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- to whom it might concern -

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PRESS RELEASE

First major community photography exhibition of 2009 opens at Goethe Institute, Hanoi

Face to Face - Photographs from Thanh Hoa, Vietnam

Exhibition Opening: 6pm, 25 February 2009, officially opened by the Parliamentary State Secretary of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development Ms. Karin Kortmann

Opening Hours: 9.30am – 12am, 2pm – 6pm daily, 26 February – 2 March 2009

Special 'Meet the Press' event: 1.30pm – 3pm, 26 February 2009

Address: Goethe-Institute, 56-58 Nguyen Thai Hoc Street, Hanoi

A unique community initiative empowering sixteen people with disabilities from Thanh Hoa province to tell their own stories using digital photography.



In the summer of 2008, **DED**, the German Development Service, asked **ensemble creative training and development** to design and facilitate a community photography project with members of various disability support groups under the **Association for Peoples with Disabilities and Orphans** in Thanh Hoa Province. These groups had voiced a need to learn new creative skills to express themselves and advocate their viewpoints more effectively to new and wider audiences at both local and national levels.

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Over the course of five months, sixteen adults living with disabilities from urban and rural areas in Thanh Hoa shared eight digital cameras and took over 8000 photographs in their communities. During this time, workshops were held in which participants discussed and shared their pictures with each other, developing their visual literacy, communication and photographic skills.

The learning approach was experiential in as much as no specific technical photographic theory was taught. Instead, participants were encouraged to experiment with the camera and their ideas. In discussion forums during the many photo viewings they talked about what stories their subjects told or how a certain photograph captured in some small part the essence of someone's spirit or personality and how some photographs acted as mirrors to deeper self-awareness and some, windows that shed light on new perspectives of what we understand to be 'community'. In this way, learning was constructed by the group from the sharing of experiences and by critiquing each other's photographs, all helped by the facilitator.

The focus was on building deeper self-awareness and engagement in their community using the camera as a catalyst for enquiry, exploration, discovery and then reflection.

Towards the end of the training phase, in preparation for the exhibition, participants underwent media training where they practised getting their message across to journalists and TV news crews. They then devised an advocacy plan that listed all the people they wanted to meet and what they wanted to say to them that includes government, education institutions and civil society groups. These meetings will be held in Hanoi and Thanh Hoa.

The **Face To Face** exhibition will be attended by the 16 photographers and features more than 90 colour and black and white photographs and 3 videos in various groupings curated by Jamie Maxtone-Graham.

The **Face To Face** project is also financially supported by the W.P. Schmitz Foundation.

The **Face To Face** project team:

Project Management: German Development Service (DED)

Project partner: Association for Peoples with Disabilities and Orphans, Thanh Hoa

Project design, facilitation and creative director: Paul Zetter, ensemble creative training and development

Special 'meet the press' event at 1.30 pm – 3 pm on Thursday 26 February 2009 at the Exhibition Hall, Goethe Institute, Hanoi

A specially organised 'meet the press event' has been arranged for newspaper, radio and television journalists to hold one to one interviews with the photographers and project team for more in-depth information about the **Face To Face** project. Refreshments will be served. Please call or e-mail to confirm your attendance.

For more information and sample images please contact

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Useful websites

<http://vietnam.ded.de>

<http://www.ensemblecreative.org>

<http://www.schmitz-stiftung.de>