



Project Vietnam Inc.

Newsletter: May 2019

Editor's Desk

This latest newsletter includes reports and debriefs from our team's 2019 visits to Vietnam and Cambodia. It also acknowledges the financial contributions made, not only our generous benefactors but by that of our volunteers who all pay their own expenses as well as a building contribution when working on the projects. Plenty of photos and reports to keep you enthralled?

The great work being done in Phong Nha has continued this year. Reports which include photos help convey this. Read Brendan McKenna, Ian Bath and Ron Toohey's reports.

Our working base in Cambodia is about to move and our long serving Project Team Coordinator Peter Angell is also moving on. See Peter's report for the details. The possibility of doing more voluntary work in the medical area has been canvassed. See David Williams report

At our last well attended monthly meeting, prior to publishing this newsletter, our good friend from Phong Nha and co-owner of the Lakehouse Resort was in attendance. Tony Agnew has provided great assistance to our Vietnam crews and was a welcome visitor. Other members also made longer than normal trips to attend the meeting. Mark Angel drove up from Lismore then drove back that night a round trip of 8 hours, good thing he has retired. Ann Maree made the trip up from Brisbane and brought to the meeting's attention fund raising she has undertaken to assist a Vietnamese family who, following a recent bereavement, no longer have a breadwinner. She presented \$200 to Tony to take back to the family with an undertaking to send more in future. Tony and Ann Maree even stayed to enjoy the "after meeting" lamb roast at the Alexander Heads Surf Club.

Sandra Robinson was also a welcome attendee at the May meeting, Sandra is our latest new member.

Though this is a rather lengthy newsletter with many reports its purpose is to confirm to all our members and followers the important work PVI continue to do every year in Vietnam and Cambodia. Hoping you get some appreciation of this.

Happy reading

Jan and John



Post meeting dinner time. Tony is third from the left.

President's Report

President Report on the 2019 Vietnam trip to Phong Nha

This year we travelled with a team of 18 people, the average age being 65 years and older. There was a consensus that for this year's trip we were not very well organised with the planned working projects. One toilet block was not quite ready to start on our arrival, as the cement had not yet dried. We had to find a new project quickly so we took on the painting at the Bong Lai Valley Middle School where we repainted the main entrance face of the building. The general view of our team members was that this was not an overly meaningful job. After 7 days of painting and under the general direction of our building coordinator, Ron Toohey the job was completed. Thankfully without hiccups or injuries to our team members. The school was very happy and so was our team to have completed the job.

During our stay at the Paradise Hotel, I called a meeting with the team members present. A discussion took place around the fact that we had no new members on this years trip. Was it the opinion of those present that the lack of new members may have been a reaction to

the kind of work being undertaken? The opinion was yes. The other concern raised during this meeting was whether The Lakehouse was being relied upon too much in choosing the projects that PVI take on.

Everyone at the meeting had their say and were satisfied that their concerns had been heard, this meeting lasted for over 50 minutes. We have found projects for 2020 coming from other sources as well as the Lakehouse.

A note from Bob the English coordinator:

The English classes were very well received by the students and the teachers at the Hoong Jack Secondary School. Bob mentioned that he received daily calls or texts in the evening asking if any PVI members were coming to teach English the following day. The students looked forward to the visits.

The final round up from our team members was overall positive, everyone went away feeling optimistic about our future and the meaningful projects for 2020.

Team Reports

Cambodian Team Ream

Well I do have to say this would have to be one of the best outcomes for such a small team over my many years working in Cambodia. I was worried that our limited numbers would show a similar limited project result. I put the outstanding result down to our experienced team, all with numerous trips under their belt and all enjoying a challenge.

At the All Kids Centre in Ream, we managed to construct an entire outdoor roof area around the complex where they will be staying for at least the next 2.5 years.



We gave the centre a complete face lift with a well needed clean, paint and urgent repairs.



Changes in the location of the nearby All Kids Pre School saw the need to relocate 4 houses which were situated at the rear of the building. Another challenge thrown to us. We managed to dismantle the houses flat pack style and relocate them to a usable area with some help to recreate one back to life.



We continued with Ros Organ's initiative from last year and donated 70 young ladies' packs to the community. All items were sourced and or produced locally.

All kids now have a second preschool centre some 20 minutes away from Ream out near the naval base which required a little help in the way of a fenced area. Completed.

Once again, we were able to help the Sihanouk Hospital with valuable medical equipment donated by our wonderful PVI member Gail Waterhouse. Further talks with them should open up some amazing trip opportunities for the future for those interested. PVI have for a few years now been donating wheelchairs, glasses and other items to the hospital which helps in providing much needed care for so many who are unable to pay for health care.

This year PVI donated thermometers and finger pulse meters which were identified as preferred items by the hospital. These donations were received with appreciation and will be effectively used to the benefit of the hospital's patients. We feel this is a very worthwhile avenue to continue and look forward to building a long-lasting future together.



To the team.

I thank you all for your wonderful efforts and hard work over the years. It's been tough sometimes but we have always found a solution, maybe not the way we have been taught or know, but we can learn in many ways from others and their experience.

We are there to help make a difference and provide the slim chance of a better life. I'm sure everyone of you, at some point in time, has been smitten by the hardship of one person or a community and realised we are so lucky. Yes, we are in the lucky country and have the rare chance to help others.

In 2020 I am handing over the reins of Cambodia Coordinator to David Williams as I would like to take a break after so many years. I'm sure he will have a much deserving time with so many members regularly returning every year.

Peter Angell

PVI Cambodia Project Team Coordinator

Vietnam Team Phong Nha

Well another year of Project Vietnam's successful activity has rolled around. Each year we look forward to our annual sojourn to Vietnam. After months of pre-trip planning, comprised of many meetings, emails and phone calls back and forth to Vietnam and also a lot of to and from between our volunteers, our 2019 March project tour was under way.

This year we weren't too sure of what our works program in Phong Nha would include and how we would keep all 18 eager volunteers gainfully employed. As always, the team was prepared for anything and we all pulled together in our allotted tasks and the result of our achievements turned out to be second to none.

The main task that our team completed was the painting and decorating of a two-storey high school approximately 10 kilometers from Phong Nha. Admittedly, at first sight that task looked rather daunting; however, the end result looks absolutely fantastic.



Last August we negotiated with a local contractor to have a new toilet block built at a local high school. The block consisted of two female toilets and a urinal for the male students. The outsourced local contractors managed to complete the toilet block in time for us to paint the new facility, and have it ready to be commissioned prior to our departure.

When I visited Phong Nha last August I was asked by a school teacher if it would be possible to inspect a large kindergarten situated in a lovely valley about 20 kilometers from Phong Nha. This particular kindergarten had a few electrical problems mainly with their ceiling fans, so when we returned in March myself and Craig, one of our gun sparkies, inspected the kindergarten and along with our other gun sparkie Mark, they came up with a plan to refurbish the electrical facilities at the kindergarten.

The kindergarten also had some minor plumbing issues, as the majority of the hand basins in the children's bathrooms had to be repositioned back on the walls. These were rectified, along with the unblocking of the drainage system.



One of our long-term members Bob Schmiede, who first came on board back in 2013 and is also a returned Vet from the Australian commitment in the 60's and 70's, commenced English classes at one of the local high schools. Bob, who had been teaching English in Saigon for several years, along with another retired Vietnamese English teacher by the name of Viet Ngu from the Dalat area of Vietnam offered their teaching services. They were assisted with the classes by Gail Bartholomew and Darryl Wright. This is a new area of entry for Project Vietnam, and on behalf of our committee I'd like to sincerely thank those involved with those classes and wish them all the best for the future advancement of the English tuition in the Phong Nha District.



English teaching -staff and students

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all involved in this year's project as I felt that with our limited resources and the available hands a lot was achieved. I know that we all walked away from our duties at the end of this project with a great deal of self-satisfaction. These annual trips always come at a cost which each year we find harder and harder to support financially, and to those members and donors that support us, I'd just like to sincerely thank you and also reiterate that every cent that we manage to raise goes directly to the ground as we, unlike other major NGO's, have nil or minimum administration costs. Project Vietnam is a registered charity and all donations are fully tax deductible.

I would also like to sincerely thank Tham and Tony and their wonderful staff from the Phong Nha Lakeside Resort for their invaluable assistance throughout the year, especially in the area of liaising with the local tradesmen and the local authorities. This assistance results in a smooth operation of our ongoing work programs within the Phong Nha areas.

Sincere regards.

Ian Bath



Ron Toohey's Trip Report

Our primary project for this year was the provision of a toilet block for a school of 600 students across the river from Phong Nha which had at that time no proper toilets at all.



Existing toilet area

The local contractors finished the construction of the toilet block in the first few days after our arrival. Our hands-on contribution to this project was to paint the toilet block inside and out.



The end result was a clean spacious tiled toilet block about 8 metres by 6 metres containing 2 cubicles and 1 urinal for both boys and girls and tanks for the effluent disposal.

We all felt that this was a very worthwhile project providing a much needed facility for the school.

The majority of our team were mostly occupied this year painting the exterior of a school in the Bong Lai Valley area which was badly in need of a clean up. This involved repairs to downpipes and gutter, pressure cleaning and mould treatment, antimould primer and two finish coats.



A smaller team attended to a number of maintenance issues at a kindergarten on the opposite side of Phong Nha.

Work here included:

- Replacement of 16 fans and 24 light fittings which had stopped working progressively over many years.

- Provision of two additional fans.
- Replacement of electrical fittings damaged by lightning.
- Refixing of 16 basins which had fallen off the walls.
- Replacement and repair of taps and drains associated with these basins.
- Unblocking of an outside drain which had not functioned for many years.

It seems that the government provides the schools for an area and then it is the local community's responsibility to maintain their school. Hence maintenance is often neglected.

Four of our members attended a school each day to give English lessons to the students. This was well received and our team felt they had made a very worthwhile contribution.

Finally, we contributed \$180 so that the final 20 metres of fencing around the kindergarten we had built over the previous two years could be completed, and \$600 for the provision of tables and chairs for classrooms in the local church in Phong Nha.

During our time in Phong Nha we investigated with our local contact Tham from the Lakehouse resort and council officials possible projects for next year. Options suggested included renovation of two consulting rooms and provision of a 10m by 10m sheltered waiting area at the area's medical clinic, and renovations to 4 classrooms at a school, including provision of new ceilings, painting and roof repair/replacement.

In conclusion, thanks must go to all those who helped make our trip an enjoyable and successful one. This includes our willing and cheerful volunteers, our main local contacts Tony and Tham and staff at the Lakehouse Resort and many other hospitable and helpful Phong Nha locals.

Ron Toohey
Vietnam building coordinator

Our Cambodian friendships and work with Allkids 2014-2019

This year was our sixth working with AllKids in Ream. It's been an effective and fruitful relationship and we greatly enjoy the friendships. This completes our initial program with AllKids at this stage.

AllKids was started by Paul Otto in 2012 after recognising the need for educating kids from poor families in and around Ream in South West Cambodia. The kids for various reasons were not attending school at the time. AllKids was created on the vision that **'all kids deserve an education'**.

Our project leader, Pete Angell was introduced to Paul through previous PVI member Steve McEwen (previous member of Vietnam project teams) who lives in Cambodia. We warmly embraced the opportunity to assist AllKids'. The work and friendships (including catching up and sharing a drink with Steve each year) have been rewarding and fruitful.

Our main work has been to provide reliable water supply for flushing toilets at four schools in and around Ream, drinking water at one of the schools and significant renovations and maintenance at government schools and the AllKids learning centre. We have spent \$88,000 directly on materials and hiring local contractors over the period and our average team of 12 volunteers each year has provided a total of 485 work hours. The total value of our work (includes cost of materials and local contractors, volunteers own costs and value of in-kind labour) is \$450,000.

Our work has been warmly welcomed by school kids and their families who have benefitted. We're proud to have been able to assist AllKids' efforts at improving the life opportunities for many young people.

Most of the children in the AllKids' program weren't previously attending school. In many cases children living in small villages outside Ream were unable to attend school because of lack of transport to travel into Ream. AllKids operates daily bus pick-ups to bring these children into Ream for schooling. AllKids co-operates with local government schools and their programs in English, computers, maths and health & hygiene are supplementary to normal classes at the local schools. AllKids also operate two day care centres to allow parents to work in local garment factories. As a result of AllKids' work, school attendance has increased and retention rates are up. Approximately 90% of children now complete primary school with most continuing on to secondary school. There are now less than 5% of children not attending school. These are some of the very positive outcomes.



Improved hygiene and sanitation are a priority health need in rural communities throughout Cambodia. Accordingly, we implemented the "water for toilets" program to provide reliable water supply for flushing toilets at four local schools. The basic system was uniform with water supplied to holding tanks and gravity feed for flushing the toilets. There were

however, different sources of water in each of the four schools ranging from solar pumped ground water to an overhead tank at Smach Deng Primary School, to solar pumped water to an overhead tank from a pipe serving the adjoining temple at Battrang School, to runoff from school building roof into storage tanks at Smach Deng High School, to water to an overhead tank from a neighbour's spring at Champkapich School. We also installed a solar powered filter system and drinking fountains at the Smach Deng Primary School. The 900 students at the school now enjoy safe drinking water as well as flushing toilets.

"Water for toilets" project provides flushable toilets to a total of almost 3,000 students at the four schools. It's estimated that the proportion of students that now have access to toilets has increased to more than 90%.

Renovations and maintenance include replacing roofing, new classroom floor and painting classroom and toilet blocks at Smach Deng Primary School, installing roofing and painting at the AllKids learning centre as well as other improvements at the day care centres.



Things are changing in nearby Sihanoukville and Ream. There has been increased foreign investment in garment factories and construction (hotels and casinos) with a corresponding large and rapid increase in population. This represents challenges and opportunities for AllKids. Whilst the steep increases in rents challenges AllKids' budgets, the demand for skilled young people with English fluency has also increased. Some of the local young people now work in very well-paid jobs thanks to the education they received from AllKids. The opportunity to help young people through AllKids work has never be greater notwithstanding the challenge of AllKids' increased costs.

AllKids is consolidating its work for the medium term given the budget limitations. Hence, having completed our initial major program of “water for toilets” we will move on to a housing program in North West Cambodia next year. We look forward to returning to work with AllKids at a future time when another suitable program is able to be undertaken.



David William

May 2019

PVI aid work for 2019

Vietnam Project

New toilet block, school renovation and kindergarten maintenance –Phong Nha – Quang Bin Province, Central Vietnam

Our team returned to Phong Nha to continue our program of improving facilities for children attending local schools and kindergarten.

Cambodia Project

Sihanoukville and Ream have been undergoing rapid change over the last 2 years. The changes represent opportunities and challenges for AllKids. Large overseas investment in Sihanoukville has provided well-paid jobs for young people who have English fluency (thanks to AllKids) on the one hand, but also resulted in large increases in land prices and rents on the other hand. AllKids has been fortunate to secure a medium term lease at an affordable rent on its Learning Centre building which enables it to consolidate operations and costs. Our work this year aimed to support AllKids consolidation goal.

Total value of Vietnam and Cambodia Projects

The total value of PVI on-ground projects in Vietnam and Cambodia includes direct costs (materials and supplies, and payment to local skilled contractors when they are engaged), travel costs of PVI volunteers and in-kind value of PVI labour.

PVI volunteers meet their own travel costs and contribute approximately 20% of the direct costs. The balance of the direct costs is met by generous benefactors and other fund raising activities.

The direct cost for our 2019 projects was \$24,500 for the materials and supplies, and payments to local contractors. Our teams provided more than 1,100 hours of labour and met their own costs of \$52,000. The total value of our work was \$124,000.

John Robertson and Tony van Boxmeer Scholarships

PVI awarded the John Robertson and Tony van Boxmeer scholarships for two young Cambodian women to undertake two year dental training at Cambodia World Family (CWF) clinic in Phnom Penh commencing in 2018.

Ran Sachem and Chhoup Saory successfully completed the first year of their training in late 2018 and accordingly, PVI forwarded the grants for their second year training.

PVI members had the opportunity to visit CWF clinic in February 2019 and meet the young women and the CWF team again. Sachem and Saory are delightful young women who are progressing very well with their dentistry skills as well as their personal development and self-confidence. They came from the poor small village of Bospo where there are no opportunities to gain advanced training leading to worthwhile and rewarding jobs.

We were informed that CWF plans to offer Sachem and Saory jobs as Dental Assistants on completion of their training later this year.



Thanks to our generous supporters

Our direct costs for building projects plus scholarships involved an expenditure of \$27,500 in 2019.

This is only possible through the generous support of many.
We wish to especially thank two major generous supporters:

- **The June Canavan Foundation**
- **Nathan & Rose Kemp**



David Williams

Possible New Initiative

PVI Medical Program Cambodia 2020

Small team of PVI nurses working hands-on at a non-government hospital in Phnom Penh

We have donated medical equipment to the Sihanouk Hospital Centre of Hope (SHCH) hospital in Phnom Penh each year over the last 4 years and we plan to continue this. Items of equipment have included wheel chairs, recycled eye glasses, mannequin for instructing CPR techniques, thermometers and pulse monitors. We will continue to donate equipment next year and, as is our practice, the items will be determined in consultation with hospital staff.

Over the time we have built close relationships with some of the staff including Mr Oeun Chanthy Chief Operating Officer. We have grown to understand the great work the hospital does treating tens of thousands of patients each year; the majority are poor and disadvantaged and receive treatment for no or very low charge.

We have explored the possibility of PVI members who are nurses working 'hands on' at the hospital based on our close relationship developed over previous years.

This is possible but will depend on whether we have any interested qualified nurses who want to be involved and the hospital executives being able to match our nurse qualifications and experience with the hospital's needs at the time of our visit.

There are some steps to be completed to confirm such an arrangement including certification of our nurses by Cambodian authorities. This would be organised by SHCH staff. The hospital commonly uses overseas medical volunteers and accordingly has well tried practical arrangements in place. The hospital is also a teaching hospital and a component of which involves highly trained overseas medical professionals visiting to undertake training courses.

The hospital is centrally located in Phnom Penh. The medical team would be separated from the building team which would be working at Battambang (north west Cambodia).

A good standard hotel is available next to the hospital.

The hospital is supported by Hope Worldwide which is a large international NGO that runs hospitals in a number of countries. Further information on SHCH is included below.

Sihanouk Hospital Centre of Hope (SHCH)

Hope Worldwide is a US based global network that supports in-country NGO's in US and 60 other countries working on health and social issues. Hope Worldwide Australia is the Australian chapter of the global network. Hope Worldwide was established in 1991.

It supports SHCH in Phnom Penh as well as the Sonja Kill Hospital in Kampot (South West Cambodia) and three other medical centres in Phnom Penh. Hope Worldwide Australia is also a partner to SHCH.

SHCH is a large non-government hospital established in 1996 and provides comprehensive health and medical facilities and services. SHCH's mission is to provide further education and training for local health professionals and provide free or very low cost 24/7 medical care to poor and disadvantaged people of Cambodia. Two thirds of the hospital's patients are women and two thirds are from poor rural communities within 50-70 km of Phnom Penh. The hospital provides tens of thousands of consultations each year (>45,000 in 2017).

The hospital has a staff of 200 Cambodians which is supplemented with overseas volunteers in areas of health professionals (doctors, nurses and specialists) and public health experts. It provides emergency care, in-patient medical wards, surgical services and an Infectious Diseases Department for a long-standing cohort of people living with HIV. It also provides cutting edge diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis which remains a significant disease in the country. SHCH provides laboratory, radiology, pharmacy and pathology services.

Special visitors

In January, a number of PVI members spent an afternoon at Gail and Ian Bath's home catching up with Nathan and Rose Kemp along with their daughters. The family from Western Australia were holidaying on the Sunshine Coast and took a day away from their busy schedule to join us for morning tea. It was an enjoyable morning sharing stories about PVI, their lives back in WA, their holiday and of course being introduced to their delightful girls.

Hope to see you again soon.



Rose and Nathan Kemp.

A big thank you

THANK YOU JUNE CANAVAN FOUNDATION

The June Canavan Foundation was established in 2010 to honour the memory of Dr June Canavan.

The Foundation has created a legacy to build on June's humanitarian work. It provides financial and other support to existing projects in the four areas close to June's heart: Sport – Health – Education – Conservation.

PVI's values and vision are well aligned with those of the Foundation and our health and education projects are consistent with its mission. As such we're been fortunate and grateful to have received grants totaling tens of thousands of \$'s over the last 5 years. We were again supported this year for our project in Vietnam.

We are proud of the effective projects that materially help poor children and families mostly in rural communities in Vietnam and Cambodia. We wish to record our special thanks to the June Canavan Foundation for its ongoing support without which our work would be significantly diminished.

