

Assisting the Disabled in Viet Nam

Since operations began in 1990, VNAH has delivered over 84,000 assistive devices to people with various disabilities throughout Viet Nam. This assistance was made possible with funding provided by The Leahy War Victims Fund (LWVF), the Freeman Foundation, the Nippon Foundation, and individual donations from supporters in the United States. On the ground in Viet Nam, VNAH works with the prosthetics and rehabilitations centers in Can Tho, Qui Nhon, Ho Chi Minh and Danang cities.

During the past six months, VNAH provided assistive devices to the disabled in many rural villages including the Central Highlands region. During this period VNAH delivered almost 4,000 artificial limbs, braces and wheelchairs.

VNAH considers the provision of assistive devices as fundamental to our efforts to fully integrate people with disability into all aspects of their communities and their nation's social and economic life.

VNAH Works to Boost Disability Programs in Viet Nam's National Agenda

During the month leading to Viet Nam's Disability Day (April 18), a series of public awareness activities were carried out aimed at increasing public and government awareness and cooperation. VNAH supported the First Annual Conference for Persons with Disabilities organized by the Association for the Disabled and Orphans and MOLISA. This event emphasized in a dramatic way the support of the political leadership for programs designed to encourage and assist in mainstreaming the disabled into the broader society. The Vietnamese Communist Party's General Secretary, Mr. Nong Duc Manh, attended and gave the keynote speech, along with other dignitaries, relevant NGOs and people with disabilities.

A NOTE TO COLLEAGUES AND SUPPORTERS

For Each Disabled Person, a Life of Independence and Dignity

Dear Friends,

I am extremely pleased by the success of VNAH/HealthEd activities over the past several months. However, we do not have the time to long reflect on our accomplishments – there's simply too much still to do.

The articles in this newsletter are a testament to recent accomplishments and the important work we are doing to dramatically change the lives of some of the poorest and most vulnerable people there.

Whether it is teaching a job skill, providing a wheelchair or a prosthetic device, the end result is most often a new life for someone with a disability – a life of independence and dignity, where people with disabilities are increasingly integrated into their communities.

Continued generous support from the United States Government, the Freeman Foundation and Nippon Foundation, the government and people of Viet Nam, and, of course individuals across the United States have made these efforts possible.

In recent years VNAH has been increasingly engaged in policy assistance to the government of Viet Nam in its efforts to improve the lives of its disabled citizens and their fuller integration into their communities. These efforts will touch the lives of all Viet Nam's disabled and their families.

I am especially pleased to report that USAID has agreed to continue to fund our work to strengthen the National Coordinating Council on Disability, improving barrier-free access for new

buildings and modes of transportation and helping the Government of Viet Nam to draft and enact new laws governing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

With these two grants in place, our work in these important areas will continue for the next few years. As a result, we have hired new staff and have expanded our office in Hanoi.

I am truly heartened by the magnitude of the humanitarian work which VNAH and HealthEd have been able to accomplish over the past fourteen years. But I'm also humbled by the magnitude of the need that continues to face us.

None of our successes could have been accomplished without the generosity, kindness, advice and encouragement offered to us over the years by our many friends and supporters.

I can only say, "Thank you so much!"

*Sincerely,
Ca Van Tran*

MOHA & VNAH Train Local Officials to Work with Social Organizations

Under a project aimed at promoting a favorable legal framework and environment for the growing local NGO sector in Vietnam, VNAH assisted the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) to organize a two-day regional training workshop in Hai Phong on November 27-28, 2003, for nearly 100 officials from central and local governments involved in overseeing local NGOs. Officials from MOHA and other ministries attended this workshop, together with representatives from VNAH and USAID.

The main purpose of the workshop was to raise knowledge and awareness of "civil servants" involved in managing associations/NGOs, and to discuss, gather comments and input on a recent Decree 88, which regulate NGOs/associations. The workshop is considered part of a project signed by MOHA and VNAH, in which VNAH will provide technical support to MOHA in the process of drafting and enacting legislation favorable to the organization and operations of NGOs in Viet Nam.

The workshop provided a significant time for open discussions and exchange of important information. Discussions not only included the pros and cons of the new Decree, but also international and local concepts and understanding of civil society, the development status and benefits of NGOs/associations in Viet Nam. Open and progressive views were expressed by MOHA senior officials at the workshop. These efforts will be crucial to enhance knowledge of local officials in charge of this sector. MOHA considers the training and discussion to have been greatly beneficial for the future Law.

Also under the project, VNAH has sponsored a study tour for several responsible government officials to study NGO development and management in the US. The project has recently focused on capacity building for the NGO Department of MOHA, especially in the IT area for management and research needs. VNAH has also provided its partner important materials on international preferences regarding NGOs and civil society, especially those developed by the World Bank and Open Society Institute.

A series of workshops, focus groups and study tours are planned by the project for the upcoming quarters. The project also plans to increase cooperation with and capacity building for existing local NGOs in an effort to promote the development of local NGOs in Vietnam.

VNAH Hosts Assistant Secretary of Labor, Dr. Roy Grizzard, in Viet Nam

On July 12, 2004, the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs and VNAH organized the Conference on Employment and People with Disabilities in Viet Nam. We were honored to have Dr. Roy Grizzard, the Assistant Secretary of Labor and Director of the US Office of Disability

Employment Policy (ODEP), attend and participate in this Conference. Ms Debra Perry, Senior Specialist in Vocational Rehabilitation from the Asia Pacific Regional Office of the International Labor Organization (ILO), also attended the Conference. More than 60 people attended, including the directors of ten Employment Service Centers and directors of DoLISA from the eight provinces involved in the VNAH/USDOL Employment Project.

While in Viet Nam the Assistant Secretary also met with officials from the Ministry of Construction and the Ministry of Transport to learn more about the needs of people with disabilities and VNAH's work in this sector.

Empowering a Person with a Disability – A Success Story

Four years ago Miss Tran Hoang Yen, a person with a disability, was a timid woman who hardly socialized, had virtually no savings and rarely left the church shelter where she had been living for seven years.

Today, Miss Yen is a successful self-employed business woman providing jobs and opportunities for other disadvantaged and disabled women. Yen's business provides jobs for 18 disadvantaged young people, half of whom are women with disabilities. Her products are distributed in several markets and department stores throughout Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and Da Nang. This year her sales approached \$64,000.

Miss Yen is representative of the success VNAH has had in seeking out potential leaders in the disabled community and providing them with and skills through the small grant program funded by USAID. These small grants provided Miss Yen and other needy people with disabilities with marketing skills, business education and access to small loan funds to buy equipment such, as sewing machines.

Miss Yen told us that these training programs gave her important skills, knowledge and the inspiration to reach for goals long unimaginable for an underprivileged woman with a disability. The program has enabled Miss Yen and others like her to be fully integrated, productive, and empowered.

VNAH Helps Launch “Good for Business” Project in Viet Nam

VNAH, with sponsorship from the American Chamber of Commerce in Hanoi, is helping the Disability Forum – the local coordinating body for NGO activities in the disability sector – implement a “Good for Business” project. This three year project:

- Promotes the employment of people with disabilities through mass media. Here the goal is to help ensure potential employers know the capacity and talents of people with disabilities and how they can be an asset to any work force.
- Works directly with private sector agencies which match job openings with skill applicants. The idea is to overcome years of prejudice and misunderstanding regarding the abilities and capabilities of people with disabilities.
- Provides hands-on practical job training directly related to the demand for employees, greatly increasing the chances that the trainee will find a job at the conclusion of their study.

While it is still too early to fully assess the impact of the project, we are pleased that early graduates have found employment at the Vietnamese French Hospital and the Bobby Chin Restaurant.

Flexible Training and Employment for Rural People with Disabilities

Finding accessible employment for a person with a disability in rural areas is especially challenging. VNAH is helping to meet that challenge in Ninh Binh Province, which is just south of Hanoi. Here there are several villages famous worldwide for their hand-sewn bed and table linen. My Huong (a local embroidery company), the Employment Service Center of the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance, and VNAH have created a partnership to training people with disabilities.

As an incentive, VNAH is providing a small “training fee” for each person with a disability educated by a company to the point they qualify for a skill certification from the Employment Service Center. After a three-month course, graduates are able to work from home and manage their production output. The embroidery company supplies raw materials and collects finished work. So far, this project has supported the training of 24 disabled people.

The Committee on Social Affairs of the Viet Nam National Assembly Reviews the Implementation of Disability Law

The Committee on Social Affairs of the Viet Nam National Assembly, with assistance from VNAH, sponsored a two-day regional workshop in Thai Nguyen Province this past July to review the implementation of the Ordinance on Disabled Persons.

Attending this workshop were more than 40 participants, including officials of the Committee of Social Affairs, representatives of legislative and executive branches from the neighboring provinces of Ha Giang, Bac Giang, Lang Son and Tuyen Quang as well as local groups of people with disabilities. Each of the elected provincial representatives from these provinces reported on the status and results of the implementation of the ordinance on the Disabled, and proposed recommendations for improvement.

Key recommendations encourage all provincial elected officials to include disability issues in their provinces programs and budgets. Other recommendations focused on accessibility and inclusive education and employment. For employment, the emphasis was placed on the need to establish incentives such as government funds and quotas to hire people with disabilities. These recommendations, along with those from similar workshops held around the country, will contribute to the discussion at the National Conference on Reviewing the Implementation of the Ordinance scheduled later next year.

VIETNAMESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Support Continues to Roll In

VNAH and HealthEd have received strong support and participation from the Vietnamese American Community addressing humanitarian needs in Viet Nam. There are several school, orphanage and clinic projects with designated donations from these groups and supporters.

Pragmatics Corporation Steps Up

HealthEd and VNAH received a broad base of support from the private sector and government agencies for our humanitarian projects in Viet Nam.

Over the years, the Pragmatics Corporation of McLean, Virginia, has provided funding for the construction of schools and water wells to villages in Hue City. In March 2004, Dr. Long Nguyen, Chief Executive Officer of Pragmatics Corp and Ms. Kim Duong, visited the Danang Prosthetics

and Rehab Center. Dr. Nguyen donated \$1,500 to the Center to help improve the boarding condition for physical therapy patients at the Center.

VIETNAMESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Frigate USS Vandegrift Joins Viet Nam Assistance

Nov. 20, 2003 – The crews of the visiting frigate USS Vandegrift joins Viet Nam Assistance for the Handicapped in the construction of a new school in the Can Gio District of Ho Chi Minh City. The Vandegrift's visit was the first US Navy ship in almost 30 years since the end of the war.

Vietnamese Professional Association Chips In

The McLean, Virginia-based Vietnamese Professional Association (VPA) recently sponsored a series of fundraising events to provide \$5,000 towards construction of the new school in the Can Gio District. The ongoing goal of the local VPA is to assist in various humanitarian projects and they are especially interested in upgrading the education and vocational opportunities of Vietnamese youth.

Wheelchair Outreach Delivery Project

VNAH continues its Wheelchair Outreach Delivery Project to rural districts. During June and July, 2004, VNAH organized and delivered 500 wheelchairs to landmine and war victims and disabled people in eleven different provinces.

VNAH and NCCD Host Workshop on Strategic Orientation in Ha Long City

On Saturday August 14, 2004, VNAH and the National Council on Disability (NCCD) hosted a strategic orientation workshop for the NCCD Council Members in Ha Long City. This workshop is an effort by VNAH, with the technical assistance of MDF, a Dutch consulting firm, to facilitate a participatory evaluation of the current and future functions of the NCCD council and office. The workshop consisted of a brief introduction to modern strategic orientation methods and a series of team designed presentations on NCCD's role in meeting UNESCAP priority areas. Of striking achievement in this workshop was the participants' enthusiasm for elevating the NCCD to a national level. If federalizing the NCCD is defined as a major objective, it will be a tremendous advancement in mainstreaming disability issues in Vietnam's public policy.

Over the coming months, the project will continue a series of interviews and focus groups with NCCD members, PWD groups, and donors to gather independent view of the NCCD. In early October, a second workshop will present the findings of the consultancy, which will be further refined through open dialogue by NCCD members. The final output of this project will be an internally designed strategic plan for developing, strengthening, and enhancing the effectiveness of the NCCD.

VNAH Helps Conduct Workshop to Promote Non-Governmental Organizations in Viet Nam

Progressive views were openly expressed by senior government officials at a two-day workshop aimed at promoting a favorable legal framework and environment for the development

and growth of local NGOs in Viet Nam. Nearly 40 officials from key central and local government offices attended this workshop. Others attending include representatives from USAID, JICA, the International Center for Not-for-profit Law (ICNL), the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and local NGOs.

The workshop was held in Ha Long City this August in partnership with Viet Nam's National Assembly Commission for Legislative Affairs. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss current laws governing NGOs in Viet Nam and to compare them to international norms, best practices, local concepts and traditions and the need to develop and enact new laws. These discussions will, we hope, contribute to Viet Nam adopting a progressive NGO law in the very near future.

Promoting Accessible Transport

Over the past several years, VNAH has been successful helping Viet Nam design code and standards for barrier-free access to public buildings. Now VNAH will also work to make public transportation more accessible to people with disabilities through the introduction and implementation of standards for buses, trains and other relevant modes of transportation. Accessible transport services not only benefit people with disabilities but also enable the elderly to move about on easily accessible modes of transport.

Earlier this month, to help highlight and call attention to the needs for accessibility in the national transport system, VNAH and the Ministry of Transportation organized the first national workshop on accessible transportation. There were over 70 attendees including representatives from the transportation sector, disability advocates, NGOs and donors, (including USAID and the World Bank), participating in this workshop. Tom Rickert, VNAH's technical consultant from the Access Exchange International, provided information to the workshop on international practices and recommendations related to accessible transportation. Earlier this year, VNAH sponsored two officials from the Ministry of Transportation to participate in a four-day international conference on mobility and accessible transport for the disabled (TRANSED) in Japan.

IN APPRECIATION

Special Thanks to ...

- American Legion
- Asia Music Corporation
- B-Line Express, Inc.
- Kathleen Blank, Esq.
- David Block, M.D.
- Center for Excellence in Education
- Charles Henry Smith Sr. Foundation
- Disabled American Veterans
- Mr. & Mrs. Thang T. Do
- Duc Minh Tran
- Kimmy T. Duong
- Rodney Ewing
- Nhan T. Fitzgerald
- The Freeman Foundation
- Humanitarian Orthotics Prosthetic Endeavour – HOPE
- International Code Council
- L.N. Surgery clinic, Inc.
- Dinh G. Lai
- Duc T. Le, M. D.
- Hien T. Le, M. D.

- Mr. & Mrs. Hung Tri Le
- Kim-Anh Le, M.D.
- Julie Maloney
- Ministries of Construction; Transportation; Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs
- Ministry of Home Affairs
- Ngoc Yen Thi Do
- Chau Nguyen
- Dien P. Nguyen
- Lan K. Nguyen, M.D.
- Nike Corporation (Matching_Gift Program)
- The Nippon Foundation
- Operation USA
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Mr. Ngu V. Pham
- Thu-Cuc T. Phung, Esq.
- Pragmatics, Inc.
- Prosthetics Outreach Foundation
- Population Services International
- Mr. Clyde Paul Smith
- The Dow Chemical Company
- The Fortune Restaurant of Falls Church, VA
- Duc Minh Tran
- Kim Q. Truong
- U.S. National Council on Disability
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- United States Department_of Labor
- Vietnamese Professional Association
- Ban T. Vu, D.D.S.
- Washington Mutual Matching Fund Program
- Stephen Wineteer
- Ms. Thuy T. Nguyen – San Jose, CA
- Ms. Ngoc T. Hoang – Bothell, WA
- Capt. Philip Herr – USN
- Mrs. Diep Thuy Nguyen
- Mr. Khoi Q. Ta
- Mr. Kork G. Louie
- The Center for Excellence in Education
- Mr. Michael Feldstein
- Dr. Lewis Feldstein
- Prof. Carol Lancaster
- Mr. Paul Hippolitus
- Ms. Susan Parker
- Mr. James Zumwalt
- Amb. Raymond Burghardt
- Mr. Robert Porter
- Mr. Mark Furuyama
- Mr. Lloyd Feinberg

Hanoi HIV/AIDS Youth Awareness Project – Achieving Sustainable Results

Health/Ed has long had a major interest in helping to stem the growing threat of HIV/AIDS in Viet Nam. HealthEd efforts in this area began in 1996, when it partnered with Viet Nam Youth Union (VNYU) to organize the first national conference on the threat of AIDS to Vietnamese youth. Hundreds of local and international experts gathered in Hanoi to discuss the spreading epidemic.

This was followed by a song-writing contest, which produced several songs that HIV/AIDS educators in Viet Nam still use today, and a concert series promoting HIV/AIDS awareness.

HealthEd has continued its involvement in HIV/AIDS and its most recent project, the Hanoi HIV/AIDS project, which was implemented from March 2001 through June 2004, was aimed at increasing HIV/AIDS awareness and safe behaviors among youth at five wards in Ha Noi City. The project was funded by USAID, and the Viet Nam Youth Union (VNYU) served as HealthEd's partner in project implementation.

According to an evaluation by an independent consultant, the project has significantly raised the knowledge of HIV/AIDS among youth at target sites in Hanoi, and improving capacity of the VNYU to implement HIV/AIDS prevention projects. Indeed, the most important achievement of the project might well be increasing the capacity of the VNYU, at both Central and grass-roots level, to undertake a community-based participatory approach to HIV/AIDS prevention.

Most recently, HealthEd has been asked by senior officials of the Government in Da Nang City to provide technical assistance and training to help stem the growing AIDS epidemic in Danang.

Personnel Notes

- Scott Robertson has joined VNAH's in-country staff as Assistant Project Director. He has been in Viet Nam for three years working on development issues with Mekong Economics. Three nationals, Hai Tran, Ly Pham and Hang Tran, have also joined VNAH in past months as program officers and accounting supervisors.
- We regret to report that John Lancaster, former Director of VNAH's Office of Disability Technical Assistance in the Barrier-free Project and, more recently, a technical consultant for VNAH on the USDOL project, suffered serious injuries in an automobile accident this past spring. John was medivaced to Bangkok and eventually moved to the United States to join his wife, Chris. He and Chris have our best wishes and prayers for a full recovery.

Employment Project Creates Jobs for People with Disabilities

At one time, people with disabilities had no real interest, commitment and capacity to be fully productive employees, but lack of skills and basic project management skills were such employment barriers.

To address this problem, VNAH is working with the government of Viet Nam (Ministry of Labor, Inhabitant and Social Affairs - MOLISA) to improve employment services and expand opportunities for people with disabilities throughout Viet Nam. With support from the US Department of Labor, VNAH is spearheading a project to improve the country's capacity to serve the disabled by providing vocational training to some 300 people with disabilities and, in the process, to improve the capacity to seek job placements for people with disabilities.

Today, at least across Viet Nam, people with disabilities are learning practical skills in soldering, computer applications, electronics, motor vehicle repair and jewelry making. Several of these courses include a practical component where trainees are placed on the job, a practice program that provides hands-on work habits. For example, more than 100 trainees from Hai Duong Province are currently employed at an HCMC, 60 people with disabilities are learning to come from the street to acquire skills from the project. Over 100 employees have demonstrated their skills in a recent job placement class.

Board of Directors for HealthEd

Xuyen Huu Bui
Kim Anh Le, M.D., Hiep Lowman, *Treasurer*
Ca Van Tran, *President*
Chuong S. Tran, *Vice President*
Dung Quoc Tran, M.D.
Kim-Hoa Tran

Health and Education Volunteers is a non-profit, charitable corporation, established to provide humanitarian assistance in the areas of health and nutrition, education and vocational training.

Board of Directors for HealthEd

Xuyen Huu Bui
Kim Anh Le, M.D., Hiep Lowman, *Treasurer*
Ca Van Tran, *President*
Chuong S. Tran, *Vice President*
Dung Quoc Tran, M.D.
Kim-Hoa Tran

Vietnam Field Offices

HCMC Office_27 Dang Tat Street, District 1
Ho Chi Minh City
011-848-848-0320 _Fax 011-848-848-0512_vnah2@hcm.vnn.vn

Hanoi Office

51 C Van Mieu Street
Dong Da, Hanoi – Viet Nam
Tel (844) 747-3000_Fax (844) 823-7444_Email: vnah3@hn.vnn.vn

Board of Directors for VNAH

James D. Bond
Minh T. Bui
Duc T. Do
Thang T. Do, *Treasurer*
Lai Van Le
Shep Lowman
Todd C. Nguyen, *Secretary*
Ca Van Tran, *President*
Chuong S. Tran

**Viet-Nam Assistance for the Handicapped and
Health Education Volunteers**

1421 Dolley Madison Blvd., Suite E
McLean, VA 22101
(703) 847-9582
Fax (703) 448-8207
Email: vnah1@aol.com_http://www.vnah-hev.org

We, Vietnamese-Americans, supporters and friends, dedicate ourselves to assist war victims in Vietnam on an equal-access basis without regard to social or political status. We operate exclusively for humanitarian, charitable purposes. Through our support for the rehabilitation programs in Vietnam we help the disabled regain their dignity and walk toward a new productive life.

Contributing to this issue:

Bui V. Toan, Mike Feldstein, _Scott Robertson, Mark Furuyama, _Hai Thi Tran, Vo Chieu Hoang