

# VIETNAM LAOS CAMBODIA



## MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC AID NEWS BULLETIN

www.msavlc.org

No. 192 – February 2018

Registered Charity No 252906

Please return the enclosed post-card to MSAVLC

# CAN WE STAY IN TOUCH ? IT IS IMPORTANT TO US

**D**ue to changes to Data Protection legislation, after 25 May 2018 we will no longer be able to send you our news Bulletins, without your express permission.

A large proportion of our income is received in response to the quarterly Bulletins on individual projects and their needs. It is our main means of fundraising, and allows us to get the much-needed funds to the people who need them. But we now need your permission to continue sending you the Bulletin.

Giving your permission is quick and simple.

For those receiving a paper copy, you will find with this Bulletin a stamped addressed postcard. Tick 'YES' to confirm that we can continue sending you our Bulletins. Or, if you no longer want to hear from us, tick 'NO' and we will remove you from our mailing list. Pop the card in the post – job done!

For those receiving the Bulletin electronically, please reply to our email saying either:

'YES – I want to receive the

MSAVLC Bulletins', or

'NO – please remove me from your mailing list'.

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

On behalf of the Trustees, I would like to thank you for your past

support; I hope we can stay in touch and continue the important work that we do together.

**Overseas supporters:** Whilst the requirement for permission does not apply to you, please let us know if you no longer want to receive the Bulletin.

*Lynn Firth, Trustee*



The Certificate of Golden Hearts recently awarded to MSAVLC by VAVA (the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin).

See the full story on Page 2.

Please return the enclosed post-card to MSAVLC

# WHEELCHAIRS FOR AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS

**O**n their last visit to Vietnam, Trustees were able to visit some Agent Orange victims in their homes and saw first-hand some of the difficulties that they experienced. Mobility was a great obstacle and one family had to care for three severely disabled boys. Mother was tiny and she said that wheelchairs would help them greatly, as she would be able to move the boys around more easily without having to lift them everywhere.

On another visit, the Trustees met one young man who had been provided with a wheelchair, and for the first time in his life he had been able to go into his village, socialise with friends, and most importantly to him, visit his local temple. His life had been transformed. Many more of the families that we visited recounted similar problems of mobility and transport.

MSAVLC works closely with VAVA, the Vietnamese Association for the Victims of Agent Orange, and knowing of the great need for wheelchairs, recently awarded them \$20,000 USD. VAVA estimated that with this amount they could purchase 180 wheelchairs. But after careful 'shopping around' they were able to purchase 273 at a cheaper price, but of the same quality. This enabled them to distribute them to victims in 43 provinces. The Trustees will visit some of these recipients on their next evaluation visit to Vietnam.

VAVA was founded in 2004 and was set up to help the Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange. Agent Orange is the name given to the deadly chemical which was sprayed by the American forces over Vietnam from 1961 to 1971.

More than 80 million litres of poisonous chemicals were used; most of them were Agent Orange, and they contained nearly 400 kilos of dioxin. Dioxin is one of the most toxic substances ever produced by mankind, and can cause many kinds of serious physical and mental disorders. Many of these are incredibly severe and disabling. It is thought that the chemical enters the genes, and is passed on from one generation to the next. In Vietnam it is known to have entered the food system through contamination of the land and rivers. Nobody knows exactly how many generations will be affected.

At present approximately three million people in Vietnam are affected

and over four million people have been exposed. They are the poorest people in the country. 70% of the families are classified as living below the poverty line and 22% of the families have three or more victims. Many are very seriously disabled and 90% have no professional skills or jobs. They are subjected to uncountable difficulties and hardships. The burden of care for these victims usually falls on their parents or relatives, many of whom are now in their old age. The problem is great, and will be made more so when the parents and carers of these victims eventually die.

Where possible VAVA gives help to these people in their homes and in rehabilitation centres: priority is given to the poorest families. Many of them try hard to overcome their unfortunate lot and they are helped by VAVA to integrate themselves into society and their community. Wheelchairs are an invaluable aid, and MSAVLC has been helping VAVA for many years, with the provision of wheelchairs and specialized equipment, and by giving financial help.

We are delighted to be able to help so many victims, knowing what a great difference it will make to their lives, and we thank our donors for their continued generosity in enabling us to do so.

VAVA have also expressed their gratitude for MSAVLC's continued support by awarding us with a Certificate of Golden Hearts. The certificate is shown on the front page.

We hope to be able to continue our support for many years to come.

*Mary Lidgard  
Honorary Secretary*



# ALL EARS CAMBODIA

News from Founder/Director of All Ears Cambodia, Glyn Vaughan

**The World Health Organisation estimates that 360 million people in the world suffer from disabling hearing loss. At least 50% of those with disabling deafness are children, and it is estimated that over half of these cases may have been prevented if adequate primary ear health care services had been available.**

Like most developing countries there is a desperate paucity of specialist ear health services throughout Cambodia with approximately two million people suffering from some degree of deafness. Half are children; most living in abject poverty and, alarmingly, most of these cases could have been prevented. In some villages, chronic ear disease in children is so common it is considered normal. Of the ones in need of hearing aids, only a minority has them; the cost of a modern digital hearing aid is more than a Khmer peasant would pay for his house. Transportation to specialist health services is often inadequate or unaffordable. Deprived education and illiteracy sustains ignorance about the effects of ear disease. These effects are often miscalculated, and the means of remediation poorly understood. Ear disease is frequently mistreated, if treated at all. There is an avoidable burden of ear disease in Cambodia requiring earlier diagnosis and more effective management.

The situation in rural communities is even worse, with chronic otitis media at a level that represents a major public health problem in need of urgent attention. Early diagnosis is the key to effective management - disease should be identified and treated as quickly as possible. There is a high degree of inner ear damage through trauma, communicable disease and ototoxicity. Furthermore there is a disturbing tendency for misuse of antibiotics.

Hearing impairment retards the development of affected individuals. In children it impairs language acquisition and damages cognitive development, which in turn impedes educational progress.

In adults, it causes vocational and economic difficulties, while in the elderly it leads to loneliness and neglect.

Deafness causes social difficulties and stigmatization at all ages.

These difficulties are magnified in developing countries, which usually have few services, almost no trained staff and little awareness on how to deal with these difficulties. Access to quality specialist care in Cambodia remains a critical problem. Most Khmers live simple lives in scattered villages. In times of illness, many seek out the khmer kru (traditional medicine men); others pay a visit to the 'injection doctors'. Some look to old superstitions. Troubled ears are jabbed with chicken quills or packed with betel and millipede juice. Some have petrol poured in them. Injured ears are frequently made worse and sometimes damaged irreparably.

All Ears Cambodia (AEC) provides the only specialist audiology and ear health services for all age groups in Cambodia. MSAVLC has been working with AEC since 2003, and in January 2017 the Trustees approved a grant to support AEC's program of focusing on the lack of human resources in ear and hearing healthcare in Cambodia. We are funding the training of two Khmer students on AEC's in-house course over two years.

Briefly, the Trainees advance through modules of anatomy and physiology, pathology, and rehabilitative audiology. Specialist modules on paediatric audiology and speech and language

therapy are also covered. Teaching is delivered by senior Khmer clinicians who have extensive clinical practice and have they themselves gone through the course with AEC. The curriculum and teaching is shared and overseen by AEC's Head of School, a British audiologist, who continues to develop and improve the study program in consultation with senior clinicians. Learning is continually assessed through teach-back techniques, presentation delivery and more formal assessment. Examinations are held at the end of each semester.

There is an emphasis on clinical skill development throughout the course. The opportunity to put theoretical study into practice, experience real situations and make difficult diagnoses is essential to prepare the trainees. They must show confidence and aptitude in the clinic to complement their classroom based knowledge.

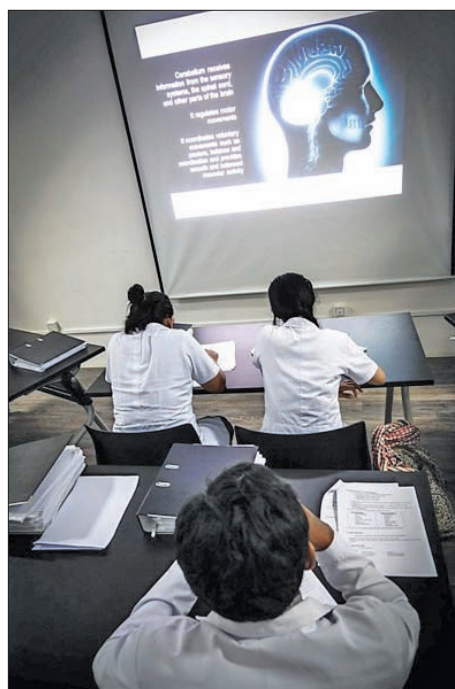
Field Visits – It is essential each clinician has the opportunity to visit each of the four clinics (Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Kratie and Battambang) and join outreach work in the provinces (Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, Kep, Kampot and Preah Sihanouk) to expand their clinical expertise. They receive practical training in examination of the ear using video oto-endoscopy.

Prey Tralach community ear clinic in Battambang exposes trainees to health care delivery for rurally-isolated and poverty-stricken communities. There is no healthcare available in the immediate area and some patients walk many miles to receive care.

In Siem Reap there is a large caseload of adults with disorders such as noise-induced hearing loss, acoustic trauma, ototoxicity and age-related hearing loss. In Kratie, screening days are held at local schools.

On outreach, AEC offers services to a number of marginalized groups such as street children, the deaf community and people with disabilities, as well as offering services to the general community.

Outreach work requires excellent partner and patient management and the ability to adapt to surroundings and resources. It helps to build clinical



expertise, fully preparing trainees for life as a primary ear and hearing healthcare clinician.

The trainees also attend special visits to key partner NGO sites. Monthly clinics are also conducted at the Kien Khleang Leprosy Rehabilitation Centre

and the Deaf Development Programme at the School for the Deaf in Phnom Penh.

These field visits allow the trainees to learn more by meeting with deaf children and adults as well as teachers of the deaf, vocational trainers and others

who support them.

The most recent report from All Ears Cambodia tells us that all eleven students are making good progress with their studies.

We wish them every success.

## THE BULLETIN

### IN THE NEWS

The article about landmines written by Mary Lidgard, which featured on the front page of the August 2017 Bulletin, was quoted in an article in the Morning Star newspaper on the 19th of August.

The author of the article, freelance reporter John Green, cleverly linked our piece about glowing bacteria which help in the detection of landmines in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, with the work done by Princess Diana in trying to get a worldwide ban on landmines.

Both Mary and MSAVLC were credited in the excellent article.

### FUNDRAISING UPDATE

The final total raised by the 'Frampton Fundraisers' on their Charity Endurance Bicycle Ride was the magnificent sum of £4,848. These funds will be restricted for the use of victims of Agent Orange.

The Trustees will discuss how the money can best be used when they visit VAVA headquarters in Hanoi on their monitoring and evaluation visits later this year.

Our thanks once again to Andrew Moncrief and the saddle-sore 'Frampton Fundraisers'.

### BONNETS AND BOOTEES

The recent articles in the Bulletin about the British Friendship Hospital in Ky Anh, and the General Hospital in Ha Tinh, prompted one of our supporters into action.

After reading the articles, Susan Toward was most concerned about the premature babies born at the hospitals and the harsh winters endured in central Vietnam. As many of these young babies go to homes which have no heating, Susan asked her friends to knit premature-baby-sized bonnets and booties to be given to the parents of babies born in these hospitals.

Thanks to Susan and her helpers we now have a large stock of knitwear which can be taken to Ha Tinh and Ky Anh on our next visit.

### DON'T FORGET

Please don't forget to complete the post card which accompanied this Bulletin and send it to MSAVLC,

1 Hillside, Tregunnel Park,  
NEWQUAY, Cornwall TR7 2AJ.

It has a stamp on it already so it will cost you no more than two minutes of your time. But we need it if you want to receive our Bulletins in the future.

## CURRY AND QUIZ

For the third year running, MSAVLC supporter Dave Smethurst and his team, held a curry and quiz night at the Organic Farm Shop in Cirencester in October 2017.

Over 80 people attended with two teams representing MSAVLC Trustees and supporters. We enjoyed a great night and an excellent vegetarian curry.

The event raised just short of £1,200 which was shared between MSAVLC and two other charities.

Our thanks go once again to Dave and his team, and to the Organic Farm Shop for hosting the event.



This is the time of year when many of us are thinking about having a clear-out of unwanted items, but did you know that if you sell something on eBay, you can donate some (or all) of the money raised to MSAVLC?

If you have never used eBay before, just complete the user-friendly eBay form which asks you which charity you would like to donate to, and what percentage of the sale price you would like to give. It's great fun watching as eBay buyers bid for your items, knowing that it will help the poor and sick in South-East Asia.

And remember, 98 pence in every pound donated to MSAVLC goes directly to our projects!

### Published by:

Medical & Scientific Aid for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia,

Anchor Cottage, 3 Horsefair Street, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham GL53 8JF

Registered Charity No. 252906

VIETNAM, LAOS & CAMBODIA MEDICAL &  
SCIENTIFIC AID NEWS BULLETIN

Editor: Peter Lidgard