

Hoi An Children's Swimming Program – A sustainable & scalable swimming program in Vietnam

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Tribob Children's Swimming Program¹

Background

Drowning is a major issue in Vietnam where it is the major cause of death in children under the age of 18. The Tribob Hoi An (Vietnam) Children's Swimming Program was initiated in 2008. With only a limited budget and the help of experienced foreign volunteers, the program has expanded and grown over the last three years.

As well as successfully teaching over 1500 children both swimming and water safety skills, the program in 2010 included local swim teacher training and group teacher training workshops with an outcome of international accreditation (Austswim). Lessons commencing in 2011 will be conducted by the newly trained local swim teachers, local management team and assistance from volunteers for ongoing training.

Aims and Objectives

The initial aim of the program was to provide children in Hoi An with basic swimming and water safety skills which could help save their lives.

Our future objective is to develop local swimming programs which are locally sustainable throughout the province and eventually all of Vietnam.

Target

Our target is to expand throughout Quang Nam Province in Central Vietnam by establishing ten new swimming pools, thereby making the swim program available to over 10,000 children. We are on track to achieve this within the next few years.

We have developed over 40 local swimming teachers. Our target is to double this in 2011 and also to up-skill five local swimming teachers to become swimming teacher trainers.

We will be establishing a water safety tour for the primary schools in the region where we envision educating over 100,000 children in water safety principals over the next three years.

Methods/Implementation

The program is run in cooperation with the Local Education Department of Hoi An. The children attend a course of 18 swim lessons as part of their school curriculum. Initially the swimming lessons were conducted by a partnership of local teachers and foreign volunteers. However as local teachers have been sufficiently trained, this system has become more locally self sustaining with ongoing training and support to ensure teaching quality is of an international standard. Now, in the third year of the program, the lessons are conducted by the local teachers with foreign volunteers mainly providing training workshops and courses for local teachers. The program was initiated by Joanne Stewart, who is from Scotland, now a local management team is being developed, with the aim for the entire management structure to be local within the next two years, with minor ongoing support from the organisation.

Results/Evaluation

The program started by successfully teaching 300 children in 2008 and this has expanded to over 700 children in 2010. Children are assessed on the first and final days of their course so results are constantly monitored and shared with local government. Each year discussions are held with the government, teachers and volunteers as to how the program can be improved. The program has reached its initial short term goals however as the program has grown and evolved new goals and targets are now in place with further reviews to take place.

Discussion

This is one model for a scalable and sustainable swimming program. It has systems and strategies in place which could be replicated in other regions and possibly other countries. The key to this is local participation and support. The use of foreign volunteers can be helpful in developing a local team of trained swim teachers. However the main aim should be having the program locally self sufficient within a three year time frame with ongoing support if required.

Conclusion

This program is a highly successful model for a charitable swimming program which is locally self sustaining and can be set up utilizing a limited budget.

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