

# Love Without Borders: A Fairy Tale of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Or a touching story of a young artist from Switzerland who gives love and hope to the street children and the disabled people of Vietnam

More than three decades after the end of the war, Vietnam has gradually evolved into a free economy.

Many people became rich, very rich...

But the economic boom did not benefit everybody. For each newly rich person, there are thousands more who are excluded.

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Two groups of excluded people are particularly vulnerable because they don't even have the ability to take care of themselves. They are:

## 1. The Street Children

Either orphans or abandoned by their parents, these children, most of them illiterate, are forced to survive by themselves on the street. There are as many as 20,000 to 40,000 of them, aged from 4 and up, living in the streets of Saigon.



## 2. The Disabled People

There is no infrastructure to accommodate or to care for disabled people in Vietnam.

Becoming a burden because of their disability, they are often abandoned by their own family.

Many of them choose suicide as the way out.



In 1992, Aline Rebeaud, then a 20 year old art student from Switzerland, came to Vietnam on a tour across Europe and Asia. One night, her encounter with a 10 year old boy who was dying of hunger next to a dumpster in the streets of Saigon, shockingly brought to her attention the desperate conditions in which those children were living in. Instead of turning her back to go back to her normal life like most of us would have done, she took care of the child and then spent many months visiting places to learn more about the situation of these helpless children.

Finally, listening to her heart, and armed only with her immense love and compassion, Aline decided to stay in Vietnam to take care of the forgotten children.



Using the money from the sales of her paintings, she bought a two-bedroom house in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Saigon, and started to gather the orphans, the children she found in the streets and the heavily disabled persons.



Tim founded a family composed of adults and children, who live harmoniously together based on true solidarity.



The Vietnamese affectionately gave Aline a surname "Tim", which means "Heart". And the children consider her as their mother, they call her "M? Tim". They also gave a name to their new home: Nha May Man, or "Maison Chance"

At the beginning, since there was no assistance, Tim did everything herself, including cooking, providing care to the disabled persons, nursing the children like a mother, and finding resources to support a growing family.



Tim as a nurse

Emphasizing education and social re-insertion, Tim also played the role of a teacher, while she was learning to speak and to write Vietnamese herself. Tim also taught the children the basics of living together, emphasizing : listening, respecting others' spaces, participating in the tasks of the house, sharing, smiling, forgiving and solidarity.



Tim as a teacher

In 1996, to find support to help even more people, Tim finally created her first official charity organization, Maison Chance-France, then Maison Chance-Switzerland

In 2002: Tim received the Swiss Henry Dunant Award (named after the founder of the International Red Cross organization) for her exceptional charity work

In 2006, Maison Chance association was created in Belgium

Early 2008, Maison Chance-Canada and Maison Chance-USA were born

The original Maison Chance, even after several expansions, became way too small for the growing family



Some beneficiaries of the Take Wings Center

In 2006, after seven years of incubation, the Take Wings Center (Trung Tâm Châ'p Cánh) was created to separate education and training functions from the shelter (original Maison Chance) and to welcome more beneficiaries

Located on 11,800 SqFt, the Take Wings Center has 5 classrooms and 4 professional training areas:

The Center is open to non-residents, including about 180 children from very poor families.

After their training, the disabled workers have the possibility to make a living by working at the workshops. Products from Maison Chance are now sold in many countries.

Some of the products made by the disabled people from Maison Chance

These disabled workers, who were deemed useless by their own family, collectively generated \$26,000 worth of revenue in 2006. The average wage in VN is less than \$1,000/yr.

Tim's Latest Project: "Village Chance", a village built specifically for the disabled people, the first of its kind in Vietnam

Objective: to provide suitable accommodations for autonomous living for disabled workers

#### Design

A village built on 38,000 SqFt

70 housing units designed for the disabled people

A restaurant-internet coffee house open to the general public

A sports playground for the children and a physical therapy area

Apartments for future disabled tourists

#### Budget

Land purchase: \$483,000 for 38,000 SqFt

Construction cost: \$301,000





Operation: once built, the Village Chance will be self-sustaining. Revenue created through rent, tourist activities and restaurant

"Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day.  
Teach a man how to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime"  
Kwan Tzu

In 15 years of dedicated work teaching people "how to fish", Tim has helped thousands of underprivileged people to find emotional stability, to regain autonomy, and to win back their dignity by finding a place in the society. These lucky people, who not long ago were abandoned because they were deemed hopeless and useless, have been truly blessed with a second chance in their life.

Sadly, a tragedy occurred:

On February 29th, Tim had a severe motorcycle accident that left her with an injured leg, a broken shoulder and perforated lung



Tim is now recovering but the pressure on her is more severe  
Tim must postpone most fund raising efforts until full recovery  
More than 300 people are totally dependent on Tim to survive  
The monthly expense for the entire Maison Chance is as much as \$15,000 because of the high cost of medical care and rising food prices (but it is in fact a mere \$50/person/month)  
Maison Chance needs to find more funds to complete the Village Chance project

By lending a helping hand to an unknown dying child in the streets of Saigon, Tim has ended up spending fifteen remarkable years helping the most underprivileged people of Vietnam

Let's hope that on the journey that she follows, many, many more generous souls will be touched by her extraordinary story to join hands and help her on the mission to give these people with injured hearts and bodies the joy of living life to its fullest and a new place in their society



Thank you for helping put a smile on these faces!

## How can you help?

Donations to Maison Chance

Make checks payable to Maison Chance-USA

8120 Industrial Parkway

Sacramento, CA 95824

Contact: <usa@maison-chance.org> or <vietnam@maison-chance.org>

Tel: 832-419-7993 or 916-548-2771

Maison Chance-USA is the official non-profit representative of Maison Chance organization in the USA (Tax I.D. n: 26-2244746). All donations are tax deductible. Receipts will be provided.

Seeking corporate sponsorships for Maison Chance

Becoming a member of Maison Chance-USA (email: <usa@maison-chance.org>)

Volunteering in Vietnam (contact <annelaure@maison-chance.org>)

Help us raise awareness by forwarding this to your family and friends

For more information

<<http://www.maison-chance.org>>

<<http://www.prix-henry-dunant.org/?p=10069&lg=en>>

<<http://www.thanhniennews.com/print.php?catid=10&newsid=9740>>

<[http://www.voh.com.vn/news/news\\_detail.cfm?iid=19500&ac=0&catid=82](http://www.voh.com.vn/news/news_detail.cfm?iid=19500&ac=0&catid=82)> (in Vietnamese)

<<http://www.nguoivienxu.vietnamnet.vn/vongtaynhanai/2004/11/342926/>> (in Vietnamese)

<[http://www.maison-chance.org/alpha/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=45](http://www.maison-chance.org/alpha/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=45)> (in Vietnamese)