

Passion for Running

With a purpose

The challenge to raise awareness for the newborns in Vietnam

Allow your passion to become your goal, and it will become even better or your profession!

Marieke Dekkers: "More than 2.5 years ago I moved to Vietnam with my family. Letting go of all I had known up to that moment, but leaving with what I love the most (Myself, Han, Isa and Lola). In search of those roads open to us all.

It started with settling down and some surprise at what evolved: my children attending an English speaking school; getting to grips with new expat living; coming face to face with the country's complex social issues; being "at home" amongst smiling local street vendors and business folks; the new temperatures; and the different flavours. I explored new work opportunities, I made new friends. And then came the RUNNING chapter:

Vietnam is a developing country, where running has grown enormously in the last 2.5 years. The number of official races and the number of runners in Vietnam are growing year on year. I started after a few months with a jungle race in Cat Tien (May 2016) - and I ended up being the first to make the finals. So I moved on and tackled half marathons and full

marathons. My first 100km run, along a busy road to the beach, was followed in September 2017 by my first 100kms in Sapa - running through the rice fields and past more smiling locals. And after each race there was another one and, surprisingly, more and more successes. There is no time to be bored in a world as beautiful as this one. Vietnam catches you unawares and takes its hold on you in a unique way.

The routine that running gives me, the opportunities to see Vietnam as it is, the boundaries I have learned to bridge, and ultimately the insights I have gained in my work and in the future, have all been crafted by my running. And, yet, the most valuable thing about running here for me are the friends I've met along the way.

I am a mental health specialist and I want to help people to be more active and to give their life more valuable meaning. Starting up a conversation with a friend or a colleague, when you are on the move, is much easier, in my experience, than when you are sat opposite them. I have experienced that time and again, together with my racing friends in the early mornings ;). So that will be my working goal, because I believe in a mental healthy life when you keep moving forward.



Marieke Dekkers

**Take my hand.
We will walk.
We will enjoy our walk,
without thinking
or arriving anywhere.**

But how far can you go? My goal for 2018 was to do 5 races for the Asia Trail Master, to see how far I can get. But when there is competition involved, is it still passion? And what do I give this country back by trying to win races? Focus on getting better has the risk to lose the pleasure and contact with my body. I was amazed by my ability to win, but I feel I lose the my passion with races.

I decided to commit myself to Newborns in Vietnam, an opportunity for a newborns life and not to question life. So that is where the focus will be, before I leave Vietnam I will create with my running friends our own challenge to raise awareness for the newborns in Vietnam.

We will try to run beside every hospital where people are working hard to give life to every child. More to follow about this challenge. Newborns Vietnam believe passionately that every child, no matter where in the world they are born, deserves the chance to celebrate his or her first

birthday and to grow into a healthy independent adult who can contribute to society without being burdened by the effects of adverse events during the first day or weeks of life.

I want to keep on sharing the passion for running by giving children and adults running training. And allow people to tell their story. So I will not stop doing what I love, this is just the start, but I will stop challenging myself being the best.

Pay attention to the things you are naturally drawn to. They are often connected to your path, passion, and

purpose in life. Have the courage to follow them!"

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