The Kingdom of Cambodia has suffered during the Vietnam war; then again with mass killings during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975 - 1991), and waves of ethnic discrimination and purges which lost 1/3 of its population and simultaneously eliminated animal parent livestock. Over those years teachers, academics, doctors were cruelly persecuted and their numbers heavily reduced. Today, survivors and descendants are determined to regain the Kingdom’s health, eliminate disease and develop peace and prosperity.

Each year the R/C Balmoral (D9630) remits funds to the R/C Phnom Penh so that the Head of the National Paediatric Hospital (Dr Vuthy) can take a team of medical practitioners to the poor outer regions and assist the most needy children whose parents are unable to pay for these services. This year in outer Kratie Province the team conducted 49 surgeries including 16 cleft palate and lip, 28 plastic & reconstructive surgeries, 5 Paediatric surgeries; attended club feet and burn contractures; gave surgical care to those suffering from maxillofacial & limb defects, and on the job training to a local surgical team.

The Mission Team included 3 surgeons, 3 Anaesthetists, 3 Operating nurses, 2 Ward nurses, and volunteers from UK, Korea & Taiwan (2 surgeons, 2 Residents/Assistants, 4 Nurses, and 2 Speech Pathologists).

All donors to this project were attracted by our DGR status and the projects’ practical adoption of local professionals and volunteers.

IF THIS WAS THE ONLY WAY TO DRINK WATER AT SCHOOL, WHAT WOULD YOU DO ABOUT IT?

A team of volunteers from Tasmania D9830 who were providing a Cataract Eye Camp in a remote village reached only by foot from Hetan, Nepal, last year. They were shocked to see the only means of 1500 school children obtaining a drink of water was from a hose in a muddy yard. They sent this photo back home and the R/C Devonport (D9830) responded by raising funds and organising the installation of a fountain which would assure continuous and clean drinking water.

When the next Eye Camp was held the Team visited the school, and PDG Kevin Shadbolt was asked to cut a ribbon and officially open the fountain.

In an emotionally charged ceremony 1200 of the students formed a Guard of Honour for the Team and each gifted a flower to express their gratitude.

PROJECT 145/2010-11
The Peoples Democratic Republic of Laos 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 the 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 95% 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 the 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 in 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: dotedmontgomery@yahoo.com

RAWCS Project No 55/20011-12 - Luang Prabang & Sayabouli, Laos

Lyn Thorpe from District 9670 again joined the Alliance for Smiles on another of their medical missions to developing countries and areas of need. Her latest mission (Project No, 46/2011-2012) was to Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, Africa with an International team of 17 medical and support volunteers from USA, Germany, Canada and Australia.

The weather was hot and humid, and conditions barely tolerable with overcrowded, degraded hospital conditions, water shortages and power failures. Our services were free so prospective patients travelled up to 18 hours in the hope of treatment. Some were rejected because supplementary surgery work was unavailable. Fifty cleft lip and palate deformities were treated in medical procedures in the short stay.

In Cameroon infants born with deformities are often rejected at birth and don’t survive. Those we saw were much loved. Lyn reports that the team worked well with local counterparts and a framework has been instituted to assist the next visit. The local Rotaract Club provided much needed interpreters as only one of the team spoke French adequately.

The Alliance’s Mission Statement is to repair children’s broken smiles by providing free comprehensive treatment for cleft lip and palate deformities in under-served areas of the world. The aim is to provide free reconstructive surgery and dental treatment to children with cleft lip and palate anomalies. Funds, sponsors and volunteers will always be welcomed. Next trips will be to Zunyi in May & Zangzhou China in July.