



PeaceTrees™  
VietNam

From the  
**Aftermath  
of War**  
to a **Thriving  
Future**



# PeaceTrees' Impact

**4,712 acres of land cleared, 136,814+ explosive ordnance removed & destroyed, benefitting over 289,715 individuals**

**175,044+ individuals received Explosive Ordnance Risk Education, 215 victims & 63 families affected by accidents supported**

**4,379 students attending kindergarten, 3,249 scholarships distributed**

**22 kindergartens, 12 libraries, 2 community centers & 100 family homes built**

**44,000+ trees planted by 1,400+ citizen diplomats**





**The tragic impact of the U.S.–Vietnam war still threatens the lives and livelihoods of people across central Vietnam every day. In partnership with Vietnamese leadership and local communities, PeaceTrees Vietnam safely clears land of explosive remnants of war and supports community-led initiatives so that future generations can thrive.**



# PeaceTrees Vietnam was established as the first U.S. organization permitted to sponsor humanitarian demining efforts after U.S.–Vietnam diplomatic normalization in 1995.

**PeaceTrees’ Mission** is to address the legacy of war by removing dangerous explosives, returning land to safe use, promoting peace, and cultivating a brighter future for the children and families of Vietnam.

**PeaceTrees’ Vision** is a Vietnam completely cleared of dangerous explosive ordnance and communities fully supported in their goals for safety, education, and economic success.

PeaceTrees’ work is rooted in mutual trust and collaboration, fostered through the support and partnership of local leadership and an enduring commitment to building friendship and understanding between Vietnamese and American citizens. PeaceTrees Vietnam works to address the lasting impacts of war through supporting citizen diplomacy and building people-to-people ties, safely removing explosive remnants of war, returning land to productive use, and promoting education and economic development to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for communities impacted by war.



A stockpile of EO found and safely destroyed by PeaceTrees EOD technicians



PeaceTrees EOD technicians removing large 500 lbs bomb from a remote mountainous area in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam

*“I think PeaceTrees Vietnam has served as a model of healing and reconciliation and has developed the new spirit of cooperation between our two countries. And they show the best image of the United States to Vietnam and to the world. So I join Vietnam Ambassador Nguyen Phuong Nga and U.S. Ambassador Daniel J. Kritenbrink with the hope that PeaceTrees Vietnam will continue—not only continue—but will expand their activities in Vietnam and bring more joy, more happiness, more peace to the Vietnamese people, especially those who are still suffering from the war’s consequences.”*

**—Honorable Hà Kim Ngọc, the Vietnamese Ambassador to the U.S., October 19, 2020**

# Our work is guided by our commitments to building partnership, collaboration, and trust, protecting the environment, and adapting to climate change, and principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Partnership, Collaboration, and Trust:** Thanks to PeaceTrees' Vietnamese program team's expert leadership and the friendship and trust built over many years of work in central Vietnam, PeaceTrees has developed effective partnerships that enable our mine action, economic, and educational development programs. We are committed to nurturing these partnerships and to having trust and collaboration guide our work.

**The Environment:** We recognize that the effects of climate change will make life more difficult for people living with war legacies and it will further impact the safety and livelihoods of individuals and communities across Vietnam. PeaceTrees is committed to using our resources to minimize the negative environmental impacts of our work, protecting the environment, and supporting partner communities as they adapt to the changing climate.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** As an international organization, we embrace that our community extends across national and cultural boundaries. PeaceTrees Vietnam is committed to principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion with the overarching goal of creating long-term understanding and belonging. We aim to uplift the voices and experiences of all people – regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, geographic location, or disability status.

Furthermore, PeaceTrees is committed to ensuring that the lived experiences of the communities we work with drive organizational priorities and program design. We strive to understand and balance the privilege and power inherent in our role as facilitators of resources and, wherever possible, keep power and decision-making with those most impacted by our work. With this in mind, PeaceTrees is also committed to mainstreaming gender and disability inclusion in all of our programs.



*Recognizing the 25th anniversary of normalized diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Vietnam on July 11, 2020, PeaceTrees is joined by officials from the U.S. Embassy, the Women's Union, and the Department of Foreign Affairs*



*PeaceTrees teams responded quickly to historic flooding during October and November 2020 by assembling relief packages and responding to EOD calls*



*PeaceTrees scholarship recipients*

## The Lasting Impact of the U.S.–Vietnam War

More than 45 years after the end of the war, communities throughout central Vietnam and the region still live with the consequences of explosive bombs and mines remaining from wartime. Since the end of the war, over 105,000 people have been injured or killed by explosive ordnance (EO) in Vietnam. Beyond the human toll they take, the presence of EO also hinders economic and social development, denies access to land and valuable resources, and prevents children from safely walking to school and farmers from tending to their land.

An Explosive Remnants of War Impact Survey published in 2018 identified the central coastal provinces and the Central Highlands as some of the most heavily contaminated areas in the country. Research has shown that over 80 percent of children, women, and farmers surveyed in Quảng Bình do not know what actions to take if they encounter an explosive remnant of war.<sup>1</sup>

The presence of EO not only impacts the immediate safety of children and families, but also limits economic growth and employment opportunities, especially for members of the Tà Ôi, Vân Kiều, Pa Ko, and Chứt ethnic minority groups of Quảng Trị and Quảng Bình, many of whom rely on subsistence farming for their livelihoods.<sup>2</sup> In Quảng Bình Province, 46 percent of the economy is based in the agricultural sector, and in Quảng Trị Province, 55 percent of the population work as farmers.<sup>3</sup> In a predominantly agricultural society, farmers—reliant upon land that is still contaminated with unexploded bombs and mines—risk their lives every day to provide for their families.

For the many people directly impacted by an accident involving an EO, the injury or death of a loved one places additional financial and emotional strain on a family already struggling to provide for itself. Children often quit schooling so they can help financially support their families. Without a proper education, children are limited in their future economic prospects, which further perpetuates a cycle of poverty.

Compounding the impact of the war, Vietnam is beginning to experience challenges caused by extreme weather and climate change. Due to its high flood risk, increasingly frequent tropical storms, and the fact that two of Vietnam's most important economic sectors are located in lowlands and deltas, the World Bank predicts that Vietnam will be one of the five countries most affected by climate change<sup>4</sup>. The continued presence of EO makes it more challenging for individuals and families to adapt to climate change by limiting economic opportunities, blocking access to resources, and heightening risk during and after extreme weather–related disasters. Without proper support and adaptation, the combination of war legacy and climate change will continue to have devastating impacts on people's lives and livelihoods.



*EOD technician delivering Explosive Ordnance Risk Education to community members in Dakrong District, Quảng Trị Province*

<sup>1</sup> Korea-Vietnam Mine Action Project, 2020

<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that 45 percent of ethnic minorities live under the national poverty line of \$150/year.

<sup>3</sup> Vietnam Census, 2020

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, 2005

# Healing What Seemed Impossible:

## How the Vision for PeaceTrees Vietnam Began

“The moment I learned my brother Lt. Daniel Cheney, U.S. Army helicopter pilot, was shot down and killed in Vietnam while saving the life of his fellow pilot, I realized my parents were joining thousands of American parents losing their children to war. Immediately, an image came to me of tens of thousands of Vietnamese families losing their loved ones, on the other side of the Vietnam War.

Suddenly, I knew that someday ordinary American families like mine must find a way to reach out to the Vietnamese people, deeper than the pathos of war, to honor the tragic losses to their families as well as our own and begin working together to build bridges of trust and understanding. I did not know how or when. Only that we must.

On July 11, 1995, 26 years after the war ended, the U.S. and Vietnam normalized diplomatic relations. My late husband—Danaan Parry, nuclear physicist and peacemaker—and I knew we must move quickly to reach the Vietnamese people to begin building a bridge of trust and friendship.

Soon we landed in Hà Nội. Vietnamese leaders warmly welcomed us, saying, ‘It’s time to close the past and open the future. We’ve been waiting for the American people for a very long time.’ They immediately invited us to Quảng Trị Province, the most severely bombed battleground in the history of the world. The landscape was barren and dangerous, and felt like the war had ended only yesterday. We experienced the terror of walking alongside a minefield and met a six-year-old boy who had lost his little brother and his own hand when a bomb remaining from wartime exploded in their family’s garden.

### **We knew we were in the right place.**

That very day, we wrote and signed our first official agreement with the Vietnamese people to sponsor the safe clearance of explosive remnants of war and to bring international volunteers to plant trees—peace trees—with our new partners on safely cleared land. Our vision for healing had begun.”



*Lt. Daniel Cheney is photographed in his helicopter at Fort Wolters training center at Mineral Wells, Texas, in early 1968*



*Co-Founder Jerilyn Brusseau, center, along with citizen diplomats and governmental partners plants the first PeaceTree, in late November 1996, in Dong Ha, Quảng Trị Province, Vietnam, after the land was cleared of explosive ordnance*



## Our Approach

Co-headquartered in Quảng Trị Province, Vietnam, and Seattle, Washington, PeaceTrees Vietnam takes a holistic approach to addressing the many challenges brought about by the legacy of the U.S.–Vietnam War. Thanks to the expert leadership of PeaceTrees’ Vietnamese program team, and trust built over many years of collaboration, PeaceTrees has developed effective partnerships in Vietnam and the U.S. PeaceTrees works to remove explosive remnants of war, return safe land to productive use, and support community-led initiatives so that future generations can meet their goals for safety and for educational and economic success.

### 1 Building a foundation of trust through citizen diplomacy

Citizen diplomacy and building people-to-people ties is at the heart of PeaceTrees’ work. Profound personal loss, experienced by families on all sides of the war, inspired PeaceTrees’ founders to reach out to the Vietnamese people in the spirit of healing, trust, and understanding between Vietnamese and American citizens. To date, PeaceTrees has hosted over 1,000 citizen diplomats, including Vietnam veterans, Gold Star

family members, students, and other travelers

who are eager to participate in PeaceTrees’ work in central Vietnam. Citizen diplomacy continues to contribute to the friendship shared between the U.S. and Vietnam today.

Citizen diplomacy has made it possible to create the strong trust and partnership PeaceTrees shares with community and governmental partners in Quảng Trị, Quảng Bình, Hà Nội, and Washington, D.C. In Vietnam, PeaceTrees’ all-local staffing model provides meaningful employment opportunities and is the key to creating sustainable mine action and economic development programs.



U.S. and Vietnamese veterans planting trees together on the former Khe Sanh Combat Base, Quang Tri Province, August 2019

### 2 Restoring safety

PeaceTrees’ mine action program has trained and equipped 150 Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians, who work every day to create safe communities by clearing land of EO, providing accident risk education, and assisting individuals and families who have been impacted by an EO accident. PeaceTrees works in partnership with provincial authorities and local communities to clear land for socio-economic development priorities, and to respond to emergency clearance tasks.

To date, PeaceTrees’ teams have safely removed and destroyed over 136,814 EO from 4,712 acres of land, benefitting over 292,666 people. They have also educated more than 175,044 people about the dangers of EO. As testament to our work, although approximately 78% of the estimated confirmed hazardous areas in Quảng Trị Province still need to be cleared, there has been only one accident in the past four years. One accident is still too many. PeaceTrees deminers work every day so that no one else is injured or loses their life, and no further families are made to bear the pain of losing a loved one to an EO accident.<sup>5</sup>

## 3

## Supporting education and economic development



Children at the Friends Forever Kindergarten in Lang Vay Village, Huong Hoa district, Quang Tri Province, March 2019

Once land is safe, PeaceTrees supports community-led education and economic development projects that help address generational poverty rooted in the aftermath of war. PeaceTrees pursues projects at the request of community members and their representative organizations, such as the Women's Union in Quảng Trị. In order to ensure that these projects provide tangible and sustainable benefits, PeaceTrees prioritizes community participation in project selection, design, and evaluation.

To date, PeaceTrees' supporters have sponsored 22 kindergarten classrooms, which have provided safety, nutrition, and early childhood education to 4,379 children. Importantly, PeaceTrees has provided 3,249 scholarships to support children throughout their primary and secondary schooling. Scholarships are awarded to female ethnic minority children, children impacted by an EO accident or living with a disability, and children experiencing financial hardships. These scholarships ease the financial burden of sending a child to school, which increases the likelihood that a child will receive the education required to end generational poverty.

PeaceTrees' economic development programs have included micro-credit funding and support for families to begin black pepper farms, and healthy garden programs to improve nutrition and enable participating women to sell vegetables at the market. PeaceTrees' approach ensures meaningful collaboration with community members, so that programs remain adaptive and responsive to local priorities and needs.



## Tran Thi Be's Story

When Ms. Tran Thi Be was just seven years old, a bomb fell on her house in Da Nang city, instantly killing her mother and five siblings. She woke up in a U.S. Army children's hospital, only to find that she had lost both legs and seriously injured her stomach.

Although lucky to be alive, Ms. Be had a difficult journey ahead. After many years of recovery, worry, and uncertainty, Ms. Be's quality of life began to improve when her neighbors offered her a small plot of land. PeaceTrees provided financial support for the construction of a house where Ms. Be opened a small tea shop to support herself.

Ms. Be became the proud mother of her three children, who have all received scholarships from PeaceTrees Vietnam throughout their education. Her eldest daughter, Nguyen Khai, is currently attending Ho Chi Minh University of Science, studying Biology and Biotechnology. Khai and her two younger brothers will continue to receive scholarships until their education is complete. Before Nguyen Khai departed for university, she shared her admiration for her mother and desire to do well in school:

*"My mom lost both of her legs in an EO accident and she is the main provider for our whole family. Sometimes I see my mother working so hard that I want to drop out of school to help. But she told me: "You have to study well so you can take care of your younger brothers in the future. This will help me feel happy." Since the time I entered first grade, my family and I have received enthusiastic help, encouragement, and support from PeaceTrees Vietnam. It is hard to express the endless love that the organization gave to me. I really appreciate it! I will always do my best in my studies so that I can honor all of the precious help I have received."*

# Our Priorities

As we look ahead to the next phase of PeaceTrees Vietnam's work, we will prioritize three goals foundational to our mission:

- 1) To safely accelerate work removing EO in order to protect lives from explosive remnants of war;
- 2) To foster prosperity in communities impacted by EO by supporting community-led initiatives in education, environmental resilience, and economic development; and
- 3) To strengthen people-to-people ties between the people of the U.S. and Vietnam by creating new and more inclusive opportunities to build mutual understanding and participation in PeaceTrees' work.

By 2025, with the support of our donors and partners, we intend to scale our impact throughout central Vietnam. Over the next three years, PeaceTrees will 1) pursue increased and diversified funding in order to return more land to safe and productive use, 2) center the needs and capabilities of individuals we work with to support more community-led development initiatives so that future generations can thrive, and 3) prioritize creating inclusive opportunities for reconciliation, peace-building, and friendship between all people impacted by the U.S.-Vietnam War, and its lasting legacies, while fostering strong relationships, and further expanding our coalition of support.

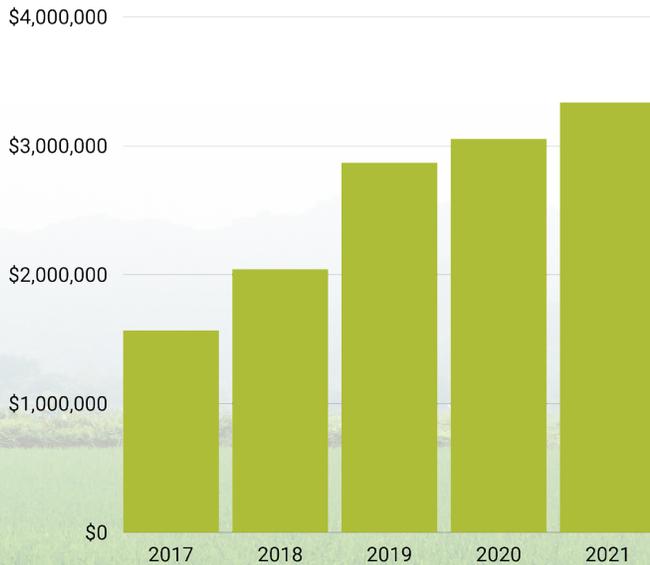


# Thank you for your support!

To address the growing and interconnected needs of the 21st century, PeaceTrees Vietnam will continue to foster trusting relationships and provide sustainable support for communities living with the legacies of war to ensure that future generations are able to fulfill their goals for safety, education, and economic success.

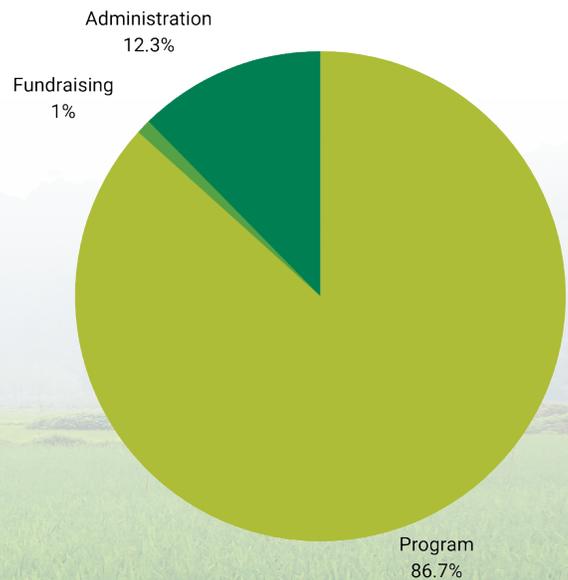
Thank you for your continued support of PeaceTrees Vietnam's life-saving work!

### PeaceTrees Annual Budget 2017- 2021



\*Estimates at time of publication

### PeaceTrees Annual Expenses 2021





On July 23, 2021, PeaceTrees Vietnam EOD Technician Nguyen Thi Le Khuyen became the first woman in Vietnam to achieve Level 3 International Mine Action Standard Certification. Khuyen joined our team in February 2018 and was selected for advanced training after excelling in her initial courses. She has quickly become a leader in the field. When asked about her own motivation and experience, Khuyen commented:

*"The more I work, the more I feel attached to this work. After we finish clearance, new roads are constructed, and new schools are built. I feel so happy watching the children playing. I think about my son enjoying the same experience. My son once asked what I do and I said I work on EO clearance. He replied: "Bombs and mines can explode, Mom. Don't do it, explode, fatal." I told him: "My job is dangerous, but I was fully trained and I know how to keep myself safe." My son believes in me because my work brings peace and safety to people. When an EO is safely handled and people can continue farming without danger, all of us on the demining team have a feeling of joy in our hearts. I am very proud of our work and the PeaceTrees Vietnam family."*

Each day, Khuyen works as a member of PeaceTrees' Battle Area Clearance Team #3. She occasionally joins a PTVN call-out team that responds to reports of suspected EO and provides risk education to residents in the vicinity. Over the past three years, thanks to increased capacity-building support from the U.S. Department of State and in partnership with Golden West Humanitarian Foundation, all PTVN EOD Technicians have received world-class training.



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