



November Newsletter

Volume 1 | Issue 4 | ETHOS – Spirit of the Community

Announcement

The last couple of weeks the fog has been rolling over the mountains, covering Sapa in a white duvet. Temperatures are dropping, and winter is getting closer...

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Get an update about Chu in Story of the Month

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Read about our newly launched Girls Empowerment Program ‘White Rabbit’

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In memory of Du’s father in law Chau A Trung, we feature an article about Hmong funerals and the importance of the funeral rituals



ETHOS
Spirit of the Community

Story of the Month

Remember Chu? We featured her in story of the month back in our August newsletter, and now we thought it was time for an update.

As previously explained, Chu suffers from osteomyelitis, an infection of the bone that can affect both adults and children. If left untreated, it can lead to bone tissue death over time. Chu was brought to ETHOS some months ago as the infection was left untreated which meant that it spread and worsened.

Chu has since August been to Hanoi for a second painful operation where the doctors tried to remove the infection. After the operation she returned home and have been cleaning has wound regularly. To everyone's surprise, Chu's femur spontaneously shattered after the disease damaged bone tissue and she was immediately brought to Lao Cai hospital.

The sight that met Phil and Hoa when they arrived at the hospital was a very thin, pale and scared little girl.



We are now concerned over the risk that Chu might lose her leg, or even worse, develop Sepsis, which could be life threatening. Doctors are aggressively treating her infection with intravenous antibiotics and her lag has been fitted with an external fixator to help the bone fuse and hopefully heal.

There is still every chance that Chu may require an amputation, a medical procedure that will require considerable skill and associated costs. There is also the issues after care, the purchasing of prosthetics and adaptation of the family home which is very remote and only accessible on foot along muddy trails.

We wish to continue to offer Chu and family emotional and financial support during this very challenging time. If you are interested in helping with donations, please get in touch.

ETHOS Girls Empowerment Group ‘White Rabbit’

The ethnic minorities in Lao Cai Province are typically marginalised from mainstream society and have little representation in public and political debates. As a result, they have less access to healthcare, education and other services, making social mobility very difficult. Hmong women and girls continue to be significantly disadvantaged. Many women in Sapa never received the opportunity to attend school as children and are thus illiterate, innumerate and often deemed unemployable. Although there has been some improvement in terms of access to education, cultural norms have traditionally placed women in a secondary position to men, which has created a high level of gender inequality in Hmong communities especially. The Hmong kinship system remains the single most important social system. According to Hmong tradition, having a son is valued higher than having a daughter, as the daughter eventually will be married off to a different clan. Due to the low-income status of most ethnic minority households some parents have had to rely on their daughters marrying early in order to receive the dowry from the marriage. Child marriage and early pregnancies are seen as normal and are typically encouraged and supported by the community.

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.” - Kofi Annan

Due to the high level of gender inequality and the preference of boys over girls, domestic violence and other challenges continue to be widespread within Hmong communities. When girls are married young it has multiple negative consequences. Girls are encouraged to end their education earlier, thus reducing future economic opportunities. Many girls fall pregnant below the national minimum age. This in turn leads to high-risk pregnancies with many births taking place at home in less sanitary conditions. Child marriage not only has a negative impact on the girl herself, it harms the entire community as the cycle of poverty continues. 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.

Wednesday the 16th of October we ran the first session of the program, with great success. The girls were engaged and had tons of fun while learning. At the end of the class, we asked the girls to discuss and come up with a name for the group. They chose ‘White Rabbit’. After the session, we looked up the symbolic meaning of a white rabbit and the following appeared “*The white rabbit appears as a sign that life will be all the more beautiful from here.*” We cannot wait to see what these amazing girls will grow into.





Hmong Funerals – In Memory of Chau A Trung

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Chau A Trung, father in law to Hmong guide Du.

Trung passed away on the 17th of October while in the forest collecting cardamom. He leaves behind a wife and 12 children, the youngest of which is just 7 years old.

A traditional Hmong funeral is a big event and can last up to one week. Most Hmong believe in spirits and reincarnation. It is therefore important that the funeral rituals are carried out correctly, so the deceased spirit will be reborn into the same family. If the deceased is an old and respected person, a buffalo will often be sacrificed. If a person has lesser status chickens or pigs will be

slaughtered for the occasion. The offerings are believed to accompany the deceased on their journey to the spirit world. If the rituals are not carried out correctly, the person will not be reborn into the same family and the soul will be forever lost.

According to Hmong tradition, crying and showing sadness at a funeral causes harm to the deceased. Many attending funerals will drink rice liquor, play cards, tell stories and eat in order for the deceased to have a successful journey from the afterlife back into our world.



THANK YOU!

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

Gael Huteau

Evi Adams

Sarah Garner

Nicolai Brzosa

Slawa Strzepka

Claire Yeates

Andrew & Joseph Grose

Simon and Catherine Bacon

Geoff Ward and family

Nguyen Thi Mai (Kua)

Tania and Johannes Glunk

Aline Nguyen and family

It is because of your kindness and generosity that ETHOS are able to support others. Thank you.



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

