



The Singapore 2010 Youth Olympic Village

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The Swede surprise

INSPIRATION

Gift of life

BY JEAN QINGWEN LOO

Alumni from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information discover how NTU and the Lien Foundation have brought viable water solutions to communities throughout Asia.

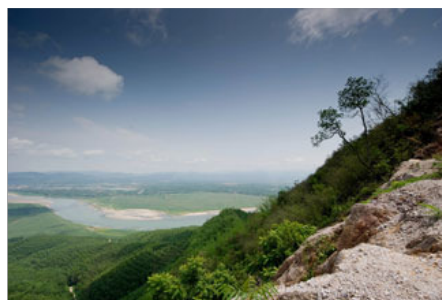


**Building blocks:** At Zame village in mountainous Yunnan, China, Lien Aid takes a back-to-basics approach: simple, accessible and affordable solutions that address needs on the ground, and which can be sustained by local means. With the support of the China Primary Healthcare Foundation, Lien Aid has brought piped water to the children of Zame Primary School.

Established in 2006 by the Lien Foundation and NTU, Lien Aid is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that seeks to address the water and sanitation crisis for poor communities in Asia. In March, the two founding partners set out on Environmental Endeavour II, the second phase of a collaboration that has helped to bring water solutions to a host of Asian countries.

I recently documented Lien Aid's efforts in a series of photographs and short films, with the assistance of fellow alumni from NTU's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information. The team included writers Yang Huiwen and Chew Xinyi, with video production by Little Red Ants, a multimedia company made up of five students from the Wee Kim Wee School's Class of 2009.

We were determined to explore the many ways in which NTU and Lien Aid have built a foundation for human development, by making clean water and sanitation accessible to countries through which the Mekong River flows. Here are a few selected images from our travels throughout China, Cambodia and Vietnam.



**Bringing change:** Farmers in rural Yunnan commonly practise terrace farming, a process that requires them to spend much of their time maintaining step-like terraces designed to slow the run-off of irrigation water. Here, Lien Aid works with partners – comprising local government

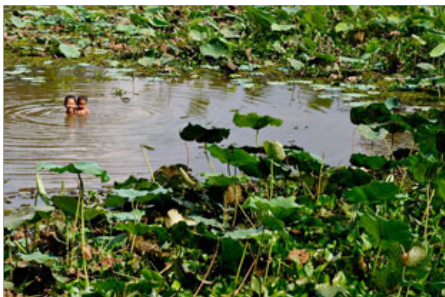


**A precious resource:** Few challenges related to sustainability are as pressing as the need for clean water and sanitation. In countries such as China, Cambodia and Vietnam, NTU-driven programmes are making real inroads in assisting local communities.

bodies, private companies and NGOs – to share resources and bring about systemic change.



**Starting young:** Another country in which the Mekong plays a critical role is Cambodia, where thousands live in floating villages along the river. Lien Aid is actively involved in public education campaigns to promote better habits related to water. Here, children attending this kindergarten in Kampong Speu province are taught to wash their hands after playtime.



**Water ways:** A mother and her child bathe among water lilies. In rural Cambodia, this is a common practice due to the lack of modern toilet facilities, a challenge that Lien Aid is working to solve on many fronts.



**Local empowerment:** With two-thirds of the Cambodian population having no access to clean drinking water, Lien Aid established a water treatment plant to empower riverside communities with this vital asset. Owned by villagers under a social entrepreneurship programme, the plant removes harmful bacteria from river water through ultraviolet radiation.



**An eye for the essentials:** It was the chance to humanise complex issues related to water that drew my collaborators and I to work with Lien Aid. Together, we travelled to numerous Lien Aid project sites over six months.



**New dawn:** A flock of ducks crossing a ricefield in the Mekong Delta. Since its inception in 2006, Lien Aid has successfully piloted over 40 projects in clean water and sanitation. By documenting its achievements, the media team hopes not only to educate the public, but to inspire others to see how they can also contribute.



**Ground issues:** Economic development has placed enormous pressure on Vietnam's water resources. Some of the challenges there faced by Lien Aid stem from the development process itself, with industrial run-off sometimes polluting local sources of water. As a result, riverside communities often rely on unclean water for drinking, cooking and washing.



**The long haul:** Lien Aid's experience in Vietnam and beyond has shown that the management of water and sanitation resources has to be addressed at all levels. It's a mission that this NTU-supported organisation is committed to, for the future of Asia's youth.

Visit [www.lienaid.org](http://www.lienaid.org) and [www.childrenofmekong.org](http://www.childrenofmekong.org) for more on this project.

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