



# Global Foundation For Children With Hearing Loss

Dear Friends,

A visit to Vietnam in 2008 changed the course of my life. It was there that I became aware of the severe global shortage of expertise and support services needed to help babies and young children with hearing loss learn to listen, speak, and thrive.

As someone who personally benefited from early identification and early intervention services when I was a baby, I know the profound impact these services have on a child's life and future.

In many low-resource countries, children born with hearing loss are unable to develop spoken language—not because of a lack of potential, but because of gaps in the [Continuum of Care](#). In 2009, I founded the Global Foundation For Children With Hearing Loss (GFCHL) to help address this issue.

Our first program launched in [Vietnam](#) in 2009. The GFCHL's volunteer professional team devoted a decade teaching the GFCHL's curriculum in the country to hundreds of Vietnamese teachers, physicians, audiologists, technicians, therapists, and families. We prepared them to share their knowledge with others to make the benefits exponential and sustainable.



The GFCHL equipped the Vietnamese with the necessary expertise, tools, and resources to help their babies and young children with hearing loss to listen and speak. Graduates of our training programs applied their new skills to create services, conduct outreach, and administer care to families of babies and very young children with hearing loss in their country.



**Last week, I returned to Vietnam for the first time since 2019.** I was grateful to reconnect with many Vietnamese professionals who enthusiastically shared how they have benefited from the GFCHL's efforts.

One such beneficiary, Sister Thuy, established **the first early intervention center in her province** for children with hearing aids and cochlear implants in 2015 after completing the GFCHL's training programs. The center's curriculum is based entirely on the GFCHL's teachings. The GFCHL donated new audiology equipment and classroom supplies to support the program.

The center provides critical audiology, therapy, and preschool education for over 70 children each year. Their staff counsels families and prepares these children for integration into mainstream schools.





I was invited to Sister Thuy's school to observe their inspiring work. During my visit, Sister Thuy arranged a **special reunion** with some of the Vietnamese therapists, teachers, and audiologists from around the South who took part in the GFCHL's training programs.

What struck me was how connected this compassionate group has remained over time. They work in various capacities and locations all across the South but are a consistent resource for each other, a **multidisciplinary team** devoted to the welfare of children with hearing loss and their families.

They travel together on volunteer missions to various schools in Vietnam to test children's hearing, offer advice to teachers, and lend support to families. I was also pleased to hear that they are disseminating the GFCHL's teachings to the next generation of Vietnamese professionals.

It is wise to attend training programs to learn new things. It is better if one can apply the lessons to their daily work. The best outcome is when one

not only applies what they learn but shares it with others - and this group has continued to do so generously over the years, benefitting so many families and colleagues.



Several families joined us at Sister Thuy's reunion as well. They proudly showed off their **children who received hearing aids and cochlear implants** from the GFCHL's programs over the years as youngsters and benefitted from the habilitation services of Vietnamese professionals trained by the GFCHL. My heart was filled with admiration and gratitude to see the kids all grown up and thriving, speaking confidently into the microphone in front of the large group!





We met one of these families for the first time in 2016 during our training program in Central Vietnam. The parents had concerns about their 9 month old baby, named **Son**, and his hearing ability.

The GFCHL's audiologists worked alongside the Vietnamese audiology technicians during the training program to assess his hearing. They confirmed that he has a severe to profound hearing loss. The GFCHL donated new hearing aids that were immediately fit on Son. The early diagnosis and hearing aids were critical for his potential to develop audition and speech.

For over a year, the family worked with several Vietnamese therapists and teachers who learned from the GFCHL, including Sister Thuy, to help Son progress.



Son's family took advantage of a marketing discount and financed a cochlear implant for him when he was 25 months old. They then moved to Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) to be closer to cochlear implant services.

They were supported by audiology technicians and therapists in HCMC trained by the GFCHL in pediatric audiology and auditory-verbal therapy. Thanks to the early diagnosis, professional guidance, and family commitment, Son developed listening and spoken language. He joined his hearing peers in mainstream school starting at kindergarten.



Today, Son is 9 years old, a master at chess, and a budding musician who enjoys his friends in fourth grade!





I also visited colleagues at a government center in Hanoi where the GFCHL taught its training curriculum to Vietnamese academics and clinicians based throughout the North. The personnel of this center, among others we trained, have since integrated aspects of the GFCHL's teachings into the **national university program** in special education.



While teaching at this center in 2018, the GFCHL was introduced to 2-year old **Lam** and his family during the practicum sessions of the GFCHL's training program. He had been identified at birth and fit with a pair of hearing aids. However, he struggled because the hearing aids were not enough to overcome his level of hearing loss.





In 2019, the GFCHL collaborated with Hear the World Foundation to donate cochlear implants and habilitation support to 10 very young children in need. Lam received his cochlear implant through this program when he was 3 years old.



Over the next several years, his family worked closely with the Vietnamese therapists in this center who were trained by the GFCHL in auditory-verbal therapy. Together, they helped Lam use his cochlear implant to develop listening and spoken language.

Lam is now 9 years old, has outstanding speech and vocabulary skills, and is among the top students in his mainstream fourth grade class!





These are just a sampling of the many ripple effects of the GFCHL's programs that continue to spread in Vietnam. The wonderful results are validation of the GFCHL's model: **long-term investment in local people and resources combined with hard work reaps great, sustainable rewards for the individual, family, community, and society - both in the present and the future.**

**Thank you for being a part of the GFCHL's story.** Together, we are making a profound impact on thousands of young children with hearing loss, their families, and the professionals who serve them around the world.

With Gratitude,

*Paige Stringer, MA, MPH*

Founder and Executive Director

