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WELCOME TO CHANGE MERCHANTS

Change Merchants brings you some of the most beautiful hand made clothing, jewellery and homewares from ethical and fair trade partners all over the world. When you shop with us you support the movement for a more equitable world, where all people are treated with dignity, are respected for their skills and paid a fair, living wage.

We believe that, together with our customers and partners, we can use the power of our purchases to buy a better world.

A VISIT TO OUR PARTNER IN HOI AN, VIETNAM - REACHING OUT



In May 2014 my fiancé and I visited Change Merchant's first supplier, Reaching Out, while travelling in Hoi An, Vietnam.

Hoi An is a gorgeous historic town in the centre of Vietnam. We stayed at a lovely beach hotel, and went to the old town any time we felt like enjoying some fantastic food and a little shopping.

I'd been researching social enterprises and ethical businesses in Vietnam for a couple of months before we went, and Reaching Out kept coming up in my searches, mentioned everywhere from mainstream travel books and blogs to

fair trade websites.

Reaching Out employs people with disAbility and trains them to make beautiful handmade homewares, jewellery, children's clothing and gifts. The business was set up by Le Nguyen Binh, who is a wheelchair user, and his wife Quyen. This husband and wife team teach young disAbled people marketable skills in a friendly, supportive environment.

The store in Hoi An is beautiful, full of high quality, hand made products that I've never seen anywhere else. In an old wooden building in the middle of the old quarter of Hoi An, it's an impressive space with a welcoming feel. Even better is that many of the products sold in the store are made in the workrooms behind and above the store. My fiancé and I were lucky enough to get to spend some time with the staff as they worked, watching as they turned lumps of silver to ornate jewellery in front of our eyes.

I was particularly impressed by the 'staff stories' that are printed and hung around the store. Next to a photo of each staff member is a profile in their own words, showing why they like working at Reaching Out. The top reason didn't seem to be the money (although certainly the ability to support themselves

and their families featured), but the opportunity to socialise and create work friendships. I think I forget sometimes just how much my own work allows me to connect with people and feel like part of my community. Not having a job (and the social contact that comes with it) really compounds the loneliness many people feel as a result of living with disAbility.



Reaching Out operates using fair trade principles, and while they haven't received fair trade accreditation yet it's obvious they take their ethical business seriously. Quyen



told me how, when the tourism economy went belly up after recent typhoons and flooding, many local businesses had to lay their staff off due to low sales. However, Reaching Out kept all of their staff on during this 'lean time', knowing (or hoping) that things would pick up eventually.

It was hard to pick what we'd stock initially, and I was like a kid in a toy store, not knowing where to start, but we went with the jewellery

line first. I was so impressed with the quality and the artistic value of the pieces. I've got some sample stock that I'll be testing out over the coming months to see what customers like the most. But honestly, I'd buy everything they stock if I could. It's all amazing.

By the way, if you're around Hoi An any time soon, go and visit Reaching Out's shop. They're at #103 Nguyen Thai Hoc Street (between Tan Ky Old House and Cargo Club Restaurant). If you ask (and it's not midday nap time) they might show you the workshop out the back. They also have a 'silent' tea house close by where the wait staff have hearing impairments. We didn't make it there and I'm still kicking myself because I'm told the food and the service are impeccable.



Photographs above are taken at the Reaching Out workshop in Hoi An, Vietnam.