

# VIETNAM LAOS CAMBODIA



## MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC AID NEWS BULLETIN

[www.msavlc.org](http://www.msavlc.org)

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# IS THIS YOUR LAST BULLETIN?

**Due to changes to data protection legislation, we cannot send you further Bulletins unless you ask us to do so. If you did not send the stamped post-card which accompanied the last Bulletin back to us, or contacted us by email, then this, unfortunately is your last Bulletin.**

A large proportion of our income is received in response to the quarterly Bulletin, where we outline individual projects and their needs. Unsurprisingly, it is the charity's main means of fundraising and that allows us to get the much-needed funds to the people who need them.

**But we now must have your permission to continue sending you the Bulletin.**

We have had a good response so far, and we thank you most sincerely if you have already told us that you would like to receive further Bulletins. But please contact us **now** if you want to continue receiving them. Either:

- ◆ Write to us using the pre-paid postcard sent with the last Bulletin, or
- ◆ Send a note to:

Lynn Firth, MSAVLC  
1 Hillside,  
Tregunnel Park,  
Newquay  
CORNWALL TR7 2AJ  
Or email:  
[msavlc.treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:msavlc.treasurer@gmail.com)  
with your name, postcode and  
YES (if you wish to remain on  
our mailing list) or NO (if you  
would like to be removed).

**Please remember, without your donations we cannot survive.**

On behalf of the Trustees,  
I would like to thank you most  
sincerely for your past support; I hope  
we can stay in touch and continue the  
important work that we do together.

*Lynn Firth,  
Trustee*

Please note: We will always protect your  
personal information, and never pass it on to a  
third party.



***Without your support MSAVLC will not be able to continue supporting young Cambodian children such as these .***

# 50-YEAR COMMEMORATION OF THE MY LAI MASSACRE

On Friday March 16<sup>th</sup> 2018, with talk of peace and co-operation rather than hatred, Vietnam marked 50 years since the My Lai massacre in a memorial ceremony that was attended by over a thousand people. It included survivors of the massacre, their families, and around 60 U.S. Vietnam war veterans and anti-war activists. Provincial official Mr. Dang Ngoc Dung said Vietnam now wants to set aside the past and befriend other countries to build a better future in which peace and happiness can thrive.

My Lai is situated in Quang Ngai Province in central Vietnam. There, at 7.30 a.m. on the 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1968, U.S. troops swept through four hamlets in the Son My sub-district, systematically killing 504 villagers, most of them the elderly, women and children.

The area was beautiful; peaceful, with rice paddies and small houses all around. The Americans claimed that it was a stronghold for the Viet Cong. However, they encountered no resistance as they advanced on the hamlets, after bombarding them with artillery, rocket and machine gun fire from helicopter gunships. Charlie Company, led by Lieutenant William Calley landed by helicopter, advanced through the fields and the atrocities began.

Villagers were shot and bayoneted, hand grenades were thrown into houses and bomb shelters, crops were destroyed, livestock slaughtered and houses burnt to the ground. About 150 unarmed villagers were rounded up, herded into a ditch and mowed down by machine gun fire. One man was thrown alive into a well, and then shot.

Over the next few hours unspeakable crimes were committed, as command helicopters circled



overhead and American boats patrolled offshore. Groups of civilians, including women and children, were assembled and executed, and fleeing villagers were machine-gunned down. As the massacre was taking place, young girls and women were raped by groups of soldiers. At the end of the murderous rampage 504 people had died, including 182 women, 17 of them pregnant, 173 children and 37 men over 60. One soldier shot himself in the foot to extricate himself from the slaughter; he was the only American casualty in the entire operation.

However, one brave U.S. officer, Captain Hugh Thompson, saw what was happening and put his helicopter down between the fleeing villagers and the G.I.'s. He rescued about ten of them, his two crewmen turning their guns on their U.S. commander whilst doing so! However, Thomson was initially vilified on his return home, and eventually died an alcoholic.

The soldiers tried to cover up the atrocities by covering the bodies with straw and burning them. Later the U.S. military ploughed the ground to destroy the evidence of their crimes, but although the troops who participated were ordered to keep their

mouths shut, several disobeyed and told their stories on returning to the U.S.A. All levels of U.S. Army command tried to cover up the massacre, but eventually Lieutenant Calley was made a scapegoat and sentenced to life imprisonment. But he only served three years under house arrest! Of course, he didn't act alone! Bizarrely, the event was painstakingly documented by a U.S. Military photographer, and some of these dreadful photos are on display in a small museum at the site of the massacre, along with sad little mementoes of that tragic day.

Trustees from MSAVLC visited My Lai in 2011, and their emotional reflections are recalled in our August 2012 Bulletin. They saw how the area had been reconstructed to reflect the aftermath of that fateful day. Shacks, burnt out shells of homes, bomb shelters and mass graves stood in their original locations, each marked with a plaque listing the names and ages of the families that had been slaughtered there.

There is a huge memorial plaque with the names of the 504 victims and their ages, engraved on it. There is one dramatic sculpture of an elderly woman holding up her fist in defiance,



a dead child in her arms and the rest of her family dying at her feet. Many visitors say prayers or bring incense to burn here. One U.S. veteran visits with 504 red roses which he places at the foot of the sculpture, to represent all the flowers that the victims would have received in their lives, the young ones from their lovers, and the old ones from their grandchildren.

The area, at last, is peaceful now, but there is an air of sadness and despair for the evil of war and its continuance today.

At Friday's memorial event, several dozen girls wearing traditional Ao Dai outfits and dove headgear, performed dances in tribute to the victims and to promote peace. Flowers were laid at

the gravesides. The My Lai Peace Foundation, a local non-governmental organization was launched at the event, and its president Truong Ngoc Thuy said at the launch;

"We more than anyone else understand the price of peace, we desire for peace".

# DISABLED SERVICES IN PURSAT, CAMBODIA



**Disability Development Services Program (DDSP) is a Cambodian non-government organisation, launched in January 2003. It is one of the few organisations in Cambodia providing services to disabled people. It is based in Pursat, a poor rural province in central Cambodia.**

DDSP's objectives are to enable disabled people to access services to improve their quality of life, to raise awareness among communities about disabled people's rights and opportunities, and to help other service providers in Pursat to include disabled people in their activities.

The population of the Province is about 400,000 and of these about 18,900 people have disabilities. These are caused mostly by landmine accidents, work accidents, diseases such as polio and cerebral palsy or birth defects.

DDSP provide practical help to

these people, nearly all of whom live in poverty, in the rural areas. They provide latrines, wheelchairs, wells and fresh water filters, as well as giving practical and emotional support and advice. DDSP also try to set the people up in small businesses, in order

to support themselves and their families. They have provided business start-up loans, as well as chickens, pigs, cows and buffalo for some of their clients.

MSAVLC funding supports their Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Rehabilitation Project (PQR Project), one of four projects which DDSP runs at present. This project focuses on four main areas:

- Basic Needs – Disabled people's health, hygiene, nutrition, housing and emergency needs.
- Rehabilitation Needs – Home-based therapy and rehabilitation equipment, and referral to rehabilitation services outside the community.
- Social Needs – Psycho-social counselling, confidence and empowerment, education and vocational training.
- Economic Needs – Access to micro-credit and capital for income



*The Stoeng Pursat River Run, which is organised by DDSP, integrates able-bodied and disabled adults and children.*

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

You are cordially invited to the MSAVLC  
Annual General Meeting  
which will be at

**6.00 pm on Tuesday 10 July 2018**

**at**

**The Embassy of the Socialist Republic of  
Vietnam in London,  
12-14 Victoria Road, London W8 5RD.**

The meeting will be followed by a short address from  
H. E Ambassador Tran Ngoc An.

The Agenda and Annual Report for 2017  
will be available at the meeting.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As a direct result of the  
General Data Protection Regulation  
(GDPR), it looks as though the charity  
is going to lose touch with many of our  
valued supporters.

If this is your last Bulletin, on  
behalf of the Trustees, I would like to  
thank you very much for your support  
and your donations in the past. The  
money which you have donated has  
made a real difference to the sick and  
the needy in South-East Asia.

If you do not want this to be last  
that you hear from us, please contact  
us and we will continue to send you  
the Bulletin, free of charge, by post or  
email.

Now, more than ever, we need  
your help in finding new supporters for  
our work, and the printed Bulletin is a  
really effective way for us to reach  
out.

When you have finished reading  
your Bulletin, please share it with your  
friends, or leave it where others may  
find it, on a coffee table, at church or  
in a waiting room.

Many thanks,  
Peter Lidgard.

generation.

MSAVLC has supported this  
project since 2010 and Trustees have  
visited DDSP headquarters on three  
occasions to talk to the Director,  
Pheng Samnang, to evaluate the  
project and undertake field visits to  
some of its clients. It is controlled by  
a Board of Directors and they have a  
total of 12 full-time staff.

DDSP faces many difficulties,  
the major one being funding. At  
present MSAVLC sends them about  
\$17,000 USD each year, to help fund  
the PQR Project. The area is difficult  
to work in and the patients are spread  
far and wide. Most are way out in the  
countryside and very difficult to  
reach. Rural roads are so poor that  
motorcycle is the only practical form  
of transport to the furthest clients.  
Usually two DDSP staff share one  
motorcycle, for what may be a four or  
five-hour journey each way.

DDSP also helps in organising  
a number of events for disabled  
people in Pursat Province, including  
International Disabled Day and the  
Stoeng Pursat River Run.

This is an annual event which  
integrates able-bodied runners and  
people with disabilities in a variety of  
road races for children and adults.

DDSP supported a total of 84  
people with disabilities in the 2017  
races, including paraplegic and  
quadriplegic clients, amputees and  
wheelchair users, and children with  
intellectual and physical disabilities.

The goal of the event is to  
promote the rights of disabled people,  
to provide a chance for them to  
integrate socially and to reduce  
discrimination.



In response to February's  
feature about Ebay, supporter Steve  
Porter sold his beloved old model  
train set and gave all the proceeds to  
the charity.

Thank you very much.

## IN THE NEWS

The article in February's  
Bulletin about our work with the  
victims of Agent Orange certainly did  
strike a chord with some of our  
readers.

We are so very grateful for the  
many individual donations made in  
February, some of which were  
earmarked especially to be used to  
further our project with the Vietnam  
Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA).

Moreover, freelance journalist  
John Green had an article published in  
the Morning Star drawing attention to  
the plight of Agent Orange victims in  
Vietnam. Once again, MSAVLC was  
credited in his article.