

## VIETNAMESE WOMEN AND CHILDREN FACING THE EFFECTS OF AGENT ORANGE

LE THI

Although the Vietnamese have done all they can to forget the past of war, hundreds of thousands of victims of Agent Orange are reminding us of the past of this horrible war, in which women and children are the worst hit.

According to latest announcement of scientists from the *University of Columbia* (USA) in April 2003: “From 1961 to 1971, the US sprayed in South Vietnam about 100 million liters of chemicals containing about 366 kg of dioxin, including 45,677,937 liters of Agent Orange. About 3,181 Vietnamese villages were directly sprayed by chemicals. Some 2.1 million people, even up to 4.8 million people were directly affected by the chemicals. This does not include 1,430 sprayed villages where no population statistics are available. About 16 million people lived, worked and fought in areas sprayed by chemicals in the wartime”.

The fact is that 30 years since the war was over (1975—2005), this toxic chemical continues to leave consequences on millions of people, most of them belong to the post-war generation, including birth defects, premature deaths and deformities. Most of the Agent Orange victims are poor, lost their working capacity and suffer from the cruel effects of the chemicals. *In many families, three generations:* parents, children and grandchildren are victims. Children, girls and boys, cannot stand on their feet and have to lie on

bed day and night. Women have not enjoyed the happiness to be mothers and been driven to despair when giving birth to monsters who died right after birth or lived a short life, or handicapped children whom they have to care for in their whole lives with a worry that when they die who will care for them?

On *the target groups* being affected by Agent Orange, and the areas where there are victims, it is horrible. The victims are not only seen in areas where Agent Orange was sprayed by the US— mainly from the provinces of Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien — Hue downward to the provinces in the Mekong Delta, but in the whole country. In the northern provinces, they are from the Red River Delta to the midlands and up to the northern border province of Tuyen Quang. This is because millions of northern soldiers and cadres who fought and worked in the southern battlefields. Young volunteers, militiamen and women who were involved in transportation, road construction, supplies, first aid and services in the sprayed areas. Many of them were affected by Agent Orange without notice. When they were demobilized and returned to their native villages, illness happened to them. In particular, when they got married, their children were affected by Agent Orange.

There are many evidences and examples on the effects of Agent Orange on *three or four generations* and maybe more in the

future. *Family* becomes a unit that suffers the effects of Agent Orange. In a family, if only a spouse (either husband or wife) is affected by Agent Orange, the whole family is affected, as their children may be monsters who die right after birth or suffer from birth defects or metal diseases. They can only live with great care from their parents who suffer pain and worry day and night.

Here we can only cite some of the hundreds of thousands of heart-renting cases in Vietnam which have been covered by the media with more specific data and touching stories.

*In the southern province of Dong Nai*, 9000 people have been affected by toxic chemicals, in many families 3 or 4 members suffer from serious illnesses such as birth defects, deformity and cancers. There are children born as monsters, children with big heads full of water like water melons, children with swelling feet with ulcerate and oedema and children like a log on two tiny feet. Many people, knowing of being affected by Agent Orange, do not dare to get married and live a lonely life. Some special cases, after giving birth to monsters, have committed suicide of horrible pain and despair.

*Mr. Nguyen Hoang Minh*, from Thanh My commune, Vinh Thanh District, *Can Tho Province* was demobilized after serving the army. He is 47, but looks like a 60-year-old man. For 12 years now, he has experienced respiratory ailments, having trouble with breathing when lying down, thus has to sleep sitting and leaning to a column in his house. His wife has given birth to 8 children, but 5 of them died of cerebral palsy and myasthenia, three are alive, but mentally retarded and slow in

development due to being affected by Agent Orange.

*In Tan Loc commune, Thot Not District, Can Tho Province*, 7-year old *Nguyen Thi Lua*, was born to a poor peasant family. *Lua* and her two sisters were affected by Agent Orange. Her two sisters died when they were two or three years of age and *Lua* is luckier than them, but her body is full of pus bubbles, very painful, and her fingers cannot be straight or move. Her family is very poor. Her father suffered from cerebral disease and extreme weight loss, making him unable to work. *Lua's* family is dependent on her mother's sale of lottery tickets in Saigon, so it is hard for them to afford her medical treatment.

*In A Luoi, a mountain district of Thua Thien – Hue province*, all 20 communes and the district town have been sprayed by Agent Orange. In *Hong Trung commune* alone, in 313 household families, there are 350 cases suffering from birth defects, paralysis, mental ailments, deaf, dumb and blind. These diseases are adding to their already poor lives. Agent Orange effects have passed on from one generation to another. Here is the story of *Mrs. Kan Von*, a former liaison girl in the anti-US war, who got married to *Mr. Quynh Van*, a former soldier from A Luoi District when peace was restored. *Mr. Quynh Van* has become ill, first with back ache, then with paralyzed body and swelling feet. *Mrs. Kan Von* gave birth to her son *Ho Xuan Vung* in 1992. As he grows up, more tumours appear on his body, particularly on his face and his illness becomes more serious. Both, *Van* and *Kan Von* have been affected by Agent Orange.

*In the central province of Quang Binh*, 5000 people have been affected by Agent

Orange, of them 2,441 are from the first generation who directly took part in the fight in the battlefields, 2,903 are from the second generation (their children) and 105 people are from the third generation (their grand children). Mr. *Do Duc Diu* from *Vo Ninh Commune, Quang Binh province*, a demobilized soldier, got married and because of being affected by Agent Orange, his wife gave birth to 15 children but 12 of them died after birth. They are now caring for two defected children with big heads and convulsions all the time. He said “Agent Orange has killed all my family”.

In *Dai Loc District, Quang Nam province*, statistics released in 1999 show that 2,167 people have been affected by Agent Orange, of them 1,381 are direct victims. By the end of 2005 the number of Agent Orange victims had been increased constantly due to more births. In *Dai Nghia commune*, there are 233 handicapped people. Mr. *Nguyen Mong Rong*, born in 1954, was affected by Agent Orange. His only daughter - *Nguyen Thi Nhan* was born in 1990, dumb and paralytic. She cannot care for herself. Mr. *Doan Nam's* daughter - *Doan Thi My Hanh* was born paralytic in 1990. She said sobbing: “I want to die on many occasions but seeing that my parents pin hope on me, I try to exist. I know the more I live the harder my parents’ lives will be”.

In *Quang Tri province*, there are about 13,160 Agent Orange victims. In *Cam Chinh commune* alone, 210 people are handicapped, including 56 children suffering from cerebral palsy, marrow membrane hernia, blood cancer, transforming skin pigment and vertebra cracks. On vertebra cracks caused by dioxin alone, more than 170 persons experienced the disease, in some families, all members suffered it.

In the Central Highland province of *Kon Tum*, according to statistics released by the 80 - 10 Committee (Committee 10-8), between 1961 and 1971, the US air force conducted 311 chemical spraying missions on *Kon Tum's* mountainous areas, accounting for about 3% of the total amount of toxic chemicals used in the whole battlefields in southern Vietnam. Statistics released by the Department of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs of *Kon Tum province* show that there are 12,055 Agent Orange victims in the province, of them 1,532 are under 16 years of age and 9,457 have not received any allowance. In *Sa Thay district*, there are 150 live births with defects who have been suspected of being affected by Agent Orange. All of them are deformed and lie on bed days and nights and suffer from mental retardation. Some of them suffer from convulsions with heads turning down, paralysis, limb defects, cerebral palsy and epilepsy. In *Sa Nghia Commune*, there is a linked twin - *Nguyen Viet Duc - Nguyen Duc Viet* born in 1982 to Mr. *Nguyen Than* in *Hoa Binh Village*. Since 1976, in *Sa Nghia*, there have been 141 premature births or monstrous births and the rate of foetal damage is up to 10% in some years.

According to statistics of *Kon Tum General Hospital*, in 1999, there were 12 defect or monstrous births. Popular cases are children born without anus, or chest or belly-linked twins. Some children were born without belly skin and all their intestines and livers are exposed. The highest number of birth defects is seen in the two districts of *Sa Thay* and *Dak To*. Dr. *Nguyen Anh Tu*, from the *Kon Tum Provincial Health Department* recalled: “Mrs. *Nguyen Thi Tra* is from *Trung Dung village*. In 1979, she gave birth to a big bundle containing dust particles. In

the same year, Mrs. *Nguyen Thi Nho* from Hoa Binh village (Sa Nghia Commune) gave birth to a bundle full of eggs□”

*In the northern province of Thai Binh*, there are now 20,000 victims of Agent Orange. In *Quynh Phu district alone*, 8,000 people are Agent Orange victims, including 129 are from the third generation. *Mr. Nguyen Bach Le* in *Quynh Hoang Commune* took part in the fight in the battlefields of Quang Tri. He got married after being demobilized. His son - *Nguyen Ba Hau* is now 35 years old but he is only 1 meter tall, with very short limbs. Hau is now married. His first son is normal but his second son is defected like him. His second son is now 12 years old but is only 80cm tall with a distorted face. In Mr. Le's family, three generations have been affected by Agent Orange.

*In Tan Hoa Commune, Vu Thu District, Thai Binh Province*, a married couple has had “2 monstrous births”. They are Mr. *Lai Van Bien* and Mrs. *Vu Thi Tham*. Mr. Bien fought in the battlefields of Tay Ninh province in 1972. He got married after being demobilized in 1979. The couple gave first birth to their son - *Lai Van Chuyen*. After one month, the little boy's eyes became blind and he has grown up with mental retardation. In 1982, the couple gave birth to the second son named *Lai Van Minh* who looks monstrous: one leg is long and the other is short and they are shrinking and cramping and his hands are very long and thin. In 1984, they gave birth to the third son - *Lai Van Do* who looks like his brother *Lai Van Minh*. Not until then Mr. Bien realized that during the years of fighting in the battlefields in Tay Ninh province, he was exposed to Agent Orange, thus affecting all his three sons. “In my family, there is

always a fight with my children screaming all the night. After nearly 30 years since peace has been restored in the country, we have not experienced a single day of peace”.

Mr. *Le Van Lop* in *Hoa Tien Commune, Hung Ha District, Thai Binh Province* fought in Ba Ria - Vung Tau province. After being demobilized he went back to his native village and got married. His wife gave the first birth in 1977, a 7—month headless and limbless foetus whose eyes are on its neck. Her second birth was a piece of pink flesh looked like worms intertwining together. Her third monstrous birth was a hairy monkey and the fourth one was a bundle of tumours. When his wife was giving the 6<sup>th</sup> birth, he became blind caused by dioxin contained in his body. After the 9<sup>th</sup> birth without a child, his wife decided to get a concubine for her husband, hoping to have a child to rely on in their advanced age. But the daughter the concubine gave birth to was a red- oval-shaped piece of flesh. The concubine was too scare that she left the house, leaving Mr. Lop and his wife living lonely.

*In An Vien Commune, Tien Lu District, Hung Yen province*, after four days of marriage, Mrs. Tuu's husband left for the front. When he came back, he brought with him Agent Orange. Their first child had two faces and died after three months. Their second child had a pig face and their third child a mouse face. All of them died after birth. The fourth child was born normal, but when it was 8 months old, its face became red and died. Their fifth child, a normal son, but suffering from mental disorder, screaming all the times and tearing everything he can. He even bit his own body to satisfy his craziness. He is 23 years old now with Mrs. Tuu caring for him throughout all those years. She said: “I have nothing in my life, except tears”.

In *Yen Mo District, Ninh Binh province*, Mr. *Quan* is a retired soldier with his right leg cut off. Mrs. *Moc*, his wife was a young volunteer served in the Lao battlefields, building the Truong Son Trail. She was hit by Nepal bombs, now still has 8 pieces of bombs in her body, making her very painful. They got married in 1976 and gave birth to a daughter named *Ta Thi Hang*. Mrs. *Moc*'s second birth was a monster and since then they dared not have another child although they wanted to. She herself was affected by Agent Orange, with black spots on her body, very itchy and she has had special medical treatment. *Hang* was four years old but could not walk, after a lot of medical treatment, she could now. She is now 22 years old, looks normal but with mental retardation. She went to school for 10 years but could not learn 28 letters and only knows up to number 10. She cannot do anything, even manages her own hygiene, particularly during her menstruation. Mrs. *Moc* has to care everything for her daughter. Mr. *Quan* and Mrs. *Moc* have placed a lot of hope on her, but *Hang*'s future life is their most worry. In particular, when they die, who will care for their brainless daughter?

In *Hoa Lu District, Ninh Binh province*, Mrs. *Hai* served as a young volunteer in the wartime. In 1964 she was involved in building the road from Ha Tinh to Quang Binh province which was often raided by US bombs. In 1991, she returned to her native village. As she became older, she could not get married. In 1976 she overcame herself and social customs to "ask" for a child for herself, wishing to have someone to share her will and woe and to be relied on in her advanced age. But the daughter she gave birth to was affected by Agent Orange she passed on her. The girl's right hand is paralyzed and she is very small and

mentally retarded. Sometimes she laughs loudly and shakes her head without any sense. At the age of 24, she cannot eat by herself nor manage her own hygiene, especially with her monthly period. Mrs. *Hai* is strenuous. When she goes out, she has to lock her daughter inside the house. War has passed, leaving her not only mental sadness (the fate of a singled mother having an out-of-wedlock child) but also physical worry about her daughter. Who will care for her daughter when she becomes old and passes away?

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Before the losses and mental and physical pain of the victims of Agent Orange, what have the Vietnamese people, Party and State done to help them to improve their lives and struggle to urge the United States to compensate for the losses of the Agent Orange victims?

1. First is the effort made by the families of Agent Orange victims *to save themselves and their children*. There are many examples set by the victims of Agent Orange who have made great sacrifices and efforts. Here we'd like to cite some typical cases.

Mrs. *Nguyen Thi Bich*'s family is in *Lien Thuy Commune, Le Thuy District, Quang Binh Province*. Her husband worked as a labourer serving the battlefield in *Quang Tri* province and was affected by Agent Orange. They've got three children with birth defects. Her husband died after serious ailments. Over the past more than 40 years, Mrs. *Bich* has been working hard tilling the fields, harvesting rice grains and potatoes to feed her three handicapped children. Agent Orange has deprived three of them of their feet. The three bodies remain, moving on their hands placed on two pieces of wood. They have been living

a lofty life for the past dozens of years. On many occasions, three of them intertwined like three earth worms on the bank of the Kien Giang River, intending to commit suicide to escape their deformities, poverty and deadlock. *Gianh*, her eldest son said: "I am the eldest brother of my two brother and sister. I myself once wanted to together with my two younger brother and sister jump into the river to kill ourselves. But it was me who used my mouth to take my brother and sister back to our home. We cannot die like that. We have to live".

Of the three of them, *Phan Thanh Gian* was more determined. Gian asked his mother to send him to school and finished the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and then back home he teaches his elder brother and elder sister. Gian sought a suitable job - hair cut, and started to cut his brother *Gianh*'s hair to practice. Later on when he learnt the skills, he cut hair for the acquainted and then clients started to come to him. He earns some money and once wrote to Prime Minister Phan Van Khai asking for a wheelchair. Mr. Khai replied him and asked the Red Cross to give him a wheelchair. *Gianh*, the eldest brother works as a baby sitter while Bi, Gian's elder sister raises chicken and helps her mother with house chores. "So we live and feel relief with our deformity fates".

*A handicapped girl with great perseverance is Truong Thi Thuong*, 16 years old, but is only 60 cm tall, and 10 kg in weight. Her parents are from *Dai Hong Commune, Dai Loc District, Quang Nam Province* (the commune that has 250 Agent Orange victims). She is like a doll whose legs are very small and hands are soft and curved. At the age of 6, she took the text books of her elder sister to learn ABC. Her parents decided to send her to school. Her hands seem to

have no bones, but it's amazing her hand writing is very beautiful (she was a winner of best handwriting of grade 5). At grade 6, she is an excellent student and represented Dai Loc District's students to take part in the Provincial Mathematics and Vietnamese language contests for best students. She got a consolation prize. Out of the school hours, she helps her mother with some house chores such as picking vegetables, making cakes, embroidery, knitting woolen sweaters and in particular she draws very well. Her parents only want to have a wheelchair for her to go to school. Thuong wishes to study well to become a teacher to help other children of the same circumstances in the future!

Little *Voat Thi Ri*, of Khmer ethnic minority group, from *Tan Bien District, Tay Ninh province* could only speak when she was five years old. Her family is very poor. She went to school on a wooden board with wheels made by her father since she was a first grader. She is 18 years old now but no one can guess her age with her shrinking legs hidden in her old dress. She has been working very hard with her writing and has been an excellent student. Now she has finished grade 6. *Voat Van Chia*, her 12-year old brother is at grade 3 but as tall as a 5-year old boy. He can walk on his feet, but they are on the opposite side, making his walking very difficult and painful. But he is trying hard with his studies to become a doctor in the future.

2. *There have been many diverse activities undertaken by the Vietnamese people, organizations and individuals from all parts of the country to help Agent Orange victims over the past years.* The movement to support and help Agent Orange victims and the positive activities of the Red Cross at all levels have resulted in a special and uniform organization to operate more effectively. It is the National

Association of Agent Orange Victims set up on Jan. 10, 2003. Madam *Nguyen Thi Binh*, Honorary Chairperson of the Association stressed: “The heavy effects of Agent Orange on human health and environment and the settlement of Agent Orange consequences are major and complicated issues, very urgent but long-term and need both domestic and international cooperation and assistance.”

*The Vietnamese State has set up Committee 10-8* to investigate into the consequences of the chemical warfare and *Steering Committee 33* to overcome the consequences. The Government has also adopted a *policy to support Agent Orange victims* and allocated additional funding to the Red Cross to conduct orthopedic operations on handicapped children, provided allowances to retired soldiers and young volunteers and their children with birth defects affected by Agent Orange.

The movement of assistance and support to Agent Orange victims has been developing fast in the country and expanding to *international organizations and individuals*. Nearly 300,000 victims have received free check ups and medical treatment, including operations, orthopedic operations, functional rehabilitation and education, job training and wheelchairs. Some have even been provided with charity houses. The funding is taken from *the Fund in Support of Agent Orange Victims* with contributions from domestic and foreign individuals and organizations such as the *International Red Cross and Crescents* and the Red Cross Societies of Norway, Germany, the United States, Sweden, Denmark and Spain, the Ford Foundation and some clubs in Japan.

On July 25, 2004, in Ho Chi Minh City, the Conference “*Linking helping hands*”

raised more than VND2.2 billions from domestic and foreign organizations, individuals, companies and benefactors to support Agent Orange victims. The Vietnam Association of Agent Orange Victims and the victims themselves have received support and assistance full of humanity from people and Friendship Associations of many countries. In March 2004, the *Secretary General of the British-Vietnam Friendship Association*, through a website, called on people all over the world to give their signatures to support Vietnamese Agent Orange victims and so far hundreds of thousands of signatures have been collected, including those of peace-loving Americans.

On June 25, 2004, representatives of 32 member organizations of the Vietnam Fatherland Front decided to observe August 10 (the first US chemical spraying in Vietnam) every year as “*Day of Action for Agent Orange Victims in Vietnam*” with diverse forms of activities such as collecting signatures from people of all strata, raising public awareness for action to support and protect the rights and interests of Vietnamese Agent Orange victims.

The *media in Vietnam* has also played a major role in covering about Agent Orange victims. The media has encouraged the movement to make contributions to help relieve their pains. The newspapers such as Vietnamese Women, Vanguard, Young Age and Labour have launched their own websites. The paper Family and Society runs addresses where people can give their contributions to Agent Orange victims and has recorded a good result. On Dec. 20, 2005, the paper Young Age (*Tuoi tre*) and the Southern Representative Office of the Vietnam Red Cross organized a review of the Program “Giving a helping hand to relieve the pain of

Agent Orange". Within only four months, the paper Young age and the Vietnam Red Cross have raised VND 6 billions. This is a great achievement full of humanity that brings happiness to thousands of Agent Orange victims. It is not only of physical but also spiritual significance.

There are centres caring for children affected by Agent Orange who lost their parents or their families cannot afford caring for them. They include the Peace Village in Thanh Xuan Precinct, Hanoi, the Peace Village under the Tu Du Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, the Hong Ngoc Centre in Sao Do Township, Hai Duong province and many others. There, many women who have sacrificed their youth hood to care for and bring up handicapped children, including teacher Linh from the Peace Village in Thanh Xuan and Teacher Tran Thi Nam from the Peace Village in Ho Chi Minh City. They are mothers who love children at "Village of Agent Orange Victims". The Hong Ngoc Charity Centre is caring for nearly 300 children, with educational classes, workshops and houses to raise them. The children are involved in dress making, embroidery and wood carving and sell their products. They are children aged between 15 and 25, with hearing impairment, blindness and body handicap.

The US Government has sprayed nearly 100 million liters of chemicals in Vietnam but has not given any assistance to medical treatment and compensation to Agent Orange victims. The Vietnamese people and the victims have to file a lawsuit against US chemical companies that have produced and supplied chemicals to the US army to spray in Vietnam during the war. These companies have earned great profit over chronic diseases and pain of millions of people, particularly

women and children. On *Jan. 31, 2004*, the *Vietnam Association of Agent Orange Victims* together with some victims themselves filed a lawsuit against 37 US chemical companies at the Brokling County Court, New York, USA.

The first hearing, lasting for 8 hours, was held on *Feb. 28, 2005*. Chief Judge Jack Wainsston announced an end to the hearing without passing any final verdict. He confirmed that the Court needed more time to study legal evidence given by both sides at the hearing. After the defendant gave its opponent presentation on *Feb. 6, 2006* and the plaintiff provides additional evidence on *Feb. 23, 2006*, on *April 14, 2006* a hearing will be held at the US Court of Appeal 2, in New York.

On *Sept. 30, 2005* the Vietnamese side finalized its presentation at the hearing comprising 28,000 words to be sent to the US Court of Appeal with solid evidence and arguments together with strong support from public at home and abroad. We are convinced that the US Court of Appeal will continue the lawsuit.

Reality in the past years shows that many international friends, including those in the US support our court case. For example, the Vietnam-US Symposium on the effects of Agent Orange/dioxin held in Hanoi in March 2002 with the participation of 280 Vietnamese scientists and 120 international scientists heard 98 papers. Although looking from different angles and levels, the scientists have shared the view that *the effects of Agent Orange/dioxin on human health and environment in Vietnam are real*. Mr. Arnold Sahectin (from Texas University, USA) announced that most of the people living in the areas sprayed by US chemicals in the past are *being affected by dioxin with a high level, 33 time higher than allowable average*. This is

the result of his latest study after 25 visits to Vietnam.

*The US Bar*, representing the interests of Vietnamese Agent Orange victims at the US Court arrived in Vietnam in July 2005 to meet and contact hundreds of victims and collect additional evidence to the lawsuit documents. Lawyer *Jinne Hirev* said: “This field trip helps the organization to have more *living evidence*, that’s why we have collected more evidence, the more the better”. Lawyer *Retheen Melez* wrote: “I am very impressed and moved by the confidence given to us by the Vietnamese people. I hope and am convinced that we’ll be successful in the struggle that we represent them. We — all lawyers in this lawsuit will make all out efforts to bring justice to the victims”.

Two victims -*Ho Si Hai* (Thai Binh) and *Dang Trong Nhut* (Ho Chi Minh City) representing the Vietnam Association of Agent Orange Victims together with Dr. *Nguyen Trong Nhan* (head of the delegation) made a month-long visit to the US in Nov. 2005. The delegation visited 10 major cities of the United States and had 37 meetings with local people which were covered by big media agencies (Reuters, AFP, BBC, RFA). Two veteran and peace organizations have promised to provide funding for Vietnamese Agent Orange victims to come to the US to campaign for their lawsuit.

Prior to the hearing to be held on April 10, 2006 at the Court of Appeal in New York, the *World Democratic Lawyers Association* will hold a meeting in Hanoi in Feb. 2006 to discuss about this court case. According to Lawyer *Jorathan Murer*, representing the plaintiff, the hearings will provide a good chance for lawyers to present their latest evidence to force American chemical

companies to hold responsible for the toxic chemicals used by the US army in Vietnam which have caused health problems to Vietnamese people and poisoned water sources, soil and plants in Vietnam. He expressed his convince that the lawsuit will be successful and lawyers representing the victims will continue to pursue this court case to the end.

On Jan. 19, 2006, Mr. David Cline, Chairman of the US Veterans’ Association for Peace issued a communiqué on the presentation for justice of Vietnamese Agent Orange victims. He said: “This is the first time since 1984, the issue of Agent Orange draws American public attention and it is also the first time, our responsibility toward Vietnamese Agent Orange victims is considered”.

So, what can we do to help the victims and bring pressure to make the lawsuit by Agent Orange victims at the US court a success?

It is necessary to expand *the movement to help Agent Orange victims* in the whole country, calling on benefactors, individuals, organizations and clubs to raise money, medicines and clothing to help families of the victims, maybe through the Association of Agent Orange Victims, the Red Cross or addresses given by newspapers. There is a saying “A friend in need is a friend indeed”, little assistance but in time will be a very precious consolation for the victims and is our sharing with their disadvantaged and hard lives. We think in this movement, the mass organizations such as the Women’s Union, the Youth Union, Trade Unions and the Vietnam Fatherland Front at all levels should make greater efforts together with the media and the Association of Agent Orange Victims to help the victims.

Second, we should continue to collect signatures, the more the better, from people of all social strata, young and old, men and women to support the lawsuit of Agent Orange victims at the US Court and write letters to the US Court of Appeal and the US President urging them to handle the case with justice. As reported by the newspaper "Labourer", in his letter dated Dec. 31, 2005, Mr. Nguyen Van Ngoc said that he and Mr. Trinh Cong Thanh are running a Website *chatdocdacam.imp*, which launched a movement of writing letters to the US President (or the US Chief Judge) among Vietnamese young people and students inside and outside the country to support the lawsuit of Vietnamese Agent Orange victims against American chemical companies. *Justice* sometimes has to be outside the window, but *truth* never surrenders.

On Oct. 16, 2005, Vietnamese students also launched a campaign to collect signatures to a petition letter to be sent to the US Court of Appeal which is handling the court case on Agent Orange. The campaign, launched by the Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanity, is joined by 14 other universities and colleges.

So, the struggle for *justice* for Agent Orange victims is the fight of our own. The fight is to awake human conscience and prove to the world that dioxin is most poisonous found by humans so far. It is also to check the criminal acts against humankind using dioxin, so that no other nations in the world will suffer disasters like the Vietnamese nation. This is the goal of the prosecutor who are Agent Orange victims in the lawsuit against US chemical companies, not the compensation disguised under any lofty humanity forms.

The Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development has published the book "*Stories of Agent Orange/dioxin victims in Vietnam*" which is highly appreciative. We should continue to collect more stories and new evidence and those covered daily by the media to publish a second white book to support in time Agent Orange victims in their coming struggle.

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