Thank you to everyone who donated to our End of Financial Year Appeal – our most successful campaign ever! With your help, we raised over $21,000 to help some of the poorest people in southern Vietnam start their own business.

Your gifts will go to the Community Development Fund, which offers small loans and business training so hard-working families can establish their own long-term livelihoods.

A small loan will make a huge difference in Mr Le’s life. As rising sea levels push salt water into the Mekong Delta, Le has been forced to adapt quickly to survive. He grows soursop, a popular fruit in Vietnam, by grafting pond apple root onto his soursop trees so they grow faster in salty conditions. But the work is hard – Mr Le has to graft thousands of seedlings by hand. He also pollinates his trees by hand because there are no bees in the region.

Mr Le is the leader of a soursop co-operative of 29 farmers supported by Action on Poverty. Members of the co-op not only share their knowledge and experience, but can also use their collective bargaining power to seek good prices in Soc Trang, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

With a small loan from the Community Development Fund, Mr Le and the rest of the co-op will be able to attend Vietgap training – a program that will ensure their produce meets rigorous standards. With Vietgap certification, Mr Le will be able to export his fruit to international markets at higher prices. He hopes to send his children to school and save for the future.

Thanks for helping people like Mr Le establish long-term livelihoods for more success stories. Visit our blog: actiononpoverty.org/blog.
SARA’S SURVIVAL STORY

Sara, 42, is a mother of eight from Dili in Timor Leste, where she runs three small businesses. Sara not only has her own fruit stall at the Taibezi Market, which provides the bulk of her income, she also operates a nearby billiard table and bathroom, which she built with her own money.

But Sara had to work hard for her success, overcoming domestic violence at the hands of her husband. Unfortunately, Sara’s experience is common in Timor Leste, with over a third of women reporting physical or sexual abuse.

Sara was forced to flee her husband and found refuge at a women’s shelter run by our local partner PRADET. This safe house protects vulnerable, abused and trafficked women and children, and offers medical and forensic services if they want to press charges.

The centre also focuses on rehabilitating survivors and teaching them new skills to lead independent lives. By finding work and starting their own businesses, women are empowered to regain control over their relationships or leave abusive partners.

After participating in the ‘Safe Room’ training program run by PRADET, Sara now sells fresh fruit such as bananas, avocados and mangoes at the Taibezi Market. Many of her friends from the centre have also started their own businesses, from selling clothes to raising livestock.

“I now rely on myself to make money and support my family,” Sara said. “I have the financial freedom to take charge of my family’s future.”

MEET OUR NEW CEO

In a changing of the guard, Action on Poverty’s Finance Director Christine Pollard has stepped into the role of CEO, while former CEO Christine Murphy remains with us, taking on the role of International Program Director.

Christine Pollard has been an accountant for over 30 years, and has worked with a diverse range of Australian charities, including Communications Law Centre, National Children and Youth Law Centre, and Vets Beyond Borders.

“I’m so very pleased to be leading Action on Poverty into the next stage of its long life as we celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2018,” said Christine.

“NGOs like Action on Poverty are in an ideal position to lead the way in working with small communities in poor, developing countries to break the entrenched cycle of poverty.

"I'm proud of our team in Sydney and Vietnam and look forward to continuing the valuable work we do with our international partners to build strong communities that can support themselves and drive change that really lasts,” she said.

Former CEO Christine Murphy has taken the part-time role of International Program Director.

During her six years at the helm, Christine Murphy has led Action on Poverty into a stronger and more prosperous position. Her achievements include full re-accreditation with DFAT, rolling out an organisational rebrand and growing the partnership program.

Christine Murphy is looking forward to focusing more closely on our international projects and having more time to spend with her young family.
A CHANGING CLIMATE IN KIRIBATI

Kaai lives on Marakei, part of the Pacific Island nation of Kiribati. Unfortunately, climate change has created erratic weather events, eroded the coastline, and made it difficult for Kaai and her community to find fresh water.

After fierce storms, Kaai struggled to cope with a shortage of fish – a staple food for many in Kiribati. This meant she had to rely more heavily on vegetables, which were difficult to produce in poor soil. She also found that her ideas about how to address these problems weren’t valued.

“Quite often we have been left out in community development programs, especially as I am a woman,” she said. “Only men or elders from my village were the ones to meet with project officers.”

The Outer Island Food and Water Project has helped Kaai access clean water and grow good food in a changing climate. This one-year project targeted women and young people – the most vulnerable among the community.

Kaai learned gardening techniques, which increased production in poor soils, and attended cooking demonstrations, where she learned how to prepare meals using her own produce. A new water system also means Kaai doesn’t have to travel long distances on foot to retrieve water for drinking and washing.

“I am happy to say that the project has given me an opportunity to learn how to cook nutritious dishes,” said Kaai. “Having different kinds of vegetables to eat supplements the loss of fish in times of bad storms.”

Kaai’s community has also been selling surplus vegetables at market to earn extra income. By adopting new techniques and adjusting to changes in climate, Kaai’s remote island community is now more secure on their land and in their future.

SHOP WITH A PURPOSE

Shop online and support us without spending one extra cent when you download Folo to your computer. A small percentage of what you spend will go towards a charity of your choice. Simply sign up on the Folo website and select Action on Poverty from the list of charities available. When you do an internet search, the Folo bar will show you where you can shop to make sure your purchase really packs a punch. Folo retailers include Woolworths, Hotels.com, Virgin Australia, Priceline and Bonds.

For more information visit folo.world
A TREK WITH A DIFFERENCE

Experience the landscape, culture and hospitality of northern Vietnam when you Trek Vietnam with us, 26 November - 1 December. Our Community-based Tourism (CBT) adventure will take you across the mountains and lakes of Da Bac district into the welcoming homes of local families, where you can enjoy traditional cuisine, music and dancing. You’ll also get to see some of our life-changing projects in person, from fishing projects that put food on the table and money in pockets, to the preschools teaching children the skills they need to break the poverty cycle.

CBT is socially and environmentally responsible tourism that empowers ethnic minority groups in the rural Hoa Binh province to develop sustainable livelihoods while preserving their unique cultural heritage and natural assets.

Booking info

Cost: $800 per person

This price includes two nights’ accommodation in Hanoi (the night before and after the trek), airport transfers, four nights’ accommodation in homestays, meals, and trekking guides and porters. It does not include flights, visa costs, or insurance.

Book now: 02 9906 3792 or info@actiononpoverty.org
More info: www.actiononpoverty.org/trek

"Oh beautiful, absolutely gorgeous. The scenery is beautiful with the mountains and the lake. We went swimming, we had marvellous food . . . and people are so welcoming and friendly. I get lovely smiles and welcoming feeling."
Rica Weller

"The entertainment was great, the dancing was fantastic, the MC was exceptional. Facilities were very good – spacious, good bed nets, toilets etc. Will come back next year."
Vivienne Jones

"I’ve enjoyed the trekking, it’s been hard, but it’s been fun and the people we stay with they have made us feel so welcome. It has been a very enjoyable experience so I can only recommend it to other travellers."
Celia Coote