

TYPHOON YAGI HITS NORTHERN VIETNAM

On the 7th September 2024 Typhoon Yagi hit the northern coast of Vietnam with a terrifying ferocity. It did not receive the same press coverage as other recent weather events, but with torrential downpours and powerful winds exceeding 200 kilometres per hour, the super-typhoon forced more than 100,000 people to evacuate their homes, hundreds of people have been killed, and many are still missing. It triggered widespread flooding, flash floods and landslides, causing severe damage to roads, bridges and buildings, uprooting trees and destroying homes, schools, healthcare facilities and critical infrastructure.

Despite having weakened into a tropical depression, over the next few days Yagi continued to cause extended periods of heavy rainfall, leading to flooding and landslides across 26 of Vietnam's northern provinces, including the capital city of Hanoi. Nearly 19 million people are living in the affected provinces, and thousands of residents living close to the Red River were evacuated as water flooded the streets, collapsing a bridge and destroying many homes and hectares of crops and livestock. An entire village was swept away by a landslide as a torrent of water gushed down from the mountains in Lao Cai Province, burying the village and 35 families in mud and debris.

In Dien Bien Province, most of



Emergency workers sorting through the wreckage of one of the houses destroyed in Ha Giang Province.

which is remote and is inhabited by people from ethnic minority communities, and who experience some of the highest poverty levels in the country, more than 400 people have been relocated to public buildings that are being turned into improvised shelters. Thousands more have sought shelter with relatives and acquaintances in less affected areas. In Ha Giang Province over 1,200 homes were damaged by floods and landslides.

Although efforts to rebuild and restore services are underway, communities are still facing ongoing safety threats. Extensive infrastructure damage and flooding poses health risks to community members from lack of sanitation and mosquito-borne and water-borne diseases, including diarrhoea, dysentery and typhoid. Thousands of people have lost their homes, loved ones and livelihoods. People's resilience is being stretched, and there is an urgent need to provide

both immediate relief and recovery support to the affected populations.

As a direct response to the disaster, the Trustees of MSAVLC immediately decided to send a donation of £5,000 to the Blue Dragon Children's Foundation, a charity that is based in Hanoi and is helping with the relief efforts.

The Trustees have been aware of the great work done by the Blue Dragon Children's Foundation for the past twenty years. Initially they were providing shelter for street children in Hanoi, but over the years their remit has extended to reuniting runaways with their families, encouraging children into education, training or work, providing legal help and rescuing people at risk from being trafficked or exploited.

Blue Dragon responded to the disaster without delay and is hard at work delivering rice, cooking oil, fresh eggs, vegetables and other food staples for people who had to evacuate their homes. They are also providing essential equipment like cooking utensils, medical supplies, mosquito nets and bedding. Whilst many communities now have electricity,



Workers from the Blue Dragon Children's Foundation delivering essential supplies to flooded homes in Hanoi City.

access to water remains a concern, as water from local streams may not be safe to drink. To ensure everyone's safety, teams are providing water

filters and clean drinking water, and they are assisting with the clearing up effort, rebuilding of homes, businesses and livelihoods. They are also offering holistic and psychological counselling and vocational training to people who have lost everything.

If communities in northern Vietnam slip further into poverty, it will push more people to leave their homes in search of a better life, and they will become more at risk of being trafficked, exploited and abused.

We can only hope that with the help of Blue Dragon and other emergency relief organisations that communities may not only be able to bounce back from this disaster, but come back stronger and more resilient than before.



Above: Homes in the villages and hamlets of the Northern Highlands were hit hard by Typhoon Yagi and the landslides that followed in its wake. The photograph gives an idea of the devastation in Ha Giang Province, where MSAVLC has in the past run training courses for traditional midwives.

Right: Basic supplies provided for a family, funded by MSAVLC's donation.



AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS RECEIVE THEIR WHEELCHAIRS

We have recently received from the Vietnam Association for the Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA), photographs of the recipients of some of the 513 wheelchairs funded earlier this year by MSAVLC.

Some of the recipients are elderly soldiers or civilians who were directly affected by the spraying of toxic chemicals during the war (1965-1975). Others are the children or grandchildren of those affected, many of whom have birth defects and are unable to walk. Without a wheelchair many of these people would not be able to leave the confines of their own homes, so we are delighted to be able to provide mobility to VAVA victims all over Vietnam.

The wheelchairs were distributed by local VAVA officials, all of whom are volunteers. The cards in the photographs show the word 'Tặng' which means 'a gift', as well as the MSAVLC and VAVA logos.



An Agent Orange victim being given his wheelchair by VAVA Fund Director Nguyen Van Khanh in Dong Nai Province in southern Vietnam.



A recipient of one of the ten wheelchairs given by MSAVLC to Agent Orange victims in Dong Nai Province.



An old soldier in Lam Dong Province who was provided with one of the 513 wheelchairs funded by your donations.

SUPPORT FOR ALL EARS CAMBODIA

The Trustees of MSAVLC have recently approved funding for two programmes submitted by Glyn Vaughan, Director of All Ears Cambodia in Phnom Penh.

Project 1: School and New-born Screening.

This is a new initiative which combines screening of school children for chronic otitis media (the leading cause of hearing loss globally) with a neonatal hearing screening service to detect congenital hearing loss. Services will be provided both in Phnom Penh district and in Kampot Province.

School-age hearing loss is given little attention in Cambodia and there is no universal screening program for babies. Hearing screening and early intervention are key to curbing infective disease and successful auditory rehabilitation. Hearing loss, particularly in babies, is not immediately apparent and is often not identified for years. Chronic middle ear disease in Cambodia is a major public health problem requiring urgent action. Systematic screening can ensure early identification and facilitate timely intervention with the treatment of ear infections in school children and fitting hearing aids on babies and children with hearing loss.

Project 2: Sponsor a Doctor.

This is a proposal to continue the funding of a full-time well-qualified medical doctor based in the primary ear care unit at All Ears Phnom Penh Clinic. The post provides the opportunity for combining clinical and teaching skills along with direct patient care.

As All Ears Cambodia has a proven record in delivering high-quality audiology screening and treatment, the Trustees agreed to fund both proposals for two years, starting in October 2024.

DISABILITY SERVICES IN PURSAT PROVINCE

Among disabled people in Pursat Province, Cambodia, the paraplegics and quadriplegics are the most vulnerable.

After discharge from the Battambang Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Centre and Emergency Hospital, they frequently develop health problems such as bedsores and urinary/bowel problems, due to poor home-care and unhygienic home conditions. They may not continue to practise the physiotherapy exercises they learnt at the Battambang SCI Centre. Wheelchairs and other rehabilitation equipment such as bathing beds and standing frames break and become unusable.

There is therefore a need for ongoing, regular follow-ups to continue to address paraplegics' and quadriplegics' health and rehabilitation problems following discharge from the SCI Centre.

Paraplegics and quadriplegics often face severe social and economic problems. The onset of paraplegia and quadriplegia is always a traumatic event, which puts great pressure on the family. Marital problems and divorce are common when a husband or wife acquires a spinal injury. The disabled person may suffer from depression, loneliness and even suicidal thoughts. The family loses income generation potential, both through the disabled person's lost income and the lost income of his/her carer. Some families of paraplegics and quadriplegics also still spend large amounts of money on seeking a 'cure' for the disability, driving the family further into poverty. Patients' children may have to drop out of school in order to replace the income lost by their parent, or to care for their parent. People with a new spinal cord injury may not know about the limited services for rehabilitation in Battambang, and they rarely have the means to get there.

Since the Covid 19 pandemic, paraplegics and quadriplegics and

their families in Cambodia have faced difficulties with personal hygiene and with purchasing food and materials such as masks and sanitizing gel. Moreover, they have limited access to health and social services, hospitals and health centres.

Disability Development Services Program (DDSP), is the only service-provider in Pursat specifically addressing the health, rehabilitation and socio-economic needs of spinal cord injury patients. Their Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Rehabilitation Project fills a vitally important gap in providing close-at-hand health support, physiotherapy, counselling, and socio-economic support for spinal cord injury patients.

Due to the fact that these patients often face income generation problems, DDSP provide a revolving fund for business start-ups and this supplies an economic lifeline for many of their clients.

MSAVLC has been funding the Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Rehabilitation Project run by DDSP since 2010. The Trustees are proud to continue support for this vital work in an area of Cambodia which is so starved of resources.

DATA PROTECTION

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