

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCES IN ASIA, RURAL CENTRAL VIETNAM by Sister Theresia





Map of Vietnam (in yellow letter S shape)

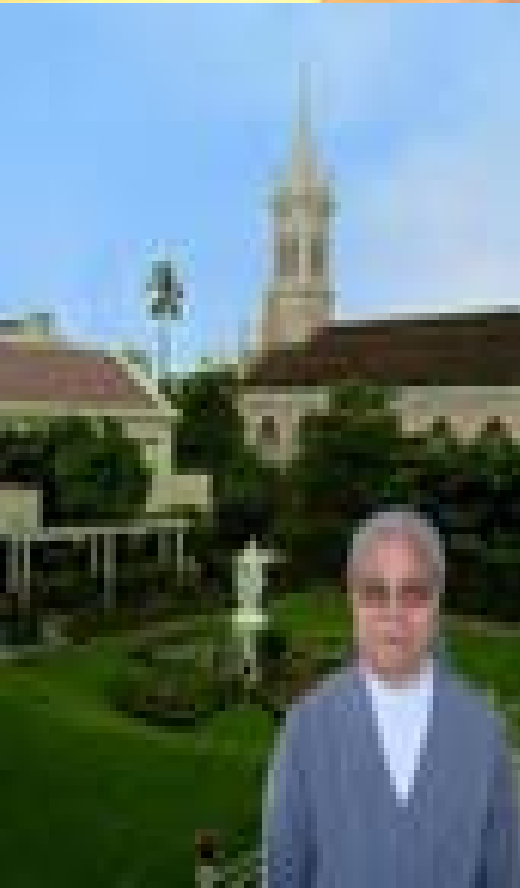
INTRODUCTION

Name : Sister Theresia NGO THI
THUY, SPC.

(Congregation of the Sisters of
St. Paul of Chartres - SPC)

Position (at present):

- Nursing Supervisor, Special School for Disabled Children
- Nursing Educator to the Lay staff
- Advisor, Nursing Visiting Groups



Educational Background

- Bachelor of Science in Education (BSE) in English Pedagogy - Faculty of Pedagogy, University of Hue, Vietnam (1966)
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) - College of Nursing, St. Paul University of Manila, Philippines (1972)
- Master of Science (MS) in Hospital Administration, Saigon University of Sciences in Medicine and Pharmacology(1974)

EXPERIENCES OF MEDICAL MISSION GROUPS IN RURAL CENTRAL VIETNAM

- Transition from centralized socialist system to market economy has made possible the "*doi moi*" (renewal) of healthcare system in 1989
- Health care services though previously free for all, was not applicable for practical purposes
- Prior to overthrow of the previous Government in 1975, the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres, was already providing health care services for orphanages, hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, Lepers' Loving Home, etc since 1860, however these were taken away from the Sisters in 1976

EXPERIENCES OF MEDICAL MISSION GROUPS IN RURAL CENTRAL VIETNAM

- Under new government, Sisters began to provide basic medical and health care services in 1990 to the disadvantaged in rural areas, where 90% of the poor live



- Shortage of health providers due to inadequate funding led to low quality of service and high costs, forcing rural poor to resort to traditional practitioners or self-medication

- Sisters then decide to discreetly send medical and health care missions to the rural communities, focusing on the most suffering ones - the lepers. (pictures)



Mission Groups

- Two main groups, one operating in the Delta and one in Highland
- Both organized by the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres based in Danang City
- Both groups started with only four Nursing Sisters each
- At present, Sr. Anne Nguyen Thi Dung SPC heads the Delta Group, while Sr. Marie Modeste Le Thi Vi SPC is in charge of the Highland
- Medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, social workers, both Catholic and non-Catholic, volunteer as health workers. Sometimes even medical and nursing students and senior high school students join the groups



Funding Sources



- Main source of funding comes from The Sisters of St Paul of Chartres in Danang City
- Material supplies of medicines, goods and clothing are provided
- Donations regularly received from relatives, friends, Paulinian associations, former students and other benefactors



- Overseas Medical Mission Groups, which are well equipped, join us occasionally. Thanks to God's providence through all these supporters, our two Medical Mission Groups have been carrying out missions successfully and fruitfully while the number of volunteer members continue to increase as well!

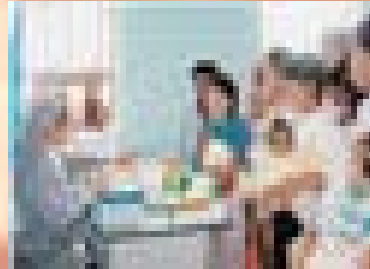


Activities

- Each group visits communities on the 2nd Saturday of every month; excluding emergency cases or extraordinary visits after each disaster



- Drugs such as Aspirin, Paracetamol, Panadol and Antibiotics for fever and pain relief are brought along



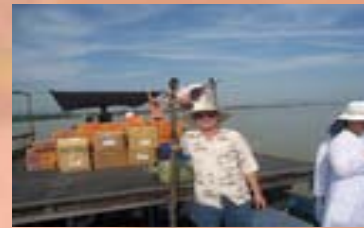
- Pediatric drugs such as cough syrup, eyedrops for infants & young children, as well as multivitamins and nutrition supplements are included as well
- Clothing & basic necessities are also distributed to the poor & ethnic minorities

We provide :

- Free consultation and distribution of prescribed drugs
- Dental care and treatment
- Transfer of patients in emergencies to nearest hospital with supporting hospital fees on a case by case basis
- Hygiene and prevention of diseases, family planning lessons, etc
- Clothing and basic food for nutrition. In cases of typhoons or floods, additional provision of staples as rice, noodles, peanut oil, fish sauce and salt



- In order to get to the mountainous areas, group members leave early in the morning and return home in the late evening
- Journey takes about 2 to 3 hours either by bus for the Highland Group or by boat for the Delta team.



- However, it is highly rewarding to see the smiles on the faces of the people!
- Our experiences enable us to learn more about the villagers and their poor living conditions, which affect not only their physical but also their moral well-being
- But what is more important is that they are happy and feel loved when we give them our attention, concern and care; and that we are able to contribute in some way to their happiness and welfare

Conclusion

Thanks to God's providence, to all our benefactors and supporters, collaborators and co-workers, our medical missions are already alleviating the sufferings of the rural poor who would otherwise be deprived of the most basic medical attention.

There is a feast we call Vietnamese Physicians' Day that we celebrate on February 27 every year. All are cordially invited to attend and to join our Medical Mission Group for a wonderful self experience.



Thank you!
Sr. Theresia

