

BINOCULAR HEADLIGHTS FOR CAMBODIA

At the beginning of 2020 the Trustees of MSAVLC agreed to the purchase of a set of new portable binocular headlights for All Ears Cambodia (AEC).

These headlights are used for otological examination and treatment of infectious diseases and anomalies of the outer and middle ear.

At the time, the team at AEC was coping with old Welch Allyn style headlights. They were in need of replacement, as they were prone to faults and had considerably reduced electrical capacity, which shortened usage time within the clinics. The headlights were on their last legs, and five new Vorotek Oto-scopes were purchased to replace them. The Otoscope is hands-free and portable with 3-dioptre magnification.

The new headlights are now employed at multiple sites. Two of the



instruments are used daily at the main AEC Phnom Penh Clinics; one is used at the primary ear care unit at AEC Siem Reap; another scope is used at base and outreach level in Prey

Tralach in Battambang Province, and the fifth one rotates between outreach clinics in the provinces of Kep, Kampot, Preah Sihanouk, Pursat, Kampong Chhnang and the Kien Khlang Leprosy Rehabilitation Centre. They are certainly earning their keep!

All patients undergoing primary ear health care (examination and treatment) at these locations benefit greatly from being examined using these new instruments. Collectively, there were 11,394 patient consultations at these sites last year, and that was during a global pandemic! The usual total figure is closer to 20,000.

A big thank you to all our generous donors who made these purchases possible, and very well done to the team at All Ears Cambodia for continuing their hard work during these difficult times.



AGENT ORANGE – JUSTICE AT LAST ?

In January 2021 a trial was opened before the Court of Justice in the southern Paris suburb of Evry. It was brought about by Tran To Nga, a 78 year-old French-Vietnamese woman, against more than a dozen companies that made or sold Agent Orange to the US military during the Vietnam War, including Bayer-Monsanto and Dow Chemicals.

Tran To Nga accuses the companies of being responsible for injuries sustained by her, her children and countless others, and she is seeking damages and justice for all the alleged victims.

Agent Orange is the name given to one of the deadly chemicals which were sprayed by American forces over Vietnam from 1961 to 1971. It was used to defoliate Vietnamese jungle and destroy Viet Cong crops in an effort to slow the advances of north Vietnamese troops, and deprive the enemy of food sources.

More than 80 million litres of poisonous chemicals were used, most of them were Agent Orange, and they contained nearly 400 kg of dioxin.

Dioxin is one of the most toxic substances ever produced by mankind,



Tran To Nga

and causes many kinds of severe diseases including cancers, neurological disorders, spinal bifida, a decrease in immunity, disorders in the endocrine system, reproduction disorders and birth defects. Many of these are incredibly severe and disabling. The chemical enters the genes and is passed on from one generation to the next. It is also known to have entered the food chain via the land and rivers. Nobody knows exactly how many generations will be affected by Agent Orange.

At present over three million people in Vietnam are affected, and almost five 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 most are jobless. The burden of care for these victims 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.

Tran To Nga was a journalist, and part of the independence movement fighting to liberate the south of Vietnam, when she was directly affected by Agent Orange which was sprayed from planes flying overhead. Since that time, she has suffered with multiple health issues attributed to Agent Orange. Sadly, her children and grandchildren are similarly affected.

Tran To Nga has been given five years to live by her oncologist and she is calling this trial “the last fight of my life”. She states that she is not only fighting for her family but also for the millions of other victims. She hopes to create a legal precedent so that all victims of Agent Orange have a path in front of them to get justice for themselves. She is also seeking recognition of the damage Agent Orange caused to the environment. It destroyed plants, poisoned animals, and polluted Vietnam’s soil and rivers.

This is the first time that civilian victims of Agent Orange have had their cases heard in an international court. The United States compensates its veterans exposed to Agent Orange, but has never compensated Vietnamese nationals. American veterans who fell victim to Agent Orange were compensated with 180 million US dollars, while the Vietnamese victims are still not recognized by the US Government or the courts. The named companies insist that it was the US military that commissioned Agent Orange, and they claim that they cannot be held responsible for how it was used during the conflict. And so, the suffering goes on.

The ruling of the court is scheduled for May 10th.

Mary Lidgard (Honorary Secretary)



A stark picture of the deforestation caused by some of the chemicals applied liberally in south Vietnam by US forces during the American war. [War Remnants Museum, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam]

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED IN PURSAT PROVINCE, CAMBODIA



At the end of last year, the Trustees were pleased to receive the Final Report for the two-year Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Rehabilitation Project from our partners, Disability Development Services Program (DDSP).

DDSP is situated in Pursat in Western Cambodia and the Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Rehabilitation (PQR) Project covers the whole of Pursat Province, some 12,700 square kilometres, which is roughly the area of Cornwall, Devon and Dorset combined.

DDSP's 77 male and 43 female clients live scattered throughout the province in the towns and villages which are interconnected by dirt roads. DDSP staff usually travel by motorcycle to visit clients in their homes, sometimes having to stay overnight in local guest houses before moving on to the next client or return home to base in Pursat Town.

During the two-year period DDSP's physiotherapists and staff supported their clients by providing physiotherapy and all kinds of medical rehabilitation and health materials and equipment. Many of the clients need crutches, walking frames or wheelchairs, and DDSP supplies and maintains them with the assistance of the Spinal Cord Injury Centre which is based in nearby Battambang. In this

period, 32 new wheelchairs were provided, spare parts were supplied for 15 wheelchairs and repairs were carried out on a further 18. DDSP staff also facilitate peer to peer counselling and socialisation activities which are both essential for the clients and their families, as shown in the photo above. In both years DDSP clients were encouraged to support, Disabled Awareness Day, International Women's Day, World Children's Day and the famous Pursat River Run.

In the final twelve months of the project, DDSP constructed three more wheelchair accessible latrines for their clients, and they provided 50 ceramic

water filters and 12 water jars for the collection of rainwater for drinking. Moreover, they were able to provide emergency support for clients who were in need of building materials for house repairs, funeral expenses and emergency food supplies and bedding.

In Pursat Province most people with disabilities and their families are very poor. So, for a number of years DDSP has provided a revolving fund to improve family income. During this project period the revolving fund provided about \$125 USD each to 21 families to start up income generation activities, including a grocery store, and a vegetable and seed merchants. There are a large number of families who have already received income generation support as farmers, shopkeepers, hairdressers and lottery ticket sellers. All of these activities have been supported and monitored during the project period. In addition, six more families have received a calf from the revolving 'cow bank' - see the photo below.

The Trustees are grateful to Pheng Samnang, Director of DDSP, and Hun Chendoeun, Project Co-ordinator, for providing another excellent report on DDSP's activities.

The follow-on project which runs from July 2020 to June 2022 has already been funded by MSAVLC. The Trustees are most grateful to all our donors whose support enables this vital work to continue.



BOOK SALES AT THE ORGANIC FARM SHOP



In 2020 the Organic Farm Shop, which is in Burford Road, Cirencester, started selling second-hand books and donating all the profits to charity.

Despite the pandemic, the Farm Shop has continued to function successfully, and so far £262 has been collected from the sale of books, half of which is to be donated to MSAVLC. This is a remarkable achievement given that the Farm Shop Café has not been fully open for much of the past year.

Our grateful thanks go to Hilary, Fiona and David for their continued support and hard work for our charity.

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

NEWS FROM THE TRUSTEES

Despite the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Trustees have continued to work from home, and meet virtually using Skype.

In the first three months of 2021 the Trustees approved grants for the following projects;

- **New Hope Children's Home, Cambodia**
Sponsorship of four children, continuation of the First Aid Project, and a grant towards the creation of a greenhouse and vegetable garden.
- **British Friendship Hospital, Ky Anh, Vietnam**
Funding of the annual Joan McMichael Prize for staff performance and sponsorship of a hospital bed.
- **All Ears Cambodia**
Continuation for a fourth year of the Listen.Out.Loud.Kratie! Project.
- **The Vietnam Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA)**
A grant of \$35,000 USD to purchase wheelchairs for victims across Vietnam.

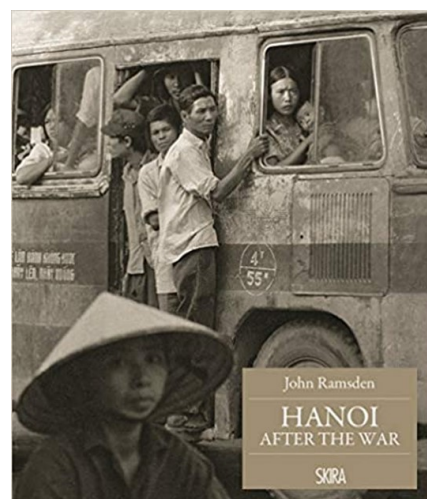
The Trustees expect to bring news of all of these projects in the coming months, in future Bulletins, and through our Facebook page.

Whilst it is obviously not possible to visit Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia at present, due to Covid-19 restrictions, officers of the charity are in regular contact with all our project leaders, and the close and careful monitoring of our spending continues. The Trustees take seriously their responsibility of making sure that all funds sent to our projects are spent wisely and are accounted for correctly.

We are most grateful to all our donors for their steadfast support during these difficult times.

Peter Lidgard
(Chairman of the Trustees)

HANOI AFTER THE WAR



A few copies of the hard-backed book "Hanoi After the War", generously donated by author John Ramsden, are still available to our supporters.

To order a copy of this unique, fascinating and absorbing book, please make out a cheque to "MSAVLC" and send it to;

Peter Lidgard,
Chairman MSAVLC
Anchor Cottage, 3, Horsefair Street,
Charlton Kings,
CHELTENHAM, Glos. GL53 8JF.

The cover price of the book is £30.00, but you can donate more if you would like to. We will bear the cost of postage and packing.

Please complete Part 1 of the enclosed Donation Form if you wish to Gift Aid your donation.



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News and pictures of the charity's activities can be found on our

website: www.msavlc.org
and on the MSAVLC
Facebook page.

Keep up with all the charity's news, and don't forget to 'like' our new posts or 'share' them with your Facebook friends.