

VISIT TO VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA - CONTINUED

Two weeks into our Monitoring and Evaluation visit to Vietnam and Cambodia, we left Pursat and travelled by car to Poipet, a frontier town on the Thai-Cambodian border.

Poipet is scruffy town of casinos and dubious-looking bars, and the notice in our hotel reminded us about not trading in drugs or weapons! However, we were there to visit our project at New Hope Children's Home, and we arranged to meet up with the Home's Director, Cheng Rostitus.

Since our last visit eight years ago, the situation at the Home had changed a great deal. The children have all grown up; some have left and gone to live with relatives, and the rest have now moved to live in a new Home in Poipet, as most are attending senior school there. They visit the old



Home at weekends, where they have grown and milled rice, gathered fruit from the trees, and they also farm fish.

Global Care, the Coventry-based

charity which used to support the Children's Home, has withdrawn its funding to encourage Rostitus to become self-sufficient. They have set him up with a small pre-school in Poipet to raise funds. MSAVLC has also purchased computers and equipment to enable him to provide computer classes for an extra income.

We were able to visit the new Home in Poipet, and see the school and computer classes in operation. The children had been well cared for, all were happy and well-adjusted, and they had received a good education and a Christian upbringing. We were delighted to meet them all again and pleased that we had been able to help them during their formative years.

The MSAVLC-sponsored First Aid Project is still in operation, and the Trustees were able to attend one of the weekly sessions run by the local pastor, where we saw the children's hair been treated for head lice.



Following our return to the UK, the Trustees agreed to supply the Children's Home with clothing and bedding, and to continue to help with funding for two more years, by which time we hope that they will be totally self-sufficient.

From Siem Reap we flew to Da Nang in Vietnam and enjoyed a short break in nearby Hoi An. We then flew on to Hanoi for the final stage of the journey.

For many years Trustees from MSAVLC have been very fortunate that whenever they visit Vietnam, the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations (VUFO) has helped facilitate the visit, by providing visas, and often a translator, car and driver. This time it was only the visas which were needed, but nevertheless, having arrived in Hanoi, we were invited to visit VUFO headquarters. There we were met by Mr Nguyen Ngoc Hung, an old friend of the charity, who is Director of the People's Aid Coordinating Committee. We discussed with him the details of the trip and the charity's future plans.

The next day we went to the national headquarters of VAVA, the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange. There we met up with VAVA's officers, all of whom work as volunteers.

In 2022, MSAVLC had provided 545 wheelchairs for Agent Orange victims, and VAVA had arranged for us to visit some of the recipients of the wheelchairs in their homes in Ninh Binh Province.

Two of these victims were war veterans who had suffered from the effects of Agent Orange during the war, and were now severely disabled. It was quite an emotional day, and we were able to appreciate just how important a wheelchair was to these victims, and how it could change their lives.

The next day we visited a Social Rehabilitation Centre on the outskirts of Hanoi. The centre caters for both residential and day-care victims of Agent Orange, up to 50 years of age. They are given an education and taught computer skills, sewing and handicrafts, as well as general life skills. The centre is run entirely by volunteers.



We went into the main hall and helped to present the five wheelchairs that had been provided by MSAVLC. We then went on to view the centre and meet some of the occupants.

Our visits to the victims served to demonstrate how widespread the continuing legacy of Agent Orange is upon Vietnam's population. Whilst our wheelchairs make a vast difference to the lives of those who receive them, there are many others waiting.

VAVA is a nationwide organisation run almost entirely by retired military veterans. They do a fantastic job in helping thousands of unfortunate people, and they stressed that every dollar donated goes directly

to help the victims. They told us that thousands more wheelchairs were needed, and the Trustees of MSAVLC have recently agreed to purchase more.

Later that evening we took a taxi to Hanoi's Noi Bai Airport and boarded the plane for an overnight flight to Heathrow.

Over the four weeks that we were away, we had:

Travelled a total of 13,816 miles using three different airlines, coach, local bus, car, train, taxis and tuk-tuks.

Met with all our project leaders and many of their staff and clients.

Spent fourteen days working and a further ten days travelling.

Stayed in nine hotel rooms in seven different hotels.

Sent a total of 79 emails and numerous texts and messages.

Written reports for the Trustees and for the website and the Bulletin.

Taken over 750 photographs, and,

Managed to keep healthy and cheerful, despite the harrowing stories, the problems, the setbacks and difficulties we encountered along the way.

In conclusion, we felt that it was an exhausting but very successful trip, and it was wonderful to see how effectively all of our project managers had used the donations given by MSAVLC's supporters.

Peter and Mary Lidgard



2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Charity's 2022 Annual General Meeting was held this year in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire on Saturday 17th June 2023.

The event was well attended, and, following a welcome and introduction by Peter Lidgard, Chairman of the Trustees, the charity's officers gave their reports.

Mary Lidgard, Honorary Secretary, stated that 2022 had been a difficult year for many; the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that many of our co-donors had withdrawn their support for deserving projects. However, MSAVLC continued to fully support all our projects during the year, and we had granted additional funding to some.

She reported that during the year the charity financially supported: the following projects:

All Ears Cambodia

Continuation of the Project 'Listen.Out.Loud. Kratie' for a fourth year, until its completion at the end of February 2022. This project has provided primary ear health care, health education and hearing aids for children and adults in eastern Cambodia.

School screening and paediatric audiology clinics in northern Cambodia.

The purchase of musical instruments. These were used to introduce music therapy for Khmer children who are deaf or severely hearing-impaired, to help with cognitive and language development, and develop speech and auditory skills.

Funding for a qualified medical doctor to work at the All Ears Clinic in Phnom Penh. The doctor was employed to enhance and promote AEC clinical services in Phnom Penh and at outreach level. He combined clinical and teaching skills with direct patient care.

Disability Development Services Program (DDSP) Pursat, Cambodia

The continuation of a two-year Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Rehabilitation (PQR) Project until its

completion in June 2022. The project has improved the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families, through access to health, rehabilitation, livelihood, and social inclusion.

The start of a new two-year PQR Project in July 2022.

Daughters of Cambodia

The continuation of a Health and Wholeness Project until its completion at the end of September 2022. The project helped young women and men in Cambodia escape the horrors of sex trafficking and start sustainable new lives for themselves. It provided skills and training, paired with vital health and support services needed to aid their physical, psychological, and social recovery.

The start of a new Health and Wholeness Project from October 2022, to run for one year.

New Hope Children's' Home, Poipet, Cambodia

Sponsorship of three children, and gifts for all the children. The project helped the Home provide shelter and stability for orphaned and abandoned children. The children receive loving care, education, health, and welfare support.

Continuation of the First Aid Project.

Hospital fees for an ill child.

Purchase of equipment for the Home.

The Vietnamese Association for Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA).

We had purchased and distributed 545 wheelchairs to 39 provinces throughout Vietnam, to assist the victims of Agent Orange to become mobile and more self-sufficient.

In conclusion, Mary thanked all of the charity's friends, supporters, donors and fundraisers for their support over the year.

John Firth, Honorary Treasurer, then gave his report to the meeting. He said that the total grants for Project Expenditure in 2022 had been £145,730 and that during that time our total income had been £90,973. Of

that, about one third was given in donations, one third in legacies and the remaining third was income from our investments.



However, John stated that the charity was in a sound financial position, and this was partly due to the low level of non-project expenditure. This was only £1,757, and it included fundraising costs of £1,076 - the cost of producing and distributing the Bulletin. The charity's running costs therefore amounted to £681 for the year, a mere 0.5% of our expenditure.

John thanked Nicola Hewlett for examining our accounts and certifying that they were all correct. Once again her service was provided to the charity free of charge.

Peter Lidgard was elected as Chair of Trustees, Mary Lidgard as Honorary Secretary. John Firth was elected as Honorary Treasurer and Lynn Firth, Jenny Gold and Susmita Ghosh were re-elected as Trustees.

The Chairman thanked everyone who had contributed to another successful year for the charity. He thanked all the Trustees for working so diligently for the charity, and Peter Ryan for keeping the website updated at no charge. Finally he thanked everyone for attending the meeting and all the charity's supporters for their donations.

The AGM was followed by an illustrated talk about the Trustees' 2023 Monitoring and Evaluation visit to Vietnam and Cambodia.

50 YEARS OF VIETNAM-UK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

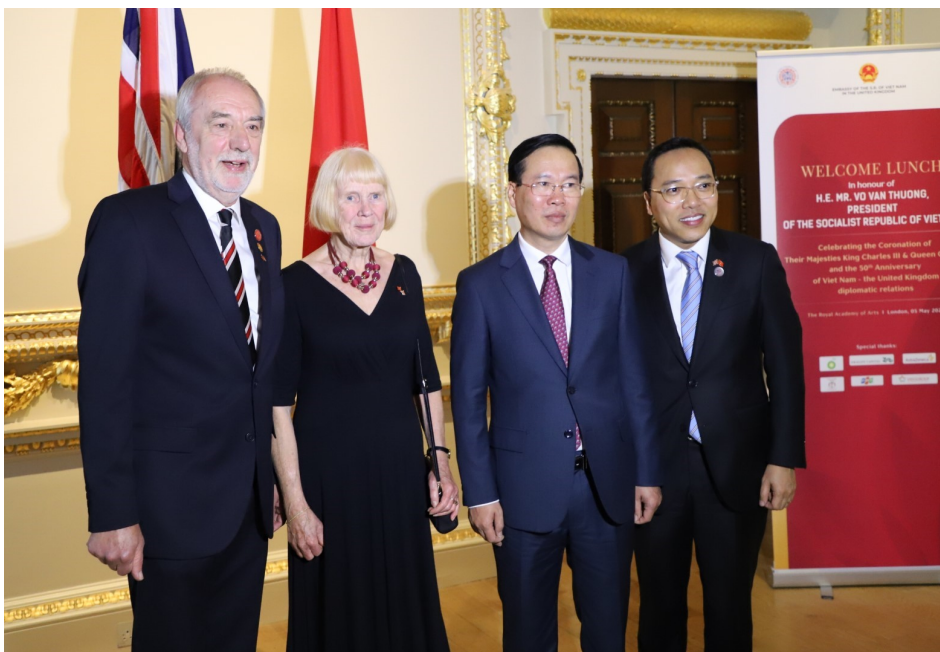
It has been a great honour for our charity to be included in the celebrations which mark fifty years of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the United Kingdom, 1973-2023.

The major feature of those celebrations was the visit of the National President of Vietnam, Mr Vo Van Thuong to London in early May.

Representatives from MSAVLC were honoured to be invited to lunch with President Thuong, along with ministers and government officials from both countries, present and former ambassadors, and officers from charities and other NGO's which work in Vietnam.

The event was hosted by Vietnam's Ambassador in London, H.E. Dr Nguyen Hoang Long, at the Royal Academy of Arts in Piccadilly, London.

In our previous Bulletin (No. 211) there was an account of the Round Table Meeting held at the Vietnamese Embassy in London in



Chair of Trustees, Peter Lidgard and Honorary Secretary, Mary Lidgard with State President, Mr Vo Van Thuong and Ambassador Dr Nguyen Hoang Long.

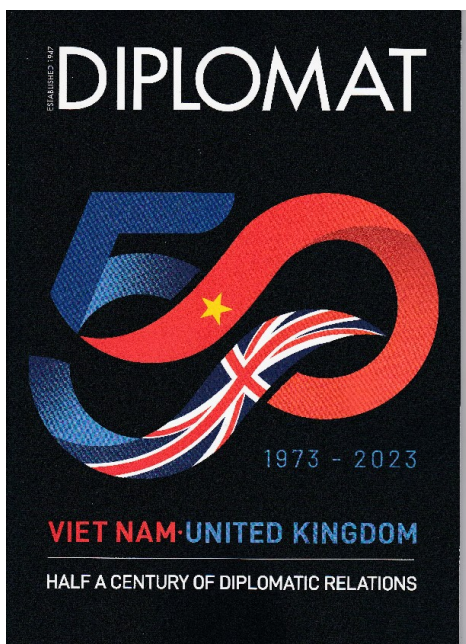
April, which was part of the activities celebrating that anniversary. There, Trustees from MSAVLC discussed supporting Vietnam's development with other NGO's currently working in Vietnam.

As a direct result of that meeting Peter Lidgard, was invited to write an article for a special edition of the Diplomat magazine, which was published to celebrate the anniversary. The article gave a very brief history of MSAVLC, and outlined some of the aid given by MSAVLC to Vietnam over the past fifty years.

There are also articles about the development of Vietnam, and the relationship between our two countries, written by ministers of the Vietnamese government and by James Cleverly MP, the UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Graham Stuart MP, the Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero, and Wayne David MP,

the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Vietnam.

The articles are available on the internet at:
<https://diplomatmagazine.com/vietnam-report-half-a-century-of-diplomatic-relations/>



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