

Back to
Contents

Call For
Papers

Submission
Guidelines

E-mail
the Journal

Journal
Staff

Editorial
Board

To HDIC
Webpage

Back
Issues

The Journal of Humanitarian Demining

Profile

PeaceTrees Vietnam

Colleen Pettit
HDIC

Winter, 1998

Information in this issue may be out of date. [Click here](#) to link to the most recent issue.

PeaceTrees Vietnam is one of 21 international PeaceTrees projects organized since 1987 by the Earthstewards Network, an international organization based in Bainbridge, Washington. As the name implies, PeaceTrees projects have a twofold purpose: social and environmental healing. Specifically, PeaceTrees projects unite former enemies, such as the U. S. and Vietnam, as together they clear landmines and counter the environmental damage caused by landmines.

With an estimated 58,000 leftover landmines and unexploded ordnance, Vietnam suffers from the lasting legacy of war. Landmines kill or maim an average of one Vietnamese child every week; 52 children every year. To address the critical landmine situation in Vietnam, Jerilyn Brusseau and Danaan Parry planned and executed PeaceTrees Vietnam, a project consisting of three phases. Phase One began in September 1996 and involved demining 18 acres in the Quang Tri Province, a chief battlefield during the Vietnam War. A team of retired U.S. military demining experts cooperated with Vietnamese militia to clear the land of

- 238 mortars, shells, and explosive bullets,
- 19 bomblets (bombees, or baseball-bombs),
- 56 grenades,
- 47 landmines, and
- 1,549 pieces of exploded landmines and ordnance.

After the U. S. team and Vietnamese militia demined the land, the U. S. team conducted a quality assurance operation, deemed the land clear, and declared Phase One a success.

Phase One not only rid the land of the environmentally and socially damaging landmines, it also reconciled former enemies, the U. S. and Vietnam. Former combatants worked together toward the peaceful goal of mine clearance. One poignant example of this reconciliation is embodied by Colonel Yung, a member of the Vietnamese militia. During Phase One of the project, Yung operated a landmine detector under the guidance of a U. S. military demining expert. Twenty-five years earlier as a Viet Cong combatant and only one mile from the 18-acre plot where he was now working, Yung

lost his left eye and some ribs to an American grenade.

Phase Two continued to fulfill the project's social and environmental aims. This phase brought together the Vietnamese and other countries to reforest the demined but battle-scarred 18 acres. In November 1996, an international team of 43 people from the U. K., Canada, U. S., Croatia, Ghana, and Germany joined a 43-person Vietnamese team to plant over 1,700 trees and plants. The trees and plants represent 37 species indigenous to the area. In addition to replenishing the vegetation, the teams built a park, which they named Friendship Forest. Like "PeaceTrees," "Friendship Forest" emphasizes the project's combined social and environmental interests.

Phase Three will include construction of the Danaan Parry Landmines Education Center and development and implementation of a mines awareness program. The Center will provide the community with much needed mines awareness and environmental restoration information.

August 1998 is slotted for the dedication of the Center. A team of volunteers will travel to Vietnam to work alongside their Vietnamese counterparts to equip the Center and plant trees.

For more information about PeaceTrees Vietnam or other PeaceTrees projects, visit the PeaceTrees section of the Earthstewards web site at <http://www.earthstewards.org/peacetrees>.
