



# DDSP GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

The Trustees have recently received the latest six-monthly report from the Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Rehabilitation (PQR) Project run by the Disability Development Services Program (DDSP) in Pursat, Cambodia. The report outlined the continuing success of this Project which has been supported by donations given by MSAVLC's supporters since 2009.

Close collaboration with local partners is essential for DDSP's work, and they are fortunate that their main office is located next to the local government buildings in Pursat city. DDSP works very closely with, and are strongly supported by: the Department of Social Affairs for



Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, the Department of Health, and the Department of Education and Youth.

DDSP also benefits from close collaboration with the local branches of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Exceed Rehabilitation Centre, for technical support to people with disabilities. They provide assistive devices such as wheelchairs, prosthetics and crutches for DDSP's clients. Clients with serious bedsores may also be referred for treatment at Red Cross or Exceed clinics.

All DDSP clients in Pursat Province have a regular home visit every six months from a member of staff. They provide physiotherapy and counselling to improve their clients' physical and psychological health, and

they supply health and rehabilitation materials. These visits are also a good opportunity for the DDSP staff to inspect and repair wheelchairs or other assistive devices. Clients with serious bed-sores, constipation or urinary problems are visited more frequently.

DDSP staff train and coach family members and carers in basic physiotherapy, counselling and how to take care of the clients and prevent bedsores.

Clients also receive sanitizing and health materials such as bedding, mosquito-nets, blankets, napkins, mattresses and sarongs. The Project also supplies ceramic water filters which provide the clients with clean drinking water.

Assistive devices such as crutches, walking frames and adapted tables, chairs and furniture have also been provided to those who are vulnerable. Perhaps most importantly, latrines have been built for disabled clients who previously had no proper toilet facilities.

The Project provides a wide range of other services for disabled people, including transport to hospitals and clinics, house repairs and support for clients' children by providing scholarships, school uniforms, learning materials, books, pens and back-packs.

To improve the family income the Project also makes available a revolving fund, in order to start up income generation activities. The regular field visits by DDSP staff provide valuable support to the success of these businesses.

It is a sad fact, that due to lack of understanding and/or education, disabled people in Cambodia are often adversely discriminated against or are regarded with disdain.

In order to promote better public awareness, the Project promotes a variety of community events, including the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD).

Last year IDPD was celebrated in Pursat on the 6th of December. The Deputy Provincial Governor, the Director of the Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, government officers from relevant departments, commune council leaders and NGO staff were invited to be guests at the event. There was a total of 97 DDSP clients there, including 39 female participants, and



this included many children with disabilities. Both the Director of Social Affairs and the Deputy Provincial Governor spoke about the legislation protecting and promoting the rights of disabled people. In doing so, they committed themselves to work towards the integration of disabled and other vulnerable adults and children into society.

The Project also provided clothing, refreshments and transportation for those who participated.

The event was enjoyed by all of the participants and many of them expressed their thanks to DDSP and to their donors for organising and funding the event.

As a further example of the activities promoted by the Project, an awareness-raising day on disability issues was conducted in Kandeang District, Pursat Province. Those

attending were disabled people, including children and their parents, villagers, a village chief, and other relevant stakeholders. They were given a greater understanding of the law on the Protection and Promotion of Persons with Disability, and other disability issues. Furthermore, it was agreed that in Kandeang District, disability discrimination had decreased through integrating children and adults with disabilities in community activities. DDSP Project staff were pleased to note that many people in the community now understand disability issues, and that disabled adults and children felt valued and respected.

The Project further supports peer-to-peer meetings for disabled people. Key workers and community leaders are invited to attend. The meetings aim to help DDSP staff monitor their clients' health, as well as helping the clients share their concerns, solve problems and build relationships with their peers. As a result the disabled clients felt confident to join, not only the activities which were organized by DDSP, but also other social activities in the community.

Everyone at the Disability Development Services Program in Pursat deserves congratulations for their part in providing these vital services to the disabled in Pursat Province.

In particular, MSAVLC would like to thank Director, Pheng Samnang, and Project Co-ordinator, Hun Chandoeun, for their excellent leadership.



# VISIT TO THE SOCIAL REHABILITATION CENTRE IN HANOI

During the Trustees' Evaluation Visit to Vietnam last year, we were taken by representatives from the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA) to visit the Social Rehabilitation Centre on the outskirts of Hanoi. The centre caters for disabled and residential victims. It consists of a large set of buildings and pleasant grounds, situated alongside an army camp which had donated the buildings to VAVA.

The residents were aged up to 50 years old and were the children or grandchildren of Agent Orange victims. 36 people were there at the time of our visit. They are the most needy, and are referred there by provincial VAVA officials. They are given an education, and taught computer skills, sewing and handicrafts, as well as general life skills, enabling some of them to eventually return to their communities and work.

The centre has been running for the past ten years and is staffed entirely by volunteers. It is one of 26 centres like this in Vietnam, provided by VAVA. They do receive some financial assistance from local businesses. And they have some support from Japan and Korea, but MSAVLC is the only organisation that provides them with wheelchairs.

We met some of the residents in the main hall and helped to present five wheelchairs which had been donated by MSAVLC. We then went on to view the centre. It seemed a happy place and the young people were excited to have visitors.

Among the people we met was a young lad who was unable to read or write when he arrived at the centre four years ago, but now he could do both and had been taught computer skills. He also looked after the centres three cows!

We also met Miss Quyen, a 35-year-old Agent Orange victim who was severely crippled, but she had won a scholarship to study in India, and had returned to teach computer skills at the school. She had been there for four years and lived in at the school. She was a delightful young lady and very happy in her work.



Every couple of months, groups of Agent Orange-affected veterans are invited to come and stay at the centre and receive health checks, saunas, exercise and vitamin therapy. This helps to improve their health and encourages their socialisation. We were impressed by the centre and the important work that is done there.

In the afternoon we met with the president of VAVA, General Nguyen Van Rinh, and other officials and we discussed their work in more detail. We learnt that like us, all of them are volunteers, and they work long hours to promote and help VAVA victims both in their homes and at the centres.

Some of the victims are given a very small pension by the government, and VAVA help by providing support, equipment, medical treatment, house repairs and employment opportunities where applicable.

We were very pleased to hear that the Americans had donated some money to help clear up the toxic chemicals from the "hot spots" in various provinces, but they still do not admit responsibility for the damage done to the people.

When we asked VAVA what other help was needed

they replied 'Always more wheelchairs', as we are their only large scale providers of wheelchairs.

The volunteers of VAVA do a fantastic job in helping thousands of unfortunate people. They stressed that every dollar that was donated goes directly to help the victims. MSAVLC hope to continue supporting victims of Agent Orange in the future.



# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Trustees are most grateful to His Excellency Ambassador Dr Nguyen Hoang Long for allowing us to use the Vietnam Embassy in London for our next Annual General Meeting, on Tuesday 11th June.

Following a welcome by Ambassador Long, the business meeting will begin with the presentation of the Annual Report for 2023 by Mary Lidgard, Honorary Secretary. The charity's Financial Report will then be presented by John Firth, Honorary Treasurer.

There will then be an opportunity for questions and the election of Trustees. Mary and Peter Lidgard will give a short illustrated presentation about their Monitoring and Evaluation visit to Vietnam and Cambodia in March 2023. Refreshments will be provided.

All supporters of the charity are warmly invited. If you hope to attend, it would be helpful if you could contact Peter Lidgard by email; [enquiries@msavlc.org](mailto:enquiries@msavlc.org) or by post using the Cheltenham address below.



## FIRST AID IN POIPET

Cheng Rostitus, Director of New Hope Children's Home has been running a First Aid Project in a village just outside Poipet in Cambodia since 2011. And whilst the number of children at the Home has slowly decreased, there is no shortage of youngsters who turn up on a Saturday afternoon to have their hair washed in de-lousing shampoo, and have minor cuts and ailments tended to by the local pastor and her helpers.

Rostitus has recently asked for funding for the First Aid Project for a further three years, and MSAVLC's Trustees have approved a small grant for its' continuation.

## 'ZERO PROJECT' AWARD

We are delighted to report that Pheng Samnang, Director of Disability Development Services Program in Pursat, Cambodia, was presented with an award at the 'Zero Project' Conference 2024, in Vienna, in February. The worldwide 'Zero Project' finds and shares solutions that improve the daily lives and legal rights of all persons with disabilities.

DDSP was selected for the award from 523 nominations from 97 countries for their Inclusive Education Project, which integrates children with disabilities into mainstream schools. Pheng Samnang publicly thanked the Trustees and supporters of MSAVLC for funding DDSP's work in Pursat Province.

## MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC AID FOR VIETNAM, LAOS AND CAMBODIA

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The charity's Annual General Meeting will be held at  
The Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam  
12-14 Victoria Road  
LONDON W8 5RD

on Tuesday 11th June at 6.30 pm.

Refreshments will be provided.

All supporters are warmly invited.

Please email: [enquiries@msavlc.org](mailto:enquiries@msavlc.org)  
if you would like to attend.

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