



Healthcare project treats rural poor in Oudomxay

Poor people in remote areas of Namor district, Oudomxay province, recently received free ear, nose and throat (ENT), dental, obstetric and paediatric care.

According to a report from the Oudomxay Provincial Hospital on Friday, clinics were held on February 6-7 when treatment for 690 patients was provided by the hospital's medical team together with local teams. The mission was funded by the United States' Lao Rehabilitation Foundation, which operates without discrimination regarding gender, age, ethnicity or religion.

Head of the province's Health Department Eye Unit, Dr Phetsamone Indara, said the aim of the two day project was to reduce dental cavities and deafness, and to help prevent the deaths of mothers and infants. Another goal was to improve health education in dental and ENT care, as well as provide information for expectant mothers.

The main causes of deafness are acute and chronic otitis media, which was diagnosed in 41 percent of all ENT cases during the two days. This condition could easily be prevented and treated if education and the right equipment were available in each district.

“The main cause of dental disease was cavities, which led to extractions for 56 percent of the 307 cases we attended to. The main need of patients is dental prosthetics which our mobile team is not equipped to provide,” said Dr Phetsamone.

“We are concerned at the large number of problems experienced by expectant mothers, as evidenced by 28 percent of the 45 cases observed. The main causes of infant mortality are breech and transverse presentations in pregnancy. These cases should be followed up at the provincial hospital, but for the majority of people, distance, lack of funds and limited access to hospitals make this impossible.

“Pneumonia was the most common paediatric disease and 47 percent of 119 cases were diagnosed as such. Our mission can only provide medicines and health education. Hospital follow up is difficult,” he added. Limited funds and lack of awareness are the main obstacles to accessing healthcare services.

Other challenges are distance and limited access to hospitals and the fact that many people simply cannot afford to travel to provincial hospitals.

Dental cavities and deafness are critical public health problems and the healthcare of expectant mothers and children is a priority for the Ministry of Public Health. Unfortunately, many other patients in this remote area have still not received treatment.

Namor is one of the poorest districts in Oudomxay province, bordering Luang Namtha province and China. It consists of 64 villages and 5,474 households of which 1,262 are considered to be extremely poor.

**By Times Reporters
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