



# BETULA ASIAN AID FOUNDATION

## Newsletter April 2019

**Dear friends of Betula,**

This year it has been 15 years ago that I drove on my motorbike in the rural area of Bac Giang province in North East Vietnam. Here I found a school for blind children, a centre for children living with disabilities and a centre for hearing impaired and orphan children. To see children living with a disability, being blind or deaf and at the same time living in very poor conditions was difficult to cope with. No curriculum in "schools", only rice and egg 2 to 3 times a day, bad dormitories, no decent toilets or bathrooms.

It made me decide to visit them weekly bringing them things they needed or liked. Helping them to examine their eyes and ears. Operate where possible. Providing crutches or wheelchairs for those in need. Helping orphan children connecting with vocational training centres in Hanoi and support financially to offer them a brighter future.



That time 15 years ago Betula Asian Aid Foundation was born. Proud to say that with so many of them we are still in touch today. Children back than having families of their own now.



Betula is now active throughout Vietnam and across its borders conducting some projects in Laos and Thailand. For the 15 years of continuous support by so many of you, friends and family, I herewith like to express my sincere thanks.

### **Phat's struggle with autism**

Phat is only 5 years old, born in Nam Dinh Province in North Vietnam. He comes from a very poor family. His father died of drug overdose. His mother has mental problems and is living in the street most of the time. So Phat is looked after by his grandmother, who is a poor farmer and has little monthly income.

Phat attended a kindergarten school in his village. There it became clear that he has lots of behavioural problems. A big challenge for the teachers who have 40 to 50 children to look after and no knowledge or skills in dealing with these kind of children.

The teacher's way to solve the problem was tightening him up with a rope to a bar of the window resulting in many blue stains. This did not go unnoticed by other parents who sought for help.

Phat was diagnosed with autism when he had a health check at a hospital in Hanoi. As the family is very poor and his situation complex, several organizations cooperate to help Phat. He will have full psychological assessment and support to help deal with the abuse and autism. Counselling and training will be provided for the grandmother so that she can support him. Moreover accommodation will be provided and cost for transportation and food will be covered during their stay in Hanoi. We wish Phat all the best.

### **Trang's new wheel chair**

About 5 years ago we supported Trang with her first ever wheelchair. She has cerebral palsy. Her wheelchair was worn out and needed to be replaced. Thuy Trang has gotten bigger and her mother has gotten older so it gets more and more difficult to take her to the bathroom several times a day. We provided a "tailor made" wheelchair to help solve this problem. Moreover we support her with some money for clothes and daily necessities.



### **Mushrooms to the rescue**

We recently started a new project in Gia Lai to generate income for poor families and at the same time help to protect the environment. Betula has set up the project in cooperation with FarGreen company. A sustainable agricultural start-up based in Hanoi. Far Green provides the necessary training and technical support.



Farmers will grow high quality edible mushrooms that are grown on a rice straw substrate that is specially collected for this purpose. Straw that is currently considered to be waste and is burned openly, which is very harmful to the environment.

The production does not use pesticides, fertilizers or chemicals and uses potable water to grow the mushrooms. In this way, locally produced, healthy mushrooms are offered, while there is a positive effect on the environment and on the lives of farmers in rural areas.

The target group are farmer from an ethnic minority. Their main livelihood is rice cultivation and there is hardly any alternative way to generate extra income in the region. The aim is to build prosperous and sustainable farming communities here. Betula has selected a core group of seven (single) female rice farmers who live close to each other.

The project has started with a successful pilot with 1 family in January. In March the project will continue with the other 6 families. The average income per capita in the area is around 450 euros per year. The average monthly mushroom production per farmer will be around 100 kg. This means an extra monthly income of around 110 euros, almost a quarter of their average annual income.



## A one year old boy in Hanoi

With a father being a drug trafficker, addicted, in and out of prison and a mother being addicted and in prostitution to get money for her addiction, the life of this 1 year old is far from blessed.

The mother left the boy in the care of his grandparents who have no real stable source of income. He has no breast milk from his mother. The milk though is paramount in this stage of his life. For the next 6 months we will provide milk for the boy and will continue support after, when necessary.

## More milk



Siu Duoc is only a few months old. He is born with a cleft lip. The family is very poor. His parents are hired to do some farming work. The job doesn't provide enough for their family though. In cooperation with another organisation we will help Siu Duoc and 3 other children to operate their cleft lip. The little baby though could not go to the hospital yet as he is not strong enough. Milk will help him gain more strength, so that is what we will provide for the next 6 months.

## A new year of the Pig



As every year we support our local partners in Gia Lai, Hue and Quang Nam organizing lunar new year for about 60 children and 50 elderly. The elderly were given rice, noodles, oil and others. The children in Gia Lai and Quang Nam had a party where they enjoyed potato chips and fruits and received their envelop with the traditional "lucky money".



Why would you support us? Betula works at grassroot level and direct. Your donations are completely used to help the beneficiaries. For more information about the programs and projects please visit our website:

[www.betula-asianaid.org](http://www.betula-asianaid.org)

Your support is needed and appreciated.

I wish you all good health!

Kees