

## **Mentoring Program for Orphaned Youths** (Pilot Project)

**When (tentative):** July-August, 2011

**Expected Duration:** (duration: **6-8 weeks**)

**Location:** Orphanage of Long Hoa Buddhist Temple, Ho Chi Minh City, **Vietnam**

**Executive Summary:** This project is a **pilot program** that introduces developmental mentorship as a character development model to orphanages in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In this model, each orphan is paired up with a **local** (from Vietnam) **volunteer ‘sibling’** who is committed to building a supportive **long-term relationship** with the orphan. Assisting the ‘sibling partnerships’ is a series of **identity-building** and **self-development workshops** whose curriculum addresses the atrocious relationship and identity issues affecting orphans. By the end of the summer, the relationships with volunteer ‘siblings’ are expected to mature into **social capital** upon which the orphans can leverage to deliver confidence and motivations in their life. The longer a meaningful relationship lasts, the more positive impact it delivers; hence, we will also start up a **system of support** for the ‘sibling partnerships’ to pursue their commitments after the summer project.

### **Statement of Need:**

Every day the lack of adult guidance affects the character development of 1.5 million orphans in Vietnam (childinfo, 2008). Although general relief service (food, shelter and schooling) is provided for this population of vulnerable children, for decades they remain the lowest socioeconomic group in Vietnamese society as they mature into adulthood. Much of this achievement gap is due to the lack of guidance in the challenges of growing up. Before reaching adulthood, young orphans are exposed to higher risks for juvenile delinquency, illegal gambling, drug abuse, and criminal offense than any other social groups.

### **Challenges to meeting the need:**

#### *\*Lack of support resources:*

For years, compensating for this lack of family relationships has been inadequate due to the lack of support resources and entrepreneurial efforts. Though the orphanage educators have been remarkably successful in maintaining disciplines and order in the household, for years their resources were too stretched to allow them to reach out to each and every orphan. In fact, housekeeping has taken most time from the 8-10 caregivers in Long Hoa orphanage, leaving the 110 orphans to unstructured, mis-educative environment in the neighborhood streets.

#### *\*‘Voluntourism’:*

Volunteering trips commonly organized by privileged groups are with short-term half-hearted commitments to the orphans. Volunteer-orphan relationships created hastily under the pressure of time are abandoned over the weekends or the summers. This creates a sense of ‘second abandonment’ (besides child abandonment), which mainly affects the younger orphans. As they grow older, they carry a sense of cynicism towards outsiders and inferiority complex in themselves.

*\*The lack of extra-curricular activities:*

In the orphanage, the life is a large social confinement because the social stigma on orphans prevents the orphans from building positive relationships with people in the neighborhood. Moreover, the orphanage lacks the resources to institutionalize extra-curricular activities. As a result, the orphans lack the social maturity and the interpersonal skills most needed to manage their lives as they 'graduate' from the orphanage in their 20s.

**Mission:** build the social capital that helps orphan youths deliver success in their life.

**Objectives for the Summer Project:**

Over the summer, ideally a team of 3-5 U.S college students, after training with professionals in the field, will collaborate with a team of local Vietnamese students to create **local start-up program** based on **developmental mentorship model**, which aims to create change through the followings:

\*Providing each orphan (up to 10-15) with a long-term consistent personal attention that promotes his or her growth. The program will build **one-to-one 'sibling' relationship** between orphans and Vietnam volunteers over the Summer.

\*Providing a **support network** (administrative, training, funding and logistics) for the 'sibling' relationships develop after the Summer and over the years. The more mature a 'sibling' relationship is, the more positive impact it would bring to the orphan.

\*Piloting **self-development curriculum** to be implemented by the orphans and the volunteers altogether. Giving orphans the opportunities to exercise their social, interpersonal and leadership skills is the most effective way to empower them. In addition, engaging in meaningful activities will strengthen the 'sibling' relationships over the Summer.

**Approaches:**

**Focus group:** the program targets the **most at-risk group** of orphans in Long Hoa (14-16years of age). Orphans of this age are undergoing great psychological change of adolescence, preparing for adulthood. The 'sibling' partnerships will have plenty of room to step into their lives. In addition, this group age is becoming the peer leaders for the younger orphans. Their participation in the program opens up ample opportunities to enlist support from the younger audience in the future.

**Workshops:** the team will conduct a series of **identity-building and self-development workshops** for the target group over Summer. The workshops will be conducted in various settings (classroom, outdoors, camping etc.), time (fire circle, late-night, morning etc.), formats (project-based, experiential, discussion-based, game and fun etc.) and levels (individual, group and sub-groups). The workshop essentially provides the relevant themes and the structured environment under which the sibling partnerships can grow. In a mutually-reinforcing relationship, the workshop and the sibling partnership are the **top-down** and the **bottom-up** approaches to change.

**Leadership training:** For the **sustainability** of the program after the summer, the team will provide **leadership training** to the Vietnam college students' on-project. The team will

empower the Vietnam college students to become the primary leaders of the self-development program. The wealth of experience gathered from interacting with orphans will make the Vietnam college students the best managers of the future program.

*Structural support:* The team will be engaged in dialogue with local NGOs, local university student groups and the Long Hoa Orphanage to set up **institutional support** for the program. The team will be responsible for recommending a plan of logistics, administrative, curriculum and funding support for the program to grow after the Summer. The team will also conduct an evaluation of the program at the end of the Summer.

## ***Timeline: (July-August 2011)***

*\*Note: the following curriculum is open to changes and feedbacks\**

### **Week 1: Group Bonding**

*Objectives:*

\*To convey a sense of commitment to the welfare of the target group.

\*To establish mutuality between the groups working together.

*Approach:* Volunteers will get to know target group. Group activities will be conducted to bond the volunteer group with the target group.

*Sampled activities:*

1. Ice breaking games
2. Scavenger hunt
3. Football match
4. Fair Exchange
5. Mass dancing

### **Week 2: Pair Bonding**

*Objective:* To initiate one-to-one relationship between volunteers and orphans.

*Approach:* Each orphan in the target group will be paired up with a volunteer group. Activities will be conducted to strengthen the pairs together.

*Sampled Activities:*

1. Instrument making and Sing-Song lesson
2. Painting lesson
3. Other pair activities
4. Cooking contest
5. Karaoke Contest

### **Week 3: Co-working/Character Development**

*Objective:* To bring the volunteer-orphan relationship to a higher level (co-working and interdependence in work)

*Approach:* The volunteer-orphan pairs will be engaged in a specific development tasks. They work together to formulate a plan of action and execute that plan in order to address a simple social need. In addition, Long Hoa students will be guided to address difference in opinion, practice public speaking skills.

*Sampled Activities::*

1. Vietnamese Language Teaching
2. Game building
3. Art Creation

*Sampled Workshops:*

1. Pair Co Operation
2. Listening and Problem Solving
3. Co Operation

\*Note: workshop topics can be altered based on the needs of each individual orphan. *Suggested topics for workshops:*

1. Relationship development
2. Confidence Building
3. Effective communication
4. Bring Passion into your work
5. Creative Thinking

#### **Week 4: Skill Development**

**Objectives:** Begin focusing on social-skill development for orphans.

**Approach:** The team will conduct workshop to develop specific social skills for the orphan group. Each orphan will be facilitated by his or her personal volunteer partner in whatever tasks given in the workshop

**Activities:**

**Workshops:**

1. Program planning, building and implementation
2. Giving compliments, making feedbacks and receiving criticisms.
3. Stress Control
4. Review, re-think and re-express your bias

#### **Week 5-6: Leadership Development**

**Objective:** develop each orphan on a social platform that engages their responsibility, their commitments and their interest. The ultimate goal is to allow each orphan the opportunity to step up in front of a group and learn to take leadership of the group.

**Approach:** The orphans will be given 3 mini-projects in which they have to independently formulate a plan of actions and execute it. During the course of the mini-projects, workshops will be conducted to address specific challenges faced by the orphan group. Certain social skills will be embedded in the leadership curriculum as well.

**Sampled Activities:**

1. Creating a plan and leading a one-day camping event.
2. Creating a plan and leading a 'treasure hunt' (or scavenger hunt) in the neighborhood
3. Kick-start a mini orphanage-led interest club.

**Sampled Workshops:**

1. Drawing the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of a plan
2. Looking at own strengths and weaknesses in a group.
3. Communication and team conflict resolution
4. Make a well-delivered point in a group discussion
5. Writing Program, Proposals and Suggestions.

#### **Week 7: Program Evaluation**

**Objective:** evaluate the successes and failures of the pilot program. Obtain evidences and data to apply for grants for the following year.

**Activities:** Engage in dialogues with participants, administrators, NGOs and social workers.

**Methods of social explorations:** surveys and interviews.