

Faith Transforms a Village of Opium Addicts

Driving along the paved zigzag roads of the Sin Suoi Ho village it's hard to imagine that the picturesque landscape of rice terraces and manicured vegetable plots were once opium fields.

Pastor Hang A Xa describes it as a bleak period for the Hmong village as almost all were drug addicts.

"We were selling opium like selling chickens. Everyone was addicted so no one worked in the fields. We did not have food, just leaves from the jungle. People were fighting. It was a very messy time," Pastor Xa said.

That included Pastor Xa's father, Hang A Lung, an opium addict who was still elected as village chairman. Because he was a leader, the government provided him with a radio to listen to and stay informed about its policies.

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Lung, however, did not understand Vietnamese. He only knew the Hmong language and the only radio program he could understand came from a broadcast ministry to the Hmong people. Instead of communist ideology, Lung listened to the Word of God each day.

Pastor Xa said, "My father heard the gospel and became the first believer. He wanted our whole family to receive Jesus. He summoned my brother who was studying in another town to come home right away. He said, 'You need to receive Jesus. If He comes, we all go to heaven and you go to hell.'"

Su admires her grandfather for being firm in his faith at a time when Vietnam banned Christianity. She told CBN News,

"Police arrested and beat my grandfather several times. And when they threatened to kill him, he asked them. 'Why take a long time for you to kill me?' He wants to meet Jesus. After a few days, they tell him go back home, we don't have food to feed you.'"

Lung obtained a Bible that had been passed from one household to another. From reading Scripture, Lung and other villagers felt convicted to quit drugs and live a life pleasing to God.

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Instead of opium, they planted orchids which became a source of income. Though most could not read or write, God gave the villagers wisdom to begin running various businesses.

Ten years later, Sin Suoi Ho village was recognized by the government as a top tourist destination and in 2023 ASEAN recognized it as a top tourist attraction in Southeast Asia.

The Sin Suoi Ho village is now known for its beauty, tranquility and testimonies of transformed lives.

On Saturday mornings, the villagers flock to the market to sell their produce. Here, Pastor Xa is shining the shoes of the people for free. "This is my way of serving the people and also an opportunity to share Jesus to them," he said.

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