

PHU CU

Area Development Project

Background

Phu Cu District is located in Hung Yen Province, northern Vietnam. The Province has 7 districts and Phu Cu is the second poorest district. It has a population of 88,164 people of whom 46% are men and 10,700 are children aged 5 to 8 years. The total area of the district is 9,127 hectares of which the cultivated area is 6,403 hectares (70%). The district is plain and flat; there is neither forestry in the area nor man-made tree plantations.

Most of the people depend on farming as their only source of living. Their major crops are rice, maize, sweet potatoes and beans. The major livestock include pigs, cows, chickens and ducks.

More than 90% of the population is illiterate and do not see the importance of education. Due to poverty, they cannot afford to send their children to school. As a result, this problem of illiteracy continues through generations!

World Vision started working in Phu Cu District in October 1999 which comprises four communes: Minh Hoang, Minh Tien, Tam Da and Doan Dao with a total population of 24,000. They are located in low land which floods every year, damaging the crops. This is a major problem as the people depend on the yield for a living. If their crops fail, it may mean that they would have to go without food for weeks or in some cases, even months!

Life in the community

Some 75% of the people live in mud and straw-roofed houses and 25% in brick houses. The average income per head is less than US\$1.00 per day and it is a constant struggle for them to make ends meet. The people are mostly farmers, who live off the agricultural produce from their land. However, due to their lack of knowledge on farming techniques, their annual yield is low. During good seasons, the farmers may exchange their produce at the district markets for consumer goods.

The children in the community have generally poor health and a significant percentage of them suffer from malnutrition. Some of the common diseases include tuberculosis and respiratory problems. There is only

ONE clinic in each commune, which helps cater to the needs of over 6,000 people. The people also walk a long distance to get medical assistance. Thus, the villagers prefer to self-medicate rather than to seek professional medical help. As a result, some of the initial sicknesses were not treated on time and their conditions tend to deteriorate fast.

Usually, the children are required to stay home to help their parents in the fields. Therefore, the majority do not have the opportunity to go to school.



Mrs Lai's Family Photo

A Desperate Cry for Help...

Mrs Lai and her family form a picture of a family, desperately crying for help. She is the sole bread-winner of the family ever since her husband passed away three years ago due to a

long-term illness. With his demise, she was left with five children and a huge debt.

The family lives on agricultural production but the income from farming is only enough to pay the interests incurred on the debt. They literally live from hand to mouth day by day. The eldest child, Nguyen Thi Phuong, dropped out of school because of the extreme financial difficulties in the family. She is now working as a maid to help support her family. The second child, Nguyen Thi Oanh, is mentally retarded and becomes an additional pressure to the family. The third and the fourth children, Nguyen Dinh Khuong and Thi Quynh, are enrolled in school but they are hoping to stop their studies because they cannot afford the school fees and are not motivated to study. The youngest child is only four years old.

During months when the crops fail, the children would be left hungry for some six months. As a result, all of them are generally in poor health.

“We need help to overcome the difficult situation so that my children can go to school and have a better future” said Mrs Lai.



Photo of a nursery garden

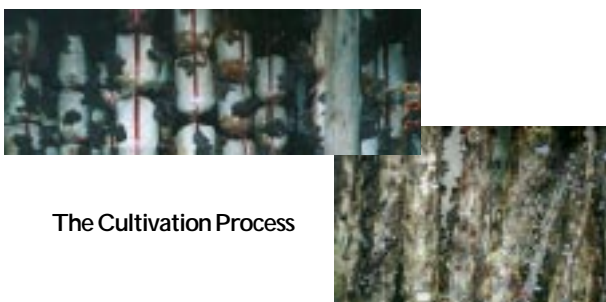
World Vision aims to help families like Mrs Lai's through:

Family Economic Development

(1) Agricultural Production

The project aims to promote agricultural production by maximising annual crops output through various activities:

- a) **Seeds** - to increase the output of maize, rice and groundnut by introducing new farming techniques and new seeds.
- b) **Cattle raising** - equipping farmers with new



The Cultivation Process

technology on cattle-raising and providing them with hybrids to attain a higher output

- c) **Irrigation** - To assist the commune people in controlling water in rainy seasons and irrigating in the dry seasons by irrigation system improvement and dike and dams making.

(2) Micro Enterprise Development

Mushroom and Dried Fungus Cultivation

World Vision hopes to improve the villagers' financial position through this new income-generating activity.



The "new look" of a newly renovated classroom

Loans are given to them at a minimal interest rate. After its successful cultivation, the villagers will then sell these products to the markets.

Education

Presently, the available classrooms are poorly furnished and teaching aids are insufficient. Students are crowded in classrooms and teachers are not properly trained too.

Therefore, World Vision hopes to cooperate with the Education Sectors of the province to help improve the learning and teaching conditions in the school. To enhance the quality of education, training on new improved teaching methods will also be given to the teachers. World Vision also aims to provide full financial support to children from very poor families in their education.

Health

Through the project, World Vision aims to reduce the percentage of malnourished children and the presence of common diseases. This will be achieved in the following ways:

- ◆ Increase health awareness among the villagers through educational talks on basic health care.
- ◆ Improve the sanitary conditions in the community
- ◆ Provide clean drinking water through the construction of wells.
- ◆ Upgrade the capability of the existing medical service providers such as the clinics and hospitals.

Conclusion

Through all the above activities, the community is expected to be self-reliant by 2013. More importantly, we look forward with you to see a transformed community where the self-esteem and confidence of the people are restored.