

# VIETNAM LAOS CAMBODIA



## MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC AID NEWS BULLETIN

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

No. 195 November 2018

Registered Charity 252906

## TYPHOON HITS VIETNAM

With the earthquakes and a tsunami in Lombok and Sulawesi, typhoon Mangkhut in the Philippines, and hurricane Florence in the United States all causing immense damage and loss of life this summer, it is not surprising that typhoon Son Tinh and the resultant flooding in Vietnam has not hit the headlines in our national papers.

Nevertheless the effects of the tropical storm were felt through much of northern and central regions of Vietnam, with at least 29 people killed, according to the Vietnam News Agency. They reported that the September floods had swept away 217 homes and damaged nearly 10,000 others. Over 100,000 hectares of rice and 15,000 hectares of maize and other crops sustained damage: up to 1,300 cattle and nearly 28,000 birds were swept away. Many of Vietnam's provinces suffered damage, landslides or flooding, including Hoa Binh, Yen Bai, Phu Tho, Thanh Hoa and Son La, with local authorities deploying manpower to help stricken families and repair bridges and roads. The national government asked all northern localities to focus resources on clearing traffic blockages, search for missing victims and providing food and accommodation for those left homeless by the floods.

As a result it was no surprise when the Trustees were informed of the cancellation of the Traditional Midwives' Training Course which was planned in Thanh Son District,



*Clearing fallen trees and mud blocking the roads in Van Chan District, Yen Bai Province, following torrential rain. — VNA/VNS Photo Tuan Anh*

Phu Tho Province for late September. Soon after the typhoon hit, our project partners, the Highland Education Development Organisation (HEDO) contacted us to say that for the time being resources in Phu Tho Province would be directed to flood relief efforts and the planned course would have to be postponed at short notice.

Undeterred HEDO's Director Professor Trinh Ngoc Trinh and his team immediately set about transferring the training course to an alternative district in northern Vietnam. MSAVLC and HEDO had already carried out very successful midwife training courses in three of

Cao Bang's districts and it had not been badly affected by Typhoon Son Tinh. So an approach was made to the province's health directorate to find out if it would be possible to set up a training course in one of Cao Bang's nine remaining districts. Very quickly it was agreed to run the course in Thach An District, and a proposal from HEDO was forwarded to the Trustees.

Cao Bang is a remote and mountainous province adjacent to the Chinese border with a scattered population of over half a million people, a mixture of many ethnic minorities including Tay, Nung, Dao and H'mong.





*The opening ceremony of the Training Course for Traditional Midwives held in Thong Nong District, Cao Bang Province in 2013, included songs from midwives in their ethnic minority traditional costumes.*

Thach An District is mountainous and remote with a 70 km border with China. The economy is poorly developed with the population relying on the cultivation of maize, rice, potatoes and cassava. Average income is less than one US dollar per day.

Infrastructure is poor, the district has only one main road. Access to the local healthcare network is limited, and cultural traditions mean that over half of babies are delivered at home. The need for a training course in modern methods for village midwives was obvious, and it was immediately agreed by MSAVLC's Trustees to transfer the funds for the Phu Tho course to Cao Bang Province.

The course took place in late September and early October, and it is hoped to include a report and photographs of the course in the next Bulletin.

## MORE WHEELCHAIRS FOR AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS

Bulletin 192, which was published in February 2018, included an article about the Trustees' purchase of wheelchairs for victims of Agent Orange. We know that this article must have struck a chord with many of our readers, because it had the following effects:

- \* Supporter and journalist John Green was stirred to write an article about Agent Orange and the effect that it has had on the people of Vietnam for the Morning Star,
- \* 47 of our supporters were prompted to send cheques to MSAVLC - the most cheques in one month since June 2015, and
- \* Two of our supporters contacted me and said that they would like to buy a further consignment wheelchairs for Agent Orange victims.

When we visited the headquarters of VAVA (the Vietnamese Association for the Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin) in 2015, we asked VAVA's Director of

International Relations, Mr Pham Truong, how we could help his organization and the victims that he supported. He explained that many of the soldiers who were subjected to the spraying of Agent Orange during the "American War" were now old men and women.

As a direct result of their exposure to Agent Orange, many are now suffering from cancers and leukaemia, nerve, digestive, skin or respiratory disorders, or from heart disease.

Of course, there are also thousands of children and grandchildren of soldiers who had been born with birth defects, as a result of one of their parents being exposed to the deadly chemicals during the war.

Mr Troung felt that providing wheelchairs was the best way for us to support these victims and their families.



*Veteran Mai Van Chuan of Xuan Truong Town, Nam Din Province with his new wheelchair provided by MSAVLC donors.*

## MSAVLC HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENT VISITS VIETNAM

In March 2018 the Trustees informed Mr Troung that they had a further \$12,500 USD which our donors wanted used for wheelchairs for Agent Orange victims. We asked him to go ahead with their purchase and allocation.

In August Mr Troung wrote to tell us that they had managed to purchase 205 good-quality Chinese wheelchairs with the money. They were in the process of assigning them through their network of local VAVA groups, to disabled people, in 25 Provinces throughout the length and breadth of Vietnam.

When the Trustees visit Vietnam in the Spring of 2019 we hope that VAVA will take us to see some recipients of the wheelchairs, to find out what effect it has had on their lives.

### LORD BALFE VISITS VAVA

Lord Balfe of Dulwich, who was appointed as one of the charity's Honorary Vice-Presidents at the Annual General Meeting in July, made his first visit to Vietnam in September this year. Lord Balfe was part of the

British Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation led by Wayne David MP. The group visited Hanoi, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City.

During the visit, Lord Balfe was able to visit the headquarters of VAVA

in Hanoi. There he was presented with a framed certificate by VAVA's President, Lieutenant General Nguyen Van Vinh, thanking MSAVLC for supporting victims of Agent Orange.



## MARY JOYCE WOODWARD

One of the reasons why MSAVLC is able to continue our support for our many projects is the fact that on rare occasions we receive a legacy from one of our supporters who has passed away. Sometimes these are small bequests, but occasionally they are substantial amounts.

A few months ago we were contacted by a solicitor in West Yorkshire who informed us that Mary Joyce Woodward had recently passed away, and that she had left a donation to the charity. Whilst the Trustees were saddened to hear of her demise, we were also intrigued, because we knew very little of Mary Joyce Woodward or of her involvement with MSAVLC. We know from our financial records that she has been a regular supporter of the charity since 2000, and probably for some time before then. We also know that she lived in Shepley, near Huddersfield.

Her Obituary published in the Huddersfield Examiner says simply:

*WOODWARD MARY JOYCE*  
*On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2017 Joyce passed away at Tolson Grange Care Home, aged 85 years, formerly of Shepley. She will be missed by her many friends. (Sadly, there is no mention of family.)*

The present Trustees suspect that Mary Joyce Woodward was involved with the charity in the past, and that possibly she was friend of the late Dr Madeleine Sharp; but unfortunately we know nothing more. We are most grateful for her gift and we are hoping that some of our readers may know more about this most generous lady. I would be most grateful if anyone knows anything further about her or her involvement with MSAVLC, that you contact me at the address shown at the bottom of Page 4 of this Bulletin.

In 2017 MSAVLC distributed over £71,000 to our projects in South East Asia, thanks solely to our generous donors. We couldn't help the poor and sick people of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia without your support.

Please remember the charity when you are making, or updating your will. The Trustees will ensure that your money is well spent.

*Peter Lidgard*

### TRUSTEES' MEETING

At their meeting held in October, the Trustees were pleased to receive excellent interim reports from two of our projects in Cambodia:- Disability Development Services Program in Pursat, and All Ears Cambodia, which is based in Phnom Penh. Summaries of the reports will be published in future Bulletins.

The Trustees also approved a proposal from Daughters of Cambodia for a continuation of their Health and Wellness Project for the next twelve months.



# JOHN PILGER APPOINTED AS HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENT

The Charity's Trustees are delighted to announce that the award-winning journalist, John Pilger has been appointed as our newest Honorary Vice-President.

John Pilger was born and grew up in Sydney, Australia and he launched his first newspaper whilst still at Sydney High School. He worked on newspapers in Australia before moving to the London in 1962. There he worked for Reuters and the Daily Mirror, soon becoming their Chief Foreign Correspondent. He reported from all over the world, covering numerous wars, notably Vietnam, East Timor and the Middle East. Still in his twenties, he became the youngest recipient of the title of *Journalist of the Year*, and he is the only person to receive that accolade twice. Later he moved to the United States and reported the upheavals there in the late 1960's and 1970's.

However, it was his investigative work in South East Asia which produced the iconic issue of the Daily Mirror, devoted almost entirely to his world exclusive dispatches from Cambodia in the aftermath of Pol Pot's reign. The combined impact of his Daily Mirror reports and his subsequent documentary film, *'Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia'*, raised almost \$50 million for the people of that stricken country.



John Pilger is an authority on South-East Asia; he has made many investigative, documentary films and written numerous books including: *Aftermath; The Struggle of Cambodia and Vietnam, Heroes, Hidden Agendas and The New Rulers of the World.*

His articles and documentary films appear worldwide. His first film about Cambodia, *Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia (1979)* is listed by the British Film Institute among the ten most important documentaries of the 20th century. He has been given awards for journalism from all over the world and honorary doctorates by British and international Universities. In 2009, he was awarded Australia's human rights prize, the Sydney Peace

Prize.

John Pilger has been associated with MSAVLC since the 1970's. He recalls: "When Joan (McMichael) and I went to Hanoi in 1975 - an extraordinary time - we were both inspired and shocked. We visited Ky Anh where the British Friendship Hospital would rise; I felt immensely proud to be in such company." His support for our charity has been resolute. He said recently,

"I refer to MSAVLC in public meetings as the best kind of charitable/humanitarian organisation".

The charity is honoured to count him as an Honorary Vice-President, alongside Lord Richard Balfe and George Howarth MP

## THE BULLETIN - DATA PROTECTION

MSAVLC is committed to making sure that our communications with you are secure, considered and welcomed. We promise to respect any personal data that you share with us, we will keep it safe, and we will not share it with third parties.

If you no longer want to receive the Bulletin and want to be removed from our mailing list, please contact:

John Firth ,  
Honorary Treasurer MSAVLC,  
1 Hillside, Tregunnel Park,  
NEWQUAY Cornwall TR7 2AJ.  
Or email: [msavlc.treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:msavlc.treasurer@gmail.com)

## MERRY CHRISTMAS

The Trustees would like to wish  
all our Supporters and  
our Project Partners, a very  
Merry Christmas  
and a  
Happy New Year  
2019.



Published by:  
**Medical & Scientific Aid for Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia**  
Anchor Cottage,  
3 Horsefair St,  
Charlton Kings,  
CHELTENHAM  
GL53 8JF

**VIETNAM, LAOS & CAMBODIA**  
**MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC AID NEWS BULLETIN**  
**Editor: Peter Lidgard**

Printed By Sharpe Media