

Update

USAID Supports Vietnam's First Employer Conference to Promote Hiring People with Disabilities



Ambassador Michael Marine at the workshop of "Employers on employment of people with disabilities" in Hanoi.

The National Coordinating Council on Disability (NCCD) held Vietnam's first employer conference on March 28 in Hanoi with the strong support of Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped. Among the 130 participants were several prominent guest speakers, including the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, the Vice Minister of MOLISA and representatives from the U.S. Department of Labor and the International Labor Organization.

The purpose of the conference, supported by our current USAID grant, was to garner support for the establishment of a panel of employers to create and expand career opportunities for people

(See EMPLOYER CONFERENCE, p. 8)

VNAH Launches New Program to Promote "Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities"

Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped initiated a new program in January to promote "Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities" (IVWD). The three-year program is funded by USAID, a decade-long supporter of VNAH's efforts to improve the policies and operational environment in which the disabled live and strive.

The IVWD Program promotes the development and effective implementation of the national disability inclusion policy. At the national level, the project will focus on activities to promote inclusive policies and central coordination. At the local level, in the two targeted provinces of Ninh Binh and Quang Nam, the aim is to direct grassroots efforts designed to move people with disabilities into the mainstream of Vietnamese society.

Specific objectives will include:

- Promoting a national disability law
- Promoting inclusion of disability issues in the Vocational Training Law and in the national survey on living standards

- Expanding and promoting stronger enforcement of the accessibility standards in public construction and transportation
- Developing an additional set of accessibility standards for people with hearing and visual impairments



Jeff Rosen (left), general counsel and director of policy for the U.S. Council on Disability, meets with Mme. Nguyen T. Hoai-Thu and her delegation.

- Establishing an "Employers Panel" to promote employment of people with disabilities
- Assisting the National Coordinating Council on Disabilities (NCCD) and the Committee on Social Affairs of the National Assembly (CSA) in their efforts to improve coordination and promote development and implementation of disability laws and policies

- Assisting the development of disabled people's organizations

VNAH continues to work with local and international partners it has had since the early 1990s. Among these partners are the NCCD, which has 26 members from relevant ministries and organizations including the Ministries of Labor, Invalid and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Transportation (MOT), Construction (MOC), Home Affairs (MOHA) and CSA.

Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped and Health & Education Volunteers Join President Bush's Council on Service and Civic Participation to Deliver President's Volunteer Service Award *Prestigious Award Honors Outstanding Commitment to Volunteer Service*

VNAH/HealthEd teamed up with the White House to become a Certifying Organization for the President's Volunteer Service Award, a national program recognizing Americans who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to volunteer service. Established in 2003, the award was created by President George W. Bush to give presidential recognition to individuals, families and groups who meet requirements for volunteer service, measured by the number of service hours performed over a 12-month period.

VNAH/HealthEd is one of thousands of organizations that have joined forces to deliver the President's Volunteer Service Award and honor the volunteers who strengthen our nation. As a Certifying Organization for the award, VNAH/HealthEd is responsible for verifying service hours, nominating

potential recipients and delivering the award.

"We are extremely proud to recognize our most outstanding volunteers with the President's Volunteer Service Award," said VNAH/HealthEd's President Ca Van Tran. "VNAH/HealthEd volunteers are role models in our community, donating their time, energy and talent to bring us closer together as neighbors and as a nation. The award is our way of thanking these volunteers and inspiring everyone in our community to make volunteering a central part of their lives."

Tran added, "Even if you've never volunteered before, the President's Volunteer Service Award is within your reach. There are so many ways to contribute, and every volunteer hour makes a difference in improving the quality of life for others. We encourage everyone to get involved and to bring along your family, friends and neighbors. Together, we can strengthen America – one hour

at a time."

The award is issued by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, a group convened by President George W. Bush to help foster and encourage a culture of volunteer service and civic participation among Americans. Chaired by two-time Super Bowl Champion Darrell Green, with former U.S. Senators Bob Dole and John Glenn as honorary co-chairs, the Council is composed of leaders in government, media, entertainment, business, education, nonprofit and volunteer service organizations and community volunteering.

For more information about volunteering with VNAH/HealthEd, please contact us at 703-847-9582 or email: vnah1@aol.com. For more information on the President's Volunteer Service Award and to find out how to identify additional volunteer opportunities in this area, visit www.presidentialserviceawards.gov or call 1-866-545-5307.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

A Note to Colleagues and Supporters	3
Freeman Foundation: Heroic Efforts Continue	4
Mainstreaming People with Disabilities	5
Regulations and Standards Published on Accessibility in Public Transportation	6
Designing a National Action Plan on Disability	7
Promoting Development of Local NGOs	8
Laotian Officials and NGO Leaders Study Vietnamese NGO	11
Four New Schools Open for Rural Children	12
In Appreciation	13
First International Concert for People with Disabilities	14
Corrective Surgery for Children	15



A NOTE TO COLLEAGUES AND SUPPORTERS

A Lasting Impact: VNAH and HealthEd Provide Life-Changing Opportunities

By Ca Van Tran, President

Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH) and its sister organization, Health and Education Volunteers (HealthEd), continue to make significant progress on humanitarian assistance programs that have a positive and lasting impact on individuals and communities. We continue to receive strong support from our long-time major donors for programs that help bring hope and life-changing opportunities to the disabled and needy in Vietnam.

At the beginning of this year, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided a generous grant to support a multi-year "Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities" program (see related article on page 1). Under this program, VNAH will focus on strengthening national policies and programs affecting the full inclusion of people with disabilities in society; supporting the implementation and enforcement of existing disability inclusion policies and programs at the local level and in the private sector; and mainstreaming disability issues into national plans for social and economic development.

To achieve this, VNAH and our local and international partners will implement a 36-month program with four inter-related components:

- 1) Strengthening the legal and policy framework for disability inclusion
- 2) Strengthening national coordination of disability policy development and implementation
- 3) Strengthening the enforcement of disability law and policy
- 4) Increasing access to meaningful employment for those with disabilities

VNAH is very grateful to have the participation of both the U.S. National Council on Disability (NCD) and the



The Freeman Foundation has provided generous funding for thousands of wheelchairs and prostheses for war and landmine victims in rural regions.

Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor as technical advisors to this important program.

The Freeman Foundation has provided generous funding for thousands of wheelchairs and prostheses for war and landmine victims in rural regions. With improved quality and design, these valuable assistive devices will enable thousands of people with disabilities to regain their dignity as well as mobility and lead more meaningful lives.

The Nippon Foundation and its sister organization, the Asia Education and Friendship Association, have responded to a VNAH/HealthEd request with funding to expand prosthetic assistance to the northern provinces in addition to

vocational training programs and school construction in remote rural areas.

Also, early this year we began two small programs to assist local NGOs and key government agencies in Laos to heighten awareness of disability issues and develop a favorable environment for civil society organizations.

Although the needs of millions of Vietnamese with disabilities are enormous, it's profoundly gratifying to see our projects begin to bear fruit. But there's much more to do, and we need your help.

Join us as we redouble our efforts to bring these wonderful people hope both by assisting in the improvement of laws and regulations affecting the disabled and by providing products and services that will directly improve their lives.

Freeman Foundation: Heroic Efforts Continue

Thanks to a generous grant from the Freeman Foundation, VNAH worked with local governments and organizations over the last year to coordinate the delivery of more than 8,000 wheelchairs and prosthetics to amputees in rural districts of Vietnam.

In June of this year, the Freeman Foundation continued to support this important program that will enable VNAH to deliver many more thousands of specially designed, all-terrain wheelchairs to amputees in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. In addition to regular wheelchairs, in the coming months, VNAH will begin to deliver a uniquely designed, hand-operated tricycle and new folding wheelchairs to amputees. VNAH is the only NGO in Vietnam to provide thousands of these valuable wheelchairs.

The sturdy, specially designed chairs enable users to travel at a faster speed and longer distance with more room for storage onboard. These chairs are often used as a tool for generating income for the users — a mobile stall to sell daily newspapers, lottery tickets or handicrafts.

VNAH made a special effort to encourage and assist wheelchair manu-

facturers to employ and train people with disabilities in their manufacturing workforces. The workers with disabilities are not only industrious and punctual, they also provide valuable user input to

improve the quality and design of the wheelchair production program. Improvement on design and quality control is an ongoing process as a part of the program.



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Mr. Houghton Freeman participates in outreach delivery of wheelchairs in Vietnam.

Making Real Progress: *Mainstreaming People with Disabilities*

Promoting inclusion of the needs and concerns of people with disabilities into mainstream social and economic development programs is a difficult task. For several years VNAH has encouraged and assisted the Vietnamese government to press forward on the issue – yielding significant results in recent months.

For the first time, the needs of Vietnamese with disabilities are being addressed in the national poverty reduction program (from 2006-2010) as one of the top priorities in the development agenda of Vietnam, which plans to invest US\$2.8 billion. The program has formally incorporated the needs and interests of people with disabilities, particularly in areas related to education, health care and micro-credit.

In addition, for the first time, the responsible ministries have joined forces to develop a multi-sector, multi-year disability program dedicated to improving the living situations of people with disabilities. The National Action Plan on Disability (NAP) seeks to institutionalize disability issues and strongly supports the creation of a funding program in the amount of VND412 billion (US\$26 million) from government and other donors for disability programs. This will pave the way for local governments to set up funding in their annual budgets for programs that serve people with disabilities at the provincial level. The NAP will also set goals, objectives and guidelines for local policy makers, planners and other stakeholders to design programs for people with disabilities.

Mainstreaming is also progressing significantly on other fronts. Earlier this year, the final draft of the Vocational Law included a chapter with several provisions on people with disabilities. This process was impacted directly by inputs from VNAH and the disability community. In addition, the Statistics Office of Vietnam has considered plans to include disability statistics in the upcoming national survey on living standards

(VLSS), again a development shaped by advocacy and support from NCCD, VNAH, MCNV, the World Bank and others. The survey, which takes place every two years, will adopt international

standards on classifications of disabilities, and is expected to provide improved, comprehensive data on disabilities.



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Vietnam Publishes Regulations and Standards on Accessibility in Public Transportation

The Ministry of Transportation (MOT) of Vietnam recently published standards and regulations designed to make public transportation more accessible to riders with disabilities. These new standards are the direct result of collaboration between the MOT and VNAH, as part of a USAID-funded disability program in Vietnam during 2004

and 2005.

The new set of accessibility standards for public transport provides specifications for making the buses and vehicles accessible to passengers with disabilities, including the requirement that public city bus services be accessible to users with disabilities.

Other achievements include the

strategic recommendations for future development of accessible transport in Vietnam. The MOT has also ordered one of the largest bus manufacturers in Vietnam to develop designs for the production of accessible buses. During the project period, the MOT provided training seminars on accessible transport for several hundred transport officials throughout the country. As a result, MOT has reported that understanding and awareness of accessibility issues among transport authorities has significantly increased.

All these efforts have begun to bring real benefits to people with disabilities. In April, the bus services in Ho Chi Minh City will no longer charge a fee for riders with disabilities.

Under the current "Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities Project" funded by USAID for the period 2006-2008, the MOT is working with the Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi Departments of Transportation and VNAH to implement accessible pilot bus routes in the cities. They are also proposing to the Government of Vietnam a project designed to further promote accessibility in public transport, including the accessibility of rail service.

Additionally, the University of Transportation in Hanoi has agreed to work with VNAH to adopt accessible transport in their formal training program. Work is underway to develop the training curriculum for the university. MOT and VNAH also worked to promote accessibility issues in the Bus Rapid Transit system in Hanoi – a high-volume, city bus service funded by the World Bank.

VNAH has received invaluable technical assistance from various international experts, including Tom Rickert of Access Exchange International (www.globalride-sf.org) based in San Francisco and Kit Mitchell from the UK.



Brett Jones (3rd from left), director of humanitarian programs USAID/Vietnam, participates in the workshops.

Accessible Construction: A New Way of Life

VNAH has provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Construction (MOC) of Vietnam to develop the Barrier-free Codes and Standards that were published in May 2002. Based on these Codes and Standards, a curriculum on building design was developed and adopted by several architectural and construction universities in Vietnam. The Hanoi Architectural University, with an estimated 3,000 students, was the first university to begin training its students with this curriculum.

VNAH enlisted the technical assistance of the International Code Council to identify the ways and means to set up an effective enforcement system at appropriate government offices to nurture the full implementation of the Codes and

Standards. VNAH supported MOC in organizing training seminars for construction professionals, including licensing officials, architects, engineers and disability advocates. VNAH also supported the establishment of five enforcement units (in Da Nang, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and in Ninh Binh and Quang Nam Provinces) to improve enforcement and compliance. As a result, new construction permits are issued only after a review process to ensure compliance, and streets and intersections in these and other larger cities now include curb cuts.

The MOC and VNAH are currently working on a project to expand the current Codes and Standards to serve people with visual and hearing impairments as well.

Community Support

- Last April, VNAH and HealthEd worked with friends and supporters in the local Vietnamese-American community to organize a dinner to entertain and honor 35 injured Iraq war veterans who were recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. This was the fourth such gathering put together since early 2005 using out-of-pocket monies from VNAH/HealthEd's board members, friends and volunteers. Service members enjoyed an evening complete with delicious Vietnamese food and traditional music performed by a group of volunteer college students.
- At this special occasion, the American Legion awarded a special grant of \$43,000 to VNAH to support its activities in Ho Chi Minh City to provide vocational training and meaningful employment to the disabled and war victims. Since the late 1990s, VNAH has worked with Vietnamese authorities and the leadership of the American Legion to organize and implement this special program.
- In August 2006, Grapes for Humanity, a Florida-based foundation, awarded



VNAH and HealthEd's board members and supporters with the soldiers and their family members.

VNAH/HealthEd a \$25,000 grant to help cover surgery and rehabilitation

services costs for disabled children in the Central region of Vietnam.

VNAH Assists in Design of Vietnam's National Action Plan on Disability

For the first time ever, a national five-year plan is being developed by the Government of Vietnam (GVN) to increase resources and support for millions of Vietnamese with disabilities. The US\$26 million plan, which is expected to receive formal GVN approval in a few months, will be implemented from 2006-2010.

VNAH supported the preparation process with technical assistance to the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) as part of the cooperative framework between the two parties.

The drafting process was initiated in early 2005 by an inter-agency team of 11 participating ministries and agencies led by the Department of Social Protection of MOLISA.

The plan, in addition to mobilizing resources and national coordination,

promotes the mainstreaming of people with disabilities through national cross-sector programming, raising public awareness and providing equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

To provide technical assistance during the drafting process, VNAH has engaged Prof. Robert Metts of the University of California at Berkeley, USA, who is himself disabled and whose expertise in economics and disability is internationally renowned. VNAH also provided technical assistance and materials on international practices, and helped organize public consultations with organizations for disabled people, other disability stakeholders and government agencies. In addition, VNAH sponsored a survey conducted by MOLISA to collect baseline data on disability to support the drafting of the plan.



Mr. John Sommer, executive director of the American Legion, participates in wheelchair delivery and outreach.

VNAH Promotes Development of Local Non-governmental Organizations

A delegation of six people representing the Office of the National Assembly, other government agencies and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) visited China in March to meet their Chinese counterparts and discuss issues related to NGOs and the legal framework governing them. Participating delegates are officials involved in the drafting of the Law on Associations and in charge of the NGO sector in Vietnam. The delegates said that the experience gained from the exchange trip will be useful in ongoing efforts regarding the development of local NGOs in Vietnam.

The exchange trip was sponsored by VNAH under a project funded by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) of Japan. Under this project, VNAH has also organized a number of thematic research operations and public consultative workshops to assist in drafting the Law on Associations. The project also provides training in legal drafting skills for concerned government staff and a networking opportunity for researchers, professionals and policy makers. The project is the continuation of VNAH efforts, dating back to 2000, aimed at promoting the development of NGOs in Vietnam.

In China, the delegation met with representatives from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Bureau of NGO Administration,

the People's Congress and a number of NGO institutions and networks, as well as universities. Discussions with government officials focused primarily on technical matters surrounding the legal framework and state management of NGOs. The discussions with NGO representatives and academics illustrated for the delegates some of the constraints and difficulties of the system from the perspectives of NGOs. The study tour was an excellent opportunity for both sides to discuss best practices and lessons learned, not only on issues regarding NGOs but also on laws such as the law on referendum, law on residence and general issues on the legislative process.

"Designated Projects"

VNAH and HealthEd are encouraged to see increased interest and participation among many Vietnamese-Americans in our humanitarian programs that help needy children in Vietnam—and we want to find more ways to expand that participation. We can work with you to design a program of your choice, whether the focus is an activity in Vietnam or in your own community in the United States. We can partner with you to raise funds, implement programs or provide oversight. We call these "Designated Projects," and they're a great opportunity for you to make a difference in the lives of Vietnamese here and abroad. For example, last year, Mr. and Mrs. Lee Nguyen of Orange County, Calif., donated \$8,000 to pay for a seafood training program for 50 people in Mr. Nguyen's native district of Lai Vung in the Dong Thap Province (featured in our last *Update* issue). This designated program resulted in regular, meaningful employment at seafood exporting factories for 50 poor people. If you have other ideas of how we can help, we'd love to hear them!

Highlights of VNAH Disability Policy Project 2004-2005

- Successfully advocated for the inclusion of disabled people in the National Target Program for Poverty Reduction (NTPR), a five-year program worth US\$2.8 billion.
- Assisted government partners in developing a national disability plan aimed at mobilizing US\$2.8 million from state and other donors for disability programs for a period of five years, beginning in 2006.
- Assisted the Ministry of Transportation (MOT) with its adopted initiatives on accessible transportation for people with disabilities, including developing sets of technical standards on accessibility for transport vehicles and regulations on accessible services in public city buses.
- Assisted the National Coordinating

Council on Disability (NCCD) in developing its five-year strategic plan. NCCD has 26 members from various ministries and disability organizations.

- Assisted the development of a university curriculum on barrier-free access design (in cooperation with the Ministry of Construction and Hanoi Architectural University). The curriculum has been adopted by a number of architectural and construction universities in Vietnam.
- Assisted the Ministry of Construction (MOC) in designing a set of check-lists to help construction contractors apply the barrier-free access standards and set up three enforcement units in Danang, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to promote compliance with the standards.

(EMPLOYER CONFERENCE, from p. 1)

with disabilities by engaging the talent and leadership of national and international employers as partners and stakeholders. The plan to establish the panel was widely supported by members of the

American Chambers of Commerce in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, as well as the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Hanoi.

The conference also provided information to participants about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

VNAH Ramps Up New Programs in Ho Chi Minh City and Dak Lak Province to Further Integrate People with Disabilities

In August, VNAH signed an 18-month agreement with the Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA) in Ho Chi Minh City for a project titled "Implementation of Activities to Assist People with Disabilities." VNAH will help increase public awareness of the project, help create jobs and provide technical support to DOLISA and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve their effectiveness in support programs for people with disabilities.

Specifically, the program will:

- Provide support for a special two-year class in computer graphics, and for two shorter classes on beauty, hair and sewing for more than 100 young adults with disabilities.

- Organize a workshop and job fair to promote the employment of people with disabilities.
- Organize festivals and a major concert series featuring performances by disabled individuals. These performances will highlight the abilities of disabled people and emphasize their capabilities and value as members of society. (See related story on page 14.)

VNAH/HealthEd signed a three-year program agreement in September with the Dak Lak Province (in the Central Highlands) to begin a number of activities to assist local disadvantaged people and people with disabilities.

VNAH/HealthEd has been working with provincial governments in the region since 1997 to conduct humanitari-



Tran Binh Minh, 9, born without arms, uses his feet to write. "His writing is better than most people with hands," said VNAH President Ca Van Tran. VNAH's program will help Minh to become a productive member of society.



Mr. Hiroshi Tanikawa, Chairman of the Asian Education and Friendship Association-AEFA (Japan), at the groundbreaking ceremony in Buon Don District, September 2006.

an outreach missions. The Government of Vietnam recently required a formal agreement for international NGOs such as VNAH and HealthEd to operate in this area. VNAH and HealthEd are among the first international NGOs to operate in the Central Highlands

The new three-year program includes provisions for technical support and capacity building for local government agencies and grassroots organizations on general rural development activities. The program started with the construction of two schools in Buon Don District to help relieve overcrowded classes and organize capacity training and small-scale technical assistance to local farmers and villagers.

The two organizations will bring to Ho Chi Minh City and Dak Lak Province years of experience in working effectively to promote equal access and address the basic needs of local disadvantaged and disabled people.

Volunteer Medical/Dental Mission a Huge Success

HealthEd/VNAH supported a dental mission to Vietnam in November 2005 with a group of 26 professionals from the United States and Vietnam with a wide range of expertise in dentistry, medicine, education and public health. The group, "Hope for Tomorrow," is a team of volunteer dental and medical professionals who bring aid to populations in need.

The volunteer mission visited four elementary schools in the rural and mountainous areas of Quang Nam and Da Nang of Vietnam and provided dental care, medicines, public health education and disease prevention training to more than 2,000 school children and villagers.



(Left) Dr. Duong Hong Linh at work during the volunteer mission at Ca Dy Village Elementary School in Nam Giang District, Quang Nam Province.

(Right) Dr. Dung Quoc Tran at the vocational training center for the disabled in Hoc Mon District, HCMC.

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Special Note

Both VNAH and HealthEd are tax exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. A financial statement is available upon written request from the State Division of Consumer Affairs, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Commonwealth of Virginia, P.O. Box 1162, Richmond, Virginia 23209, U.S.A.

Laotian Officials and NGO Leaders Study Vietnamese NGO

HealthEd sponsored a study tour to Vietnam in July for a group of Laos PDR government officials and NGO leaders to exchange experiences on legal and fiscal rules and the development of local NGOs. Feedback from delegates after the eight-day visit indicated that they had learned a great deal about NGO issues and the NGO legal framework. They also gained valuable, practical experience regarding the operation and management of this sector. The study tour was part of a project funded by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Japan (SPF).

The delegation of seven members, led by Ambassador Khamphong Phanvongsa, president of the Laos Union of Science and Engineering Associations (LUSEA), included officials from the Public Administration Committee of the Prime Minister's Office, which is working on a draft regulation for Laos NGOs.

In Vietnam, the Laotians met with relevant Vietnamese government officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs (who manage local NGOs), the Commission on Legislative Affairs of the National Assembly, the legal experts of the Government Office and the National Coordinating Committee on Disability, as well as local NGOs and prominent NGO networks such as the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Association, the Lawyers Association and the Southeast Asia Research Association of Vietnam. Discussions included: legal frameworks for NGOs, the role of government in managing NGOs, registration and reporting procedures, as well as experiences of local NGOs in internal governance, fundraising and interaction with the government.

HealthEd will work with LUSEA and other local partners to organize a national conference on NGO issues in Vientiane later this year. The program will be aimed at promoting understanding and capacity building for NGOs. In addition, the project will sponsor training programs to improve the capacity of local NGOs in this country.



Ambassador Khamphong Phanvongsa (fourth from right) with members of his delegation and VNAH/HealthEd staff in Hanoi offices.



Deaf children in Laos

Four New Schools Open for Rural, Ethnic Children; Eight More to Open Soon

Under the multi-year school construction program funded by the Nippon Foundation and the Asia Education and Friendship Association (AEFA - Japan) that began last year, HealthEd has completed four new elementary schools for children in remote mountainous districts in Quang Nam, Phu Tho, Thanh Hoa and Quang Binh Provinces of Vietnam. HealthEd is working with the Central Government agency (the People's Aid Coordinating Committee - PACCOM) and local education departments to implement this important program.

Each school has either four or six classrooms, a teacher's room and sanitary facilities, and can accommodate 50 to 100 children. A majority of the children are from the ethnic minorities of Bru Van Kieu, Ruc, H'mong, Muong and Dao. In the past, many of these children had to walk several hours to attend school. Completed in February, the new four-room school in Thuong Hoa Village—near the Laos border in Quang Binh Province—will provide much-needed education to more than 100 children mostly from the Ruc tribal community.

HealthEd and AEFA worked with local authorities and PACCOM, a government agency coordinating international NGO programs in Vietnam, to set up a consortium of volunteers from Japan, as well as from the local community, teachers and parents, to support this special program. The local community contributed labor and materials for the construction of these schools.

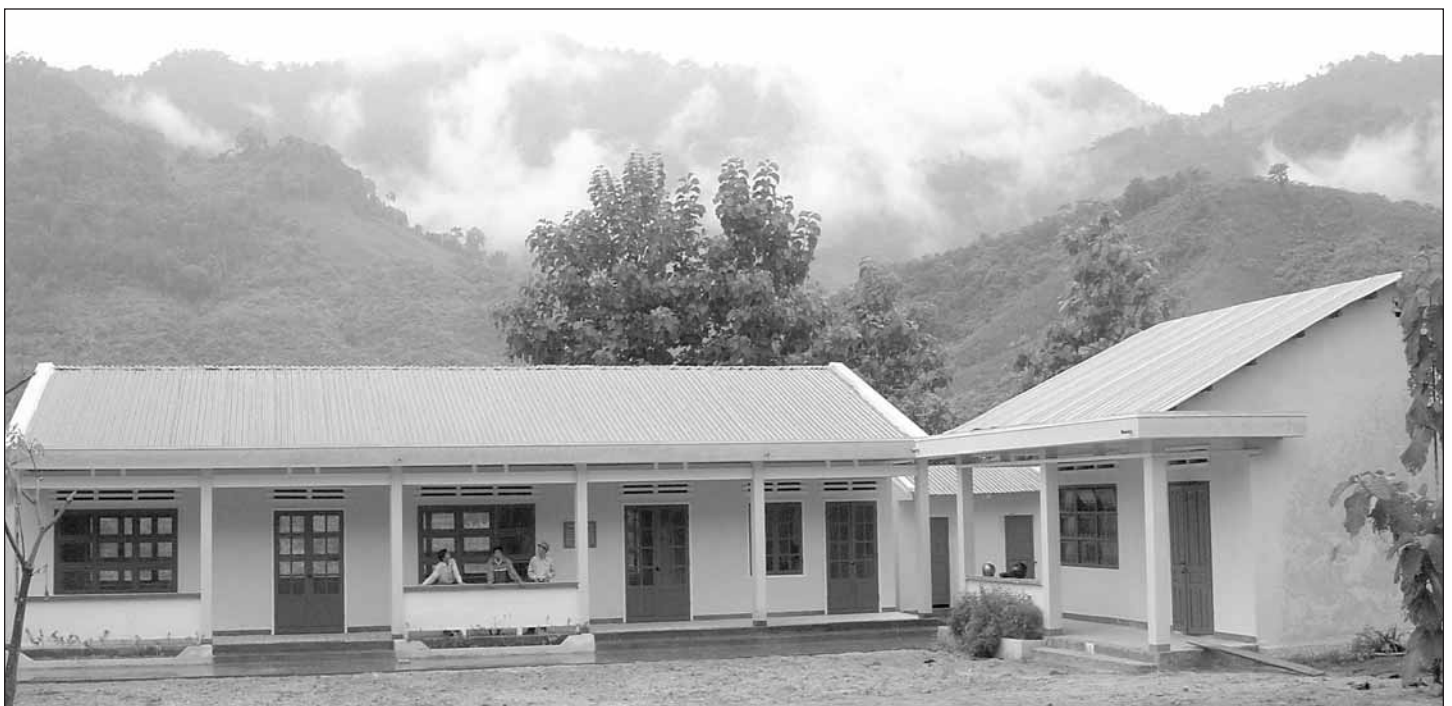
During this current school year

(2006-2007), the project plans to build eight more schools in several rural provinces including Vinh Long, Tra Vinh, Quang Nam, Lang Son, Tuyen Quang, Thanh Hoa and Thua Thien.

HealthEd and AEFA also set up an exchange program between these new schools and schools in Japan to encourage communication and promote cultural exchange and support among teachers and students of schools in both countries.



A new four-room school in Thuong Hoa Village—near the Laos border in Quang Binh Province—will provide education to more than 100 children mostly from the Ruc tribal community. The school has six classrooms, a teacher's room and sanitary facilities.



HealthEd's school program will provide much-needed basic education to disadvantaged, ethnic minority children in remote mountainous areas.

IN APPRECIATION

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- Westgate Realty Group, Inc.
- Ms. Tanya Tan
- Ashton Title & Escrow Company
- Ngoc Q. Chu, D.D.S.
- Dung Q. Tran, M.D.
- Mr. Chau Nguyen
- Mr. Minh Van Dang
- Youth Watch International
- Mr. Khoi Quang Ta
- Mr. James D. Bond
- Mr. & Mrs. John D. Hoang
- National Coordinating Council on Disability of Vietnam
- Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd Feinberg
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- Mr. Daniel Wolf
- "Grapes for Humanity"
- Gen. Jack Nicholson

VNAH and Health Ed are fortunate to have garnered support from literally hundreds of wonderful people and organizations over the years—far too many to acknowledge here. We must, however, find space to recognize some very special benefactors who have gone "above and beyond" in supporting our cause. We hope all of you—contributors at every level—realize how very grateful we are to have you behind us; and we hope we can count on your help for many years to come.

NEWS BRIEFS

Draft Vocational Training Law includes provisions for people with disabilities:

A final draft of the Vocational Training Law, currently at the Vietnamese National Assembly awaiting review, has an entire chapter, including six major provisions, geared toward helping people with disabilities. This is the result of the advocacy of a number of disabled people organizations, including the NCCD, CSA/NA, the Ministry of Justice and VNAH. The law is expected to be passed by the end of this year or early next year.

Prime Minister beefs up disability programs and policies:

Earlier this year, the Prime Minister released a directive advising concerned ministries to step up efforts to assist people with disabilities. The directive emphasized efforts to finalize the National Action Plan on Disability (NAP), which includes plans for inclusive education and a new disability law. Following the Prime Minister's directive, various ministries have issued their own plans.

First cross-disability organization

established: The Hanoi Disabled People Association, Vietnam's first cross-disability organization, was formally established in Hanoi this April. VNAH has supported the formation of the Hanoi Disabled People Association, which officially received its license after a year of waiting and advocacy. The association organized its first congress in April, with participation from more than 150 government and disability-related stakeholders and 19 small and unregistered self-help groups. NCCD, VNAH and other organizations provided technical support to help establish this organization, which represents over 700 people with disabilities in the capital city.

VNAH Stages First International Concert for People with Disabilities

Historic Concert Series to Celebrate Contributions of the Disabled in Laos and Vietnam

Later this year, VNAH will be part of an historic international event when it partners with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments to present Asia's first-ever disAbility Concert Series. The two-day event will bring together disabled performers and celebrities from Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and the United States to present evening concerts in Vientiane, Laos and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In addition, the event will include two days of festivals and exhibitions featuring arts, crafts and other products created by people with disabilities. The event is funded in part by the Nippon Foundation.

The event is designed to raise awareness about the *abilities* of disabled people and emphasize their independence and contributions as productive members of society. It will also promote employment opportunities for the disabled across the continent. In fact, the event itself will create hundreds of jobs for the disabled community.

The event will be held in Laos on Saturday, Nov. 25 and Sunday, Nov. 26 and in Vietnam on Saturday, Dec. 2 and Sunday, Dec. 3—the United Nations' International Day of Disabled Persons. Adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1982, the International Day of Disabled Persons "aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life."

In Vientiane, VNAH is supporting the Foundation for Assistance to the Poor and the Department of Fine Arts of the Laos Government to organize this special event, which will feature performances by Gypsy Queen, a rock band; a drum band called the Taiko Federation from Japan; two blind pianists/singers from Thailand; a group of wheelchair



The Nippon Taiko Drum Band of Japan is among the groups of disabled performers that will participate in the upcoming concert series.

dancers from Cambodia; and a team of disabled performers from Vietnam and Laos.

In Ho Chi Minh City, VNAH is working with the Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA) to organize a "Day in the Park" festival for people with disabilities, which will include free admission to a local amusement park, as well as live performances by groups of performers with disabilities. VNAH is working with DOLISA of Ho

Chi Minh City, surrounding provinces and other groups—including international NGOs, local NGOs and the private sector—to provide logistics, hotel, food and other support. Five thousand to 8,000 people with disabilities are expected participate.

The evening performances will be covered on live television in both Vietnam and Laos in an effort to maximize the audience and heighten awareness about issues related to disabilities.

Join Us to ENABLE the Disabled

Corporate and individual sponsors are welcome to help make this historic international event a success. Why support the disAbility Concert Series?

- Position your organization as a leader in creating opportunities for disabled people in Asia
- Facilitate job creation and mainstreaming people with disabilities into society
- Raise public awareness about the needs and abilities of people with disabilities
- Join the U.N. International Day of Disabled Persons

- Sponsor an historic concert and workshop series with thousands of attendees
- Help build capacity for organizations that assist the disabled
- Create a network for disabled assistance with governments, NGOs and corporations
- Increase your visibility through live television coverage in Vietnam and Laos

Become a sponsor and become a part of history! For more information, contact Thao Ly Tran, Email: vnah2@hem.vnn.vn or vnah1@aol.com

VNAH/HealthEd Support Corrective Surgery for Children

VNAH/HealthEd has increased its technical support to regional rehabilitation centers and hospitals to perform corrective surgery on disabled children. Over the past few years, VNAH/HealthEd has provided financial and technical assistance from the Mekong Delta to the Central Highlands to restore mobility for several hundred disabled children, most of whom were born with a deformity or suffered from polio.

The activity was added as an extension to VNAH's prosthetics and orthotics outreach program. VNAH coordinates and organizes hundreds of outreach missions to deliver prosthetic/orthotics assistance and wheelchairs to rural areas in Vietnam. According to VNAH's President Ca Van Tran, "At a typical outreach mission, several mothers would show up, carrying their disabled children and asking us for help. We just couldn't turn them away." Although VNAH's ongoing program is focused on production and delivery of prostheses and wheelchairs, we are now able to provide assistance to these children with corrective surgery in hopes that they won't need to depend on prostheses or wheelchairs.



Before and after photo shows the dramatic results of corrective surgery. VNAH/HealthEd has provided financial and technical assistance from the Mekong Delta to the Central Highlands to restore mobility for several hundred disabled children, most of whom were born with a deformity or suffered from polio.



Mothers with disabled children flock to VNAH/HealthEd outreach missions.

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Health and Education Volunteers (HealthEd) is a non-profit, charitable organization committed to providing humanitarian assistance to people in need through health and nutrition, education and vocational training.

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Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH) is a non-profit, non-political organization dedicated to meeting priority humanitarian and development needs. VNAH's projects focus on helping people with disabilities lead rewarding and productive lives that include the ability to fully participate in their nation's and their community's social and economic affairs.

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Vietnamese Legislators Review Implementation of Ordinance on Disabled Persons

Last January, VNAH supported the Committee on Social Affairs of the National Assembly to organize a national conference to review the seven-year implementation of the Ordinance on Disabled Persons. More than 120 people from local and central government agencies, organizations for people with disabilities and the media participated in

the two-day conference. Chaired by Mr. Truong Quang Duoc, Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly, the conference generated a strong momentum for both the government and the National Assembly to begin work to upgrade the current ordinance to a new, more comprehensive disability law.



Mr. Christopher Kuczynski (5th from left), head of the office for enforcement of U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, meets with the Vietnamese delegation.

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