The Peoples Democratic Republic of Lao is one of the poorest countries in South Asia. It has a population of 5.5 million, with a per capita GDP of just $US 350 per annum. Untreated dental decay is a major problem in Lao (and South Asia generally), particularly in children, with the resultant oral pain regularly affecting the ability of children to eat, sleep and study at school. This problem is mainly caused by an increased consumption of refined sugar in diets, as a result of the influx of Western sugar products, which are causing a major deterioration in oral health. The overall prevalence of gingival bleeding was 99% amongst 12 year olds in 2008.

As a result of this decay, the treatment needs of the population of Lao are very high. Unfortunately, the Lao Govt and dental profession are ill equipped to meet this need at the present time. Lao has only 300 dentists to provide oral care to the people, being a ratio of one dentist to 18,333 population. (For comparison purposes, the UK ratio is 1 dentist: 2,100 population.) Much of the population of Lao still rely upon DIY or what we term “street” dentistry, which is provided by untrained workers like blacksmiths, usually with no anaesthetics, but more seriously inadequate cross infection control, risking the spread of life threatening diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis. While neighbouring countries of Cambodia & Vietnam have received much assistance from foreign oral health organisations, Laos continues to be neglected.

Since 2008, PDG Dr Ed Montgomery and his supporting Rotary Club of Glen Innes, NSW have installed four dental surgeries in local hospitals in Provincial towns. Equipment & materials have been successfully installed this year - one in both Luang Prabang, and another in Sayabouli. Their success is being monitored but already evidence to hand is very pleasing. The work continues but funds are needed to respond to the demands.

Donations can be made through the national website www.rawcs.com.au

Please quote the Project Number or contact Project Officer
Dr Ed Montgomery on email: dotedtomjack@yahoo.com