



# Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 2

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## Mobile Outreach brings artificial limbs and braces to the disabled in Dakrong District



*Mobile P&O van on a mission to a commune health care station that serves ethnic minority patients in a rural, mountainous area of the province.*

In cooperation with the Orthopedic Department of the Quang Tri Provincial Hospital, Project RENEW has completed an assessment of the need for rehabilitation services among the ethnic minority population living in 14 communes of Dakrong District. The survey examined 133 people with disabilities and found that 89 of them need assistive devices such as prosthetic limbs or orthopedic braces to help them with mobility. The needs assessment, according to Dang Quang Toan, Project RENEW Victim Assistance Manager, will serve as a foundation for Project RENEW's Prosthetics and Orthotics (P&O) Mobile Outreach Unit to expand its services in this mountainous and rural district near the border of Laos. The new services are expected to start in October 2009.

Dakrong is the second most populous ethnic minority district of Quang Tri Province. During wartime, the district was heavily affected by ground fighting and bombing. As a consequence, today it is still seriously contaminated with explosive remnants of war. According to a recently released BOMICEN survey, about 97% of the total land area in Dakrong District is contaminated by ERW. Survey results reveal that nearly all ERW victims – most of them middle-aged men and teenagers – have been injured while searching for scrap metal left from the war. Ms. Ho Thi Lien, director of the Huong Hiep Commune health station, noted that most local people with disabilities live below the poverty line, so they welcome expansion of Project RENEW's P&O Outreach Program into Dakrong, with its

provision of free services to the poor.

When the mobile P&O program was initiated in March 2008, the main focus was on providing orthopedic devices and rehabilitation services to ethnic minorities in Huong Hoa District. The funding was provided by the U.S Department of State and the Norwegian Trauma Care Foundation/Tromsø Mine Victim Resource Center (TCF/TMC) until August 2008. Since September 2008, TCF has been the lead funding agency for this specialized program and is also supporting the expansion into Dakrong District.

Project RENEW also provided financing to upgrade equipment to improve productivity and the quality of orthopedic devices fabricated by Quang Tri Hospital's Prosthetic and Orthopedic Workshop. After more than one year of operating in all 22 communes of Huong Hoa District, the P&O program has provided 189 orthopedic devices to 196 ERW survivors and disabled beneficiaries, at no cost to them. To help the recipients better use the devices provided, Project RENEW has coordinated with district health authorities to organize training courses for Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) volunteers. The P&O Outreach team visits beneficiaries on a regular basis to check the quality of devices and to provide repairs if needed. In April 2009, a Department of Health evaluation of the mobile P&O program in Huong Hoa District resulted in very high marks for quality and efficiency of services, which led to the request for the program's expansion into Dakrong District.



*Three young men in Huong Hiep commune await examination by the P&O team. All three amputees were injured and permanently disabled by ordnance explosions while they were collecting scrap metal.*



*Ho Van Lung, a 10-year-old Van Kieu boy living in Avao Commune of Dakrong District, lost both his legs in an ERW explosion when he was six years old, while farming with his parents on the mountain near his home. Today Lung needs surgery for the proper fitting of two new artificial*



*CBR training aimed at instructing amputees on proper use of artificial limbs made by the P&O Mobile Outreach Team and delivered on-site to local villages.*

## EOD Quick Response Teams answer calls to remove ordnance, ease residents' worries



*This live mortar round lay adjacent to this woman's house for years before it was finally reported to the Quick Response Team who removed it the same day.*

A 7:00 a.m. telephone call started the day's activities abruptly for the EOD Quick Response Team (QRT) on the morning of 11 September 2009, when the ERW hotline\* started ringing. The caller was Ms. Hoang Thi Nhi Trang, Deputy Secretary of the Youth Union in Cam An Commune, Cam Lo District, who was reporting live ordnance found by a local man in the commune. The QRT team quickly recorded all necessary information including the exact location of the ordnance, and 15 minutes later they arrived in Truc Kinh Village where the ordnance had been discovered.

The item was lying under a tree stump just five meters away from the nearest house, and seven houses were within the safety cordon. The QRT identified the ordnance as a high explosive 60mm mortar round, with no fuze. That meant, according to Mr. Ngo Thien Khiet, Team Leader of QTR No. 2, that the mortar round was safe for the team to move with expert care and caution. However, even without the fuze, if the ordnance had been tampered with by striking or cut-

ting (as scrap metal collectors sometimes do), it could have exploded. Mr. Khiet ordered the team to remove the ordnance to the team's central demolition site for disposal later. In some cases the team would destroy the ordnance in place, but because of the close proximity to people's houses, it was decided that the ordnance should be removed off-site for demolition. The Quick Response Team is now qualified and certified to carry out such disposal actions without the presence of an international EOD supervisor, in this case from RENEW partner Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) which has provided the training and field supervision for the team up to now. The team's certification to work independently is an important advance in skills and performance.

Project RENEW and NPA have agreed to continue explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) capacity building for the two Quick Response Teams (QRT) that are currently operating in Cam Lo District. The first QRT to complete NPA training in grass roots EOD response was put into operation in June 2008. Less than one year

later, the second QRT went operational, working alongside their more experienced colleagues who are providing leadership and technical backup. Both EOD teams will be trained and provided managerial and technical supervision so they can conduct operations up to a Level 2 EOD qualification standard. Between 2009-2011, Project RENEW in coordination with NPA will conduct periodic evaluations and monitor team activities to ensure that safe practices are observed at all time, in accordance with NPA's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) used in Vietnam.

Since June 2008, both QRT teams have conducted 505 EOD tasks and destroyed 1,450 items of ERW.

*\* The hotline is a telephone number that has been widely advertised and is known to residents throughout the area. It is a public emergency "free call" which costs nothing and allows residents to call in and report sighting of ERW. The call may originate from any phone at no charge to the caller.*

## Clearance of Vung Ha site makes way for safe expansion of Quang Tri Town



*Caterpillar 320 allows for mechanical excavation to reach buried ordnance much faster.*

Two months after starting UXO clearance operations at a site called Vung Ha, which is a key part of the economic expansion plan of Quang Tri Township, substantial progress has been achieved.

With equipment and manpower funded by DoD and DoS/WRA via VVMF, Project RENEW's clearance team has been working hard with technical assistance from Golden West Humanitarian Foundation, which provides EOD training and supervision along with research and development components, to meet the handover deadline at the end of this year.

The site is across the river from the main area of Quang Tri Town, and consists of a large expanse of land which could not be safely developed prior to clearance of the ordnance there. When the clearance is completed the area will be turned into residential and commercial tracts with access from national Highway 1A, with new streets, water, electricity, and other infrastructure.

Evidence unearthed during clearance operations shows that the site was previously used as a U.S. artillery position during the war, and the terrain originally sloped toward the river at a steeper angle. Over the course of time, flood waters from the river have deposited soil over the surface of the site, which has been used for farming by local people.

As a result, the average depth of UXO is greater than one meter, which requires a lot of excavation work and which poses a real challenge for the team. However, thanks to assistance from a heavy-duty Caterpillar excavator with multiple accessories that can be attached, this challenge has been dealt with. Artillery shells have been uncovered at depths of 1.2 to 2 meters, which would have taken the team several days to unearth without this mechanical assistance.

The team has currently completed clearance of eight hectares and destroyed 30 items of UXO, most of them large caliber projectiles.



*Some projectiles at the Vung Ha site had to be removed from depths greater than one meter to ensure that expansion of infrastructure and construction work can be done safely.*

**Artillery shells have been uncovered at depths of 1.2 to 2 meters, which would have taken the team several days to unearth without this mechanical assistance.**

## RENEW staff achieve professional and academic excellence

*Beginning with this issue of the newsletter, brief profiles of RENEW staff members will be shared with our readers so you will know the names and faces, the interests, backgrounds and contributions of the people who make up the RENEW team.*

In addition to saving lives and preventing injuries from unexploded ordnance, an unstated part of Project RENEW's mission is "capacity building" among our committed staff of mostly young Vietnamese professionals.

All of Project RENEW's professional staff in recent years have been invited to international conferences and workshops in numerous countries. They have explained our work in Vietnam and described the continuing problems caused here by ERW. They have joined missions and working groups in Australia, Austria, Canada, Cambodia, China, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Laos, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, and the U.S. Recently two of our RENEW colleagues completed educational achievements of which we are quite proud.

Duong Trong Hue started Project RENEW's Mine Risk Education program in 2001. He was also involved in the RENEW impact surveys and KAP studies of the extent and nature of the problem in Quang Tri Province. This knowledge helped to determine strategies and communication programs to build people's awareness of the dangers of ERW and help them to be safe. Two years ago, Hue was the first person from Quang Tri Province to be awarded a Fulbright Fellowship for a Masters study program in the



*Hue and friend in Washington, DC during Hue's time of study in the U.S.*

United States. In June of this year, Hue returned to Vietnam and joined the teaching faculty at RMIT University, the Australian institution of higher learning in Ho Chi Minh City.



*Quang during conference on cluster munitions in Wellington, New Zealand in February 2008.*

Tran Gia Quang joined the staff of VVMF's Hanoi office in September of 2004 after graduating from the Institute for International Relations, one of Hanoi's most prestigious universities. Quang decided that VVMF and Project RENEW offered an opportunity to use his educational skills to enhance relations between the U.S. and Vietnam, and also to help bring about safer and more secure lives for people living

in Quang Tri Province and other areas affected by ERW.

While working full-time in support of RENEW staff and as liaison in Hanoi with Vietnamese ministry officials, as well as U.S. Embassy staff and representatives of other international organizations, Quang pursued nighttime studies at his old university. He was invited to Japan and Singapore to make presentations on his study topic, U.S.-Vietnam cooperation in neutralizing post-war ERW. Last month Quang's university, now renamed the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, awarded him a Master's Degree which he earned with flying colors. Quang is one of the two students who received the highest marks in the class.

We are proud of Hue and Quang and all the Vietnamese staff who have made Project RENEW the success it has become in just a few short years, bringing benefits to people whose lives have been directly affected by the dangers of ERW in Quang Tri Province.

As they continue their work, RENEW staff are encouraged to seek opportunities to study, to travel and to stay active internationally at both academic and professional levels. Project RENEW will strive to continue offering opportunities for aspiring staff members to contribute to better lives for the Vietnamese people today, and to open doors for future learning and leadership tomorrow.

**Chuck Searcy**  
**VVMF Vietnam Representative**

*"As they continue their work, RENEW staff are encouraged to seek opportunities to study, to travel and to stay active internationally at both academic and professional levels."*

## Project RENEW welcomes VVMF 2010 delegation to Vietnam

Since the first VVMF delegation came to Vietnam in April, 2000, which led to the launch of the humanitarian assistance program that became known as Project RENEW, VVMF delegations have visited Vietnam almost every year. These journeys offer veterans, business leaders, students and teachers, housewives, and families of veterans from all over the United States a unique opportunity to discover Vietnam's diversity, its history and culture, to enjoy the extraordinary landscape, and to bask in the warm welcome always offered by the people of Vietnam.

Preparations are now underway for the next delegation visit from 9 to 17 January 2010. The delegation will be led by **General Barry R. MacCaffrey, USA (Ret.)**, Adjunct Professor of International Affairs at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and VVMF Founder and President **Jan Scruggs**. During the journey from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City the delegation will spend a full day in Quang Tri Province, learning about the threat of explosive remnants of war and observing Project RENEW's humanitarian mine action operations supported by VVMF. In addition, delegation members will meet with high-level Vietnamese and American government officials and learn about U.S.-Vietnam relations, Vietnam's society and its political system, and Vietnam's regional and international policies that have led to economic recovery and political stability.

Further details are available from Holly Rotondi, Vice President for Programs, at VVMF's Washington office: +1 202 393 0090 ext.104 or e-mail hrotondi@vvmf.org.

## Project RENEW Coordination Office

103 Nguyen Binh Khiem Street  
Dong Ha City  
Quang Tri Province  
Vietnam

Phone: 84 53 3858 445  
Fax: 84 53 3858 442  
E-mail: [projectrenewvietnam@gmail.com](mailto:projectrenewvietnam@gmail.com)

## Restoring the Environment and Neutralizing the Effects of the War

We're on the web

[www.landmines.org.vn](http://www.landmines.org.vn)

Project RENEW is a cooperative program between Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) and the Department of Foreign Affairs of Quang Tri Province, Vietnam established in 2001 with the aim of creating and development a comprehensive and integrated management model to address the issues of explosive remnants of war.

Currently, our humanitarian mine action efforts consist of:

1. EOD clearance and mobile quick response teams to safely remove hazardous ordnance.
2. Risk education for children and adults to teach accident avoidance and prevention of ERW casualties.
3. Victim assistance to provide medical treatment, rehabilitation services, and income generation to survivor families.
4. Data management and analysis of survey and other ERW-related information collected.

Project RENEW would like to thank the following donors and partners:

U.S. Department of State

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Norwegian People's Aid

The Humpty Dumpty Institute

United Nation Children's Fund

U.S. Department of Defense

Trauma Care Foundation/Tromsø Mine  
Victims Resource Centre

Golden West Humanitarian Foundation

The Government of Vietnam, Quang Tri  
Provincial authorities and local people

Various organizations and individuals

## Global ban on cluster munitions signed by 100 nations, moving toward ratification

On 25 September, 2009 France and Burundi formally ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, making them the 20th and 21st States to ratify this international humanitarian treaty which prohibits the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions. It also sets out obligations to assist victims of this deadly ordnance, and their families and communities, as well as mobilizing international resources to clear contaminated countries such as Vietnam. Vietnam's neighbor, Laos P.D.R., was the first nation to sign the treaty at a ceremony in Oslo in December 2008. Since then 100 nations have signed. With France and Burundi now the 20th and 21st nations to ratify, only 9 more ratifications will bring this crucial treaty into force.

During this process, Project RENEW has provided support to Pham Quy Thi, a Vietnam cluster bomb survivor who is a strong campaigner with the "Ban Advocates" initiative sponsored by Handicap International Belgium. Thi's participation with HI and the efforts of other cluster bomb victims around the globe helped build momentum that led to the treaty signing in Oslo in December.

Thi suffered serious injuries when he hit a cluster bomb while working in his rice field in Hai Lang District in 1977. He was only 23 years old. The explosion claimed his right hand and caused serious injuries to his abdomen. A number of metal fragments are still lodged in his body.

In his story published on the Ban Advocates Blog, Thi expressed his hope that the treaty would help clean up all contaminated areas in Vietnam, so that he and others would be able to work without fear, and so that explosives left over from the war would no longer pose a risk to local people.



*As a CMC campaigner, Thi attended the Berlin conference in June 2009 on destruction of stockpiles of cluster munitions.*

Thi has become quite well known in his home village for his active role as leader of the club for people with disabilities, many of whom, like Thi, have been injured and disabled by explosive ordnance. Thi has helped organize vocational training opportunities for disabled people to earn independent incomes and reintegrate into their communities.

This has also achieved a few moments of fame beyond Vietnam. At the cluster

munitions convention in Dublin, Ireland, Thi represented disabled victims from all over the world when he spoke at an international press conference on the stage with Lord Alfred Dubs, British member of Parliament, and Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), member of the U.S. Senate who introduced legislation that prohibits the U.S. from exporting cluster munitions to any other country. The Leahy bill was signed into law by President Barack Obama in March of this year.

Vietnam is not known to have ever used, produced, stockpiled, or transferred cluster munitions to any other country. Vietnam has not yet signed or ratified the treaty. Yet Vietnam remains heavily devastated by the widespread use of cluster munitions by the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. The contamination of explosive ordnance including cluster munitions has claimed over 100,000 deaths and injures since the war ended in 1975, and the residual threat requires extensive clearance operations today.

There is a strong expectation among the international community that the Government of Vietnam will join the convention by signing and ratifying the treaty very soon. Vietnam's participation would secure much greater international assistance for efforts such as Project RENEW, to help overcome the continuing effects of the war and to bring greater hope and opportunity to the survivors of cluster munitions and other explosive ordnance.