

Bokeo villagers get health check-ups



Some 5,490 people in the remote districts of Tonpheung, Huayxay and Pha-oudom in Bokeo province recently received free dental, ear, nose and throat (ENT), pediatric, obstetric and eye examinations, along with general health check-ups.

The services were provided by a team of doctors from the United States and Oudomxay and Bokeo provincial hospitals, according to the Oudomxay provincial hospital's Eye Unit.

The check-ups took place from October 2-10 with the collaboration of the Lao Rehabilitation Foundation (LRF) and the Government Office's National Science Council.

The services, funded by the LRF at a total of US\$ 59,734.00, 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 ENT care, and to 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 in need of assistance, the Eye Unit's ophthalmologist 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.

To help the people of Bokeo province, LRF President Dr Luc Janssens also provided medicine, aural, dental and obstetric equipment to provincial and district hospitals.

The program began in 2008 and so far more than 15,000 people from the Northern provinces have received free health check-ups and treatment.

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

Health services will be provided in La, Baeng, Houn and Pakbaeng districts in Oudomxay province in February next year, according to the Eye Unit.

By Times Reporters
(Latest Update October 18, 2011)