



VIETNAM AND FRIENDS

Supporting blind people in Hanoi

A project of Vietnam and Friends

VAF01



A. About the Vietnam and Friends Group

1. Field

- Support for handicapped and people in need
- Education for handicapped and people in need
- Environmental protection



2. Objectives

- Train necessary skills to disabled and people in need, for a better chance to find a job in their future (e.g. English, customer service...)
- Support handicapped and people in need in finding a job (e.g. build connections with CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), NGOs...)
- Raise awareness about environmental protection within the local community

B. Support blind people in Hanoi -VAF01

I. Background knowledge: Situation of visual impaired people in Vietnam

The most common reasons for blindness in Vietnam is Agent Orange, lack of nutrition (especially vitamin A), accidents and several diseases.

In the past, blind people in Vietnam were regarded as the lowest class of society. They were really poor, got no education and non-blind people looked down on them. Calling somebody „blind” meant this person was an idiot, stupid and unable to do anything good. Only some of them could earn money on the street by begging, singing and predicting the future.

Until today there have been some positive changes in Vietnam. In some parts the government takes care of visual impaired people (a little financial support, a free bus card inside large cities, blind associations and centers...), there are several blind schools and they are free to go to universities. The society tolerates them and officially they have access to all kinds of jobs, so some of them can earn enough money for themselves



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and their family. But in reality there are not a lot of other possibilities besides doing massage and handicrafts (and the salary is very low), because they can't get the education and qualification for a better job and companies in Vietnam have concerns to employ disabled people. The unemployment rate among blinds is up to 93,7%. There are new job perspectives: They can work with computers (IT sector), with customers (service sector), as interpreters, become teachers, musicians or do arts. But they need to get the required education.

Visual impaired people have to face a lot of difficulties. They are dependent on the help of other people in many parts of their life and there are things they will never be able to do. Though most people tolerate them, they don't have a lot of contact with non-blinds, except for their family. Separation instead of integration. It is not easy for the blinds to get married, especially for women, because of their disability to do housework and take care of their husband and children. Most of the visual impaired people in Vietnam have to stay with their family their whole life, because they are not able to live alone. This is often not easy for them and for their family. They want to be independent, live on their own and get a chance on harboring their dreams, like everybody else. They don't want to feel separated and stand on the outside, be discriminated and treated like lower class people.

II. Locations

There are 2 different places in this project which need volunteers at different days and times during the week: The Nguyen Dinh Chieu school for blind children, and the blind association of Thanh Xuan district. The project coordinator sets a suitable schedule and manages with all volunteers who work in the project at the moment, so the work can be



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shared. The volunteers also can enter agreements with each other.

1. Nguyen Dinh Chieu school for blind children

Address: 21 Lac Trung, Hai Ba Trung, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

Nguyen Dinh Chieu is a primary and secondary school for blind and sighted students, and has a center for blind adults. Over 1000 sighted students study together with over 140 blind and low vision students.

Most of the visual impaired students live in the school and only go home on the weekends or for holidays and don't need to pay the school fee.

Since it was established, this school has provided their visual impaired students with many extra classes for their practical skills, such as musical classes, physiotherapy classes and computer classes. These skills help them to find a job when they graduate.

The school needs international volunteers who are able to teach English to their students and create a friendly environment in order to encourage them to speak this language.

2. Training and Adaptability center for blind adults

Address: 287 Trung Kinh street, Cau Giay district, Hanoi

This center belongs to the central blind association, was established in 1994. The purposes of this center are to do trainings for blind people in some skills including: management skill, teaching skill, English, computers, massage...

This center needs international volunteers who are able to teach English for some blind teachers here because they will often attend training courses held by some international experts, and some are eager to become English teachers, and teach English to their own students.



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III. The objective of the project.

We want to improve the English level of the participants in our project, to make them communicate with other people in English fluently, hoping they can use English in their future to have an easier life. English is the most popular and useful foreign language in the world and opens many new job perspectives, also for disabled people, hence there is a necessity for them to communicate in English fluently. Moreover, there are not a lot of good books and documents available in Vietnamese Braille, but in English. The second objective is to give them the requested soft skills for a better job in pre-vocational classes. Another perspective is, especially for the students in Nguyen Dinh Chieu School, to make them feel more integrated, more confident and also believe in themselves through contact with non-blind people. It's also very encouraging for them to hear about visual impaired people in other countries and their possibilities; therefore they get new ideas and can push the development to better living conditions for blind people in Vietnam. Besides, the class is a good environment for interesting cultural exchange between volunteers and students.



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IV. Participants in the project

- **International volunteers**
- **Local volunteers** (speak Vietnamese and English, help to teach and communicate with students and local people, most of them have experience and are good Co-teachers)
- **Local coordinator** (has experience in teaching and working with visual impaired people in Vietnam, contact to all project relevant persons, prepares a time schedule, arranges local volunteers for each lesson, forms the classes, introduces new volunteers to the project, provides information about all important topics, gives advice and helps



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solving problematic situations)

- **Visual impaired people**
- **Others** (sighted students of the blind school, stuff...)

V. Working description – The project in detail

1. Blind school

At the moment, with this new school year of the 2012 – 2013 period, we have 10 mainstream English classes for blind students and some blind staff working in massage center in Blind school with different levels from beginners to advanced. The classes are taught from Monday to Friday in the children' lunch break from 12.30 - 13.45 pm.

Each international volunteer has his/her own class (max. 8 students) and get support from one local volunteer in every lesson depending on the level of students (for A class and B class – the highest English level classes – normally there is no local volunteers, or maybe 1-2 times per week when necessary). The volunteer prepares the lessons in advance, basing on the provided English book.

The volunteers should try to improve 4 skills: Listening, reading, writing and most important, speaking, among those speaking and listening are the most important. The volunteer should also use all his/ her creativity to make the lessons interesting for the students (f.e. with music, games, funny stories, audio books...) different from their strict regular classes. The students are very shy and unconfident to speak English, so the volunteer has to be patient and sensitive, to make them believe in



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themselves.

When the English level of the students is good enough, we provide a **Presentation class** and a **Customer Service class** (CS class) for them, 1 time per week for 2 hours, taught by international volunteers.

In the **Presentation class** the students learn useful vocabulary for presenting a topic, how to prepare and hold a presentation and practise it with the class. It's important to make them feel comfortable and sure of themselves, so they dare to speak in front of other people. Being able to hold a speech or a presentation is advantageous for job interviews and for many of the jobs blind people can do in Vietnam. They will get more confident in themselves and in speaking English. This class is taught without local volunteers.

The **Customer Service class (CS class)** is a pre-vocational class and has the aim to make their students ready for a job in the service sector. Because of their ability to handle telephones and computers, there is a great chance for visual impaired people to work for companies by taking care of their customers. In this class the students learn theory about customer handling, useful phrases, solving problematic situations and earn practical experience by acting role-plays. The international volunteer who teaches the CS class gets support from some graduated students, who work for a social company in Hanoi and have training and experience in customer service.

2 times per week in the morning, there is the **English Club**. It is for advanced students or already graduated ones (no local volunteer needed), who want to practise their English. There are usually around 5 members and their English level is different, but they like to meet, just sit together



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and talk, discuss, exchange with each other and the international volunteers. The task of the volunteers is to prepare a topic and possibly a text, audio etc. and act as a moderators in the discussion or conversation.

English club for integration between blind and sighted students

1/ Objectives

- To integrate blind students and sighted students
- To improve English skills for students
- To improve soft skills of students (working group, debating skills, presentation skills ...)

2/ Participants

- Sighted students (chosen by the vice-head master. Ms Nga)
- Blind students (students from A, B class and 2 students from E class.)
- International volunteers and one local volunteer.

3/ Working time

English Club will occur 1 time/week, at around 4pm (suitable time for both blind and sighted students).

Note: So far this time is not fixed yet.

4/ Working description

One international volunteer will be the leader for one lesson and for the other lessons, the other international volunteers will take turns.

Local volunteer will be the supporter for international volunteers.

Lesson: For every lesson, we will choose one topic to talk about to improve skill of students and that they need to work together. Topic for the next lesson will be chosen from the previous lesson.



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Depends on the lesson, the students will be divided into smaller groups with both sighted and blind students in each group.

We also organize mental and physical **activities** outside the classroom like sports, games, music and other contests, trips outside the school... to provide a friendly and creative play environment for the young children and to give some variety, entertainment and fun to the older ones. The events encourage the students' creativity and empower their team spirit. This is also a chance to practise English, get in contact with each other and to experience cultural exchange. On some special occasions like anniversaries, the Teacher's Day or the Women's Day we also celebrate little parties with music performances, games and more.

In the future we also would like to work with the sighted students of Nguyen Dinh Chieu School, first for their own benefit and secondly to increase the integration of the visual impaired students in the school.

An international volunteer will teach one **regular English class with sighted and blind students**, one lesson per week, together with their Vietnamese teacher. The taught class can be from grade 3 to grade 8 and the lessons will base on the students' English textbook, provided by the school. It is an opportunity for the students to have more diversified, interesting and funny lessons, to practice their English and for the volunteers to see how the blind students study in their main class and to learn about the Vietnamese education system, the different way of teaching in Vietnam. Vietnamese students are very good in memorizing all grammar topics and vocabulary, they can write essays, but they are not really good at communicating in English because they are too shy and



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there is a lack of speaking practice in Vietnamese classrooms. The international volunteers can help the students to be more confident, bring some variety and give them a chance to meet, speak and exchange with foreign peoples.

We also want to establish a **reading club** 1 time per week for sighted students. Nowadays reading books is passing out of our minds continuously, but reading is one of the best ways to learn another language. In the reading club the students can meet and read books together with local and international volunteers. Through this they can extend their knowledge, improve their English, especially their pronunciation as well as their text apprehension, discuss in English and exchange with each other and the volunteers. We hope that some of the visual impaired students can join this club and listen to the sighted students reading. Firstly, because it's not easy to get books and other documents in Braille for the students, they are expensive and not well distributed in Vietnam, secondly, because it takes more time and is more exhausting to read Braille than Black-writing and moreover we hope that the blind students get more integrated and tie friendships with the sighted students.

2. Training and Adaptability Centre for Blind Adults

International volunteer will hold one class with 10 teachers of this center, 2 times per week, with one lesson lasts 1 and a half hour, teaching English for these teachers. Volunteers will hold English class as in an English club similar to the English club in the Nguyen Dinh Chieu School, but the average age of the members is higher (between 20 and 40 years) and their English levels differ more from each other.



VI. Available materials

- **The English book for Nguyen Dinh Chieu School.** This book was compiled by Vietnamese and international volunteers who have a lot of experience in teaching English and working with blind students. The book has no images and is suitable for blind people. It contains all important grammar topics, so the volunteer can easily follow an order and continue after the former volunteer left. Every student gets one exemplar of this book in Braille, so they can also study by themselves and review the lessons at home.
- **Braille printings** There is a Braille embosser in the school and also one teacher, who is willing to print out all documents we need for our lessons.
- **CD-Player, some old computers, Speakers** for including audio in the lessons
- **Braille boards and pens** for writing Braille

VII. Required qualifications and experiences

- English fluently with clear pronunciation
- Patience & sensitivity
- Willing to work & stay in Hanoi
- Cultural sensitivity



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- Commitment to voluntarism
- Ready to live like the local people in a lower standard of living (basic accommodations, transport by bus or bicycle, lower hygienic standard, local food).
- High motivation and ready to be in face of many difficulties like language and cultural difference, low budget, etc.

It is also advantageous if you

- Have previous English coaching/teaching experience.
- Have education/knowledge and previous experience in working with disabled people.
- Know how to read and write Braille
- Have experience in working with customers, customer handling and you're able to provide good trainings in customer service



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We always search for qualified volunteers, who have a suitable education or experience for this project. But according to our experience during the years, we know that volunteers with less experience or no education in this field can be very well placed in this project when they are committed and willing to work hard.

Before new volunteers start to teach in this project we provide training about the specialties in working with visual impaired people and some necessary skills, including Braille lessons.

If you think about bringing some materials as present or donation, we are glad to tell you what is needed in the project at the moment.

