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From the People of Japan.....



Minister Mr. Hideo Suzuki, of the Japanese Embassy, and Chief Strategic Officer of HDI Mr. David Prettyman jointly unveiled the plaque at the handover ceremony

On June 4th 2013 Mr. Hideo Suzuki- Minister, Embassy of Japan in Vietnam officiated at a formal ceremony to hand over equipment from the Government of Japan in support of Mushrooms with a Mission (MwM) program in Quang Tri Province. The state-of-the art mushroom production equipment for the centre in Cam Lo will enable the program to substantially increase the production of mushroom spawn bags making a significant contribution to the sustainability of mushroom farming in the region.

According to Mr. Hideo Suzuki, Japan has always put great importance on landmine and UXO clearance as well as the recovery of the livelihood of the victims and the community, as Japan firmly believes that this is an extremely important component of peace and confidence building.

“The Mushroom Center is a unique self-support facility which is run by the Vietnamese authorities and HDI together. It helps landmine/UXO survivors in Quang Tri Province to live on their own by growing and selling mushrooms,” said Mr. Suzuki.

Thanks to the grant of \$123,000 from Japan, HDI and Project RENEW have procured bagging machines, steam boxes, boilers, mushroom driers and HEPA filters, all necessary tools to more efficiently produce mushroom spawn and ready-to-fruit blocks for growing mushrooms.

A plaque in recognition of the new equipment was unveiled by Mr. Suzuki and Mr. Prettyman. Also in attendance were Mr, Nguyen Duc Chinh, Vice Chairman of Quang Tri Province People’s Committee, representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Science and technology and local representatives from Cam Lo, Dakrong, Gio Linh and Trieu Phong districts as well as representatives of MwM farming families and staff of Project RENEW and HDI.

The Japanese-funded state-of-the-art equipment has increased the production of mushroom blocks from 30,000 to more than 300,000 per month enabling the program to expand and increase the number of farmers they assist, as well as funding more UXO and landmine removal.

Through its critical grant funding, Japan has become a strong supporter of the Mushrooms with Mission program, along with the U.S. Department of State, Foreign Ministry of the Republic of China and the Australian veteran organization, MiVAC Trust.



Ho Van Chinh- The able leader of the Dakrong project

The very first communal grow house built outside the facility is now run by a group of 7 farmers from the Xa Ruc Village in Dakrong District where Chinh is the leader of the committee.

Ho Van Chinh lost his right hand when a cluster bomb exploded way back in 1979 while he was hoeing land in the family's farming lot. However, his disability due to the tragic accident didn't stop this 57-year-old man to become a reliable counselor of his hill tribe community in Dakrong District.



Chinh the leader of the community.



Chinh working on the communal grow house.

Located in Huong Hiep Commune, Xa Ruc Village these families are ethnic minorities who reside along Highway No.9. This area was subject to heavy bombardment and ground fighting during wartime. Most of the families mainly live on slash-and-burn farming. The income from this is limited and is insufficient for their daily needs. In May 2013, their lives changed when Mushrooms with a Mission (MwM) expanded their program to Dakrong District. Chinh showed great leadership qualities and was the obvious choice to head the project.

Mr. Chinh donated 90sqm of his own land to construct the communal grow house where six other farmers will work together to cultivate mushrooms for sustainable incomes.

In April, participating farmers visited the MwM centre in Cam Lo to familiarize themselves on how to grow mushrooms. Later on technical staff of MwM conducted a hands-on training in Dakrong.

"Feel so excited about this project, all of my neighbors voluntarily gave a hand in building this communal grow house," said Mr. Chinh. "We believe growing mushrooms will ease the burden of our daily life by providing us a significant source of income," said Chinh.

By the end of June, these families will receive 6,000 ready-to-fruit blocks of Oyster and Wood ear mushrooms.



The completed communal grow house in Dakrong

The Wood ear Mushroom



Auricularia auricular-judae is commonly known as wood ear mushrooms and is a species of edible *Auriculariales* fungus found worldwide. The fruiting body is distinguished by its noticeably ear-like shape. The species has a tough, gelatinous, elastic texture when fresh but it dries hard and brittle. Wood ear mushrooms can be dried

and rehydrated before cooking.

Wood ear mushrooms have long been used for their medicinal benefits. They are used in oriental medicine to prevent heart disease. They also contain anticoagulant substances that act like blood thinners creating effects similar to that of aspirin.

These fungi are used for their crisp, snappy texture and their color rather than their taste. The Chinese regularly add wood ear mushrooms to dishes because they think it improves breathing, circulation, and well-being. And they may be correct. Recent studies of the medicinal effects of *Auricularia polytricha* have identified a chemical that tends to inhibit blood clotting.

Since blood vessel diseases, strokes, and heart attacks are associated with clotting, perhaps moderate ingestion of this mushroom as food may indeed confer long life and good health on its users.



A New Factory Building



A brand new addition to the mushroom centre in Cam Lo is the new factory that houses the state of the art equipment donated by the government of Japan. Funding for the construction of this building was provided by HDI and an Australian Veterans Organization, The MiVAC (Mines Victims and Clearance) Trust.

Covering an area of 600 square meters, the new building was essential to the program as it expands to increase the capacity of mushroom block production. The new building and machinery has helped to streamline

production of ready-to-fruity mushroom blocks. It houses the sawdust storage, mixing and bagging machines with conveyors, two boilers that provide 300 kg of steam per hour to four steam boxes where blocks are sterilized. It also houses a cooling room with HEPA filters and a sterile inoculation section.



The cooling room with HEPA filters

In addition, the Mushroom Center has a scientific laboratory and two driers for drying mushroom harvested in wet weather conditions.

According to Dr. Ai, with the current equipment capacity, the Mushroom Center can produce 10,000–15,000 blocks per day. All mushroom blocks produced here have better quality and it is unlikely to be contaminated.

“New facility and equipment enables MwM to provide ready-to-fruit blocks as soon as the season arrives, making it easy for our farming families to cultivate and gain expected yields ,” said Dr. Ai.



Bagging machine and steam boxes

Harvest Time for MwM Farmers



Le Thi Danh with her harvest of Linh Chi

June is a happy month for Le Thi Danh, a 38-year-old single mother of four children from the Cam Lo District.

Her family just completed their first harvest of Linh Chi mushrooms after four months of cultivation. She harvested 10 kg of dried Linh Chi mushrooms. This is considered a good yield as the other farming families who have finished their season harvested an average of 7 kg.

During this season farmers grew a variety of mushrooms. Linh Chi, Wood ear and Oyster. The Linh Chi and wood ear mushrooms are sun dried, packaged and delivered to the centre.

MwM buys back all the mushrooms cultivated by the farmers. With the recently awarded VietGAP certification they are able to sell Linh Chi mushrooms to pharmaceutical companies for medicinal



Wood ear mushrooms are sun dried

purposes and the Wood ear mushrooms to supermarkets, restaurants, hotels and other outlets.



The fresh Oyster mushrooms were sold on a daily basis at the local markets by the farmers. The unsold Oyster mushrooms are dried and stored for sale much like the wood ear mushrooms.

Visitors to MWM



A group from "Veterans for Peace" from the United States visited the mushroom centre together with their spouses and friends.



Students from University of Michigan, nited States helped to make blocks for MWM farmers at Mushroom Center

MWM expands to Gio Linh District

The Chairman of the Provincial People’s committee of Gio Linh District wrote to MWM program requesting them to consider working with farmers in the district to cultivate mushrooms. This request coincided with MWM’s intension to expand to other districts as it had done with Dakrong. After several meetings with the PPC and the farmer’s Union, 14 farmers were selected. Most of the farmers were victims of UXO accidents and the rest were from female-headed households.

These 14 farmers visited the centre to learn about mushroom farming and technical staff provided them with the necessary information. They will have a more formal on-hands training in Gio Linh.

The PPC provided the land to build two communal grow houses. Through Ms Lily Lerer of the University of Chicago funding to construct the two communal grow houses was made available. Materials were provided and farmers are seen building their communal grow houses.



Communal grow houses in Gio Linh under construction.



The two communal grow houses which are under construction will provide these families a unique working place where they come together to grow mushrooms.

MAKE A DONATION!
We appreciate the ongoing financial support of concerned organizations and individuals like you. Your contributions enable us to bring more marginalized families into the program. Click here to make a donation:

Donate Now!

MwM achieves VietGAP Certification

Mushrooms with a Mission were awarded the VietGAP Certification for Linh Chi and Wood ear mushrooms in June 2013. VietGAP indicates Vietnamese Good Agricultural Practices.

This certification was awarded by the Hanoi-based QUACERT Vietnam Certification Centre under the Ministry of Science and Technology’s Directorate of Standards, Metrology and Quality.

The VietGAP certifies that the MwM products meet four criteria:

1. Standard production techniques.

2. Food safety including methods to ensure harvested mushrooms have no chemical or physical contamination.
3. A working environment that prevents abuse of farmer’s labor.
4. Production origin tracking.

All farming families and technical staff were trained by QUACERT experts on VietGAP regulations and production processes.

The VietGAP certification brings confidence to the distributor, consumer and managing agencies. It helps producers

develop their trademark and create a stable market for their products.

Accordingly, MwM products will be consumed in the big cities of Vietnam, ensuring its trademark and competitiveness with other similar products.

In the future, MwM mushroom packaging will also bear the name NAMUS and will indicate the nutritional content of the product and bear the VietGAP Certification label in each package.



www.thehdi.org



www.landmines.org.vn

About NAMUS

NAMUS is the official trademark of the brand of mushrooms grown by UXO survivors in Quang Tri Province, part of Mushrooms-with-a-Mission (MwM), a program jointly implemented by Project RENEW and New York-based Humpty Dumpty Institute (HDI). RENEW has worked for 10 years to clean up bombs and mines in Quang Tri Province, reducing accidents and injuries and improving the lives of victim families. HDI is a non-profit humanitarian organization which has conducted post-war poverty-reduction and mine action programs in Angola, Armenia, Eritrea, Lebanon, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Laos, and now Vietnam.

MwM supports victim families and poor communities in ERW-affected areas in Quang Tri Province by creating jobs for people with physical disabilities, helping them achieve stable incomes and contributing to socio-economic improvements in the communities where they live.

MwM ensures that growers will be able to earn a good income from their mushroom products. Profits from the program will go back to support Project RENEW’s humanitarian activities including ERW cleanup and removal programs, and to expand opportunities for more victim families to join the program.

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DONORS



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