

NEWSLETTER 6/05

It has been a long time since the last newsletter. We have been busy both here and over in Hoi An. The Hoi An Foundation recently sent Jane Reichel over to Vietnam to work at the orphanage. She was in Vietnam from January to April and helped us accomplish a lot for the children of the orphanage. Here are the updates on the children and the projects:

1) Recent Health Issues. In the last few weeks there was an outbreak of a febrile illness involving the carers and the children. Hai, Khoa Nhi, Luu Mai, Hoang Nhi, Thi Manh and Bong ended up in the hospital on medicine. Yen, one of the carers, was stabbed by a drunk man with a knife. Everyone involved seems to be doing well. The outbreak in the orphanage illustrates how close quarters and suboptimal hygiene in the setting of compromised immune systems is a good setup for the quick spread of infections. We have been lucky that these outbreaks are rare. Robyn quickly noted the sick children and worked to get them medical attention

2) Surgeries. We have had 2 successful surgeries on the children in the last few months. Robyn spent 3 months in Sai Gon with Be Hong awaiting shunt surgery for hydrocephalus. She finally underwent the surgery and is back at the orphanage. She is more alert and appears happier. Minh An waited 3½ months at the Hue hospital awaiting heart surgery for a congenital defect. The ward was full of patients who had been waiting for over six months. She finally got her surgery before Christmas and returned to the orphanage. Minh An's mother wanted to take her back home after the surgery. Minh An was brought up by her father who eventually abandoned her in the market (he had a drug habit by report). Her mother had no job at the time and we were concerned with her ability to care for a child who recently finished a big surgery. We got permission to keep her at the orphanage until her strength improved. Minh An has finally returned to her mother who is now working in a local cafe in Da Nang to support herself and her child. We would love to be able to support Minh An and her mother and to ensure that Minh An does not end up in another institution. Minh Hien and Van Hien are currently getting cleft palate surgery in Sai Gon.



3) Employment. Thanh and Tuyet (the previous physiotherapist and the teacher of the handicapped children) left the orphanage to start their own business. Two more physiotherapists were hired and they were trained in Hue. The Kianh foundation hired Kinh, a social worker, translator and all-round help to Jackie and Robyn. Kinh is an English language graduate and was previously the co-coordinator for heart surgeries for another INGO in Vietnam. Kinh helped us to get funding for Minh An's surgery. Both the Kianh Foundation and the Hoi An Foundation

have employed Nick Keegan. He will serve as the Director of Business Development and work with us to organize the foundations and help us work more effectively towards our goals with the children. The Kianh Foundation and the Hoi An Foundation currently employ 3 carers, 2 special education teachers, 3 physiotherapists, 2 project workers, and an administrative assistant.



4) Special Education Classroom. Le and Loan are now working in the newly built special education classroom. Roe Schroeder, a long-term volunteer and a special needs teacher in Australia, has been doing wonderful work in training Le and Loan. Education for the disabled is a relatively new concept in Vietnam. Roe arranged for a Speech Therapist from Australia to come over for a week and observe the children and give us some ideas and direction in working with the non-verbal kids. A group of students from Sweden came over and helped

redecorate the classroom. A corner of the disabled classroom is now set aside for some of the more severely disabled children who rarely get to leave the disabled bedroom. They can come into the classroom and benefit from the change of environment. Luu Mai, Hai and Van Mai now go to school and love it!

5) Bathrooms/Bedrooms. The disabled bathroom is finished. Van Mai is on his way to being toilet trained. A student group from Australia came over for a month and painted/retilled the dilapidated boys' bedrooms. We are looking to fund new furniture for these rooms to complete the renovation.

6) Physiotherapy. Kalli, a German-born physiotherapist, worked in January with the new physiotherapists to individualize treatment programs for each of the disabled children. He told us he had never worked with such motivated and enthusiastic Vietnamese colleagues and that training them was the highlight of his three years in Vietnam! He plans to return for the summer to continue his training of the physiotherapists.

7) Dental Work. Last summer we got dental treatment for all 70 children at the orphanage sponsored by East Meets West (www.eastmeetswest.org). The program took many months to complete and we were told that our children had the worst teeth that they had seen in a mass treatment. Luu Mai needed 14 fillings and 2 root canals! We are able to get the yearly treatment for free but will be looking to fund the trips to Da Nang for all of the children at around \$500 USD a year. Yearly visits will help prevent future dental problems.



8) Nam. Nam is doing well. Jane was able to see him during her visit to Hoi An. We finally have received confirmation of his HIV positive status. He had extensive skin lesions that have improved with the help of a local dermatologist. We are still working on getting him better medicines to treat his HIV. We hope more medicines will be available this year

That's all for now. Thanks to everyone who has been supportive to our work in Vietnam. I think we have come a long way in the last few years and we couldn't have done it without the help of all the volunteers and the support of our friends and family. We're looking forward to a productive year.

Josh Solomon – www.hoianfoundation.org
Jackie Wrafter – www.kianh.co.uk

