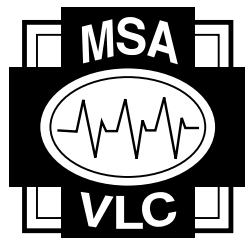


VIETNAM LAOS CAMBODIA



NATIONAL LOTTERY
CHARITIES BOARD
United Kingdom

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INDOCHINA SEPTEMBER 2003 (Continued)



After spending five and a half days in Laos and Cambodia, we arrived in Hanoi on the evening of 7th September and were met by Mr. Hoang Bang Giang from the People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM), a most helpful and efficient young man whose command of English was excellent. It was already dark when we arrived but, as we drove from the airport, we found the streets and shops crowded with families shopping for the autumn "Moon Festival" on 11th September, which is a great children's festival and special cakes are made for the occasion. We had asked to be booked at the Ho Guom Hotel, where we had stayed in 2002. This is a smallish hotel at the end of the Lake of the Recovered Sword, by Old Hanoi, where there are myriads of small shops in streets that are

mainly named after the produce that is sold there.

A small courtyard leads off the street to the hotel's entrance, which means that residents are protected from traffic noise. We had just settled in our room when our good friend Mr. Lam Bao telephoned to say he would be joining us next day.

The following day, immediately after breakfast, we went to PACCOM with Messrs Bao and Giang to discuss our proposed itinerary with Mr. Khoa, the Deputy Director. Mr. Thai, the Director, later joined us briefly, as did Mr. Phong, who had looked after us in 2002. To our great delight, PACCOM had suggested that Mr. Bao should accompany us on our journey farther south the following week.

That evening, we went by night train

("soft and air-conditioned") to Lao Cai, one of the six northern provinces bordering on China. A charming young woman from the Highland Education Development Organisation (HEDO) joined Giang to take us on the journey. It had been raining on and off since we arrived in Hanoi and, when we reached Lao Cai City, it was raining steadily and continued to do so during our entire stay.

(We learned subsequently that we were on the fringe of a typhoon). We then went, by road, to Sa Pa, a mountain town some 2000 metres above sea level, and by this time the rain was torrential. At our hotel, we met our old friend Professor Trinh Ngoc Trinh, the Director of HEDO, who had preceded us to make arrangements for the next day's ceremony with "traditional" midwives.

Our first appointment was a meeting

This will benefit not only this part of Vietnam: a new road, already well advanced in construction, will enable Laos to have access to the sea. The young people of Ky Anh – and the rest of Ha Tinh Province – are enthusiastic as they look forward to economic and social uplift and especially to improved nutrition. For KAPC, priorities are training and economic uplift. Mr. Mien told us that the erstwhile Jaipur Limb building (which “Friends of the British Friendship Hospital” had presented to the KAPC when the Limb Project had had to be discontinued) was now working with war disabled, including Agent Orange (AO) victims. Ky Anh has 1700 children affected by AO and is the worst-affected district of the province (probably because it is the most southerly and therefore nearest to Quang Tri Province, which was the most heavily-sprayed area). In 1998, a survey was made of army veterans and it was found that these families often had several affected children.

We next went to the hospital where the Director, Dr. Le Xuan Dinh, gave a brief report on the current state of the hospital and progress since our last visit. The hospital has 170 staff and there are also 150 staff in community health stations serving 313 villages. The situation regarding medical equipment, including in the biochemical laboratory, is improving. The Glostavent is working satisfactorily. The new gynaecology/obstetrics and infectious diseases buildings have been completed and are operational. Three polyclinics – north, south and west – have been upgraded, as have 32 commune health stations. Last year, there were 7000 admissions to the hospital and 170,000 out-patient consultations. 900 people were immunised against tetanus and rabies but, in future, these injections will only be given to children under 15. The uptake of routine immunisations is 89% – about as good as can be expected anywhere. It had been expected that 100 cataract operations would have been carried out in the past year, but only 80 had actually been done. In October, there was to be a survey of the population for cataract and it was expected that 30 cases needing operation would be identified. The most common conditions seen now were cardio-vascular, with road traffic and other accidents the next most common. There had been no cases of Haemorrhagic Dengue Fever recently.

Dr. Dinh then went on to tell us that the hospital had an urgent problem with medical waste disposal and were having to dispose of hospital waste by landfill which, in a country with a high rainfall, was most unsatisfactory, for infected material was seeping out into the environment. The government had recently drawn up rules – backed by financial support – for waste disposal in provincial hospitals but not for district hospitals, although their problems were also acute. We asked Dr. Dinh to let us know what an adequate waste disposal unit would cost.

Just before we had left Coventry, we had been informed by Win Langton’s daughters that their mother had left £1000 for the hospital. This is going to be used to buy a nebuliser for the intensive care unit of the paediatric department and will be a suitable memorial to Win, along with the bed which MSAVLC had endowed in her name.

From the hospital, we went to the erstwhile Jaipur Limb Centre. We had been asked, in 2002, if the building could be used in future for disabled people, to which we readily agreed. I had expected to find it equipped for physiotherapy etc. and I imagine that this would have been the expectation of most of our supporters. However, it is now a waste disposal and recycling plant, but it is helping the disabled – by providing paid employment.

The Director, Mr. Hoang Son Lam, explained how the project had come about: in 1999, a group of army veterans had realised that there was a growing problem with household waste and they decided that something had to be done to protect the environment. The following year, with support from the KAPC, they formed the “Cooperative for the Environment” and organised the collection of rubbish. The cost of setting up was 841 million dong and they received 81 million dong from provincial organisations but the remainder had to be borrowed and they are still 250 million dong in debt.

The Cooperative employs 30 people, veterans disabled themselves or with badly-affected children. It receives no state support and depends entirely on the collection of fees – 5 million dong per month from 600 households, shops and offices in Ky Anh District (collections are made from houses, markets, bus stops, etc). This is enough to pay the salaries of the staff –

350,000 dong (£15) per month.

The Cooperative would like to be able also to provide medical insurance for all employees but this would cost 20 million dong (£850). Children in Vietnam receive medical care free of charge but, since adoption of a market economy, adults have to pay. Because they have been affected by toxic chemicals, employees of the Cooperative need more frequent medical attention than the average, but they cannot afford to pay for this, nor can they afford medical insurance (which can be bought from the state) and their salary takes them above the income at which they would be entitled to free medical treatment.

(MSAVLC has since decided to pay for one year’s medical insurance for the Cooperative’s employees.)

We did a brief tour of the plant, which occupies several buildings behind the former limb centre, and learned that plastic waste is separated from other waste, is cleaned and recycled to make carrier bags, which are sold and realise a further million dong per day.

We were then driven to the new seaport and tried to imagine what it will look like when the surroundings are industrialised. At present, it is a beautiful and peaceful scene: let us hope it will be developed with imagination.

The next day, at the Department of Ophthalmology in Ha Tinh Provincial Hospital, we were welcomed by the Director, Dr. Nguyen Quoc An. It is a team from this hospital which visits Ky Anh periodically to perform cataract operations – usually about 100 each year - and 200 are carried out annually in the Provincial Hospital. We have previously supplied the department with lenses but Dr. An said that he is now able to get lenses from the Fred Hollows Foundation. However, he would be grateful for a new set of instruments for cataract operations.

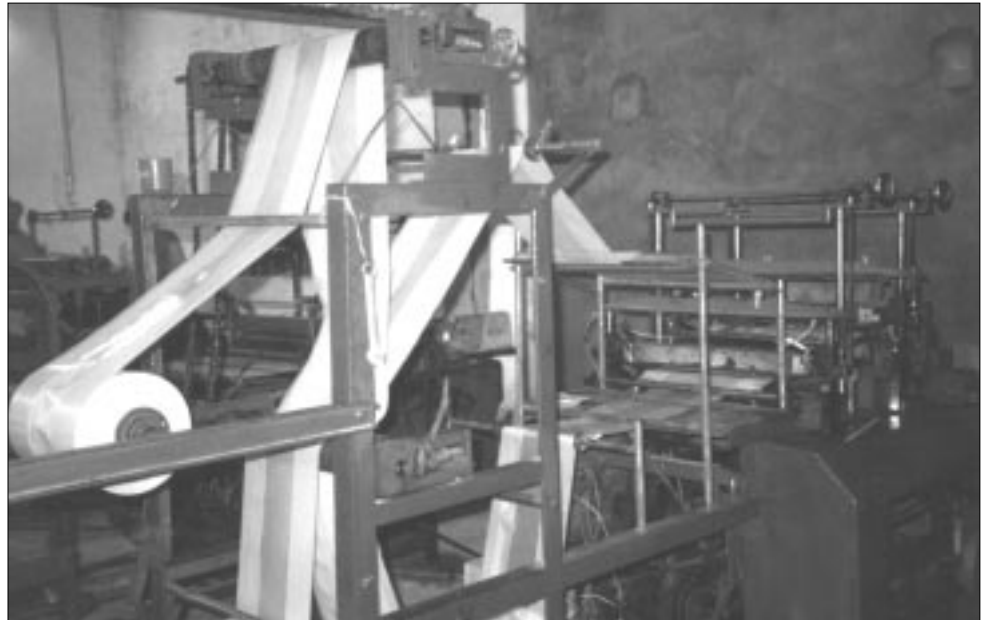
He expressed his appreciation for equipment already provided by MSAVLC and asked if we could possibly provide a new slit lamp: the one currently in use dates from 1962. We asked about the incidence of trachoma in Ha Tinh Province but he had no statistics: these could be obtained from Ha Tinh Eye Centre. However, he told us that there was a very high incidence of entropion in two districts of the province which had recently been surveyed.

(to be continued)

AT KY ANH



Dr. Le Xuan Dinh with some of the staff at the British Friendship Hospital (Dr. Nguyen Dinh Lan, former Director, in middle of back row)



Recycling Household Waste at the Cooperative for the Environment



From Plastic Waste to Plastic Bags

DURING 2003, MSAVLC PROVIDED MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC AID TO THE VALUE OF £56,638.77 AS FOLLOWS:

FEBRUARY	£12,250.00	Thanh Hoa Eye Centre Anti-Trachoma Project (LOTTERY-funded)
	£6,218.12	HEDO Training of 100 traditional midwives in Sa Pa District, Lao Cai Province
APRIL	£3,000.00	North-East Wales Institute Grant to Dr. Nguyen Thi Hao
	£3,000.00	Thanh Hoa Eye Centre Anti-Trachoma Project (Pilot Project)
MAY	£2,000.00	British Friendship Hospital, Ky Anh for Cataract Operations
	£200.00	British Friendship Hospital, Ky Anh Joan McMichael-Askins Memorial Prize
	£1,000.00	British Friendship Hospital, Ky Anh Bed endowment in memory of Win Langton
JUNE	£2,640.00	Medical Rehabilitation Centre, Pakse, Champasak Province Equipment for Audiology Departments of 4 District Hospitals
JULY	£5,920.00	Thanh Hoa Eye Centre Anti-Trachoma Project (LOTTERY-funded)
AUGUST	£2,700.00	Medical Rehabilitation Centre, Pakse Audiology Programme
	£2,500.00	Cambodian Health Committee Treatment of Tuberculosis, Chantrea, Svay Rieng Province
	£200.00	Thanh Hoa Eye Centre Prizes for competition
OCTOBER	£5,126.65	"All Ears Cambodia" Equipment for Audiology Programme, Cambodia
DECEMBER	£3,400.00	"All Ears Cambodia" Equipment for Audiology Programme
	£2,000.00	British Friendship Hospital, Ky Anh for Cataract Operations
	£1,000.00	British Friendship Hospital, Ky Anh Purchase of Nebuliser for Intensive Care Unit of Paediatric Department (legacy from Win Langton)
	£200.00	British Friendship Hospital, Ky Anh Joan McMichael-Askins Memorial Prize for 2004
	£732.00	Cambodian Health Committee Binocular microscope and diamond-tipped pens for TB Project, Chantrea
	£2,552.00	Ha Tinh Provincial Hospital Slit lamp with table.