

VIETNAM LAOS CAMBODIA



MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC AID NEWS BULLETIN

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Celebrating Fifty Years of Aid to South-East Asia

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DAUGHTERS OF CAMBODIA

For some time, the Trustees of MSAVLC have been concerned about the appalling sex-trade that exists in Cambodia. Our particular concern is in Phnom Penh, which the Trustees have visited many times.

“In Cambodia, one of the poorest nations in the world, the sexual exploitation of children is a thriving business, especially in the capital Phnom Penh and increasingly so in urbanising border areas...

Studies show as many as one third of sex workers in Cambodia are children under 18 years of age, and more than half of those forced into the sex industry are lured or sold into it by people they know.

Thousands of children and women are lured, sold and kidnapped into the sex industry each year. They are often betrayed by their neighbours, friends, relatives, guardians and even boyfriends or parents, and they are tricked with false promises of a better life or well-paid work. They are then forced to pay off ‘debts’ for transportation, health and living expenses, subdued with rape, violence and torture and sold from brothel to brothel. The sex trade feeds on the despair, ignorance and poverty of those it seeks to exploit.”

‘Children on the Edge’ – UNICEF.



Images by Jeremy Max

The Trustees felt compelled to help in some way, and last March met with Ruth Elliott, a Cambridge University psychologist, who founded ‘Daughters of Cambodia’ in Phnom Penh in 2007.

Daughters of Cambodia is a non-profit organization working with survivors of sex trafficking who have elected to leave the sex industry, but need assistance in order to do so.

Daughters helps young women and men escape the horrors of sex trafficking and start sustainable new lives for themselves. It provides

dignified, rewarding employment, paired with vital health and support services needed to aid their physical, psychological and social recovery from exploitation. They reach out to those who are trapped in the sex industry and offer them opportunities to walk free, start a new life and learn how to sustain it within community settings. Daughters operate non-residential centres in the heart of Phnom Penh’s red light areas, where young women, or young men, wishing to leave sex work are taught how to change their life-styles. They are provided with employment at one of

their fair-trade businesses along with a range of social and psychological services.

They have 3 workshops; a sewing room where clothes and furnishings are made, a silk screen workshop and a jewellery workshop. Here boys and girls are employed and taught a trade with good working conditions and wages, and they live independently within the community.

Most of the girls are aged from 18 to late twenties. They have little education so are offered educational opportunities and creative programmes such as music,

art, photography, dance and design, which encourage self-confidence and self-esteem. There are medical clinics and antenatal clinics, and psychological counselling is available, as well as social workers who visit the girls in their own homes.

Daughters of Cambodia has helped hundreds of girls to permanently walk free from sex-work and to experience psychological healing and improved quality of life.

However, numbers are now capped due to lack of funds, which is their only limiting factor in terms of numbers. They also have a program for male trans-sexual sex workers called Sons of Cambodia.

As recovery takes place, many clients at Daughters become leaders and managers within the organization and are employed in roles including Business Managers, Head Chefs,

Quality Control Managers, Order and Dispatch Controllers, Production Technical Trainers, Counsellors and



Receptionists; many are found employment within the community.

Daughters is a faith-based organization, and clients are offered opportunities to learn about the love of God at Daughters' weekly Christian church if they wish, but it is entirely voluntary.

Daughters run the Sugar'n Spice Café, where delicious food is served, in their visitors' centre in Phnom Penh. The visitors' centre also incorporates the Hands'n Feet Spa and a boutique where

products made in the Daughters' workshops are sold. The girls are taught cooking, waitressing and customer services. They have also opened a Hotel near the Russian Market in Phnom Penh, called the White Linen Hotel, and this also incorporates a café inside.

When the Trustees from MSAVLC visited Daughters of Cambodia they were moved and humbled by the dedication of Ruth and her staff who are doing an incredibly difficult job with care, compassion and essential practical aid.

It was agreed to fund a proposal put forward to us by Daughters to support for a year: two councillors, a midwife and a security guard, food and medical supplies, and referrals, transportation and operational expenses.

The Trustees would welcome your help to support the vital work that Daughters is doing, both now and in the future.

*Mary Lidgard
Honorary Secretary*

NEW TECHNOLOGY

The Trustees are keen to keep up with the newer forms of communication available in this digital age. Readers will hopefully be aware of our website, (www.msavlc.org) which has recently been completely redesigned and updated by Deborah and Jon Dainton and Mary Lidgard. We have now launched a Facebook page, which is being administered by Trustees Donna Airey and Susmita Ghosh. If you are a Facebook member search for "Medical and Scientific Aid for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia".

If you would like to receive our Bulletins by email please contact Lynn Firth (lynndfirth@gmail.com). A single donation, no matter how small, means that you can get our Bulletins for free, until you ask us to stop. We appreciate that many people still like the paper Bulletin and we will continue to post them to our supporters throughout Britain and around the world.

Peter Lidgard



GEOFF'S WALK

As a way of celebrating your 70th birthday, it takes some beating!

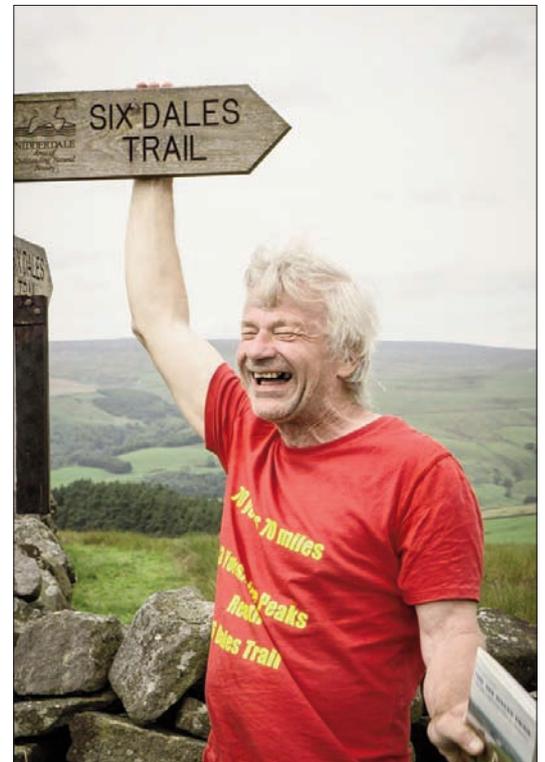
Geoff Hill, from Harrogate in Yorkshire, who has been a supporter of MSAVLC for many years, decided to do a sponsored walk last summer and give the donations to our charity.

Encouraged by some of his friends, Geoff walked a total of 70 miles, including the Yorkshire Three Peaks and the 38-mile Six Dales Trail from Otley to Middleton.

As he has been a keen supporter of MSAVLC for some time, Geoff walked all the way wearing a t-shirt publicising our charity, and he asked for sponsorship from friends and family.

He said that he had expected to raise one or two hundred pounds, but was amazed to find that the total added up to over £1,200! Geoff also made sure that his donation was gift-aided and so the final sum raised was £1,526.39.

The Trustees were delighted to receive these funds, and thank Geoff



most sincerely for his efforts. Despite the poor weather, Geoff said that he enjoyed the challenge.

He can rest assured that all the funds will be spent helping the most sick and needy people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

OUR WORK IN 1985

We were contacted recently by Beatriz Chadour-Sampson, an author who is researching the life of Barbara (Bobbi) Cartlidge with the hope of writing a book about her life. Beatriz was aware that an article had been written by Bobbi Cartilage for the Bulletin in 1985. Some years ago Dr Madeleine Sharp gave me the charity's collection of Bulletins, and although they do go back to 1965, many of the publications from the 1970's and 1980's are missing.

However, as luck would have it, a copy of the Bulletin from May 1985, when the charity was celebrating its twentieth birthday, was amongst the collection, and the article written by Bobbi Cartilage was there. I was fascinated to read it, and I thought that it would be of interest to our more long-standing supporters, some of whom may know Bobbi, and to our newer supporters who probably know little of the early work of the charity. Some extracts from her article are printed below:

"Vietnam's heroic fight for independence, against enormous odds, was a fact with which I was familiar in the 1960's, but when Stanley Foreman telephoned me one day in 1966, asking if I had a bit of spare time to help the newly formed Committee for Medical Aid, I had little notion of the tremendous tasks and deep involvement that lay ahead. Then and since people would ask me why I did it, and the answer is still the same: it was the most direct and practical way to do something to counter the unspeakable horror and hardship forced on Vietnam. Moreover, this was one committee dedicated to spare no efforts, where few words were followed by swift and concrete actions. The keynote for MACV was always a sensible, practical approach, terrific teamwork among the many specialised volunteers over the whole country and abroad, and close contact with Vietnam itself.

Among the many different jobs I did in the course of many years, one was the responsibility of getting the blood donated at our many Donating Sessions, to a blood bank in Sutton, Surrey within a few hours. To be honest, I felt pretty sick the first time I handled the body-warm fluid in its soft plastic container. Moreover, on the first few occasions I had to cool it down in my domestic fridge and forgot to tell my husband—who recoiled in horror when he opened the fridge door to get a pint of milk. We got quite professional soon afterwards with special boxes which had frozen inserts to keep the blood at the right temperature. These inserts had to be prepared 24 hours ahead in the deep-freeze, a task which I entrusted to a local ice-cream manufacturer. Packed with inserts and full of blood, each box weighed 24kgs, and I grew muscular like Popeye, humping them in and out of my car. The routine for many years, sometimes every week, was to get the blood to Sutton on Sunday night after a session, then fetch it again the following Thursday, leaving home at 6 am, and deliver it to LOT, the Polish Airline at London Airport. If the flight was delayed, they would telephone me and I would have to go back to Heathrow, collect the boxes and return them to Sutton, because even in those special containers, it could not remain for longer than eight hours.

In the early 1970's, Gordon Schaffer and I were delegated by the Peace Committee to attend a Peace Congress in Budapest, Hungary. I was never a great public speaker, in fact, I have always avoided that task, but as soon as we got there they clamoured that I should tell them about our aid to Vietnam. I discovered it was quite easy, at any rate to address a large audience who didn't speak English, so every two or three sentences I could pause and think while the interpreter rambled on in Hungarian. In the resplendent main chamber of the Hungarian Parliament, decked out in gilt and plush, I elaborated on the

various and many activities of our Committee. Their reaction was in some ways unexpected – they were used to their aid for Vietnam being organised by their Government. They were amazed that we did all this work unpaid, making our own decisions, and some thought it sounded 'romantic'. I was quick to tell them how unromantic it is to lug ten to twelve boxes of 24 kgs. each, for weeks on end in the small hours of the morning.

By which I do not give the impression that it was all hard slog and nothing else. When I joined the Events Committee, I helped with the organisation of concerts and later the Art Exhibitions to raise funds. Of course it was a lot of hard work, but it was always interesting and good to see such a large variety of paintings on the walls, talk to prospective clients and generally help people to understand the problems that faced Vietnam. It was exciting and rewarding to have so many willing and sympathetic artists, many of whom gave their work entirely or shared a generous portion of the proceeds of their sales with us. Beryl Bainbridge enjoyed her first success as a painter with us, before she became a famous writer. Patrick Procktor, David Hockney, Ron Kitaj, Philip Hughes, Keith Grant, Hilda Bernstein, Harold Elvin, Ken Sprague and Peter de Francia were among the hundred or more participants. Not only did they respond to our appeals time and again, but often helped to hang up the pictures as well. In our hey-day we raised sums exceeding £10,000 though as Vietnam receded from the headlines, it became progressively harder to achieve large turnovers."

We highly appreciate the work of Bobbi, and all her colleagues, who helped support the charity in the early days, but also to everyone who gave their time, and their blood, to help those in need.

Peter Lidgard

LEN ALDIS

It is with great sadness that we have to report that Len Aldis, who was a great supporter of MSAVLC, and was known for his enduring campaigns to support Agent Orange victims in Vietnam, died at his home in London in November 2015 at the age of 85.

Len was co-founder of the British-Vietnam Friendship Society, (BVFS) and for many years he was its Honorary Secretary, but in the 1980's and 1990's

he was also a member of MSAVLC's Executive Committee. Until recently Len attended the charity's meetings in London and helped with the distribution of the Bulletin. He was a founder member and Honorary President of the Vietnam-UK Network, and also a great campaigner for peace and for pensioners' rights.

As secretary of the British -Vietnam Friendship Society, Len visited Vietnam frequently, giving money and gifts to

the people who had suffered in the Vietnam War, especially those who continue to suffer the effects of Agent Orange. It was Len, more than anyone else, who exposed the fact that the lasting effects of this chemical warfare were being passed on through three or

four generations.

Len campaigned for Monsanto, the USA's multinational corporation responsible for the production of Agent Orange, to pay compensation to its victims. It was his disgust at the use of chemical weapons in the Vietnam War that led to Len spearheading the campaign against Dow Chemical's sponsorship of the 2012 Summer Olympics in London: Dow had played a large role in the production of Agent Orange but had also worked on how to make napalm more deadly.

The Vietnamese people responded warmly to his unstinting support. He received a series of honours in recognition of his work, and he was awarded the Order of Friendship by Vietnam's President.

Mr Pham Gia Khiem, a former deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, said in a letter sent to Len on his 80th birthday in 2010, that the Vietnamese Government and people highly appreciated the great contributions of Len, and the British-Vietnam Friendship Society, to Vietnam.

The Trustees send their sincere condolences to his family.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

You are cordially invited to the MSAVLC
Annual General Meeting

which will be at

6.30 pm on Tuesday 8th March 2016 at

**The Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
in London**

12-14 Victoria Road, London W8 5RD.

EVERYONE WELCOME

NEW HOPE CHILDREN'S HOME

Since the article in the September 2015 Bulletin, four more children have been sponsored at the New Hope Children's Home, and a number of donations have been received to aid our work there. Our grateful thanks go to our generous supporters for their kindness, which will make life a little easier for everyone at the home.

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