

On day one, December 11, I started to ride from Quang Tri to Quang Nam, against the pouring rain, and cold wind. In Lang Co, Hue it rained heavily with gusting winds. My raincoat was completely soaked. It was so cold that I had to rent a room to stay overnight there.

On the morning of December 12, I started to ride to Thu Bon river, destination Giao Thuy bridge. I went along Thu Bon river to check out how fishing families who used to live on boats along the river managed now to survive the flood. I made a tour visiting these families from 1pm to nearly 6pm and I spent the night in Ai Nghia town, Dai Loc district, Quang Nam province.

For the next few days, I went out to donate cash to needy people living on the river. Local inhabitants called them 'twilight people'.

I visited each time a cluster of 6 families living along the river. Not many families still live on the river boats. Now they live in clusters on land. The Thu Bon river currently has many dams, therefore, there are much less fish and shrimps. And not many people still fish for the living.

As for those who are still actually live or work as fishermen on boats, they are very poor. They can not afford to build houses, so boats are their permanent shelters.

Fortunately, one of my brother-in-law's uncle lives in this region. He led me to visit these poor families. I feel grateful to be on this trip with this compassionate man. At one time, he said something that I will never forget: "The richest of the ethnic minorities and the people living on the river (also known as the twilight people) are null compared to the poorest among us. However, we keep complaining about our misfortune".

These fishermen, nevertheless, were very generous.

On my visit, they offered to give me all the fish they caught that day. I refused. One elder man told me: "Honestly, we are not starving by giving you all the fish we caught. We may be hungry, but we are used to the hunger for so long now. Our gift to you comes from the depth of our heart. We don't know whether we will meet you again. Please accept these fish and shrimps as a heartfelt thank from our six families." I was really touched, but I had no heart to take away their food. So I told them: " A thousand thanks, but I can not take these fish, I am vegetarian".(Chuckles).

These river people earn a meager income from fishing. They get vnd 300,000 every net catch, but only one catch every 3 days. In average, if they are really lucky, for one day they catch vnd 100,000 worth of fish.

Finally, I had to say Good bye to them.

At the moment of departure, I realized that I will never forget them.

Ho Vu Hai Son

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