



Oudomxay Villagers Get Free Health Checkups

More than 2,500 people in the remote villages of Khon and Nahom in Baeng district, Oudomxay province recently received free dental, ear, nose and throat (ENT) and eye examinations, along with general health checkups. The services were provided by a team of doctors from Oudomxay provincial hospital and Baeng district hospital.

The check-ups took place from March 13-18 with support from the United States-Lao Rehabilitation Foundation (LRF) and Australia's Fred Hollows Foundation at a cost of over US\$28,400. 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 were still many people with oral, ear, nose and throat and eye diseases in remote areas of the country in need of assistance, the project's coordinator Dr. Phetsamone Indara said. "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 were still waiting for better healthcare services, Dr. Phetsamone said.

To help the people of Oudomxay province, LRF President Dr. Luc Janssens also provided an ultrasound machine, EKG, nebuliser, ultrasonic doppler, oxymeter, delivery set, autoclave, otoscope, sphygmomanometers along with stethoscopes and some medicines to help improve local healthcare.

The programme began in 2008 and so far around 42,000 people from the northern provinces have received health check-ups. The mission operates without discrimination regarding gender, age, ethnicity or religion. Similar health services would also be provided to people in other areas in the near future, according to Dr. Phetsamone.

By Times Reporters (March 25, 2016)