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 Adhiratha Keefe (Proj Dev & Rec/Arch Officer)



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Slide Set: The Crystalline Goddess, Photos and caption text by Jacques Danois : Series 20, Vietnam

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Notes

from UNICEF records stored in UN Archives and records research facility in LIC, Queens NY.

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THE CRYSTALLINE GODDESS

Photos and text by Jacques Danois

Slides

Text

- 1 Vietnam has two seasons: the dry and the rainy season.
- 2 For 6 months of the year, water is extremely scarce - difficult to find even deep down in the earth. Wells run dry, and streams are reduced to mere trickles.
- 3 During the next 6 months, water is abundant, and often too abundant. The ricefields become flooded; rivers overflow; pools and ponds swell up. To establish a system for the provision and distribution of clean and drinkable water is a significant undertaking; it is by no means an easy task.
- 4 In Vietnam, water is so essential to the lives of the people that they think of it in terms of female deity with the name "Thy Than". Her blessings are diverse: The water from the sky provides rice and other crops. The water of the rivers brings fish to eat and serves as a convenient mode of travel. The water of the sea produces salt, among other things, to further please the palate.
- 5 But the goddess Thuy Than is not always well-treated by her admirers. Water pollution has become increasingly worse and thereby threatens the well-being of those who must have clean water to drink. Many strangers to Vietnam think the Vietnamese people are immune to the diseases inherent in unfiltered water. They are wrong, of course. Indeed, the Vietnamese - particularly the children - are as vulnerable as anyone else to germs and contagious disease.
- 6 - 10 This village has only one well where the inhabitants can find water that is more or less drinkable. Everyone must depend on it to help cook meals, bath children, wash the dishes.. What is worse are the disadvantages suffered by

Slides

Text

- 6 - 10 (cont.) the mothers of the village, who have no health services nor any means to get clean water. Mothers and children therefore are in constant danger of infection and even of non-survival.
- 11 The situation is similar in many other rural areas. Maternal health centers and schools, more often than not, lack adequate sanitary facilities.
- 12 - 14 The United Nations Children's Fund , in collaboration with local authorities and with the financial support of the Danish government development agency DANIDA, has initiated an expansive programme to equip rural schools and maternal health centers with water supply systems.
- 15 Simply to have water to drink is not enough. It is extremely important to know and understand the cause and effects of the problem. Children are learning from teachers and engineers about the new role to be played by Thuy Than in modern life. Water is life; and cleanliness and good hygiene are the guarantee of this life.
- 16 New latrines have been installed to replace the dirty and unhealthy old ones.
- 17 The children are also learning to take care of their environment. At school, they make sure their recreation areas and new facilities are kept clean every day.
- 18 - 19 The installation of water supply systems is entrusted to specialists in the Vietnamese Ministry of Health. These technicians see to it that the water supply systems function on a proper and regular basis.

Slides

Text

- 20 The water here is clear and pure - worthy of a true goddess of good health and life. According to legend, Thuy Than is a fighting deity, who stands up to the mountains and the earth. Seeing the difference between what was and what is, one realizes that Thuy Than one realizes that Thuy Than once more has scored a victory.
- 21 Children learn quickly to drink only filtered water.
- 22 In many schools they willingly sacrifice part of their recreation time in exchange for a glass of clean water.
- 23 The water programme jointly undertaken by UNICEF, DANIDA and the Ministry of Health will soon permit the majority of children living in rural areas of Vietnam to enjoy better living conditions and increased good health.
- 24 UNICEF EMBLEM

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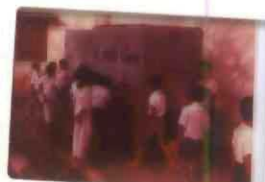
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