



Phongsaly villagers get free health check-ups

More than 3,380 people, including 2,000 women, in villages in Ngot-Ou and Samphan districts of Phongsaly province, recently received free dental, ear, nose and throat, and eye examinations, along with general health check-ups.

The services were provided by a team of doctors from the Lao Rehabilitation Foundation (LRF) and Oudomxay and Phongsaly provincial hospitals, according to the Oudomxay provincial hospital's Eye Unit.

The services, funded by the LRF at a cost of **US\$53,920**, were provided with support from the United States - Lao Rehabilitation Foundation and Australia's Fred Hollows Association.

The aim of the project was to prevent dental cavities and deafness, help prevent the deaths of mothers and infants, improve health education in oral hygiene and ear, nose and throat care, and provide information for expectant mothers.

Despite the doctors' work, there are still many people with oral, ear, nose, throat and eye diseases in remote areas of the country who are in need of assistance, LRF's project coordinator Dr Phetsamone Indara told *Vientiane Times* yesterday.

“Many of these conditions could easily be prevented and treated if education and the right equipment were available in each district,” he said.

The main causes of infant mortality are breech and transverse presentations in pregnancy, which should be followed up at the provincial hospital.

However, for the majority of people, limited funds and lack of awareness are the main obstacles to accessing healthcare but distance, limited access to hospitals and the fact that many people cannot afford to travel to provincial hospitals remain major challenges.

Cavities and deafness are pressing public health problems and the healthcare of expectant mothers and children is a priority for the Ministry of Health.

Unfortunately, many other people in remote areas are still waiting for better healthcare services, Dr Phetsamone said.

The mobile health care service was also attended by LRF’s President Dr Luc Janssens.

The program began in 2008 and so far more than 20,000 people in the Northern provinces have received health check-ups.

The mission operates without discrimination regarding gender, age, ethnicity or religion.

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