



*Poverty reduction through Water, Sanitation
and Hygiene (WASH) Projects*

March 2023 Newsletter

Chairman's Welcome, by *Brian Boon, MCS*

Hello, or Xin chào! (pronounced "sin chow"!) from Khe Sanh in Vietnam.

I wish you all a very Happy (but belated) New Year, and hope that you all enjoyed your festive season.

Current Status in Vietnam

I am very happy to announce that now that COVID has passed, we have arrived in Vietnam to commence our WASH (Water, Sanitation and Health) project in the Ba Tang Commune.

There are some maps at the end of this Newsletter, so that you can see where we are. There are also some maps showing the heavy concentration of US bombing in our area!

Peter Perry has been here for about five weeks already to help set up the Administrative and Logistical aspects for the project. Some of his bigger achievements during his time here have included:

- Hiring two very good young local staff members – Thanh is our Administration Manager, and Ha is our Construction Supervisor
- Rented a combined office and house, and getting it refurbished and internet connected ready for us.
- Hiring a 4WD vehicle
- Opening three bank accounts - in \$A, \$US and Vietnamese Dong
- Getting a 3 month Border Pass for me – needed as we will be working very close to the Laos border

They sound simple and straightforward, but Peter assures me they have NOT been ...

Our new staff members:



Mr Thanh, Administration Manager



Mr Ha, Construction Supervisor



Photo: Our new office and house in Khe Sanh

Peter's biggest challenge was in trying to get us a very official rubber stamp. Would you believe he had to drive up to Ha Noi (11 hours each way) and go around several departments to get our "bloody stamp" (as he now calls it) approved. We did actually receive it the week after he left!

Another challenge he had was at the bank to withdraw some cash from our account. After some 20 pages of various forms, about 14 signatures and 1 hour, we did actually get our cash.

I think we will have some interesting challenges here!! ...

Sadly, Peter and partner Frankie left us on 6 March to spend a few well-earned rest days in Ha Noi before they headed back to WA.

Peter – on behalf of our Board and Executive Committee – thank you sincerely for your work here. I know it has at times been very frustrating for you, but you have achieved what you wanted to achieve – except for the "bloody stamp"!!

And what is next?

I arrived in country about three weeks ago, and we immediately had a meeting with our MiVAC team and the Provincial Dept of Foreign Affairs (DoFA), during which we had a signing ceremony, with their Director, of our updated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).



Signing Ceremony at Quang Tri Provincial DoFA - Brian and Ms Thoung (Director)

(Rear L-R: Ha, Thanh, Peter, Mr Lieu (International Cooperation Division of DoFA), Ms Dung)

Would you believe we were then informed that we now needed to submit detailed “Project Documents” to the Provincial DoFA, and also a detailed “Construction Permit” application – with locations and detailed drawings!! Shame they omitted to tell us 3 months ago. Thanh and Ha are enjoying drafting them.

Most construction materials are in short supply here (as are most food items for Aussie expats), so our plan is to update my designs and then order the main construction items – e.g. the large diameter poly pipes and fittings. This will get them here (hopefully) in a timely manner. For the technically minded, the following are some of the major items for the first of our two water supply systems:

- Black poly pipe – 11.8km
- Sand – 46 m³ or 75 tonnes
- Gravel – 74 m³ or 112 tonnes
- Cement – 20 tonnes
- Reinforcing steel bars – 7km

Our original site visits were in March 2018, wherein we recorded village and sub-village data regarding people and housing numbers and their locations.

Ha, Thanh and I have had several meetings with the Ba Tang Commune senior staff. Our main aim has been to confirm that the village locations and population numbers are still correct. This has been a long drawn out affair, as the Commune has changed their reporting boundaries, and it has been difficult to correlate our original data with the new data. And we need accurate up-to-date data on people numbers to calculate their water tank holding capacities. Also, along with Ba Tang Commune staff and village elders, we will confirm the locations for such things as the water source, water tanks, and the pipelines etc. Then we need to get these areas cleared of any unexploded bombs and mines. (You will note on the map of American bombing, that this province was the most heavily bombed during the war – so we do not want any villagers to get injured by exploding bombs during the construction of the water supply systems.)

The other issue with our data being 5 years old (thanks to COVID) is that costs of many items – such as construction materials, office and house rentals, vehicle hire – have all increases considerably, due to factors such as inflation, and also the shortages caused by the construction of many windfarms that are being built in the area. As the budget from our generous donor was fixed, we have had to reduce our current plan from 3 water supply systems to 2, to enable us to be able to fund our work here. However, we have been given a positive indication that a new application for the now-dropped water system will be favourably received.

Once the areas are cleared, we will get the materials delivered onto the various sites, and starting from the water source, we will build a small dam, then pipe the water to a “settling tank” (in which any dirt etc can settle out) then pipe the water to two large holding tanks, and from there to smaller tanks in the 10 small villages in this first phase. Each village tank will have a certain number of water points (see photo) coming from the tank and located through the villages.



As explained in an earlier newsletter, we will be supplying the materials and technical input, while the villagers’ contribution will be to supply the workers to construct the system.

New Honorary Life Members

At our last AGM, the following were nominated and approved to become Honorary Life Members due to their ongoing contributions to MiVAC over many years. They were:

- Mr Peter Perry
- Mr John Salter, MC, CCT
- Mrs Lyndall Clark

My congratulations to you all and thank you for your contributions to MiVAC and the communities with which we have worked.



Brian presenting Peter with his Honorary Life Membership Certificate outside our office

(L-R – Ha, Brian, Peter, Thanh)



John proudly showing his Honorary Life Membership Certificate



Lyn proudly showing her Honorary Life Membership Certificate

Chairman's Close

In our next newsletter, I will provide an update on the status of our project, and I hope to be able to provide many photos.

Till next time! Stay safe.

With kind regards,

Brian

Brian Boon, MCS

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### **Some useful links:**

Webpage: [MiVAC – Mines Victims and Clearance](#)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/minesvictimsandclearance/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@mivacinc1642>

Global Development Group: [GDG Australia - J1014N Ba Tang WASH \(globaldevelopmentgroup.org\)](#)

**Map of the Provinces of Vietnam, and showing Quang Tri Province:**





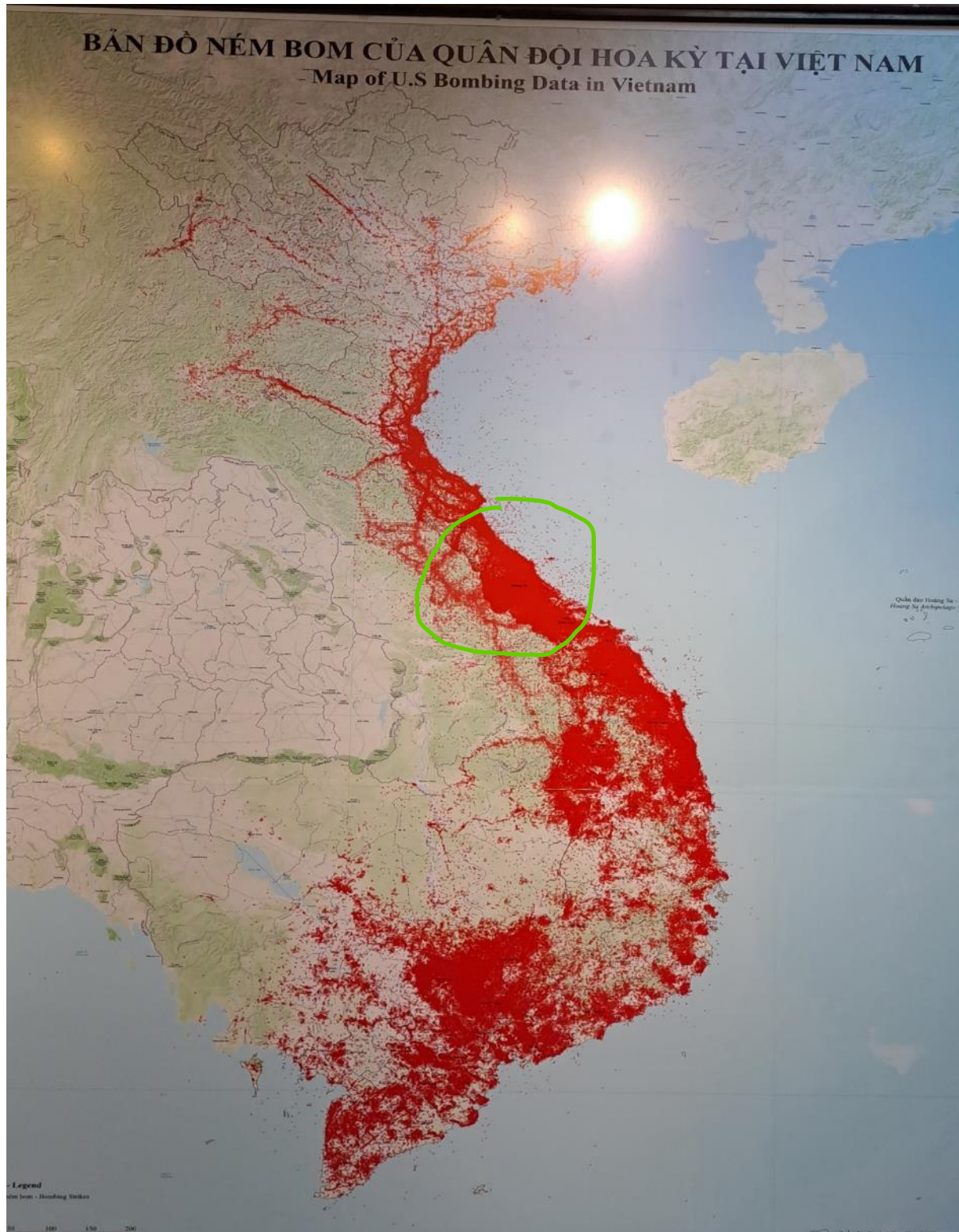
Map of Quang Tri Province, showing Khe Sanh and the Ba Tang Commune:



Note: Khe Sanh and Ba Tang are in the southern part of Huong Hoa District, with Ba Tang very close to the Laos border (Laos being the white-coloured area adjacent to Ba Tang).

## Map Showing the Extent of US Bombing in Vietnam

Note: Quang Tri Province is circled – heaviest concentration of bombing!





Extract from above map showing the heavy concentration of bombing in Quang Tri Province

