

## Help for 120 children in Vietnam who lost a parent to COVID-19 – September 2022

Thanks to the generosity of our donors we were able to raise \$10,588 to help school children in Vietnam who lost their mother or father to COVID. Funds collected were distributed in September 2022 to 120 heart-broken children in Vietnam. This assistance was a great comfort to them and a beautiful act of kindness. We are currently raising funds to give another grant in 2023 to help more children.

Our humanitarian program, Education for Girls in Vietnam, focuses on girls K-12 who come from families living in poverty in Vietnam. The students selected for the awards are chosen because they are both poor and working hard in school to get good grades. Currently, there is an additional criterion – the gift is for children who lost a parent in the pandemic.



*Each school holds an award ceremony for the recipients*

Each girl is given 2 million Vietnamese Dong which is about \$85. This is a significant gift because the average monthly income in Vietnam is about \$150. The money is used to help the child pay for school expenses (clothes, a bicycle, and/or school supplies) and it helps feed the whole family.

The award is a form of recognition and encouragement for students who are overcoming difficulties in their life. The financial gifts are given to girls because they are more disadvantaged and have fewer opportunities compared to boys.

The agency overseeing the awards is the Vietnam Women's Union which works to uplift women and families. The Women's Union has local chapters in all the provinces in Vietnam. This organization has a reputation for having integrity and effectiveness. I (Bhavia Wagner) can attest to this because I have been working with them for the past 30 years. The Vietnam Women's Union works with local schools to select the students. The teachers and school principals nominate the students who are most deserving.

We started this program as an act of reconciliation with Vietnam and to offer friendship. It is a very simple yet deeply meaningful program for people in the USA and in Vietnam. It makes everyone happy – both those who give and those who receive. The program is still run by volunteers.

Donations are made to the US-based 501c3 non-profit organization Friendship with Cambodia because it offers donors a tax-deduction and we do not take an administrative fee.

The spread of COVID in Vietnam was kept to a minimum by strong measures taken by the government. Restrictions on travel and gathering were put in place and there was a lot of testing and quarantining. The economic and emotional impacts were severe, as many people could not earn a living.

The number of cases of COVID-19 in Vietnam was among the lowest in the world until the Delta variant took off. Then it became impossible to contain and Vietnam did experience wide-spread infections especially in the more densely populated areas of Ho Chi Minh City and the surrounding provinces. There have been over 43,000 deaths.

In September of 2022, monetary awards were given to 120 female students who lost their mother or father to COVID-19. These families also have financial difficulties. All of the girls are studying in grades K – 12 and have good academic results.

The students chosen live in seven provinces in south Vietnam and in Ho Chi Minh City. The provinces are Tien Giang, An Giang, Binh Duong, Long An, Ben Tre, Dong Thap and Hau Giang.



**Here are a few examples of girls who received the award in 2022:**

**Twin girls in 3rd grade and their older sister** who is in the 7th grade lost their mother in the COVID-19 pandemic. They are from Tien Giang province and they are all good students. They are living with their father who works as gardener and does not have a stable income. In addition to the terrible heartbreak of losing their mother, the family is struggling to get by.

**Thi Nhi from An Giang province** is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Her mother died from COVID-19 and now she is living with her grandparents who are poor. She is suffering from a great loss.

**Phuong Thao** is a very good student in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and she recently lost her father to COVID-19. She lives with her mother in Long An province. Her mother does temporary work and earns very little. The tragedy has created many emotional and financial challenges for Thao and her mother.

Here is a letter from a recipient in Vietnam.

*Dear aunts and uncles,*

*I would like to send my greetings and deep gratitude to you. Today, I feel really lucky and touched to receive this support. It's like shimmering candles that light the way for broken hearts in dark places. It helps me rise up and overcome my difficulties.*

*The award is a meaningful gift to lift some of my family's burden. It also encourages my spirit to overcome my despair. It gives me strength and motivation to follow the path of realizing my dreams. For me it's a very precious gift.*

*Thank you for caring about me and helping me. I don't know how I can repay your kindness. I promise I will try harder in my studies. Thank you for thinking of people with difficult circumstances.*

*I would like to send my best wishes to all of you. I hope the award program will grow stronger, more successful, and inspire other disadvantaged people to keep walking on their path of life.*

*Yours,*

*Hoang Thi Thao from Luc Khu High School*

*Each student is given 2 million Vietnamese Dong – approximately \$85*

Thousands of children in Vietnam had a parent die during the pandemic. We invite you to donate to help one or more children at \$100 each. Donations can be made on-line at [www.friendshipwithcambodia.org](http://www.friendshipwithcambodia.org) or checks can be mailed to Friendship with Cambodia, PO Box 5231, Eugene, Oregon 97405. Donations are tax-deductible.

Thank you for your kindness. It will always be remembered.