

Tragic aftermath of Vietnam war

Thomas C. Fox | Feb. 15, 2010 NCR Today

This tragic news speaks to the aftermath of war. It comes from Project RENEW, composed by a dedicated group of people who are doing some terrific humanitarian work in Vietnam. Here is a message they sent me today:

There was no Tet celebration to welcome the Lunar New Year for Ho Van Nguyen's family this year. A cluster bomb explosion killed Nguyen on Friday morning, Feb. 12, as he was cutting weeds around his banana trees and preparing for the Tet holiday which began in Vietnam on Saturday.

The accident occurred in Mai Lanh Village, Mo O Commune of Dakrong District, which is in the western part of Quang Tri Province, along the former wartime DMZ.

The 40-year-old father of six daughters left home after breakfast on Friday morning. His wife said Nguyen took with him his favorite farming tool, a bush-hook. About 10:30 a.m. there was an explosion from the direction of his family's hillside slash-and-burnt farm plot along the Dakrong River.

It is believed that Nguyen hit a cluster munition while clearing weeds from around his banana trees, using the bush-hook. The area where he was working is a large cultivation site for over half of the 1800 Van Kieu minority people who reside in Krong Klang Townlet. Bananas, cassava, and maize are the major sources of income for local residents there.

Mr. Ho Van Hoi, Nguyen's uncle, heard the explosion and was the first to rush to the accident scene. When he arrived, he saw his nephew lying lifeless on the ground. Both his hands were severed, his eyes were badly damaged, and the skin was scorched from the chest up to the face of the victim. Click here: [Project RENEW Photo storage](#) to see the photos of this tragic accident.

On the eve of Tet, Nguyen's tragic death suddenly thrusts his family into extreme difficulties. His wife and six daughters, the youngest only three years old, are facing shock and grief, and an uncertain future. The family's emotional tragedy is compounded by the loss of their only breadwinner, who also supported his aging parents.

"I married twice but have only that son," lamented Nguyen's father, Mr. Ho Van Mong, who was a guerrilla fighter during the Vietnam war. "How can I live on without him?"

Since the war ended in 1975, more than a third of the 105,000 casualties in Vietnam have been caused by cluster munitions, called "bombies" or guava bombs by the local ethnic minority people.

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