



# Project Vietnam Inc.

## Newsletter: July 2021

### *Editor's Desk*

The July 2021 Newsletter highlights what PVI is able to do assisting the needy in Vietnam and Cambodia whilst not being able to visit those countries. Our usual role of yearly visits putting bodies “on the ground “has not been possible and is unlikely to resume for some time, so our focus has changed.

Through the success of our member’s fund-raising efforts plus the generous support of our loyal sponsors PVI is in a position to provide cash support to worthwhile causes. In this Newsletter we report on

- the success of the housing assistance to poorer families in both Vietnam and Cambodia
- the water filtration initiative
- the provision of emergency food funds
- funds to support dental trainees
- microcredit funding to help families establish their own businesses
- the Chin chicken farm in Cambodia
- ongoing support for AllKids and the Days for Girls program
- PVI’s facilitating of Tom Smith’s work in Sapa
- Ian’s good news story.
- Health insurance for Vietnamese families

Janice and John Miller

July 2021

## What's Been Happening Behind The Scenes In 2021

Earlier in the year we were hopeful that we would be able to send a team of PVI workers to Cambodia and Vietnam to continue with the work we were doing on the ground in 2019. Sadly, that plan hasn't come to fruition but non the less we are working with NGO's in Cambodia and Vietnam to financially assist with development and running of programs and initiatives to empower the locals.

To date we've spent more than A\$35,000, such a great effort for a small organisation.

### Construction of new houses in Cambodia and Vietnam

PVI are providing funds for the construction of 10 houses in each country this year. The materials for the new houses range from US\$1,800 to US\$2,560 depending on the materials used. We have contributed US\$500 for each house. The remaining cost of the house has been saved and/or borrowed by the families.

#### Vietnam Housing

Currently five houses have been completed in Vietnam at a cost of US\$2500. Below is an example of a family's living conditions prior, during and after PVI's housing project.



We are working through an international NGO, *Mekong Plus*, which is based in HCM. It has two local Vietnamese NGO's - Anh Duong and Thien Chi.

Anh Duong operates in the Hau Giang Province and Thien Chi operates in Binh Thuan Province.

These contacts are known to us through our member, Sandra Robinson, who worked as a volunteer with Thien Chi in 2013.

Both NGO's operate programs aimed at poverty reduction and work closely with rural communities and local authorities. They work with families and aim to improve education, standards of living and skills to provide sustainable income. Both organisations rely on external funding to continue to provide their grass roots support in delivering their programs:

### Microcredit Program

At our last PVI meeting held in June, Sandra presented a proposal from Anh Duong asking if we would redirect the remaining US\$2500 from the housing project to support their Microcredit Program as the COVID pandemic has caused many poor families in rural communities to lose their income from casual employment. To make matters worse, many other family members who lost jobs in larger centers, have now returned to the family home. Many families are now unable to provide basic family necessities and have no spare capital, or the capacity, to diversify into other areas of income.

The US\$2500 would allow 14 new families to enter the program and would cover the cost of surveying poor families, and ongoing follow up. Once the families enter this program, they are monitored for other needs as well, e.g. educational scholarships to ensure children are attending school and any health needs/difficulties.

It was voted that we support the microcredit program by redirecting the remaining US\$2500 from the housing program.

### How does the microcredit program work?

Small loans are provided as capital to start a home business which will supplement the family income. These small businesses are usually based around agriculture or livestock (e.g. chicken, duck, pig raising or growing vegies, dragon fruit, pepper etc.). Training is also provided to increase the families' capacity to succeed in their chosen venture. The loans are repaid in cycles of approx. 5 months and each family normally remains in the program for 3-4 years, receiving up to 8 cycles of loans. Excellent results see an increase in family income of approx. 25% per year, with 96% of families 'graduating' from poverty after 3-4 years.

There are two criteria for poor villagers to receive the next rounds of micro finance:

- 1.They have to return the capital on time

2.They have to use the capital for the right purposes.

However, other factors are considered: when there are many children at school, when some members of the family are chronically sick etc. then the support continues till the income reaches a higher level.

Project staff and village workers have the record book for each poor household who receives micro finance to follow up those households. Every month, both project staff and village workers will visit each household at least once, and support them if they have trouble in the process of production.

Monthly, to monitor the households receiving micro finance, Mekong plus holds a village workers meeting. In this meeting, each village worker reports on the situation as well as the difficulties (agriculture, education, health etc.) of every single poor household so that the project staff will agree together about the best approach.

It is not expected that the microloan will cover the full investment. In fact, the project team wants community support to these households, before the loan is made and during the project implementation. For example, for pig raising, the community will help to prepare for a pig stall.

**\* Criteria to select the poor families to join microfinance at Anh Duong:**

- They are a poor family with children going to school
- They are hardworking, they have dreams to escape poverty.
- Their income is low, around 1\$ per person per day.

Sandra Robinson

**Cambodia Housing**

Currently 8 houses have been constructed, the funds for the project being channelled through KGNO to Saveth in Bospo.

Saveth is the local director of KNGO school at Bospo He is well known and respected in the community for his work in helping the children and families in the surrounding communities. He has become a 'go to' for many poor families.

Saveth organised the purchase of materials and the construction of the houses for the families identified most in need.

Saveth reports that the families are very appreciative of our assistance in providing new houses. We're also appreciative of the great job done by Saveth.

On the following page is one of the families chosen by Saveth. This family lives on an income of approx. US \$150 a month. Their income is derived from traditional fishing for snail, crabs and fish. They have 4 children, each child attends school.

Before the construction of their new house they lived in a small leaky house which leant to one side.

The family are very grateful for their new house and wish the donors success and good health during Covid.



*Family's living conditions before construction of new home*



*During construction*



*New home which is 4x5 metres wide, constructed of timber and corrugated iron*

## Water Filtration Program

PVI has partnered with Thien Chi to introduce a pilot water filtration project in Tanh Linh. PVI's contribution of A\$1200 will assist five poor families who have been identified to participate in this project. Initially, the pilot project will assist these families with the installation of the filtration system, technique and maintenance training and provide them with ongoing support for a 12-month period to ensure the success of the project. On completion and after evaluating the pilot project, it is envisaged the project will continue to benefit other poor families in this rural community.

The filtration system if successful will improve the quality of the drinking water which will reduce the levels of intestinal diseases and skin complaints. As many of these health conditions prevent families from working or attending school on a regular basis, their level of poverty increases. Presently contaminated water is used for their daily cooking, bathing, laundry, cleaning and often drinking. Drinking water, which must be purchased in plastic bottles, is often unaffordable.

Thien Chi has identified approximately 25 families (who earn as little as US\$33 per person, per month) in this district who would benefit from a water filtration system.

Sandra Robinson

## Health Insurance

PVI has funded \$2000 for health insurance for poor families in Vietnam as identified by local NGO's Thien Chi and Anh Duong. A\$1,000 for each organisation will assist approx 20 families (total 40 families) to access health care and medications for 12 months.

Many poor families in the rural communities cannot afford health insurance and therefore have no access to ongoing health care. They are either elderly and not able to work, or are too ill to work, and therefore have no capacity to purchase health insurance.

Many common ailments go untreated and affect the ability of families to earn an income. More serious conditions often mean the people suffer without the required medication to ease their pain and/or improve their outcome. If a family is covered by health insurance they still have to contribute approx. 20% of the treatment costs, but they are normally able to access free medications.

Both organisations feel providing health insurance for the really poor, sick families is especially beneficial during these pandemic times. The following is a video link of one of the health insurance recipients who will benefit from further health care once their COVID lock down restrictions are lifted and she can visit the hospital. In the meantime, she is able to access medications :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYxG6Tc6OHk>

### **Emergency Food Program**

In March 2021 (PVI) donated funds to purchase 1000kg of rice. Forty impoverished families each received 25kg of rice, together with condiments. The food parcels are organised and distributed by our partner contacts in the respective communities. The parcels include basic food and water and have been greatly appreciated.

It was agreed at our last PVI meeting to send another round of food parcels to our contacts in Vietnam and Cambodia to distribute to families that are struggling to survive in these uncertain times.

### **Dental Trainees**

We continued to support two trainees in their second year at Cambodia World Family Dental Clinic. One of the trainees is supported by a private sponsor through PVI. CWF is currently closed so the training has been interrupted but will resume as soon as conditions permit. Saroeury is a young woman who was sponsored for dental training a few years ago. We are continuing to support her during her second year of university. Her studies continue on line. PVI and another private sponsor support jointly. PVI received \$2,399 for the other sponsors for the trainees and Saroeury.

### **Allkids**

We have had a long and close relationship with AllKids which runs a Learning Centre and Day Care Centre at Ream, south west Cambodia. We had undertaken projects for AllKids for 6 years until 2019. We supported their fund-raising raffle by purchasing \$250 worth of tickets.

### **Sanitary Packs**

Neale Whitsed has organised the "Days for Girls" program again this year. Neale raised funds in his local community around Wodonga. He arranged the production and distribution of 50 sanitary packs at a cost of US\$515 (~A\$700). Distribution of the packs was arranged through a local NGO, Claire Amitie International (CAI). CAI started in France and has been operating in Cambodia for many years assisting women and girls rebuild and prepare for the future.

### **Chin's Chicken Farm**

Chin's chicken farm is now a reality and is operating well. Chin's thorough and professional approach will hopefully ensure its success. He purchased 30 hens, 5 roosters and 50 chickens to get the farm started.

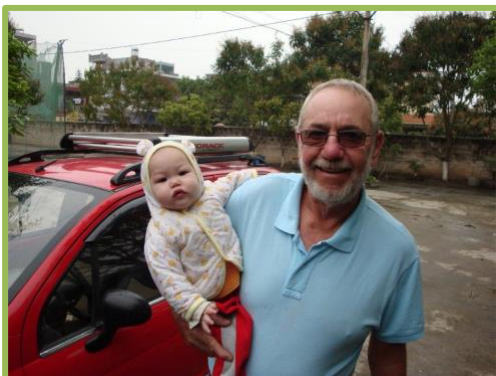
Members made private donations towards his new business plan to establish a chicken farm. PVI members donated \$3,175 and \$1,000 was added from PVI. Chin has now

established his chicken farm which is going well and is now providing for him and his family. The total amount was \$6,844 with the balance being contributed by Judy Malzard and Peter McDonald.

### Good News Story

In March 2006 Project Vietnam sent a team of volunteers to the City of Thai Binh to facilitate a renovation project at one of the orphanages. The previous year we had completed the construction of a new classroom facility at the Thai Binh School for the Deaf. Thai Binh City is situated about 110km South East of Hanoi with a population of approximately 2 million people. Apart from the rural industries, the city boasts many educational facilities, including 45 vocational centres, along with two universities, one being a medical university, which Project Vietnam has sponsored five medical interns for approximately five years to assist them with their ongoing fees.

Project Vietnam's project at the orphanage consisted of redesigning their kitchen, providing new cooking equipment along with a new dining room for the orphans and the staff. Upon arrival at the orphanage we all naturally inspected the present facility, and of course, met the children and distributed a quantity of donated clothes and toys that we'd bought over from OZ as we always do. I noticed in the corner of one of the rooms a small wrapped bundle with a mass of black hair at one end. A small baby that was left at the orphanage only two days earlier, a little baby girl at about 5 days old. Well as you can imagine she certainly grabbed my attention along with the rest of the crew, and of course was nearly smothered to an inch of her life when our medical team of nurses and Dr Gail Waterhouse arrived from Hanoi three days later. A few donations went her way in the form of food/formula etc. Over the next few weeks I asked the orphanage principals what they were going to call her, and they replied that's up to you Mr Ian, so I named her Lucy after one of my granddaughters.



Lucy is now 15, and from the reports that I receive is doing very well at school. Every chance that I've had over the past years I travel up to Thai Binh and visit the orphanage and with the assistance of the staff I take Lucy shopping for clothes and school requisites.



July 2021

Two months ago, I requested PVI sponsor Lucy at an accredited School of English, of which PVI has agreed to do. I do know that if she is successful with her English tuition it will open many doors for her later in life and if that's the result of this sponsorship I sincerely thank Project Vietnam.

Ian

### Tom Smith in Sapa

Tom Smith has been supporting children from poor minority communities around Sapa, Vietnam for some years. Tom has been forwarding money to a Priest of the Sapa Catholic Church to provide accommodation, food and education for the children. Tom was happy for his continued support to be facilitated through PVI.

### Fundraising

Apart from our wonderful sponsors and the occasional donation from the public, we rely heavily on our two main fund-raising activities – Eumundi Markets Carpark attendants and providing manpower for the Ironman events held on the Sunshine Coast. Thanks go out to all our members who give up their time to work at these two events.

If you would like to help out at the next Ironman 70.3 event at Mooloolabah on Sat 11<sup>th</sup> Sept or Sunday 12<sup>th</sup>, email John or Jan Miller at [jojanmiller@gmail.com](mailto:jojanmiller@gmail.com) for further information.

### Our Sponsors

Once again, we would like to acknowledge and thank our generous benefactors whose continued support enable us to fund our projects

**June Canavan Foundation**

**Rose & Nathan Kemp**

**Chem Supply**

thank you!