

Friends of the Underprivileged *Newsletter*



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This is our newsletter for friends who get together, in our personal capacities, with the sole vision of helping the underprivileged in Asia.

We spent two weeks in Vietnam to follow up on current projects while assessing new potential projects. As usual, we paid for our own expenses so that all donations will entirely benefit the underprivileged. We first met with scholarship recipients at Ben San, Hieu Liem, and Tan Kim Bang villages in Binh Duong province. We provided all students with a tasty snack, gave them new school supplies, and awarded the exceptional students with textbooks for their new school year (Figs. 1-3). Do Thi Loan, who is the only child attending school in her family, lives with her single mother, three other siblings, and her grandmother. Despite the family's financial hardship, Loan has received FOU scholarships during the last four years and continues to excel in her classes with top honorary certificates (Fig. 4).

The FOU projects have been very successful at DiLinh leprosy camp in Lam Dong province. We started with seed funding for coffee and 10 scholarships in 1990. The numbers of awarded scholarships have increased ten times since then. Among the 100 scholarship recipients, 41 students received honorary certificates this year. Such statistics is in sharp contrast with the generally low academic achievement of more than 50% dropped-out rate for children of lepers in the camp back in 1980s. One of the successful students is Mr. K'Chieu who received FOU scholarship to finish high school. He recently received his degree in nursing and now works in DiLinh camp to provide healthcare to his own parents and other lepers. Figure 8 shows K'Chieu and the first autoclave that FOU donated to the camp in 1990s. This sanitizing equipment is still in perfect condition and has been intensively used to improve hygienic conditions in the clinic, and stop the spreading of contagious diseases in the camp. We happily distributed gifts and awards to students at the camp. The award ceremony was accented with a creative talent show performed by the scholarship recipients (Figs. 5-6). FOU wishes to have more scholarship sponsors for this leprosy camp to eradicate the social stigma of leprosy while helping the studious and healthy children successfully integrate into society.

FOU would like to replicate the successful model of DiLinh to other places when visited two tribal villages Datong in Lam Dong (Figs. 7-8) and Buon Hang in Dac Lac provinces (Figs. 9-10). With help from the local religious leaders, we distributed relief food and medicine while studying possible projects to help these primitive villages. We also visited the scholarship recipients in Buon Ma Thuot and reviewed other projects at Nu Vuong Hoa Binh (Mary Queen of Peace) convent.

FOU has supported 18 heart operations so far this year. All the indigent children were screened and recommended by the Office of Generic Counseling and Disabled Children office (OGCDC) in Hue. We witnessed the rare heart operation of Vo Hoang Hung, 8 month old, whose defective heart is located on the right of his sternum (Fig. 11). We also distributed goodies to children in the hospital, and then forwarded scholarships to other underprivileged students in Thuy Cam, 50 km south of Hue. In the south, we provided relief support to orphans at three pagoda temples Phat Minh in Ben Tre, Tu An in Phu My, and Vien Quang in Tan Thanh. We also donated to the Society for the Blind through Lover of the Holy Cross convent (Dong Men Thanh Gia) in Saigon.

FOU sincerely thanks all friends and supporters worldwide who have been providing meaningful support to our vision for the benefit of underprivileged children.



Fig. 1: The scholarship recipients in Tan Kim Bang village, Binh Duong province.



Fig. 2: The scholarship recipients in Ben San village, Binh Duong province.



Fig. 3: Dan hands an award to Do Thi Loan (with honor certificate). Tan Kim Bang village.



Fig. 4: Loan (center) with her grandmother (left) and her single mother (right).



Fig. 5: Mr. Hung and the students at DiLinh leprosy camp, Lam Dong province.



Fig. 6: Honor students in their tribal costume. DiLinh camp.



Fig. 7: Minority people in primitive Datong. Sister Mau (right) provides loving care to a patient.



Fig. 8: The kids are excited with their donated toys.



Fig. 9: Dan distributes a box of ramen noodle to a leper in Buon Hang, Dac Lac province.



Fig. 10: A smiling mother and child with their gift in Buon Hang.



Fig. 11: Doctors perform a 7-hour heart surgery to Vo Hoang Hung in Hue Central Hospital, Thua Thien province.



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- Friends and colleagues worldwide.
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