basic. Stainless-steel tables provided a washable surface, while plastic chairs allowed people to sit down to eat.

Reflection

The kitchen was already operating through local volunteer effort. FoVO did not need to establish or manage the service.

Providing practical equipment supported something local people were already doing for their own community.



REPORT TO DONORS 2014

Some Stories from This Year

New Year at An Bình

The January field trip brought me back to An Bình Orphanage in Sài Gòn, where FoVO had already been helping several of the residents with education.

An Bình was never much like my idea of an orphanage. It was a busy household of girls and young women, some with disabilities and others from poor rural families, who went out each day to school, university, vocational courses or work.

Around New Year the residents decided that I should be taken out rather than spend all my time discussing projects.

We went to a local café for ice creams and fruit smoothies. Back at An Bình there was a New Year meal with the sisters and residents. As usual, the meal involved plenty of talking, laughing and repeated Vietnamese toasts of: “Hai, ba, vô!”

“One, two, drink!”

The visit was also practical. Computers were being installed, books and DVDs were being bought for the library, scholarships were being arranged and Hiếu was recovering from her recent surgery.

But some of the best parts of a field trip were not projects at all.

Sometimes it was simply being included in the life of the household for a day.

The Road to Hưng Sơn

Hưng Sơn was a Thai village about 150 kilometres inland from Cầu Giát in Nghệ An.

Getting there meant travelling away from the coastal towns and into the mountains. Cha Thuc helped arrange the visit and introduced us to families he believed needed assistance.

We began by buying children's clothing. Over the following days the project developed household by household.

One elderly woman received rice and chickens. Another household received a piglet and blanket. An elderly couple with disabilities received a piglet. Clothing went to children in poor households. Another family, where the husband was mentally ill and his wife supported three young daughters by farming, also received a piglet.

By the end, FoVO had provided children's clothing, rice, blankets, ten chickens and six piglets.

It was not a single large project delivered to a village organisation. We travelled around and looked at individual households, with local people helping us decide where the assistance should go.

Some things were intended for immediate use.

Others walked home on four legs.

Waiting Before Paying for the Water Plant

Cha Thuc proposed something much larger than FoVO's usual projects: a water filtration plant for Quỳnh Ngọc, a fishing village near Cầu Giát.

The estimated cost was about $15,000.

He asked FoVO to provide one third — $5,000.

For FoVO at that time, $5,000 was a very large project.

I asked for plans, specifications and costs before agreeing to contribute. I also wanted someone with suitable technical knowledge to look at the proposal.

Through our contacts we found Phong, a priest in Sài Gòn who had a chemistry degree and experience with water-filtration equipment. He travelled to the village and helped with the technical side of the project.

The proposal was that the plant would produce up to about 3,000 litres of filtered water each day. Water would be sold cheaply, with the income helping to pay wages, electricity, transport, repairs and other running costs.

Local people helped construct the plant.

FoVO promised its $5,000 contribution, but I did not immediately transfer the money.

We waited.

Eventually photographs arrived showing the filtration plant completed and operating.

Then FoVO paid its one-third contribution.

For a charity accustomed to projects costing a few hundred dollars, it had been an unusually large commitment.

The photographs were reassuring.

The plant existed. It was working. We paid.