

D R A F T Der Rede von Hugo Fasel, Direktor Caritas Schweiz

Let me begin with thanking the Vice Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, his Excellency Mr. Hoang Trung Hai, for inviting us to this reception. For Caritas Switzerland this reception reflects the friendship and excellent cooperation we enjoy with Vietnam. The people and the Government of Vietnam have always welcomed Caritas Switzerland in their country. Since we have established our office in Hanoi in 1996, we always had good relations and a productive cooperation with the people and the authorities at all levels.

The goal of Caritas Switzerland is to help people wherever they live. Whether they struggle with poverty here in Switzerland or whether they are suffering from hunger in Africa. Or if they are in need of clean drinking water in Vietnam. Caritas Switzerland is always aiming to support the people so that their needs can be met.

Our project in the beautiful northern highlands of Vietnam provides clean water to more than 2000 families in the district of Quan Ba in Ha Giang (gesprochen: Ha Sang) province. The living conditions are still extremely difficult in this isolated mountain region. 85% of this population are peasant families of ethnical minorities. Access to clean water throughout the year is a great challenge. Even though the mountains have high precipitation rates from April to October, the communities there suffer from a latent lack of water during the dry season.

In recent years the authorities have done much to improve the situation. But when Caritas carried out a participatory rural appraisal in 2009; the people highlighted that, in some of the villages, there are still gaps in the domestic water supply system. Women, for example, have to walk long distances uphill to get water in plastic

buckets from the reservoirs. Caritas in close cooperation with the local authorities will now install water supply systems for three more villages in Quan Ba. Spring water in the mountains is collected in a filter reservoir with the help of little dams and then fed to the water tanks in the village through pipes. From there, the water can be fed into the households via simple plastic piping. So the women do not have to walk to the water reservoirs anymore.

The population of the villages are actively participating in the design and construction. Our local Vietnamese NGO partner will also make the families more aware of hygiene and environmental issues, which are closely related to water use.

The work of Caritas Switzerland in Vietnam is always taking place in close cooperation with the people and also the local authorities. And all parties are participating from the very beginning of a new project. It is the Vietnamese people who decide on their needs and thus on the objectives of the project. And it is the Vietnamese Government, which has enabled Caritas Switzerland to work smoothly.

Thus, providing clean drinking water to 2000 Vietnamese families, as an act of solidarity of the people of the city of Bern, is only possible in close cooperation with the people and the government in Vietnam. In the light of this excellent cooperation between the Government of Switzerland, the people of the City of Bern and the people in Quan Ba, Caritas Switzerland is very grateful to be in the position to make this contribution to clean water in Vietnam.

We are honored to hand over these symbolic 130'000 drops of clean drinking water.