

2007 Proposal to Snowflower to support Thay's Love & Understanding Prog.

From: SnowFlower's Love & Understanding Committee

Drafted by Edward Celnicker (July 3, 2007, updated Jan 12, 2010)

One of the crucial aspects of Thich Nhat Hanh's Buddhist practice is social activism. In 1965, during the Vietnam War, he and other monastics and lay people established a School of Youth for Social Service to be a presence of peace and to aid the poor in Vietnam. Much of the work they were doing was not allowed after the war. However, for over 30 years, while based in France, Thay's order managed to provide materials and spiritual support to those in need. In recent years, sanghas in Europe and the United States have supported Thay's work through the Plum Village Love and Understanding program. This program is run through Thay's root temple in Hue by monastics and social workers who make the decisions regarding disbursements of funds. The Love and Understanding program has several focuses:

Education and Food: Pre-schools in the poorest areas provide nutritional meals and learning activities to boys and girls who otherwise would be left in the care of an older sister or alone while parents work. Funds are used for nutritional meals and teacher salaries. In addition, scholarships are provided to older students for education.

Community Development: Having access to water is crucial for good health. It also allows families and schools to grow vegetables for consumption or to sell them for much needed income. Other community development projects also help in paving roads, building bridges and schools, as well as digging wells.

Elderly, People with Disabilities and Orphans: Too often the elderly and people with disabilities do not have the means to take care of themselves. Some of them have been abandoned by their families. The Program provides them with funds to live in dignity.

Natural Disaster Aid: Vietnam is subject to natural disasters such as typhoons and floods. Families may be left without food, potable water and shelter. Villages may be destroyed. Immediate assistance is needed for survival.

How can we as a Sangha help?

Give a kindergarten child a chance to be cared for and loved, for \$5.00 a month ([\\$60](#)).

Give a scholarship to an adolescent or young adult for \$10.00 a month ([\\$120](#))

Sponsor a Teacher or a Day Care Assistant for \$25.00 a month ([\\$300](#)).

Sponsor an elderly person or an orphan under the age of sixteen, for \$10.00 a month ([\\$120](#)).

Sponsor Community Development ([any \\$ amount](#)).

Sponsor Natural Disaster Aide ([any \\$ amount](#))

Contributions from Snowflower Sangha have so far paid the yearly salaries of 6 teachers and assistants, provided meals for more than 75 children, and paid for 8 wells.

Thich Nhat Hanh's life is a testimony to the Buddhist ideal of wisdom and compassion. Our financial support of his Love and Understanding Program is a way to show our commitment to this ideal.

SNOWFLOWER SANGHA'S WORK

**IN SUPPORT OF THICH NHAT HANH'S
LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING PROGRAM**
Drafted by Jonathan Reed (July 3, 2007)

MISSION:

To create a way for the North American Sangha to help Thich Nhat Hanh's Love and Understanding Program extend support and friendship to children, families, and communities in real need in Vietnam; to deepen our spiritual practice through *dana* (generosity); to strengthen our Sangha through the practice of shared engaged Buddhism; and to share what we learn with other Sanghas.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES:

1. Create a framework by which we as a practice community can spiritually and materially support our root teacher's efforts to help the poorest families and communities in Vietnam. Love and Understanding Program projects include preschools and food programs for very young children; support for destitute elderly and disabled persons; the digging of wells; natural disaster relief. *(The committee to create this framework was established at the January 2007 Sangha business meeting.)*
2. Provide simple ways for Snowflower Sangha members to materially contribute to the Lotus Fund for Vietnam. For example, a designated box at Tuesday and Friday meetings and information on making one time or regular contributions to the fund. *(The committee is working with Green Mountain Dharma Center on this.)*
3. Develop informational and inspirational materials about the project, including a logo, an information sheet or brochure, a DVD and other materials to share with Snowflower Sangha members, Plum Village and affiliated monasteries and the larger Thich Nhat Hanh Sangha. *(The committee is presently developing these.)*
4. Encourage other Sanghas to support The Lotus Fund by sharing our Sangha's experiences and materials we have developed with them. *(This will be a committee focus for the next year.)*