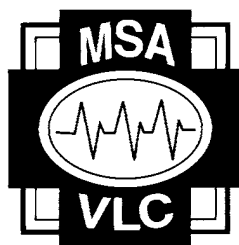


VIETNAM LAOS CAMBODIA



MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC AID NEWS BULLETIN

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WATER FOR LAOS

Suan Luang Orphanage is situated about 20 miles away from Luang Prabang in northern Laos. Although Luang Prabang is a favourite spot for tourists, few see the poverty that is just outside the town, in the surrounding countryside. 33% of the population live below the national poverty line, and the average life expectancy among local people is just 50 years! This is due to many reasons including poverty, malnutrition, inadequate water supplies and poor medical care. The doctors are not well educated and the health system totally inadequate; older people and those with serious diseases are sometimes just left to die.

MSAVLC was made aware of Suan Luang Orphanage by Andrew Brown, an Australian who lives in Luang Prabang. Andrew runs the Lotus Villa Hotel in central Luang Prabang, but he gives much of his time and energy to helping the poor of his community. He told us of the desperate need for a well at the orphanage, and so Trustees from MSAVLC visited it in 2013.

The orphanage has 655 children in its care, aged from 11 to 17 years old. Some have no parents at all, and others have families who cannot afford to keep them. There are 51 staff and all the children come from around the Luang Prabang area. The orphanage is partly funded by the Government, but only to the extent of \$12 USD per child per month, which is obviously not enough. The Government provides free schooling for these children, some pencils and books. They also provide some basic food, but this is barely enough to feed them all. Andrew's hotel supplements this food twice a week with eggs, meat and fresh vegetables.

The Trustees were shown around the orphanage and school. There are about 50 children per class and 12 classes. In one classroom block the roof was



in dire need of repair. They were shown the girls' and boys' dormitories which were at either side of the dusty school field. They were very grim, the rooms packed solid with bunk beds, almost touching each other, with clothes hung up on them and very little else. They were very dark and dingy inside with no toilets or washing facilities. There were toilet blocks outside the dormitories, but no hand-washing facilities in most of them.

Outside the girls' dormitories was a large tank filled with river water where the children washed their hands and faces and cleaned their teeth, they also washed their clothes in it. They had to bathe in the river which was some distance away. Drinking water had to be purchased, and a 20-litre bottle was 4,000 Kip (about 40p), but this soon mounts up, 600 children drink lots of water! The Trustees were shown the canteen and the kitchen where food was being prepared in large oil drums over huge log fires. The meal that day was a stew that seemed to contain only fish heads and a few vegetables, with rice.

A fresh-water well was desperately needed there, and the Trustees subsequently agree to fund one for them. It was completed in October 2013 for less than \$1,800 US dollars. It now supplies clean, fresh water for all the children in the orphanage. Andrew wrote to us saying:

"It is all finished and the well is pumping out clean water and lots of it."

"There is not much to see in the pictures, as the pump is in the bore, but we drilled next to a disused concrete tank which was actually in quite good condition inside. We will reconnect some new plumbing to the tank and then we will have free water."

"Thank you for such a wonderful gift. The water is ok for drinking but we will still use filters for the kids' drinking water. Now the kids can have endless showers; they will be most grateful. The well driller has guaranteed the pump for a full year but we expect that we will have clean water for several years into the future."

"Thank you so much!!!"

One of the dormitories and the kitchen at Suan Luang Orphanage.



Since the success of the well at Suan Luang Orphanage, the Trustees have agreed to fund wells for some of the villages in Jumpet District, which is close to Luang Prabang, but is one of the poorest districts in Laos. At present villagers have to collect water from the local river which is often contaminated by upstream villages. This is a dangerous practice, especially in a climate where water-borne diseases thrive.

Moreover it is usually the women who collect water from the rivers, and

during the rainy season the banks become slippery and dangerous. There have been instances of women and children drowning or slipping on the banks and breaking a limb or a hip.

A well could supply water for 400-500 people and would improve the lives and health of these villagers immeasurably, at a remarkably low cost.

MSAVLC is at present working with Andrew Brown to target suitable villages, and we hope to put in clean and safe water systems in four villages

this year.

However, there are many other villages in Jumpet District which are in dire need of fresh water. MSAVLC wants your help to raise about £1,200 for each village water system. With enough funds we can extend the program to many more remote villages of this often-neglected country.

*Mary Lidgard
Honorary Secretary*

NEW HOPE FIRST AID PROJECT

The New Hope Children's Home is situated in the countryside on the outskirts of Poi Pet, a city which is depressed, poor and scruffy. The Home is run by Cheng Rostitus, a committed Christian who was brought up during the Pol Pot regime and survived its horrors. Due to his experiences he is determined to help the poor and disadvantaged children of the area. There is obviously an enormous need for orphanages, with less than 1% of the 600,000 orphaned children in Cambodia living in them. The less fortunate live a life of poverty on the streets, and are often lured into crime and prostitution at a very young age.

Rotitus opened the Home in 2012 and works there with his wife and small staff of dedicated workers. Trustees from MSAVLC visited the home in 2013, and were able to see for themselves the new development and meet the children. They



visited the girls and boys dormitories which are separated by a dirt playing area. Both had a tiled living area which was empty except for a few small plastic stools, and each had two bedrooms, one for the little ones and one for the older children. There was also a small room off

the dormitory, for the house-parents. The small children slept up to four in a large bed, and the older ones slept on floor mats. There were some clothes in baskets, one or two hand-coloured pictures on the walls, four little toy instruments and nothing else. The dining room was empty except for

a table and a few plastic chairs, it still had a dirt floor and the walls were bare concrete blocks. Outside they were trying to develop their kitchen garden and were growing a few bananas, paw-paw trees, herbs and morning glory. There were two large ponds with a few fish in them.

When financial help can be found, many improvements have to be made to the existing buildings. When the Trustees visited the Home there was just one basic outside shower by the boy's dormitory, and only two toilets which were by the entrance gates, a good 200 yards away. Unfortunately this area is flooded during the rainy season!

The orphanage eventually hopes to cater for about 100 children. The youngest children are taught at the Home along with some of the neighbouring children, and the older ones attend school in one of the nearby villages.

MSAVLC sponsor two First Aid Clinics which are supervised by Rostitus, one at the New Hope Children's Home, and one in the slum area of Poi Pet. The First Aid Clinics both take place on a Saturday and are attended by about 60 children. Wounds are cleansed and dressed, burns and abscesses treated and head lice eradicated. There is no hospital nearby and no free treatment is otherwise available. The Trustees attended both these first aid sessions, the first one in a barn at the Home where the area nearby had recently been cleared of landmines. The second took place outside a church, in a depressed area of Poi Pet. A wooden table was laid up with the first aid equipment, and chickens, dogs and children swarmed around. However, the sessions were efficiently run, and were obviously much needed. The Trustees were very impressed by the efficiency and kindness shown to the children.



The children at the orphanage had no toys or games to play with, to provide them with physical and mental stimulation, and the Trustees were able to buy for them skipping ropes, Lego, footballs, tennis rackets, balls, dolls, farm animals and coloring books and pencils. They were received with amazement and delight, by both the children and the staff!

Since the Trustees visit it was agreed by MSAVLC to fund the building of a shower and toilet block outside both of the dormitories and this work is now almost complete. We hope to continue our support for the New Hope Children's Home into the future, and try to raise funds to continue the First Aid Project.

If you can help, please give what you can, to enable us to help these vulnerable children, and save them from a life of hardship and poverty.

*Mary Lidgard
Honorary Secretary*



JO CARRITT

The Trustees heard recently of the death of Jonathan (Jo) Carritt, a lifelong supporter of the charity and son of its founder Dr Joan McMichael. He was 65.

We send our condolences to his family and friends at this sad time.

HAVE YOU SEEN THE CHARITY'S NEW WEBSITE ?
You can find it at: www.msavlc.org

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013

Once again the charity's Annual General Meeting was held at the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, in Victoria Road, London, by kind permission of the Ambassador, H.E. Vu Quang Minh.

The turnout was disappointingly small, quite possibly due to the London Underground strike which began that evening. Nevertheless the Trustees were delighted to see that George Howarth MP, the Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Vietnam was able to attend. There were also a number of officers from the Embassy and a reporter and cameraman from the Vietnam News Agency.

The meeting began on a sad note as the Chairman, Peter Lidgard, remarked that it was the first Annual General Meeting that he had attended without the presence of Dr Madeleine Sharp. He said that Madeleine been a wonderful inspiration and a tireless worker for the charity for over 40 years. A minute's silence was kept in her memory.

ANNUAL REPORT

Introducing the Annual Report, Peter Lidgard told the meeting that 2013 had been a difficult year for the charity. Due to her declining health, Madeleine Sharp had only been able to attend one of the Trustees' meetings: as had Brian Stenson, who resigned in March due to ill-health. Chairman Peter Lacy had been in hospital during the summer, and both he and his wife Sheila Lacy had reluctantly resigned from the Trustees due to ill-health, in November.

In February Peter and Mary Lidgard embarked upon an extended visit to South-East Asia to monitor and evaluate all of the charity's projects. They spent a

total of fifteen weeks in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and were for the first time able to look in detail at all the charity's projects. They also had an opportunity to meet some of the beneficiaries of the aid which we send, and to make a number of outreach visits. It was a tiring but very worthwhile trip.

During their visit Peter and Mary sent full reports back to the Trustees, and on their return a number of important policy decisions were made. These were;

- To target the charity's aid to the poorest and most vulnerable people in the three countries,
- To continue to make biennial monitoring and evaluation visits to South-East Asia, to ensure that the charity's money was being spent wisely and effectively, and
- To try to limit the number of projects supported and not to take on any projects in new locations.

During the year the Trustees noted that the charity's website was completely out-of-date, and so it was agreed to re-write and re-launch it. They were fortunate to recruit Jon and Deborah for this task. It was a major undertaking to rewrite the reports of all our projects and include many new photographs which is now nearing completion. There is a section called 'News' and we are hoping that this will be a way of keeping our supporters up-to-date. Deborah Dainton was co-opted on to the Trustees in January this year as Website Manager.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Honorary Treasurer, John Firth, presented the Financial Report to the

meeting. He noted that the charity's income was well down compared with 2012, but that we still have plenty of funds in reserve. Spending on the charity's projects in South-East Asia was up compared with 2012, but this was not surprising because of the project proposals made following the monitoring and evaluation visit. (Details of all of the charity's project spending will appear in the May edition of the Bulletin.)

John also noted that administrative costs, excluding production and posting of the Bulletin, were less than one per cent of the charity's spending.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Charity's Trustees were then elected as follows:

Chairman: Peter Lidgard.

Honorary Secretary: Mary Lidgard.

Honorary Treasurer: John Firth.

Trustees: Lynn Firth,

Deborah Dainton.

The meeting concluded with thanks to the Ambassador for his hospitality, and a sumptuous Vietnamese Buffet provided by the Embassy.

MAILING LIST

We have amalgamated our old mailing list with our database of financial supporters. As with any large computer-based exercise, it is possible the odd gremlin might have got in the works. If anyone receives this Bulletin after asking us not to send one, or if it's arrived by post instead of email (or by email instead of by post), please tell us. Write to John Firth (Hon Treasurer MSAVLC), 5 Cleevemont, Evesham Road, Cheltenham GL52 3JT or send an email to enquiries@msavlc.org