

August 5, 1963

Mr. Leroy Wehrle
Deputy Director
USAID
c/o American Embassy
Vientiane, Laos

Dear Roy:

I have a rather unusual favor to ask of you and Charlie Mann.

The wives of our provincial representatives here have had for some time a project of helping to train and support a group of about 57 Vietnamese social workers and rural nurses, attached to a special combat unit patrolling the highway between Cap St. Jacques and Bien Hoa. These Vietnamese girls, who are all volunteers, assist families in the Strategic Hamlets along the highway and go into the interior of the province on patrol with the combat units.

What is most needed for these social workers and nurses is a good month's training course. Due to bureaucratic difficulties and commitments elsewhere, neither the Ministry of Health nor USOM Public Health has been able to give any help. The Rural Affairs wives, while eager to help, do not themselves possess the competence. All they have been able to give so far has been a brief first aid course which they taught themselves.

While in Laos, Barbara mentioned to some Operation Brotherhood friends what she and other wives were trying to do here and the difficulties they were encountering. Several of the OB personnel immediately volunteered to come to Vietnam to help. Vitoy Naranjo told Barbara, just before we left, that he felt he could spare 2 or 3 people for a month by having others double up in their jobs.

After departing Vientiane, Barbara told me about this and I suggested that she first talk the idea over with the wives here, then with the Vietnamese, before I mentioned the subject to you.

She did so and the response was very positive on all sides.

The upshot of all of this is that I'd like to ask whether you could give OB permission to allow two of their people to come down here for one month's time, provided, of course, that the remaining personnel doubled up in a satisfactory manner to take over the jobs of the two missing personnel. Their airfare and complete expenses will be financed by the Rural Affairs wives and a private Vietnamese donor from this end, so no expenditures of OB or other official funds are involved. If this could be handled in an informal manner with permission granted to OB to release these people, I would be most grateful. The Vietnamese girls, if properly trained, will be most helpful in permanently pacifying an area of considerable psychological and political, as well as military, importance here.

With best regards to you and JoAnn,

sincerely

Rufus C. Phillips