



Mr. Timothy Rieser, one of the key staff of the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations and Mr. Andrew J. Imparato, Senior Counsel and Disability Policy Director, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (Right), meet with the Vietnamese delegation. They emphasize the importance to include people with disabilities as well as coordination among different public agencies in the implementation and enforcement of the new disability law.

The US Shares its ADA Experience to Help Key Vietnamese Government agencies to Implement Their New Disability Law

In December 2011, VNAH organized a study trip to the U.S. for high-level Vietnamese policy makers responsible for developing and implementing disability laws, policies, and programs. Participants included the Vice Minister and officials from the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Vice Minister and officials of the Ministry of Education, and officials from Ministry of Health.

The study tour came at a crucial time for these officials. With the recent adoption of the Vietnamese disability law that guarantees the right of people with disabilities to equal participation in society, the ministries are now struggling with how this ideal can be operationalized and implemented.

The ministries are also struggling with how to create a system that recognizes the many dimensions of disability, the important roles of multiple levels of government, and the need for those levels to work together. The study tour highlighted the importance of integration and coordination among different agencies and service providers across sectors (health, education, labor, and social security) and at various levels of government (federal, state, and local) in the US.

The delegation met with Senator Tom Harkin, architect of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and friend of Vietnam. Judith Heumann, Special Advisor on Disability Rights for the U.S. State Department, and leaders of federal, state, and county



Sen. Tom Harkin (Left) thanks Vietnamese Vice Ministers of MOLISA and MOET for making the coordination and collaboration among the government agencies an important part of the implementation of the new law.

agencies that design policy and/or administer programs that address the needs of people with disabilities including health, education, employment, social services, and economic support.

In addition to the meetings, the delegation visited schools, employment centers, transition programs, rehabilitation hospitals, and other service providers. The officials saw a range of programs they could potentially implement and gained an appreciation of how the US integrates and ensures inclusion for people with a wide range of abilities and functional limitations.

This activity is part of VNAH's ongoing project to assist the Vietnamese government in developing laws and policies that facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream of society.

A New Three-Year Project for Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities

VNAH launched a new three-year project to help the Government of Vietnam develop and promote policies and programs that allow people with disabilities (PWD) to fully participate in society. The project will focus on developing the policy framework for establishing an integrated system of service delivery, enhancing compliance with existing disability laws, and promoting inclusive employment.

This initiative is a continuation of the 2006–2010 “Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities” project funded by USAID that led to the successive passage of a number of important laws and policies, culminating in the new National Law on Persons with Disabilities (see sidebar).

In the next three years, VNAH will assist the Government of Vietnam in developing a more integrated disability service delivery system that enables the Government to provide comprehensive services and support to beneficiaries in a coordinated manner. Changing the current fragmented system will require policy changes and human resource development.

VNAH will help the Government develop a national strategy/action plan to guide the coordination among different sectors of the government and different service providers. In addition, VNAH will develop curricula to teach social work and vocational rehabilitation as it relates to people with disabilities. The curriculum will be integrated into the academic programs of the social work and medical universities and colleges across Vietnam.

VNAH will also work with the government to develop strategies that will strengthen compliance with disability legislation. The approaches will include monitoring and evaluation the implementation of the disability laws by National Coordinating Council on Disabilities (NCCD) and the Vietnam Federation for Disability (VFD) and by establishing penalties for violations of law.

VNAH will continue its initiatives to promote inclusive business and employment for people with disabilities through activities carried out in partnership with the Blue Ribbon Employers' Council (BREC).

Past Accomplishments:

From 2006–2011, with support from USAID and others, VNAH assisted the Ministries of the Government of Vietnam to develop and implement the following disability laws, policies, and programs:

- National Law on Persons with Disabilities (2010) and the Implementation Decree and Guidelines;
- Disability provisions in the Vocational Training Law (2006);
- Amendment of the Labor Code to eliminate articles discriminatory toward employment of PWD;
- Adoption of first National Action Plan on Disability (NAP) for the period 2006–2010, and development of the second NAP for the period 2011–2020;
- Adoption of national technical codes, standards and regulations on barrier-free access to construction, public transportation, and information and communication technology (ICT);
- Establishment of the Vietnamese Federation on Disability (VFD), a national federation of disabled people's organizations (DPO) and numerous provincial DPOs;
- Establishment of the Blue Ribbon Employers' Council (BREC) to promote mainstream employment of PWD



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Health and Education Volunteers (HealthEd) is a non-profit, charitable organization committed to providing humanitarian assistance to people in need through health and nutrition, education, and vocational training.

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Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH) is a non-profit, non-political organization dedicated to meeting priority humanitarian and development needs. VNAH's projects focus on helping people with disabilities lead rewarding and productive lives that include the ability to fully participate in their nation's and their community's social and economic affairs.

Contributors for this issue

Huong Nguyen, Toan Van Bui, Phin Cong Pham, Loi Thang Nguyen, Dr. Tri Bui, Bui Diem Trinh, Kathleen Blank Riether, Robert Horvath, Joan Luke, Bich-Thuy Tran, Kinh Nguyen, Binh Ngo



Teachers of the Rock Creek Elementary School in Montgomery county, Maryland, showcase their successful inclusive and special education to the visiting Vietnamese government delegation.



A Note to Colleagues and Supporters

Dear Friends,

We are now well into the New Year as we look back at VNAH's accomplishments in 2011. It is both gratifying and humbling to realize the scope of our accomplishments and the number of lives that have been touched. Last year we wrapped up one of our most exciting and successful projects, a three-year program funded by USAID to provide integrated support services for people with disabilities in Danang. Over the course of the project, we trained over 100 workers who helped hundreds of people with disabilities identify their social, health, and educational needs and referred them to appropriate support services provided by many different public and private organizations. We helped strengthen the capacity of Danang's local service providers by bringing in U.S. experts to train doctors and physical therapists. We supported the local government of Danang in developing a five-year plan to focus local resources on the needs of people with disabilities. Just as importantly, we supported the formation of several Disabled People's Organizations (DPO) and provided capacity-building to prepare them for an active role in disability policy decision-making. The Danang government is now anxious to expand and replicate what has been accomplished to date throughout the rest of the city. The success of the Danang project has set the stage for our next three-year program, now underway, in which we will assist the Government of Vietnam towards transforming the current fragmented service delivery system into one that works for people with disabilities throughout Vietnam.

This past December, we also organized a study trip to the U.S. for the Vice Minister and officials from of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), the Vice Minister and officials of the Ministry of Education, and officials from Ministry of Health. The purpose of the tour was for these officials to have the opportunity to observe models and best practices for achieving integrated service delivery. They have key roles to play in implementing Vietnam's national disability law and will be instrumental in creating a service delivery system based on public/private collaboration, as well as cooperation and coordination across multiple levels of government.

With funding from USAID, we are also now working with MOLISA, the National University of Social Science and Humanities, the University of Labor and Social Affairs, and other colleges and universities in Vietnam to create university-level curricula and skills training in the field of social work.

This year's accomplishments have all come about through our deepening partnerships with our funding organizations, the Government of Vietnam, the NGO community, and countless individuals here and in Vietnam. It seems that as our hope and determination to help make a difference for people with disabilities grow, so do our opportunities. We are grateful for all our partners, who believe in and are working for equality of opportunity for people with disabilities. With your help, we know that no dream is impossible. We thank you for your unfailing support and wish you all the best for 2012.

Sincerely,
Ca Van Tran, President

Thousands of People with Disabilities in Danang City Benefit from USAID Supports



Mr. Frank Donovan, USAID/Vietnam's Mission Director, speaks at the workshops.

Du is 21 and lives with his parents and brother in Hoa Vang, a rural district in Danang. He has severe cerebral palsy and cannot speak. However, his smile can light up a room. Du and his family have been involved with the USAID-funded VNAH program “Rehabilitation Services and Social-Economic Supports to People with Disabilities in Danang”, a three-year USAID project that ran 2008–2011. Through the program, Du and his family have received a variety of support services. For example, Du receives rehabilitation services at home, which has also helped his mother learn more about caring for people with CP. His family has also received a stipend as well as seed money to begin breeding pigs. The bathroom in his family’s home has also been remodeled so it is accessible to him.

Du is one of over 3,800 people with disabilities in Danang who have benefited from the project with support such as rehabilitation services, education, job placements, home improvements, access to government welfare, preferential micro-credits, and capacity-building training for local service agencies.

The project developed a cadre of 96 collaborators who worked with each individual family to identify their medical and social needs and to develop strategies for meeting those needs. The collaborators helped families access existing services as well as find new avenues of support.

Unfortunately, some of the services Du and other people with disabilities needed were either not available or were not good quality. In order to address this issue VNAH enhanced the capacity of local services delivery system by providing training and renovating rehabilitation facilities (see sidebar).

Highlights:

- 441 disabled people and their families received government financial subsidies, preferential loans, support for home improvements, and job assistance.
- 2,300 people with disabilities received rehabilitation services such as orthopedic surgery, physical therapy, and assistive devices such as wheelchairs, prostheses, and pushers.
- 1,400 services providers (doctors, physical therapists, health workers, social workers, community workers, care givers, disability activists) received training to provide services to people with disabilities.
- The first city-wide census of disabled people was Completed.
- Developed and implemented a computerized disability information management system for tracking beneficiaries and planning services.
- Upgraded and equipped three rehabilitation units at the district hospitals and built a satellite rehabilitation center in the rural community of Hoa Vang.
- Established a network of 96 community-based rehabilitation workers.
- Established a city-wide Disabled People’s Organization (DPO) and three district branches.
- Provided U.S. and Australian physicians and physiotherapists to deliver advanced training to over 100 doctors and physiotherapists.
- Supported the City Government of Danang in developing a second 5-year action plan to support people with disabilities.

Independent Assessment Team Finding Significant Achievements Resulting from VNAH's Comprehensive Support for People with Disabilities in Danang

In September 2011, we evaluated the current USAID-funded program in Danang and recommended ways for VNAH to build on its experiences, successes, and lessons learned. As part of this evaluation, we interviewed government officials, met with service providers and collaborators, assessed rehabilitation facilities, and met with disabled people and their families.

We found that VNAH had accomplished a number of significant achievements in implementing the program from October 2008 through September 2011. In addition to the quantifiable outcomes listed below, we found changes in societal attitudes. Participants in a focus group of adults with disabilities said: "People in the community are more friendly and respectful"; "Families with children with disabilities feel proud that their children can get schooling and training"; "Families see that people with disabilities are showing more confidence."

In order to build on these successes VNAH needs to ramp up its program. It has developed a strong foundation on which to build an even more comprehensive and integrated program that reaches all districts in Danang. Some of our findings include:

VNAH has an exceptionally strong working relationship with the National Government and the local government in Danang.

- VNAH has been working with the Vietnamese government and other stakeholders to develop a legal framework at the national level to ensure that people with disabilities are accorded basic rights and access to the mainstream of society.
- VNAH was instrumental in encouraging the Danang government to develop a 5-year Disability Action Plan in order to focus attention and local resources on the needs of people with disabilities. VNAH provided significant support for developing the 2011–2015 plan. This legal structure sets the direction for future disability programs and mandates the government to allocate funds.
- VNAH, responding to the challenges in information management within and among the different government agencies, developed a computerized disability information system to be used by all agencies serving people with disabilities.

“People in the community are more friendly and respectful”

“Families with children with disabilities feel proud that their children can get schooling and training”

“Families see that people with disabilities are showing more confidence”



Under its 2008–2011 USAID contract, VNAH has developed and implemented an integrated program in two of Danang's seven districts that can be expanded to the city's other five districts. VNAH trained and provided stipends to over 100 social and health workers in the communes. These workers meet with the beneficiaries to identify their needs and refer them to social, health, and educational services. The referral system forms the foundation for integrating services from multiple providers and networking across different government departments and non-governmental organizations that are funded by multiple funding streams. The Danang government is anxious to see this model expanded.

VNAH has enhanced the capacity of local providers in Danang to deliver quality rehabilitation services. Over the past three years VNAH built and equipped four rehabilitation centers and brought US experts to Vietnam to train doctors and physical therapists.

VNAH recognizes the need to include people with disabilities in decision-making. VNAH supported the formation of several government-recognized Disabled People's Organizations (DPO) and provided capacity-building to enhance the DPOs ability to play an active role in future endeavors.

VNAH has been a critical link in sharing the U.S. expertise and experience with Vietnam. The organization has helped establish the Blue Ribbon Employer

Council (similar to the Business Leadership Network in the US) and the National Coordinating Council on Disability (similar to the US National Council on Disability)

Lloyd Feinberg, Consultant (formerly USAID disability coordinator and manager of Leahy War Victims Fund)

Thomas Kane, Public Health Specialist, DAI

Nanette Goodman, Disability Policy Consultant

Developing the Social Work Profession for Vietnamese with Disabilities

VNAH has embarked on an exciting new initiative to assist in the development of curricula and training for social work professionals engaged in providing support to people with disabilities. VNAH, with funding from USAID, will work in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, the National University of Social Science and Humanities, the University of Labor and Social Affairs, as well as other colleges and universities, to create these professional training opportunities for social workers.

VNAH's mission and the goals of social work both seek to actualize the values of empowerment, self-determination, and human rights, making this an ideal collaboration. The collaboration will develop a short course in social work for practitioners in the field, course curricula for graduate and undergraduate social work programs, and trainings for the trainers. The curricula, teaching methodologies and training developed through this collaboration will help teach existing professionals and improve the learning experience of future social work students, provide them the tools needed to work more effectively with people with disabilities.



Ms. Judith Heumann, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights of the U.S. Department of State and Ms. Charlotte V. McClain-Nhlapo, Coordinator, Disability Inclusive Development Policy Planning & Learning of USAID meet with the Vietnamese delegation.

Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) Promoting Accessible ICT

Since 2009, as part of a USAID funded project, VNAH has supported the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) to strengthen legislation that ensures access to information and communication technology (ICT) by people with disabilities. As result, in 2011 MIC issued a national code, standards, and circular/regulations on accessible ICT.

With technical assistance funded by VNAH, MIC became the first government agency to upgrade its website to meet international web content accessibility guidelines. At the website launching ceremony Nguyen Minh Hong, Vice-Minister of MIC said "This was a great effort joined by VNAH, MIC and a technical expert with disabilities (visual impairment) in ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities. This website is the first model in Vietnam to ensure that PWD can access information. I am sure that other ministries and government agencies can look at this as a reference for them to follow – one of the very effective ways to help people participate in society."

Blue Ribbon Employer Council (BREC) Assists Thousands of Vietnamese with Disabilities Obtain Jobs

BREC, a USAID-funded partnership between VNAH and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), is going strong. Since 2007, its membership of international and Vietnamese companies has grown from 25 to 119 employers. BREC activities, events, and job fairs have also generated job opportunities for more than 1,500 Vietnamese with disabilities and enabled more than 500 to enter vocational training programs.

In 2011, BREC held its second Recognition and Awards event in Hanoi. Over 120 participants attended to honor the 14 award recipients who received recognition for their outstanding contributions toward promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities and the business benefits of hiring workers with disabilities. One of the recipients, Ms. Nguyen Thao Van,

was later nominated by USAID Vietnam for the 2012 U.S. Secretary of State's Award for International Women of Courage. This successful event included a speech by Mr. Michael Foster of USAID Vietnam, and was aired on numerous Vietnamese television programs.

BREC members continue to demonstrate their commitment and dedication to corporate social responsibility and promoting employment opportunities for Vietnamese with disabilities. Recently, USAID funding for BREC has been extended to 2014 as part of the VNAH project "Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities." BREC plans to hire a director, implement a marketing plan, and develop a sustainability strategy to continue operating beyond the end of the USAID funding.

Australian Physios Assisted with Training Their Vietnamese Colleagues

On arriving in Danang, Vietnam, in April 2010, I was assigned to train local physios in all aspects of physiotherapy. Since pediatrics formed a large part of the local physio workload, and I had no experience with children, I immediately persuaded fellow Australian Volunteers International (AVI) colleagues to help. Not only did they respond to the call, they connected me with five more experts, all of whom have come to Danang and conducted trainings.

It started with a cerebral palsy expert volunteering in Hoi An, who provided theoretical and practical knowledge through several workshops and some valuable resource materials. She introduced me to another Australian physio who had extensive experience with children with disabilities (CWD). She later conducted two 4-day workshops for local physios and doctors on assessment and treatment of CWD. After the workshops, she provided support via email, donated some equipment to the clinic, and developed valuable resources including an assessment manual for physios, treatment sheets for physios, and parent information sheets.

She also connected me with a manager of Wesley Hospital, Brisbane, who helped out with technical support for difficult cases and introduced three more Australian professionals including two physios, one specializing in pediatrics, and an Occupational Therapist. They all visited Danang and delivered practical training workshops covering a variety of topics including assessment, cerebral palsy, stroke, and occupational therapy.

Thanks to all these Australian physios and the occupational therapist for volunteering their time and services. They made my job here so much easier and so much more effective. The Australians provided the local Vietnamese physios and rehabilitation doctors with knowledge and skills they otherwise would not have been able to access. Some of these physios will continue returning to Vietnam to carry on this important work in providing quality physiotherapy in Vietnam, all at their own cost. They are a great example to the rest of us.

Joanne Luke, volunteer PT, completed her 20-month assignment with VNAH in December 2011.

BRIEF UPDATES

Brief 1: Job Fair for People with Disabilities and Celebrating International Disability Day

On International Disability Day, Saturday December 3, 2011, the Vietnam Federation on Disability, in cooperation with VNAH, the Blue Ribbon Employer Council, among others, organized an event and Job Fair in Hanoi. The event featured employer booths, entertainment, and sports activities. USAID Mission Director Mr. Francis Donovan was among the distinguished guests and speakers.

More than 2,000 people attended the event including 1,500 people with disabilities and 500 service providers, care-givers, and friends.

VNAH used the event as both a celebration and a learning opportunity. With volunteer support from BREC employers and nearly one hundred students from FPT University in Hanoi, VNAH surveyed 400 people with disabilities and 200 service providers to identify the strengths and challenges of the event in order to develop even more successful programs in the future.

Brief 2: Implementation Decree of Disability Law

The Law of Persons with Disabilities came into effect in January 2011 with 53 articles, of which 18 articles needed implementation guidance through the subsequent Decree and Circulars. VNAH supported the design of this law and the drafting of a Decree and two Circulars. The implementation Decree has been drafted and submitted to the Government whose final approval was expected in late December 2011. The two Circulars will provide guidance on disability determination and classification that will be carried out by the communal and medical councils, and on establishing the bodies responsible to identify who will qualify for what types of social welfare, and supports as stipulated under the new disability Law.

Brief 3: Second National Action Plan on Disabilities

The second National Action Plan on Disability 2010–2020 has been submitted to the Government for approval. The Plan builds on successful experiences and lesson learned from the first five-year action plan 2006–2010.

With a total budget of US\$100 million, the Plan is a comprehensive approach to disability and has strong support from a wide range of Government Ministries.

USAID and VNAH have actively supported the development of both disability action plans which identify concrete steps and timetables for the Government to meet its strategic goals.



Jamil Mneimneh and Dinesh Ganesh Shetty (Left) from IBM at a training session.

P&O Program: VNAH Continues to Provide Desperately Needed Prostheses and Other Assistive Devices.



In 2011, VNAH continued to work with regional prosthetics and rehabilitation center to provide prostheses and wheelchairs to war-amputees, land mine victims, and other people with disabilities throughout Vietnam. Mr. Huynh Tien Dung, a program beneficiary and double amputee due to land mine, said "I'd never dreamed of having a three-wheeled wheelchair for daily life activities."



VNAH has been providing assistive devices and fitting prostheses in Vietnam since 1992 and has helped more than 120,000 children and adults with disabilities throughout the country. The devices cost from \$60-\$120 each and without the program, many people with disabilities would not be able to afford them. The program is funded in large part by The Nippon Foundation and the Freeman Foundation.

IBM and VNAH's New Partnership

In 2011, VNAH established a valuable partnership with IBM. In the first year of the partnership, IBM provided on-site technical assistance in Danang to implement a disability management information system, provided project management training to VNAH's staff. IBM/Vietnam also became a member of the Blue Ribbon Employer's Council (BREC).

IBM assigned two information technology technicians, Jamil Marcus Mneimneh and Dinesh Ganesh Shetty, who worked with VNAH and local partners for a month in September, to provide technical support for the implementation of the Disability Information Management System, an internet-based software that was developed to assist local governments in tracking and communicating disability information. The information is designed to help facilitate effective referral and case management. The Danang City Government has already committed to adopting the software and VNAH is working with the Ministry of Health, to use this software in its national rehabilitation programs and replicate it in other provinces in Vietnam.

IBM has also been assisting VNAH in project management training. Through an IBM grant, IBM consultants delivered an educational workshop "Project Management: Concepts and Consultation" to the Danang and Hanoi staffs of VNAH. The educational instruction and facilitated workshops helped staff to conceptualize project management and apply these management concepts to VNAH's current projects.

First National Disabled People Organization Established

Over the past several years, with funding support from USAID, VNAH has worked with local partners, including the National Coordinating Council on Disability and disabled people organizations (DPOs) across the country to set up a national organization that represents all disabled people in Vietnam.

After several years of facilitating meetings and public consultation workshops to mobilize support and select members, helping to develop the Charter and action plan for the organization, and advocating with the central Government for approval, VNAH was pleased to see the formal

establishment of the Vietnam Federation on Disability (VFD) in March 2011, with a 51-member executive committee.

The VFD is a vehicle for the various disabled people organizations and self-help groups across the country to network and coordinate their actions, bringing added strength and visibility to addressing disability issues.

VNAH and the newly formed VFD have worked together to organize a number of activities including: two regional training workshops for DPOs, a job fair and outdoor event to celebrate International Disability Day, field visits to monitor/promote disability programs, and upgrading the VFD website.

International Training in Rehabilitation Medicine

As part of its effort to improve rehabilitation services in Danang, VNAH has brought a number of international experts from Johns Hopkins University in the US and Australian Volunteers International to share their knowledge with rehabilitation physicians and physiotherapists in Danang.

Johns Hopkins University (JHU)

Johns Hopkins University (JHU) in the Baltimore, MD, has partnered with VNAH to provide education in rehabilitation medicine to local Vietnamese medical and allied health staff. Through this partnership, JHU assessed the current knowledge base in Danang and developed a training plan based on this needs assessment. Over the past two years, faculty from JHU have provided workshops and training sessions on a variety of topics including disability assessment, general rehabilitation, and pediatric rehabilitation. Trainers from JHU included: Dr. Sam Mayer, Dr. Alex Vu, Dr. Frank Pidcock, Dr. Kieu Phong, among others.



Dr. Frank Pidcock of the Kennedy Krieger Institute in a training session for healthcare specialists in Danang.

Australian Volunteer International (AVI)

AVI has been a valuable partner for VNAH since 2010.

First, as part of its professional volunteers deployment in Vietnam, AVI assigned Joanne Luke, an experienced physiotherapist to work with VNAH in Danang for 20 months to provide technical training to local physical therapists and parents of disabled children.

Second, AVI gave VNAH a grant that provided funds to increase the capacity of local caregivers to provide appropriate daily support to children with disabilities. The grant covered the cost of printing a user-friendly, color booklet on the daily management of children with disabilities and the cost of training physiotherapists, community workers, and caregivers on the booklet's contents. Through this "train the trainer approach" local physiotherapists were able to conduct training sessions for additional community workers and caregivers.



Vocational Rehabilitation Model Brings Jobs

Nguyen Trong Dong has become self-confident, independent, and able to provide for his family, thanks to the VNAH vocational rehabilitation program in Danang city, a USAID-funded project. Dong, who has limited mobility, has been working at the Danang branch of FPT a large information technology company in Vietnam. Before receiving vocational rehabilitation and assistance with the job search, Dong had tried to find a job many times but was unsuccessful. His confidence was low and finances were difficult, especially after he got married and had a child.

“Dong had tried to find a job many times but was unsuccessful. His confidence was low and finances were difficult, especially after he got married and had a child.”

Now he is earning of \$120 per month from the new job and can provide financially for his small family. More importantly, he is now self-confident and independent. He said proudly, “With the current stable job, I am no longer solely dependent on my wife; in contrast, now I am able to raise my son together with my wife.”

The vocational rehabilitation model is the first of its kind in Vietnam. It demonstrates the effectiveness of a continuum of services in supporting people with disabilities like Dong, to obtain mainstream and sustainable employment. VNAH established a network of 60 service providers, including employment service providers, rehab services, community-based rehabilitation (CBR) workers, DPOs, and employers. Since the inception of the program in June 2010, over 30 people with disabilities obtain jobs at companies in Danang such as Vietnam Business Process Outsourcing (VBPO) and FPT. VBPO alone has hired 15 persons to work in jobs such as data entry and desktop publishing.

Swiss Families Sponsoring Poor Children in Danang

Mrs. Sarah Schmidlin, a Swiss physical therapist, volunteered with VNAH to provide therapy to children in Hoa Vang, a poor rural district of Danang city. Upon her return to Switzerland after two years of volunteer work, Sarah joined VNAH's child sponsorship project that connects individual donors to families and children living in desperate situations in the Danang area.

VNAH identifies needy children and families and introduces them to donors who can choose to "adopt" a child for a period of 6 months or more, and support them with a monthly contribution. The support has been used for food, school fees, bicycles that are used for transportation to school, home improvements, and seed money to start a small business. The donors and families keep in touch regularly via letters and emails and sometimes donors visit the sponsored children in Vietnam.

Sarah and her husband not only sponsor a child, they encouraged their relatives and friends to do the same. As result, six families have

donated over \$5,500 to 10 children and families in Hoa Vang over the past years.

VNAH would like to express its appreciation to Sarah and her families and friends, including Mr. André Stirnimann, Mr. Hansjörg and Mrs. Judith Blaser, Mr. Hans Wyrsh and Mrs. Jutta Stirnimann, Mr. Hans-Peter and Mrs. Romy Schmidlin, Mr. Richard and Mrs. Marie Wespi and Mr. Marcel Schmidlin and Ms. Flavia Buser. Their contributions have helped these Vietnamese families improve their living conditions and have given them hope for the future.



VNAH outreach team at work in Krong Ana District in Dak Lak Province, Central Highlands.

“Sarah and her husband not only sponsor a child, they encouraged their relatives and friends to do the same. As result, six families have donated over \$5,500 to 10 children and families in Hoa Vang over the past years.”

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Mass Fitting for Amputees in Tam Ky, Vietnam



Dr. Ken Rutherford (L) and Mr. Cameron Macauley (R) with a group of land mine victims in Tam Ky City, Quang Nam Province

their turns to have plaster casts made which would then be used to manufacture new, durable and very comfortable prostheses. They removed their old prostheses and I was astonished by these ancient, hand-made artificial legs constructed of wood, rubber, wire, and cloth. Most of them had broken and had been repaired numerous times.

We were invited by Mr. Ca Van Tran, President of the Viet Nam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH), a US-based NGO, who sponsored the outreach event. VNAH was founded in 1991 by Vietnamese-American philanthropist Ca Van Tran. Mr. Tran came to the United States in 1975 where he found work washing dishes at a Mexican restaurant, he was soon owner of the Taco Amigo chain in Northern Virginia. He also served in the US Marines during the Vietnam War. Mr. Tran regularly visits communities in rural Vietnam to offer free prosthetic devices and wheelchairs to people with disabilities. He has used much of his personal money to support programs for people with disabilities in Vietnam and is now interested in opening new projects in Myanmar.

“A new arm, leg, or wheelchair makes all the difference in the world for these people,” said Ca. “It makes work, play, and everyday activities possible and allows them to live with dignity and self-respect. Nothing gives me greater joy than to see an amputee walks with grace, pride and comfort. Even though the situation is improving for people with disabilities in Vietnam, much more needs to be done.”

Today’s event was an opportunity for amputees to be fitted for new prostheses, which will then be manufactured in VNAH-supported prosthetics workshop in Danang. The community of Tam Ky is home to many people affected by the Vietnam War and the UXO resulting from it, however access to modern mobility devices has been difficult. Of the two-hundred-plus amputees who appeared at the event, nearly all were using worn, outdated, home-made prostheses constructed from wood, rubber, wire, and cloth. Poorly-made devices of this type

On March 9th my colleague, Trauma Rehabilitation Specialist, Cameron Macauley from the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR) at James Madison University, and I had the good fortune to participate in a mass fitting for amputees in Tam Ky, Vietnam. When we arrived, some 200 men and women were awaiting

are uncomfortable to use and often lead to skin breakdown on a residual limb, as well as chronic back pain and joint problems.

After being fitted for a new prosthesis by having a plaster cast made of their residual limbs, many of these amputees will be transported to the workshop in Danang where the new prostheses will be carefully customized to their needs. They may also spend some time undergoing physical rehabilitation and learning to walk with the new device. Amputees who require upper-limb prostheses will learn to use their new hands to dress and feed themselves and to ride a bicycle or a motorbike. All of these services are provided free of charge.

These amputees were men and women who had lived for decades without the benefit of tough, comfortable prosthetic limbs that would tolerate physical abuse and exposure to weather. Their residual limbs were calloused and scarred from chafing inside poorly-fitted sockets. I could see the look of joy and relief at the thought of being able to work, play, and take a relaxing stroll without feeling the pinch and cramp of a barely-adequate prosthetic leg.

I lost both my legs to a land mine in Somalia in 1993, so I know what it means to walk on artificial legs. I have met thousands of amputees in countries around the world and I know how important these new limbs are to them. VNAH is providing mobility, comfort, safety, and even beauty in the lives of these Vietnamese, many of whom never dreamt that they would ever be lucky enough to get a new prosthesis. It is a wonder and a profound delight for me to see such kindness in action.

Ca Van Tran recognizes the value of being able walk with dignity and grace, of being able to run after a soccer ball, of having a leg that won’t buckle under your weight. Thank you, Mr. Ca, for your dedication to people with disabilities in Vietnam and around the world, and to your efforts to making their lives easier and better.



Kenneth R. Rutherford, Ph.D.

Director, Center for International Stabilization and Recovery, James Madison University



Amputees with home-made legs waiting for their new limbs.



Health and Education Volunteers Projects

More Schools for Students in Mountainous Area

Children in 15 ethnic minority in the central and northern highlands will no longer have to walk 3–5 kms to school each day only to be taught in inadequate facilities, many of which are made of clay, bamboo, and leaves.



HealthEd, in partnership with the Nippon Foundation, the Asian Education Friendship Association (AEFA) and other Japanese private companies added 15 new schools to the 74 they have built in the past five years. Each school has from 4–6 classrooms and cost from \$40–60,000.

In addition to building schools, HealthEd has built dormitories serving ethnic minority teens attending higher grades in schools far from their villages.

The project is part of the HealthEd's efforts to improve education opportunity for ethnic children. The projects receive strong support from local communities and governments. The local

communities contribute raw materials, labor, and the funds for new tables and chairs. After the schools are built, the local authorities take full responsibility for staffing and paying the teachers and maintaining the facilities. Over the years, HealthEd has given priority to poor villages in Dak Lak, Kon Tum, Quang Nam, Tuyen Quang, Yen Bai, and Hoa Binh provinces.

AEFA, a Japanese-based NGO, developed an exchange program between the newly-built Vietnamese schools and schools in Japan. AEFA encouraged Japanese schools to establish relationship with the Vietnamese schools and now students and teachers in both countries write letters and exchange paintings, photos, and crafts. Schools in Japan also donate money to Vietnamese schools.

AEFA has also mobilized support from private companies to build schools in Vietnam and Laos. The Thankyou Holdings Group and Ark Group are among the very active supporters who have funded a number of schools in Vietnam.



The children celebrate their new school