

ETHOS



Spirit of the Community

ETHOS – Spirit of the Community Team have a growing portfolio of **development projects**. ETHOS operate as a business that trades in order to tackle social problems, improve communities, people's life chances, and the environment. Our aims and objectives are:

- To preserve, promote and enhance traditional culture and practices.
- To minimise ill health and unnecessary suffering.
- To eliminate extreme poverty by removing systematic barriers.
- To initiate small scale sustainable development projects for capacity building.
- The empowerment of women through literacy and increased opportunity.
- To minimise waste and support local conservation and environmental protection efforts.



Waste recycling and composting.

Vietnam plastic waste is amongst the highest in the world and it is this statistic that inspired us to start a system of recycling and composting.



The ETHOS community centre has a number of waste streams, including coffee grounds, egg shells, vegetable cuttings and fruit peels. We use this to create our own compost, thus enriching our soil. We are also modelling this behaviour to others.

Compost is rich in nutrients. We use our household organic waste for organic farming. The compost itself is beneficial for the land in many ways, including as a soil conditioner, a fertilizer, addition of vital humus or humic acids, and as a natural pesticide for soil.

Our compost is specifically used to fertilise fruit trees. This has increased yield considerably and also improved fruit quality. We now use our own plums to produce home-made organic jam which is served as part of the breakfast menu within our community centre. ETHOS also grow our own pumpkins, hemp, herbs, peaches and pears.

ETHOS also recycle glass, plastic and metals that are sold to a local sorting and recycling centre. At present there is NO system of domestic recycling in Sapa and we hope to model this behaviour to encourage other households in the area to sort and sell their waste streams.

This project aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (<https://www.globalgoals.org/>)



Book Bank & Literacy Classes



Since 2016, ETHOS have been building a resource library with the hope of improving literacy amongst our guides and the wider community. Participants are streamed into early readers and those who already have basic proficiency. We host intensive 25-hour workshops within the ETHOS community centre once every few weeks. This allows adult learners the opportunity to focus on reading and writing, based on phonics principles.

There is a great interest in our literacy workshops and attendees come from our guide team as well as being open to anyone who wants to learn. Classes are typically 8 to 14 adult learners and teaching is led by Phil and also by volunteers.

According to Barack Obama, "Reading is the gateway skill that makes all other learning possible, from complex word problems and the meaning of our history to scientific discovery and technological proficiency". This is something we agree with wholeheartedly.

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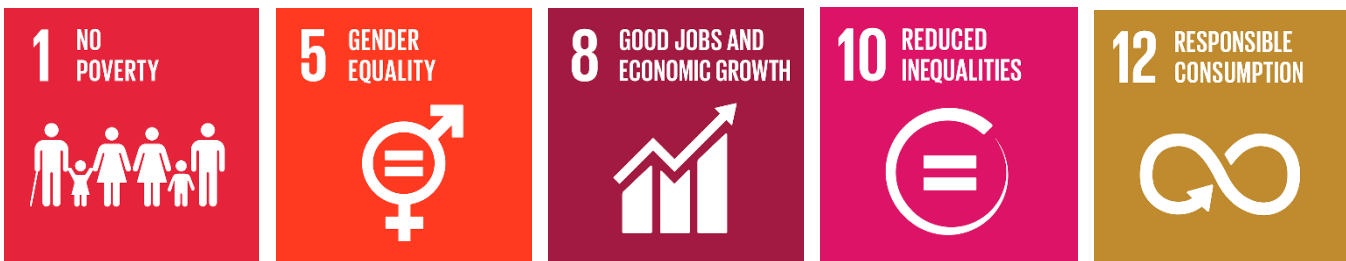
Linens for Life

Linens for Life has a simple but powerful objective: to empower people using existing waste streams from the established tourism industry. With this program, several families in the wider ETHOS community are able to earn a small livelihood by converting linens discarded by hotels into new and useful items that they can sell. At the same time, hotels can recycle their unwanted linens in a way that makes a real difference.



Communities receive basic training on how to design, market and sell items using natural products and traditional techniques. These items are then sold to earn an income for the people who made them. At present, the team are producing high quality homeware, fashion textile jewellery and clothing.

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Operation Smile Vietnam

ETHOS have an ongoing partnership with Operation Smile Vietnam.

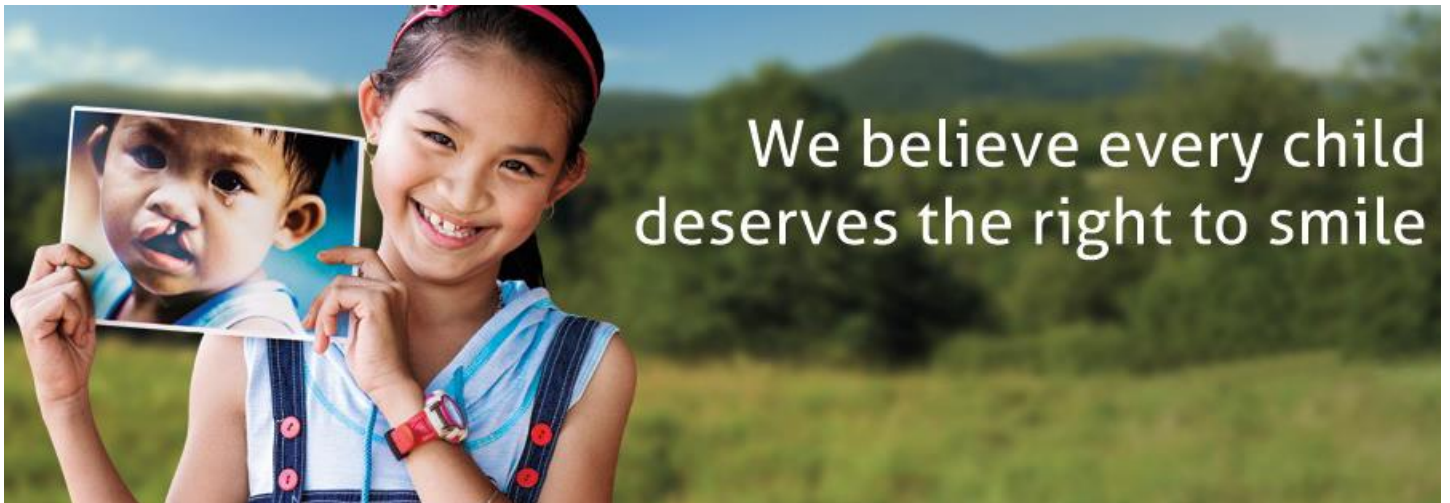
Operation Smile is an international children's medical charity that performs safe, effective cleft lip and cleft palate surgery, and delivers postoperative and ongoing medical therapies to children of low and middle income families.

ETHOS network within our communities to find and document cases of childhood deformities. We then send frequent portfolios to our partner international medical professionals who in turn help to schedule check ups and surgery.

Operation Smile is a pioneer in advocating the importance of safe surgery in resource poor environments and is the largest surgical charity of its kind, leading research into the causes of cleft lip and cleft palate, and its prevention, treatment and eradication.

Together, we create smiles, change lives, heal humanity.

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Aseo Cookstove and Chimney initiative



The Adaptive Sustainable Engineering Support Organisation develop simple, sustainable and locally producible technical solutions for everyday problems in developing countries. The aim is to improve the everyday lives of people in development countries while at the same time protecting the environment.

In mountainous, northern Vietnam live many subsistence farmers. One of their main health issues is household air pollution (HAP) and pneumonia, a result of their cold, smoke filled houses. The ETHOS Heater is built in the style of a traditional Swiss masonry heater, adapted to the local requirements. The prototype fulfils the two main tasks, cooking and heating. The main advantage of the masonry heater style is its ability to store heat. It is best suitable to use the fast burning bamboo, a locally abundant source of fuel. The heater incorporates a chimney thus allowing homes to be cleaner and warmer. The cookstove was developed in close collaboration with ETHOS - Spirit of the Community and reduces the two biggest killers of people in the area.

Worldwide, around 3 billion people cook and heat their homes using open fires and simple stoves burning biomass & coal. Over 4 million people die prematurely from illness attributable to the household air pollution from cooking with solid fuels. More than 50% of premature deaths due to pneumonia among children under 5 are caused by the particulate matter (soot) inhaled from household air pollution.

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ETHOS Water Tanks

ETHOS have an ever expanding network of 20 litre stainless steel water tanks within our village communities.

Properly maintained rainwater tanks provide good quality drinking water for our guides, their families and for travellers who use our homestays and eat with host families.

Sapa Mountain rainwater is clear, has little taste or smell and is sourced from a well maintained water catchment system. For extra safety, we bring our water to a rolling boil for six to eight minutes and then allow it to cool before drinking. The ETHOS water tanks therefore contain non-fluoridated and unadulterated crisp clean rainwater.

Instruction as to how to perform periodic cleaning of rainwater tanks is also included as part of this programme.

Drinking clean water is known to be the best and the most natural hydrating liquid. It promotes cardiovascular health, keeps muscles and joints working, and helps cleanse toxins from your body. Staying hydrated also helps balance your blood sugar, helps relieve headaches, and promotes healthy skin.

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Refill My Bottle

ETHOS are a registered water refill station with Refill My Bottle Vietnam. We offer free filtered water for travellers who want a sustainable solution to creating less plastic. This project runs along side our growing network of village based water tanks and commitment to being a zero plastic organisation.



Easily accessed through the mobile app or website, the Refill My Bottle map shows you nearby locations where you can refill your water bottle for free or minimum fee.

ETHOS are now part of a community of responsible travellers, conscious locals and mindful business owners who take action against plastic waste. We offer a simple alternative to buying bottled water and our goal is to reduce the number of single-use plastic bottles used unnecessarily throughout the world.

Let's Reduce, Reuse and REFILL!

Background: Statistically, Vietnam is one of the top five countries that contribute to plastic pollution in the ocean with 500,000 tons/year according to statistics of Ocean Conservancy.

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Plant-for-the-Planet

Plant-for-the-Planet is a global movement with an ambitious goal: to fight the climate crisis by planting trees around the world.

Plant-for-the-Planet events are organised by children for children at which they motivate each other to take action against the climate crisis. The children become active Climate Justice Ambassadors and pass on their knowledge and encourage other children to take on social responsibility and shape their future.



ETHOS hope to create a culture of sustainable forestry by engaging ethnic minority children in activities that inspire. With annual tree planting initiatives, children living within the Hoang Lien Son National Park will lead the way in reforesting areas that are currently scrub land and lacking in diverse flora and fauna.

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Adopt A Spot

Adopt A Spot is an award winning social enterprise providing funding for the anti-litter initiative Clean Up Vietnam. As a winner of the Danish Embassy's Green City Solutions competition, Adopt A Spot work with schools, businesses and individuals to help them keep our local environment clean and green.



Funds raised through the Adopt A Spot programme are used to support clean-up groups all over Vietnam. ETHOS are responsible for regular clean ups in villages around the Sapa area. Our clean ups also focus on education for primary school children by encouraging the younger generation to consider the sustainable future of their own environment.

Together, we want to engage and inspire families, youth and local businesses to take action to protect the environment.

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Composting Toilets

A composting toilet is a type of toilet that treats human excreta by a biological process called composting. This process leads to the decomposition of organic matter and turns human excreta into compost. It is carried out by microorganisms (mainly bacteria and fungi) under controlled aerobic conditions.



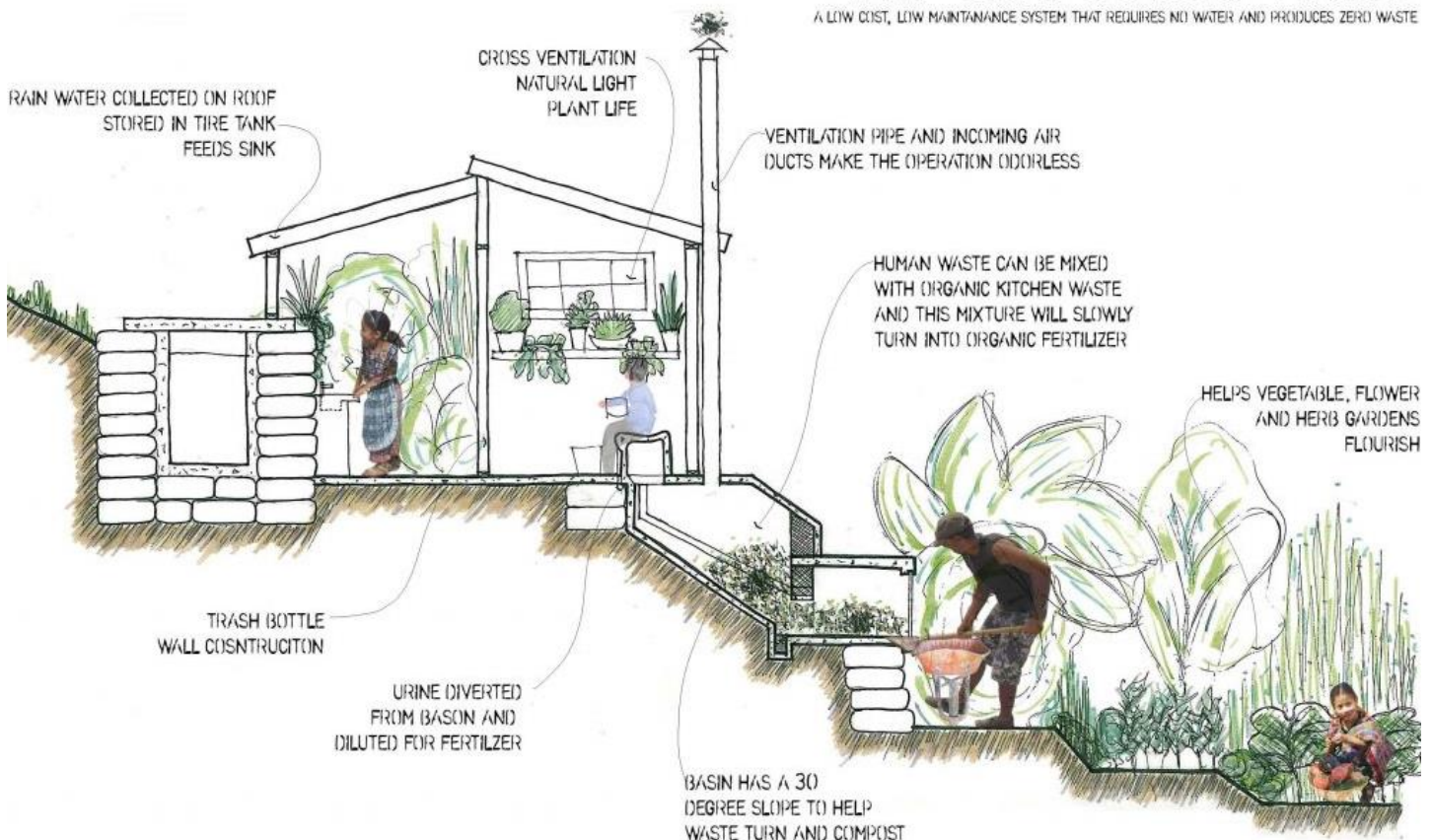
Our composting toilet design uses carbon additives such as rice husks or bamboo leaves, added after each use. This practice creates air pockets in the human excreta to promote aerobic decomposition. This also improves the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio and reduces potential odor. The end product can be used to enrich soil and improve agricultural production for users of this technology. The increased crop yields have a great benefit for local families who can produce more food to eat or an excess to sell.

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DRY COMPOSTING TOILET

A LOW COST, LOW MAINTENANCE SYSTEM THAT REQUIRES NO WATER AND PRODUCES ZERO WASTE



Human trafficking Awareness and Prevention Workshops



Targeting vulnerable Hmong teenagers, our monthly workshops are designed to educate and empower. Taught exclusively in Hmong language by young, female community leaders, classes aim to break stereotypes and challenge the issues behind the trade in young girls to China as brides or prostitutes.

Our primary aim is that all of those in attendance leave knowing what human trafficking is and why it occurs. We also educate the girls about strategies used by traffickers and most importantly, how to better protect themselves and their peers.

With a range of team building games and activity based learning, workshops take place over a full day. Session conclude with scenario based theatre empowerment. Each workshop costs \$300 to host, with finances paying for transportation costs, wages for four course leaders, lunch and refreshments for 50 people and a gift pack for attendees.

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Hot showers with ASWA

In developing countries, universal access to water and sanitation is seen as an essential step in reducing the preventable infectious diseases burden. This is best achieved by programs that integrate hygiene promotion with improvements in water quality and availability, and sanitation.

Home hygiene pertains to hygiene practices that prevent or minimize the spread of disease at home other everyday settings such as social settings.

About 2 million people die every year due to diarrheal diseases, most of them are children less than 5 years of age.

Access to hot water and personal space for bathing therefore plays a vital role in preventing the spread of infectious diseases. ETHOS are supporting our community in the building of wet-rooms, complete with sink and mixer tap, water heater and shower head. These facilities take on a particular level of importance in winter, where Sapa temperatures can dip below zero degrees Celsius.

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Workshops and Traditional Cultural skills

Indigenous people make up on 5% of the earth's population, yet safeguard an estimated 80% of the planet's biodiversity.

Indigenous peoples are known to have a close relationship with their land and for generations, they have been living in harmony with nature. Their way of life represents their culture, identity, traditions, and most importantly it is a heritage that has been passed down for generations.

The Vietnamese economy is amongst the fastest growing in the whole world. With development and globalisation, traditional cultures are at great risk of being lost. We believe that all peoples change all the time, but that tribal peoples' futures should be decided primarily by themselves. 'Development' which destroys people is not real progress. This position is now endorsed by the United Nations and international law, and we believe all countries must uphold the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as ratify and apply the Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169).

Our traditional craft skills workshops provide the opportunity for participants to learn traditional craft skills from a range of cultures. Our workshops bring together culturally and linguistically diverse artisans and provide opportunities for visitors to learn traditional skills as well as incentivising communities to continue with traditions as a source of sustainable income generation. ETHOS work with artisans who produce quality hemp from seed. We work with skilled silver smiths, musical instrument makers, weavers and some of the most celebrated embroiderers in Asia.

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Accommodation for Cha

We are providing accommodation, emotional support, security and, educational opportunities for Cha (02/06/06), who before coming to ETHOS had no safe place to call home.

With a father addicted to drugs and imprisoned multiple times for burglary and drug dealing, home life was traumatic. Domestic violence was common place and mother made the decision to escape frequent beatings by running away to China.

Mother was assisted in crossing the border by human traffickers and sold to a Chinese man as a bride in 2014. Leaving three daughters behind, ETHOS made the decision to accommodate the three sisters. Two have now married and have families of their own leaving just Cha under our supervision and care.

As a child, Cha was often forced to sell on the streets. Since coming to live at ETHOS, Cha is registered at school and is thriving. She is a bright, keen student who dreams of becoming a chef or tour guide. We hope that Cha is able to grow and become a role model for others in her community.

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Accommodation for Khu

We are providing accommodation, emotional support, security and, educational opportunities for Khu, born in 2005.

Khu is a remarkable young girl, possessed by a strong desire to succeed. Khu made contact with the ETHOS team in Autumn 2019 and made it clear that she would love to continue with her education beyond year nine.

Khu is the oldest of four sisters and her family do not have the necessary finances to facilitate further education. As a solution, Khu and her father proposed that she would come and live with our team in the ETHOS Community Centre, attending secondary school in the morning and then learning English with us in the afternoons. Khu dreams of becoming a tour guide and would love to be able to travel one day.

She has settled in well and enjoys playing UNO. She is progressing well with her English and loves to interact with travellers from around the world as a way of practising her spoken English skills.

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Textiles Social Enterprise

Inspired by Indigo is an association of women for artisan development in weaving, designing and marketing of contemporary textiles using traditional skills and natural materials.

The association came together after extended conversations in communities around Sapa. We decided to use traditional skills as weavers and expert embroiderers to friends and families, so formed the cooperative. The cooperative gives all members a sense of purpose and we are starting to work together to create new designs, choose colours, dye and weave our textiles. We have already completed orders for a line of earrings in Australia and are working with an American designer to create a collection for sale in the USA in Winter 2018.

Little by little, we are growing stronger and looking towards a better future for all of those involved. Our values are to pay all artisans up front and in full for their work and they are guaranteed a fair wage for what they produce. This means, women in our communities can earn an income to support themselves and their families in a region where paid work is hard to find.

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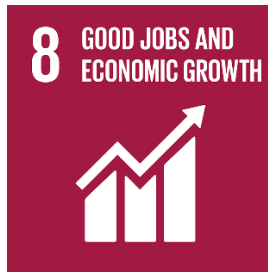


Photo credit: Rehahn



Small Business Start-ups and consultancy

We envision a world where all people hold the power to create opportunity for themselves and others.

We celebrate and support people looking to create a better future for themselves, their families and their communities.

ETHOS work with a growing number of local people to help them start or grow a business, go to school, access clean energy or realise their potential. For some, it's a matter of survival, for others it's the fuel for a life-long ambition. Our work enables people to grow a business and create opportunity for themselves, it creates opportunities for others as well. That ripple effect can shape the future for a family or an entire community.

So far, ETHOS have supported in developing facilities for local Hmong families to open their own homestays and sustainable enterprises. We have helped in planting fruit trees and in setting up small scale animal husbandry initiatives.

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Documentation of traditional cultures and practices

This is a project that 'gives voice' or an opportunity for Hmong, Dao and other tribal elders, craftspeople and artisans in Sapa District to share history and folktales. They talk about their understanding of local history and their lives, as well as explain and demonstrate different traditional crafts. We document with video, working with bloggers, influencers and anthropologists to tell stories and share knowledge.

The project is also a way for younger Hmong and Dao men and women working as guides at ETHOS to learn more about their heritage, by being a core part of the project.

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Health and hygiene seminars

Hygiene is a set of practices performed to preserve health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Hygiene refers to conditions and practices that help to maintain health and prevent the spread of diseases."

Effective rural hygiene and sanitation promotion is a major challenge for many in the Sapa area. Poor hygiene and sanitation cause major health problems in many communities in which we work. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene to be the fourth leading cause of deaths and the second leading cause of diseases in low-income countries. Improving hygiene and sanitation are therefore among the most important interventions to improve child health and should be a main priority in health promotion for ethnic minorities in Sapa District.

Health promotion has been a crucial part of health education and primary health care development for the ETHOS team. With a focus on hand washing, oral hygiene and the spread of infectious diseases through coughs, sneezes, animal husbandry and poor food preparation, we hope to help eliminate the major sources of disease transmission. Classes are taught by our Hmong leadership team and all those in attendance are given toothpaste, toothbrushes and soap. Classes are most aimed at primary aged children and take place every few weeks in villages across the district.

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Medical Projects

The majority of local people cannot access adequate health care due to a lack of literacy, finance and an understanding of the risks and procedures involved.

The ETHOS Team are regularly approached by people desperate for medical assistance, often when they have been refused treatment in regional hospitals. Where expertise is required, people may have to travel to either Lao Cai or Hanoi for treatment and we support with networking and connecting with the right hospitals and the best doctors. Most significant, we assist with essential paperwork that often allows for access to subsidised treatment and financial support.

Over the past few years, we have worked closely on many cases ranging from pneumonia, Japanese encephalitis, tuberculosis, snake bites, burns, muscular dystrophy and many more.

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Winter Jackets

Sapa winters are notoriously harsh. Keeping warm can turn into a matter of life or death for some people in highland areas. With humidity often reaching 100% and temperatures dipping sub-zero, pneumonia becomes the number one killer for poor villagers. Homes with substandard insulation and mud floors contribute to the damp conditions that make the disease so prevalent.

One solution is winter jackets that can be worn as overcoats. These help to block out cold air and moisture. For the weak, they are potentially life saving.



Each winter coat costs 90,000 VND (\$4) and ETHOS arrange for distributions in villages throughout the region.

Since 2015, we have delivered 706 jackets.

We believe in long terms sustainable solutions to development and understand that projects such as this are short term fixes. Ultimately, it is essential for local people to have the means to provide for themselves in the long term.

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Building citizenship

Within the past 2 decades, community capacity building and community empowerment have emerged as key strategies for reducing disparities and promoting public health.

ETHOS work with a number of highly marginalised ethnic minority groups, many of who are suffering from the effects of complex geopolitical history that is outside of their control. Whilst minority people are seen being separate to mainstream society, true equality cannot exist. This leads to the perpetuation of systematic barriers that only serve to further inequality.

ETHOS are supporting our guide team and wider community in building up their citizenship. From bank accounts to motorcycle licences, medical cards, personal identification and guide narrator licences, each piece of paperwork is a step towards being accepted as part of society without necessarily adversely impacting on traditional culture. This paper trail does nothing to damage language, belief sets or traditional skills and we believe that increased citizenship can occur simultaneously to celebrating cultural identity and remaining proud of the cultural variations that make each of Vietnams 54 ethnic minorities unique.

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Culture in the News

When tribal elders speak of their culture, you can't help but see how their eyes light up. When their minds go back to a bygone era, they start to glow and beam with pride.

Working closely with Réhahn, an acclaimed French photographer, ETHOS are keen to highlight how important these traditional cultures truly are. Since making Vietnam his base, the photographer has been on a quest to take portraits of members of the country's 54 officially recognised tribal groups, succeeding with 49 so far.

The photographer is particularly interested in creating a record of traditional costumes and clothing. Last year, he established the Precious Heritage Art Gallery Museum in Hoi An. As well as his photography, the free-to-enter cultural space displays tribal artefacts, including traditional apparel.

"In many places, traditional cultures are fading," Réhahn says. "Around 10 of the 49 groups in Vietnam that I've met can't even make their traditional costumes any more, and many villages don't even have one. Elders are worried to see their culture disappearing, but I often meet young people who don't care at all about their traditions. They use a phone and Facebook from a very young age."

Of the photographs displayed in the Precious Heritage Art Gallery Museum, around one third were taken together with ETHOS in various locations across the north of Vietnam.

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Travelling and Learning

Travelling to new areas provides time to think, ideate, observe and learn new things - culture, food, history. It also gives a lot of time to introspect and understand on how certain things are done around the world.

We have observed over many years that poverty almost always makes people focus on the short term. When resources are scarce and the future is uncertain, focusing on present needs is the smart thing to do. However, when chronic poverty leads to a daily focus on the present, it undermines long term goals like education, savings, and investment, making poverty worse. While it may be tempting to think that underachievement is due poor socioeconomic status, poor literacy levels or a lack of self-belief, we have known for some time that it's more complicated than that. We therefore resist the urge to confuse a lack progress as failure.

Over the past few years, the ETHOS team have travelled to Hanoi, Ha Giang, Dien Bien Phu, Muong Te Sin Ho, Y Ty, Mu Cang Chai and many more on team building trips. A personal highlight were two trips to Hoi An in central Vietnam. Watching reactions on the first flight or first time seeing the ocean was magical. These trips help create a sense of place. They help to incentivise learning and have had a profoundly positive impact on how our team value their own culture.

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Prenatal and Childbirth Workshops



Sa Pa district has the highest rates of infant and child mortality in Lao Cai Province. Government data indicates that in 2016 a staggering one in every 23 children died in Sa Pa district before their fifth birthday. There are many other incidences of child mortality that go unrecorded.

The high mortality rate among the ethnic minorities in Sa Pa district, arises from limited access to information regarding a healthy pregnancy and a general lack of understanding of hygiene and wrong practices both during and after the delivery of the child. Low levels of literacy and poor access to healthcare facilities also contributes.

ETHOS prenatal and childbirth workshops operate with the aim of decreasing the high infant and child mortality rates by providing childbirth and reproductive health workshops in the villages. We offer two different workshops, one regarding childbirth and one regarding reproductive health. For the childbirth workshop, we work collaboratively with an experienced midwife who educates the women in a safe pregnancy and delivery of the child. We will additionally provide a basic delivery kit for women who choose to deliver at home and a baby bundle to help new mothers. For our reproductive health workshop, we aim to target younger girls and educate them in their reproductive system, to prevent diseases and promote an understanding of their bodies. For this workshop we will hand out 'Days for Girls' packs, which includes reusable sanitary pads.

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Girls Empowerment Program

ETHOS' girls empowerment program equips ethnic minority girls with tools, support, and provides education that encourages critical thinking. The program supports girls in growing into becoming role models and future community leaders who can promote positive development in their local communities.



ETHOS' girls empowerment program runs weekly over a period of 20 weeks with a small group of Hmong girls all fourteen to fifteen years old. The initial sessions are designed to create a safe space for the girls. In the later sessions, the content of the sessions will move into being more sensitive. The aim is to empower the girls to participate in open dialogue in topics that are usually taboo. Each session lasts for two hours and includes an English lesson regarding a chosen topic, worksheet, teambuilding activities and crafts.

ETHOS girls empowerment program wants to help break the cycle of poverty by empowering girls to have a voice and speak up against harmful traditional practices. Hopefully with time, this can lead into positive community development.

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