



Oudomxay Villagers Get Free Health Checks

Some 1,300 people in remote areas of Nga district in Oudomxay province recently received free dental, ear, nose and throat (ENT) and eye examinations, along with general health checks.

An ophthalmologist from the provincial hospital's eye unit said the services were provided by a team of doctors from Oudomxay provincial and district hospitals.

The check-ups took place at a district dispensary with the support the United States' Lao Rehabilitation Foundation (LRF) and the Fred Hollows Foundation of Australia. The aim of the project was to prevent dental cavities and deafness, help prevent unnecessary deaths of mothers and infants, improve health education in oral hygiene and ENT care, and provide information for expectant mothers.

Despite the doctors' work, there are still many people with oral, ear, nose, throat and eye ailments in remote areas of Laos who are in need of assistance, the ophthalmologist Dr. Phetsamone Indara told *Vientiane Times* this week.

"Many of these conditions are easily preventable and can be 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.

To help the people of Oudomxay province, LRF President Dr. Luc Janssens also provided medicine and medical equipment, including a nebulizer, ultrasonic doppler, oxymeter, small surgery set, delivery set and other items for the dispensary to use and improve community healthcare.

The programme began in 2008 and so far more than 20,000 people from the Northern provinces have received health checks. The mission operates without discrimination regarding gender, age, ethnicity or religion.

Similar health services will also be provided to people in other areas in the near future, according to the eye unit.

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