

AN IMPORTANT AND EXCITING YEAR

At the Annual General Meeting of the charity held on Tuesday 11th June, Honorary Secretary Mary Lidgard reported that 2023 had been an important and exciting year for the charity.

The original venue for the meeting had been the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in Kensington, London, by kind invitation from H.E. Ambassador Dr Nguyen Hoang Long. However, shortly before the date of our AGM, the Embassy were informed that an important delegation from Vietnam was coming to Britain, and they were to be received at the Embassy that same evening.

Fortunately the Trustees were able to switch our meeting to a room in a hotel only a few hundred metres from the Embassy.

Everyone who had indicated that they hoped to attend the meeting at the Embassy was informed of the change of venue, and all agreed that the meeting was a great success.

The dissolution of Parliament meant that MPs had returned to their constituencies by mid-June, and so one of our Vice-Presidents, Sir George Howarth, apologised that he was unable to attend.

Nevertheless, we were delighted that MSAVLC Vice-President Lord Richard Balfe did attend the meeting, along with all six Trustees, former Trustee Shirley Hepple, Vice-chair of



The Trustees with some of the charity's supporters at the Annual General Meeting held in June.

the Vietnam UK Network, Ms Bao Ha Pham, Mr Nguyen Tuan Viet and Mrs Dao Thi Hong from the Vietnamese Embassy, as well as a number of our most loyal supporters.

The Trustees Annual Report was presented at the meeting by the Honorary Secretary: her full report is printed overleaf.

Honorary Treasurer, John Firth outlined the financial report for 2023. He noted that the charity had a 24% reduction in donations received, but that our investment income remains robust and accounts for 49% of the charity's total income.

The Treasurer further remarked that in 2023 the charity had spent over £104,000 on our projects in Vietnam and Cambodia. Only £1,558 had been spent on running costs, mostly on the production of the Bulletin, with a mere 0.5% of our expenditure used on administration.

Once again, the officers and Trustees were proposed and re-elected to their posts to serve for a further year.

Finally, thanks were given to the Trustees and to the charity's voluntary helpers, and also to all our supporters who have generously given donations.

HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2023

2023 was an important and indeed exciting year for MSAVLC.

It is the aim of the Trustees to try and visit all of our projects every two to three years, but due to Covid, and other factors, this had not been possible for some time.

However, the Trustees were delighted to be able to send a delegation to Vietnam and Cambodia, in March 2023, to monitor and evaluate all the charity's current projects, and visit any related organisations.

Over the four weeks that the delegation was away, we travelled a total of 13,816 miles, using three different airlines, coach, local bus, car, train, taxis and tuk-tuks. We met with all our project leaders and many of their staff and clients. We spent 15 days working, and a further ten days travelling. We stayed in nine hotel rooms in seven different hotels, a couple of which I must admit were rather dubious establishments, and we wrote numerous reports, emails and texts for the Trustees, for our website and for the Bulletin.

It was a successful and emotional, but very worthwhile trip, and we were able to check on all our projects in great detail, their effectiveness, sustainability and value for money. Many patients and clients, who had benefitted from the aid sent by the charity, were visited in their own homes, villages and local clinics. We learnt of their successes and failures, their struggles, their triumphs and their hopes for the future, and we were able to ascertain what continuing help they may need from us. We learnt how during Covid, many of our projects had suffered, through lack of funding due to donors dropping out, and the limited access to clients due to Covid restrictions. Extra finances had been granted to some of these projects to buy essential supplies during this period, and our project leaders were very grateful for this.

Over the years MSAVLC has supported a great many projects, some of which have reached their natural conclusion, and some that due to economic progress no longer need our

assistance. We now focus our support solely on the most deprived and most needy sections of society.

The projects visited and supported financially during 2023 were;

All Ears Cambodia,
The Disability Development Services Program, Pursat,
Daughters of Cambodia,
New Hope Children's Home, Poipet, Cambodia,
The Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange, and
Hoa Binh Peace Village, Ho Chi Minh City.

Funding was also sent to the British Friendship Hospital in Ky Anh, Vietnam.

During the rest of the year Trustees were in contact regularly with all our project leaders and we are grateful to them for supplying us with regular updates, narrative and financial reports, and newsletters. All reports were examined carefully by the Trustees, any queries ironed out with the project leaders, and any further funding discussed.

As well as conducting their respective executive roles, Peter Lidgard (Chairman) compiled and edited the Bulletin, Mary Lidgard (Honorary Secretary) liaised regularly with all project directors and managed all emails sent to the website contact address, and John Firth (Honorary Treasurer) maintained the charity's mailing list.

Lynn Firth was responsible for the distribution of the Bulletin by post and email each quarter, and for compliance with General Data Protection Regulations. Susmita Ghosh managed the MSAVLC Facebook page and Jenny Gold liaised with New Hope Children's Home for the welfare of our children there.

The Trustees held meetings three times during 2023 and were in touch regularly by email and telephone.

I must stress that all the Trustees are volunteers and work from their own homes. I would like here to thank them all sincerely for their

devotion, dedication and hard work.

In April the Trustees were invited to attend a Round Table meeting at the Vietnamese Embassy to discuss with other charities "How British non-governmental organisations can better support Vietnam's socio-economic development". It was a productive meeting and MSAVLC was honoured to be awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for "extraordinary charity work and contributions to Vietnam."

The Annual General Meeting was held in Cheltenham in June and was very well attended.

The Bulletin was published in February, May, August and November and distributed to all our supporters by email or post.

I must pay special tribute here to Nic Hewlett who examines our Financial Accounts free of charge, and has done so for many years, and to Peter Ryan who manages our website for us, again without payment.

Thanks too to David Smethurst and Fiona Mann who raise money for us from the sale of books, and to Kieron who raises money for us through his Facebook page. (We actually have no idea who Kieron is, or where he comes from, so we are unable to thank him personally, but we are very grateful, never-the-less).

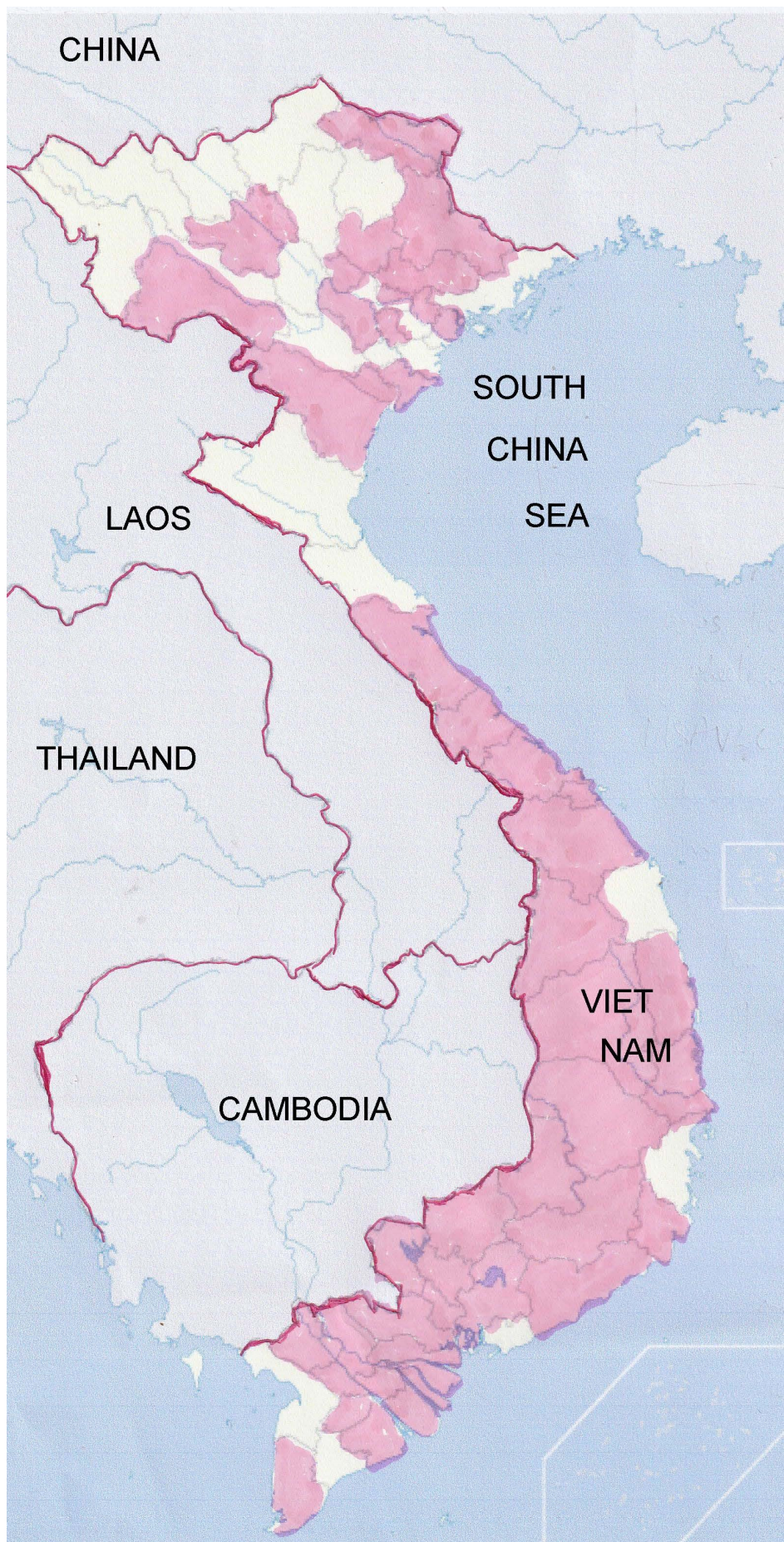
Many, many thanks must also be given to all our very generous donors and supporters without whom we could not continue.

Finally, I must express our deep sadness at the death of John Pilger, the third of our Vice-Presidents.

John was a fearless, award-winning, crusading journalist, filmmaker and friend, who supported MSAVLC since it was founded in the 1960's, and he was probably our longest-serving supporter. We were greatly honoured when in 2017, he agreed to become an Honorary Officer alongside Dame Judi Dench, Lord Richard Balfie and Sir George Howarth. John will be sorely missed by everyone that knew him.

*Mary Lidgard
Honorary Secretary*

2024 WHEELCHAIR DISTRIBUTION IN VIETNAM



The map opposite shows the distribution of the wheelchairs provided by MSAVLC to VAVA (The Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin) earlier this year. Each one of the 47 provinces coloured pink on the map, received ten or more standard wheelchairs; with a total of 485 spread across the country.

VAVA state that MSAVLC is the only major supplier of wheelchairs to Vietnam's victims of Agent Orange and other chemical weapons. The concentration is higher in the south and central provinces, as that was where the greatest amount of Agent Orange and other chemical weapons were used during the 1965-75 war.



The photo above shows one of the old soldiers who received one of the 35 mechanical wheelchairs, which were also supplied at the same time by MSAVLC and distributed by VAVA.

Your donations mean that these people, both former soldiers and civilians who were sprayed with chemicals, or their children or grandchildren who were affected, can at last venture outside their homes, using wheelchairs supplied by MSAVLC.

On their behalf, the Trustees thank you most sincerely.

DAUGHTERS OF CAMBODIA RED-LIGHT OUTREACH

Since the Trustees' visit to Daughters of Cambodia last year, we have received detailed reports of their most recent work. As well as their regular workshops, social work, and health care services, Ruth Elliott and her team have continued to hold monthly red-light outreaches in Phnom Penh. Here they make contact with girls working as sex workers in bars and brothels, they listen to their stories, talk to them, give them a bunch of flowers, tell them of the work of Daughters of Cambodia, and offer them a route out of sex work.

Many new girls have now joined Daughters, most of them teenagers, but their ages range from 12 to 48 years old. Staff at Daughters have now been busy doing what they do best: stabilizing them, working with them to reduce their psychological distress and trauma, teaching them job skills, teaching them life skills and treating their health needs.

All of the girls rescued have tragic stories to tell and all of them are traumatised. One of the girls shared her distressing story with us.



"I worked in a sex bar for 10 years. I experienced a lot of physical abuse there, but one customer I remember especially, he tied me up and electrocuted me. I managed to run away, without any clothes. Other customers sometimes pulled my hair and hit me with their shoes or spat on me. I was afraid that one day a customer would kill me. Sometimes customers would force me to re-enact what they'd seen on pornography, and they treated me like a slave. People always cursed me when I did this job. I felt my life was in darkness and I wanted to die.

I could not see a future and I felt I was worth nothing. I walked away because I wanted a fresh start and a new job – and now I am free from that life, now I am loved and accepted".

During their visit to Phnom Penh the Trustees talked to many of the girls with similar experiences. It

was upsetting for the girls to recount these stories, but they were keen to do so. It enabled us to realise just how much their lives had been changed by Daughters, and how thankful they were to have escaped such horrors.

We realise just how important is the work done by Daughters of Cambodia. Without them so many girls would be trapped in a life of depravity and pain, with no means of escape.



The Trustees of MSAVLC are proud to continue our support for Daughters, by funding their Health and Wellness Project. We are most grateful to all of our supporters who have donated to make this support possible.

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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