

**VIETNAM
LAOS
CAMBODIA**



**MEDICAL &
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NEWS BULLETIN**

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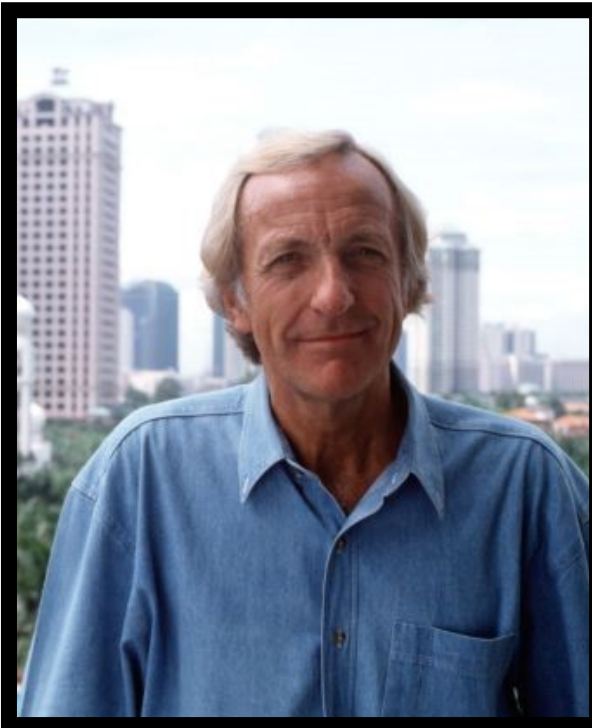
JOHN PILGER R.I.P.

It is with deep regret that the Trustees of MSAVLC have to report the death of John Pilger, Vice President of our charity.

John was a fearless, award-winning, crusading journalist and film maker, who supported MSAVLC since it was founded in the 1960's, and he was probably our longest-serving supporter. His book 'Heroes', published in 1986, was the inspiration for the series of articles printed in recent MSAVLC Bulletins, and the charity was greatly honoured when in 2017, he agreed to become an Honorary Officer alongside Dame Judi Dench, Lord Richard Balfe and Sir George Howarth. He died at his London home, of pulmonary fibrosis, aged 84.

John's journalistic career began in his native Australia, but he moved to London in 1964 to work as a copy writer for the Daily Mirror. He became the Mirror's war correspondent in Vietnam, and as a journalist he never shirked from saying the unsayable. Across half a century, in newspapers and in his documentary films – many for ITV, but later also in the cinema – he became an ever-stronger voice for those without a voice, and a thorn in the side of those in authority.

John Pilger was one of the first journalists to return to Vietnam after the war, and his films included: "Still America's War" (1974), "Do You Remember Vietnam" (1978), and "Heroes" (1981), where he took five disabled American war veterans back



to former combat zones to reflect on what he described as a war fought "in the cause of nothing".

In 1975 John went to Vietnam with Joan McMichael, founder of MSAVLC. Together they visited Hanoi and Ky Anh in Ha Tinh Province: "When Joan and I went to Hanoi in 1975 - an extraordinary time - we were both inspired and shocked. We visited Ky Anh where the British Friendship Hospital would rise; I felt immensely proud to be in such company." he said.

In 1979, he went to Cambodia after the Vietnamese had thrown out Pol Pot and the murderous Khmer Rouge. In a report that took up almost half of the Daily Mirror, he revealed that possibly more than two million people, from a population of seven

million, had died as a result of genocide or starvation, while another two million faced death from food shortages or disease.

Haunting images of emaciated children, and doctors battling to save lives, were subsequently seen in Pilger's documentary film "Year Zero: The Silent Death of Cambodia" which was watched in 50 countries by 150 million viewers, and won more than 30 international awards.

Displaying his talent for putting a human tragedy into a political context, he laid part of the blame on the US, which had secretly and illegally bombed Cambodia, creating the turmoil that allowed Pol Pot to seize power. Furthermore, he said that western governments were unwilling to give substantial aid to those now running Cambodia, for fear of displeasing the US, which had been defeated in the Vietnam war only four years earlier.

John Pilger's reporting helped to raise forty-five million dollars in relief and earned him a 'Journalist of the Year' title in the British Press Awards and the United Nations Media Peace Prize. Over the next decade, he continued to return to Cambodia and report on the power politics. He even survived an ambush after being put on a Khmer Rouge death list.

He was great supporter of our charity and quite recently he kindly remarked, "I refer to MSAVLC in public meetings as the best kind of charitable/humanitarian organisation".

Continued overleaf

ANOTHER 513 WHEEL-CHAIRS FOR VIETNAM

Many of his subsequent documentaries exposed human rights abuses all over the world. At great personal risk, Pilger entered war zones and countries run by military dictatorships. He reported on genocide in East Timor and torture in Burma. He interviewed Nelson Mandela in South Africa and reported human rights abuses in Iraq, Palestine and his native Australia. He left the Mirror in 1985 and wrote for other papers, including the Guardian, and won numerous awards for his journalism and film-making.

John Pilger's journalism was the manifestation of a deep humanity that inspired everything he did. He possessed the most remarkable skill in communicating the truth behind many of the major injustices of our time. The wars that tore the world apart in the 20th and 21st centuries, and the suffering of their countless victims, were his concern. He will be greatly missed.

We send our condolences to his family and friends at this sad time.



FUNDRAISING AT THE ORGANIC FARM SHOP

Once again our supporters at the Organic Farm Shop at Abbey Home Farm in Cirencester have sent us a donation from the sale of second-hand books. This takes the total sent to us in 2023 to £285!

The Trustees would like to thank David and Fiona and all our friends at the Organic Farm Shop for continuing to support our charity.

As ever, we promise that 98.5% of your donation will be used to support our projects in South-East Asia, with only half a penny in the pound used for administration.

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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The Trustees were delighted to receive recently a notification from VAVA, the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin, that the money donated to them in 2023 had been used to purchase 478 standard wheelchairs, and 35 mechanical wheelchairs (see above).

Ms Do Mai Khanh, Director of the International Relations Department at VAVA in Hanoi told us: "Your donation and contribution is a huge source of encouragement for us

in our job and much help to our victims of Agent Orange to integrate into communities".

The wheelchairs are now being distributed to VAVA provincial groups throughout Vietnam, from Cao Bang in the Northern Highlands to Ca Mau in the Mekong Delta.

We will publish photos and more information on this latest consignment of wheelchairs, in future Bulletins.



MSAVLC-funded wheelchairs for distribution being loaded onto a motorbike trailer at VAVA headquarters in Hanoi.

VIETNAM VETERAN VISIT

In 2022 MSAVLC provided hundreds of wheelchairs for Agent Orange victims, and during our visit to Vietnam last March we were taken to see some of the recipients of the wheelchairs in their own homes.

We left Hanoi and were driven about eighty miles to the province of Ninh Binh, weaving our way in and out of the busy morning traffic, and onto Highway 1, which was rather less crowded. Our driver, however, drove at a hair-raising pace, and we were bumped up and down in the back of the minibus.

We reached the headquarters of VAVA Ninh Binh, where we had a meeting with VAVA officials. They told us that there are 5,000 Agent Orange victims in Ninh Binh Province alone. Of the 545 MSAVLC-funded wheelchairs sent to VAVA, ten were sent to Ninh Binh Province and these were shared between eight districts. There was a high demand, and it was obvious that many more wheelchairs were needed.

We then set off to meet some of the recipients of the wheelchairs. We drove through a district which was devoted to the carving of locally-quarried stone. Huge statues of Buddha's, foo dogs, pillars, pots, and garden ornaments were being exquisitely chipped away at, sanded and carved. The whole area was thick

with grey dust which settled everywhere, around the houses and on the trees and plants, and even penetrated the minibus. I saw one statue move, but realised that it was actually one of the workers, covered from head to foot in the grey dust! It must be very unhealthy to live in the village houses which are situated in that area and impossible to keep them clean and free from the thick clouds of grey dust which descend upon them.

We reached the home of Mr. Pham Van Quyuet who lived in a tiny cottage in the village with his wife and son. He had been affected by Agent

Orange when he was a soldier in Quang Tri Province during the American War.

Quang Tri Province is situated in central Vietnam, where the fighting was intense. Agent Orange and many bombs were dropped on the area, and many lives were lost.

Mr. Quyuet was left severely disabled and could not walk. However, he was proud that he had fought for his country. His bed was in the tiny living room, where he showed us a photo of himself when he was a soldier, and he proudly displayed photos of General Giap and Ho Chi Minh on the wall.

We met his son who had also been affected by Agent Orange, and his wife who bravely coped with all their needs. The wheelchair that Mr. Quyuet had been given meant that at last he could leave his home, and his grandchildren were able to take him out into the village. His wife became very emotional and expressed her gratitude for our help.

It was gratifying to see the difference that the wheelchair had made to the lives of the whole family, and to realise that many more people had been helped in this way. We thank all our donors who make the purchase of these wheelchairs possible.

Mary Lidgard, Hon Secretary



A DAUGHTER OF CAMBODIA

In March 2023 Trustees of MSAVLC visited Daughters of Cambodia where we support a Health and Hygiene Programme for the girls and boys who have been rescued from the sex-trade.

After seeing the Visitors Centre and workshops we met their Finance Officer and thoroughly checked their accounts and accounting procedures.

We talked to staff members and many of the girls. We heard harrowing stories of how they had been rescued from the sex trade and the abuse that they had suffered from the men and sometimes their own families. Some had been sold into brothels by their mothers, and many of them had been raped by members of their own families. Nearly all of them had suffered abuse from the "clients" at the brothels, they were beaten and

even threatened with guns if they did not comply to the client's wishes! Unfortunately, there was no one to complain to, as some of the police and



government officials were also clients!

One young girl had run away terrified from her abusive family, when she was just ten years old. She lived under a bridge until she was picked up by a man who she thought would help her. But the man raped her repeatedly and then sold her to a brothel. She became pregnant, but was eventually rescued by Daughters who helped her, cared for her and found her a home. She is now working for them in their sewing room and is safe and happy. Although traumatised, her life has been saved.

We talked to many other girls whose stories were of a similar nature and they were keen to tell us how relieved and grateful they were. We were impressed by the care and compassion that was shown to the girls by everyone at Daughters of Cambodia.

REPORT FROM ALL EARS CAMBODIA

In October 2023, the Trustees were pleased to receive detailed reports from Glyn Vaughan, Director of All Ears Cambodia. MSAVLC began supporting three projects run by All Ears in April 2022, and these latest reports outlined the work completed up to September 2023.

Project Resound, focuses on providing clinical and health educational services for children of Siem Reap Province and beyond, through screening at primary schools. Siem Reap is one of the poorest provinces in Cambodia, despite the presence of Angkor Wat, a world heritage tourist site. The project's focus recently has been on the schools in the Srangae sangkat (commune), in Siem Reap district. The aim has been to move outwards to include further sangkats once all schools in Srangae are completed.

Teams from All Ears Cambodia visit the schools and screen all the children. They identify and treat ear diseases, and where necessary reduce disability by providing hearing aids.

During the latest period 2,173 children were screened, treatment was provided and some of the children were fitted with digital, behind-the-ear hearing aids, which make a vast improvement to their lives.

Combined with the school screening is a health education program which creates increased awareness about hearing and ear health. The Listen-Out-Loud Show is a child-centred interactive lesson which impressed the Trustees when they visited All Ears Cambodia last

doctor who, like Dr. Kruiy, did his medical training at the University of Health Sciences and Preah Ang Duong Hospital. Dr. Kakada, is based at All Ears Cambodia, Phnom Penh Site 2.

Dr. Kruiy and Dr. Kakada between them provide services for the new-born hearing screening and diagnostics programme. Referrals for the programme have increased substantially at All Ears Phnom Penh with babies now being referred from the local paediatric hospitals and clinics. New-born screening at All



March. It includes games and activities, and use of the musical instruments recently funded by MSAVLC, which was Project 2.

The third project sponsored by MSAVLC is sponsorship of a doctor. Dr. Huy Chheang Kruiy continues in his role as lead clinician at All Ears Phnom Penh Site 1. He is a young, although very capable, ear, nose and throat doctor who qualified at the University of Health Sciences. Dr Kruiy did his specialist ear, nose and throat training at Preah Ang Duong Hospital, the national eye, ear, nose and throat hospital in Phnom Penh.

Joining Dr. Kruiy this year is Dr Lorn Tim Kakada, another Cambodian

Ears is a two-step process involving the use of oto-acoustic emissions and automated auditory brainstem responses. Those babies failing the screening are often candidates for aural rehabilitation, and hearing aids are fitted in appropriate cases.

The Trustees of MSAVLC are very pleased to be sponsoring this pioneering work done by All Ears Cambodia, in a country which has virtually no other auditory health screening for children or adults.
