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# VietHope Newsletter

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Winter Issue IV

December 2004

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**VietHope** is a non-profit organization dedicated to Vietnam's socioeconomic development. We at VietHope believe that the wealth of Vietnam lies in its human capital and its prosperity is dependent on the harnessing of this human capital. As such, we believe that good education is indispensable to Vietnam's growth and future.

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## WORD FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*by Nam Tran Nguyen*

As 2004 comes to a close, we at VietHope would like to share a few thoughts with our donors/sponsors, families, friends and partners. VietHope is now two years into its operation. Over these two years, your generous support and constant encouragement has allowed us to pursue our mission of bringing education to the destitute children of Vietnam, one child at a time. We are honored that you have chosen to support our mission and efforts, and we are determined to keep your trust.

This past year was a highly productive year for VietHope. Through your support and the hard work of our staff, we were able to achieve a number of milestones. In terms of projects, we have solidified our core Scholarship Program and introduced two new scholarship programs, Scholarship Program B, which supports 80 minority students, and the University Scholarship Program, which offers 5 scholarships to first year university students. In addition, we have renovated a number of libraries and study centers. On the organizational front, we have strengthened our internal structures, processes and communication. We have successfully recruited new and dedicated volunteers. Our Public Relations team has conducted local television interviews and presentations to increase the awareness for VietHope. This past year also saw the strengthening of our relationship with our partner organization in Vietnam, Greenbridge (Nhiep Cau Xanh). Greenbridge has been instrumental in our project implementations; and, as we implement more projects (and projects of greater

scope), we hope to continue to build on our strong relationship with Greenbridge. We are proud of these achievements and hope to accomplish much more in 2005.

As the current president of VietHope, I want to thank each of our staff members for their dedication, hard work, camaraderie and vision. In particular, I, along with our entire staff, want to express our deepest gratitude to Kim-Son. As president of VietHope during our first year of inception, Kim-Son provided the light necessary for the team to navigate through the many unknowns. I am extremely grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of VietHope and am looking forward to navigating through the many more unknowns with this team.

Our thoughts are with you and your family during this holiday season. Do know that your generous contribution to VietHope has made a difference in the life of a child.

Best wishes for the New Year!

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### NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

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Word from the Board of Directors	1
Updates on VietHope Projects:	
The Scholarship Program	2
University Scholarship Program	2
Issue in Education:	
Gender Disparity in Education	3
Fundraising Dinner	5
VietHope Voices: Wishes	5

## The Scholarship Program:

VietHope's Scholarship Program currently funds 25 students in the Ca Mau, Dong Thap, and Khanh Hoa provinces. VietHope is actively increasing its number of awards each quarter.

## VietHope Scholarship Recipients:

Le Hoang Giang  
Le Thanh Truc  
Nguyen Thi Ut Lon  
Nguyen Thuy Linh  
Lam Thuy Mo  
Tong Thanh Thoang  
Nguyen Le Thi Tu Anh  
Nguyen Thi Ngoc Khanh  
Huynh Thi Lam Kieu  
Nguyen Ngoc Trinh  
Duong Thi Nuong  
Truong Van Nghia  
Ngo Thi Kim Nam  
Nguyen Hue Minh  
Nguyen Hong Mich  
Pham Thi Kim  
Tran Kim Ngan  
Nguyen Thi Thanh  
Tran Thanh Hai  
Dinh Thi Bao Ha  
Huynh Thi Phuong  
Nguyen Thi Phuong  
Tran Thi Huynh Nhi  
Doan Thi Kim Oanh  
Pham Thi Ngoc Tran

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## UPDATES ON VIETHOPE PROJECTS

### The Scholarship Program by Lynn Huynh

*"If your plan is for one year, plant rice;  
If your plan is for ten years, plant trees;  
If your plan is for a hundred years,  
Invest in education."*

--Confucius

This past summer members from both the Scholarship Program and our partner organization in Vietnam, Greenbridge (Nhiep Cau Xanh), worked hard to implement Group B Scholarship Program for the 2004-2005 academic year. The objective of Group B Scholarship program is to support students who are living in poverty, but are still determined to work hard and succeed in their education. Through Group B, VietHope has supported 80 students from Binh Gia, Vung Tau. These 80 students are from an ethnic minority group called Chau-Ro. As Group B scholarship recipients, they received books and uniforms. In addition to these items, the fund covered for tuition for children in the primary level. Without the program's financial support, the students will unlikely receive the opportunity to access higher level of education.



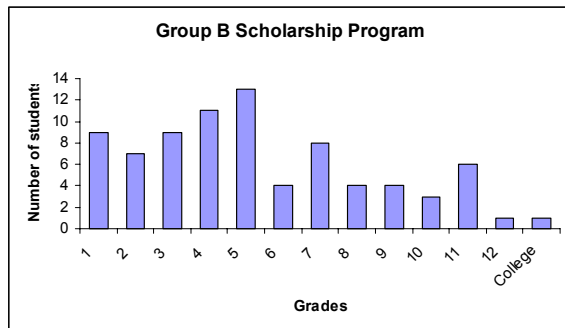
Students receiving books and uniforms  
Photo by: Lynn Huynh

### University Scholarship Program by Anh-Hoa Nguyen

Starting in the spring of 2005, VietHope will be implementing a new university scholarship program in Vietnam. The overall education enrollment rates in Vietnam have been increasing over the last few years. However, relative to primary and secondary school enrollment rates, college education enrollment is substantially lower.

The low college enrollment rates in Vietnam can be at least partly attributed to the lack of funding. Every year many talented students who are accepted to the top universities find themselves unable to pursue a college degree due to their families' financial restraints, the rising costs of a college education, and the extremely limited availability of governmental scholarships. Therefore, providing college scholarships to promising students with great potential is an essential step in improving overall education in Vietnam.

(continued on next page)



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## General Information on Vietnam:

Population = 81.6 million

-80% of population resides in rural regions

-45% poverty level in rural areas

-71% of rural population without access to clean water

Gross National Income per capita = US\$430

## Education in Vietnam:

Primary Enrollment rate:  
Female = 90.7%  
Male = 92.1%

Lower Secondary Enrollment Rate:  
Female = 62.1%  
Male = 61.3%

Upper Secondary Enrollment Rate:  
Female = 27.4%  
Male = 30.0%

Literacy rate: 94%

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VietHope will select scholarship recipients from those freshmen who come from rural regions and meet VietHope's three criteria of demonstrating academic merit, financial needs, and social activism. VietHope will collaborate with Greenbridge, our partner in Vietnam, to publicize the university scholarship program to college students in Vietnam. Greenbridge will collect information and interview applicants, while VietHope will review the applications and select the scholarship recipients. Five scholarships of \$250 each will be distributed in January 2005.

In addition to other educational projects that VietHope has been conducting, the university scholarship program will contribute to the educational development in Vietnam by encouraging students to reach their full potential and obtaining a higher education through much-needed financial assistance. Without the encouragement and generosity of VietHope's supporters, we would not be able to implement our projects. We are profoundly grateful for your generous support and hope that you will continue to aid VietHope's efforts to help impoverished students in Vietnam by contributing to this new university scholarship program.



Photo by: Lynn Huynh

## ISSUE IN EDUCATION

### Gender Disparity in Education

by Uyen Kim Huynh

Vietnam has become one of the fastest-growing countries in Asia with strong foreign investments, booming small businesses, and new government reforms to help Vietnam sustain its economic momentum. Its economy has grown by an average of 7% a year over the past decade, lifting many Vietnamese people out of poverty. The "Doi Moi" (Renovation) policy in Vietnam has been a continued success. Vietnam's great investments in education are partially responsible for this economic success.

Throughout its history, education has been highly valued among Vietnamese people, and the country's leaders have long recognized the importance of education for national and personal development. Education increases workers' average earnings and productivity. It also reduces the incidence of social problems such as drug abuse, crime, welfare dependency, and lack of access to medical care, all of which can weigh heavily on the economy.

However, major disparities exist among boys and girls with regard to access to basic education. While Vietnam has made progress in providing primary education for most children, the rate of girls attending primary and secondary education in poor and ethnic minority areas remains low. In addition, the rate of girls attending school has not been consistent in all regions and between all socio-economic groups. Girls from the more remote, poor and ethnic minority areas have lower rates of participation and achievement.

## Ways to Support VietHope:

VietHope welcomes anyone who shares our mission. There are a number of ways in which you can support VietHope.

### Donations to the Scholarship Program:

Become a sponsor for \$180/year or \$15/month.

Become a donor by donating a flexible amount

Donate to other VietHope projects

### Membership:

Membership fees go to cover any shortage in funding for VietHope projects and to cover operations expense

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In primary school, the rate disparity by gender of 1% was found in the ethnic minority areas but it was 14% in secondary school. In all regions of the country, the adult illiteracy rate of women is twice that of men.

Lao Cai Province is one of the worst off areas in Vietnam in terms of educational attainment, especially for women and ethnic minorities. In the 15-25 age group 67% are illiterate, 95% of them are female. The average attendance rate, for primary aged children (6-14 years) in Sapa District is 80% and only 53 % attend school regularly.

There are also high repetition and dropout rates, with girls attending school at a significantly lower rate than boys at all age levels.

Schools had traditionally been free in Vietnam, but recent reforms have imposed fees and other charges that families must contribute at all levels of education. Parents these days face several forms of direct and indirect costs: monthly tuition, additional tutoring fees, school maintenance fees, textbooks, and school uniforms. Education is becoming unaffordable, in particular for families in rural areas where the poverty rate is 45% as opposed to 18% in urban areas.

Extreme poverty remains the principle restriction preventing girls from poor, remote and ethnic minority areas to attend primary and secondary schools. Sixty five percent of government educational spending goes to higher levels of education, which favors students from the middle and higher income families, as only 30% of the poor advance beyond primary school.

Additionally, when given a choice by parents to spend money on secondary education, preference is given to boys over girls, particularly in rural areas.

Access to education is a basic human right and the fair provision of education to boys and girls is a major political responsibility, as well as, an important tool for socio-economic development in Vietnam. Given that the country's population is extremely young (approx. 30% of Vietnamese are under the age of 14, compared to 19% in the U.S.), the widening educational disparities represent an immense liability for sustaining Vietnam's economic and social development.

Sustained economic growth can only be maintained in Vietnam when there is truly equal opportunity for education to all children and a continued growth of skilled workers. The challenge for the next decade will be to eliminate disparities and ensure that boys and girls everywhere, particularly those living in poor, rural areas gain access to primary and secondary education. VietHope's mission is to continue providing educational support to all children in the poorest provinces of Vietnam where there is currently insufficient public service towards educating its youth.

"Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation. Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education."

-John F. Kennedy

## VietHope Executive Committee:

Nam Tran Nguyen,  
*President and  
Fundraising Chair*

Hansel Pham,  
*Vice-President and  
Admin Chair*

Lynn Huynh,  
*Secretary and  
Scholarship Program  
Chair*

Chau Nguyen,  
*Treasurer*

Van Thi Huynh,  
*Project Manager*

Kim-Son Nguyen,  
*Director*

Uyen-Khanh  
Quang-Dang,  
*Public Relations  
Chair*

Alan Tu  
*Communications  
Chair*

Uyen Kim Huynh  
*Newsletter Editor*

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## VIETHOPE VOICES WISHES: POEM TO VIETHOPE *by Uoc Nguyen*

To All The VietHope Donors and Members:

May I be a drop of water  
In the vast river of love  
Meandering near and far  
Bringing peace everywhere

May I be a singing voice  
Like a fresh flower smiling  
Offering a sense of well being  
To every sentient being

Oh this joy that I'm feeling  
Is here to stay  
Even in the ups and downs of life  
Everyday is a spring day

In the midst of life I stand  
Looking all around  
The flower of Hope is blooming  
Its fragrance lingering  
May I be a beam of sunlight  
In a foggy, foggy morning  
Lessening life's sufferings  
So the day is warm and bright

May my work be always useful  
May all being feel peaceful  
May all wars be banned forever  
And may all beings feel love.

## VIETHOPE FUNDRAISING THANKSGIVING DINNER *by Uyen-Khanh Quang-Dang*

A successful night of fundraising coupled the giving spirit along with a love for the cinema was hosted by Dr. Phuong Thuy Le and Dr. Francis Lu at their home in Cupertino, CA on Saturday, November 27, 2004. A four-course meal was followed by a showing of the 1976 Japanese movie "Shall We Dance?" followed by a discussion led by Dr. Le and Dr. Lu. One hundred percent of tickets sales were donated to VietHope and Aid for Children Without Parents, two organizations devoted to the well-being of Vietnamese youth. VietHope's Public Relations Chair Uyen-Khanh Quang-Dang gave a presentation of VietHope's overall mission and projects. The night ended with \$730 from both individual donations and money raised from tickets for the dinner.

VietHope would like to thank Dr. Le and Dr. Lu for the generous dedication of their time and energy, and especially for channeling their creativity in fundraising efforts for VietHope. VietHope will announce our upcoming fundraising dinners and hope that you can attend.

## *Happy Holidays!*

*VietHope would like to thank  
our donors. Thank you for  
your generosity and for  
your trust in us.*