



SUNSHINE SCHOOL
Annual Report 2014

At the Sunshine School

Programme Description

Established:	1991
Location:	38 Tu Xuong Street, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City Target group: Street children and disadvantaged children
Sponsors:	Porticus, One Foundation
Local partners:	The Centre for Social Assistance for Disadvantaged Children
CNCF Staff:	Mr Nicolas Pistolas, Ms Son Thu Trinh, Ms Nguyen Thi Ngoc Quyen, Ms Lam Ngoc Thien Huong School Staff: 10 staff including 1 principal, 1 vice principal, 1 administrative staff, 6 teachers, 1 Janitor
Monitoring Visits:	Daily
CNCF Involvement:	Full funding and supervision
Budget 2014:	US\$57,522 Actual costs: \$55,602 ¹
Reporting Period:	January - December 2014
Compiled by:	Nguyen Thi Ngoc Quye

On behalf of our Foundation and the Sunshine Children of Vietnam, we thank all sponsors for supporting this programme in 2014.

¹ Unaudited amount. This figure may change subject to auditor's report

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Home visit

Programme Background

"I want a beautiful school for the street children, a school with sports facilities, a music room, an art department, computer technology, domestic science and training in life skills..."

-Christina Noble, 'Bridge Across My Sorrows'

Due to conditions of extreme poverty, there are still many children in Vietnam who have either never attended school or are forced to drop out at an early age in order to support themselves and their families. The socio-economic pressures faced by these children means not only are they unable to afford the cost of schooling, but many must spend long hours assisting their families by: scavenging on rubbish sites, selling chewing gum, lottery tickets, soft drinks and food on the city streets. In many cases they also live and work in areas rife with drugs and organised crime placing them at severe risk of child prostitution, trafficking and drug abuse.

Our Founder, Christina Noble saw education as the way to break the cycle of poverty. This led to her creating a school in 1991 to provide both street children and children from destitute families with the opportunity to attend school at flexible hours. Christina called the street children of Ho Chi Minh City her 'Sunshine Children'. "Yellow" Christina says, is her favourite colour: "bright, bold, sunshine yellow." And so the school became known as the Sunshine School.

One person saw the potential for change in the desperate faces of the street children she met when she first came to Vietnam.

When Christina first threw open the doors to the Sunshine School, there were just 30 children. The numbers have grown and, through our donors' generous support, we now provide between 150-200 children with schooling every year, filling classrooms with the smiling faces of children who are open and willing to learn.

Poverty in childhood is often the platform for a lifetime of challenges. Recent academic studies suggest that the poorest children are often denied the relationships and environments they need to develop socially and emotionally. "Children raised in poverty ...are faced daily with overwhelming challenges that affluent children never have to confront and their brains have adapted to suboptimal conditions in ways that undermine good school performance...These children experience more stress due to loneliness, aggression, isolation, and deviance in their peer relationships, and they are more likely to describe feeling deprived, embarrassed, picked on, or bullied. As a result, they more often face future struggles in marital and other relationships."¹

Research, however, indicates that if you can get the children into school and help them stay there, there is a huge opportunity to turn around the negative impacts of poverty. If the child can learn to read and write, it gives them an opportunity to secure a place in vocational training, employment or higher education. In Vietnam, few vocational training schemes or employment opportunities admit students who do not have at least a Grade 5 Certificate. Our Sunshine School provides children with the educational skills needed to attain this much-needed certificate and along with academic study they also learn how to interact

¹ Eric Jensen "Teaching With Poverty In Mind: What Being Poor Does To Kids' Brains And What Schools Can Do About It" ASCD, 2009



socially with other children and adults, both skills crucial to their future success.

In July 2013, the Vietnamese Government lifted 'tuition' fees for all primary students, including children from poor households and orphans. Nevertheless, students at all schools still have to pay for other expenditures such as food, beverage, hygiene, uniforms, facilities and tutorial classes etc.

The school is located at the Foundation's centre of operations in Vietnam. During the last 20 years of operation the school has grown considerably and now offers 6 primary education classes, from Grades 1 to 5.

Last year, in an attempt to redress the imbalance between the mainstream school curriculum and the curriculum we offer our children at the Sunshine School, we officially included English and Art classes. Additionally, to enhance our children's grade average, we hold tutoring classes three times each week. This is discussed in more detail later in this report.

Our Sunshine children also follow a healthcare program and participate in many extracurricular activities. They and their siblings are eligible to receive support from our other programs such as the Sponsorship Program, the Education Assistance Program, the Medical Assistance Program and the Bicycle Support Program.

Students range in age from 6 to 16 years old and study literacy, mathematics, general science, English and they participate in the Foundation's Sports, Music and Arts Projects. During the school year all the children are included in excursions, festivities and celebrations organised by CNCF, such as the annual

Christmas Festival, Children's Day, Teacher's Day and Mid-Autumn Festival.

One of the main aims of the Sunshine School is to help integrate children into the mainstream school system. Once they graduate, students can then apply for financial support under the Sponsorship Program and Education Assistance Program to facilitate their integration back into mainstream education and hopefully beyond to further education.

CNCF's two full-time social workers are on hand daily to assist the children with schooling issues and to counsel them on all educational and vocational opportunities open to them. The social workers also provide psychological counselling to the students.

The Sunshine School also boasts a library for its students with hundreds of books and magazines. Children can come to the library to read after class as well as borrow books and magazines to read at home. In order to promote children's reading habits each school year, the library organises many extracurricular activities. This year they had: 'We love Vietnamese history' contest, 'My favourite book' contest, Book Introduction Seminar, etc.

Direct beneficiaries: Children between the ages of 6-16, who come from under-privileged families (including street children), those who are over the maximum school age or otherwise excluded from mainstream schools due to lacking the required legal documents to enroll (often the case for ethnic migrants to HCMC). We assess the family's circumstances through our enrolment process and annual home visits.

Indirect beneficiaries: Sunshine School students' families and relatives





Lessons in the classroom



Smiles during the break



Practicing grammar



Play time



At the classroom

Programme Overview

In 2014, the Sunshine School provided free primary education to 164 disadvantaged and street children in Ho Chi Minh City. This was a really great year for us as all 17 of our Grade 5 children passed their final examinations from primary school; a truly fantastic result for these disadvantaged children who face so many other challenges in their lives.

15 children were able to continue with their studying at senior school level and 2 children left to follow religious (seminary) studies in the Khmer traditional custom.

In comparison to the previous semester, however, the number of students getting “below average” was lower in the first semester of 2013 – 2014. This was felt to be due to a new, more rigorous method of assessment, which the Department of Education introduced following negative feedback on overall standards of education.

2014 also unfortunately saw a significant increase in the drop-out rate of students in comparison to 2013.

This is also the second year that English, Music and Arts classes were included as part of the official curriculum. Besides teaching children reading, writing and maths, Sunshine School students now benefit from a diverse array of subjects and extra-curricular activities such as: art, dancing, singing, hip-hop, keyboard, guitar, taekwondo, football and badminton.

We gave our Sunshine School students many opportunities to participate in all kinds of festivities, such as the Christmas Festival and International Children’s Day to enable them to develop their social skills and provide them with an opportunity to create great memories of their childhood.

Most of our children had the opportunity to meet with, and interact with, visiting international school children and volunteers. This informal interaction helped the children improve their communication skills and self-confidence.

The Sunshine School has a library for its students with hundreds of books and magazines available.

Our Sunshine Children were given the opportunity to take part in life skills and living values training courses this year. This year’s courses were designed to improve communication skills, help the children study more effectively and also covered adjusting and coping with life-changes and losses.

The Sunshine School also received complimentary healthcare by kind donation from the Hoan My Medical Corporation.

Sunshine School children also receive additional support from our other programs. In 2014, the Sponsorship Program supported 3 extremely poor students of the school; 15 graduates from the Sunshine School entered into the Education Assistance Programme; 12 children received bicycles and helmets from the Bicycle Support Programme; and 6 families of the students received Family Assistance and Medical Assistance.



Project Activities

ACADEMIC REVIEW

The Sunshine School operates out of just two classrooms providing six different classes of children from Grades 1 – 5. To accommodate the number of classes within the limited space available, Grades 1 – 3 study in 2 hour blocks per day, while Grade 4 and Grade 5 study in 4-hour blocks per day. We also use the third floor in the main CNCF office building as another classroom for spill over classes along with the medical centre’s outpatient clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays when the outpatient clinic is not being used.

	Term II 2013-2014	Term I 2014-2015
At the beginning of the period	164	148
At the end of the period	154	137
Decrease	10	14
Increase	0	3
Net Decrease	10	11

Table 1: Number of students from Jan to Dec 2014

Reasons	Jan – Dec 2013		Total	Jan – Dec 2014		Total
	Semester I, 2013-2014	Semester II, 2012-2013	2013	Semester II, 2013-2014	Semester I, 2014-2015	2014
Change school	5	1	6	0	4	4
Back to hometown	2	1	3	4	2	6
Support family	3	1	4	3	3	6
Others	2	2	4	3	5	8
Total	12	5	17	10	14	24

Table 2: Number of dropouts in 2013 and 2014

There was a significant increase this year in the number of students dropping out of school, up by 41% on 2013 numbers. Whenever a child is taken out of the school we make every possible effort to meet and talk to the parents to see if there is any other solution. In 99 percent of the cases of a child being withdrawn from the school the decision is financially driven, whether it is because the family has to move to a cheaper location or the child has to work to provide an income for the family. We always try to provide alternative solutions. Unfortunately, however, we are not always successful.



EXAMINATION RESULTS

All 17 of our Grade 5 children passed their final examinations from primary school. 15 students continued to higher (senior school level) education and 2 students went on to do seminary studies to be a monk in the Khmer traditional custom. The number of children graduating from Sunshine School and continuing their studies has remained stable over the last 3 years.



FINAL EXAMINATION RESULTS

In comparison to the previous semester the number of students getting “below average” was lower in the first semester of 2013 – 2014. This was felt to be due to a new, more rigorous method of assessment, which the Department of Education has introduced following negative feedback on overall standards of education.

As we reported last year, the previous focus was a quantitative ‘scores-based’ approach. The government introduced wide-sweeping changes to the assessment system, introducing a more qualitative approach, taking into account on-going assessments

(the children now take three exams over the course of the year as opposed to one final exam) of the creative thinking process and by encouraging students to be more proactive. Our children have scored lower over the last two years of assessment but we believe this is a better reflection of their actual abilities.

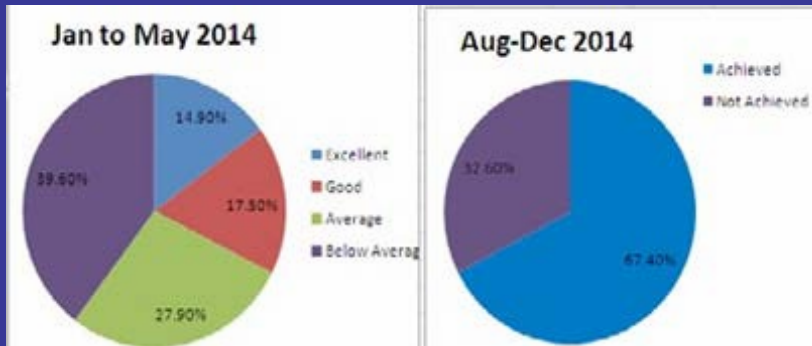
Our teaching and programme staff are working to introduce the proper tools for addressing academic performance issues in our children. This was the main reason for introducing extra classes onto the timetable such as English Language.

At present, our children generally receive two hours per day of tuition in comparison to students at mainstream schools who receive seven hours per day. We have introduced new classes to the timetable try to put our children on the same platform as their mainstream peers. We remain constricted by managing the limited space and number of children, however.

We also run three extra tuition classes of one hour each for children who are identified as struggling.

	Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Average (%)	Under average (%)
2nd semester of 2013-2014 (Jan to May 2014)	14.9%	17.5%	27.9%	39.6%
	Achieved			Not Achieved
1st semester of 2014-2015 (Aug-Dec 2014)	67.4%			32.6%





During the school year, all children receiving below average results attended additional tutoring classes (three one-hour sessions every week) from Grade 1 to Grade 3 in order to improve their study results.

DISCIPLINE

Each teacher monitors every student to encourage them to participate in class, to attend school regularly, to help their classmates and to ensure well-prepared assignments are handed in. This information is then provided to the Vice-Principal at the end of each day.

In this way, the Vice Principal is able to monitor each student's progress. Where a student shows significant improvement they receive a gift acknowledging their hard work, like a reward-system. Around 24 children received such gifts each month. This has had a positive impact on their overall confidence and desire to keep on studying as well as encouraging the other students to work hard.

MONITORING OUR CHILDREN

Every year our Sunshine School Programme Team conducts visits to each of our children's homes. This is to ensure we maintain a cooperative relationship with the child's family and to enable us to assess any change in family circumstances and living conditions. It is crucial for us to understand the daily living arrangements for our children, many of whom come from single-parent or violent homes and who work long hours before and after school and at the weekends, in order to help support their families.

This year we conducted an extensive review of our children's backgrounds and progress by compiling detailed profiles of each child. The profile contains specific details such as the child's health status, the parent's occupation, if any, and the family's income. We also record family circumstances that impact the child's well-being and their ability to perform at school. This was a lengthy exercise but one that is essential to us managing and addressing behavioural and academic issues.

This extract is taken from one such profile:

Hoang¹'s father earns US\$4.50² per day. Hoang's mother sells softs drinks outside their rental room. Her daily income is under US\$2 per day. Hoang's entire family of six lives in a small room in a rusty metal building that they rent for US\$76 per month. According to Hoang's grandmother the parents fight a lot with each other. The father is very physically abusive towards the mother.

¹ Name changed to protect the Child's privacy

² Conversion to USD at 21,030 VND





Waiting outside the school



Christmas Celebration



Art Class



Taekwondo demonstration



Health check

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

A) Festivities

During the year, Sunshine School students had many opportunities to participate in many kinds of festivities, such as the Mid-Autumn Festival and Vietnamese Teacher's Day.

The children were able to relax and enjoy themselves, with many participating in performances, building their self-confidence and hopefully creating enduring memories.

Christmas Celebration 2014: In Vietnam, there are still a lot of disadvantaged children who do not have families that support them to celebrate a Christmas event to bring them hopes and gifts. In Dec 2014, a Christmas Celebration was held at the Foundation Playground for nearly 400 CNCF project children, including Sunshine School students, children from the Centre for Social Assistance for Disadvantaged Children, Girls and Boys' Shelters. The children were very excited this year as the day of the celebration also coincided with our Founder, Christina Noble's birthday. The children gave wonderful performances of dance, music and singing and they took great joy in participating in all the fun games. Gifts of Christmas cakes and other simple food and drinks were given to the children for them to take home to share with their families.

During the year, most of the Sunshine School children had the opportunity to interact with international school children and corporate visitors who visited from the Singapore International School, the Chinese International School of Hong Kong and several others.

Despite obvious language barriers, the Sunshine School children and their international counterparts were able to communicate with each other and had a great time. Thanks to these activities, the children's communication skills and self-confidence improved enormously.

B) Arts and Sports

Please refer to the separate annual reports for specific details of Sunshine Arts and Music and Sunshine Sports Program activities

C) Library Activities & Competitions

Our library is filled with over 1,500 age-appropriate educational and enticing books for our children to choose from. In addition to general weekly activities (borrowing books, educational films, basic IT literacy), in 2014, the librarian has also taken books to the classes during the noontime for children to read and organised a few events/competitions quite successfully. These events are listed below:

- Handmade paper flower contest in November 2014.
- Card making contest for Teacher's Day, November 20th 2014.
- Good hand writing contest in November 2014.
- Craft activities: bracelet handmade, handmade coin purses etc.
- Tree planting
- Photography

D) Living Value and Life-Skills Training

These trainings were continued to encourage our children to learn and develop basic living values. There were six topics offered to all students in 2014:

- Personal Hygiene
- Politeness
- Love
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Peace

We also offered life-skills training over the year to our Grade 4 and 5 children. The training was provided by an external provider and considered subjects such as:

- Developing effective communication skills
- Effective studying techniques and working as a group
- Developing money management skills and how to save
- Adjusting and Coping with Changes or Loss.

Most Children participated very enthusiastically and told us they would like to attend similar classes in the near future.

HEALTHCARE PROGRAMME

We consider it crucial to monitor the health of our children, so each year they are provided with a full health screening. This year's screening was provided free of charge by Hoan My Medical Corporation. The screening included: General check-up, optometry, dental and de-worming). For those diagnosed as malnourished, milk is provided on a daily basis.

- Number of children identified as malnourished who receive daily milk during the year: 39 (24%)
- Number of children undertaking the annual general check-up: 127 (87%)
- Number of children undertaking the eye check-up: 104 (61.2%)
- Number of children undertaking dental check up: 143 (88%)
- Number of children having deworming twice a year: 100%

The healthcare programme runs effectively with the direct support of CNCF and other CNCF local partners. We have made huge efforts to encourage our children's parents to pay more attention to their children's health and nourishment and to encourage them to take advantage of this free-of-charge service.

We noticed the number of children taking-up the eye and dental check ups decreased from last year. In 2014 the check-ups were held at the weekend rather than during the school week and we believe this contributed to the lower participation rate. In 2015 we will arrange the appointment during the week to ensure the maximum number of attendees.

OTHER SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

- **Sponsorship Programme:** We identified 3 of our students as qualifying for our Child Sponsorship Program in 2014. These students will be matched with a sponsor and will now receive financial support each month to support their study and their family's daily expenses.
- **Education Assistance Programme:** After graduating from the Sunshine School, those students who wish to continue



on to higher education studies (secondary school) are enrolled under the CNCF Education Assistance Program (EAP), which covers their tuition fees. This year 15 of our graduates from the Sunshine School entered the Programme.

- **Bicycle Support Programme:** Students (former and current students) of the Sunshine School are supported by the Bicycle Support Programme, which aims to provide poor children with bicycles and helmets as a means to go to school. In 2014, thanks to kind support from donors, 12 students received bicycles and safety helmets.
- **Family Assistance and Medical Assistance:** Family Assistance and Medical Assistance are available for Sunshine School children who require emergency interventions of either a financial or medical nature. In 2014 six families of Sunshine School students received support including family assistance (2) and medical assistance (4). These families were supported due to urgent need.

TET GIFTS FOR FAMILIES OF SUNSHINE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Tet is the most important holiday in the Vietnamese calendar and marks the end of one lunar year and the beginning of another. It is a time when many people return to their hometowns to celebrate the holidays with their families. It is also a time when children receive new clothes, lucky money (li xi) - traditionally presented in a red envelope - and together with their families they share special traditional dishes. For poor children, however, Tet is very different as it highlights the difference between the rich and the poor; between those that can afford to celebrate and those that simply cannot. We ensure

each child receives at least one small gift and a red envelope with a token amount of lucky money.

The Tet gift presentation was held at the Sunshine School in January 2014 with the attendance of 30 lucky students who received gift baskets thanks to the generosity of our donors. Parents, teachers and staff were also in attendance.

The children and their parents were so happy and moved when they received the gifts including boxes of biscuits, cookies, and candies, cooking-oil and other kinds of food. Thanks to this special gift from CNCF each student's family could really celebrate the Tet holiday.

Success Story

For our 164 students at the Sunshine School, the education they receive at the School provides them with a real opportunity to effect a change on their own and in their family's lives. The Sunshine School provides them with a means to open the door to enter the world of knowledge, without which they would simply continue in life without schooling, in the same cycle as their parents before them with no opportunity to escape poverty. Here is a success story about a child who is a 5th Grader in school year 2014 - 2015 of the Sunshine School

Thuan*

(*The name of the child has been changed to protect her privacy)

Thuan's parents met each other in 2000. Thuan's father was a motorbike taxi driver at that time. Her mother, a young and naïve girl, trusted the father but he was already engaged to another woman when she discovered she was pregnant. The father ordered her to have an abortion but Thuan's mother insisted on keeping her baby, even though she knew this was very much against Vietnamese culture and that she would be judged harshly as a single parent.

Thuan was born in 2002 in Central Vietnam. She has never known her father or his family. When she was 4 months old her mother moved them to Ho Chi Minh City in the hope of a better life.

Thuan's mother loves her very much and did whatever she could to bring in money. At first, this meant selling lottery tickets. She would harness Thuan to her in a sling on her back while she sold the tickets on the street. She was unable to afford to send Thuan to a kindergarten.

Thuan and her mother shared a single room with another woman and her young family. Thuan's mother soon became ill and had to change her job due to ill health. She then started selling soft drinks and street food in one of Ho Chi Minh City's big parks. She has been doing this since 2010 and she makes about 200.000 VND per day (around US\$9).

Thuan was accepted into the Sunshine School in 2009. She was not eligible to study in mainstream schools because she is from a migrant family and she did not have the required documentation. Despite all the hardship that Thuan and her mother have faced, Thuan has worked incredibly hard at school. Her mother understands the importance of education and is really supportive of her studies. She also supports Thuan in her extra-curricular classes such as Music, Sport and Arts.

Thuan used to be such a timid and shy girl. But she has developed into an articulate, smart and confident girl who loves Taekwondo and art. Her paintings have been shown at many CNCF's events and she was recently awarded first prize in a painting competition held by a local five-star hotel in support of CNCF. She also won the bronze medal in a regional Taekwondo Competition last year.


Thuan is really talented and a model student but she is also a really good daughter to her mother, who still struggles hard to make a living. Thuan helps her mother sell drinks and food every day before and after school and also at the weekends. Although they still struggle hard to make ends meet and the road ahead will not be easy, we believe that with our encouragement and support she will continue to make amazing progress at school. She has her eye on the future and she knows she needs to work incredibly hard to escape poverty.

With the continued support of our donors and supporters, we will do our utmost to ensure that Thuan and her mother have a better, brighter future.





A sunshine school girl taking notes



“The future of our world is the future of our children,
our beautiful children.

For many of them, it is a matter of giving them back their future,
giving them a life, giving them hope and giving them
a childhood they deserve.”

- Christina Noble -



If you or your organisation are interested in supporting this programme in 2015/2016 please contact our Foundation.
It is only through the kind generosity of others that we are able to continue our work with some of the world's most vulnerable children.

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