



JULY 2014

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Vietnam



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VOLUNTEER STORY

I hate to say goodbye.



Hello everyone!

Today is my last day at the Hope Center and my last day as a volunteer of Projects Abroad. It has been a crazy week in Hanoi! I did not think it was going to be so exciting, interesting and especially challenging to work as a "teacher" in A3 class in Hope Center for handicapped children. It all started badly and I wanted to go home early, but after some words from my mother and friends, I pulled myself together and it all has been a wonderful experience. The days have been long and at times they are filled with screaming, biting, peeing on chairs, stinging in the eye and vomiting on the lap. Fortunately, there are the good and pleasant things too, the ones I'll miss. Nothing has been better than getting a huge hug from a grinning Khang, being climbed on by monkey boy Lam, comforting them when needed and at least being present and seeing their progress. It was also fun to see how teachers slowly but surely started to trust me and were no longer afraid to use their little English to speak to me. It made the stay much easier and I really appreciate that they've gone out of their comfort zone and tried as best as they can. I had bought a small goodbye gift for them. So the children got new crayons, pencils, a workbook and biscuits, but the balloons were really the most exciting! For the teachers I bought one Vietnamese-English dictionary, so it might be a little easier for other volunteers and teachers in the future!

I'm really bad at saying goodbye. The volunteers come and go, but when you get to the last day having to say goodbye to all of them, it is no fun. The children who I feel have been mine, the teachers, the cook in the house and the people who work at the Projects Abroad office, I had to say goodbye to all of them, knowing that it is very likely I will not see them again. That is absolutely terrible and can make anyone cry! Luckily the world's best sister will be on the plane to Hanoi, and we will have so much fun travelling together :) Tonight is the farewell party for Julia and tomorrow will be the one for me! So the weekend cannot be anything other than good!

Tuva Rolfsen, Care volunteer, Norway

VOLUNTEER STORY

Working at Viet Duc hospital

I started my work in the pediatric department in Viet Duc Hospital. I joined the daily meetings with the nurses and doctors and on my first day I found out that the language barrier was huge. There were some surgeons who could speak English, but the nurses couldn't speak English at all and I was told to follow the nurses. The patient statuses are also in Vietnamese so I didn't know the reason why the patients were in the hospital and nobody who could tell me. Luckily, I met some resident doctors who studied during some days in this department; they could explain more to me about the diseases and symptoms of patients. A couple of days later I spoke with the female surgeon in this department, doctor Hoa and the male surgeon, doctor Quan. From then they took me to the operation room every day, so I could see a lot of operations. So after one week my days got more structure, three times a week I started earlier in the morning to go with the doctors to visit the patients before the daily meeting. After the meeting I went to the operation room until around 12. At 13:30 I went back to the department and joined the doctors when they are doing consultation, or joined the nurses when they did injections.

In this department, there were not a lot of tasks which I could do and I mainly did observing. During the consultation I could do patient examinations and sometimes I gave IV injections via an infusion. In this department it is difficult to take blood samples because the children are very small and that requires some experience.



After two and a half week I went to the GI department. The doctors' were all very friendly and I also joined the patient visits in the morning and after the meeting I went to the operation room. I saw many different operations and the doctors were all very willing to explain a lot of things to me.

I spent two week in this department and apart from the GI surgeries, I also joined operations from departments such as neurology, orthopaedics, plastic surgery and cardiovascular surgery.

I also spent some days in the emergency department which was very interesting. I mainly cleaned wounds and changed bandages.

The most significant difference between hospitals in Vietnam and in the Netherland is that family members fulfil the task of a nurse. They have to wash the patients, lay them in different positions to prevent decubitus and give them food. Sometimes this causes problems because family members don't do their tasks properly. I've seen a little girl with a huge ulcer on her back because the family didn't changed her body position.

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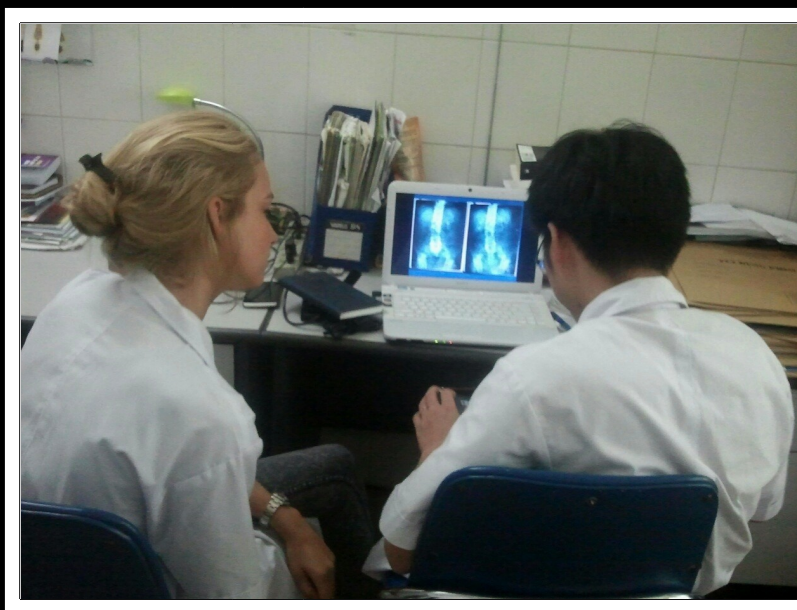
VOLUNTEER STORY

Working at Viet Duc hospital

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Furthermore I think the syndromes of the patients differ from the syndromes in Holland, because in Vietnam they come to the hospital in a very late stage, so the cases are more severe. Some procedures differ from the procedures in the Netherlands, such as intubation, IV injections and bring in a sonde. Also the amount of painkillers which they give is less and in a later stage than in Holland.

Finally, in the Netherlands privacy is a very important aspect of the healthcare and this seems to be of less importance in Vietnam.



To the next volunteers I would recommend building up a good relationship with the doctors and the surgeons because they will show you many things and explain even more. Besides that, I would recommend asking for a supervisor or contact person who you can discuss your expectations and wishes with and their expectations of you before starting the project. Finally, if you have questions or would like to do things, don't be shy and just ask them. In general, everybody is very friendly and would like to teach you a lot.

Julia van Steenhoven, Medical volunteer, Netherlands

2-WEEK-SPECIALS GROUP IN VIETNAM : July

The first 2 Week Specials group of year 2014 has left Vietnam with a heart full of nice memories and with a new perspective about life and happiness. Projects Abroad would love to thank every member of the group for having given the best of yourself to help the handicapped children (the second and third generation of Agent Orange/Dioxin victims in wartime) and for having been all dedicated and hardworking volunteers. :)



"I spent each day in the eyes of the kids seeing life through their eyes and afterward realizing how much it opened my own..."

- Annabelle Fischer, USA

"Je me suis sincèrement attachée à chaque enfant qui avait chacun leur personnalité. J'aimerais remercier chaque personne qui m'a permis de vivre cette expérience..."

- Amandine Bibert, France



"I believe that volunteering is the most life expanding thing you can do... You've been living in a bubble for the last 17 years of your life but once you get out of the bubble you see there is a lot more in this world than what you thought..."

- Grace Verellen, Belgium

WHAT'S ON: AUGUST CALENDAR

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2	3 Pierrick and Nahoko arrive
4 Eleana arrives	5 Tom, Sophie and Michele arrive	6	7 Social Dinner	8	9	10
11	12 Heather arrives Art & Craft workshop	13 Omar arrives	14	15	16 Ellie arrives	17
18 Lucy and Nicole arrive	19 Ida arrives	20	21 Monthly Outreach event	22 Aldo arrives	23	24 Kim and Simone arrive
25 Vivian arrives	26 Sophie arrives	27	28 Medical Outreach	29 Jessica arrives	30 Marloes arrives	31

August 7 - Social Dinner: A great chance for volunteers to be introduced to a delicious food specialty of the country while getting to know other fellow volunteers from different volunteer houses and host families!

August 12 - Art & Craft Workshop: A workshop organized by Projects Abroad to facilitate volunteers working with children.

August 21 - Monthly Outreach event. This is the most expected event of the month when the volunteer team has the chance to contribute their enthusiasm and volunteer spirit to the local community. Stay tuned for more coming information!

August 28 - Medical Outreach. More information to come!