



# CHILDREN OF VIETNAM

## BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES

Fall 2016

### Poverty Hurts Children By The Numbers

- 37% of all children live in poverty
- 49% of rural children do not attend kindergarten
- 41% of dropouts leave because they couldn't afford school fees
- 80% of children with disabilities never attended or dropped out of school
- 41% of children do not have access to hygienic toilets
- 29% of children have stunted growth
- 24% of children under 5 are malnourished
- 10 million children are infested with parasites
- 1 in every 3 ethnic households has a child who quits schools



30 million people were lifted out of poverty in the last two decades.

Thank you for helping to continue this positive trend.

### From the President, Country Director & Executive Director

Dear Friends,

High in the Truong Son Mountain range there is young girl named Nep. She has nothing but sheer persistence to call her own. Certainly you would consider her poor with her family's income based on subsistence farming on deforested erosion prone land. She and her siblings are poor in other ways too...poverty is truly multifaceted and knows no boundary. There is no toilet in the household nor fresh clean water. Did you know that water and sanitation



Huong delivering school scholarships



Two happy girls ready for school

hygiene behaviors are inter-related with poor nutritional status of rural children and women—a reality that is particularly relevant in Vietnam where approximately one out of every three rural children are stunted. School is a challenge too as the yearly fees, books, uniforms costs are equivalent to a month's income. **What would you choose...food or school?** Even getting to school is a challenge as there are miles to walk or Nep has to stay away from her family in a residential school.

Poverty is more than income, it comes at children and families from all directions and that is where you come in by bridging these challenges, by paving a wide path out of poverty to a brighter future. Upon receiving a school scholarship through your gifts, Nep's character shone bright when she spoke, "Life is difficult but we know we are lucky to have the support of our parents and COV and the donors. This is the highest spirit gift. We promise to try our best in learning."

**Thank you each everyone for your care, compassion, and love.**

In appreciation,

Ben Wilson  
President

Luong Thi Huong  
Country Director

Nancy F. Letteri  
Executive Director



(l-r) Loung Thi Huong, Country Director, Ben Wilson, President, and Nancy Letteri, Executive Director in front of COV office in DaNang

### Bikes Make Smiles and a Way to School!

The bicycle given to the children are constructed locally to our specifications with the important components imported from a high quality manufacture. We are very lucky to have a local bicycle



shop owner with a generous heart as he discounts these bicycles considerably for the children. Bicycles can mean all the difference in making sure young students arrive to school on time and ready to learn.

## Tragedy is a Powerful Motivation

It seemed that nothing could break Trung's happy family including his beloved parents and younger sister Minh Hieu. However, the worst happened when his father died of serious liver disease in 2012. His mother was so distressed that she committed suicide with toxic substance in the same month,



Trung and Hieu outside house

leaving Trung and his younger sister in the house without the love and care of parents. Since then, they have been supported by their uncle, aunt and grandmother, but there's no one on earth who can replace their parents. Together they are scrapping together as a family.

This summer, Trung passed his university exams and was given entrance to the University of Science and Technology. The new challenge is now how to afford this path that will lead him and his sister out of poverty. Trung is working a part-time job to earn more money to afford



Trung's sister studying in high school

school fees and to take care of his younger sister Hieu.

There are hundreds of young bright students just like Trung who cannot afford a university education - an education that would be a path out of poverty for themselves and their siblings.

Time and again, we have seen young people graduate then turn their earnings over to their families to help younger siblings. Truly an education can lift an entire family.

With your donations, COV's university program helps students just like Trung to pay for school fees, provide workshops to learn life skills, and give back through community service. Thank you!



Trung always has a smile

## Read What Others Say about COV

The Great Nonprofits Top-Rated Awards is the one and only people's choice award where volunteers, donors, and people served by nonprofits are asked to share stories of about their experiences with nonprofits.

Here is what one person shared: *"COV was breathed into existence through a deep compassion for the children of Vietnam and has matured due to the careful nurturing of Ben Wilson (Founder and President) and those who share his vision. Beginning as a response to the needs of children who lack proper medical care, suffer the effects of*



*poor nutrition and face the inability to receive an education, COV has maintained a clear vision since its inception in 1998. The fiduciary accountability and the wise use of resources have engendered trust among a broadening base of supporters and has allowed COV to impact the lives of countless children and their families in Vietnam. COV continues to broaden its services and is transforming and saving the lives of children."*

See what others say about us or leave your own comment: <http://greatnonprofits.org/org/children-of-vietnam>

## Education Healing & Paving a Path Out of Poverty

The visit started out as it has each year...I walked into the single story school building, with wooden tables and chairs filled with children wiggling in their seats, smiling yet shy. Some children wore oversized uniforms, some had dirty fingernails, but all had bright eyes curious about the world around them. Each year I visit this remote region in Quang



Dragon scholarship for boys

Nam province called An Son. A Vietnam Vet encouraged us nearly 5 years ago to start an education program for the children living here and now the Dragon Scholarship Fund supports these children and covers all of their school expenses.

School in Vietnam has many costs such as mandatory uniforms, school fees, and insurance. Further, school sessions are not typically full days so to pass the the required exams, tutoring is needed. The total cost averages \$130, a big burden for poor farming families to support even one child. And yet education is surly a solid path out of poverty.

Visiting with the children always brightens the day, yet this year my heart strings were pulled. A special group of four children were called to my attention. They had just lost their father in August. Their mother was struggling to keep the family together working as a handywoman at a textile company earning barely \$90/month. The younger children (in 11th, 7th and 4th grade) need to stay in school and the older son at university. Yet, the oldest, the hope of the family for a better life, was considering dropping out to help his mother.

COV gave a small one-time scholarship to each of these

children, but they are all still at risk of dropping out, including the oldest. If he can stay in university and graduate, he will have paved the way to economic security for himself and his siblings.



In mourning for their father

## 10th Kindergarten for Ethnic Children!

We have always focused on the needs of children, so when we were invited to work with C'Tu ethnic minority communities we were ready. Although ethnic minorities make up less than 15 percent of the population in Vietnam, they accounted for nearly half the remaining poor (World Bank 2010).



*Old kindergarten often cancelled during rainy season due to mud floor*

We are focusing in Tay Giang, a mountainous district of Quang Nam province. There are 70 small village communities and 12,992 people living in a large 351 square mile area. The C'Tu are generous and peaceful people primarily live off the land, though only 2.1% of the land is arable.

During our preliminary discussions, community leaders shared their dreams for their

children to be free from poverty. They wanted to give their children the best start possible through early childhood education, beginning with kindergarten, as the vehicle to success for both the elementary schoolchildren and their older siblings who are often forced to forego their own education



*New kindergarten waiting for children*



*Posing with kindergarten children*

in order to care for their younger sibling. As reported by the World Bank (2009), almost one in every three ethnic minority households has a child who quits school in the middle of a grade.

This year through the generosity of you, our donors, our 10th kindergarten was constructed! Each kindergarten cost \$17,000 with the local government contributing any overage, land, and a trained teacher. To bring early education to these most precious children is truly a joy. Thank you!

## Light in the Dark: Sinh's story

Sinh was born tiny and weak. He had a congenital heart disease and limited vision due to cataracts. These health issues persist though this little boy has received several surgeries since he was two. There are 1.3 million children with disabilities (CWD) in Vietnam. Thousands reside in and around Danang, a recognized "hot zone" for residual contamination from Agent Orange from the war. It is not possible to determine the cause of Sinh's challenges; however, Vietnamese researchers have found in studies that there is an increased risk of birth defects compared to those who were not exposed. Among the birth defects, spina bifida, hydrocephaly, malformations of the extremities, musculature issues, developmental disabilities, congenital heart defects and cleft-palate are found (<http://www.agentorangerecord.com/>).

To add to Sinh's challenges, his father was abusive and abandoned Sinh and his mother. They were forced to live with his maternal grandparents. Children with disability are 1.7 times more at risk of violence including neglect, abandonment, abuse and sexual exploitation in comparison with other children.

Worse still, after a while, Sinh's mother also left him to be with a new partner. In his grandmother's words, "Sinh was then no more than an orphan and I have mothered him." His grandparents are poor and due to their already economic condition Sinh's maternal grandfather was unwelcoming of the little boy. It is his grandmother, in her fifties and a bricklayer, who stood by him.

"I was so sad and hopeless, but I was determined to raise my grandson even without support from my husband." Together, they were struggling to live on though they felt very much in the dark. His grandmother was depressed and isolated. Families whose children are disabled are often stigmatized and have very few social supports.



*Sinh with his loving Grandmother*

Sinh was then introduced to the Hope System of Care for Children with Disabilities (HSC) in May 2016. His disabling conditions and needs were evaluated through an in-depth consultation by an interdisciplinary team of experts. His care/service plan includes health care (financial supports for treatment or hospitalization), nutritional supplements, a school scholarship, and enabling his home environment.



*Meeting to discuss Sinh's care plan*

Also, Sinh and his grandmother receive social integration and moral support. The grandmother has been encouraged to take part in the Parent Support Group whereby she can vent her daily challenges and soothe her distress by talking to others and hearing others' stories at the same time. Surely Sinh can feel the love and care from his grandmother as well as many others since his enrollment in HSC. Sinh's grandmother: "He has many difficulties physically and sentimentally. Yet, he is now filled with warmth and light. I am so blessed to see him grow into a strong and cute boy. He loves me most and just that gives me strength to overcome our hardship together."

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# Children of Vietnam

www.childrenofvietnam.org

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### IRA Required Minimum Distribution

Required to take a minimum distribution from your IRA?  
You have the option to distribute tax free by directing it to the charity of your choice. Your distribution can support charitable causes and get a tax break while meeting tax requirements for IRAs. Please contact your financial advisor for more information and consider Children of Vietnam in your discussions.



## Building bright futures for vulnerable children...here's how:

### MAKE A DONATION TO HONOR OF A LOVED ONE

— you are lighting the path out of poverty.

#### Educating

- Keeps a child in school with books, paper, pencils, uniforms . . . . . \$55
- Helps children arrive at school on time and ready to learn with a bike. . . . . \$70
- Awards a university scholarship to a poor student for 1 of 4 years . . . . . \$515

#### Healing

- Eliminates parasite infections for 200 children . . . . . \$112
- Gives critical care to a child with disabilities for 1 year. . . . . \$350

#### Sheltering

- Trains an entire community handwashing and other hygiene . . . . . \$100
- Builds a bathroom for an ethnic minority family. . . . . \$700

#### Nurturing

- Feeds 1,250 vulnerable children specialized vitamin-fortified porridge . . . . . \$25
- Provides business and life skills training for single mother. . . . . \$50
- Supplies a single mother with a micro-enterprise opportunity to support her children . . \$700



Above photos courtesy of David Graham

**Cảm ơn! Thank you!**