



VIETNAM AND FRIENDS

# SCHOOL ON THE BOAT



## **Giving children the opportunity of attending school and learning**

### Context

Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam, it has around 6,5 million inhabitants, and a density of around 1800 inhabitants per square meter. As in most of the capitals of the world, Hanoi draws in rural populations. They emigrate with the aim to find more work than they had left. Indeed, Vietnam is a developing country which wants to open itself to the world economy, and wants free itself from its dark historical, political and economical past.



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During the development of Vietnam, the industry of the large cities expands and evolves. The countryside inhabitants arrive in Hanoi, with the hope of benefiting from this rapid economical expansion.

The urban lifestyle in big Vietnamese cities has been improved, and the poverty rate has diminished from 58% in 1993 to 11% in 2010. The conditions of living have also been improved. For instance, in 2006 the Vietnamese government signed a convention against hard labour, so that decent working conditions are respected. According to this convention, the minimum wage in Hanoi and in Ho Chi Minh City should be 45\$ per month, 40\$ in small industrial cities, and 30\$ in rural areas.

This meant that many families arrived in Hanoi to benefit from the expanding industrial and social improvements. This rural exodus was a success for some families, but those who were unable to benefit from it fell into a precarious financial state.

### *The Public*

We work with families excluded of the labour market. Those who tried their luck in prosperous Hanoi, but could not integrate into the new lifestyle. The reason for this and the biggest problem of these people is that they have no papers, no identity card, no authorization to live where they have settled. They come from the rural areas, where the authorities are more flexible and daily life is simpler than that of big cities. So these families have to find an alternative to their current situation.





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### These Families live in 3 areas of Hanoi:

- Area 1: Is under the Long Bien bridge, on an island formed by two sides of the Red River. This area is called “the island”.
- Area 2: Is on the edges of the Red River, a placed called “the Fisher village”.
- Area 3: Is in a shanty town of Long Bien neighborhood.

## Living Conditions



The concerned population had no other choice than to settle in these areas, because they are illegal 'immigrants', and they do not have to pay taxes to settle there. Nonetheless, they could be evicted anytime, because if the land on which they live is bought they will have nowhere to live. Considering the intense expansion of Hanoi, it is expected to happen soon. Therefore, they built floating 'houses', made of basic materials such as tins, steel sheets and plastic covers. These houses are unhygienic and are likely to bring diseases, also because the Red River is highly polluted. Hanoi's inhabitants throw away their waste in the river and in the area around it. The inhabitants of these areas have no other choice than using this water for daily use. It is a major sanitary issue, because even if the water is filtered it is still contaminated, and so many are at risk.

## Working Conditions

As previously explained, the public who we work with has to find work to survive. They work in various fields, generally as motorbike-taxi drivers, farmers, vendors (of everything you can sell!), night workers in markets or gatherers of recyclable waste. Most of the inhabitants work day and night, trying to offer their families acceptable living conditions. Nevertheless, their average daily wage is around 50,000 and 100,000VND (from 2 to 4€), which is not enough to eat, maintain the household and simply live in Hanoi.

On the island, the families have stands where they sell drinks and snacks. It is impossible for them to do this when it is rainy, too hot or too cold, as the weather in Vietnam can be.





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## Schooling

In Vietnam, schooling is not free, and quite expensive in comparison to the national standards of living. It is impossible for these families to afford schooling which costs 200€ per year per child.

Moreover, most of the family members do not have a birth certificate, a necessary paper to inscribe a child to school. They do not have this paper because they had to flee from the hospital after giving birth, for they have no identity card and not the money to pay the hospital.

Our first step was to work with these families to obtain birth certificates for those who did not have one. We act with local authorities and hospitals (sometimes it is necessary to go to the hospital in which they gave birth to gain access to essential information). We needed to finance this, because the republication of the birth certificate was not free. This step would have been very difficult for the families without the help of international and local volunteers. Today, each child has his own birth certificate and is able to be schooled.

As was mentioned above, school in Vietnam is fairly expensive, so that families who cannot afford public schools must find an alternative solution to provide their children with an education. They resort to 'charity schools', also called free schools and are provided by local or international associations. There, the children are education and alphabetized, but their level is still very low, and it cannot be compared to the level in public schools. Also, these schools are overfilled, and are not numerous in Hanoi.

These children are seen as poor, and this limits their access to superior studies. A child needs to be fully integrated in society: it is the first socialization in a whole life ; it is decisive for the future. Free schools exclude them of this personal development process.

## Our objectives

### 1. The general aim

School gives children an opportunity that they will benefit from in the future. This is the reason why the main aim of the association is to help them to stay in school, until they are independent. However, school is not our only concern. We will also take care of the children, taking into consideration their social and familial environment.

### 2. Improving working conditions

To improve the working conditions we have to know each child's family, and their situations. We have to work with them to bring the best situation possible to their children. We cannot understand the children's behavior if we do not know their lifestyle and their families.

Creating a trustful and sincere relationship with families is the first step of the project. We work with the families, in their houses, in their villages; our presence has to be legitimate and we have to get to know each other.



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### 3. Creating better learning conditions

With the objective to create better learning conditions for the children, we have to help the families, materially and psychologically. How can a child go to school if his family cannot survive? We have to show that we are here to help them when they need us. To encourage the children to go to school, we organize cultural outings and sportive events so that they can escape their hard lives. This allows them to open themselves to the world and to meet other children.

### 4. Promoting local actions

Today, we work as an international organization; with the project mainly lead by the locals in Vietnam. We want to back local interventions, help social works to develop themselves in Vietnam and to incite local actions, rather than international ones.



## Actions



In order to achieve our goals, we propose different actions.

Firstly, we organize lessons and extra-scholar activities with local volunteers.

Secondly, we offer to each family, whose children go to school, a weekly rice ration. We want to be present for the families to back them through their difficulties, but also to share enjoyments.

Lastly, we back them financially and would support them in case of health problems, or hospitalization. Health problems can often slow down the children's education.



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## Means

This program and the budget are planned for a minimum period of ten years. It is the necessary time for the youngest child, five years old, to be old enough to learn independently. The program works thanks to five parties: donators, founders (the French organization), Vietnam and Friends (the local NGO), local coordinators, and local volunteers.

Among these parties, we can distinguish two organizations:

### The French organization

#### Created by volunteers coming from overseas

This organization was created in Rouen (France) in 2011. It is composed of three main parts: the president, the accountant and the secretary. These responsibilities can change quite often, and are shared between all the motivated founders and are reviewed every six months. Each founder can ask to be in charge of one of these responsibilities, when it is needed.

- The president

He is responsible of the continuing or ending the project with the agreement of all members. All the decisions are made in cooperation with the founders. To make some decisions, the president has to send an email to the founders, and the final decision is made with a majority of votes.

- The accountant

He is responsible of the monthly money transfer between the SOB and VAF's accounts. One basic budget; local coordinators' wages, local volunteers' defrayal, rice ration, insurance and activities; never changes, it is the same for each month. The accountant is the only one responsible for this basic budget.

Only the budget for health is likely to be modified, as it depends on exceptional health cases. In this case, the accountant has to send an email in order to have the cooperation and agreement of all founders.

The accountant is in charge of the monthly communication, between the international volunteers, local coordinators and donators, concerning the financial report. He has to send this report once a year to the French organization and to the donators.

The bank account in France is only authorized to receive money from donators, and then transfers it to VAF. No credit cards for founders and no other transfers are authorized. The bank account contract is sent to founders.

- The secretary

The secretary is in charge of the communication between founders and evaluates the participation and motivation of each member. He communicates with the international volunteer and the local coordinators, and is responsible of the report of all actions and activities. Furthermore, he must react in



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case of lack of information. Also, he communicates with Dam The Lãm, VAF's president, about recruitment and receives each new contract. Then, he informs all the founders about different changes.

## The local organization, VAF

### The French organization's partner

We need to sign an agreement with the organization in France about: the way of working, the volunteers, the finances, and the responsible persons of the project. We need to create a separate bank account only for the project. The bank account is ruled by two responsible people entitled to withdraw money. After we have sent the monthly budget to the accountant, the monthly money is transferred. The budget is sent at the end of each month, with the aim to anticipate the finances of the next month. Local coordinators make the budget for each upcoming month and the international volunteers check it before sending it to the accountant. The local coordinators are responsible for organizing the basic budget, which depends on the different activities.

The local organization is composed of five parts: the president, the international volunteer, local coordinators, local volunteers and a person who receives a portion of the money of the president (Lãm the Dang).

- The president

He has to train the international volunteers and be sure that they have enough information about the project. The president receives money from the French organization and gives a part of it to another person. He transfers it each month to local coordinators. Furthermore, he is in charge of the recruitment of international volunteers, and informs the French organization about his competences. He also is in charge of the recruitment of local coordinators, and sends each new contract to the secretaries.

Lastly, the president is responsible of the progress of the project.

- The person who receives money

With VAF president, the local organization (a founder in Vietnam) gives his agreement to receive money in part with the president.

- The international volunteer

The two organizations give their agreement about the volunteer recruitment. The number of international volunteers is fixed: only one person for at least six months. The international volunteer checks and transmits the project finances to the accountant. This budget comes from local coordinators. They also are in charge of the newsletter, which informs about the actions and the project progress, with pictures and videos.



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We advise the volunteers to visit the families and children quite often, spend time with them to understand their environment better. The international volunteer works in cooperation with local coordinators.

- Local coordinators

They are two: one for the Fisher Village and Long Bien neighborhood, and one for the Island. Their working time is not officially fixed, it is flexible and depends on the current tasks. Their wage is 600,000VND (it can be raised after six months, depending on the coordinator's investment).

They are in charge of:

- The local volunteers' training (and they also check their work).
- They check the children's evaluation.
- They are in charge of the monthly activities.
- They organize the monthly meetings with local volunteers.
- They work in cooperation with the international volunteers.
- They have to plan a specific budget in case of emergency (health problems or other specific needs).
- They are responsible for the progress of the project and that it is positive.
- They have to keep a regular contact with each family and each child, to create a trustful relationship.
- They stay in contact with the public school, to follow the progress of each child's education.

The local coordinators work in direct cooperation with the French organization, VAF, local volunteers and families. They are the main component of the project.

- Local volunteers

They are eight: 4 for the Fisher Village and the Long Bien neighborhood, and 4 for the Island. The number of local volunteers is fixed according to the different school levels of the children.

- Their work time is 2 days per week.
- Their defrayal is 200,000 VND per month.
- They have to help the children with their homework and adapt themselves to the children's level and difficulties.
- They have to remain close to the families and children and communicate with them.



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- They have to attend the monthly meetings, and organize activities once a month.
- They evaluate each child (progress, needs, difficulties) and take notes everyday.
- They inform local coordinators about families' motivations and difficulties

*To complete our project successfully, we need you.*

*To help us, please fill our membership form (on School on the Boat's website), or donate to Vietnam and Friends.*

*Thank you!*



## SCHOOL ON THE BOAT

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