

# Vietnam Highland Economic Rehabilitation Program



## Project Overview

Target Location: Binh Phuoc Province, Vietnam

Agricultural Output: Cacao, cashew, eel, bamboo

Funding: \$400,000 from anonymous donor + \$75,000 from Skoll Foundation = \$475,000 Total

Duration: 2 years (apx. Spring 2010 – Spring 2012)

## Project Description

Over 30 years since the Vietnam War ended, the country of Vietnam is still feeling the resonating effects. With more tons of bombs dropped on the country than all of the bombs dropped in all of the theaters of the Second World War combined, and with many of these bombs experiencing a failure rate of up to 30% (as is the case with the preferred weapon used to target the Ho Chi Minh trail, the cluster bomb), unexploded ordinance (UXO) still remains a major problem. Counting the unexploded baseball-sized explosives discharged from cluster bombs alone, the total UXO produced from the war is a staggering 50,000,000 – 60,000,000, which is roughly translated to one unexploded ‘bombie’ per citizen. These ‘bombies’ still plague the fertile landscape of the Vietnamese highlands.



*Recovered bombie from Ho Chi Minh Trail in Vietnam*

The Highland Economic Rehabilitation Pilot Project funded by a private donor and the Skoll Foundation, will attempt to improve the production systems of rural highland

Vietnamese farmers who live along sections of the former Ho Chi Minh Trail beginning in September of 2009. This project will focus on the development of the value chain for cacao while piloting demo plots for bamboo and eel. Through new methods of cultivation, and marketing, these rural farmers located in the Southwestern province of Binh Phuoc, can increase their annual income from nearly nothing to \$2,500 per year.

Rural highland farmers and fisherman have for the most part been left out of Vietnam’s fast-paced economic growth, which has been primarily located in its urban centers—like much of Asia. By utilizing new methods, this pilot program seeks to introduce methods and equipment that will allow

high value crops such as cacao, bamboo, eel and cashew to be produced and collected more efficiently and marketed more aggressively. ‘From farm to fork,’ all facets of the value chain will be assessed, and when necessary improved to ensure the greatest number of participants can enjoy sustainable benefits from the project.

This program will also be testing a new concept for mine and UXO clearance in Vietnam. This concept would have ROP purchasing UXO contaminated land, clearing it of all mines, and reselling it to program participants. By doing this, ROP can recycle money for UXO clearance and continue clearance operations of the affected areas of the Vietnam War without having to continually raise new funds.



*ROP International Programs Director, Ken Neils, PhD surveys a cacao grove in Southern Vietnam*



*Binh Phuoc province in South-west Vietnam*