



September Newsletter

Volume 1 | Issue 2 | ETHOS – Spirit of the Community

Announcement

September in Sapa is truly a magical time. The rainy season is typically replaced by clear blue skies and the harvesting of the rice begins.

Inside This Issue

PG. 2

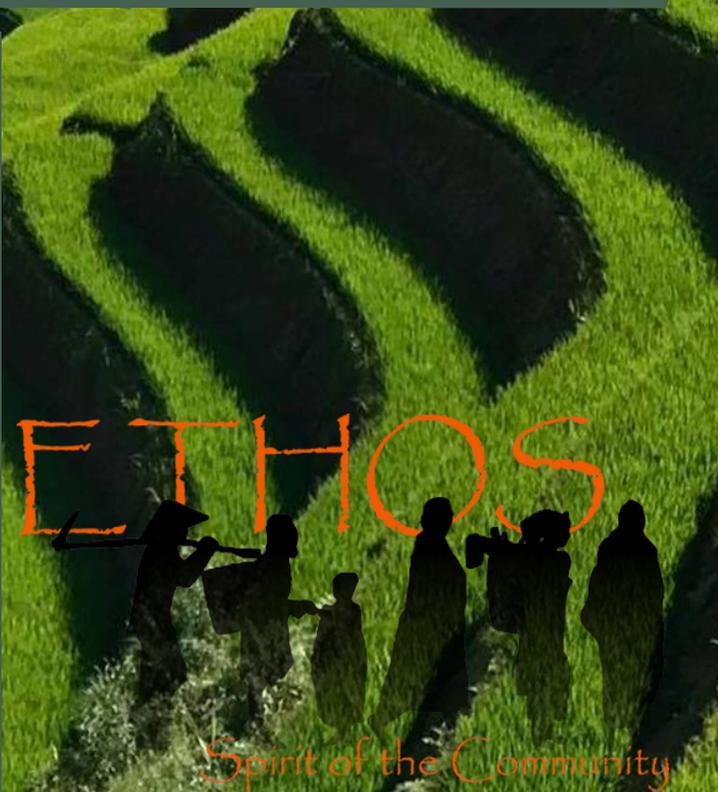
Read about the widespread problem of domestic violence in Hmong families and the negative impact it has on children growing up in these unsafe environments.

PG. 3

Read about our new tours to the stunning region Mu Cang Chai and to a small Red Dao village in the outskirts of Sapa.

PG. 4

Read Story of the Month about Mao and get an insight into her life as an illiterate deaf girl.



ETHOS

Spirit of the Community

The negative impact of domestic violence in Hmong families

Globally, women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence, and this is no different for women in Vietnam. According to numbers from a survey conducted by the UN in Vietnam, a staggering 58% of all married women in Vietnam has experienced either physical, mental or sexual violence carried out by their husbands. Domestic violence not only has a profound negative impact on the women directly subjected to the violence, it also causes long term harm to their children who are unwillingly trapped in an unsafe environment.

Within the Hmong communities, domestic violence is especially widespread and is considered to be a private matter between husband and wife. Although the women of many Hmong families are the breadwinners and are earning an income through selling of handicrafts to tourists or working as guides, the women are still granted a lower social position than men. At ETHOS we often hear stories about domestic violence and in some cases, we are directly involved in supporting victims of domestic violence. One of the cases we have recently dealt with is So's situation.

So grew up with a father addicted to opium, and a mother who suffered greatly from his addiction and violent behaviour. So's father would often hit the mother while So and her two other sisters were in the same room. In the aftermath of one of the father's violent attacks, it became too much for the mother and she decided to escape in order to save her life. She left behind the three girls with Phil and Hoa and sold herself to human traffickers who found her a husband in China.

After the mother was gone, So made some terrible decisions for herself. One of them was to get a job in Sapa town. Here, she got in contact with a couple of men who tricked her and sold her to traffickers in China. After months in China, So fled and returned to Vietnam. However, soon after she came back, she met an older Hmong man, fell in love and is now living in an abusive relationship, very similar to the one of her mother. Although we have offered consistent support and opportunities for So to break with her past, the cycle of abuse has seemed almost impossible for her to escape.



Research has shown that children that grow up in secure and safe environments have an easy time forming positive relationships with people and have a stronger sense of self-worth. Contrasting, children that grow up in an environment with violence will often be drawn towards similar unsafe environments and seek violent partners. In So's situation, having grown up in a violent environment has had the negative consequence that So is unable to create and maintain healthy relationships. So has been drawn towards the only lifestyle she knows, a lifestyle marked by instability.

At ETHOS we are currently trying to set up programmes to address the problem of domestic violence, to prevent situations, such as So's. We are networking with a team of experts from around the world and are in direct consultation with our guide leadership team. However, we have through bitter experience learned how difficult it is to break with the cycle of abuse. Due to the normalization of violence as part of the Hmong families, children often grow up copying the behaviour of their parents. Thus, the boys grow up to become perpetrators and the girls victims and the cycle continues all over again.

At ETHOS we believe that prevention is always better than trying to solve the problems once the damage has been done. If you have any ideas as to how we could address the issue of domestic violence, empower women to stand up for their rights and work with men to change their violent behaviour, we would love to hear from you.

New tours

We are delighted to announce that August saw us release two new tour options.

The first is to a very quiet Red Dao village, close to Sapa. We met with local families to discuss trialling treks in the area and were met with a very positive response. With quintessential Sapa rice terraces, bamboo forests, and a lovely waterfall, this is a lovely short walk ideal for families or those not wanting anything too challenging. On a hot day, there is an opportunity to take a dip in a cool mountain stream.

The second new trip is to the magnificent Mu Cang Chai region. This is a spectacular district famous for its highland scenery and rice terraces. The special topography, with steep hills and deep valleys have led to local ethnic minority residents such as the Hmong, Thai, Dao creating masterpieces of land manipulation. The curving terraces, although man-made, appear to be in complete harmony with the landscape, creating a hypnotic patterning across the hills and valleys.

For more information about these treks and others, please visit our website.



“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page.”





Team Building Day

Team building days give us the rare opportunity to share some quality time together. Monday the 19th of August we got together and saw our Hmong guides cook up some wonderfully fresh barbecue by one of our favourite waterfalls.



 <https://www.facebook.com/ethosspirit/>

 Ethosspiritsapa

 https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g311304-d4976142-Reviews-Ethos_Spirit_of_the_Community-Sapa_Lao_Cai_Province.html

Story of the Month

For most of us, the ability to communicate through speech and language is something that is a normal part of life and easily taken for granted. In our societies, help is easily accessible where a child is born deaf. The inability to communicate through speech, can be replaced by sign language and/or writing and most often a deaf person is able to fully integrate into the society. Now, imagine being born deaf into a poor family and into a society where there is nowhere to go to learn alternative ways of communication. That is Mao's reality. As a 17-year-old girl (pictured left) that spends most of her days looking after her family's buffaloes. Mao has a long-term involvement at ETHOS and she sees our community centre as a refuge from everyday life. Due to Mao's situation, she is extremely vulnerable to exploitation as she is not able to understand what is happening and cannot fully inform others if she is in a dangerous situation. Having recently been kidnapped by traffickers, Mao sought refuge by running to our centre for safety. Imagine being trapped in your own brain day in and day out without any ability to communicate. We want the ETHOS community centre to offer a safe refuge for those needing support. Mao often joins us for fun, games, a hot shower and some friendly smiles.

THANK YOU!

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

Patch Green

Carmen, Brian, Anthony and Joey

Emmanuele

Jacob and Alex

Kate and Leigh

Luisa Casseb

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