



NEWS BULLETIN 299
WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 13, 2017

Horror and Heroism as Vietnamese Confront the legacy of Agent Orange

AP raises \$9,000 for six affected families



Phan That, left, with his daughter Pham and wife Haong

Phan That (photo left) awaits the future with trepidation. Mr That was exposed to Agent Orange, the defoliant that was sprayed over Vietnam during the war, and passed the poison on to two children who are now severely handicapped. Adding to his worries, the That house sits on low-lying land, which leaves it exposed to flooding.

Mr That is not alone. According to the Vietnamese Red Cross, three million Vietnamese have been affected by dioxin poisoning caused by Agent Orange. Most were born after the war.

The US government has funded efforts to clean up contaminated "hot spots" and supports several pilot programs that include medical assistance. But the rest of the world views Agent

Orange as an American problem, leaving the Vietnam government and communities to struggle with compensation and support.



Pham Thi Do and her son Toan, who recently entered hospital for hemophilia

[Thanh Duc](#)'s children have been paralyzed by Agent Orange and a fourth child was killed in an accident. [Le Van Dung and his wife Dang Thi Met](#) produced 13 children and lost 12 to Agent Orange.

There will be no happy ending for these parents, because the condition of their children is irreversible. AP has grown close to the family of [Pham Thi Do](#) and her cheerful 22-year old son Nguyen Van Toan, one of three siblings poisoned by Agent Orange. Toan (photo) is a talented craftsman and his model of Hue University brightens up the AP office in Washington, but he recently went into hospital for hemophilia and may never leave. His father sits at his side, while his mother cares for his ailing sister at home.



Le Thanh Duc, right, rears chickens with help from Nguyen Van Thuan, an AEPD outreach worker

In an effort to shift the focus back to victims and their caregivers, The Advocacy Project (AP) is today launching an [appeal on Global Giving](#) to buy a cow for the That family. This will be the seventh time that AP has helped an Agent Orange family, in partnership with the Association for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (AEPD), a leading advocate for war victims in Quang Binh province. The campaign has raised \$9,000 to this point.

[The six families funded so far](#) continue to battle heartache. Two of [Mai Thi Loi](#)'s sons have been driven mad by Agent Orange and chained up to prevent them from smashing up the house. Three of [Le](#)

But while these children probably cannot be cured, much can be done to ease the pressure on their parents, who respond to donations with gratitude and hard work. AP's approach is to purchase livestock or poultry that will produce a sustainable income. Mai Thi Loi's cow, *Opportunity*, has doubled the family's earnings.

Once funds are raised for Mr That and his wife, AEPD will buy a breeding cow that will produce calves, milk and fertilizer, enabling the family to buy medicine and shore up the house against future floods. Mr That will be assisted by an AEPD outreach worker who was himself wounded in the war and can relate to

other survivors (photo). A Peace Fellow from AP will visit next year and check on progress.

This approach relies heavily on the dedication of Peace Fellows, who have contributed most of the \$9,000 raised so far. [Ai Hoang](#) (2016) was helped by donations from her own family in the US - an act of remarkable generosity given that the family fled from Vietnam when Ai was a child.



Peace Fellow [Jacob Cohn](#) raised \$1,500 for Duong Thi An, whose son is going blind

odds and fighting for a better future for their children. Having the chance to share (their) stories with the world will probably be one of the most fulfilling experiences of my career. I'll be bringing a lot more than souvenirs home from this trip."

* [Click here to donate to the That family](#) and thank you!

Drafted by Iain Guest iain@advocacynet.org

Thanks to Humanity United for supporting our 2017 program and to the Peace and Collaborative Development Network for re-posting our bulletins.

