



NEWSLETTER / DECEMBER - 2021

maisonchance

SUPPLIES FOR THE MOST DISADVANTAGED IN RURAL AREAS

BACK TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID-19 SITUATION



A BETTER FUTURE FOR A GIONG AND A PHONG

A Giong and A Phong with Tim at Maison Chance Dak Nong



Tim throws a birthday celebration for orphans at Maison Chance Dak Nong

ALINE REBEAUD

Founder and Director of Maison Chance

Dear friends of Maison Chance,

I hope you are all well, and I appreciate your prompt response to the appeal for assistance during the recent pandemic situation. However, the current situation is far from ideal, but we'll have to adapt and live with it. For my part, I've been stuck at the Maison Chance center in Dak Nong province for nearly 7 months. The province continues to control and limit who enters and exits the region, and we are now almost self-sufficient.

The economic status in Saigon has suffered as a result of the five-month strict lockdown. There was no food and no work for the impoverished during this period. The authorities decided to lift the lockdown and accept Covid-19 as a part of life. Since then, the number of reported cases has still remained high. Members and employees of Maison Chance have been found to be infected with COVID-19. Despite the fact that we always take precautions and test on a regular basis, but more COVID-19 infections have recently been reported. As hospitals are at capacity, we must quarantine infected patients in living rooms and classrooms and hope that we are not overburdened. In addition to caring for the beneficiaries at Maison Chance, we have organized food aid for impoverished student families attending schools at Maison Chance Saigon and Dak Nong, benefiting nearly 2,000 people. The food packs are provided once a month for three months. The total cost of the aid program is estimated to be around 2.5 billion VND. Thanks to the support of sponsors, the most disadvantaged people have overcome the difficult time and look forward to a brighter future. Since November, Maison Chance has been gradually returning to normal activities, but on a limited scale to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection. We planned to open a sewing vocational training program in Dak Nong this year, but we had to postpone it because of the mobility restrictions, which hindered the participants from coming to the Center. Due to the current situation, the intention of welcoming tourists to experience community tourism cannot be implemented. For the time being, we are waiting patiently for things to get better. Despite the difficulties, Maison Chance manages to produce cashew nuts-related products in Dak Nong and market them both domestically and internationally. This activity provides jobs for disabled members. In addition, we cultivate a type of corn known as Nu Hoang (Queen), a purple maize that can be eaten raw and sells well locally. We expect to keep cultivating seasonal local produce like coffee and pepper, as well as manufacturing dried products including papaya, sweet potato, and mango. These products have the advantage of being able to be preserved for a long time. Maison Chance hopes to have you as a customer in the future!

Last but not least, I would like to wish you all an enjoyable holiday season as well as a New Year filled with hope, health, and great luck.

Warmest regards,




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SUPPLIES FOR THE MOST DISADVANTAGED IN RURAL AREAS

Despite facing numerous difficulties as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, with the spirit of "a slice of bread when hungry is worth a whole loaf when full," Maison Chance keeps on trying to support disadvantaged ethnic minority households in Krong No District of Dak Nong Province, including communes such as Quang Phu, Nam N'Dir, Dak Nang, Nam Nung, Buon Choa, Nam Da, Nam Xuan, Tan Thanh, Dak Dro, Dak Mam, Dak Sor, and some households in Cu Jut and Dak Glong District and Dak Lak Province. The assistance plan of Maison Chance was divided into three periods in September, October, and November. After conducting research and appealing for funding, Maison Chance ordered foodstuffs for the trip promptly.

Maison Chance's social workers managed to obtain enough supplies to support the first phase on time after much effort, including more than 10 tons of rice, 481 kg of dried fish, 624 boxes of instant noodles, 341 cartons of milk, 494 bottles of cooking oil, 494 bottles of fish sauce, and 550 kg of sugar, which were divided into various bundles by employees and beneficiaries of Maison Chance Dak Nong for ethnic minorities who were suffering greatly as a result of the pandemic restrictions. Each present is valued at VND500,000 (USD22) per individual per month and will last for three months. We were unable to advance as scheduled due to pandemic prevention directives, so we had to wait for permission to distribute aid gifts to the impoverished families.



The recipient is packing rice into their bicycle to deliver home

After many days of waiting, we finally received an official dispatch allowing us to travel to deliver support gifts.

Many of our colleagues wanted to help deliver the aid supplies, but due to restrictions on the number of people allowed, we took only 5 people on this trip, who came from departments ranging from security to office workers.

The journey began at 6 a.m., and we had to travel various zigzag roads that were riddled with potholes. We arrived in the Phu Vinh village after traveling for more than two and a half hours.

When we arrived, a large number of ethnic minority people were waiting for us since they had been informed in advance and were quite delighted to receive support supplies at this time.

However, the village hall was situated on a steep slope and trucks were unable to get there, so we decided to borrow a local residence to serve as a distribution point for gifts.



The staff (protective clothing) reading names of those who receive food aid from the list



A minority person arrived to receive the food aid



Rice, noodles, and other staple items are included in each gift

Thanks to the efforts of the village's youth and militia, the unloading went quickly and smoothly.

After taking measures to prevent infections, such as washing hands, wearing masks, and keeping a safe distance, the first packages were given to the desperately poor people who were waiting for supplies. Their excitement could be seen on their austere faces, as they have endured great hardship in recent months owing to the pandemic restrictions.

The big gifts and variety of foodstuffs stunned everyone, from the elderly to the young, and they even turned to us in amazement, asking, "Oh, that much?" and "Is it all mine?" when we reminded them to take all their remaining items.

Our team couldn't help but be touched by everyone's happiness at receiving the timely supplies, and it's a great motivation for us to keep going on our mission to deliver supplies to poor and struggling ethnic households in these rural areas who have been hit hard by the outbreak restrictions.

On behalf of the families who received support, Maison Chance would like to express its gratitude to the benefactors and sponsors who have helped to offer these meaningful and practical presents. Hopefully, more philanthropists will join Maison Chance in its efforts to assist the poorest and most vulnerable people in society in surviving the pandemic situation.



A young boy has received gifts and is awaiting the arrival of family



The recipients work together to carry gifts back to their families

MAISON CHANCE PROVIDED THE SECOND WAVE OF FOOD AID

Saigon implemented severe measures for more than 100 days to contain the outbreak in the country's largest and most populous city. For middle-class, well-off, and upper-class families, the lockdown period is a period of slow living in which the entire family gathers and looks after one another.

They might not be able to freely socialize or shop, and getting fresh fruits and vegetables, fish, and meat for their meals could be difficult. All of these sufferings and hardships, on the other hand, appeared to worsen for the working poor families, bringing them close to despair if they did not receive timely assistance.

Indeed, a week after the city began implementing the restrictions for the first time, we contacted several families of children supported by Maison Chance to check on their health and the state of "slow living".

Surprisingly, we learned a new concept from a parent over the phone "slow death." The saying "we're dying slowly, not living slowly, Miss," yet carried a lot of bitterness and despair.

That's right, how could they not "die slowly" when their work was lost, resulting in a lack of income, while rent, power and water bills, bank loans, and other loans to cover times of need, such as medical expenses, must still be paid.

You might wonder why they didn't save and accumulate money to manage themselves in times of emergencies but have to rely on others. However, few people realize that the majority of them are people who do not own a house or fields in their hometown, and because they have no livelihoods at home,



The necessities are ready for distribution to the needy

THE FOOD AID PROJECT

they are forced to relocate to big cities like Saigon in order to find work and earn money to send back home to care for their elderly parents, pay debts, and send their children to school. Even if they could save money, they've already spent it after months of waiting in their cramped motel rooms for the pandemic restrictions to end.

More than 200 community students supported by Maison Chance have more than 200 different stories to tell: the family has a father but no mother, a mother but no father, the mother left the house and the father was mentally ill living with grandparents, the parents are blind, and only children are the family's eyes.

Their main similarity is that they are poor laborers, some of them are crippled, who struggle to make ends meet by low-wage, unstable jobs like picking up bottles, selling lottery tickets, working as motorcycle taxi drivers, or construction workers, among other things.

Families have been drained by the long struggle under the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, and they urgently need timely assistance from the entire community to ensure that no one is left behind.

Despite existing difficulties, Maison Chance is doing its best to contribute a small part to act as a bridge to send gifts and generosity of benefactors to families in need, in the spirit of "Good leaves cover ripped leaves" together with the sharing and joining hands of the community."

Following the initial aid in September, Maison Chance continued to deliver a second wave of food aid at the beginning of October. This time, the aid included not just rice and basic essentials, but also everyday hygiene items for families such as bath soap, washing powder, toothbrushes, and dishwashing detergent, among other things.



The necessities are placed in packs with the recipients' names written on them

THE FOOD AID PROJECT

The number of student families seeking assistance this time has climbed to 204 households with approximately 900 people, thanks to the city's efforts to ease social distancing restrictions. Upon receiving the Maison Chance supplies, a number of parents expressed their happiness and surprise. Several parents told us that their entire family has been infected with Covid-19 and some parents are still undergoing treatment.



For them, ensuring the safety of the family members during the pandemic is a top priority, and other concerns are temporarily set aside. As a result, the food aid from Maison Chance has motivated the students' families to gradually return to the normal pace of life. Maison Chance will make every effort to assist families in regaining their children's access to school after the pandemic restrictions are gone, not just the essentials that help to solve short-term problems.



Poor families travel to the Take Wing Center and Village Chance to get food aid



A large household receives a large amount of necessities

BACK TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID-19 SITUATION



Maison Chance students in their homes

Last May, it appeared that Maison Chance Dak Nong pupils would have a one-month summer break to return home and see their parents and relatives, as is usual. But then came the pandemic restrictions, which threw everything into disarray. Due to the severe consequences of the outbreak response, the children have been trapped in the locality for the previous 5 months, underfed and struggling with their families.

After considerable deliberation and planning, Maison Chance decided to welcome the children back to the Center with the purpose of assisting underprivileged students who are ethnic minority children from the region in not falling behind in their studies.



The children are tested for Covid-19 before returning to the Center

The pupils were taken by their parents to the Krong No District Medical Center on October 5 and 7, 2021, under the guidance of the Maison Chance pandemic prevention department, to be tested for Covid-19 before returning to the Center. There were a total of 139 children, with 123 in primary school (grades 1–5) and 16 in special education. Despite the fact that Maison Chance has been running out of funds as a result of the outbreak's impacts, we organized our employees and covered the entire cost of Covid-19 testing for the children, which cost up to VND120 million for three tests in a week.

The above cost, as well as the number of students, are only temporary since, once the pandemic situation in other regions improves, the Center will welcome all remaining students to assist them in staying on track with the educational program.

According to the plan, a team of the driver, medical personnel, social workers, and teachers with protective gear were prepared at the testing spots to arrange the pick-up of the children when their test results were negative. The pupils were given procedures such as checking temperature, disinfecting, and changing masks when they arrived at the Center entrance. Then they were taken to a dormitory room for a seven-day quarantine. Simultaneously, staff from the District Health Centre visited the center every three days to administer rapid COVID tests. The children's faces were flushed with weariness when they initially arrived at the Center after traveling such a great distance and having to undergo Covid-19 tests. However, after resting, and rejoining with their close friends after so many days apart, the children were more lively and full of excitement, engaging in chats with one another. In the dorms, which had been silent for nearly six months, familiar waves of laughter resounded.

Each of the children's rooms has its own instructor and medical personnel to monitor, care for, and arrange activities for the children to begin getting used to textbooks, communal activities, and, most importantly, to keep them from feeling confined or bored while in isolation. Since the children were unable to leave the dorm during the quarantine period, health department employees delivered meals and drinks to a prearranged spot for in-charge staff to pick up and distribute to the children's rooms. These were the children's first delicious, substantial meals after months of being underfed with their family. Teachers and medical personnel gathered and disinfected domestic and medical waste to process at the center's medical waste treatment furnace on a daily schedule in line with the guidelines to guarantee that pandemic prevention and control measures were properly implemented during the quarantine period.

Although the students were required to be quarantined for a week to ensure efficient COVID-19 prevention, when they returned to class, the teachers tried their best to tutor them so that they could keep up with the regular curriculum.

We believe that with careful planning and preparation, as well as the efforts of the Maison Chance staff, all children will be healthy and ready to pursue their dreams and desires.



Children line up for health checks before entering Maison Chance Dak Nong

SMARTPHONES AND INTERNET ACCESS FOR THE MOST DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS



A pupil has a brand-new smartphone in her hands

The fourth outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Vietnam occurred during the summer break and lasted until the start of the new school year. Throughout this outbreak, Saigon was the most severely affected city, with all city activities, particularly the economy, social life, and education, being severely harmed.

Due to the complications of the pandemic, students across the country, particularly in Saigon, are unable to begin the new school year in the traditional manner and must instead switch to online learning. However, underprivileged children at Maison Chance who are living in abject poverty have an even greater challenge. Students must have the necessary equipment, such as a laptop, tablet, or smartphone, as well as a stable Internet connection, to participate in online learning.

Many families whose children attend the Village Chance school lost their jobs, significantly reducing their incomes and making day-to-day life exceedingly tough. It took real effort for them to stay in Saigon for more than three months during the pandemic so that their children's education wouldn't be disrupted.

Therefore, they had no idea how to get their children phones and laptops. As a result, many children will have to begin the school year without access to the Internet to study.

The Village Chance school teachers attempted to teach the children by making phone calls by their phones, but this approach didn't really work, particularly with the younger students.

As we recognize the urgency and significance of this issue influencing the quality of teaching and learning, Maison Chance joined with sponsors to provide 58 of the most deprived children with smartphones equipped with high-speed 4G SIM cards.

When students and families received the smartphone, they were overjoyed and relieved that the pandemic restrictions had not disrupted their studies. Smartphones with Internet access will make it easier for children to learn; teachers will be able to convey lessons visually, allowing students to absorb and learn more efficiently.

On behalf of the students and their families, Maison Chance would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the sponsors who have joined us in our mission to provide education to disadvantaged children.



The principal hands the phone to the pupils



It's practical to provide pupils a new smartphone so that their schooling does not suffer



The smartphones enable pupils to continue learning without interruption

MAISON CHANCE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK

When the pandemic hit Saigon, the number of cases approached the four-digit mark every day, and the city has struggled to contain the outbreak with the assistance of the country's health workforce.

During the early days of the outbreak, Maison Chance Saigon adopted social distancing in all of its activities. At the peak of the outbreak, the city decided to tighten its existing restrictions, requiring citizens to "stay put." All employees and members of the Maison Chance were also allowed to stop working and vocational training at the Take Wing Center. Members would instead study online at the Shelter or work at the Village Chance, with only a few employees coming to the Take Wing Center for very essential tasks.

Despite efforts to prevent the pandemic, five cases of infection via an unknown route were reported in the last weeks of September at the Maison Chance Shelter. After the District Health Center revealed the rapid test results, we were all taken aback. To be certain, we managed to perform an additional PCR test on five people who had positive rapid test findings. The five members were quarantined in a separate area of the Shelter while waiting for the Pasteur Institute's confirmation results. Simultaneously, each member's condition was diagnosed and a treatment plan was developed thanks to online checkups. One of the most concerning members was a quadriplegic with poor health who had not received the COVID-19 vaccine, while another has type 2 diabetes.



Village Chance members queue to be tested for COVID-19

Furthermore, the other three had all received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccination, so their health was more assured.

After getting over the initial panic, we all joined the fight against COVID-19. On the one hand, the social workers regularly phoned to encourage the members, and on the other hand, contacted the local health department to disinfect the Shelter and find a place to treat them. Maison Chance's medical staff worked with the treating doctor to administer medicine and provide assistance to the patients. However, local treatment facilities were either overcrowded or inappropriate for wheelchair users due to the city's extremely high number of COVID-19 patients. As a result, it was decided to quarantine and cure the members at the Maison Chance Shelter.

Members infected with COVID-19 recovered after two weeks of quarantine treatment and experienced no major side effects. All of this was made possible by early proper treatment, and their spirit of optimism stayed intact. As the city progressively reopened in early October, Maison Chance allowed a limited number of staff and members to return to work at the Take Wing Center,



Village Chance members are being taken their nasal fluids in turn by medical staff to check for COVID-19

on the requirement that they be tested for COVID-19 every three days.

In the second week after returning to work, we detected one more COVID-19-positive member, this time a disabled member who is a social integration from Village Chance. Thanks to the experience from the previous battle against COVID-19, the infected member was quarantined and treated properly. We realize that the fight against the pandemic will take months, if not years. As a result, the city's current operation plan, in general, and Maison Chance's in particular, is to adapt to the pandemic while attempting to minimize the number of infections.

The price of all products has risen dramatically as a consequence of the pandemic, posing major challenges. However, all beneficiaries' living and educational expenditures, as well as healthcare costs for COVID-19 testing, prevention, and treatment, need to be covered. Therefore, the combined efforts of domestic and international donors are a great encouragement for Maison Chance to remain positive throughout this tough period.



A BETTER FUTURE FOR A GIONG AND A PHONG



A Giong and A Phong are orphaned and helpless, with no one to look after them



A Giong is six years old, and A Phong is three

Traveling to different places and meeting people from different backgrounds has made us realize that there are far too many children who have experienced poverty, underdevelopment, and hopelessness from the moment they were born. Once their fates are revealed, everyone can't help but feel sad for them. The case of two brothers, A Giong and A Phong, is a typical example.

They were born in an out-of-the-way village deep in the wooded mountains, far from the regular residential areas. This is known as a settlement, a place where ethnic minorities have migrated to from all around without any permission or legal documents to protect their rights. Both electricity and running water are unavailable in this region. The majority of the people's income comes from working as hired laborers.

Poverty frequently leads to reckless, bad decisions. They follow the path of crime to make a livelihood and eventually become involved in illegal activities, just like the two children's parents.



A Giong and A Phong in the class

Their father was taken into custody and accused of drug possession and distribution. Soon after, the children's mother was arrested on drug-related charges, but she was released on bail as she was still parenting the children. In March 2021, when A Giong was 6 years old and A Phong was 3 years old, their mother was arrested and charged again for drug trafficking.

As a result of their parents' imprisonment, the children have become orphans. Nobody looks after or nurtures the two children since they have no close relatives. The children spend their days roaming the fields and sometimes bathing in the hydroelectric dam's lake.

The children slept wherever they could find a place to sleep at night, but danger was never far away. Every day, hunger and thirst become friends with the children who have no idea where to go to have a meal. People in the village offered the children what they had at the time, assisting the children in overcoming their temporary hunger since they, too, struggled to feed their families on a daily basis during the pandemic lockdowns.

They were orphaned, hungry, and neglected, which caused them to become sickly with burnt skin, timid, and difficult to approach.

After learning about the children's situation from local authorities, Maison Chance Dak Nong organized a field trip and then welcomed the children to the Center in April 2021 to nurture and care for them.

When they initially arrived at the Center, they were hesitant whenever getting involved with others, and because they did not speak Vietnamese, it was difficult to communicate with and teach them. However, the children's hearts gradually opened, and smiles sprouted on their lips, thanks to the care and compassion of members and staff at Maison Chance Dak Nong.

In the eight months since their arrival at Maison Chance, the children's appearance and spirits have changed significantly.

A Phong and A Giong's skin has improved and they have put on weight. They've started learning and understanding Vietnamese, but are still shy to speak the language. A Giong

started first grade, whilst A Phong began with the word "Da!" (Yes, please!)

Their happy home is now Maison Chance. Every day, the children live and play pleasantly with their peers, interact fearlessly and joyfully with their teachers, and the disabled in the center.

Maison Chance will always be there for them, ensuring that they have a bright future and a happier life to compensate for their months of misery, hunger, and self-pity.



After some time at Maison Chance, A Giong and A Phong enrolled in a class with new pals



Ms. Thu Ly is awarded the Rebeaud Award by Ms. Tim, sponsored by Mr. Phung Lien Doan.



After 7 months of working remotely due to Covid-19, Tim is happy to see her colleagues again



Delectable pastries for the ceremony prepared by the Maison Chance beneficiaries.



Everyone is relieved to see Tim after such a long time apart.

NEWSLETTER MAISON CHANCE DECEMBER - 2021

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