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## EXPECTATIONS OF THE AGENT ORANGE/DIOXIN VICTIMS IN VIETNAM

*(Opinions of the victims collected by tape recording from the interviews)*

**Collected by Nguyen Thuy Hanh**

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### **I. Living and economic related requests**

#### **\* Housing, land and other issues:**

1. *“Actually building this house (house of gratitude), I didn’t want. The department for labour, invalids and social affairs did this, the Government cared and did this, knew that the Government gave money to build but... this actually caused difficulty for me... I just said, now I concentrate on food and education of my children. He thought I asked that money for my children. He said he would build a house, not ... give me money. I hadn’t wanted to build yet.”* (Do Huu Sen, Binh Lam commune, Hiep Duc, Quang Nam).
2. *“Only hope that the Vietnamese and American Governments have a humanitarian heart to help my family, economical support is just a part but it can encourage us spiritually”* (Mr. Ma, Khe Lu, Nguyen Khue commune, Dong Anh, Hanoi).
3. *“My living standard is not so good, both of us try to bring up our children with difficulties. I really hope that kind-hearted people help our children so that they will not feel so disadvantaged”* (Tran Thi Nam Giang, Du Son village, Nguyen Khe commune, Dong Anh, Hanoi).
4. *“Our couple only want a land plot, and then build a shed to live there”* (Tran Thi Khanh Huyen, Binh Thuan).
5. *“Coming from a farmer family with many difficulties, due to economic conditions I also took part in working. However, unfortunately I got an occupational accident in 1998, generally my arms and legs are unable to work, my elder child is busy with study, our family is generally in very hard condition, I hope that authorities at all levels, kind-hearted donors of the Government support us so that our family can improve economically”* (Truong Tien Hung, Yen, Nam Dinh).
6. *“Want to raise a cow, my house has not been constructed completely, without a kitchen, my first dream is to have a water well, two children study and get scholarships”* (Ho Xuan Chieng, Hong Quang, A luoi).

7. *"I just want to ask for my children some house space, because this house is gonna collapse soon"* (Tran Thi Chung, Bo De, Yen Phong commune, Y Yen district, Nam Dinh).
8. *"Only hope to repair the house"* (Nguyen Thi Nguyet, Ninh Xa Ha village, Yen Ninh commune, Y Yen district, Nam Dinh).
9. *"Hope I and my children can earn money, my husband will not be sick. Have money for husbandry, widen, tidy up, the furniture from the bowls and plates are not ok yet. Many expectations. Have proper places to sit. From the chairs we've also not got, need to borrow."* (Nguyen Thi Hoa, Ninh Xa Ha village, Yen Ninh commune, Y Yen district, Nam Dinh).

**\* Policies and regulations**

1. *"We hope this problem is soon solved, the Government can have solution soon like having policies for victims, compensate for the disadvantages that we unfortunately meet. For example the children can be considered to be allowed to go to school with reduced fees or exemption from paying tuition fees."* (Nguyen Dinh Hanh, G3/1, Street 6, Trung Dung quarter, Bien Hoa, Dong Nai).
2. *"I request the Government to support for my three children"*. (Nguyen Quang Canh, Chanh Liem village, Cat Tuong commune, Phu Cat, Binh Dinh).
3. *"I hope that you visiting our home can help us a little bit, too pity for us, old like me trying to raise him is also not enough, I feel pity for him"*. (Phan Minh, Phan Dieu's father, Phu Cat district, Binh Dinh).
4. *"Hope to have a little support for the children"* (Nguyen Van Khanh, Chanh Liem village, Cat Tuong commune, Phu Cat, Binh Dinh).
5. *"I think there should be a policy for the children of the agent orange victims and some compensation policies for them, so that they can settle their mind to live and are supported by the society to live"* (Le Thanh Chi, Hue city).
6. *"I also hope that the children can benefit from some policies so that our couple will not be so hard."* (Phung Thi Thuy, 23 years old, Phu Nghia village, Phu Kim commune, Thach That district, Ha Tay).
7. *"Request the Government that we have contributed our youth years, now in the elder years we hope the Government can care... When we join the army, the commune complimented and encourage us with drums and flags. That year, not so many women participating, was transferred to the district, now we came back and receive no benefits... Request the Government to care about me, 7 years service in the army and now have nothing, no more privileges than the normal people"* (Hoang Van Tinh, Nhoi Tren village, Co Loa commune, Dong Anh, Hanoi).

8. *“My hope is if my child is affected with agent orange then you can help to raise a voice so that my child can benefit from some policies so that he does not fell so disadvantaged.”* (Nguyen Thi Ngai, Village 5, Tan xa commune, That That, Ha Tay).
9. *“Want my child to have some monthly support so he do not feel so pity for himself.”* (Le Van Chiem, Ngoai Thon village, Phu Kim commune, Thach That, Ha Tay).
10. *“Hope that the Government can care, give my child some support for being affected with agent orange”* (Ninh Xuan Thong, 40 years old. Ninh xa Ha village, Yen Ninh commune, Y yen distrit, Nam Dinh).
11. *“Want to have some support, not sugar or biscuit ...during Tet... but also not dare to compare like Mr. Thach in Doai, eye disability but I still have healthy children, can work in the farm. We do not require so much, everyday only some thousands are enough for us to live. On 27/7 they go and receive gifts, my family is still quiet...”* (Tran Minh Thao, Quynh Hong, Quynh Phu, Thai Binh).
12. *“Expectations but we cannot have, only hope, Governmental policies or Provinces and local agencies have any support for people with disability, if so please help us something, honestly I do not dare to request for anything.”* (Nguyen Thi Bao, Ngoai Thon village, Phu Kim, Thach That, Ha Tay).

**\* Jobs**

1. *“I hope that I can have some stable job, enough income to meet the needs of my family”* (Do Van Giap, child of Hoang Thi Dieu, Kim Bong, Tan Xa, Thach That, Ha Tay).
2. *“Hope my child can have some stable job in the future”* (Dng Thi Hong Van, 22 Lane 810, La Thanh, Ba Dinh district, Hanoi).
3. *“The war has robbed all of my children, I at the moment only have one child, an only girl grandchild, and with an only wish that she can have a job in the future so that her life can be maintained. So her parents will not be so worried in their later life”* (Pham Hong Phong, Y Yen, Nam Dinh).
4. *“I hope my children will be provided with a job”* (Nguyen Van Ngo, Hong Thuong commune, A Luoi district, Thua Thien Hue province)
5. *“I wish that his business will prosperous and my disabled children will be received financial support to ensure their lives in case I pass away”* (Nguyen Anh Tuyet, born in 1959, farmer in Tan Binh commune, Ham Tan district, Binh Thuan province. She has 8 children. Her first son, born in 1983, with heart disease, the forth child is a girl born in 1989 with feet atrophy and the seventh child is also a girl with cleft palate and lip)

6. *“I have an aspiration that the government will create a job for her and support a sum of money. I am old now, there comes a day I will pass away. And when this daughter will be old and die there will be my small granddaughter alive”* (Cao Thi Cuu, Tan An township, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province. She now is living with her daughter with feet atrophy, and granddaughter who has only half of the feet)

**\* Salary:**

*“I hope that the government will pay attention to the salary of teacher like me so that it will deserve the labour capacity”* (Tran Thi Nam Giang, Son Du group, Nguyen Khe commune, Dong Anh district)

**Capital creation:**

1. *“I wish that I could run a small bussiness to support him to go to school”* (Do Huu Sen’s wife, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province)
2. *“I expect to be supported with the capital”* (Hoang Thi Dieu, Kim Bong village, Tan Xa commune, Thach That district, Ha Tay)
3. *“Our hope is to receive the capital for production so that the incomes will help us in raising our grandsons”* (Phung Van Tiep, Phu Nghia village, Phu Kim commune, Thach That district, Ha Tay province)
4. *“We hope to receive amount of money for raising catles”* (Le Van Chiem, Ngoai Thon village, Phu Kim commune, Thach That district)

## **II. Health related requests**

**\* Policy**

1. *“We need a government policy for his treatment. We will bring him for treatment even if we have to spend everything and even only one hand is treated.”* (Tran Thi Nam Giang, Son Du village, Nguyen Khe commune, Dong Anh district, Ha Noi)
2. *“The only thing we want is that the government takes care of him. I would like to ask for his health examination to identify the level of exposure. Now, he is ranked at 4<sup>th</sup> level with 100,000 VND monthly financial support. He has been identified to be wounded in the war from 1990”* (Hoang Van Tinh, Nhoi Tren village, Co Loa commune, Dong Anh district, Ha Noi)

3. *“I hope the local authorities pay attention to my granddaughter so that she could receive the financial support from the government. We expect that she can receive the incentives for stable life”* (Hoang Thi Dieu, Kim Bong village, Tan Xa commune, Thach That district, Ha Tay province)

**\* Health**

1. *“I wish that my child will overcome this disaster and his disease will be treated”* (Tran Thi Thuy, Phu Nghia village, Phu Kim commune, Thach That district, Ha Tay province)
2. *“My expectation is that he can walk, I can bear any difficulties for that”* (Tran Thi Thu Ha, born in 1981, houseworker, Binh Lam commune, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province. She gave birth a son in 2002 with soft neck. Her husband works as a bricklayer with unstable salary)
3. *“I feel pity for him so much, while other kid are healthy and can walk. I wish that my grandson health is improved”* (Nguyen Thi Thai An, 36 Apartment 28B Dien Bien Phu, Ba Dinh district, Ha Noi)
4. *“The most expectation is that he can sit, his health is recovered. I hope that some social organization fund for my son treatment as our economic is limited”* (Nguyen Thi Thanh Van, 36 Apartment 28B Dien Bien Phu, Ba Dinh district, Ha Noi)
5. *“Firstly, I wish that I could live as long as I could because these two children need parent’s support. In case we pass away, it will be unfortunate for them. Moreover, I gave birth the last two child at the old age so I wish to live longer to see their grown up”* (Trinh Thi Toan, Yen Phong commune, Y Yen district, Nam Dinh province)
6. *“My biggest hope is that my grandchildren have been treated so that they could go to school like their peers”* (Nguyen Thi Dan, village 5, Tan Xa commune, Thach That district, Ha Tay province)
7. *“Wishing for being healthy for long time, not having diseases. The Government should pay attention to Agent Orange affected people, if the country is picking up.”* (Hoang Van Tinh, 59 years old, Nhoi Tren village, Co Loa commune, Dong Anh district, Ha Noi)
8. *“My biggest hope is he can walk, he can fit in life”* (Nguyen Van Khoi, lottery vender in Tan An townlet, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province. Khoi has four children, the second son born in 1986 is cerebral-palsied and paralysed in bed that always needs care and help by others)

9. *“I have a dream of happy end that will help our children rehabilitated to be able to walk, to sit so that we/family members are less hard”* (Tran Thi Ngoc Phuong, Tan Binh, Ham Tan, Binh Thuan)

10. *“Hoping that in the future there will have an organisation, a mass organisation to examine and have conclusions of Agent Orange affected people, so we can know at what level we are affected? to create conditions to help us mentally and materially. So we will not always to think of being infected that influences both material and spiritual life. The hope is that there will have exact result of myself in order to help us feel safety to earn living in peace”*. (Do Van Giap, Hoang Thi Dieu’s son, Kim Bong village, Tan Xa commune, Thach That district, Ha Tay province.)

**\* Giving birth:**

1. *“Our family did not want to have the third child. But, they (the couple) always think that: firstly, this child (the third generation affected with paralysis) is hopeless, secondly the other child is cross-eyed. So they tried to have another child with hope of better situation”* (Do Bich Canh, Nguyen Viet Trinh’s grandmother, Khe Lu village, Nguyen Khe commune, Dong Anh district, Hanoi)

2. *“Do not want to give birth continuously like that, it was unplanned, then had pregnancy extrauterine, then it broke and bleeding, so I had to have operation. After that, we applied family planning, it was difficult time so we did not want to have more births, but it was unplanned then we had the last son”* (Vo Thi Thuy, Ngo May townlet, Phu Cat, Binh Dinh)

3. *“We wanted to have more children, as we thought one was disable/affected then the next one would not be like that, not be ill,.. Only desire for having a healthy child and normal. We are poor, we would have been happy if we have had a healthy child, but being poor and having the children like these, we are very sad”*. (Tran Thi Thuy, Phu Nghia village, Phu Kim commune, Thach That district, Ha Tay province)

4. *“I have no dream rather than giving birth to normal children”* (Phung Thi Thuy 23 years old, Phu Nghia village, Phu Kim commune, Thach That district, Ha Tay province)

5. *“My aspiration is to have a perfect child”* (Mai Thi Tu, her husband is Ho Ngoc Huan – born in 1955, farmer in Que Tho commune, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province. Tu has three children, the first daughter, born in 1984, is mental problem, stunned)

**\* Health check and treatment:**

1. *“We wish to have medicines that can limit chemical’s impact. Currently, some have been examined and blood tested so that they know about infection level, but most of*

- the people do not have chance to have blood test*” (Nguyen Dinh Hanh, G3/1 ward 6, Trung Dung precinct, Bien Hoa, Dong Nai)
2. *“Hope for our children not being sick, having medicines”* (Quynh Ong, Nham commune, A Luoi).
  3. *“Wishing for our children can speak, that is enough”* (Hoang Van Ay, Hong Kim, A Luoi)
  4. *“I hope to have more money for taking my child to treatment, as people said it can be operated to reshape vein. We always keep in mind that try to work and save money if there is a chance, if the government can support something or organisations working on disability help my child going for treatment, we really wish that”* (Nguyen Dac Thuc – Hong Thuong, A luoi).
  5. *“We would like to request you to talk to higher levels for giving my child a health care notebook. Having it will help us to go for treatment easier”* ( Nguyen The Quang, Yen Phong, Y Yen, Nam Dinh)
  6. *“Hope the government and national/international organisations to study and produce appropriate medicines and provide support to victims”* (Huynh, Yen Phong, Y Yen, Nam Dinh)
  7. *“We are poor in rural areas, we can afford to take our children to hospital for examination and buying medicines, we can not be possible to seek for doctor for our children... I really want to have a good doctor to treat for our children”* (Nguyen Thi Ca, Yen Phong, Y Yen, Nam Dinh)
  8. *“Hope that higher levels can help our ill children to have examination and treatment”*. (Dinh Thi Dien, Hoa Binh)

**\* Supportive equipments:**

1. *“Giving it a wheelchair, it can go to the streets for peaceful mind, only staying at it is pitiful”* (Do Thi Nham, Chanh Liem village, Cat Tuong, Phu Cat)
2. *“My three children only defecate in the house, hoping for a wheelchair that can help them do outside”* (Nguyen Van Khanh, Chanh Liem, Cat Tuong, Phu Cat, Binh Dinh)
3. *“I wish that kind-hearted people and organisations create conditions for my a to give a wheelchair so that my child can move from one place to other place, and the mother will not have to carry the child. My child is very heavy now to carry, nearly as tall as the mother”*. (Tran Thi Nam Giang, Son Du village, Nguyen Khe commune, Dong Anh, Hanoi)
4. *“He always asks me to buy him a wheelchair, I said he will have one whenever his father earn enough money”* (Tran Thi Khanh Huyen, Binh Thuan)

5. *“I like to have a wheelchair, no one give me. The small one that was carried passing over the church, not big one. But no one give. Each time passing over the church, someone has to carry”* (Tran Van Tu, Binh Thuan)
6. *“Hoping that my child can sit, sit on the wheelchair then we can push, that’s alright. Do not have to carry, it is very difficult to carry when the child grow up, the more growing, the more heavier, but we can not just leave the child lying in bed all the time as the child’s back will be ulcerated, that’s why I always have to carry my child”* (Huynh Thi Huong, born in 1978, house-keeping, husband is clock/watch repairman in Tan Binh, Ham Tan district, Binh Thuan province. She has two daughters; the first one Tran Huynh Vy Vy born in 1999 is disable).

**\* Centre for caring:**

1. *“I do not know if the government can help us to bring up one child. It is good if the government has one place to bring up that child”* (Nguyen Van A, born in 1951, bike/motorbike repairman in Que Tho commune, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province. Mr A has four daughters; the second one born in 1984 is mental deficiency, the last daughter born in 1998 has acnemia and dumb. His family became more difficult and hard since his wife died)
2. *“It is very good if the government has a centre to take the children there before we die”* (Nguyen Minh Tam, Bo De village, Yen Phong commune, Y Yen district, Nam Dinh province)
3. *“I want to send my child to some rehabilitation centre where he can be treated to be able to walk. Then I can go working. If I must stay at hom and take care of them like this, our life cannot be improved”* (Tran Thi Chin, Doan Van Dao’s wife, born in 1972, farmer in Binh Lam, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province – having two sons, the first one Doan Van Kien, born in 1995 is cerebral-palsied.)
4. *“My last hope/expectation is that we can give our child to society when we become old”* (Nguyen Van Khoi, lottery seller in Tan An townlet, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province. Khoi has 4 children, the second son born in 1986 is cerebral-palsied and paralyzed in bed and always need helps and care from others).

### **III. Cultural and education related requests**

**\* Environment:**

- 1) *“ I really wish to leave this area – where my children seriously affected. So that we want to move to the North. But nowadays, it is difficult to change the residence and move to the North; furthermore, it is easier to find a job here. We want to leave this area, move to the countryside – where our relatives is living. We hope that the new*

*cases of diseases will be limited, our next generations will not be affected*” (Nguyen Dinh Hanh, G2/1, quarter 6, Trung Dung ward, Bien Hoa city, Dong Nai province).

**\* Mass media:**

- 1) *“ I do not like to be taken photos or to be filmed at all. I gave birth to my child, so I raise him/her up even though my child is disabled. I do not want my child be a burden to society”*(Hoang Van Tro, Trang Commune, Co Loa, Dong Anh).
- 2) *“One should not spread informations about dioxine victims because this will affect the children negatively. I was discontent the press for their photo coverages of some families. Journalists spread some informations about the families, bu they have not seen the negative effects of their reportages. We do not like to be reported because in psychological term. If girls know that tis boy or that boy is a dioxine victim, they will not marry him”* (Nguyen Dinh Hanh, G3/1 Zone, Trung Dung Ward, Bien Hoa, Dong Nai).

**\* Education**

- 1) *“We intend to take our child to the school for disabled in Dai Bi, Co Loa to study, but there, only people who can move around on their own legs, be accepted. Parents do not like to have children care institutions; institutionalisation is taken as the last resort”* (Tran Thi Nam Giang, Son Du Hamlet, Nguyen Khe Commune, Dong Anh District).
- 2) *“ Wish my children could study at a school for Dumb and Deaf people, or at a Vocational Training school for disabled, so that they could have a bright future. I also wish my children would find a job, so they would earn money for their lives”* (Dang Thi My Hanh, Binh Trung hamlet, Tra Binh, Quang Ngai).
- 3) *“Wish to have vocational training for disabled children, so they can earn living when the parents get old”* (Ho Thi Nga, Tra Xuan townlet, Tra Bong district, Quang Ngai province)
- 4) *“ I wish my children could study in a school for disabled people; here, in normal schools, my children are not accepted”* (Nguyen Thi Tu, Hiep Duc, Quang Nam).
- 5) *“I am much worried. My children cannot go to school. I want to send them to some school for disabled children. What will they live on in the future?”* (Nguyen Thi Tu, Binh Tam commune, Hiep Duc district, Quang Nam province).
- 6) *“ Having enough money for the children to study”*(Dinh Thi Dien,Hoa Binh)
- 7) *“There is a special class for disabled children in every local, district and province”*(Truong Tien Hung, Y Yen, Nam Dinh).
- 8) *“ They integrate with the community”*(Truong Dinh Chung,Y Yen, Nam Dinh)

- 9) *“The Government pay more attention to disabled children, they themselves are underprivileged, and help them integrate with the community”*(Duong Xuan Thieu, Y Yen, Nam Dinh).
- 10) *“ I feel self-tity because I gave birth an abnormal child. I am overcome with grief when I cannot allow her to go to school though she wants to go to school”*.(Nguyen Dac Thuc, Hong Phuong, A Luoi).
- 11) *“ Firstly I wish he can walk in order to go to school, anyhow he can read. It is very pitiful to be illiterate.”*(Pham Van Tuong, Hop Thuong, Hong Thuong, A Luoi).
- 12) *“We don’t have money to pay for the children’s schoolfee, even though we really want”*(Hoang Van Ay, Hong Kim, A Luoi).
- 13) *“I want my child to go to school, she would be able to read and write. But she can’t study, so the teachers do not accept her”*. (Le Van Chiem, Ngoai hamlet, Phu Kim commune, Thach That, Ha Tay).

### **III. Some recommendations to the Vietnamese government**

- 1) *“We really wish, but we do not know where we can find and adopt a child, for example, an 3 – 4 or 5 year old one”* (Nguyen Dang Thien, Yen Phong Commune, Y Yen District, Nam Dinh Province).
- 2) *“There are a lot of discriminations in public”* (Phung Van Tiep, Phu Nghia Hamlet, Phu Kim Commune, Thach That District, Ha Tay province).
- 3) *“ I wish all my children healthy, household economy returns to normality, jobs are stable”* (Vo Thi Thuy, Ngo May town, Phu Cat District, Binh Dinh Province).
- 4) *“ I wish my children grow up, take care for their brothers and sisters; and when I get old, I have time to have furlough after strenuous service”*(Do Huu Sen’s wife, Hiep Duc District, Binh Dinh Province).
- 5) *“ Wish the Government pay more attentions to us, so we do not feel self – pity”* (Hoang Van Tinh, Nhoi Tren Hamlet, Co Loa Commune, Dong Anh District, Ha Noi).
- 6) *“ I have had many wishes, but I do not know the wishes are achievable. So I put up with it”* (To Thi Chau Thuan, 48 years old, Number 8, Ngoc Ha Bluff, Ngoc Ha Precinct, Ba Dinh District).
- 7) *“I only wish my father and all the family members healthy, household economy more prosperous (than today)”* (Ninh Xuan Lap, Lower Ninh Xa Hamlet, Yen Ninh Commune, Y Yen District, Nam Dinh Province).
- 8) *“I wish I am healthy, live long to look after the child”*(Tran Thi Toan, Hoang Nghi hamlet, Yen Phong commune, Y Yen District).

9) *“Wish the Government pay more attention to my child, more and more”*(Mai Thi Tu – whose husband is Ho Ngoc Huan, born in 1955, a farmer in Que Tho Commune, Hiep Duc District, Quang Ngai Province. She has three children, her first daughter is stunned).

10) *“The State politics should concern themselves with every patient and his/her real situation. They should not pay attention to whether the patient is the first or second generation”* (Do Van Giap, Kim Bong Hamlet, Tan Xa commune, Thach That District, Ha Tay Province).