



**AnimalsAsia**

Kindness in action

# KINDNESS IN ACTION

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**Forix Foundation - Vietnam Bear Rescue Sanctuary  
Interim Report - February 2022**

*\*cover image: Chilli-Bienchen venturing outside for the first time after  
being rescued from Hanoi Central Circus*

## Background

The Forix Foundation and Animals Asia are working together to improve the quality of veterinary care in Vietnam, and provide sanctuary to the endangered Asiatic black bear, also known as the moon bear, in Vietnam. The Forix foundation has supported the annual cost of food for one bear at our sanctuary, and the cost of Vietnamese veterinary Intern Hân Mai Ly, who is in training to become a junior vet at our new sanctuary in Bach Ma.

Your support has meant that we are on track to closing the book on bear bile farming in Vietnam, and improving animal welfare in the long term. Together, we are making Vietnam a kinder place for bears and other animals across the country. We are paving the way for other countries to follow, by creating the blueprint for how to end bear bile farming in collaboration with governments and the active participation of communities.

## Project update - Vietnamese Veterinary Intern Hân Mai Ly

Animals Asia is leading the way in advancing veterinary medicine in Vietnam through our veterinary intern program that speaks to our commitment to creating long-lasting improvements to animal welfare across Asia. First class veterinary care is central to improving animal welfare in the long term and ending bear farming.

The training program is designed to train Vietnamese Vets to provide world-class care for animals residing at sanctuaries. Hands-on training at the Vietnam Bear Rescue Center will teach them how to best care for and rehabilitate endangered bears, with the ultimate goal of staffing the new sanctuary.



Dr. Hân is well on her way to becoming an Animals Asia Junior Veterinarian. In the last few months, she has been signed-off to see bears for visual checks at the houses, make her medication plans and enter her notes into our veterinary system without double checking by our staff veterinarian. Our staff Veterinarians Shaun and Rachel and Veterinary Nurses Kat and Kelly have worked with incredible tenacity to support her, and the other three interns,

being shadowed and providing constant teaching. Whether it's simplifying complex ideas, sharing their expertise learned over decades, or simply standing back to allow hands-on opportunities for our interns, our staff veterinarians and nurses are critical to the success of our internship program.

As part of their internship, the interns are learning to use a new tool to measure the internal pressure of the bears' eyes - a tonometer. This piece of equipment is essential for clinical decision making when caring for bears like Moggy. Knowing Moggy's intraocular pressure allowed them to plan if one or both eyes had to be removed (only one needed removal). Meanwhile, Hân did her first gastric biopsies using our endoscope.

Our veterinarians are critical responders in an emergency, often backing up or taking over from the Emergency Response Coordinator. Our veterinary interns have been put through their paces responding to emergency drills, an essential part of their training in preparation for working in the new Bach Ma sanctuary. Situations the interns practised including providing emergency veterinary help to a bear, dealing with a fire, and coordinating human first aid. After each drill, our team comes together to debrief the scenario to identify what went well, what didn't go well, and what we'll do differently next time. It means if a real emergency does occur, our response will be excellent.

Veterinary Interns Thái and Hân ran the vet department over Christmas, the first time that we have left the sanctuary vet department under the full operation of Vietnamese vets. Our staff veterinarians remained on call and Heidi, our bear and vet department director remained onsite in case support is needed, however this is a milestone to be celebrated.

*"It's a really good thing we will have Bach Ma. There are a lot of bears who need us. We are so grateful to donors for making it possible that we can build another sanctuary. Ending Bear Farming is a big step for Vietnam to prove to the world that we care about wildlife. As an Asian country, we used to use a lot of things from animals for medications, but we need to change now because we have modern medicine. Ending bear farming shows the world that the awareness of the Vietnamese people is raised and we're on the same page as the rest of the world."*

*There is a song which said 'my father told me one day you'll leave this world behind, so live a life you will remember'. When I think about being part of the solution to bear farming, quite simply my life has meaning. It's my pride. If I can impact other people around me, I'm really happy with what I am doing. Everyone in the team has this impact. Globally, we have this impact. I am very proud of that."*

**Hân, Veterinary Intern, VBRC**



Hân's plans are to one day get her masters at the University of Edinburgh. Her goal is for vets to be respected as much as doctors in Vietnam. She wants to eventually get her PhD too and lead the charge for Vietnam. Without the Vietnamese Veterinary Intern program, the interns would have joined a small animal vet clinic or at a wildlife center without access to invaluable learning opportunities. There is currently nowhere else in Vietnam giving this level of training or the opportunity to work as a colleague, not simply observers or assistants, and actively engage in learning every day.

### **New Sanctuary Update**

The Animals Asia team has worked hard to lay the groundwork for the new sanctuary in Vietnam. However, the continued pandemic and resulting restrictions have been large obstacles, resulting in delays to the timeline we originally projected. Vietnam saw a surge of COVID-19 cases over the summer and fall which resulted in lockdowns up and down the country. This means that our original plan to break ground was delayed.

Last year, we submitted an End Bear Farming project document to The Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development. This 377-page bilingual manual on sanctuary operations covers everything from bear rescues and health checks to first-time enclosure access. This manual, alongside our hands-on training and oversight, will be critical to the

new sanctuary's success. Stipulating the running of a rescue center in a usable and accessible way has been a monumental challenge and one that our team has risen to beautifully. We are extremely proud of the document as it will not only pertain to our new sanctuary but can be used as a cornerstone document for any new sanctuary in the country.

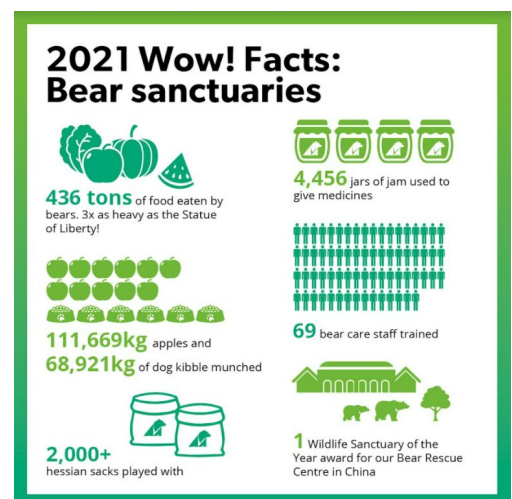
Feedback from the government on the Environmental Impact Assessment in January 2022, has meant we have had to slightly revise the masterplan to move one of the bear houses. This again has pushed our construction commencement date back, but we are hopeful of receiving final approvals from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment after the Tet Lunar New Year holidays in February to enable us to commence the construction process in March 2022.



While the setbacks we've experienced have indeed been frustrating, we have not lost momentum, and we are doing all we can to prepare for the construction and operation of the sanctuary. Our veterinary interns will continue training and move to Bach Ma as soon as the sanctuary is ready to accept bears.

### Food for a bear

The funding from the Forix Foundation also went towards feeding one bear over the last six months. Over the fall, we increased the protein for the bears as they have larger appetites leading into the winter months. Our team has been able to focus on providing nutritious food and changing their menus frequently and using the food to encourage them to forage, dig, sniff and climb. We purchase this food locally which supports the local economy. In Vietnam, through the purchase of fruits and vegetables alone in 2021 over \$170,000 was injected into the local economy.



**Thank you for your support!**

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