

# **PROGRESS AT DAUGHTERS OF CAMBODIA**

At their recent meeting, the Trustees of MSAVLC were pleased to receive a positive and informative report from our partner organisation 'Daughters of Cambodia'.

'Daughters' rescues young people from the sex trade and provides them with social, physical and psychological recovery, along with sustainable and meaningful employment, and MSAVLC provides funding for their Health and Wellness Project. The report was sent by the organisation's Founder and Director, Ruth Elliot, and edited extracts are printed below.

*The Medical and Social Work program at Daughters of Cambodia is a crucial front-line service provided to victims of sex trafficking and sex exploitation. Due to their occupation, their health is in a poor condition often with sexually transmitted diseases; they suffer from distressing psychological symptoms including PTSD; their domestic relationships are abusive and exploitative; their children are at risk of repeating the cycles of abuse and sex exploitation; and they easily fall prey to other forms of exploitation due to lack of education and lack of empowerment.*

*We have been providing medical treatment, psychological treatment, social work support services, safeguarding and interventions for children at risk, and life skills training. To date, we have helped 825 former sex workers experience freedom, health and psychological/social recovery as a result of your kind support.*

## **Medical clinic**

*During the course of this year, we have treated approximately 200 medical cases in our medical clinic and made about 30 referral cases. In addition to Daughters' clinic, clients attend referral appointments at the specialist medical centres that we partner with. The clinic also provides healthcare for their children and sometimes for their other family members. This fiscal year we have had 19 young women join our program and 9 of those are still with us. Around one third of those who have left, have started their own businesses, which is a fantastic outcome!*

## **Medical Program**

*Daughters' medical program provides medical diagnoses, treatment, and recovery of health for our clients, who are all former trafficking and sexual exploitation victims, along with their children. Our current medical officer is called Monirath; she started working with us in May 2023, replacing Kim Seak the former medical officer, who left because of her commute time to work.*

*Monirath is a highly talented and experienced nurse/midwife, who has worked at a top Phnom Penh hospital for 7 years. She operates Daughters' on-site medical clinic on a part-time basis, but we offer medical care and treatment every day through our referral partners.*

*Monirath conducts intake screening assessments of new clients, and 3-monthly health checks for all existing clients. She administers treatment and makes referrals. Our clients are a high risk group for cervical cancer and other STI infections, especially those who either have multiple partners, or whose partners have multiple partners. Cervical screening tests save lives by finding cell changes that have developed on the cervix. These cell changes are then treated before cancer develops. We referred all clients for cervical cancer screening and education to our partnering clinic.*



We have just this week started a vaccination program for our clients and staff against tetanus. Some clients are nervous of the injection and of the effects, and we are conducting some educational workshops to give education on the benefits of vaccinations.

#### **Redlight Outreaches**

This year we have been conducting regular outreaches to red-light areas of Phnom Penh to reach out to girls trapped in the sex industry. As part of this, we have taken hygiene packs to give out, and have built relationships with sex workers, explaining ways in which Daughters can help them. We have offered them employment along with our medical treatment and social work support services.

#### **Health Care Services**

We treat an average of 25 clients per month for general conditions, including an average of 5 external referrals. This year, we have regularly treated: STD infections, contraception and reproductive health difficulties, antenatal care, ENT conditions, physiotherapy, and stomach pain.

#### **Ante-natal Care**

We have a few pregnant girls who are in risky situations currently. One of these girls lives with a violent drug-taking partner and is regularly the victim of domestic violence. We have given her much support and education to counter this. Another young woman is still selling her body and has neglected her pregnancy, avoided attending ante-natal appointments and declined our support for the birth. We are

concerned that she is planning to sell her baby, and we are monitoring her situation closely. A young woman who is expecting twin boys is doing well and is flourishing in her pregnancy.

#### **Health Education and Life Skills**

Life skills and health education workshops at Daughters are making a real difference in the lives of the girls.

We have made progress in helping reduce our clients' consumption of energy drinks and also cosmetic creams and procedures that are unnecessary or harmful to health, and many of the clients report that they have now ceased these activities. Some topics we have covered this cycle are:

Contraception Methods - type, duration, pros and cons.

Cervical Cancer - risk factors, prevention, signs & symptoms and regular check-ups, pap smears.

Budgeting your monthly salary - why and how.

Spending, saving, wants versus needs, an overview of the "envelope method" to keep track of money.

Scams, tricks and traps - how to recognise and avoid them.

Assertive communication, what is passive and aggressive communication, illustrated with role-plays and activities to support understanding.

Hygiene.

Nutrition.

Pornography (re. adults and children), and Relationship skills.

#### **Social Work Services**

Our social work department provides support for our clients to bring about changes in psychological and emotional wellbeing, and in domestic and social functioning. As part of this, we work to empower them with psychological resources and techniques. We target reducing abuse and risk factors including: child abuse, domestic violence, risk of re-trafficking, dysfunctional behaviours, addictions, psychological distress, symptoms of trauma, dangers and threats to our clients and their children.

#### **Mental Health**

We have been helping some clients who have mental health struggles and psychological distress including symptoms of PTSD, and suicide ideation. We have been providing counselling, therapeutic support, and medical treatment, and are glad to report that they are all showing signs of recovery and healing.

#### **Day-care**

Daughters has re-established a day-care creche, run by Danish volunteers who have created a program of activities, which they teach to the Khmer day-care staff. They also monitor standards and encourage the day-care staff to stimulate and interact with the children. Our day-care programs include: music and singing sessions, dance sessions, story reading, parachute play, art & craft, stories, fine motor activities, outdoor play and water play.

Our team teaches childcare classes, to both the day-care staff and clients who are mothers, in order to break cycles of dysfunctional parenting and harmful practices based on ignorance, societal norms, or conditioning.

We gave the day-care a fun facelift recently, to make it a happy space, painting the walls in fun colours, and purchasing beautiful climbing equipment, picklers, slides and cubes to create a stimulating indoor play area for the children.

The Trustees of MSAVLC are very pleased with the medical and social work carried out by Daughters of Cambodia and they recently agreed to fund the Program for a further year.

Donations, either earmarked specifically for Daughters of Cambodia, or provided generally for the ongoing work of MSAVLC, are always welcomed.



Ruth Elliot and the Outreach team in the red light district of Phnom Penh.



# HEROES

**MSAVLC has been supporting the Disability Development Services Program (DDSP) in Pursat for over ten years. The organisation gives invaluable aid to paraplegic and quadriplegic victims in Pursat Province in central Cambodia. Our Hero, Pheng Samnang is director of DDSP, and this is his story.**

Pheng Samnang was born in 1973 on about May 6<sup>th</sup>, although he is not sure of the actual date. At the time the Vietnam War was raging and bombs were falling on Cambodia. His father died two or three years after he was born after falling from a tree, and his mother and three of his seven siblings died in 1978 during the Khmer Rouge regime. He was very ill as a baby, but recovered, so was called Samnang, which means “lucky”!

In 1975 when the Khmer Rouge took over the country, his family were split up and his siblings were scattered. Samnang was left with his mother, but food was very scarce, and his mother gradually starved to death. Samnang sat beside her for a long time, not knowing that she had died, and he tried to wake her. Eventually he was pulled from her and his mother's body was taken away. He was now alone, but fortunately his elder sister found him and came with a cow cart to take him to her home. At the time, food was almost non-existent, one can of rice had to feed fifty people which meant only a few grains for each person, and due to malnutrition, Samnang could hardly walk.

In 1975 Samnang's aunt and uncle managed to escape from Cambodia, taking his elder brother with them. They travelled to France, where his brother still lives today.

Samnang lived in Phnom Penh with his sister until 1988, when they moved back to the countryside in Pursat. They were extremely poor, and they bartered palm juice and cakes made by his sister, for rice, and they raised pigs and chickens. They found skeletons in the fields and forests near their house from people who had starved to death, or been killed by the Khmer Rouge.

Samnang was able to start school at around twelve years old, and he attended school in the morning and sold cakes in the afternoon. He learnt his lessons from the teachers' memories, as books were scarce due to the Khmer Rouge regime's policies. He had to cross a river to get to school, so he tied a string to the trees at each side of the river, held on to it and swam across, with his books in a



bucket. He often tried to hide himself amongst the trees on his way to school as he was very poor, and had to wear ill-fitting clothes which made him feel ashamed. He went on to secondary school and had to walk about seven kilometres to reach it along a railway line. He was still very poor, and he felt self-conscious. His brother-in-law had a horse which sometimes Samnang could ride on to school, but the other children would shoo it away, so he had to walk back home. His sister had a second child, but unfortunately her husband left her, and Samnang had to work even harder in order to secure food to feed the family.

When Samnang finished secondary school he worked at the commune offices as a clerk, and then as a cashier. At eighteen he applied to train as a teacher and passed his exam to teacher's training school, where he trained for three years. There he learnt English and how to teach maths and physics. In his last year at the school, he was on his brother's motorbike and was hit from behind, breaking his leg very badly. He was in hospital for six months and the doctors wanted to amputate his leg, but he refused and managed to walk out of the hospital on crutches. He returned to the training school and passed his final exams.

Samnang then taught maths and physics in Pursat, but for his first year of teaching he was paid no salary. He lived in a room at the school, but his sister lived in the outskirts of Pursat, and one of his brothers in Banteay Meanchey. During this time Samnang used to go back and forth between them and obtain one month's worth of

food from each of them. He travelled on the train, but had no money for his fare, so he used to jump from the roof of the train down into the carriage to hide from the conductor. He had no money to buy food, but his family would give him rice which he supplemented with salty fish eggs, water lilies, water greens and crabs from the fields nearby. He would also collect some food from an aunt who was a nun in a nearby pagoda.

To earn money, he opened private English classes at his room in the school and taught them for about three years. He saved up and bought a bicycle and later a motorbike which he used as a motor taxi. He would pick up customers early in the morning and take them to the market and they would pay him for the ride. He would then teach from seven to eleven and work as a motor taxi in the afternoons.

Samnang also worked clearing mines left by the Khmer Rouge. The man in charge of the operation walked by the school, saw Samnang and asked him if he was free in the afternoons, and if so, could he come and work for him. He started work in the office and then learnt how to locate land mines so that they could be blown up. He even learnt how to defuse them.

However, due to his limp some students at the school would call him names, chanting “smooth land, rough walking.” This hurt him very much and he realised just how people with severe disabilities must feel, and he wanted to help them. He heard that DDSP were recruiting, and aged thirty-three, he applied for, and got the job of director. He thinks this was mainly because although the other candidates were better qualified, they were asking for high salaries, and he just simply wanted to help people.

Samnang has been leading the team at DDSP ever since and he is doing an amazing job, helping the poor and disabled people of the Pursat region. There is precious little help for them, and without DDSP probably many would have died.

We are immensely proud of Samnang, and of what he has achieved. We are honoured to be working with him and his team at DDSP in Pursat.

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: A POSTSCRIPT

Regular readers may have noticed that the Annual General Meeting that was held in Cheltenham in June was a successful and enjoyable event. The attendance was good and supporters who were there were able to enjoy excellent facilities provided by Charlton Kings Social Club and also an illustrated presentation about the recent visit made by the Trustees to Vietnam and Cambodia.

A few days after the AGM it was heartening to receive a very complementary email from one of our supporters who attended our AGM for the first time. He wrote:

*"I want to thank you for making me so welcome at the AGM last weekend. It was a pleasure meeting you all and especially to see the presentation of your travels earlier in the year and all the great work the individual projects are doing in their respective fields.*

*I feel it is so important when supporting a charity to know exactly where the money goes and the impact it is having on the ground. Your talk illustrated that perfectly, and it was also wonderful to hear that MSAVLC is in such a strong financial position thanks to the hard work and prudent management of the trustees."*

The Trustees are most grateful to everyone who gives their time and their money to MSAVLC, so that we can continue helping the less fortunate people of South East Asia.

-----

# DIFFICULT TIMES

To keep all of our projects in Vietnam and Cambodia running we need funds, but the Trustees of MSAVLC understand that these are difficult times for everyone. Inflation hits us all: fuel and energy prices have rocketed, food and maintenance costs have all increased significantly.

Whilst we appreciate every donation from our supporters, it is hardly surprising to learn that donations to our charity are declining. So, to help boost our funds, we would like to ask if you would you consider making a bequest to MSAVLC in your will.

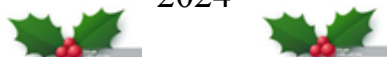
No matter how large or small, every gift will make a difference.

Our promise to you is that we will ensure that the money is used to help the neediest people in Vietnam and Cambodia.

You may already appreciate that 98.8% of the money donated by you goes to our projects in South-East Asia, with only 1.2% spent on administration and fundraising. Moreover, the Trustees' recent visit to our projects there reaffirmed our faith in our project managers. We know that they are using the money honestly and wisely, and are making a real difference to people's lives.

The Trustees of MSAVLC  
would like to thank all  
supporters for their kind  
messages and  
generous donations.

We wish you all a  
Merry Christmas  
and a Happy and Peaceful  
New Year  
2024



# THANK YOU!



MSAVLC is the only large scale donor of wheelchairs to VAVA ,the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange.

Without your donations this young victim would not be able to get about. On her behalf, we thank you.

## 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)