

Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

Volume 17
Issue 3 *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*

Article 18

October 2013

Faces of Mine Action: AEPD's Nguyen Thi Thanh Hong

CISR JOURNAL

Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal>



Part of the [Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

JOURNAL, CISR (2013) "Faces of Mine Action: AEPD's Nguyen Thi Thanh Hong," *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* : Vol. 17 : Iss. 3 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol17/iss3/18>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.

THE JOURNAL

OF ERW AND MINE ACTION

Issue 17.3 | Fall 2013


[Editorial](#)
[Focus](#)
[Feature](#)
[Special Report](#)
[Notes from the Field](#)
[R&D](#)
[Faces of Mine Action](#)
[Briefs](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[CISR Home](#)

Faces of Mine Action: AEPD's Nguyen Thi Thanh Hong

Nguyen Thi Thanh Hong has a personal connection to her work at the Association for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (AEPD). Her schoolmate was killed by an item of unexploded ordnance (UXO) while going to work, and Hong's six-year-old brother died from a cluster munition explosion during the Vietnam War.¹ Inspired by these losses, Hong works diligently at AEPD to improve the lives of persons with disabilities including landmine survivors.

As the vice chairwoman of AEPD, Hong provides support to the chairman and advocates for disability awareness within the community. Additionally, she works on fundraisers and collaborates on proposals with outside organizations. Irish Aid and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs are two of AEPD's largest donors and supporters.

AEPD aims to improve the social and economic well-being of disabled people, including those affected by landmines. Formerly known as Landmine Survivors Network-Vietnam, AEPD is a local, Vietnamese nonprofit organization that has worked in the Quang Binh province since 2010.² Instead of exclusively working with landmine survivors, AEPD assists all PWDs, including victims of Agent Orange, an herbicide sprayed in Vietnam from 1962 to 1971. Exposure to the herbicide led to the formation of many diseases and congenital disabilities among the Vietnamese population.³ Founded in 2010, AEPD has worked with nearly 3,000 landmine survivors and 2,000 other PWDs.

AEPD uses the peer-support model to help persons with disabilities, focusing on five key areas: livelihood, social



Nguyen Thi Thanh Hong with CISR Director Ken Rutherford and his wife, Kim Rutherford, during the 2013 Senior Managers' Course in ERW and Mine Action. Photo courtesy of CISR.


integration, health care, climate change and advocacy. AEPD also provides disaster-management services for disabled people in Vietnam, because they are the most vulnerable citizens during natural disasters.^{4,5}

According to Vietnam's Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, Vietnam's latest population and housing census conducted in 2009 shows that 7.8 percent of the population age 5 or older is disabled. This is equivalent to 6.7 million people. Of these persons with disabilities, approximately 53.8 percent are female and approximately 75 percent live in rural areas. Explosive remnants of war (ERW), Agent Orange and congenital disabilities account for a significant amount of the total number of PWDs.⁶ As a result of the Japanese occupation of Vietnam (1940–1945), the First Indochina War (1946–1954) and the Vietnam War (1955–1975), the nation remains contaminated with landmines and ERW, including cluster munitions. An estimated one-fifth of Vietnam's total land area, including all 63 provinces and cities, is contaminated. In May 2013, Vietnam released the National Mine Action Plan for 2013–2015, which calls for a national mine action center and the clearance of 1 million sq m (386 sq mi) per year of contaminated land.⁷

PWDs in Vietnam

Additionally, disabled persons face many mental and physical challenges. According to Hong, 80 percent of disabled people live in urban areas and 70 percent of disabled people living in rural areas depend on their families for their physical well-being, which includes financial support. Less than 10 percent of disabled persons have jobs, hence the strong need for humanitarian support from organizations like AEPD. The government enacted the Law on Persons with Disabilities in 2010; however, many disabled people are unaware of their rights under the law.

The pathway to self-sufficiency is long and difficult for ERW survivors and persons with disabilities. AEPD helps individuals understand their rights and build the skills to support themselves and their families. To facilitate their education, AEPD organized training courses in advocacy skills and rights education for persons with disabilities.⁸

Although the government has tried to support all persons with disabilities, it has limited resources.⁹ Since there have been many policies to support Vietnam's war veterans, AEPD especially works to support female PWDs to limit their disadvantages.¹⁰ 

~ *Chloe Cunningham, an editorial assistant at the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR), interviewed Nguyen Thi Thanh Hong when Hong attended the 2013 Senior Managers' Course (SMC) on ERW and Mine Action at James Madison University (JMU). The SMC was organized by CISR and funded by the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA).*

Endnotes

1. In Vietnam the Vietnam War is called the American War.
2. "Association for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities." *AEPD*. <http://aepd-vn.org/index.php?newlang=english>. Accessed 30 May 2013.
3. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Agent Orange." <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/8993/Agent-Orange>. Accessed 19 September 2013.
4. "What We Do." *Association for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities*. <http://aepd-vn.org/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=51%5C>. Accessed 5 September 2013.
5. "Disability, natural disasters and emergency situations." *United Nations Enable*. <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1546>. Accessed 5 September 2013.
6. "2010 Annual Report on status of people with disabilities in Vietnam." National Council on Disability (NCCD). Hanoi, December 2010. Accessed 30 October 2013.
7. Email correspondence with Nguyen Thi Thanh Hong. 10 September 2013.
8. "Vietnam." *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor 2013*. http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/816. Accessed 19 September 2013.
9. "Social Inclusion." *Association for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities*. <http://aepd-vn.org/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=44&newlang=english>. Accessed 20 August 2013.
10. "Gender in Viet Nam." *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. http://www.unwomen-eseasia.org/Vietnam/gender_in_vietnam.html. Accessed 20 August 2013.

Forum Widget

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

The Journal of ERW & Mine Action is produced and sponsored by:



© 2013 All rights reserved. *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*, Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at James Madison University.

MSC 4902 Harrisonburg, VA / USA 22807 | Email: cisr@jmu.edu

If cited properly, short sections (a sentence or two) can be used without permission. Written *Journal of ERW and Mine Action* approval is required, however, before longer sections of content published in *The Journal* may be used by another source or publication.
ISSN 2154-1485

[Past Issues](#) * [CISR Home](#) * [Subscribe](#)