



Restoring the Environment and  
Neutralizing the Effects of the War

Dear Friends,

It's our pleasure to share with you Project RENEW's quarterly newsletter.

Highlights in the June issue:

- **RENEW team cleans up site to build an amusement park for local children.**
- **Thousands of young students receive notebooks with UXO safety messages from RENEW.**
- **Proud to work in an environment dominated by men.**
- **RENEW support enables the blind to live independently.**

Please scroll down to read more from the Project RENEW Team.

## RENEW team cleans up site to build an amusement park for local children

A RENEW EOD team is clearing a site where a community center and an amusement park for local children will be built once all exploded ordnance is safely removed. The site is in Lam Lang 3 Village, Cam Thuy Commune, Cam Lo District, an area heavily contaminated by wartime ordnance.



This deployment is part of RENEW's partnership with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in response to the local needs and requests for clearance of small and medium sites for community development projects. After completion of the clearance, the community center and amusement park to be built there will serve 1,100 households in a total population of 5,275.

"We are very excited about this project and we support it," said Ms. Le Tai Hang, a local villager, "because we will have a spacious place to organize meetings and community activities. We can also share our experiences about farming, and our children will have a safe place to enjoy outdoor activities," she said.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Visit of the Norwegian Embassy Delegation, 25 May 2010



Norwegian Ambassador Mr. Stale Torten Risa meets with Mr. Nguyen Duc Chinh, Vice Chairman of Quang Tri Province People's Committee at Project RENEW Office during his review of the successful partnership between NPA and RENEW in clearing ERW.

### Visit of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, 15 June 2010



Mr. Benjamin Liang, Representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office attends an information briefing on the Taiwanese-funded "Mushrooms-with-a-Mission" program in Cam Lo District. This is an initiative by RENEW in partnership with the Humpty Dumpty Institute to reduce poverty among ERW victim

Since 1976 to the present, in Cam Thuy Commune has suffered 18 deaths and 14 injuries caused by unexploded ordnance (UXO). In Lam Lang 3 Village alone, Project RENEW's Quick Response EOD Team has safely collected and destroyed 44 items, one of which was in an area where local children used to play. All UXO items found have been quickly removed (the ones that are safe to move) to the project's Central Demolition where they are destroyed, ensuring the safety of local residents, especially children.

Contributing to the efforts of minimizing the risks of UXO accidents, RENEW's Mine Risk Education program undertakes activities such as public information messages integrated into community activities, risk education panels as part of commune gatherings, and distribution of leaflets.

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## Thousands of young students receive notebooks with UXO safety messages from RENEW



Cheers of excitement rang out from more than 350 students when they heard the announcement that each of them would receive 10 notebooks, free of charge from Project RENEW, to support their school studies.

At a year-end ceremony at Ton That Thuyet Secondary School of Cam Nghia Commune, the school principal announced that every student, regardless of academic grades for the year, would receive 10 notebooks with UXO safety messages printed on the front and back covers - a gift from a Project RENEW donor. Usually at the end of the school year only a few exceptional students are rewarded with a small number of notebooks.

Designed to reduce accidents and injuries by spreading UXO risk information and promoting safe behavior among students, the notebook initiative also lessens the financial burden for parents who have to cover the extra cost of books and supplies for their children's education.

The local Youth Union, Project RENEW's partner in risk education, distributed 40,000 risk education notebooks to 4,000 students in the two districts of Trieu Phong and Cam Lo, where RENEW has deployed Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams to provide quick response to findings of dangerous UXO, and safely remove it or destroy it.

Pham Thi Loan, a sixth grade student who had an outstanding performance record in school, had tears in her eyes as she received her notebooks, when she talked about her father. "He died three years ago when attempting to cut an artillery shell to sell for scrap," Loan said. "These notebooks are good for me and my classmates. As we write and study, we will also be reminded how dangerous it is to contact with unexploded munitions. That's the reason my dad is no longer living."

families.

### USEFUL LINKS

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Ms. Pham Kim Ngan, principal of Khoa Bao Secondary School in Cam Thanh Commune, thanked Project RENEW and the donor. "This support is really appreciated, because the living conditions of most students in this area are still difficult," she said.

The gift of the risk education notebooks was made possible through a generous donation from Mr. David M. Wells, an American lawyer who lives and works in London, England. Another donation from Mr. Wells in 2008 was used to construct 17 new billboards, promoting the message of risk education and safety in Hai Lang, Trieu Phong and Cam Lo Districts.

Since Project RENEW was launched in 2001, the number of accidents, injuries, and deaths caused by unexploded ordnance in these three districts has steadily been reduced from about 45 a year during 1996-2001 to a total of only 7 during 2002 up to present.

While ERW clearance takes time and money, ERW risk education is an immediate intervention aimed at reducing the number of deaths or injuries caused by explosive leftover of the war.

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## **Proud to work in an environment dominated by men**

Ms. Nguyen Thi Lan joined Project RENEW in May 2009 after four years of working for a medical center in Dakrong District. Since then, Lan has been responsible for providing medical support to one of two Project RENEW EOD Quick Response Teams.



Born in Quang Tri Township, Lan was not as lucky as her friends. An ERW accident resulted in a permanent disability for her mother when she was only eleven. Nevertheless, Lan's mother has been a brave woman who has worked very hard with her remaining left hand to bring up her three children. Growing up in a disabled mother's arms, Lan decided to enter medical school as her first step toward helping people in similar circumstances.

Working in a environment dominated by men, Lan says she has never feel uncomfortable. Her pride in being a medical staff officer for Project RENEW and her experience of having a disabled mother motivate her a lot in her daily work with this nine-man team. In the field when her team members are carefully cleaning up dangerous ordnance, Lan is always on standby to react immediately in the case of an accident - which fortunately has never happened so far.

"In addition to my own knowledge, I am equipped with complete medical kits and supplies to fulfill my duties as a field medic," said Nguyen Thi Lan. "Safety is the team's first priority, so we practice *casevac* (casualty evacuation) on a monthly basis so that we're ready to respond in the case of any incident."

Since June 2008, Project RENEW's partnership with Norwegian's People Aid (NPA) has fielded two Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams that are now deployed in Trieu Phong and Cam Lo Districts. These two EOD teams have conducted over 1,000 tasks in response to ERW findings reported from the local community. Over this period, more than 3,000 items of explosive ordnance have been safely destroyed.

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## **RENEW support enables the blind to live independently**

Support from Project RENEW has enabled more than 60 blind people to go to work earning substantial incomes and enjoying more independent lives.



Project RENEW started its support to the Hai Lang Blind Association in 2007, with occupational training to teach blind persons to make bamboo toothpicks, brooms, chop sticks and incense sticks. During the approximately 10 months when the workshop is in regular production, the blind workers can earn about \$35 to \$40 US dollars a month, which is a considerable amount for people with disabilities and not far below per capita income in Quang Tri Province.

This successful model has attracted great attention from the community. Local businesses and charity organizations have visited Hai Lang Blind Association. Many decided to help distribute products made at the blind workshop and promote them in the local market.

In late 2009, with funding from the Trauma Care Foundation, Project RENEW dedicated a new workshop facility which now provides enough space for expanded production. Specialized equipment also helps ease the manual work formerly required for preparing raw materials, which is also very time-consuming for blind workers.

"With the workshop and equipment in place, we are focusing on making tooth-picks and incense sticks which sell well in the local market," said Tran Xuan Loi, the manager of the Hai Lang Blind Association. Loi lost his sight in 1980 because of an explosion from old wartime ordnance.

"This generous support has helped 60 blind people in my association earn additional income and to lead independent lives," said Loi.

"However, the number of blind people who are in need of this support remains quite large," he said.

In Hai Lang District alone, there are 438 blind persons living in the district, and the number of blind persons in Quang Tri Province is estimated to be over 3,000. An ERW victims survey conducted by RENEW in 2006 indicated that since the war ended Hai Lang has the second highest number of ERW casualties in the province.

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