

Home for Abandoned and Disabled Children
Huang La, Bac Ninh Province, Vietnam
2009 Status Report - by Mark Girod - Executive Director FPF

Forgotten People Foundation Executive Director, Dr. Mark Girod traveled to Bac Ninh City and Huang La Village with Dr. Hank Bersani and Dr. Abby Wojcikiewicz to visit the resident and caregivers at the Home for Abandoned and Disabled Children (HADC). Previous trips to the HADC were co-sponsored by the Office of Service Learning at Western Oregon University and included several students who worked in the orphanage assisting with food preparation, care of residents, and building construction. This year the trip was focused on assessing the needs of the residents and caregivers.

Dr. Hank Bersani, past president of American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities conducted analyses of the various disabilities and needs of the residents. He identified needs for specialized equipment, therapies, and tools necessary to provide for appropriate care and improvement of the lives and learning of the residents.

Dr. Abby Wojcikiewicz, Board certified naturopathic physician, conducted medical examinations on all residents and prepared detailed medical histories of each. The residents appeared well cared for without evidence of abuse or neglect and the caregivers seem to genuinely enjoy the residents they work with.

Common abnormal findings on physical exam included microcephaly, severe developmental delay, upper and lower extremity contractures, evidence of malnourishment, and dental decay and deformities. Training and consultation by medical personnel, particularly those experienced in caring for people with cerebral palsy and other forms of developmental delay, may result in fewer deformities and improved nutritional status among current and future residents. Treatment by a dentist and a greater focus on daily dental care would also improve the health and quality of life for the residents and staff of the HADC.

Additions of some specialized equipment that we take for granted in the US could make an important difference in the health and safety of the residents. They need child-sized wheelchairs, some adaptive seating to make eating safer, and one or two shower chairs to better meet the needs of the residents with physical disabilities.

Across the last two years, donations from the Forgotten People Foundation have allowed for construction of a new building dramatically increasing the safety, comfort, and floor space of the HADC. As a result, the HADC has increased the number of residents it serves (including two new residents who arrived during the March FPF team visit). However, several important elements of the new building are not complete including upstairs storage, office space, and additional safety and security features remain to be added to the surrounding grounds.

Through the kindness and diligence of the Forgotten People Foundation and all who have contributed, the HADC has been transformed from a tiny, dangerous, and unsanitary facility into a modern, safe, and clean facility serving almost twice as many disabled and abandoned residents! We should each be proud of the contributions we have made that have, quite literally, transformed the quality of life for these residents.

Only about \$5,000 worth of facilities development work still needs to be completed but then we do need to secure enough financial assets to assure no food shortages during the winter months. Making sure the residents and caregivers have enough high quality food across the entire year remains a challenge despite generous donations from the surrounding Huang La community.

Once again, please make a donation to the Forgotten People Foundation today. Skip lunch once a month, forgo that latte, or set aside your spare change for people who are living in unbelievable need. Even the smallest contributions are meaningful to those who have almost nothing.

Submitted March 2009 by Mark Girod (FPF Executive Director), Hank Bersani and Abby Wojcikiewicz (FPF Board Members)