

PHOTOGRAPHY



PROJECT

KUJUMBHA
Highlights
VIETNAM



FUNDED BY



COMMUNITIES

GLOBAL
& LOCAL

Creativity

MULTI
SKILLS

SUSTAINABILITY



THE IDEA

*from oneself
to communities*

Starting from an initiative of a Manaaki Scholarship Program Alumni, five people have come together to explore how to use critical photography as a tool to re-connect to oneself and later witness the change in the communities.



THE PROJECT

With the belief that when we are more connected to our true-self, we will understand and assist the community we work with much better, the project was designed in two main parts: mindfulness photography and Kuumba training for trainers.

The first part was conducted by Annhien K. Le - Manaaki Alumni. The training included basic photography skills, colors psychology ideas, questions to ask before shooting and expressing self through photos.

The second part was tailored to Vietnam context, carried by Dr. Evangelia Papoutsaki and Ma. Makanaka Tuwe - both are based in Aotearoa. The training program focused on building capacity for agents of change. This was online delivered.

This project was funded by the Manaaki Small Grant Fund from The New Zealand Embassy in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2022.





OVER **1000** PHOTOS

FROM **6** DIFFERENT CITIES

16 STORIES FROM
PARTICIPANTS

05 MONTHS

WITH HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF WORK
IN VIETNAM AND NEW ZEALAND

01
TALKSHOW

01
WEBSITE



Photo by Linh Hoang



Photo by Huy Nguyen



Photo by
Phuong Nguyen



Photo by Anhhien Le



Photo by
Phuong Nguyen



Photo by Trang Ta



Photo by Trang Ta



PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



Within this photobook, only highlight photos and stories from participants are featured.



HIGHLIGHT #01

Who am I?

The stories are told by Annhien K. Le - Manaaki Scholarship Alumni and Project Co-ordinator. She is now working as a consultant for mindfulness photography and photography for social development.

With three photos taken in Saigon, Nha Trang and New Zealand, she reflected her self with those questions:

- What are my values?
- What are my dreams?
- What do I want to change?
- What are my resources?

When I saw this tiny doll, I think I met myself when I was a child: short hair, no smile, often wondered about the world. She is like the mini-me. So I adopted her. I don't give her a name as the name can say a lot about a person. In Vietnamese language and culture, names of people often have meanings. The names express expectations that parents have for their children. Sometimes, in real life, it can be a lot of pressure for children to fulfill their parents' dreams.

When I was a child, I spent a lot of time staying with my grandma and playing with my cousins there. We played hide and seek, role plays, and war battles. We learnt how to interact with children of different age range. We learnt how to live and behave in a community. We grew up and built our personality when we played together.

I remember my grandma's house being in front of a road. On the other side of the road there was a huge rice field. Every afternoon, I would sit under a tree in front of my grandma's house, looked at the stunning yellow rice field, and wondered what it was out there behind the field.

How far would I go?

A small, handmade doll with short, vibrant purple hair and two white, upright bunny ears. The doll is wearing a red top and is sitting on a dark, textured rock. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green foliage and a blurred path, suggesting a natural setting like a garden or a field. The lighting is natural, creating a gentle, nostalgic atmosphere.

The doll at the same spot where I often sat in front of my grandma's house, wondered about the world.



When my grandma was still alive, whenever we have the ceremonies to remember our ancestors, she always cooked lots of food and placed them in small plates like this. Now when I saw my aunt do the same things when she prepared the food for my grandma's death anniversary, I did not only see the food. I saw my family's tradition. I saw the love that has been passed from generations to generations. I heard the sounds of the breeze through the tall green trees in my grandma's garden. I realized how lucky I am, having all of these things as a firm, loving foundation for the development of my personality.



I was asked in our Kuumba training to draw the eco-system map of me. So I made this.

The greenery, the trees and the grass in the photo represent my (greater) family. I'm from a family that is very diverse (like the ecosystem of a forest). I inherit the family's generosity, the ability to adapt to different living environments and the ability to respect differences in others. Psychologically, green color makes us feel safe, loved, healthy, growth and balance. That is how I feel when I think of my family. This is my life foundation.

The path to the lighthouse is like my education and life experiences. Ups and downs, hard and easy...but there's always things to enjoy along the way. Spiritually, there is no actual end of the path as it leads to the lighthouse, where the Maori people believe that this is the area where all Maori spirits will bid their last farewell before return to their ancestors' land. There is no end to education and life experiences. And the purpose of it, to me, is not to go further in the world, but at the end, is to go back to ourselves, like the spirits going back to their ancestors' land. This is to understand who we really are, the reason why we are here on earth, what can we do to contribute to our planet earth.

All the white line drawings are what I hold in me as my basic characteristics: playful, creative, having a sense of humor, see things in the eyes of a child.

There are trees, hill, people, animal, ocean, sky... in this illustration. This is the ecosystem of our planet, and also of mine. I am nothing but I am also all of them. The background photo was taken (by me) at Cape Reinga, where Tasman Sea meets the Pacific Ocean. I have always wanted to travel the world and now when I do this exercise, thinking of all behind me, in front of me, and with me and within me, I'm ready to "enter" the world.

HIGHLIGHT #02

*What is it
in my eco-system?*

Nam-Phuong Vu Nguyen is a holistic health coach in Vietnam. She has had trainings to different companies, communities and individuals on stress management, nutrition balancing and complete healthy life-style. She also has her podcast and youtube channel to promote those values to the communities.

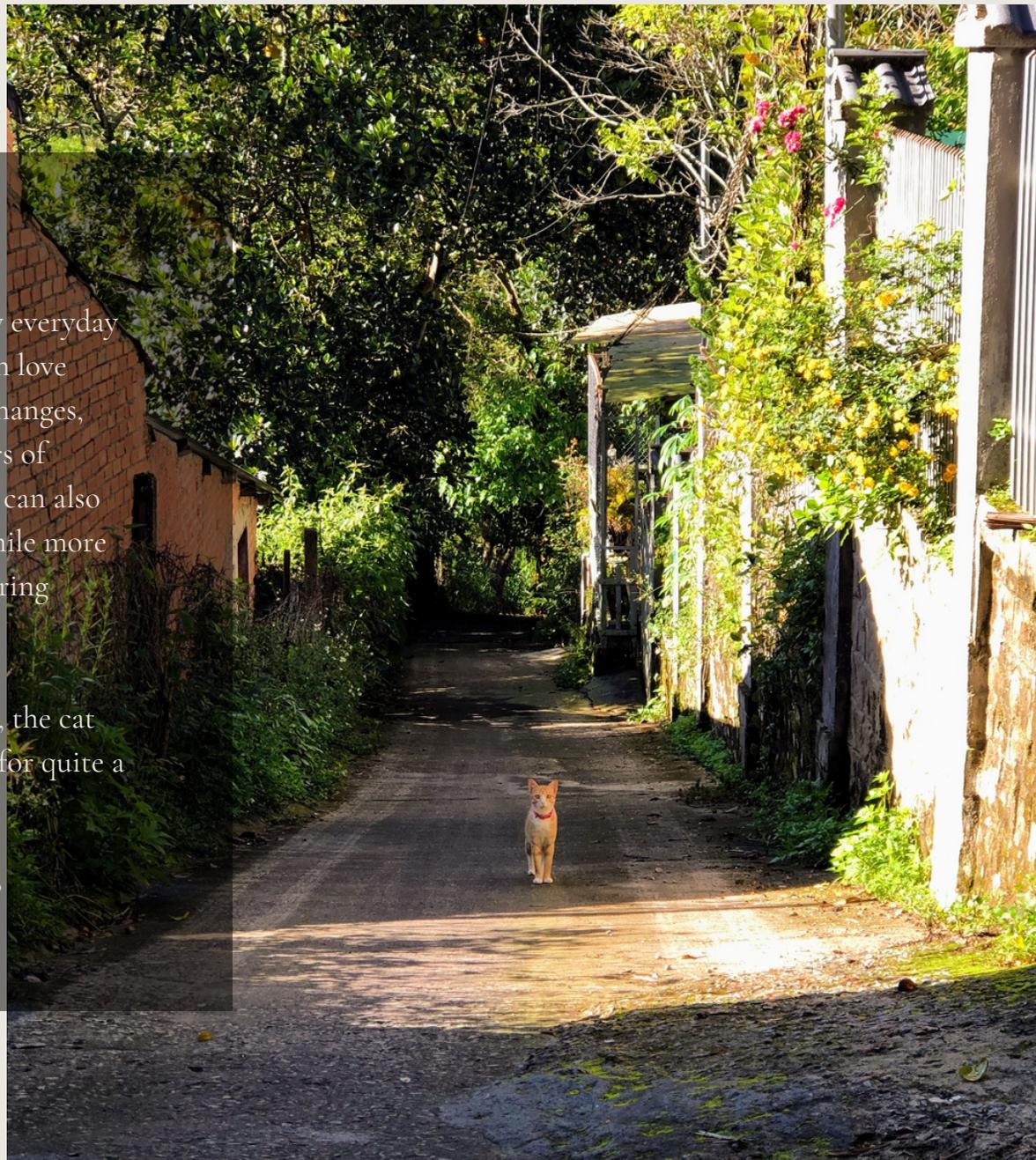
Nam-Phuong's story highlights feature the eco-system she is natured and nuturing.



This is the road I have walked by everyday for 4 years so far, and I am still in love with it. There are always lively changes, such as the birds singing or colors of seasonal blooming flowers. But I can also see less and less trees growing while more and more electricity wires appearing on the way.

That day when I took this photo, the cat and me had a look at each other for quite a while.

Do you have anything to tell me?





THE HOUSE THAT WAS BUILT BY THE COMMUNITY

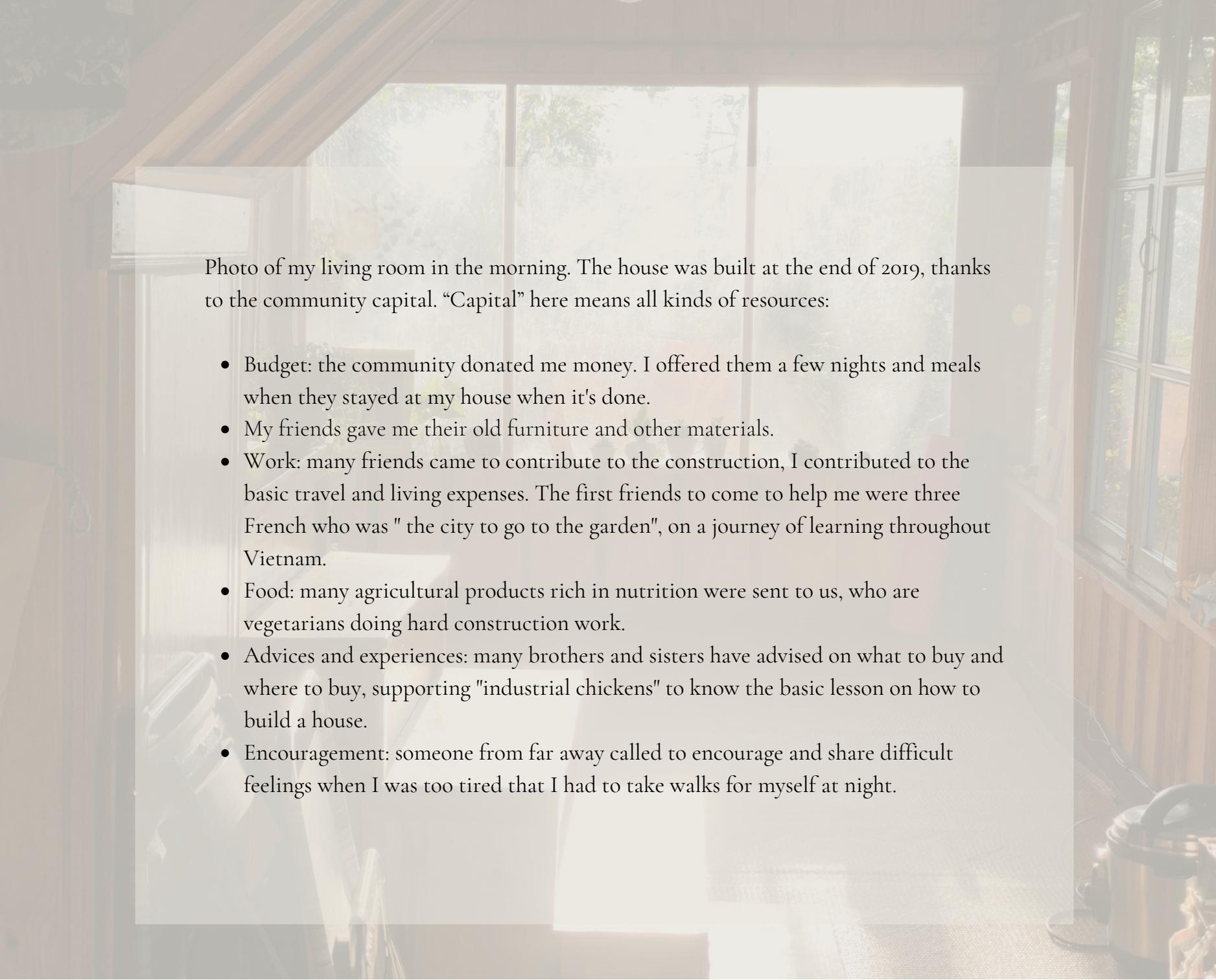
A photograph of a living room in the morning. The room features large windows with a view of trees outside. The interior is made of wood, and there is a table with a white cloth in the foreground. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box.

Photo of my living room in the morning. The house was built at the end of 2019, thanks to the community capital. “Capital” here means all kinds of resources:

- Budget: the community donated me money. I offered them a few nights and meals when they stayed at my house when it's done.
- My friends gave me their old furniture and other materials.
- Work: many friends came to contribute to the construction, I contributed to the basic travel and living expenses. The first friends to come to help me were three French who was " the city to go to the garden", on a journey of learning throughout Vietnam.
- Food: many agricultural products rich in nutrition were sent to us, who are vegetarians doing hard construction work.
- Advices and experiences: many brothers and sisters have advised on what to buy and where to buy, supporting "industrial chickens" to know the basic lesson on how to build a house.
- Encouragement: someone from far away called to encourage and share difficult feelings when I was too tired that I had to take walks for myself at night.



OUR BODY IS A GARDEN

A person with long blonde hair is sitting on a porch, wearing a dark long-sleeved top and light-colored pants. They are leaning forward, resting their head on their hand. The background shows a wooden door and a window with a view of greenery. A table with a teapot and a cup is visible in the foreground on the left.

Photo of my friend Aunt T. on the porch, while she was recuperating at my house not long ago. Last year, she was diagnosed with cancer at a time when Saigon had a strict lockdown during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. She refused to be a "patient" in the hospital. She said to herself, "I don't want to talk about cancer as a battle. My body is a garden. And cancer is like grass, which is always inside. Because the garden is abandoned, the grass is out of control. It's simply just some imbalance in the ecosystem. It's not about "fighting" cancer, but about rebalancing the garden of the body."

Every day, she walks a lot, finds a place to bask in the sun, touches the ground, eats pure plants and focuses on using wild herbs (including mugwort juice). She also believes that cats have healing ability. "Every time I feel hurt somewhere, I would hug the cat and gently place it against that place. But if the cat doesn't like it, I don't force it."



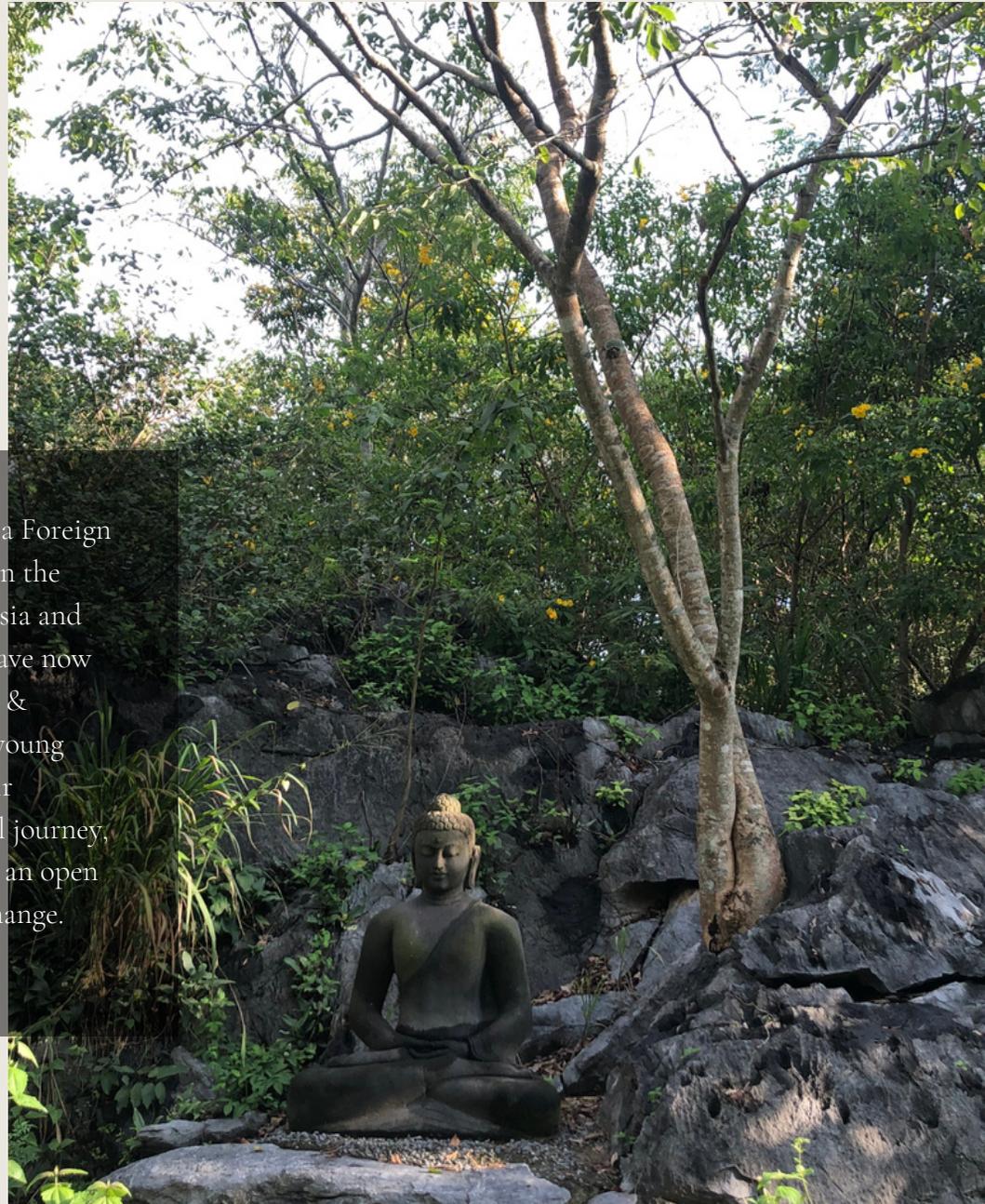
HIGHLIGHT #03

My living values

Quang-Huy Nguyen is a lecturer at several universities of economics and business in Vietnam. He is also the founder and advisor of Vietnam Social Innovation Challenge, a local social venture competition for young professionals since 2012.

This project had walked him through a meaningful journey of feelings and affirmations. He shares his living values through a photo he took in Thailand in July 2022.

Thailand is my first overseas destination. I was a Foreign Trade University (FTU) student participating in the Business Plan Competition among Southeast Asia and Taiwan universities (SATU). After 15 years, I have now been a FTU lecturer and come back for sharing & mentoring young entrepreneurs (some are not young any more by their age -) on how to develop their business models. Looking back on this beautiful journey, I thank myself for always keeping a young soul, an open view and an eager interest in international exchange.

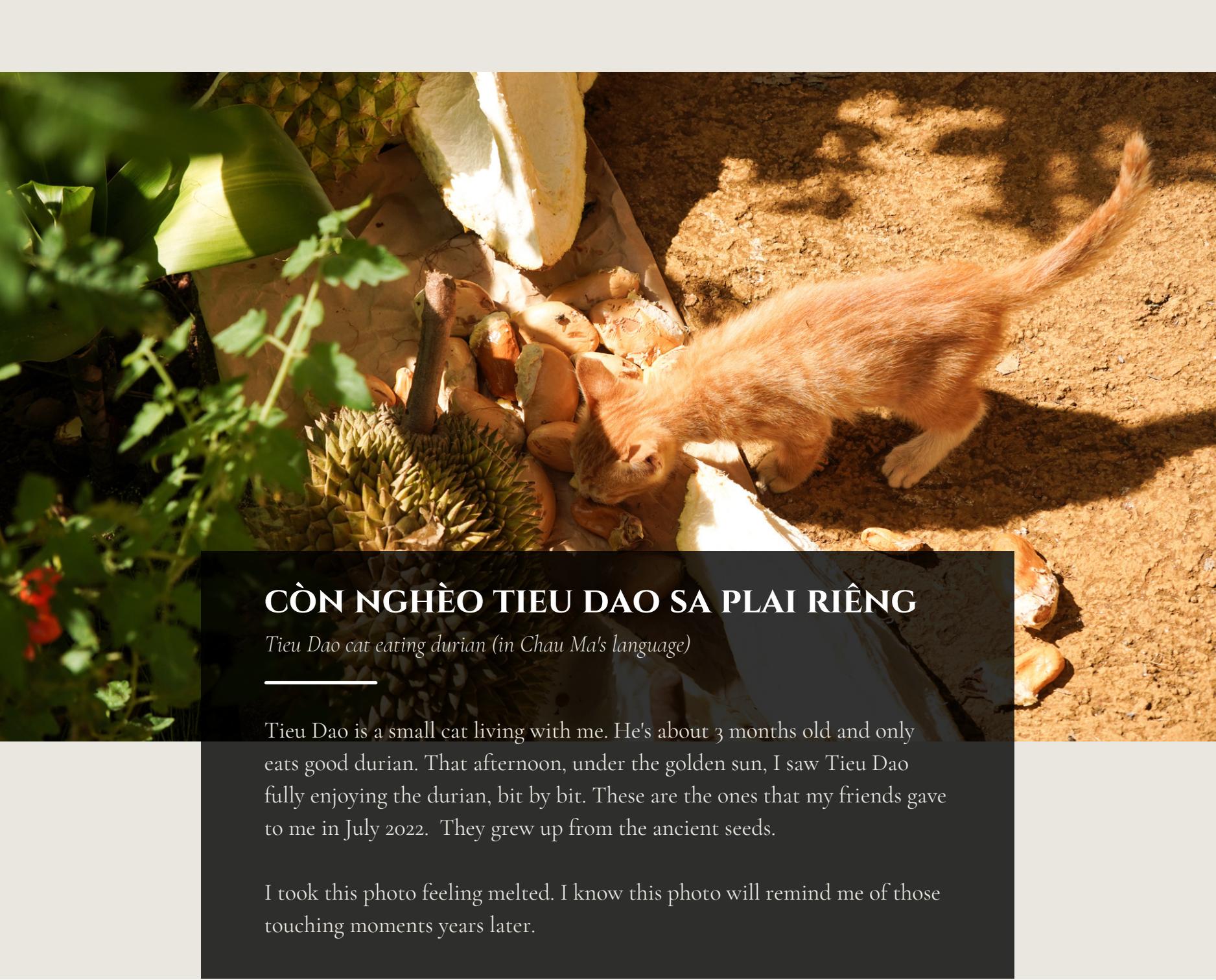


HIGHLIGHT #04

Wellbeing of the village

Trang Ta is the founder and CEO of numerous community initiatives and enterprises such as "Earthworm Food Forests Regenerative", "Saigon Eco Compass", "The Greenery Connect Social Enterprise".

Her photos and stories were captured in a local community in Bao Loc. These images tell us a lot about the life of indigenous people whose voices are often forgotten in today's world.



CÒN NGHÈO TIEU DAO SA PLAI RIÊNG

Tieu Dao cat eating durian (in Chau Ma's language)

Tieu Dao is a small cat living with me. He's about 3 months old and only eats good durian. That afternoon, under the golden sun, I saw Tieu Dao fully enjoying the durian, bit by bit. These are the ones that my friends gave to me in July 2022. They grew up from the ancient seeds.

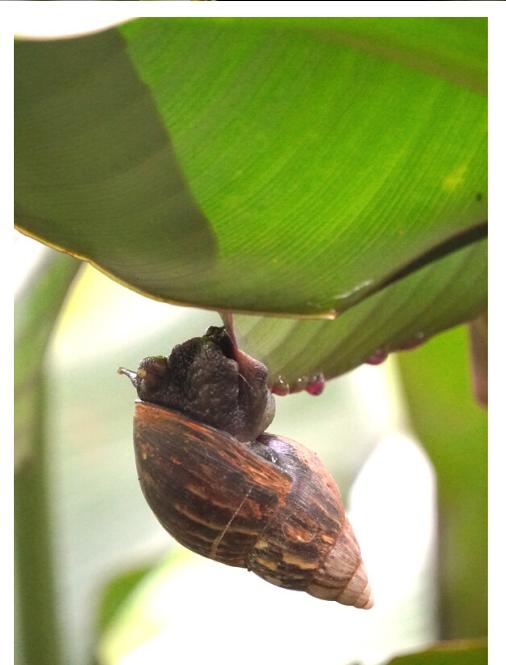
I took this photo feeling melted. I know this photo will remind me of those touching moments years later.

Three years ago, the garden was arid and silent from the sounds of birds, insects and small animals when I took over from the previous owner. Chemical residues from chemical fertilizers and herbicides have made the soil inert.

After taking over the garden, I stopped all chemicals and proceeded to replenish the biomass with seasonal lawn mowing.

Now life is back.

I can see colorful butterflies perching on flowers sucking nectar. The cobwebs, in the early morning sunlight, embrace the dew drops everyday. The birds are singing together. The snails are hidden under the layer of rotting leaves...



**RESIDENTS OF
THE FOREST**





PỒL TRUNG HOA KHAI LÒT BI KHAI ƠM /

Chinese people have come and stayed (in Chau Ma's language





I was surprised learning that around the gardens in this valley, there are some gardens of Chinese families. The Chinese migrated to Vietnam in the sixteenth century, and from the late Ming to the first half of the twentieth century. The Chinese do services, trade and some do agriculture.

In my neighbors there are families like that of Mr. Manh or Ms. Thanh, who often help me much. I learn a lot and get a lot of support from them.

Trust, respect for family background, ancestors and culture; and the continuation of the generation with the spirit of seeking, being humble and caring about doing the best for themselves and their community are what I think of when speaking about the Chinese community in the indigenous area of Chau Ma's people here. At the same time, in harmony with the surroundings, the Chinese gradually become a mark in the Chau Ma community here: gentle, hardworking people; never forget their historical roots.



HIGHLIGHT #05

What I learnt

Linh Hoang has over 10 years working with different local communities in Vietnam. She sees herself as an observer, a witnesser and a learner.

In this project, she made two interviews with Mr. Son Pham - former Director of NPO Programs at LIN center, and Mr. Hiep Tran- language interpreter for people with hearing impair.

I'm really a new to photography. I always find it strange, like photography and me are two parallel lines that we never meet. When I walk through a garden, or see a tree, a lovely street corner or beautiful sunset, I just take photos with my pure feelings, no technique at all. From time to time, I come across stunning photos that make me wow, I think it must have been taken by really professional photographers. While for me, sometimes I can't express what I see in the photos I take.

When participating in the project, I have a chance to learn from the most basic things about composition, colors and lighting. I may not be able to take good pictures immediately after this project, but I now I know why looking at a picture I can feel good or not good. Or I can even sink in it. I can see memories, and even cry.

Back to the projects I'm working with, I think photography plays a very important role in helping me to understand better the working stories of my fellows. I may have heard their stories lots of time, but with photos adding to the words, they have new colors. I understand more about their difficulties and concerns.

Looking at them through the photos I take, I really appreciate their thoughts and actions for the communities they are supporting.



*Hiep Tran, the interpreter
for people with hearing impair*

Now if I take photos of my garden, I will know which corner of the morning sun would shine on, which angle is best for a bright afternoon, where my trees, flowers, and vegetable are covered by different colors. If I take photos of my neighborhood, I will know where to stand to capture the best image of the sky.

For a long time, I have assumed that photography is art and that exhibitions are for beautiful images where photos are framed and hung. But this project has widen my view. Photography is life, people to people and people to nature. When others see your photos, they will feel your emotions.

I really liked one thing in this project that the trainers shared with us: when you capture that moment you are the witness, you are not outside but you are a part of that story.

That feeling is very clear especially when taking pictures of relatives, friends or street corners with strangers.



Mr. Son Pham -former CEO of NPO programs
LIN center



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