

VAVA HONoured

MSAVLC has partnered with VAVA (the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange), since its inception in 2004. During that time MSAVLC has funded a variety of equipment for both child and adult victims, including in the past three years, the purchase of 740 wheelchairs. These have been given to victims of Agent Orange living in provinces all over Vietnam.

In late December 2021, at a ceremony in Hanoi, VAVA was honoured by the Vietnamese Government. Vietnam's Vice President, Võ Thị Ánh Xuân presented VAVA with the Labour Order on behalf of the Party and State.

Addressing the delegates at the ceremony, Vice President Xuân stressed that Agent Orange was a crime that the Vietnamese people had been suffering from for the past 60 years. She said that it was not only a burden for the Vietnamese people but for all of mankind. Vice President Xuân called on international friends, organisations and communities to continue to accompany and support Vietnam to ease the pain of victims and to prevent chemical warfare ever being used anywhere on the planet.

In response, VAVA President, Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Van Rin, noted that between 1961 and 1971, the US army sprayed about 80 million litres of toxic chemicals, containing 366 kg of dioxin, on South and Central Vietnam. This caused severe and long-term consequences to



*Vice President Võ Thị Ánh Xuân presents the Labour Order to the Lieutenant General Nguyễn Văn Rinh, President of the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA).
Photo Tuấn Đức VNA/VNS*

the environment, the ecosystem and to people's health. As a result, around 4.8 million Vietnamese were exposed to the toxic chemical, and more than 3 million of them became victims.

As part of efforts to care for, support and gain justice for Agent Orange/dioxin victims in Vietnam, VAVA was founded, aiming to mobilise resources for the victims and struggle for justice for them.

Over the past seventeen years VAVA has raised millions of dollars worth of cash and goods, at home and abroad. It has been used to build houses, provide capital support and award scholarships for the victims.

VAVA has also constructed detoxification and rehabilitation centres for the victims, and provided care for their families.

The VAVA leader expressed hope that the government, organisations and the Vietnamese people, as well as international friends, will continue to join hands to ease their pain, while accompanying the victims in their journey for justice.

The Trustees of MSAVLC are proud of their long association with VAVA. We are the only UK charity which directly supports Agent Orange victims.

A HARROWING STORY

Every three months the Trustees of MSAVLC receive a Newsletter from Daughters of Cambodia, our partner organisation which rescues girls and young women from the sex trade in Phnom Penh.

The Newsletter is an essential communication, particularly during these times when it is impossible for us to make in-person visits. The Newsletters give vital information about the day-to-day activities of Daughters in Phnom Penh and details how and where the money donated by MSAVLC is spent. As well as narrative reports and photographs, there are often case studies which illustrate how individuals have been helped by Daughters' organisation.

Below is a case study which was included in a recent Newsletter. The story is told by the young lady in her own words. Please be warned, it is a harrowing read.

"When I was 20 years old, my step-father tried to rape me many times. I told my mother, but she didn't listen to me or try to get justice for me at all. I was sexually abused by my step-father when I was sleeping or when my mother went to temple. So, I ran away from my hometown to Phnom Penh city.

I met a Vietnamese man on the same bus as me. He told me he loved me, and he wanted to marry me, so I went with him to live with his mother. Our relationship was just like husband and wife, and he gave me a lot of money, but later on I found out he was a drug dealer. Whenever he used drugs, he raped me. I was pregnant 5 times. He persuaded me to have abortions each time because he was worried that the effects of the drugs that he used would be transmitted to the child. He was also a gambler and went to casinos located near the riverside with his friends.

One day, he said he wanted me to go to work in Sihanoukville with him. When we arrived, he sold me to a Chinese man. He lied to me that he would come back soon, but I waited for him for months and he didn't come. The Chinese man raped me when I was two months pregnant by my husband. I didn't know I was pregnant, so I decided to abort the baby. This was my sixth abortion. Afterwards, I got pregnant again with that Chinese man,

and that was my seventh abortion. I was really sad living in this condition because I was raped by not only one man but different Chinese men every night. I couldn't bear that I was treated as a slave, so I ran away. I went out to buy food at a market, and I took the chance to run from that place.

After that, I got a job in a karaoke bar. I had to abort a baby each time I got pregnant with customers. One day, I met my husband accidentally. He cried and apologised to me. He said he was tricked by those Chinese men, and he had looked for me for many months. So, we came to live with his mother in Phnom Penh again, and gave me a lot of money, pretty clothes and belongings. I wanted to have a child with my husband because I thought the child could make him change. However, my

paid me to have abortions. I have had twenty abortions.

One day, I was pregnant and a member of Daughters staff came looking for girls like us, and told us about Daughters where the sex workers can get jobs with good salary. So, I started work at Daughters. The social workers sent me to a partner NGO to have a proper delivery for my baby. After three months of working at Daughters, I gave birth to my child. Now my child is in a children's safe house because I have some mental health problems. But each Sunday I go to church with her.

Now, I work with Daughters and I always ask them to pray for me, and they always do so. I'm learning about intercession now. I am glad to have the medical program there because I have a problem with my uterus which is



assumption was wrong. When I got pregnant, he started being violent towards me. He shouted that he wanted to kill me because he thought I got pregnant by another man and that the baby wasn't his child, and that he would kill the baby too. He tried to slash my neck one time, so I ran away from him during the pregnancy. I became trapped in sex work again and I worked there until I gave birth to my child.

After the birth, I stopped working and went to sleep in the corner of the park. My baby died because I didn't look after the baby properly. Afterwards, I went to work as a sex worker again. Whenever I slept with men and got pregnant, I aborted the babies. Those men always

causing me so much pain. They partner with a medical clinic that can treat this. The Doctor there plans for me to have surgery very soon".

It is plain to see what a beneficial effect that Daughters of Cambodia has had on this young woman's life.

MSAVLC has supported Daughters' Health and Wellness Recovery Project since 2015. The Project has helped scores of young women like the one in the story, thanks to the generous donations given by MSAVLC's supporters. With your help we hope to continue this vital work.

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2021 - A DIFFICULT BUT SUCCESSFUL YEAR

For many people 2021 was a difficult year, with the fear of contracting Covid, and the restrictions placed upon work, movement and contact with others.

However, despite everything, MSAVLC has been very successful in continuing to provide aid to disabled and disadvantaged people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The Trustees have continued to meet virtually using Skype, and frequent contact has been maintained with all our current projects overseas via telephone, post and email.



During the year the charity made grants of over £83,000* to projects in Vietnam and Cambodia. Specifically, MSAVLC has funded:

- The Health and Wellness Recovery Project for Daughters of Cambodia.
- Year four of the 'Listen Out Loud' Kratie Project for All Ears Cambodia.
- 500 wheelchairs for Agent Orange victims in Vietnam.
- A sponsored bed at the British Friendship Hospital in Ky Anh, Vietnam.
- Child sponsorships, farming equipment and continuation of the First Aid Project at New Hope Children's Home, near Poipet, Cambodia.

The Trustees have gained a new member; Jenny Gold RGN began work with the Trustees in May, and she has taken over responsibility for

our sponsored children at New Hope Children's Home.

During the year we produced four Bulletins which we circulated to 229 email, and 155 postal recipients, and we have created ten new posts on our Facebook page.

Unfortunately, travel restrictions have meant that, once again, it was not possible for any of the Trustees to visit South-East Asia for monitoring and evaluation purposes. But we are hoping to send a delegation as soon as travel restrictions in all three countries are relaxed.

With more stories in the newspapers of six-figure salaries and bonuses for charity bosses, I hope that our supporters will be pleased to read that once again non-charitable spending in 2021 was kept to an absolute minimum. Everyone who works for the charity is a volunteer, less than one and a half per cent of our total spending went on the production and distribution of this quarterly Bulletin, and less than one per cent was spent on administration, including bank charges. Put simply, of every hundred pounds that we spent, ninety-seven pounds seventy pence* went directly to our projects.

With all the problems and restrictions caused by the pandemic, it is unsurprising to note that total donations, both standing orders and individual cheques, were slightly down compared with the pre-pandemic level, although they showed a significant improvement on the 2020

total. Fortunately, the charity benefits from a steady income from our investments, and so we were able to continue funding all our projects. Nevertheless we are most grateful for all donations, no matter how large or small.

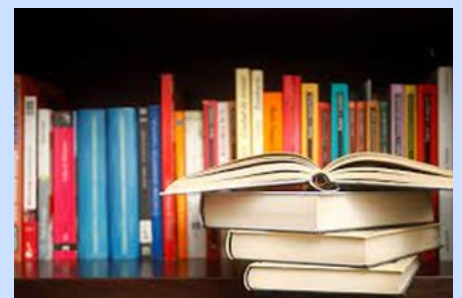
The Trustees fully appreciate the fact that times have been hard for many of our supporters and may well continue to be so for the foreseeable future. So, if you are unable to make a donation at present, perhaps you would consider making a bequest to MSAVLC in your will. It's quite easy to make an amendment or codicil to your will, or it might be an opportunity to update or amend your existing will. If you are making a bequest, please use the full name of the charity, Medical and Scientific Aid for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and include the charity number 252906.

The Trustees assure you that all the money donated will be used to help the most disadvantaged and disabled people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

* provisional figures.

Peter Lidgard (Editor)

BOOK SALES IN CIRENCESTER



Grateful thanks are again given to all concerned at the Organic Farm Shop and Cafe in Cirencester. They have once again donated money to MSAVLC from the sale of second-hand books. We are amazed how much the book sales make, especially during these challenging times.

Special thanks to David, Fiona and Hilary. Your support is much appreciated.



BONNETS AND BOOTEES

For some years now Miss Valerie Copeland has been knitting a variety of simply beautiful cardigans, bonnets, bootees and blankets for premature and young babies in hospitals and poor communities in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Due to the pandemic, we have not been able to deliver these items personally. But recently one of our supporters kindly agreed to pay the postage, and the clothes have now been delivered and shared out between grateful mums in hospitals, and in their homes.



CAMBODIA'S LANDMINES

As a result of the civil war in Cambodia in the 1970's, the countryside is still littered with mines and other explosives. One estimate is that up to 10,000 mines were laid during the conflict, and despite efforts to clear them, many are found and explode often causing horrific injuries. So, it was sad to read recently in the Phnom Penh Post, of the death of one of Cambodia's most successful locator of mines and unexploded ordnance.

"A landmine-hunting rat that was awarded a gold medal for heroism for clearing ordnance from the Cambodian countryside died on January 11.

Magawa, a giant African pouched rat, originally from Tanzania, helped clear mines from about 225,000 sqm of land – the equivalent of 42 football pitches – over the course of his career.

After detecting more than 100 landmines and other explosives, Magawa retired in June last year.

The Belgian charity APOPO, which trained Magawa, said in a statement: "He passed away peacefully this weekend at the age of eight."

Phnom Penh Post

Work to make the Cambodian countryside safe, which is carried out by APOPO and other landmine charities, is continuing.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

At the time of writing, Vietnam is in the middle of a second wave of Covid-19, with an average of 17,000 new cases per day. However, the vaccination programme continues apace, with 76.5% of Vietnam's 96 million population now having received two doses of the vaccine.

Both Cambodia and Laos, with much smaller populations, have been successful in vaccinating their people, and infection rates are low at present.

Nevertheless, the pandemic has played havoc with the economies of all three countries and poverty rates have increased sharply.



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:

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