

## **HUONG PHUONG VILLAGE ORPHANAGE ORPHANAGE PLAY EQUIPMENT PROGRAM**

The orphanage Director at Huong Phuong village orphanage has identified a need for play equipment. Currently, the play and exercise equipment consists of a large unfurnished TV room at the orphanage and a small metal carousel outside.

Any donations for play equipment are first collected into a trust account held in Australia. For this not-for-profit donations account there are no commissions, admin costs or account keeping fees. St George Bank kindly agreed to waive fees. When sufficient funding to purchase play equipment has been reached, the funds will be withdrawn and transferred to the orphanage Director. Provision of the play equipment will be fully accounted for, monitored and reported back to sponsors.

Returning through Saigon, I spent a couple of days looking at orphanage/kindergarten play equipment with Sister Luan, orphanage Director, another nun who runs a preschool in Saigon, and my interpreter Hoan.

We visited the premises of two suppliers. Both have glossy colour catalogues. But one, we found, supplied mass produced play structures wholly imported from China. They had a big show room.

The second supplier turned out to be a cottage industry. Based in a shed at the outskirts of Saigon, every item of play equipment was carefully crafted by hand. All items are made to order, so there is no floor display or floor stock. Prices turned out to be very competitive with the China imports.



*Sisters arrive at the play equipment fabrication workshop.*



*Fiberglass moulded play equipment.*



*Moulds for play equipment in storage*



*Cutting steel for chair components.*



*Fiberglass (composite) crafting.*



*View of the workshop.*



*Sister Luan, orphanage Director, examines the fiberglass.*



*Director of the workshop explains the manufacturing process to the Sisters.*



*Fiberglass fabrication.*



*Fiberglass paint at the workshop.*



*Hospitality at the play equipment importer's showroom.*



*Meeting and discussion after visits to the equipment suppliers. The sisters seem happy with their decision.*

The idea of supporting the orphanage by providing play equipment was also to support manufacturing in Vietnam. So, for me, the choice between imported and locally made equipment was easy.

Despite this, the two sisters spent a lot of time gently interrogating the suppliers. The discussion, as far as I could gauge from the repeated references to *composite* (fiberglass or plastic) and *son* (paint), seemed to revolve around quality of plastic and paint.

I suggested that locally fabricated fiberglass at least had the property of being able to be repaired if it was damaged or weathered, and that paint can be re-applied by a villager at any time. So both not a problem.

The basic structure useful for the orphanage is the centrepiece, the main outdoor play structure. It is big, having a footprint of 8m x 9,5m. All other structures are optional and could be left out if not enough donations are collected.

The way that donations are proposed to be collected is to have a Vietnamese community fundraising event in Canberra. This could be centered around the blessing of a statue of Mary of La Vang, accompanied by showing some photos of the orphanage and passing a hat around for donations. The event would be negotiated through a local Vietnamese priest in Canberra.

A statue was purchased in Saigon and taken as luggage on Vietnam Airlines back to UC (Australia) for installation at a local church, such as St Vincent's Church Aranda, as a fundraiser. The wording could be as follows: *Please donate here to the Huong Phuong village orphanage in central Vietnam. Donations may be handed to the priest of this parish for sending to Vietnam. Please email [peter@blackmountainprojects.com](mailto:peter@blackmountainprojects.com) if you wish to: Find out exactly how your donation is being used; Contact the convent; Visit the convent to stay in the luxury accommodation reserved for guests; Visit the convent to personally give your donation; Do volunteer work.*

An explanation of the statue reads: *Mary of La Vang. The Lady of La Vang is specially venerated in Vietnam. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century persecution of Christians in Vietnam, people left their villages and hid in the forest of La Vang. Sick with starvation and dysentery, they appealed to Mary. In a vision, Mary taught the people to heal themselves with herbs gathered in the forest and they were saved. La Vang is the most famous Christian sacred site in Vietnam. This Mary of La Vang statue was hand carved by Vietnamese craftsmen. It was brought back as a tribute to the social work of the sisters at Huong Phuong orphanage.*






Part of the funding-raising offer is that private Australian sponsors would match raised funds dollar for dollar. This should provide additional incentive for the local Vietnamese community to donate. They would know that their money would be doubled. Of course, the dollar-for-dollar match would cut out at half of the total cost of play equipment.



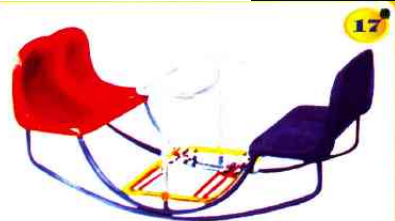

On 25<sup>th</sup> May I met with therapists who work with the disabled in Canberra to seek advice. Their basic advice was:

- Cushioned ground and floor matting is vital to minimise brain injury from falls or other play accidents.
- Play equipment is in 3 categories: Fixed outdoor, portable indoor, and future fixed indoor (if a large play room was built).
- “Ball pools” should be avoided. They present a maintenance and hygiene problem.

## OUTDOOR PLAY EQUIPMENT


Outdoor play items, picked from the Saigon-made catalogue and the negotiated prices including delivery to Quang Binh province and installation on site, were:





Outdoor play item Cost M VND /\$A	
Centrepiece (Adventure playground) 73.2M	 <p data-bbox="863 763 1114 824">Bộ liên hoàn phức hợp Composite</p> <p data-bbox="1305 741 1401 831">D: 8 m R: 9.5 m C: 2.8 m</p>
Swing set 4.95M	
Slide 5.8M	
Dragon boat ride 7.0M	 <p data-bbox="858 1711 1050 1765">Xích đu Rồng 15 chỗ Composite</p> <p data-bbox="1241 1711 1321 1765">D: 3.7 m R: 1.5 m</p>
Carousel 5.1M	

<p>Seahorse ride 1.8M</p>	 <p>Thú nhún lò xo Cá Ngựa Composite - D: 0.6m-R: 0.4 m</p>
<p>Duck ride 1.8M</p>	
<p>Rocker 1.65M</p>	 <p>Bập bênh 4 chỗ Ghế Composite</p> <p>D: 1.2 m R: 0.6 m</p>
<p>Ball hoop 0.33M</p>	
<p>150mm drained wood chip base 10.0M (estimate)</p>	
<p>Sand pit enclosed with stone perimeter 4.0M (estimate)</p>	
<p><b>TOTAL</b></p>	<p><b>118.6M = \$5,650A</b></p>

## INDOOR PLAY EQUIPMENT FOR EXISTING TV ROOM

Portable and safety floor matting items, which should be locally made but could be imported, were:

Indoor play items: portable/packable	Cost M VND /\$A
Large ball	
Bouncers	
Drums	
Rockers x 2	
Snowshoes x 2 pairs	

<p>Stilts x 4 pairs</p>	
<p>Trampoline</p>	
<p>Safety floor matting to cover whole play room.</p>	
<p>Roll-up exercise mats x 12</p>	
<p><b>TOTAL</b></p>	<p><b>56M (estimate) = \$2,700A</b></p>

## FUTURE PLAY STRUCTURE TO BE HOUSED IN A NEW EXTENSION

A large new play room in a future extension of the orphanage could be designed to fit an indoor play “fort” (selected from the “Happy Island” range). Cost would be part of the extension building construction budget.



## ORPHANAGE PHOTOS



Left to right: Hang, Huong.





*Another new baby being fed.*



*Thu nurses the new baby.*



*Diem, Hue, Phi.*



*Thu, new baby, Vy, Uyen.*



*Hang, Huong.*



*Mother Superior Hoa attends to orphanage children.*



*Be reads at mass.*



*Sisters Thanh, Phuc, Phu.*



*Lien nurses the new baby at the orphanage.*





*Sister Loi feeds Bao.*



*Left to right: Tram, Linh, Mai.*



*Sister Linh nurses a new baby.*





*Nam.*





*Left to right: Thu, Sister Hoai, Phi.*



*Orphanage children at a service in the temporary chapel.*