



# October Newsletter

Volume 1 | Issue 3 | ETHOS – Spirit of the Community

## *Announcement*

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*Another harvest season has come & gone and to the joy of our Hmong & Dao friends, this years crop has been very good one. Compared to last year, the yield has increased for most families. However, even after a successful harvest, most families do not get enough to rice to last a whole year...*

## *Inside This Issue*

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### PG. 2

Read our “Story of the Month” about Khu, the newest member of the ETHOS family.

### PG. 3

Read about the importance of youth leadership in transforming communities and learn about rice harvest in Sapa.

### PG. 4

We are happy to announce that our guides May Kim and Sung has given birth to a healthy girl and boy respectively. See pictures of the two new miracles on the last page of the newsletter



# ETHOS

*Spirit of the Community*

## Story of the Month

One quiet Wednesday evening, Phil received a message on Facebook. It was from a Hmong girl named Khu. In the message she asked Phil if she could speak to “auntie Hoa”. Phil thought it a little strange that a girl he had met just once before and over two years previously contacted him out of the blue, but he gave her Hoa’s contact information, and soon after she messaged Hoa asking if she could drop by our office the following day with her dad to have a conversation with our team. Hoa agreed, although she was not aware what the meeting would be about. The next day Khu and her dad came over as promised. What met us was a tiny girl, far younger looking than her 15 years and no taller than 1.4 meters. Her confidence and determination blew us away. She competently outlined her thoughts while her father sat quietly next to her. Khu explained that she had passed the entry exam to high school, but that she wasn’t able to pay the prohibitive fees. Khu’s family, like almost all Hmong in the area are rice farmers. Her family includes three other younger siblings that the parents have to feed, so money is tight. During the conversation, Khu got quite emotional & expressed that she knew that education is vital to get better life. Initially Phil and Hoa had thought that the meeting would be with the aim of Khu and her family getting financial support for her to go to school. However, during the conversations things took a drastic turn when Khu suddenly said ‘Okay then. It is decided. I will move in with you. I will study hard in school, & help you around the house’. It had never been mentioned that Khu should move in. However, the next day Khu’s dad dropped her off at our centre. Khu came with a single backpack of clothes & was ready to move in.



Initially, everything was new. A new school, new people, a new house meant that Khu found all the changes challenging. A month has now passed and Khu is more settled and enjoying the new environment and opportunity to learn and interact with people from around the world. From living in a quiet Hmong village, to suddenly staying in a busy community centre with people coming and going all the time, there was a lot to take in. However, Khu has showed us that with her determination and confidence she can cope with all the challenges thrown her way. She wakes up every morning at 6 o’clock and walks half an hour to get to her school. At lunchtime she walks back to eat lunch, for then again to walk back to school to have classes in the afternoon. When she comes back from school in the late afternoon, she does her homework and is helping around the house.

At the moment Khu’s dream is to improve her English and to eventually become a tour guide. We are very excited to see Khu’s progress and we hope that her determination to improve her life will bring positives for her whole family.

## **Empowering youth leaders to help transform communities**

Around the world youth leaders are demanding change and inspiring others to join them in making the world a better place. Currently, 16-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg is gaining massive media attention by taking a lead in the environmental activism. Greta has inspired millions of people worldwide to take action and is demanding that we collectively fight against global climate change to prevent future disasters. Although some remain critical, no one can deny that she has succeeded in bringing the problem of climate change to the table and mobilised people globally. Greta began her journey protesting alone in front of the Swedish Parliament, with the aim of pushing the Swedish government to address the climate crisis. Hereafter, Greta lunched 'Fridays for Future', inspiring millions of young people around the world to skip school on Fridays to demand climate action from their governments. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September an estimated 4 million people in 161 countries worldwide, went on the streets and held the largest climate change demonstration, largely inspired by Greta.

What Greta is showing us, is that big impacts start small. What began as one girl standing up for what she believes in, has inspired millions of others to join her and take action.



*“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”*

Children are the future. In order to further community development, we at ETHOS are trying a new approach of empowering youth leaders to help us run our health and hygiene seminars and anti-human trafficking workshops in the villages. We have chosen a small team of girls that we will support and train to deliver our projects. The idea is that the girls will be delivering the content of our projects to the children that attends the workshops and thus become group leaders. Hopefully, by empowering this group of teenage girls and teaching them valuable skills, they will grow into becoming community leaders and drive development in their villages forward. Additionally, the hope is that this group of girls will become positive role models and inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more.

## **Rice is life**

In Sapa you will often hear the saying ‘rice is life’, and indeed, without it, most would struggle to survive. Rice is the single most important aspect of hill tribe life and all elements of daily life are determined by the agricultural calendar.

When the rice is ready to be harvested, relatives and friends gather to help each other cutting the rice. When the rice has been cut, bundles are collected and ponded against a wooden box to thresh the rice from the stalks. Hereafter, the rice has to be dried in the sun before it is stored in bags to last throughout the year.

When the rice harvest is over, many families celebrate by throwing a party. At the party, the new rice will be cooked, plenty of rice wine consumed and often, a pig will be slaughtered for the special occasion. Luckily, the harvest was very successful this year, so that calls for big celebrations in the villages.

## Sung's baby

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, we received news that guide Sung gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Sung will be busy now with three toddlers at home, but we are sure the newest addition to the family will bring lots of joy and happiness. ETHOS offer all of our guide team paid maternity leave, meaning both mother and child can enjoy bonding without the financial worries faced by being unable to work. Congratulations Sung!



## THANK YOU!

*We would like to thank our guests for their generous donations this month:*

Karen

Juliette

Tom and Nancy

Erica

Ian and Cate

*It is because of your kindness and generosity that ETHOS are able to offer support for those in need. Thank you.*



## May Kim's baby

We are happy to announce that our Red Dao guide May Kim in early September gave birth to a healthy baby girl. According to Red Dao tradition, in the first weeks of a newborn's life, the baby should not be seen or touched by people outside the family. It is believed that it brings weakness upon the baby. Postpartum the mother will soak in multiple herbal baths with herbs collected from the forest to help her heal and recover. The baby will undergo different rituals managed by a village Shaman, to protect the baby from evil spirits and ensure the baby has enough strength to face the world. Both May Kim & baby are doing well & the family are thrilled with their new member.



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