



CHALLENGING TIMES AT ALL EARS CAMBODIA

In March the Trustees were pleased to receive from Glyn Vaughan, Founder-Director of All Ears Cambodia, the Final Report of the Listen. Out. Loud. Kratie! Project. The original 2-year project was begun in 2018, but it was extended for a further two years with grants given by MSAVLC. It was based in Kratie, a poor province in Eastern Cambodia.

Glyn Vaughan's report describes the project, and how they overcame the challenges caused by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. An edited version of the report is printed below.

Hearing Loss – A Global Problem

Hearing loss has often been referred to as an 'invisible disability', not just because of the lack of visible symptoms, but because it has long been stigmatized in communities and ignored by policymakers.

Unaddressed hearing loss is globally the third largest cause of lived-with disability. It affects people of all ages, as well as families and economies. According to the WHO, an estimated one trillion US Dollars is lost each year due to our failure to adequately treat hearing loss.

Whilst the financial burden is enormous, what cannot be quantified is the distress caused by the loss of communication, education and social interaction that accompanies untreated hearing loss. What makes this matter more pressing is the fact that the number of people with hearing loss is

likely to rise considerably in the coming decades. Over 1.5 billion people worldwide currently experience some degree of hearing loss, which could grow to 2.5 billion by 2050. In addition, a billion young people are at risk of permanent hearing loss from listening to music at loud volumes over prolonged periods of time. The 2021 World Report on Hearing shows that evidence-based and cost-effective public health measures can prevent many causes of hearing loss.

The Covid-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of hearing. As we have struggled to maintain social contact and remain connected to family, friends and colleagues, we have relied on being able to hear them

more than ever before. It has also taught us a hard lesson, that health is not a luxury item, but the foundation of social, economic and political development. Preventing and treating disease and disability of all kinds is not a cost, but an investment in a safer, fairer and more prosperous world for all people.

Project Summary

The project began as a two-year program of clinical and health educational services for the local people and children of Kratie province in eastern Cambodia. The programme was subsequently extended to a third year of funding and, thereafter, a fourth year with the agreement of MSAVLC. The project embraced preventative health care, clinical care,



aural rehabilitation, community health education and local capacity building. It was designed to help the greatest number of underprivileged people in the most effective way.

Daily clinical services were provided at All Ears Cambodia's base clinic in the provincial town of Kratie, as well as at outreach level where clinics were, under normal circumstances (pre-pandemic), conducted weekly. Services in Kratie included:

- primary ear health care.
- diagnostic audiology (hearing aid tests).
- rehabilitative audiology (hearing aid fittings).
- ear mould manufacture (hearing aid moulds, swim plugs and noise attenuators); and
- ear and hearing health education.

A key component of the project was the parallel program of health education (the Listen. Out. Loud. Show). That is, the provision of a platform for informal, contagious learning about sound and ear and hearing health through an educational, fun and interactive show. This was aimed primarily, although not exclusively, at children.

The Covid-19 Pandemic

Cambodia was largely spared by the coronavirus in 2020. Although a number of imported cases and transmission to direct contacts were confirmed throughout the year, no community transmission was detected until the end of November.

Cambodia began its vaccination programme, and detected its largest outbreak to date, in February 2021. It was thought to be related to a quarantine breach that led to outbreaks at nightlife venues. Cambodia reported its first death in March 2021. As the Alpha variant spread in the capital's markets and garment factories, a curfew was later strengthened to the country's first lockdown across Phnom Penh in April, as the World Health Organisation warned Cambodia's healthcare system was at risk of becoming overwhelmed. Provincial authorities later introduced restrictions elsewhere as outbreaks occurred.

Happily, the vaccination drive in Cambodia saw remarkable success with 10,083,720 adults of the 16 million population having received their first dose within slightly more than 9 months.

However, the pandemic has had

a severe impact on the economy, notably the tourism and garment sectors, with projections of a lasting increase in poverty, debt and unemployment. Over 3 million children were affected by school closures. At the time of writing,



(March 2022) there have been 130,589 coronavirus cases and 3,032 deaths, but now the vast majority of the population is double-vaccinated.

At the All Ears Cambodia Kratie clinic, located in the provincial town, focus remained on local townspeople, villagers, schoolchildren and target groups under the wing of partner NGOs. At outreach level, where services are normally performed at schools, there remained severe disruption of the programme owing to the Covid pandemic. All schools remained closed by order of the Ministry of Education through most of the period, although they have reopened in recent months. School authorities, however, have, for the best part, remained reluctant to invite in outside agencies for the fear of Covid transmission. Accordingly, caseload figures for year 4 at outreach level were only 2,830 consultations in the year. Nevertheless, the collective caseload for the 4-year period was 26,630, which is commendable given the impact of the pandemic, as it was originally estimated that there would be a total 30,000 seen in the four years.

Screening at school/village level was affected severely in the final year of the project. However, the total for the four years of 13,808 cases compares well with a total of 16,000 anticipated at the beginning of the project.

Health education, in the form of the Listen. Out. Loud. Show was similarly affected by Covid-19 restrictions, with a total of 1,325 children and adults taking part in the show over the four years but only 104 in Year 3, and 63 in year 4.

It is important to recognize, however, that every patient receiving care from All Ears Cambodia also benefited from primary ear and hearing health education, as it is a normal part of the consultation/treatment process.

Rehabilitation of hearing loss through the fitting of hearing aids continued throughout the four-year period with 960 children and adults benefitting immeasurably by the fitting of bespoke hearing aids to one or both ears.

Similarly the continuing professional development programme provided in-house training for All Ears staff by professionals from all over the world including Australia, Switzerland, and the University of Swansea in Wales.

All Ears Cambodia continues to review and update its risk management strategies and maintains strict regulations within its clinics to minimize the chances of Covid-19 transmission. Presently, staff at All Ears are cautiously optimistic regarding the coming months. The vaccination drive has seen the current infection rate drop significantly in recent weeks and life in Cambodia has begun to return to normal. They anticipate clinic caseloads to slowly return to ones resembling pre-pandemic times. Nonetheless, they remain cautious especially with the advent of the new virus strains that have recently appeared elsewhere in the world.

Despite the pandemic, All Ears Cambodia still managed to conduct over 12,000 consultations in the year : running clinics from 5 sites and, albeit for a short time, outreach clinics covering 7 provinces. As always, focus has remained on the weakest and hardest hit, by working closely with local and international partners.

The Trustees are most grateful for the hard work done in difficult circumstances by Glyn Vaughan and his colleagues at All Ears Cambodia.



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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.

Don't forget to 'like' our new posts or 'share' them with your friends.

MOEUN RITHY'S STORY

For many years, MSAVLC has funded and supported the Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Rehabilitation Project run by the Disability Development Services Program (DDSP) in Pursat, Western Cambodia.

This Project aims to improve the quality of life of people with paraplegic and quadriplegic disabilities, through access to health and rehabilitation services, basic needs and social intervention, emergency support and enhanced income generation.

health problems (often sick and bed sores), I could not go to anywhere I wanted, and I lacked health and hygiene materials. I had no wheelchair or any other assistive device to help me move! More than that, I was discriminated against by neighbours as well as my family, because of my disability.

However, since 2004, I was lucky to be supported by the Project, and DDSP colleagues conducted an assessment to improve my disability and family situation. Since that time, I have received so much support from

drinking water, house repairs and sometimes food, especially when my wife and I were sick.

The Project also supported my daughters and my son to go to school during the past few years. Recently, my family received an adapted latrine. This is really a great help for my family, as it has prevented us having to defecate outside with fear in the bush, especially at night-time.

We have also been given a revolving fund of \$250 USD for generating income through pig-raising, and we expect to have sold the pigs in the next six months with a good income.

I am very happy and proud of myself that I have survived until now! My physical health, my feelings, my family relationships and my living conditions are very much improved! My daughters and my son are all getting married, and they have jobs so that they can survive themselves.

I would like to say that without you and your respected donors, we believe we do not have today! We would like to express our profound thanks to your continued generous support to our family, as well as other vulnerable people, in Pursat province for almost 20 years.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and all your beloved ones good health, success and long life."

The Trustees are most grateful for the donations given by our supporters which directly fund DDSP's excellent Project.



One of many DDSP clients is Moeun Rithy, a 53-year-old man with paraplegia caused by an accident during tree felling in 2001. He lives with his family at Prek Thnout Village, Roleap Commune, Pursat Province. His wife currently works as a second-hand clothes seller at the community market. They have three children, two daughters and one son. He told DDSP how he felt after his accident, and how their Project has helped him to come to terms with his injury, and lead a more fulfilling and happy life, despite his dreadful injuries.

"Knowing that I had become a paraplegic I felt very depressed and isolated. I almost killed myself then, as I couldn't help myself or my family. From 2001 to 2003 life was terrible as our kids were very small and my wife had never done any business to earn income for the family. They all relied totally on me!

At that time, we faced many challenges such as no food to eat, and we were not able to support our children to go to school. I had many

DDSP, such as regular physiotherapy and counselling, and training on counselling and physiotherapy for my family, so that they are able to take care of me. I have received support for referrals in and out of hospitals, been given health and sanitation materials, and a wheelchair for my mobility around the house and community. I have received a ceramic filter for safe



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

After a space of four years, the Trustees were delighted to hear that His Excellency Ambassador Nguyen Hoang Long had agreed to host the charity's Annual General Meeting at the Vietnamese Embassy on 10th May this year. The restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and concerns over travelling on public transport in the capital, meant that there was no AGM in 2020, and the 2019 and 2021 meetings were held in Cheltenham.

However, the Trustees felt that this year the AGM should be in London, in order to give supporters who live within easy reach of the capital an opportunity to attend. It will also give us all a chance to meet Ambassador Long and his staff at the Embassy.

All supporters of MSAVLC are most welcome to attend the meeting which will also include presentations and a short address from Ambassador Long.

The Embassy of Vietnam is situated in Victoria Road, London W8, a five-minute walk from the Kensington High Street Underground station.

POSITIVE NEWS FROM DAUGHTERS



After two very difficult years, it was a great relief for the Trustees to receive a very positive and hopeful New Year Newsletter from Daughters of Cambodia.

The new Daughters of Cambodia Visitor Centre in Phnom Penh re-opened in November 2021, with Christmas cards and decorations, clothes and jewellery for sale. Daughters were also able to have stalls at Christmas Fairs in the city, which generated good sales for the organisation. Furthermore, restrictions limiting church services were relaxed and everyone at Daughters was able to

attend church over the festive period.

January marked 15 years since Daughters began rescuing girls and young women from the sex trade, changing their lives and giving them meaningful work. Staff and clients were able to celebrate together the many lives that Daughters had dramatically changed as a result of their efforts over the years, with the support of charities such as MSAVLC.

Recently the day-care centre has reopened for clients' children, and they have begun holding jewellery and clay bead-making workshops. All signs that Daughters is getting back to normal after a difficult couple of years.

Your donations to MSAVLC ensure that Daughters of Cambodia can continue their vital work.

MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC AID FOR VIETNAM, LAOS AND CAMBODIA

Annual General Meeting

Will be held at

THE EMBASSY OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC
OF VIETNAM

12-14 Victoria Road, LONDON W8 5RD

On Tuesday 10th May at 6.00 p.m.
All supporters are welcome to attend.

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