

Helping The Street Kids



GLOBAL COMMUNITY
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They are generally known as the 'local street kids' – children from broken or poor homes, sometimes orphans—and this is the only center of its kind in Vietnam's Quang Tri province to provide for them.

The problem is there is so little funding or government support buildings in the center have been closed because they are too dangerous to use, the number and quality of carers has been downgraded and there is always a desperate search for funds to support the children.

According to the center's director, Ngo Quang Manh, the compound in the province capital of Dong Ha cares for 30 boys and girls aged 6-17 years old. It takes the equivalent of 75 dollars per month to provide them with three meals a day, accommodation and local schooling.

An international non governmental agency, the Global Community Service Foundation (GCSF) has, in the past, provided food, alerted donors to the center's needs, encouraged volunteer carers to provide their help and arranged special events.



Enjoying a lunch break.
Photo: Ray Wilkinson

The agency would now like to extend its help to repair the rickety buildings and start vocational training for the children.

"Things were very tough here before 2000," longtime director Mr. Manh recalled. "Children behaved very badly and there was no discipline. Very big trouble. But it is so much better now.

That is evident in the attitude of 13-year-old Thao. She has been here since she was four-years-old and though she is the smallest girl in her dormitory she is the room 'prefect.'

"I like school," she says excitedly, an attitude echoed by other nearby girls and boys. Most children in developing countries, particularly the under privileged or disabled express a fervent desire about education. Perhaps more starkly than in advanced countries they instinctively know that learning is the best way out of their current plight.

And they often aim high. "I want to be a teacher or a doctor when I leave here," says Thao.



Local GCS director Nguyen Xuan tam and the center's director examine crumbling buildings.
Photo: Ray Wilkinson