FoVO

Friends of Vietnam Orphanages Inc.

Helping disadvantaged communities in Vietnam

# Report to Donors

## 2020 Financial Year

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

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# Introduction

During the 2020 financial year FoVO carried out projects in villages, children's homes, shelters and disadvantaged households across Vietnam.

The projects included school assistance, medicines, food and household supplies, as well as small livelihood projects involving chickens, pigs and tree planting.

Livestock and tree planting were becoming an important part of FoVO's work. Rather than simply providing short-term assistance, these projects aimed to help disadvantaged households use activities they already understood to produce food or earn some additional income.

FoVO continued to work through a network of local interpreters, nuns, teachers, university students and other volunteers who helped identify needs, organise projects and follow up what happened afterwards.

During the financial year FoVO received $11,882 in donations and spent $20,710 on projects in Vietnam. Funds already held by FoVO allowed project expenditure to exceed donations received during the year.

As in previous years, FoVO's Australian administration costs were met separately. This meant that 100% of donated funds went to direct assistance in Vietnam.

## Project Summary

During the 2020 financial year FoVO received $11,882 in donations and spent $20,710 on projects in Vietnam. Funds already held by FoVO allowed project expenditure to exceed donations received during the year.

Every dollar donated went to direct assistance in Vietnam. Australian administration costs were met separately.

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

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# Project Summary

## How Your $20,710 Was Spent

| NO. | PROJECT | AUD | MILLION VND |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Bửu Trì Pagoda children's home, Cần Thơ — school calculators and nutrition | $750 | 11.7 |
| 2 | Thiên Ân children's home, Cần Thơ — school materials, sandals, lice treatment and nutrition | $750 | 11.7 |
| 3 | Mái Ấm Tình Mẹ, Bình Dương — school materials, shoes and household supplies | $750 | 11.7 |
| 4 | Homeless women's shelter, Đồng Nai — transfer trolley for sick and dying residents | $750 | 11.7 |
| 5 | Lâm Hà street children — sandals and food for three households | $100 | 1.6 |
| 6 | Linh An single mothers' shelter and children's home, Lâm Đồng — bicycles, nappies and household supplies | $930 | 14.5 |
| 7 | Vi Nhân School for Disabled Children, Buôn Mê Thuột — uniforms and warm jackets | $500 | 7.8 |
| 8 | Buôn Hwie E- đê village, Đắk Lắk — mountain pig raising | $1,500 | 23.4 |
| 9 | Buôn Mê Thuột rubbish tip — protective clothing for rubbish pickers | $250 | 3.9 |
| 10 | Sapa Pu Dak M'Nông village, Đắk Nông — chickens, feed and children's clothing | $400 | 6.2 |
| 11 | Thuận An village, Đắk Mil — chickens and feed for Linh | $130 | 2.0 |
| 12 | Southern coast medicine project — children's homes, disability workshop, Raglay village and leprosy community | $2,000 | 31.2 |
| 13 | Mái Ấm Thiện Tâm children's home, Nha Trang — flood-resistant chicken enclosure and chickens | $300 | 4.7 |
| 14 | Two high school students, Nha Trang — school sandals and encouragement | $40 | 0.6 |
| 15 | La Salle summer school, Nha Trang — study materials and encouragement awards | $350 | 5.5 |
| 16 | Bản Khe Ngài Vân Kiều village, Quảng Trị — cây tràm seedlings, food and student-volunteer project | $1,200 | 18.7 |
| 17 | Phong Nha villages — chicken raising and bicycle | $1,000 | 15.6 |
| 18 | Kim Lũ village, Quảng Bình — chicken raising and water containers | $1,200 | 18.7 |
| 19 | Hà Tĩnh villages — chicken raising and other household assistance | $1,450 | 22.6 |
| 20 | Mái Ấm Thiên Ân single mothers' shelter, Hà Tĩnh — sanitary and post-natal supplies | $765 | 11.9 |
| 21 | Hậu Lộc High School, Hà Tĩnh — student encouragement awards | $1,000 | 15.6 |
| 22 | Xã Đoài disability shelter, Nghệ An — food, nappies, bedding and medical assistance | $1,020 | 15.9 |
| 23 | Khơ Mú mountain community, Nghệ An — winter clothing and blankets for children | $1,200 | 18.7 |
| 24 | Quỳnh Lập community affected by leprosy — chicken-project follow-up and chicken-coop wire | $160 | 2.5 |
| 25 | Phát Diệm elderly and disabled women's group house — food parcels | $300 | 4.7 |
| 26 | Phát Diệm villages — chicken raising for 20 households | $1,330 | 20.8 |
| 27 | Phát Diệm village and kindergarten children — school materials and blankets | $335 | 5.2 |
| 28 | Phát Diệm single mothers' shelter — mother and baby care packages | $250 | 3.9 |
| | **TOTAL** | **$20,710** | **323.2** |

VND converted at the Reserve Bank of Australia average rate for the financial year, approximately 1.56 million VND = AUD $100.

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# 1. Bửu Trì Pagoda Children's Home — Cần Thơ

## School calculators and food — $750

### Description

FoVO worked alongside local volunteers to provide school calculators and food for 45 children living at Bửu Trì Pagoda children's home in Cần Thơ.

The project cost $750.

### Observation

The project combined an immediate everyday need — food — with practical assistance for the children's education.

The calculators were provided for school use rather than as toys or general gifts.

FoVO was able to carry out the project through local volunteers who knew the children's home and could organise the assistance locally.

### Reflection

This was a simple project, but it reflected an approach that became common in FoVO's work: provide practical things that people can use immediately rather than introduce a complicated program.

Food met an immediate need. The calculators helped children with their schooling.

Working alongside local volunteers also allowed a small Australian charity to carry out a useful project without needing its own staff or organisation in Cần Thơ.






The boys crowd around to look at their school educational materials.





Water seeped into the temple and all the children and nuns got sick. Phu, one of the eldest, has infections over her hands and legs stained with iodine.

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# 2. Thiên Ân Children's Home — Cần Thơ

## School materials, sandals, lice treatment and food — $750

### Description

Thiên Ân was a Christian children's home in Cần Thơ caring for about 45 children.

The home had been forced to leave land it previously borrowed and had relocated to a new, smaller site. Yến, who managed the home, and Quế, who assisted her, placed a strong emphasis on education. At the time of our visit, 12 older children were away undertaking job-training courses.

FoVO provided $750 for school sandals, house slippers, lice-treatment shampoo, food and other everyday supplies.

### Observation

On its previous site, Thiên Ân had raised chickens and kept fish ponds. The new block was too small for these activities.

This meant that an earlier form of practical assistance was no longer suitable. Rather than continue with livestock, the 2020 project concentrated on the children's immediate educational, nutritional and personal-care needs.

The supplies included school sandals, slippers, lice treatment, dried fish, noodles, beans, fish sauce, shampoo and other basic food and household items.

### Reflection

The circumstances of a children's home can change. A project that made sense on one site did not necessarily make sense after the home moved.

The important thing was not to keep repeating an earlier FoVO project simply because it had worked before. Assistance needed to fit the place and circumstances as they were now.







project.

Staff Que (left) and Yen (right) with the newly delivered school sandals and other provisions from our

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# 3. Mái Ấm Tình Mẹ Single Mothers' Shelter and Children's Home — Bình Dương

## School materials, shoes, hygiene items and household equipment — $750

### Description

Mái Ấm Tình Mẹ was a busy shelter for single mothers and children in Bình Dương, a major factory area north of Sài Gòn.

At the time of our visit there were 16 expectant or new mothers and about 65 babies and children living at the home.

FoVO worked alongside the nuns who managed the shelter. They identified a mixture of practical needs for the children and the household.

The $750 project included school sandals and shoes, exercise books, pens and other study materials, together with soap, clothing, hair dryers, a fruit blender and kitchen equipment.

### Observation

The shelter cared for mothers arriving from different parts of Vietnam, including women who came to Bình Dương for factory work or who needed somewhere private and safe to give birth.

The children's rooms were organised by age, from infants through to older children.

The nuns placed strong emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene. Soap and other personal-care items were therefore not minor extras. In a large shared household they were part of keeping the children healthy.

The project also included practical equipment chosen by the nuns themselves, such as hair dryers, kitchen utensils and a fruit blender.

### Reflection

A useful project did not have to consist of one large item.

In a busy shelter, many small practical things could make everyday care easier.

The people managing the home knew which items were actually being used and where supplies were running short. FoVO's role was to listen and provide a modest budget that could be turned into useful things.





Children, nuns and interpreter with our project of school shoes, study supplies and other provisions.



Babies room at midday sleeping time.




Animated discussion by the nuns about our educational supplies.



Everyone wants a photo with the new arrival, a 3-month-old baby left at the church gate with one of the nuns.



With Dung, our project partner and friend of Thi.

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# 4. Homeless Women's Shelter — Đồng Nai

## Transfer trolley for sick and dying residents — $750

### Description

FoVO provided $750 for a transfer trolley at a shelter for elderly homeless women at Suối Tiên in Đồng Nai.

The shelter was managed by Sister Hường and, at the time of our visit, housed 129 women.

Sister Hường identified the trolley as a priority because the newer beds could not be moved. It was needed to transfer sick residents for treatment and, when a resident died, to move her for preparation for burial.

### Observation

The shelter was much more than a dormitory. It occupied about 25 hectares with buildings, gardens and fish ponds.

Residents lived in different areas according to their level of care. Some women were still physically active and helped with kitchen and housekeeping work. Others could care for themselves, while sick and bedridden residents required greater assistance.

The shelter also had an interesting economy. Unsold vegetables from markets were donated and used in the kitchen, with unusable vegetables fed to fish. The fish farm and gardens contributed to the running of the shelter.

New buildings were being developed with support from the fish farm and overseas Vietnamese donors. The nuns were also considering accommodation for fee-paying retired women as another possible source of income to support the homeless residents.

### Reflection

The trolley was a simple piece of equipment, but it came from observing how the shelter actually worked.

The visit also showed that a charitable institution did not necessarily survive on donations alone. This shelter combined donations, farming, work by residents who were able, and possible future income-producing activities.

FoVO did not need to fund the whole institution. It could contribute one practical item that the people running the shelter had identified as missing.



The fish ponds and gardens provide a beautiful landscape setting.





Dormitory for mobile women. As commonly happens in hospital wards, a leader emerges in every room and becomes the principal carer.




Photo-shopped poster of resident women sailing in a ship captained by Sister Huong, with heaven watching over them.



In contrast to the Western aged care model, welfare here relies on work from almost everyone. Here the elderly and a Downes syndrome woman do vegetable market work with the donated vegetables



Dormitory for the bed ridden

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# 5. Street Children — Lâm Hà, Lâm Đồng

## Sandals and food for three households — $100

### Description

In Lâm Hà town we met a group of four children who spent much of their time together in the streets. Three were K'Ho Indigenous children and one was Vietnamese.

FoVO first considered providing school materials and sandals through the local government school. However, the proposed school project became complicated by official approval requirements and was abandoned.

Instead, we visited the children's households and spoke with family members.

FoVO then provided a strong pair of sandals for each of the four children and food for the three households involved.

The $100 project included rice, cooking oil, fish sauce and noodles.

### Observation

The visit showed that school supplies would not have been particularly useful for these children because they attended school only irregularly.

One girl, Hương, lived with her blind grandmother and was helped by an aunt who worked as a farm labourer. Hương and her brothers had previously been placed in an institution but repeatedly ran away and returned to Lâm Hà.

When choosing sandals, Hương initially wanted a bright pink pair with plastic flowers. Our interpreter explained that sturdy sandals would last much better for children who spent much of their day walking around the town.

The children were delighted when they were each able to choose their new sandals.

### Reflection

The original idea was to help the children through their school. Once we looked more closely at their circumstances, that was clearly not the best approach.

Visiting their homes changed the project.

A small amount of money spent directly on strong footwear and basic food was more useful than school supplies that might rarely have been used.

Sometimes the first project idea needs to be abandoned after meeting the people concerned.



Lam Ha street kids invited over for a snack and drink. Far left and right, older K'Ho girl and her brother.



Huong at centre (with curly hair) with her Vietnamese friend in white school uniform.



Huong with her blind grandmother.




The kids with the K'Ho aunty that helps them. She is a farm labourer.



Photo wearing the new sandals.



Home visit to relatives

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# 6. Linh An Single Mothers' Shelter and Children's Home — Lâm Hà, Lâm Đồng

## Bicycles, nappies, electric hammocks and household supplies — $930

### Description

Linh An was a small single mothers' shelter and children's home at Tân Văn, about five kilometres outside Lâm Hà.

At the time of our visit, eight nuns cared for a few single mothers and about 35 infants and children.

FoVO provided $930 for six children's bicycles, two electric hammocks for rocking newborn babies, nappies, baby formula, shampoo, cleaning products, footballs and treatment for one child with severe eczema.

### Observation

The project was agreed only after some discussion with the sister-in-charge.

She first suggested school fees and then computers. FoVO declined both suggestions. We did not want to commit to continuing school sponsorship and we were cautious about funding computers because they could easily stop being used for the children.

The final list was much more practical.

The six bicycles had rear racks so that two children could travel together. The electric hammocks used small motors to rock newborn babies. The project also supplied 600 nappies and other everyday items needed in a home caring for babies and children.

### Reflection

Project negotiation sometimes meant saying no.

FoVO did not automatically fund the first thing requested. The discussion continued until we reached a list of items that we believed would directly help the children and mothers.

The final project was less ambitious than school fees or computers, but it was easier to see who would use the assistance and how it would help.










Children with our assistance project.





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# 7. Vi Nhân School for Disabled Children — Buôn Mê Thuột

## School uniforms and warm jackets — $500

### Description

FoVO provided school uniforms and warm jackets for 30 disabled E-đê Indigenous students at Vi Nhân School for Disabled Children in Buôn Mê Thuột.

Each boy and girl received a complete outfit.

The school was run by the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres and cared for about 180 children. Around 100 boarded at the school, including about 50 E-đê children who stayed there without charge.

### Observation

Families who could afford it contributed fees according to their means, while the E-đê boarders were supported by the school.

The E-đê children were clearly pleased and excited to receive the same school clothing as the fee -paying children.

FoVO had previously assisted the school with padded classroom flooring, teaching materials and equipment.

### Reflection

The value of the project was not only that the children received warm clothes.

Having the same uniforms as the other students also helped the E-đê children take part in school life on the same basis as everyone else.

Sometimes a simple item such as a school uniform can have both a practical and a social value.





Cupped hands is something girls do in Vietnam for posed photos.





One girl does a humorous imitation of me.



With the group of Ede indigenous, mostly deaf, children. They got school uniforms or jackets.






The girls appeared very happy to get the same clothes as the fee-paying students.

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# 8. Pig Raising — Buôn Hwie E- Đê Village, Đắk Lắk

## Nineteen mountain piglets for 10 households — $1,500

### Description

FoVO provided 19 mountain piglets to 10 selected E-đê Indigenous households in Buôn Hwie village, about 18 kilometres from Buôn Mê Thuột.

The project followed an earlier FoVO pig-raising project in the same village.

Sister Hương of the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres worked regularly with the village and helped organise the project.

### Observation

Before providing more pigs, we visited households that had received piglets the previous year.

Seven households had successfully raised their pigs. Some had bred them, sold mature pigs and reinvested the money in more piglets.

Three households had not looked after the pigs successfully. It was agreed that they would not receive more livestock. Instead, three other disadvantaged households were selected.

The new piglets were raised by the nuns before being transported by truck to the village. They were distributed at a community gathering outside the village headman's house.

One nun who had helped raise the piglets became very emotional when they were handed over to their new owners.

### Reflection

This project showed the value of returning to see what happened after an earlier project.

FoVO did not simply distribute livestock again to the same households. We looked at which families had used the earlier assistance successfully and changed the recipient list accordingly.

The project rewarded people who had made good use of the first opportunity while giving other households a chance to participate.





Visiting pigs successfully bred from last year's project.



Sister Nga assembling the people. She has hand raised the piglets and is very emotional about losing them.



Some children attend in their school uniform, their best clothes.



The village elder sits down with the people.



The people that ate their pigs are not getting any more from us so they are not happy.



This is a meeting for young and old. This grandmother is the last to arrive.



This man survived having a large tumour drained at the hospital. It is now swelling again.



Sister Huong, who has a mission to the Ede people, gives a speech in Vietnamese about the basis of the project.



The village elder translates Sister Huong's speech into the Ede language to the people.





Our local volunteer Thao with Sister Hau, the pig handler.







People find good reuses for Communist Party propaganda (weather proofing a pig house).





One by one, Sister Hau catches a piglet and one by one they are dropped out of the back of the truck into bags for people to take home.






Sister Hau bruised by the pigs but still in good cheer, emerges from the truck container.

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# 9. Rubbish Pickers — Buôn Mê Thuột

## Protective clothing for 50 workers — $250

### Description

FoVO provided protective clothing for 50 people working as rubbish pickers at the Buôn Mê Thuột city tip.

Most of the workers were local E-đê Indigenous people.

The $250 project provided boots, work gloves, rubber gloves, hats and cloth face masks. Small packets of sweet snacks were also included.

### Observation

Around 100 people from the surrounding area worked at the tip collecting recyclable plastics, metals and glass.

They worked in eight-hour shifts, including at night, and were paid according to the quantity of recyclable material they collected.

The work was dirty and hazardous. It was slightly better paid than labouring on coffee farms, but the shame attached to the work was obvious. When I first tried to photograph the workers, several turned away. It took some time before people relaxed and agreed to face the camera.

The nuns packed the protective clothing into individual kits and drove us through the mud and rotting rubbish to the working area. The workers collected their kits and then returned to work.

Around 100 people from the surrounding area worked at the tip collecting recyclable plastics, metals and glass.

### Reflection

This was a very small project for people doing difficult work at the edge of the city's economy.

FoVO could not change the work itself. What we could do was provide some basic protection for people who were already doing it.

The visit was also a reminder that disadvantaged people were not necessarily unemployed. These workers were earning an income, but doing so in hazardous and unpleasant conditions.



Pickers go back to work after collecting the protective clothing kits.





Left – Modelling the protective clothing. I am wearing men's boots, hat, cloth mask, reinforced gloves and waterproof rubber gloves. Women's outfit has combined facemask/hat.

Right - The Suzuki Super Carry, the nuns fabulous little van.





Driving through traffic to the tip, we are protected by Mary with a flashing light halo on the dashboard.





Left Arriving at the tip, we could see huts that provide weather shelter on hot or wet days and nights.





Nuns hand out the clothing kits from back of the van.







Selfie with a picker. Right – one of the pickers shows happiness with her protective clothing kit.

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# 10. Chicken Raising — Sapa Pu Dak M'nong Village, Đắk Nông

## Chickens, feed and clothing for village families and children — $400

### Description

FoVO returned to Sapa Pu Dak village in Đắk Nông, where we had provided chickens to M'Nong Indigenous households the previous year.

For the 2020 project we selected the three households that had been most successful in raising those chickens.

FoVO provided 60 month-old chickens and three 25 kg bags of chicken feed for the three households.

We also provided school sandals and warm jackets for 17 school children, together with slippers and winter clothing for another 10 children in the village.

### Observation

This was not simply another distribution of chickens.

We already had some evidence from the previous year's project about which households were interested in raising livestock and were able to do it successfully.

The new chickens therefore went to three households that had demonstrated that they could look after them.

The project also recognised that the village had other immediate needs. Clothing and footwear were provided for 27 children as part of the same visit.

### Reflection

Our experience was beginning to show that giving people livestock was only the beginning of a livestock project.

The animals had to be looked after, and some households were better placed or more interested in doing this than others. Providing some initial feed also gave the chickens a better start.

Returning to the village allowed FoVO to build the new project on what we had learned from the previous one.



Packing chickens at the market.



People start to gather for our meeting.















Left – market seller arrives with chickens.



Right – Our interp made up this list of the 17 children in the village who attend school. We also provided clothing for 10 other children who don't go to school.







This woman erected a religious shrine in defiance of local police.



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# 11. Chicken Raising for Linh — Thuận An Village, Đắk Mil

## Fifty chickens and feed — $130

### Description

FoVO provided 50 month-old chickens and a bag of chicken feed for Linh, a young farm labourer living at Thuận An village near Đắk Mil.

The small project was intended to help her earn some household income while she retrained as an early childhood teacher.

### Observation

Linh was experienced in agricultural work, including grafting coffee and avocado trees, but farm labour was physically demanding and irregular.

She had decided to retrain for work as a kindergarten teacher, which offered the possibility of steadier employment.

Raising chickens at home was something she could do while studying and continuing to manage her household.

### Reflection

This was not intended to become a large chicken-raising business.

The livestock was a small practical support while Linh tried to move from heavy farm labour towards more secure work.

The project showed that livelihood assistance could sometimes be useful as a bridge to another kind of employment rather than as an end in itself.



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# 12. Medicines for Children's Homes and Communities — Southern Coast

## Medicine packages for 12 locations — $2,000

### Description

FoVO provided $2,000 for medicine packages distributed through a network of children's homes and disadvantaged communities in the Nha Trang region.

The project was managed by our local volunteer Lâm and his helpers.

Medicine packages were provided to:

- La Salle disability workshop and accommodation, Nha Trang
- Lộc Thọ Pagoda children's home, Nha Trang
- Hướng Dương children's home, Nha Trang
- Chùa Phật Bửu, Ninh Hòa
- Thanh Sơn Pagoda children's home, Cam Lâm
- Nhân Ái, Cam Ranh
- Đại An Children's Home, Cam Ranh
- Mái Ấm Hy Vọng, Cam Lâm
- An Đào children's home, Ninh Hòa
- a Buddhist temple children's home in Nha Trang
- a Raglay Indigenous community in Khánh Hòa Province
- a community of 37 households affected by leprosy at Trại Cùi.

### Observation

Unlike most FoVO projects, this project was spread across a number of locations.

Lâm and his local helpers knew the children's homes and other communities along the southern coast and organised the distribution.

For the Raglay community and the 37 households affected by leprosy, the medicines were delivered through local nuns who already worked with those communities.

This allowed one FoVO grant to reach a much wider group of people than we could have reached by working at only one location.

### Reflection

The project showed the value of working alongside a local network.

FoVO provided the money, but local volunteers and nuns provided the knowledge, contacts and organisation needed to get the medicines to the different communities.

A small charity did not need to create its own distribution system when a local one was already working.

This farm provides a lot of opportunities for Lam to try out new projects.




With Lâm at his village in Cam Ranh.



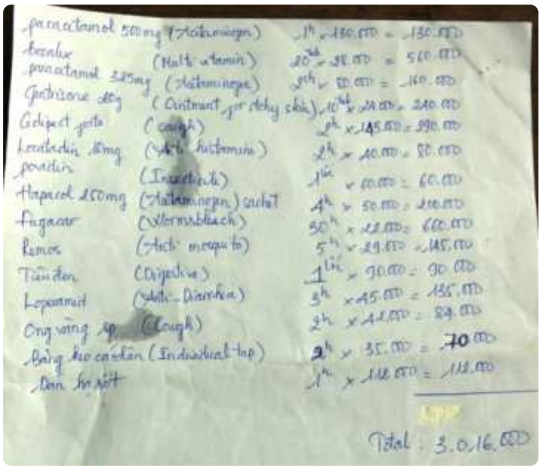
Some farm residents



Lâm at a new fish pond. Entertainment pavilion and caretaker's house in background.



Catfish with Morning Glory (rau muon)






List of medicines in each orphanage package and photo of quantities and brands.

## La Salle Medicine Package, Nha Trang.

The La Salle monastery has been operating for a long time in Vietnam. Disabled workshop workers receive accommodation, cooked meals and a small salary. There are few overseas sponsors and the workshop is self-supporting. We provided a medicine package for them.






Disabled workshop.

## Lộc Thọ Pagoda Orphanage, Nha Trang. Medicine Package.









This temple is very decorative. The school is well organised. The orphanage has a very small group of children. It appears that many overseas visitors are attracted to the temple surroundings and are sponsors. There appear to be sufficient overseas sponsors for the temple to maintain itself.

## Hướng Dương Orphanage Nha Trang. Medicine Package.





One of our previous projects was for each girl at Hướng Dương orphanage to choose a soft toy “best friend”.

## Chùa Phật Bửu Temple Orhanage. Medicine Package.






Orphanage entrance




A number of women who have left violent men have made their home at the temple. There appear to be sufficient sponsors for the temple to maintain itself.

## Thanh Sơn Temple Orphanage. Medicine Package.





The children at this temple live with not much supervision. The temple appears wealthy and has a lot of sponsors. But not much is invested in the children. Additional donations are unlikely to improve child care. There appear to be sufficient overseas sponsors for the temple to maintain itself.

## Nhân Ái Orphanage. Medicine Package.

This orphanage, run by the Holy Cross sisters, now has 13 former children doing tertiary studies. There appear to be sufficient overseas sponsors for the convent, kindergarten business and orphanage to maintain itself.






Nun with children check out the medicines.

All convents, shelters and
kindergartens operate on a business model. Presentation is important.

### Đại An Orphanage, Cam Ranh. Medicine Package.

This visit I saw the results of our previous years' projects. These had included chicken raising, pig raising and vegetable farming.

The students here are looked after very well. Several of the nuns here have been trained in the Philippines. They are able to tutor English to the students. Some buildings have been recently extended. The good level of organisation shows that students are trained to keep their rooms tidy.





Examining medicines. And having a really close look at the bandaids!



Nun shows the poultry



Pigs bred from our previous projects



Vietnamese welfare model: all children do their own washing and drying.




Kids next to our medicine delivery.

## Mái Ấm Hy Vọng Downes Syndrome Centre. Medicine Package.

This is a day centre run by the Holy Cross sisters, mainly for young people with Downes syndrome. Every month, government and families contribute money. Every Holy Cross orphanage also has a yearly contribution from the Caritas fund raising group in the local Diocese.





## An Đào Temple Orphanage. Medicine Package.



Temple/orphanage extension being built.




Children at lunch.



This orphanage is very well organised. Children are not required to wear the temple uniforms and can walk around in normal clothes or school uniforms. Babies are minded by older children as well as the women. This is good, because the older children get responsibility, learn how to look after others and get the role of older brothers and sisters. This orphanage has some sponsors, but does not appear wealthy.

## Kim Son Temple Orphanage, Nha Trang. Medicine Package.

This orphanage has 45 children with a free school for the poor.





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# 13. Chicken Raising — Mái Ấm Thiện Tâm, Nha Trang

## Flood-resistant chicken enclosure and chickens — $300

### Description

FoVO helped Mái Ấm Thiện Tâm children's home near Nha Trang to expand its chicken raising after flooding the previous year.

The home was run by a retired couple and cared for 13 school-age children.

FoVO provided materials and labour to build a raised platform and ramp so the chickens could escape above flood level.

We then provided 50 month-old chickens and two bags of chicken feed.

### Observation

The children's home was about 15 kilometres from Nha Trang and was well organised, with a strong emphasis on education.

The owners employed a female tutor to help the children with their schoolwork, as well as a cook and a driver.

The chicken project was not simply a matter of buying chickens. The earlier flooding had shown that the enclosure itself needed to be changed.

A metal ramp and raised platform were therefore built before the new chickens were delivered.

A later follow-up showed that the problem had not been solved. Despite these preparations, many of the chickens died during another flood. We would need to reconsider the project again.

### Reflection

This was another example of a livestock project needing much more than livestock.

We had identified one risk and tried to design around it, but the later flood showed that our solution was not enough.

A project could look sensible when it was completed and still fail later. The important thing was to find out what happened and be prepared to change direction again.





Left – flood ramp for chickens being made and right, completed.



Chickens delivered.



Chickens ready for release in their new home.





Left - Children practice vocab. Right – a pet monkey looks out of its cage.






Talking about uses of Western medicines. The orphanage director, right, sceptical about the use of Western medicines.



REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 14. School Support for Two Students — Nha Trang

## School sandals for Luyến and Linh — $40

### Description

FoVO provided new school sandals for Luyến and Linh, two Year 11 students in difficult circumstances whom we had also assisted the previous year.

Both girls had left their village homes and moved to Nha Trang to improve their chances of completing high school.

### Observation

Linh came from a large family and was living at Phở 63, a restaurant that provided part -time work and accommodation for students who were struggling.

Her day began with restaurant work from early morning until noon, followed by tutoring in the afternoon and school classes in the evening.

Luyến's father had suffered from cancer for several years. The family sold their fishing boat and other belongings to help pay for his treatment. After he died, her mother worked on her brother's fishing boat.

When we met the girls, we took them for an ice cream, helped them contact their families and bought them new school sandals.

### Reflection

This was a very small project.

The sandals did not solve the much larger difficulties the two girls faced, but they were useful for students already making considerable efforts to stay at school.

Sometimes encouragement and a small practical item were enough for FoVO's role.



REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 15. Summer School for Children from Poor Families — Nha Trang

## Study materials and encouragement awards — $350

### Description

FoVO provided $350 towards study materials and student encouragement awards for a free six-week summer school in Nha Trang.

The school was run during the school holidays by Vietnamese La Salle brothers working with university student volunteers.

Around 100 children from poor families attended.

### Observation

The project made use of an education program that was already organised locally.

FoVO did not run the classes. The La Salle brothers and university students provided the teaching and organisation, while FoVO contributed towards the materials and encouragement awards needed for the program.

### Reflection

A modest grant could go further when it supported people who were already giving their time.

The project combined FoVO funding with local volunteer effort and an existing education program.

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 16. Cây Tràm and Food Assistance — Bản Khe Ngài, Quảng Trị

*Tree seedlings, food and student volunteer activities — $1,200*

## Description

FoVO worked alongside a La Salle university student group on a project for Vân Kiều Indigenous families at Bản Khe Ngài in Đăkrông, Quảng Trị Province.

Around 40 university students took part.

FoVO funded 500 cây tràm seedlings for each of 20 village families, together with food supplies and transport to the remote village.

Each family received rice, salt, fish sauce, sugar and cooking oil.

The student group also contributed clothing and sandals for the children and organised educational and recreational activities with prizes.

## Observation

The project combined FoVO funding with a much larger contribution of student time and effort.

The students helped organise the visit, transported supplies, visited families and spent the day with the children.

We encouraged the student group to plan much of the trip themselves rather than have FoVO direct every detail.

The cây tràm seedlings were intended as a small livelihood project. Tree growing was already part of the local economy, so the project built on something families were familiar with rather than introducing an entirely new activity.

## Reflection

This project showed how a small FoVO grant could be multiplied by local volunteer effort.

The student group contributed time, organisation, clothing and activities, while FoVO provided the main project funding.

It also reinforced another lesson: livelihood projects were more likely to make sense when they built on activities people already knew how to do.

The project did not invent tree growing for the village. It added resources to something already happening there.



At Dakrong, a canoe leaves the town to cross the river. This forms the Vietnamese and Vân Kiều language boundary. Previous years' projects at this village have resulted in established trees and income for the people. The people have now asked for more trees to plant.



The village children gather for entertainment and activities planned by the students. No lack of children in the mountain villages.



Loading canoes with food.



Transferring cay tram trees by canoe.



Students crossing the river by canoe.



Offloading tree seedlings from canoes.





Two English speaking backpackers got involved with this project.



Students setting out on the four km walk to the village.



Cooling off at a creek crossing.



A first experience of this kind for many of the students.



Students arrive at the village.



Students/villagers meet and greet.



Students organised into groups did home visits.





Visiting with gifts of food.



Home visit.



Students meet a mother at her house.



A family leaves with gifts of winter clothes and food.



Children with their new clothes (some wearing shop tags) and sandals.



Children with new sandals.



Typical local mountain village house.



Lunch hosted by the village head man, who is also their spiritual expert.



Children gather at a neighbour's house.





Home visit. A cultural encounter for young uni students and a chance to experience mission in their home country.







Good results from our previous years: hillsides planted with cay tram trees.

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 17. Chicken Raising — Phong Nha Villages

## Chickens, feed and a school bicycle — $1,000

### Description

FoVO worked alongside the Vinh Sisters of Charity in mountain villages near Phong Nha.

Sister Nhàn and the local nuns identified disadvantaged households and helped us visit them before the project went ahead.

FoVO provided 30 month-old chickens and a 25 kg bag of chicken feed for each of 10 households.

The project also included a bicycle for a schoolboy being cared for by the nuns on behalf of his single mother.

### Observation

Before buying the chickens, we visited each of the 10 households.

We looked at their circumstances and checked whether they had made suitable preparations for raising chickens.

The households included families dealing with disability as well as limited income. One household was headed by a carpenter who had difficulty walking and who, with his wife, cared for their 29-year-old disabled daughter.

The nuns already knew these families and continued to work with them after our visit.

### Reflection

This project reinforced a lesson that was becoming important in FoVO's livestock work.

Selecting disadvantaged households was not enough. We also needed to ask whether a household was ready and able to look after the animals.

The visit before the project was therefore part of the project itself.

The chickens came later.



The man sits by his wood work bench.



Half completed coffin.



House interior.



29 year old paralysed daughter.



Woodworking chisels at the home.



Piglets we provided last year were raised and sold to buy more piglets. A successful project.



The chicken yard is of a good size.

## The local nuns

Sister Nhan is a good project partner. Young, beautiful, energetic. And good at asking people for things with a bright smile. Every time she sees a house being built she asks for the left-over ceramic tiles. These have now paved the kindergarten play area. When she found a tree log at a house ready for cutting into timber, she asked for a slice of the log. That is now the nuns' dining table. Doors to the kindergarten came from a house demolition.

Sr Nhan also does not ask directly but gives a clear hint of what she wants. The nuns have taken in an 8 year old boy who was being raised by grandparents. Sr Nhan asked for a bicycle “for the boy” but actually for the nuns to use as well. Because the nuns are the only resident social workers in the village we also gave them chickens.



Left over tiles from building sites



These are the chickens we provided, agreed by locals to be large and beautiful.



Sister Nhan





Sister Nhan selects the bicycle.



Getting the bicycle home on the back of a motorbike.

## Mentally disabled household

This mentally disabled man was married to a woman who had a physical disability. They had two mentally disabled children. The wife died this year. His mother moved in to care for them.



Mother who is the carer



Chicken house



Shrine at the man's house



Inspecting the chicken house

## Disabled single mother

The young woman has a disability and had two children. Her husband died and the mother-in-law treated her badly. So she took the children and moved out of her home area (Hue). She works as a construction labourer.

## Dong and Oanh

Before marrying, Dong went to Taiwan to work and saved enough money to build part of a house and marry Oanh. Both sons were born disabled.





Dong and Oanh at their part constructed home with disabled sons.

## Lieu

Lieu is a beautiful young woman with three children and a mentally ill husband. She is a garbage recycler and occasional construction labourer. Her husband Lac collects firewood in the jungle.



Lieu with daughter

## Disabled woman

The disabled woman is also the carer for her brother. He used to be capable, first working as a bicycle repairer, then training as a photographer, then working in building construction. After a construction accident he became mentally unstable and periodically attacks his carer. He lives in his wood house and she moved into her sister's concrete house next door.






## Chien and Tuyet

Chien is lame, but very hard working and well organised. His wife Tuyet has left to get employment as a house servant in Saigon. He stays at home to look after their three children (Four year old in Kindergarten, Seven year old in Grade 2, ten year old in Grade 4). He has constructed a chicken house and already keeps some chickens. So he has a good chance to succeed with our project.





## Xuan

Xuan's husband died in 2015 while collecting firewood in the jungle. Xuan has a heart condition and has three children. After her husband died, Xuan moved to stay with her mother.



Above, Xuan's mother sits beside her hammock.

## Me Doan

Me Doan is a disabled elder. Her adult daughter, who is mentally ill, lives with her. They support each other.



Me Doan in her room, surrounded by all the things she needs.



Leaves collected by Me Doan for herbal medicine.

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 18. Chicken Raising — Kim Lũ Village, Quảng Bình

## Chickens, feed and water containers — $1,200

### Description

FoVO supported chicken raising for 11 disadvantaged households at Kim Lũ village in Quảng Bình.

The project was carried out with our local partner Quốc.

FoVO provided 300 month-old chickens and six 25 kg bags of chicken feed.

The project also provided 200 plastic water containers, each holding 20 litres.

### Observation

The chickens were intended to provide households with eggs, food and possible income.

A later follow-up from Quốc reported that the chickens grew quickly and successfully.

However, some households ate their chickens before they began producing eggs. They were disappointed because the birds supplied were an egg-laying variety rather than chickens intended mainly for meat.

This made us think more carefully about the type of chicken being supplied and what households expected to do with them.

### Reflection

The project worked in one sense: the chickens survived and grew well.

But survival of the animals was not the whole measure of success.

The type of chicken also had to suit what people wanted from the project. If households expected meat while FoVO expected egg production and breeding, the project could be misunderstood even when the chickens themselves did well.

This was another small lesson in the practical detail of livestock projects.



Quốc is giving instructions to the people about the need to prepare their chicken houses for our project. The local priest has a lot of authority in this community.

### Bảo

Bảo's husband died of lung cancer, leaving four children to raise. She has no farm or occupation.




### Quyết

Quyết's husband is a drug user who returns home from time to time. She has four children and has a fifth, two-week old baby. Her in-laws have given her household a wooden hut. During the visit her face was coated with turmeric for the traditional three-month post natal confinement period.





Quyết at the wood house her in-laws provided.

Village post-natal tradition is for the mother to stay in confinement, keep very warm, refrain from bathing and coat her face with turmeric.

## Thế

Thế is the carer for her husband and her four children. He has a mental illness.






## Lệ

Lệ's husband died. She has 11 children, some of them gone to Saigon to find work. Three children remain at home. One of the three is mentally disabled.





## Bình

Bình's husband is a deaf -mute. They work together cutting and collecting wood in the forest. They make charcoal. They also sell the wood for kitchen fire cooking.





## Định

Định's husband died. She lives with her children. She works hard and her vegetable farm is very well organised.



## Dũng

Dũng has had a stroke and his wife has bowel cancer. He told with humour how his wife had too many children (eleven) and used to be fat and bossy. But since her bowel cancer, she got very thin. Now she can only walk around the village talking nicely to people. Now her tendons stick out. Dũng had the most well organised chicken house. It was treated with lime to kill mites and spread with a good mattress of rice husks.





Dũng's well organised chicken house.





## Thanh

Thanh's wife had a stroke and has been lying in her bed for seven years. His daughter is the carer.





Thanh at his home.

The shrine room: images of ancestors, saints, members of the holy family, guest furniture, CD decorations.

## Linh

Linh and her husband do not have a regular occupation. She looks after children at home while he gets casual labouring work. He was a bit drunk when he came out of the house to give her a short lecture about how she should hurry up with the chicken house preparation.



### "Huyền"

Huyền has a bright smile but appears to be mentally disabled. At first she could not decide whether she was able to raise chickens. Her neighbour convinced her to go ahead with the project.





### "Châu"

Châu's husband drinks a lot. When he returns home drunk, he is very violent to her. The priest wanted to give her some chickens so she would have some power to raise an income.



Chickens arrive and people wait while the seller counts them out.




Standing next to the Vietnam War bomb casing used to call the village together.



Seller counts out chickens.



Man comes to collect his chickens.



Woman and daughter take their chickens.



Taking a bag of feed back home.



Water bottles being delivered.

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 19. Household Assistance — Hà Tĩnh Villages

## Chicken raising and other practical assistance for 16 households — $1,450

### Description

FoVO worked alongside local volunteer groups to assist 16 disadvantaged households across six villages around Hà Tĩnh city.

The local groups nominated households and we then visited them to see their circumstances and discuss what assistance might be useful.

Thirteen households received chicken-raising projects. Each received 30 month-old chickens and a 25 kg bag of chicken feed.

For households that were unable, unprepared or unwilling to raise chickens, we provided other practical assistance.

This included winter clothing for two disabled sons, food for a family caring for an underweight disabled baby, a second-hand refrigerator for a single mother with newborn twins, food for two other households, and materials for a simple bamboo chicken shelter.

### Observation

The household visits were important because the circumstances were different in every home.

Chicken raising was suitable for most of the households, but not for everybody.

Rather than deciding beforehand that every disadvantaged household should receive chickens, we looked at whether people were willing and able to raise them.

Where chickens were not suitable, the money was used for something more useful to that particular household.

### Reflection

This project showed why a standard package did not always work.

People could have similar levels of disadvantage but very different needs and abilities.

The project started with a list of disadvantaged households, not a list of things FoVO wanted to give them.

The household visit helped decide what came next.

### Nam 1, Hiệp and Đồng

Our main project partner in Hà Tĩnh is three young men who are a close group of friends. They do a lot of business and volunteering together. All are university educated, Party connected, idealistic and keen to help their people. They are hard-working and successful businessmen. Hiệp and Đồng donated their valuable local connections, their cars and their valuable time. As a result, we always had big cars and a big group of young and enthusiastic volunteers (sometimes too many!)




With men's group volunteers Nam 1, Hiệp and Đồng. We asked three local groups to nominate the most disadvantaged households in villages around Hà Tĩnh City. Then we visited (and vetted) them.

### Local government list

The first group were people obtained from the local government list of the poor. We inspected each because the list is not 100% reliable. Some people pay bribes to get on the list. Others are preferred for the list because of their connections to Communist Party families or Việt Cộng war service. We vetted out a few households.

### Youth volunteer group nominations

The second group were those nominated by the local Red Cross volunteer group and the local Communist Youth volunteer group who run a soup kitchen at the local hospital. This list was more reliable than the government list. We accepted all households nominated.

### Legion of Mary women's group nominations

The third group was households nominated by a Legion of Mary women's group. We excluded one household, who seemed to be friends of the woman taking us around. The others were nominated from the adjoining non-Christian village. We accepted all of these. (It's complicated. Đồng Hà Christian village where the women's group is located and adjoining Communist Nam Giang village have a war history. During the war the men of Đồng Hà built a guarded bamboo stockade to protect them from attack by Nam Giang. Now the women's group of Đồng Hà visit the sick at Nam Giang with support.)



Hồng Phấn from the Hà Tınh market sellers volunteer group helps us buy and deliver food to this family who have a disabled baby.

## Visits to Households for Chicken Raising Project

### Carers of an adult mentally disabled daughter

The first household is a retired village literacy teacher and his wife and mentally disabled daughter. He went into hospital but didn't recover and became bed -ridden. The woman had also been sick in hospital for months. She agreed for her grandson to raise chickens.





## Man with leg disability

The man was crippled by an accident. He and his wife sent their two sons to study and work in Japan. They had to pay off the 200M ($12,000) bank loan for the costs of two study visas. The sons have paid off about half of the loan. This couple works hard and were very successful with our previous projects. They were happy to tell us that people from the market come to buy their poultry because it is well raised with natural foods and tastes good.





Our volunteer Nam 1 with the couple.

## Tịnh and Biên

Tịnh and Biên are elderly parents of five children. They have two mentally disabled sons. Tịnh was a Vietcong soldier and could have got a dioxin damage government pension for his sons. But he lost his war service paperwork. He now has obtained war service recognition on paper but is still unable to get his birth certificate to complete his application for a war pension. Sadly, a son who was born without a disability later developed mental illness and walked away from home in 1999 and disappeared. The local people believe that con ma (ghosts) have entered the bodies of the three young men and live inside them. They said they could no longer raise chickens but asked for winter jackets for their disabled sons. We bought 2 winter jackets, 4 jumpers and 2 trousers for 1M from money donated by our volunteer friend Dong. He made a bet with his friends Nam1 and Hiep that he could eat 4 whole trays of food. But he lost the bet. His friends agreed for him to donate the 1M that he had to pay them.







## Thiên and Hoa

The wife Hoa is mentally disabled and her husband Thien works in building construction. They have three children. The first and the second were born mentally disabled. The third child, a son, was born normal. He drowned a few months ago when he walked into floodwaters at the back of the house. This household was referred to us by the local Red Cross group. Local people believe that a con ma (ghost) led the three year old boy to the place where he drowned, because he was too intelligent and didn't fit with the mentally disabled boys.



Left to right, husband, mentally disabled boy, mother-in-law.

## Anh

Anh has a husband who is mentally disabled. They have two children. The first is normal. The second is mentally disabled and only weighs 5kg at age of 12 months. Anh said they do not have enough food to eat so they cannot raise chickens. She got a few things from the local Red Cross group. She asked for medicine. Instead we bought food: 20kg rice, 50 chicken eggs, 2 litres oil, 2 litres fish sauce.





Anh's parents -in-law with the disabled baby.

## Thanh

Thanh is a mentally disabled single mother of a son in year 11. Every day she goes to the rice fields to catch small freshwater crabs which she sells at the market. But lately, there haven' t been any. The aunty and uncle next door are helping the son. They agreed to raise chickens for the mother and son.





The boy and his mentally disabled mother.

## Thuận and Thương

Thuận is a mentally disabled woman who was raped. Her daughter Thương is not mentally disabled and has left to start studying medicine at Huế University. Thuận is the breadwinner, weaving bamboo baskets for a small income. She also cares for her approx 100 year old mother and her blind sister. Last year we gave them old clothes from a neighbour and a clothing storage cabinet.





## Hiền

Hiền is aged 45. She has cancer and must go to Hanoi hospital for treatment every month. Her husband is her carer. Mother-in-law lives with them and agreed to raise chickens for them.



Mother-in-law with grandchild.

## Hùng

Hùng is aged 35. Part of his brain is exposed outside his skull from a motorbike accident 18 months ago. He has been bed-ridden since that time. His parents had to sell land and property to get money for his treatment. When they ran out of money the hospital sent him back home. His brother went to Poland as an illegal migrant worker. A few months later, he disappeared.



## Lien

This single mother's father had a stroke. She is mentally disabled, and does not have any occupation. She was raped by someone in the village. She now has a one month old baby.



## Hop

Hop (pronounced “Herp”) is a single mother of a mentally disabled daughter. The daughter is about 20 years old.





Hop stands behind her daughter, who wanted to wear her new sandals for the photo.

## Lien

Lien is a single mother. Her son went to prison for killing a man. He returned home but cannot get a job. He still is creating difficulties for her by getting into trouble.



## Hong

Hong's husband died and she raised three children. She collects garbage for recycling. Three children are in year 1, year 6 and year 8.





## Son

He has heart disease. He has been bed-ridden for five years. His wife is his carer. They are raising two high school children. Two other children have left and for university.





Son making a sling shot.

## Lien

Lien is disabled in her legs. She married a downs syndrome man. They have two children, aged five and one. Both children are normal.

## Woman with new twins

This woman from Hue broke up with her husband then followed her new partner to Ha Tinh. They lived together and had a son who is now 7 years old. He left when she gave birth to twins. They are 6 months old. He family in Hue don't accept her. She had to move with her children and a suitcase into a rental room. She is very thin and her milk is drying up. She asks other mothers for some breast milk to help feed her twins. She asked us for a refrigerator to help her store the breast milk. Our project partners drove 60km for us to buy and deliver a second hand fridge. The market sellers volunteer group then helped us with buying and delivering food: 20kg rice, 50 chicken eggs, 2 litres oil, 2 litres fish sauce.





REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 20. Mái Ấm Thiên Ân Single Mothers' Shelter — Hà Tınh

## Post-natal, baby-care and medical supplies — $765

### Description

FoVO provided $765 of post-natal, baby-care and medical supplies for Mái Ấm Thiên Ân, a single mothers' shelter near Hà Tınh city.

The shelter was run by nuns and provided a place for unmarried mothers and their babies.

The project supplied everyday items needed for caring for mothers and newborn babies.

These included nappies, sanitary pads, baby cleaning gauze, towels, sleeping mats and pillows, baby bottles, an electric breast pump and milk reheater.

FoVO also provided basic medical and hygiene supplies including a blood-pressure testing kit, medical trays, an examination torch, gloves, masks, bandages, saline, antiseptic and washing products.

### Observation

The project was based on a detailed list of what the shelter actually needed.

Many of the items were inexpensive and ordinary, but a shelter caring for mothers and newborn babies used them continually and in large quantities.

For example, the project included hundreds of newborn and baby nappies, 2,000 pieces of baby cleaning gauze, sanitary products for the mothers and basic equipment for post-natal care.

The nuns were therefore able to turn a relatively small FoVO grant into a large collection of practical supplies.

### Reflection

There was no need for FoVO to invent a project here.

The people running the shelter already knew what they were running short of.

Our role was simply to listen to their list and help pay for the things they actually used.



Nuns and two baby girls with our project.

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 21. Study Encouragement Awards — Hậu Lộc High School, Hà Tĩnh

## School clothing and study materials for 30 students — $1,000

### Description

FoVO provided 30 study encouragement awards for students at Hậu Lộc High School in Hà Tĩnh.

The students came from some of the poorest local families but were doing well at school.

They were selected from 21 classes in Years 10 to 12.

Each student received a warm jacket for the approaching winter, a school backpack, 20 exercise books and 20 pens.

Two girls also received school sandals.

### Observation

The project was not simply a distribution of school materials.

The awards recognised students who were continuing to study well despite difficult family circumstances.

The school selected the students, so FoVO relied on teachers who knew both their academic progress and their family circumstances.

The clothing and study materials were practical, but the project was also intended as encouragement.

### Reflection

This was a simple way of recognising effort as well as need.

FoVO was not paying the students to achieve good results. We were giving some practical encouragement to young people who were already making the effort to continue their education.

The project also showed the value of working through teachers who knew the students and their families.













With English language teachers.

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 22. Disability Shelter — Xã Đoài, Nghệ An

## Food, nappies, bedding, hygiene supplies and medical assistance — $1,020

### Description

FoVO provided $1,020 of food, bedding, nappies and hygiene supplies for a disability shelter at Xã Đoài in Nghệ An.

The shelter was run by the Vinh Sisters of Charity.

The project included 300 kg of rice, winter blankets, bed sheets, padded floor tiles for bed frames, soup and noodle packets, washing powder, cooking oil, long-life milk, seasoning and 2,400 nappies.

FoVO also arranged hospital examination and medical treatment for a boy at the shelter who was suffering from severe skin irritation and infection.

### Observation

The project consisted mainly of ordinary consumable items used every day in caring for people with severe disabilities.

The very large number of nappies gives some idea of the continuing care required.

The project also responded to an immediate medical need when one boy developed a serious skin problem.

Rather than treating that as a separate project, FoVO arranged for him to be examined and treated while we were assisting the shelter.

### Reflection

Much of the work of a disability shelter depended on unremarkable things that had to be replaced again and again: food, nappies, bedding, cleaning products and basic medical care.

These were not dramatic projects, but they were part of the everyday cost of caring for people who depended heavily on others.



Nuns with our project



Sister Lành, the capable founder and manager of this shelter for severely disabled youth.



This order accepts women with some disabilities as nuns.






















Boy with severe skin irritation, for whom we tried to negotiate medical treatment.



REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 23. Winter Clothing for Khơ Mú Children — Nghệ An

*Winter clothing, blankets and footwear for 76 children — $1,200*

## Description

FoVO worked alongside Hiệp and his friends from the Hope Connection volunteer group on a project for Khơ Mú children in a remote mountain village in Nghệ An, near the Laos border.

The project provided winter jackets, blankets, boots and socks for 76 children, together with some sweets.

The total project cost was 23 million VND. Our Vietnamese project partners raised 5 million VND and FoVO provided the remaining 18 million VND, about $1,200.

## Observation

Reaching the village was part of the project.

We travelled by motorbike along a rough mountain track. Because the village was in the border area, we first had to stop at an army border office. After about an hour and a half of negotiation, I was given permission to visit for the day.

The village consisted mainly of wooden houses on stilts. There was no electricity or piped water.

The women and children were intensely curious about the visitors. When the volunteers organised the children in lines inside the kindergarten room to distribute the clothing and blankets, women crowded around the windows to watch.

The bags of sweets caused the most excitement.

## Reflection

This was a very simple project in a place where even simple things were difficult to obtain.

Warm clothing, blankets and footwear were a useful first step.

It also showed the value of working alongside a Vietnamese volunteer group. Hiệp and his friends knew the area, helped organise the project and took FoVO somewhere we would have been very unlikely to reach on our own.








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Children with their new winter jackets.



The bags of sweets cause the most excitement!

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 24. Follow-up Visit — Quỳnh Lập Leprosy Village, Nghệ An

## Wire for a chicken enclosure — $160

### Description

FoVO returned to the government-administered village at Quỳnh Lập to inspect chicken -raising projects carried out during the previous two years.

We met our local contacts and visited some of the households that had been most successful in breeding their chickens.

One couple had lost chickens through theft. FoVO provided $160 for wire so that they could build a more secure chicken enclosure.

### Observation

The return visit showed that households had responded differently to the earlier chicken projects.

Some had successfully raised and bred their chickens.

Others had sold their chickens or had not looked after them successfully.

There was also jealousy in the settlement. Some people thought that everybody should receive a few chickens, whether or not they intended to raise them.

The theft from one of the successful households showed another practical problem. Raising chickens required not only the animals themselves, but somewhere reasonably secure to keep them.

### Reflection

This visit made us more cautious about simply distributing more chickens.

We wanted to encourage households that were prepared to put their own work into raising and breeding them.

Rather than immediately starting another large distribution, we decided to wait and consider how we might support the more successful chicken breeders in the following year.

The $160 spent on wire was small, but the return visit taught us more than another distribution would have done.



Leper women relaxing on the footpath to enjoy a game of cards.



One of the women has taken off her plastic legs and left them on the footpath.

### The nuns

The nuns were successful in looking after their chickens. The chickens are bred for food and are used for feeding villagers and visitors.

### Phượng, leper colony's "information centre"

Phượng Hồ is nicknamed "Phượng nhảy", meaning she is the local neighbourhood watch. If someone wants to broadcast news in the leper colony, they just tell Phượng. As in previous years, she was consulted because she is the local social expert. At our inspection she still had chickens left from last year's project.



Phượng consulting with her daughter.

### Mai and Khoa

Mai and her husband Khoa have had their legs amputated at the knee. She looks after four children. .Her husband works as a casual labourer on construction sites. Some of the local children earn a bit of money by trapping and selling birds. I watched Hoan, her 15 year old boy climb to the top of a tree to retrieve a bird from a cage trap he had set. He stopped school at Year 7 because he did not study well. Other children are Trâm Anh

in Year 1, Quỳnh Đan in kindergarten, and Như Ý is a year old. This family succeeded in previous years' chicken raising projects. They concentrate on eggs to raise income.

At our inspection she still had bred chickens from last year's project. She sold many small chickens for income. She kept the large ones for more breeding and egg laying. She has many chickens. Our project was successful here.





Mai strapping on her legs.

## Hường and Thọ

Hường is 43 and her husband Thọ is 50. Both are lepers and amputees. They have no children. The husband works as a casual labourer on building sites.

At our inspection this couple still had many chickens. They concentrate on egg production and sales to raise income. Walking chicken eggs sell for twice the price of factory eggs. Our project has been successful here.





Hường is helped by the metal crutch to balance on her plastic legs. Her chickens look well.

### Kính and Quyết

Kính is a leper and amputee. He works very hard and does all sorts of jobs in the leper colony. Last year's chicken raising project went well and the chickens have a large free-range area. His wife Quyết is not a leper. They were married last year after Sister Nguyen matched them. Match-making is still common in Vietnam.

At our inspection we discovered that they had tried a home remedy to vaccinate their chickens from chicken flu. They planted garlic. Garlic is commonly used for a range of medicines, including keeping ghosts away and mixing with rice spirit to cure colds. They mixed the garlic with water, gave it to the chickens and the chickens all died from poisoning. I consider the couple should not be punished for their belief in folk medicines and they should be provided chickens to raise next year.





Kinh puts his prosthetic leg to one side and works hard cutting and tying garden stakes to use in his garden and supply to other people in the village.

### Yến

Yến Khuynh left her indigenous Thái mountain village as a teenager, to care for her grandmother in the leper colony. After her grandmother died she stayed in the leper colony. Her husband Huynh moved in with her and they have two children. They live in the one-room dwelling that was her grandmother's home. One daughter lives with them and goes to school. The other daughter Phương Anh was sent to Trang Nứa orphanage. There, Phương Anh and her friend Xuân decided organise a mass escape from the orphanage on their bicycles. The breakout didn't succeed. Huynh and Yến were very successful in our previous chicken raising project.

At our inspection we found that people were jealous. They said that the chickens should only go to lepers (because this couple are grandchildren of a leper, but are not lepers). The female leader of the village came and grabbed half of their chickens and then gave them to the drunk man next door. A few days later he sold the chickens to get money for rice spirit. So they lost half their chickens. But they work very hard and have raised more chickens. When the chickens wander into the drunk neighbour's yard he steals them. This couple can't do anything because the man is too violent. They asked for chicken wire to secure the chickens. We agreed to purchase wire for them.



Yến Khuynh.



Yến's chicken enclosure before and after.



## Lý and Li

Lý is a 58-year-old leper. His wife, who I visited, is Li who is also 58. She has lost both hands and a leg. They run a small bicycle repair workshop in their house. Their son, aged 25, studied agriculture at university, married recently and lives in the Central Highlands.

At our inspection we found they had large and well-kept chickens. They also saved a lot of money by providing chickens for their son's wedding reception. Our project was successful here.





REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 25. Food for Women's Group House — Phát Diệm

## Food parcels for 12 women — $300

### Description

FoVO worked alongside Sister Kính of the Phát Diệm Holy Cross Order to provide food for a small group house near Phát Diệm.

The house accommodated elderly and disabled women and a woman with a disfigurement.

We provided 12 food parcels. Each contained 20 kg of rice, two litres of cooking oil, 30 packets of noodles, one litre of fish sauce, and a toothbrush, toothpaste and soap.

### Observation

The women were living together rather than in a large institution.

One was Nhung, a blind woman who had adopted Nhat, a younger woman with an intellectual disability who had been picked up from the street.

Nhat had acted as Nhung's guide for years and called her "mother".

By the time of our visit, Nhat had developed cancer. Their roles had partly reversed: the older blind woman was now helping to care for the younger woman who had previously helped her.

Sister Kính knew the women and their circumstances and included the group house in her continuing work with disadvantaged people around Phát Diệm.

### Reflection

The food parcels were simple assistance, but the visit showed something that a list of recipients would not.

People who themselves needed help were also helping each other.

The relationship between Nhung and Nhat was not simply one of a "carer" and a "disabled person". Over the years each had cared for the other.





REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 26. Chicken Raising — Phát Diệm Villages

## Chickens, feed, medicine and heat lamps for 20 disadvantaged households — $1,330

### Description

FoVO worked alongside Sister Kính of the Phát Diệm Holy Cross Order to support chicken raising for 20 disadvantaged households in villages around Phát Diệm.

Each household received 30 chicks and a 25 kg bag of feed.

Medicine was also supplied to mix with the feed, and heat lamps were provided to help the young chickens survive the approaching winter.

One woman was unable to raise chickens, so we provided food and clothing instead.

The project also included waterproof winter jackets for the local nuns who travelled around the villages assisting people.

### Observation

This was more than simply handing out chickens.

Young chickens needed food, medicine and protection from the cold if they were to survive.

The project therefore included some of the other things needed to keep them alive during their first weeks.

Sister Kính knew the households and could also identify when chicken raising was not suitable. In one case we provided food and clothing instead.

### Reflection

Our chicken projects were becoming more practical.

The animal itself was only the beginning.

If a household was expected to raise chickens successfully, we also had to think about feed, health, shelter and the weather.

The project also reinforced another lesson: chicken raising should not be forced onto somebody for whom it was unsuitable.



People wait to collect their chickens and bag of feed.



A households shows their chicken enclosure, warmed by a lamp. It needs to be securely covered at night to prevent raids by rats.



A household places a chicken to warm the new chicks.

## Yến and Du

Yến is Du's second wife. The husband Du has been paralysed and bed -ridden for 9 years. They lived with the first wife's children. She used to be beaten by the children. So her relatives got her a house with her 8 year old daughter. We helped her last year with chickens and it has been a success.





Yen with her husband and chickens in the yard.

## Hưởng

Hưởng's husband left a long time ago. She raised children who have now left for work in Saigon. We helped her with chicken raising last year and she has been successful.





Chickens in banana tree area of Huong's garden.

## Thắng and Như

Last year we gave chickens. These were successfully raised and sold to obtain meat and medicines for the husband Thắng, who is paralysed. He had a stroke some years ago and has been bed ridden since that time.





## Linh

Sister Kính's mother lives alone since her husband died. Raising chickens, growing vegetables and raising fish keeps gives her an occupation. Linh successfully raised chickens that we provided last year and shared them with her son.



## Tươi

Tươi has a mental disability and works very hard. She met a man online and married. He also has some mental disability but does casual labour. They don't have land but live in a house on residue land next to the canal, built by people in the village. She has two children, a 2 year old and a baby. She is also the carer for her mentally disabled mother. Tươi makes some income from basket weaving. Last year we gave her chickens. She raised them for meat for her family, sold others for income, and still had one left when we visited.



Tươi with her mother.



Tươi weaving baskets.

## Bình

Bình is the carer for her mentally disabled sister, seen standing to her left in this picture. Her son is a drug user. His wife left him and their three children. Now Bình is the carer for them all. We gave her chickens last year which she raised and sold for income. The 1970 date stamp on the concrete water tank indicates this was one of many villages in the north developed by the government during the war as part of a Communist 5-year plan. The V-A-C (vườn -ao-chuồng) or garden -fishpond-animalpen farming model was supposed to be: garden to provide food for fish pond and animals; fish pond to support the water for garden and ducks; animals to provide fertiliser for the garden. Each house had rice plot on a collective farm. Rice plots are now separately owned.




## Tha and Mát

Mát is the carer for her husband Tha who had a stroke more than a year ago. He is brain damaged and can't talk. Her son's wife left. She is now the carer for her husband and three grandchildren. This is a common story in Vietnam.



Mát with husband and grandchildren.



Mát takes our 25kg of chicken feed home on her bicycle.

## Thắng

Thắng is the carer of a 30 year old mentally ill son. His wife left him with their two children. She is now the carer for the three of them.





Thắng examines the chickens we gave her to raise.

## Thủy

Thuy is the carer of her mentally disabled adult son.



## Sự

Sự is 82 years old and is the carer for her approx. 50 year old mentally disabled son.



## Hồng

Hồng is the carer of Giang, a mentally ill daughter who was raped by someone in the village. Giang had a son. Hồng now the carer of both. We visited with food last year. This year we gave her chickens to raise.






Hồng stands with her daughter and grandson. Right: moving our bag of chicken feed through a gateway.

## Lượng

Lượng is disabled man in a wheelchair who was introduced a mentally disabled woman for marriage, so he would have someone to be his carer. Their daughter, the one with the bright smile, is really the carer for all four generations that live in the house with her.




Lượng with his father, daughter and grandson.

## Cường and Hoài

Cường is a truck driver who is disabled after a road accident when he was 20 years old. He married a mentally disabled woman, to have someone to look after him. They have a son. His wife's life with the parents-in-law was terrible. Using Facebook, Sister Kính obtained overseas Vietnamese money to build them a one-room shelter. Though attached to the parents-in-laws house, it provides some separation from them. The wife is the carer for husband and son and does basket weaving to raise some income.



Family in shelter. Facebook crowd funding is standard practice in Vietnam.



Wife weaving baskets.



Son wheels bicycle home, laden with our bag of chicken feed.

## Vũ

Vũ is a single mother who is the carer for her down syndrome daughter.





Vũ wheels her chickens home.

## Loan

Loan is the carer for her mother who had a stroke. She is also raising her son.





Loan with her mother, and above, taking our chickens home.

## Đàm

Đàm is the carer for her bed ridden husband.






Đàm taking her chickens home.

## Nhì

Nhì sold his house and took his family south to the Central Highlands to find employment. They failed and returned to the village with no house and no money. They are living in a borrowed house.









## Hà

We visited Ha last year with some food, because she is physically unable to raise chickens. This year we brought food. We asked her whether she needs any clothing. She touched her own soiled garments and said very simply, “But I have clothing”. We looked inside her empty house and brought her a winter jacket, two do bo (casual outfits) and a winter blanket.





## One-armed man

We visited the family of this one-armed man. He lost his hand in a work accident. When we arrived my interp pointed to expensive furniture in the house and the son’s prestige motorbike (Honda Liberty, 75M). We left this man off the list.





## The local nuns



REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 27. School Materials and Blankets — Phát Diệm

## School materials for 10 disadvantaged children and blankets for 20 disabled children — $335

### Description

FoVO provided school materials for 10 disadvantaged children in villages around Phát Diệm.

Each received a school bag, exercise books and pens.

The same project also provided blankets for 20 disabled children at the convent kindergarten.

### Observation

The project met two simple needs at the same time.

For the village children, the assistance was intended to help with school attendance and study.

For the disabled children at the convent kindergarten, the need was more basic: warm bedding.

### Reflection

This was a small practical project.

It did not attempt to solve the wider problems faced by either group.

It simply provided useful items that the children needed at the time.



Students modelling their new high school backpacks and books.







Blankets for 20 disabled children.

REPORT TO DONORS 2020

# 28. Single Mothers' Shelter — Phát Diệm

## Mother and baby care packages — $250

### Description

FoVO provided mother and baby care packages for a small single mothers' shelter in Phát Diệm run by the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres.

The project included nappies, changing mats, towels, baby clothes, bottles, shampoo, blankets, sheets, bibs, socks and other everyday items needed for caring for newborn babies.

For the three mothers, we also included some personal care and beauty items such as shampoo, face wash, moisturiser, foundation and lipstick.

### Observation

Most of the project consisted of ordinary practical items for caring for babies.

The mothers appeared particularly pleased with the small personal items provided for them.

These were inexpensive compared with the rest of the project, but they were not simply baby supplies.

They recognised the mothers themselves as young women going through a difficult period.

### Reflection

It was easy for a project like this to focus only on the babies.

The reaction to the beauty items was a reminder that the mothers also had needs of their own.

Sometimes a very small part of a project could have a meaning greater than its cost.





These women agreed for a photo with our project of baby care items.