

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER PROJECTS ABROAD VIETNAM

Chuong Duong bridge - Hanoi



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2 Week Care & Community Project in Hanoi with Projects Abroad



Time flies when you're having fun, that's for sure. The two weeks felt like two months in Hanoi, but now back at home it feels like two days. The Friendship Village became like a second home, filled with people who are full of love, happiness and gratefulness. It's incredible how you can band with people you just met.

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FEATURE STORY

2 Weeks Care & Community Project in Hanoi with Projects Abroad

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We became a part of The Friendship Village by helping the kids out in classes, teaching them maths, art, daily basic skills like washing their hair, cooking and cleaning. We played different sports outside with all of the children. But also hanging out with them in our free-time felt great! Why? Because you can see in their eyes how they appreciate your presence, even if it was just a little bit of time you spend with them. From the beginning it felt like I've known the kids for ages, it's crazy!



We also did some gardening and we painted the doors of one of the houses where some of the children live. We did a little for the Friendship Village, but we received so much more in return: life experience.

I've never met so many thankful kids in my whole entire life, even though I'm just 17. All of the children don't have much, but they know how to appreciate the best things in life: friendship, joy and love. The children and people in the Friendship Village are the best example for how the world needs to become to be a better place for everyone.

People ask me how the whole journey was, but to be honest, I can't describe it, because you need to experience it yourself to fully understand what kind of impact this kind of journey has on your own life. This amazing journey was definitely memorable for me and I'll try my best to begin new journeys on my life road just like this one. People always inspire you, no matter where you are in this little world. Keep in mind: the most valuable lessons aren't taught, they're experienced.

Phebe Wai, 2 Week Special volunteer, Netherlands

Volunteering in Vietnam



When I decided to go to Vietnam to teach English I decided to do a lot of things for the first time in my life. I had never been to South-East Asia before. I never travelled on my own before. I had no teaching experience. What if I wouldn't make any new friends? I was really nervous! A couple of days before my departure, I almost regret the whole thing. It just felt more comfortable to stay home with all familiar things, my friends and my regular routines.

On my first day teaching I met some really nice local volunteers who were going to help me translate my lessons. I also met a big class of first graders and a very different school system than I'm used to. I couldn't remember exactly when the lesson was supposed to start so I asked one of my local volunteers. Her answer was simple: "You can start now". That's how I learned the Vietnamese culture has a different and more flexible view on time than my (Norwegian) culture does.

One of the reasons I wanted to teach in Vietnam is because I'm really interested in learning more about the Vietnamese culture, and not just from a tourist's perspective. By working in school - maybe the most important institution in a society - you learn so many new things about the culture and the country in general. No matter what placement you choose, working in Vietnam with Vietnamese colleagues, Vietnamese schedule, Vietnamese lunch and Vietnamese ways of doing things really gives you some valuable information about the culture and the people. You also become more open-minded and tolerant towards other cultures. This is one of the most valuable things I brought home after volunteering in Vietnam.



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Volunteering in Vietnam

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If there is one thing I will never regret during my stay in Vietnam it is the fact that I decided to go to Bo De Pagoda to do some care work in the afternoons after teaching in the mornings. This gave me the opportunity to join two different placements and it felt very worth spending every second there. This way I feel like I really made the most out of my limited time in Vietnam - which is always a good feeling. At school I was working very independently alongside my local volunteers, but at Bo De Pagoda there are many other volunteers working every day to talk to and share experiences with.

Living in a house full of new people from different countries and with a roommate I never met before was also a new experience for me. It turned out to be great! There is always someone in the living room if you need someone to talk to, you eat your

dinners together and the evenings are most often filled with social events. Joining these social events is a great way to get to know people from other houses and there is always something exiting to do in the wonderful city of Hanoi!

Travelling to a foreign country to volunteer might feel like taking a big step. You need to take a lot of different things into consideration. How to raise the money, where you want to go, what you want to do, how much time you want to spend and if you want to travel on your own.

To all the people wondering if they want to take the step I just want to say - go for it!

This is something you might regret not doing some day, but you surely will never regret doing it! The list of things you learn is almost endless; it makes you more independent and gives you great skills to use later in your career. A lot of people say they want to travel and want to do different things, but there is a big gap between wanting and doing. Going back to Norway after five weeks volunteering in Vietnam I've so many new memories, new friends and I am so happy with all of it.

Maren Lorentzen, Teaching volunteer, Norway



Language & Cultural social event

Hands-on experience gained by a clinical psychology graduate by volunteering in Vietnam

Ronalyn Bio (22) came to Vietnam with Projects Abroad to gain more knowledge in the field that she wants to establish a career in: clinical psychology. She was placed at Hope Center – a center of education and intervention for children with disabilities where she worked in the department for autistic children.

Ronalyn's day-to-day work during her one month stay went as follows: in the morning she worked one on one with a child using skill games such as building blocks and puzzles before lunch and nap time, when she helped with feeding the children and getting them to go to sleep. She started working in the afternoons at 14:00 with similar activities; sometimes the schedule was changed up with different practices like playing with the balls or tumbling. Additionally,

Ronalyn was assigned to work with one specific child to follow up with his progress and at the end of the volunteer time, she gave a talk on that child's progress.



By being a volunteer in Vietnam, Ronalyn was able to perceive that the Vietnamese people did not really know how to deal with situations such as autism. “Different opinions and different experiences from people around the world, like the international volunteers, can be of a great help”, said Ronalyn. She was modest when talking about the difference she made at the center: “I think I just made it easier for the carers and the teachers there and I helped them by giving them my interest in how to play with children. I also suggested they should clean the toys because they are very dirty and the teachers clean the toys every Friday now which is really good.” Yet Ronalyn did more than just playing with and feeding the kids, she was able to use her knowledge to improve the situation of a specific child: “The child I'm working with, Lam, usually isolated himself in the classroom and over the course I worked there he ran up to me every-time I walked into the classroom and hugged me. So the teachers there told me, ‘Lam really likes you!’ “. It was the most memorable experience Ronalyn had during her month in Vietnam.

“I was a bit shy I would say but working there I learnt how to take charge of situations because if you work with nine or 10 autistic children, it's going to be some chaos, but it's really good to take initiatives, be passionate and help the kids”.

Volunteering at the centre gave Ronalyn the chance to gain first-hand experience in her field of study. “I've just graduated from psychology and I worked as a research assistant for child development since February. I think from this experience I got more hands-on experience instead of sitting behind the book and learn about it.”

University of Sydney students spend one month at Physiotherapy Project in Vietnam



Health and Sciences students Natalie Di Donato and Kylie Fish decided to spend their summer in Vietnam – a country whose rich culture has long fascinated the two girls – to participate in Projects Abroad's Physiotherapy Project. They wanted to bring the physiotherapy skills they have learnt at their university to help out the people in Vietnam.

Natalie and Kylie's placement was at the National hospital of Acupuncture, where their role in the beginning was to help with the acupuncture, put on the electrodes then take off the needles and treat the children. As they were not very comfortable with the acupuncture and not being able to use the skills they hoped to bring to the table, Natalie and Kylie switched to working with the parents and children in the waiting area by doing the massaging and skills training. "Helping the parents is really good because we were able to teach them how to do the simple physiotherapies for their children by themselves".

Since the hospital focused only on acupuncture, the doctors and nurses there didn't have any experience or knowledge of what physiotherapy was. With the presence of Natalie and Kylie, the treatment for the disabled children became a combination of the hospital way (acupuncture) and the volunteers' way (physiotherapy) which worked quite nicely, "They did the acupuncture and we added the physio skills. This was much more beneficial to the kids", said the two girls.



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University of Sydney students spend one month at Physiotherapy Project in Vietnam

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The two volunteers did meet some obstacles at the beginning of their placement, “It was just chaotic and so busy everywhere; in the hospital it was overcrowded with people all over the place: two or three kids on one bed and the heat, all the people, all the needles, all the electrodes, kids screaming... it was just overwhelming for a few first days”. This did not prevent Natalie and Kylie from continuing their great work enthusiastically.

After one month, Natalie and Kylie not only brought physio treatments to the little patients, but also bright smiles and important developments of motor function. “The most memorable moment I have was when I saw the huge smile on the face of the para-



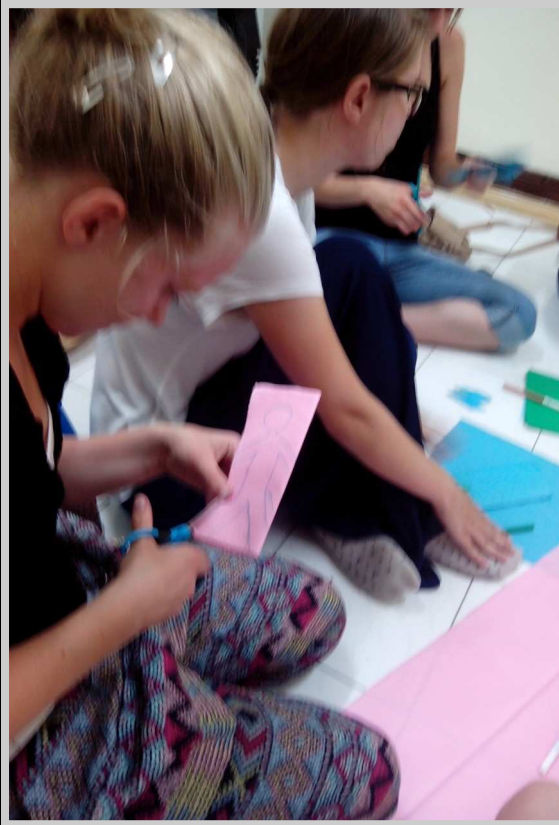
lysed 14-year-old boy who I treated everyday. The boy was not usually smiley and happy because he still has to be dependent on others at his age. I brought with me a blow-up kangaroo and let him punch it to strengthen his muscles. One day he was signaling me that he wanted to do the punching with the kangaroo and I couldn't find it anywhere. But later when I found it and brought it in, there was a huge smile on his face, it was the third time I saw his smile and since then he smiled a little bit more”, shared Kylie. Natalie also recalled her greatest moment: “To me it was when the parents came up to us and said “Oh, come work with my child! Come work with my child!” because they saw other children were improving.

Natalie and Kylie had this advice to share with those who wish to have a similar experience: “Be open to everything. It can be the small things can make a big difference for the children who are going through a rough time and I think that is the key thing for us. Don't be afraid to try and try new things”.

Duong Pham, Information manager

MONTHLY WORKSHOP REVIEW

Monthly workshops is a concept developed and run by Projects Abroad in order to support the work of the volunteers. The topics can be quite diverse, but in general they will revolve around the themes related to their projects: Care, Physiotherapy, Teaching (Classroom management), Art & Craft, Language & Culture, etc.. The latest workshop organized is the art & craft session when an art & craft social enterprise was invited to lead the it. Volunteers were shown how to make simple toys and crafts for kids from environmentally-friendly materials. Let's check out how the workshop looks via these photos:



And this is how the volunteers applied what they learnt in their volunteer work:



September Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Vietnam's Independence Day	3	4	5	6 Katharina and Kathryn arrive	7 Rhys and Ryan arrive
8 Worthwhile event: baking cakes to raise fund	9	10 Danielle arrives	11	12 Westlake tour by electric bus	13 Youssef arrives	14
15	16	17	18 Stine arrives Mid-autumn festival hanging out	19	20 Julia arrives	21
22	23 Jessica arrives	24	25	26 Monthly workshop	27 Kinh/Le's birthday	28
29	30					

September 8 - Worthwhile event. We are supporting a partner's fundraiser event by making , baking and selling cakes together. Proceeds will go towards the fund for disabled people.

Event time: 1-7PM

September 12 - Westlake Tour– Weather is getting cooler and a tour around the famous Westlake by electric tourist bus will a good way to spend time together while enjoying the scenery.

Meet at: Tran Quoc pagoda (Thanh Nien St) **Time:** 5.30PM **Cost:** 80,000VND/ person

September 18 - Mid-autumn festival hanging out - One of the biggest and most interesting festivals of the year when all the locals flock to the streers to see the lion dance and to se the colorful vibe of the city.

Meet at: Tourist Information Center **Time:** 8PM

Sep 26— Monthly workshop - More information to come

Photos of the Month



Care volunteer Gwendal work with orphaned child at Bo De pagoda in a craft lesson



Play time of care volunteer Eman and orphaned kids



Care volunteer Hannah was having a little fun with bubbles at her care placement



Volunteer Deborah much enjoyed her time with the Vietnamese autistic children



Daily practice and exercises with physio volunteers have brought positive changes to the disabled kids



Occupational therapy volunteer Carly and physio volunteer Julie took a photo together with the veterans who suffer from agent orange during the wars

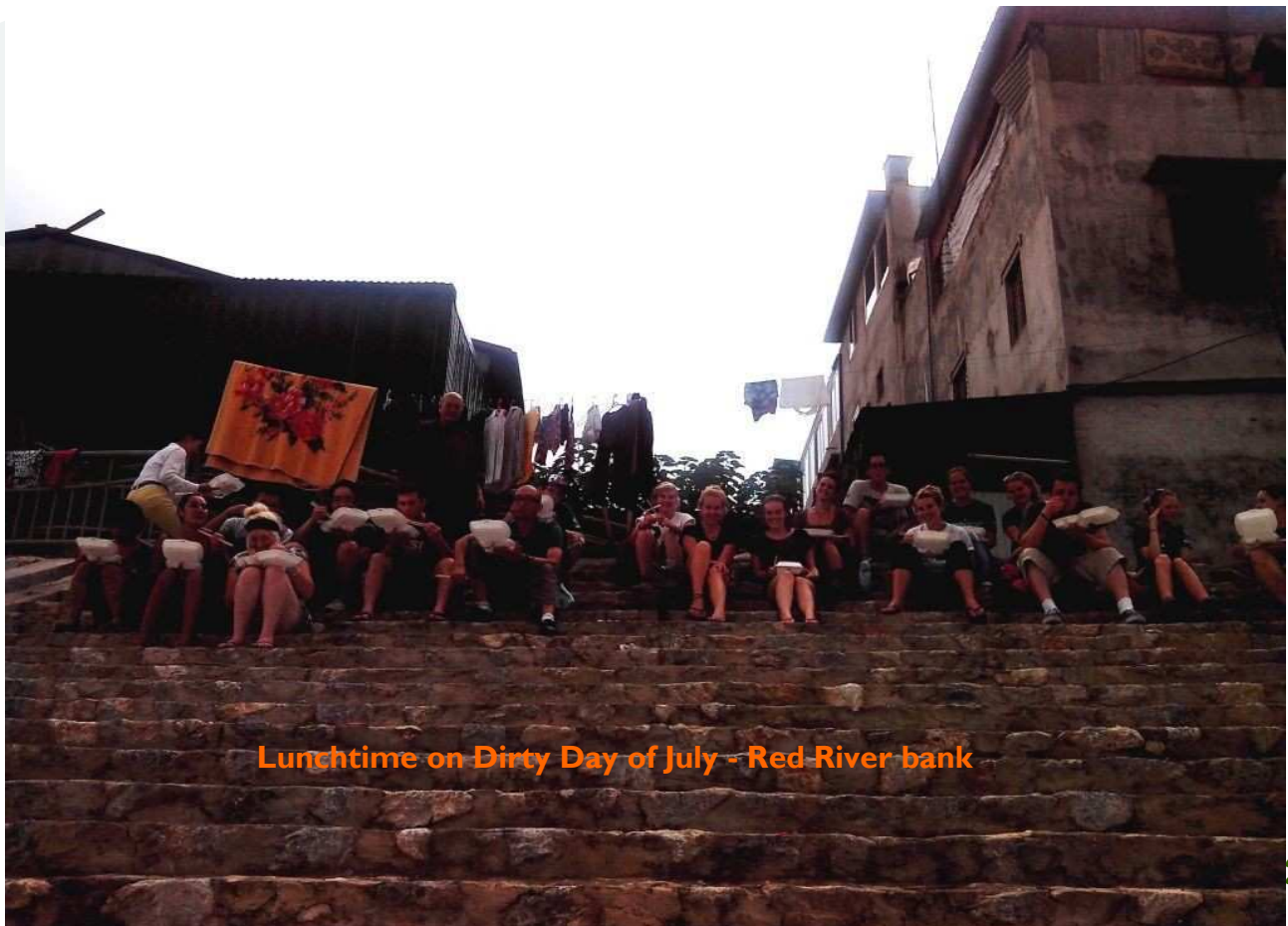
Contact Us

Address:

Apartment No. 103, Building B4
Van Phuc Diplomatic Compound
298 Kim Ma Street
Ba Dinh District
Hanoi, Vietnam

Projects Abroad is the leading global organizer of overseas voluntary work placements. Our wide range of projects, including Teaching, Care, Conservation & Environment, Medicine & Healthcare, Sports, Culture & Community projects and Journalism, are designed specifically for the needs of the communities in which we work, whilst giving our volunteers the very best experience of volunteering abroad.

Based in Hanoi, Vietnam, volunteers can work on a variety of projects, including care work with disabled and orphaned children, physical therapy at local hospitals, and teaching either English or French in both primary and secondary schools. The latest projects to be opened is Community Village project and Occupational Therapy project. If you are interested in volunteering in Vietnam with Projects Abroad then please log on to www.projects-abroad.net for more information.



Lunchtime on Dirty Day of July - Red River bank