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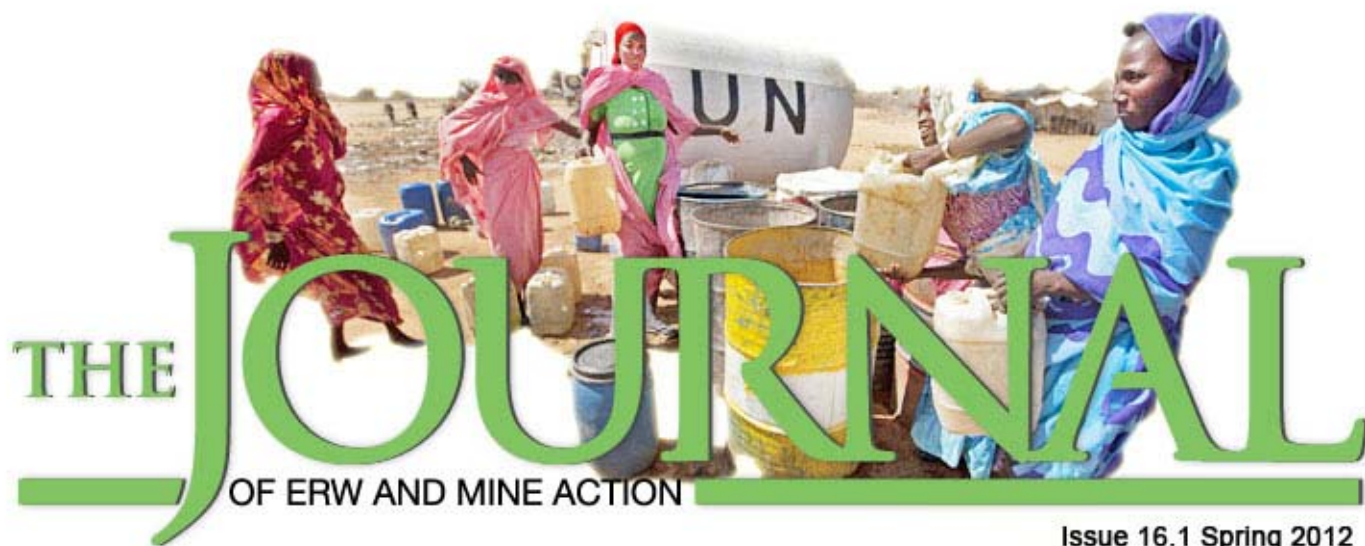
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PeaceTrees Vietnam

In 1969, Jerilyn Brusseau's brother, American Daniel Cheney, died when his helicopter was shot down over Vietnam's southern provinces. Brusseau vowed that when the war was over she would work for reconciliation. Gathered with friends around the breakfast table one Sunday morning, the group decided on an avenue to build bridges of reconciliation between the United States and Vietnam: "We wanted to take the spirit of 'citizen diplomacy' fostered by 18 previous international PeaceTrees programs in other countries to a deeper level, by working with the Vietnamese people in removing landmines and planting trees."¹



As a result, Brusseau and her husband, Danaan Parry, founded PeaceTrees Vietnam in 1995. Until it achieved nonprofit status in 2005, it was a part of the Earthstewards Network, an international nonprofit supporting grassroots conflict-resolution projects.² The Earthstewards Network has organized 25 PeaceTrees projects throughout the globe since its founding in 1979, including projects in Croatia, India, Kenya, Nicaragua, Northern Ireland, Palestine and the United States.³

Following Brusseau's and Parry's first visit to Hanoi in 1996 after the normalization of Vietnamese-U.S. relations in 1995, the program developed quickly. Three demining experts, formerly in the U.S. military, surveyed land in Quang Tri province and the Vietnamese Government gave PeaceTrees Vietnam official permission to begin humanitarian demining work. In September 1996, 43 international volunteers worked with 43 Vietnamese volunteers to clear the 6.5 hectares (16 acres) of mined land and plant 2,000 trees in this area near Dong Ha. Today, this land is the Friendship Forest Park.¹

Ongoing Efforts

Left over from the Vietnam War⁴ in the 1960s and conflicts with China and Cambodia in the 1970s, explosive remnants of war, landmines and cluster munitions still contaminate an estimated 15 percent of Vietnam's land area.⁵ Since 1979, landmines and ERW have killed or injured more than 35,000 Vietnamese.¹

To address these challenges, PeaceTrees Vietnam takes a multi-faceted approach, including land clearance, survivor rehabilitation and mine-risk education. Under the organization of PeaceTrees, trained Vietnamese specialists conduct the demining.³ By the end of 2011 the PeaceTrees Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams had destroyed more than 63,343 pieces of unexploded ordnance and cleared more than 534 acres (216 hectares) of land.⁶

In 1997, PeaceTrees established the Danaan Parry Landmines Education Center to provide MRE.³ As of the beginning of 2012, PeaceTrees MRE programs have reached more than 72,750 children and adults, helping them to identify and avoid landmines and other ERW.⁶

Beginning in 2002, PeaceTrees' Friendship Village program resettled more than 100 families on the reclaimed land of a former U.S. Army base in Dong Ha. The village facilities include a kindergarten and a meeting hall, and the program provides needed utilities for the newly built homes, including safe, running water. In 2010, another project cleared 42 hectares (104 acres) of land, which enabled 56 families to safely live and farm.¹

PeaceTrees also provides rehabilitation assistance to survivors and families. Its victim-assistance program includes medical care for survivors and a microloan program to help survivors and families start businesses for support.¹ As of the end of 2011, this program has helped more than 738 survivors.⁶

Continuing its tradition of establishing international bonds between the people of the United States and Vietnam, PeaceTrees organizes two "friendship/diplomatic" trips to Vietnam each year to build relationships between American, international and Vietnamese volunteers, and to participate in tree-planting and restoration efforts.¹ To date, 585 people have traveled and volunteered in Vietnam through this program.⁶

Organization and Participation

A 13-member board of directors oversees the work of PeaceTrees Vietnam. Three American staff members, headed by Executive Director Blair B. Burroughs, perform the daily administrative work of the PeaceTrees' American team. In August 2011, cofounder and board member Jerilyn Brusseau was one of four recipients of an annual Women of Inspiration Award, given by the Seattle Storm, a U.S. women's basketball team, for her work with PeaceTrees.⁶

Leading PeaceTrees work in Vietnam, Country Director Quang Le oversees the work of six other employees and two trained Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams. PeaceTrees closely cooperates with other organizations, including the Quang Tri Province People's Committee, a regional government body similar to a U.S. state government, and the Women's Union of the Quang Tri Province.⁷

The Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) has provided significant support to PeaceTrees Vietnam. In 2008 and 2009, PM/WRA funding allowed PeaceTrees to expand its EOD work and provide MRE in ethnic minority languages. Charitable foundations, nongovernmental organizations and individual donors also fund PeaceTrees' ongoing work. The assistance and participation of volunteers is essential—from raising awareness about the work of PeaceTrees Vietnam to joining one of its biannual citizen diplomacy trips.³

On 23 February 2012, in partnership with the Vietnamese Friendship Organization, PeaceTrees Vietnam hosted a free public event, entitled "World Café: Exploring our connections to Vietnam and one another" in Seattle, Washington. Angie Chau, the author of *Quiet As They Come*, a collection of short stories about Vietnamese immigrants in California, was a special guest.⁶ ↗

~ Rachael Weber, CISR staff

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