



# Yêu thương từ cây nấm

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Dự án hợp tác bởi Project RENEW và Humpty Dumpty Institute

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## Quarterly Newsletter of Mushrooms with a Mission

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## Renovated facility will be “Mother Farm” for expanded mushroom production in Quang Tri Province

For weeks Pham Thi Sen, a single mother of two, has been inoculating mushroom spawn into thousands of “blocks” – cylinders of plastic bags packed with rich sawdust from rubber trees – at the laboratory of the MWM Mushroom Center. With a half dozen other technical workers, Sen is aware that these ready-to-fruit mushroom blocks will bring new hope for poor and vulnerable families who will be tending the new crop. The technical production staff are proud of their work; they believe in what they are doing, because they know they are filling a need.

The Mushroom Center is an integral part of the MWM program. Located on a 4.3 hectare site in Cam Lo District, the facility was handed over by the local government as part of the partnership with HDI. The Mushroom Center will serve as a “Mother Farm” designed to provide raw inputs to farmers, and to process, package and market the mushrooms that are bought back from the farming families.

Visitors to the Mushroom Center this fall will observe a bustling scene of energy and activity. Some 18 people including the technicians and other seasonal workers are busy producing 50,000 ready-to-fruit blocks of Lingzhi for delivery to 100 beneficiary families. Everyone on the staff is aware of the importance of their work. This fall will be the first time for these 100 farmers – who are landmine/UXO survivors, female-headed households, ethnic minorities – to attempt to grow Lingzhi mushrooms after the training they have received from MWM staff and the Farmers Union.

The MWM staff’s support will help ensure that the farmers’ production of Lingzhi will be successful, and bring higher income to par-



*A typical scene at the Mushroom Center’s lab where local technical workers are transplanting spawn into blocks to be delivered to farming families.*

icipating families who have cultivated only wood-ear and oyster mushrooms during the past three years. By the end of October, the 50,000 ready-to-fruit blocks of Lingzhi produced at the Mother Farm will be delivered to the 100 satellite farms for the full growing cycle to be completed. A ready market awaits these highly prized Lingzhi mushrooms, which are regarded as having valuable medicinal properties.

In August 2012, HDI and Project RENEW received a grant of \$123,000 from the Government of Japan to support the MWM program. The Japanese funding will allow HDI and RENEW to purchase state-of-the-art production equipment including steam boxes, bagging machines, mushroom driers and clean rooms with High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters. This equipment will enable HDI/RENEW to substantially increase the production of mushroom spawn bags at the facility, and thereby increase the number of disabled farmer families who can participate in the program. The equipment has been ordered and is being shipped for installation by December 2012.

## Strong-willed mother climbs her way out of poverty with support from Mushrooms-with-a-Mission



*Construction on Ms. Muon's new rainproof mushroom growing house, built with support from the MWM, is nearly finished. She will soon be growing Lingzhi mushrooms for the first time, expected to bring her a very good income.*

For years, Ms. Doan Thi Muon, a single mother of three children in Cam Lo District, has been collecting and trading junk to earn enough money to feed her family. The 50-year-old lost her job as a kindergarten teacher after she gave birth to her third child in 2000. Not having enough land for farming, her only choice was to start trading all kinds of assorted junk for income - kitchen utensils, pieces of fabric, electrical wiring, aluminum cans. For twelve years she has had to bike 10 kilometers a day, making the rounds house to house to collect scrap in scorching heat and biting cold. Her health has suffered. She has been diagnosed with spondylitis and hernias. She worries that someday she may be too sick to continue working as a scrap collector.

In the past, on a lucky day, she earned 30,000 VND or about \$1.50 USD from reselling junk to a local scrap dealer. "Other people can have a day off if they fall sick," Ms. Muon said. "For me, I cannot, because a day off means my children will have nothing to eat." As she talked, several scars on her face

and neck were visible, the result of injuries she sustained from cluster bomb fragments when she was a child during the war.

Her eldest son quit high school last year to take a job in Saigon as a seasonal worker, because she could not afford his tuition. "He is brave," Ms. Muon said. "If I can earn more, maybe he will be able to continue his studies and even get a higher education."

This October is a time of hope for Ms. Muon and 99 other landmine survivor families, female-headed households and ethnic minorities in Quang Tri Province. These families will go into the Lingzhi mushroom season with the promising prospect of earning much higher incomes to improve their living conditions. So Ms. Muon these days is busy installing a mushroom grow house with construction materials and labor supported by MWM. She is convinced that the medicinal qualities of the popular Lingzhi mushroom will bring new hope for better lives for her and others.

***"I'm thinking about quitting my scrap trading work to focus just on mushroom growing, which is easier and more profitable."***

Ms. Muon was selected to join the MWM program in January 2012. Under this initiative, she and other UXO victims and disadvantaged families have been provided with tools, materials, training, and grow houses to cultivate a variety of mushrooms.

"If I strictly follow the technical guidance provided by the MWM staff, I can earn an income of four million Viet Nam dong (about \$200 USD) after deducting costs for six months of cultivation," Ms. Muon said while standing next to her mushroom grow house, being constructed to house 500 ready-to-fruit blocks for the first Lingzhi crop.

Ms. Muon hopes the income from growing Lingzhi will also help her get the medical care she needs, as well as tuition for her younger children. "If things go well with the mushrooms," she said, "I'm thinking about quitting my scrap trading work to focus just on mushroom growing, which is easier and more profitable."

### 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.

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## Funding from the Government of Japan bolsters Humpty Dumpty Institute’s “Mushrooms with a Mission” program in Vietnam



*Mr. Hideo Suzuki (right), Charge d’Affaires ad interim of the Japanese Embassy, and Ms. Jeanne Samuel, Country Director of the Humpty Dumpty Institute, sign the grant contract at the Embassy.*

The Humpty Dumpty Institute has received a grant of \$123,000 from the Government of Japan in support of its “Mushrooms with a Mission” (MwM) program in Quang Tri Province. On August 10 in Hanoi, Mr. Hideo Suzuki, Charge d’Affaires ad interim of the Japanese Embassy, and Ms. Jeanne Samuel, HDI Country Director for Vietnam, cemented the new partnership under the framework of Japan’s Grass-roots Grant Assistance program for FY2012. This funding will allow HDI to purchase state-of-the-art mushroom production equipment for the MwM Mushroom Center in Quang Tri includ-

ing steam boxes, mushroom driers and HEPA filters. The new equipment will enable HDI and its local implementing partner Project RENEW to substantially increase the production of mushroom spawn bags at the facility for use by the MwM farmers in Quang Tri. The Japanese-funded equipment will enable expansion of the MWM program to more farmers in the area, contributing to the long-term sustainability of mushroom farming in the region.

“Mushrooms with a Mission” empowers landmine survivors by providing them with the tools and knowledge needed to grow, market, and sell mushrooms and earn extra incomes to provide for their families. Mushroom growing is an ideal livelihood option for disabled survivors of UXO accidents, because technical skill is more necessary than heavy labor. The program benefits female heads of households, ethnic minorities, and families living below the poverty line.

Ralph L. Cwerman, President of HDI, thanked the Embassy and Government of Japan and noted that “Japan’s contribution to the MwM Program in Vietnam is very significant. For many years, Japan has been a critical leader in the battle against landmines and UXO worldwide. Japan has also made enormous investments in countries and NGOs around the world to assist landmine survivors and to educate populations around the world about the dangers of landmines and UXO. With this funding HDI and Project RENEW enthusiastically welcome Japan as a strong supporter of this unique MwM program.” Cwerman pointed out that other major donors of this program include Vietnam, the Republic of China, and the United States.

Mr. Suzuki said, “The MwM program highlights the importance of helping the survivors by integrating them into the community, respecting their dignity and making them stakeholders in the socio-economic development of Vietnam”. Mr. Suzuki also said the MwM Project “embodies the idea of ‘Human Society’, a uniquely Japanese concept that the Government introduced internationally and is now shared and accepted globally.”

Mr. Suzuki explained, “Building a ‘Human Society’ means empowering every member of the community and protecting the fundamental freedom of all human beings. Without men and women who can stand alone, there is simply no sustainable community.

“And without a sustainable community, there is no balanced development of a national territory,” Mr. Suzuki concluded.



*50 farmers received new grow houses to grow Linh Chi mushrooms. Here construction workers are putting the roof on a grow house.*



*Renovations at the facility to accommodate the inoculation of spawn and incubation of blocks.*

## Vietnamese Diaspora joins hands to help Quang Tri UXO survivors



*Madame Nguyen Cao Ky, Master Hsin Ting and other group members pose for a photo with Do Thien Dang, a double amputee who lost both legs in a landmine accident. Dang grows mushrooms with support from the MWM.*

In late September a group of Vietnamese-Americans and Vietnamese friends from Saigon and Hanoi, led by Madame Nguyen Cao Ky, visited the Mushrooms-with-a-Mission program in Quang Tri Province.

The delegation was accompanied by Mr. Ralph Cwerman, President and Co-Founder of the Humpty Dumpty Institute and Venerable Hsin Ting, who serves as the sixth Abbot and Director of the International Buddhist Progress Society and Vietnamese Diaspora in the U.S.

Most of the group members were visiting Quang Tri Province for the first time, many years after the war ended. In 36 hours of traveling around Quang Tri and meeting local residents, the group learned much about the war's consequences and how the work of HDI and Project RENEW are helping reduce the impact of unexploded ordnance (UXO).

The group first explored the Mushroom Center which is set up to provide raw inputs to farmers, and to process, package and market the mushrooms bought back from the farming families. Visiting two female-headed households who were starting their first season of growing mushrooms, the group was able to see first-hand the significant impact of the HDI and Project RENEW assistance to these vulnerable families.

On the same day the group observed a live demolition conducted by a RENEW team which safely destroyed three UXO items found by local construction workers who were building a new market in Trieu Phong District.

Madame Nguyen Cao Ky, at the end of the group's visit and on behalf of the

Vietnamese Diaspora, announced that they would be donating 26 mushroom growing houses to the MWM program. That means that 26 more disadvantaged families will have the opportunity to rise out of poverty and generate their own independent income.

"We sincerely thank HDI, Master Hsin Ting and RENEW," Madame Cao Ky said on behalf of the group, "for giving us an opportunity to share the pain that the war caused to our people in Vietnam."



*Ralph Cwerman, President of the Humpty Dumpty Institute makes some opening remarks at the briefing for members of the Vietnamese diaspora. With him in the picture is also Hien Ngo, Communications and Development Manger of Project RENEW.*

## Lingzhi: the miracle mushroom



*Lingzhi mushrooms are regarded as having valuable medicinal properties.*

The Vietnamese name for Lingzhi is Linh Chi, which literally means supernatural mushrooms, and with the unique qualities and traits that they possess, the name stands so true. This herb has been called by names like the miracle herb, the Celestial herb and what not! The Lingzhi mushroom belongs to the Ganoderma genus and is known to be the oldest form of mushrooms that has been used in the field of medicine. In fact, the wild Lingzhi, which grows naturally without human interference is known to be grown at the base of the stumps of deciduous trees which grow in densely wooded mountains. The wild Lingzhi is ex-

tremely rare because not all aged trees tend to have them. In fact, sources state that only 2 or 3 trees out of 10,000 are likely to have the growth of wild Lingzhi. Nevertheless, because of their medicinal benefits and value, they are commercially grown in various parts of the world including Europe, Asia, South America, and even the United States.

Lingzhi is known to: Lower Blood Pressure and Cholesterol; helps control Glucose Levels; helps in suppressing the Growth of Cancer Cells; improves the Memory and Immune System, strengthens the respiratory systems among others.



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**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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