

## THE ASIA FOUNDATION

### THE STORY:

Thao Dodson maintains that all one needs to succeed in life are one's brain and hands. She applied this principle in her life after being forced to migrate from her rural village in Northern Vietnam to Saigon during the Vietnam War. She used her skills garnered from a few months of fashion design school to create a children's clothing business which employed women of all ages in her village and provided enough income to feed her entire family. Thao witnessed the impact that training and employing women had on her community. Eventually, Thao migrated to the US and despite the distance she continued to support family members by sending relatives to vocational school. Years later, after a trip to her home village, Thao decided to expand her informal philanthropic engagement beyond her family to support girls in her home village. With the help of the Asia Foundation, she started a scholarship fund in her village to send 40 girls to school for primary education and vocational training. For just \$200 a year, Thao covered the school fees, supplies and lost wages so the parents would continue to send their girls to school.



Thao ignited this program and the Asia Foundation stewardship of this program has helped it to flourish. The Foundation's leadership enabled the expansion of Thao's project to serve 140 girls in three provinces, Nam Dinh, An Giang and Can Tho. Furthermore, at the request of the local authorities and the teachers as well as wishes from the girls and their families, the Foundation will continue providing additional scholarships for girls in the program who already finished the primary and secondary schools so that they can continue their higher study at either a university or vocational school.

This project is one of the many important projects the Foundation provides in Vietnam. With an extensive network of offices, staff, and partners throughout the region, The Asia Foundation works in more than 20 countries to develop and implement programs that increase economic opportunity, find solutions for long-term conflict, improve the environment, support women's rights, reduce human trafficking, ensure fair elections, and much more. The Foundation also distributes hundreds of thousands of books annually to schools, universities, public libraries and other institutions throughout Asia.

### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Help support Spark in its efforts to raise funds for the Asia Foundation to support Thao Dodson's scholarship program by attending Spark's Annual Global Gala: The Black and Pink Ball on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at the Julia Morgan Ballroom in San Francisco. Please visit [www.sparksf.org](http://www.sparksf.org) for more information.

Contact the Asia Foundation to learn about their work in empowering women in communities throughout Asia. Please visit [www.asiafoundation.org](http://www.asiafoundation.org) for more information.