



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

April 2023 Newsletter

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

Hello, or **Xin chào!** (pronounced "sin chow"!) in Vietnamese.

Current Status with Ba Tang Project, Vietnam

Sadly, I have to announce that we have pulled out of Vietnam.

We have had very little support from the various levels of government; even to the extent that the provincial government has asked us to submit "project documents" that will take at least 4 months to get approved, due to the large number of departments that want to get involved.

A reputable local business person in Khe Sanh advised us that while the villagers would want the water supplies, government officials would be non-caring as there was "nothing in it for them".

The Commune HQ which we have been trying to help, has been unable to give us consistent and accurate figures for their sub-village populations – which we need to calculate water tank volumes and pipeline diameters – even after 6 weeks of requesting and 5 meetings.

Finally, at our recent meeting with the heads of the Commune, they told us they are now planning a large wind turbine farm – right over and near 2 of our 3 planned water supply systems.

Another challenge we had was to send our remaining cash back to the donor and MiVAC. We had to get a letter from two government departments that they approved it!!! Plus, around 30 signatures and 2 hours in the bank!

Dr Denis Bartrum, from Queensland and also a veteran, volunteered for one month on our project. He was hoping to assist either the Ba Tang Commune Medical Centre or the Khe Sanh District Hospital. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic wheels also turned very slowly in that regard, so he was not able to achieve his objectives.

With the many challenges we faced, our Board has decided to terminate the water supply project, and it is very unlikely we will ever return for future projects.

If you would like more details on the challenges we have faced, please email me:

chairman@mivac.org.au

So, what achievements have we managed for our water supply project in Khe Sanh??

- Held an initial meeting with the Provincial Department of Foreign Affairs (DoFA), and formally signed the updated MOU
- Selected and contracted a local Administration Manager and a Construction Supervisor
- Located, leased and set-up a building for use as our office
- Located and leased a suitable second-hand 4WD vehicle

- Applied for and obtained an “official stamp”. (This required Peter Perry and our Administration Manager to drive the 11 hours from Khe Sanh to Ha Noi, and return – a 2-day trip just to get a rubber stamp!)
- Prepared a Bill of Materials for one of the water supply systems and sought quotations.
- Prepared a Quotation Recommendation for the supply and delivery of sand, gravel, cement and reinforcing bars.
- Held five meetings with senior staff from the Ba Tang Commune
- Dr Denis prepared medical documents, including: “*MiVAC Medical Plan*”, “*Agent Orange and Glyphosate*”, and “*Dangers of using well water in Viet Nam*”.

Community Involvement

MiVAC officers also helped the communities in Ba Tang and Khe Sanh through “hearts and minds” activities, such as:

- Mr Ha, our Construction Supervisor, personally collected about 100kg of clothing from around his home village and donated the clothing to villagers in Ba Tang 3 village.
- Dr Denis and I were invited in Khe Sanh on several occasions to teach or speak English to classes at a local Kindergarten, a formal English school, and an informal English school. These activities were conducted on weekends or at night.
- At the request of the kindergarten owner, Dr Denis also conducted limited physical examinations on about 40 children, which included neck glands, and lung and heart checks on a Saturday morning.

This community involvement was well demonstrated by the many parents who stopped us in the streets to thank us for our work at the kindergartens and schools.

I have to say that Dr Denis and I found the Khe Sanh people to be very friendly to be sharing their town with. They were certainly very ready to wave, to say “Hello/What your name? / here you from?” and to show us a lovely smile. The children especially were very ready to try out their English with us.

Chairman’s Close

We are very disappointed that we will likely not be completing our project to provide water to some 4,800 villagers in the Ba Tang Commune. Clearly it is they who will miss out on our work. It is a shame that the government makes it so hard for charities like us to perform our work simply and speedily.

Till next time! Stay safe. **Tạm biệt** (goodbye)

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 \(globaldevelopmentgroup.org\)](#)



Mr Ha (in MIVAC shirt) arriving with bags of clothes, and being thanked by the village chief.



Mr Ha handing out the clothes packs, with Mr Khoa (a Commune leader) leaning over opening the orange bag.



A fairly typical house in the remote areas, with plenty of firewood stacked below to keep dry. The house is only quite small and basic. No running water, toilet outside (maybe)!



A local “bus”!! 12 people altogether, plus the trailer, all getting dragged along by a small motor scooter. The trailer is securely (?) attached to the scooter by the pillion passenger sitting on a crossbar – that’s it!



An existing issue: Lack of maintenance on the small offshoot pipe leading off the 100mm main supply pipe, with water continually flowing, has caused all that erosion, such that the concrete water tank has fallen into the eroded trench. What a waste of money, for what could have been fixed so easily and inexpensively! Why? No community involvement in the original construction, no maintenance training provided to the villagers, and no government maintenance funding! Therefore, no “ownership” by the village = non-sustainability. MiVAC reverses all this!



Broken off tap on water tank near the Commune HQ. But no water flowing into the tank anyway!



Adults: (L-R) – Brian, a Teacher, Ms Phuong (the owner) and Dr Denis – posing with some of the kindergarten children after our English session on Australian animals.



Dr Denis checking the teacher's lymph glands to ensure no swelling. He then went on to check the children's necks, as well as their heart and lungs.



Dr Denis (closer to camera) and Brian having fun speaking English with a small evening class – talking about Australian animals which they could think the names of.



Dr Denis and Brian (closer) with a very active English class. The young girl (third person from the right and age 14) asked us on the street if we would come to their night class and talk to them in English. We all had quite a bit of fun, as you can see!