



Oudomxay villagers welcome free health checks

More than 8,000 people from 17 villages in the remote areas of Xay district, Oudomxay province recently received free dental, ear, nose and throat (ENT) and eye examinations, along with general health checks.

The services were provided by a team of doctors from Oudomxay provincial and district hospitals in collaboration with health experts from the United States' Lao Rehabilitation Foundation (LRF), according to a report from LRF's official.

The check-ups took place at Namheng and Kangtok dispensaries in the district from February 6-13 with the support the United States' Lao Rehabilitation Foundation (LRF) and the Fred Hollows Foundation of Australia at a cost of about US\$13,500.

The aim of the project was to prevent dental cavities and deafness, 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, LRF's Coordinator, Dr Phetsamone Indara told *Vientiane Times* on Friday.

"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 along with limited access to hospitals and the fact that many people cannot afford to travel to provincial hospitals.

Cavities and deafness are among 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 blood pressure testers, a minor surgical set, delivery set, temperature, fetal doppler, head light, plastic tape metric, autoclave steriliser, nebuliser and weight scale to use and improve community healthcare.

The programme began in 2008 and so far more than 46,000 people from the northern provinces have received health checks. The mission operates without discrimination regarding gender, age, ethnicity or religion.

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

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