



Dear friends,

All tensions and uncomfortable events were put aside when people were preparing for the Vietnamese New Year, which fell on 12 February this year. You can compare it with the days before Christmas. There is a pleasant atmosphere and everyone is friendly. This is also the beginning of spring, so people did a lot of cleaning activities. Our Center was cleaned well and the workers from the mountains bought presents and took them back to their village. We came together for our last gathering. Bick our director spoke an encouraging word and gave everyone a bonus envelope. After that we had a delicious meal and left soon after that. The Center was closed for more than two weeks.



Understanding leprosy



Several villages in the Central Highlands of Vietnam became a safe haven for leprosy sufferers who have been shunned by society. Leprosy today is a treatable disease but in Vietnam there are still at least 60.000 people who live with leprosy. Many lepers live in the Central Highlands. Though times have changed, discrimination against leprosy patients can be severe according to relief workers. They cannot sell, work or live together with their families, because people fear being infected by leprosy. When children of lepers graduate from high school, people don't want to hire them for work.

Lack of Hygiene

Treatment and support for these lepers came through the love and care of several sisters with the same compassion as mother Theresa. The Central Highlands is one of Vietnam's poorest regions and this poverty is often at its most severe in minority communities. The lepers live often in isolation without enough sanitation. The lack of sanitation and limited access to health care is often a chance for leprosy spreading. There are still cases of leprosy because of poor hygiene. Leprosy is a disease that often affects the poorest of the poor.



No plans to move

Living with leprosy remains a daily challenge. There is still discrimination, but it is improving because people get more understanding about leprosy and are not as scared as before. Most residents of these leprosy villages have no plans to leave, and want to live together. One man said that he has a coffee farm, but it is hard for him. He wished that he had two hands because it would be so much easier. Some people live with leprosy since they were a child. For years they lived by themselves, shunned by people, but living together is at least a safe haven.

Relief for village

We contacted one of the sisters and she encouraged us to help one of these poor leper villages with 400 clean cookstoves and 400 kg sticky rice. The lepers belong to the Xtieng minority. We drove for hours with a truck full of stoves and rice through the Central Highlands and ended up in Tu Mờ Rông. After being welcomed by the sisters, together with the leaders of the lepers, we gave them some information about the stoves. Some of our workers were more motivated than ever, after seeing these lepers. The distribution was well organized and we were able to make a short video: [The Relief to a Lepra village \(click\)](#). It was all sponsored by friends in Holland showing their love for helping the poor. As long as we have sponsors like them, we can help people here. Seeing the smiles of these lepers it was worthwhile to help them. Here are some pictures:



Joining the Navy

Thang was a student at the Dong A University in Danang. He became a part-time worker at our center during his studies. He worked very well with the other workers and they became a good team. In his free time he taught English and computer skills to some of the workers and joined them in their football games. After graduation last year he received a call to join the army. We were a little bit sad to lose him, but this was a new challenge in his life. The local authorities were very proud of his willingness, as many young people like to escape military service. It all worked out very well, and Thang is now stationed in Danang at a Navy compound near the harbor.



Teaching simple truth

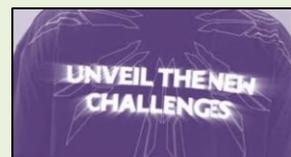
Bich & Phi have been teaching in the mountains lately. The minorities in the central highland are sometimes very poor and their lack of knowledge hinders them from developing their land or family business. They often fall into debt therefore their land was taken away by rich men. They are now working for those rich people and no

longer own their piece of land. Teaching them the simple truth of basic principles and ethics, which can be applied in real-life situations, has helped them to succeed in life. This is why the FBT course is so effective and Bick and Phi are willing to commit their lives to help those people. Please watch an example of their teaching but this time by their mentor [Mario Brühlmann \(click\)](#).



To make a difference.

Minority people are often very close. If one person does something, the whole village follows. If someone gives up, the whole village just gives up. Fear prevents them from creating new opportunities for their families. This makes it hard to overcome poverty. The FBT seminar made them aware that they must change their minds and be creative in order to have effective strategies for making a good living. The FBT teachers trained them to break ineffective habits and to make a difference in their communities. One leader of the Bana minority expressed his gratitude to the FBT program and trainers for helping his community to understand the need to change their minds in order to escape poverty. (Photobook by Nguyen Hoan - 54 VN Minorities)



Finally

We have been starting a new season, and asking for new challenges. A few weeks ago someone was driving through traffic, wearing a shirt with the words: "unveil the new challenges." Maybe that was a word for us. For everyone there is a purpose in life. It needs to be unveiled in order to see it happen. We wish you and also ourselves the willingness to be changed.

Have a blessed Spring and Summer.

Greetings

Green Impact team

Called to Serve

For more information write to: infogreenimpact@gmail.com