

We Help War Victims

NOVEMBER

TO DONATE GO TO: WEHELPWARVICTIMS.ORG

2011



Women on our team proved that they were capable of performing every task!

Heart of our team: Four strong women

Not just “strong of heart,” these women were truly the backbone of our most recent project.

Some people find it ironic that in Laos villagers covet jobs working with dangerous remnants of war. (An accidental detonation is the obvious hazard, but other conditions can create a bad day at work. Hard beds, leaky tents, scorpions, snakes, heat, humidity and homesickness all affect morale).

Why do so many Lao aspire to employment with clearance companies? Many candidates are motivated to improve their community by ridding villages of UXO. However, for most candidates idealism plays secondary role.

The fact is that clearance work pays well in comparison to most other occupations here and, given

the vast quantities of ordnance present throughout the country, there likely will be steady employment.

So... who gets hired? In the past, mostly men. And, among male candidates, men with even limited work experience have an advantage over other candidates.

Stiff competition for jobs means **an age-old dilemma** exists for some categories of workers: women, youths, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and the physically handicapped. *“To get a job you need experience; to get experience you need a job”.*

During Project Phongsali 2011 WHWV gave preference to female candidates in the belief that it was well past time to give women an opportunity to prove themselves on the job. Our hope was that seasonal work with our organization would help make the women all the more competitive for job openings with future projects that fill the gap when WHWV temporarily departs.

In every way, on every day, the women on our team performed as well as the best male employees that have ever worked for us.

We Help War Victims works seasonally in Laos and draws staff from Phoenix Clearance Ltd, a full inclusion employer!

They accepted every task with a willing attitude and demonstrated all the skills necessary for successful employment as de-miners.

They experienced harsh living conditions far from family and friends, for weeks at a time, without complaint. In fact, their optimism and good cheer often lifted the spirits of others on the team.

Nestle Foods:

Mammoth Swiss company implicated in the deaths of infants fed coffee creamer.

Save The Children and a long list of other humanitarian non-profits have taken a public stand against the marketing practices of the Swiss food company Nestle. They charge that Nestle is again marketing products that entice parents in developing countries to cease breastfeeding their children. That practice violates provisions of the World Health organization's International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

A physician working in Laos submitted the following report:

In November 2008, a 6-month-old female infant was admitted to the provincial hospital of Luang Namtha with a 6-day history of watery diarrhoea, anorexia, fever, and underlying severe malnutrition. She was the second adopted child of a Hmong family. The parents are farmers living in a remote area.

They bought 10 cans of the same red label Bear Brand coffee creamer (0.80 \$ per can) in May 2008 in her first month of age. The infant was fed coffee creamer and boiled water for the first 3 months, 1 can every 3 days. Relatives had told the parents that this product would be good for children, which was reinforced by the logo of a baby bear drinking milk from the mother bear.

In June 2008, the parents were unable to find cans of this type in the local district market and changed to a slightly cheaper brand (Palace, Daily Foods Co., Thailand, 0.69\$) with a written message in Thai language: not to be fed to children under 1 year. They had not read the message, did not know Thai language, and the mother is illiterate. The seller told them that it could be given to children.

The infant presented with diarrhoea and kwashiorkor and died with complications of severe malnutrition, diarrhoea and infection.



We clear a schoolyard while parents dig graves



Our team frequently meets widows, orphans and amputees, but few sights have touched us so deeply as the sight of graves prepared for infant burials.

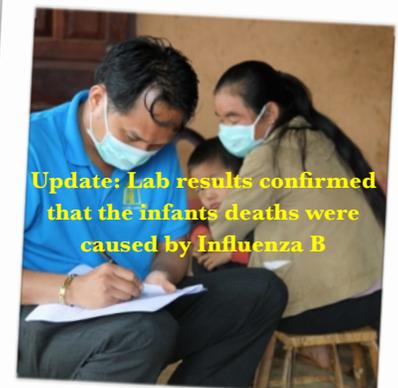
We cleared a schoolyard to assure child safety. Then, we discovered that four infants recently died of a mystery illness.

No one in the village could provide much detail about what caused the deaths. When pressed, **villagers simply shrugged and said, "Baby just got sick and died"**. When asked what plan the village had to confront the epidemic, the naiban told us that villagers planned a quarantine and a spirit ceremony in which a buffalo would be sacrificed.

When asked whether his village would accept help from the district hospital he assured us that parents would welcome assistance, but were skeptical over the chances that help would come. He reported that parents' past requests for vaccines and medicine had gone unanswered.

Fortunately, **WHWV** was able to contact the World Health Organization which quickly dispatched a team to conduct interviews and collect cultures.

In the course of the WHO visit, workers discovered the rueful level of immunization among village children. Doctors on the team resolved to get vaccines to the village in the near future so all children can be properly immunized. **We Help War Victims** has pledged assistance.



Update: Lab results confirmed that the infants deaths were caused by Influenza B

“Kubb unites people and creates peace on Earth” says....

Eric Anderson, Editor, *Kubb Nation*

Wisconsin Kubb, Eau Claire Wisconsin, recently hosted the 2011 U.S. National Kubb Championship Tournament and selected **We Help War Victims** to be one of two organizations to receive profit from the event. The tournament, organized by Eric Anderson, chairman of Wisconsin Kubb, involved 80 teams from across the country and raised over \$4,000 to assist select non-profits.



Kubb is a sport that originated in Scandinavia hundreds of years ago and has been tagged “Viking Chess”. It has experienced a modern resurgence across northern Europe and has an enthusiastic following in America’s upper mid-west.

Anderson possesses an enthusiasm for Kubb that is equaled only by his desire to advance humanitarian projects that improve life for people in need. In a recent issue of *Kubb Nation* Anderson shared his philosophy of how sport and humanitarian service can be mutually supportive:

“From its inception, our Kubb tournaments have been fundraisers. For four years, the tournament raised money and awareness for victims of conflict in Darfur. And, for the past three years, we have raised money for the Eau Claire Wisconsin chapter of “Girls on the Run,” an empowerment program and that operates programs in several elementary schools in Eau Claire County.

This year our tournament raised money for **We Help War Victims** with a goal of assisting villagers in Southeast Asia to remove or destroy land mines, bombs, and other unexploded ordnance left from the Vietnam War”.



These cluster bomblets in Laos are about forty years old. They have a life expectancy of about 100 years.

Lewis Mullen is six years old and just started first grade. He has a long life ahead of him.

But consider this: When Lewis eventually completes a lifetime of work and retires to enjoy old age, cluster munitions in Laos will still be killing innocent civilians. Unless we help!

Update on cluster treaty ratification



66 Nations Have Ratified
Among the signers:

UK, France, Germany, Spain, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Croatia, New Zealand, Mexico, Nicaragua, Japan, Laos

Major user nations yet to sign:

United States, Russia, China, Israel

Number of clusters in US storage:

In excess of 750,000,000



New Videos On Website

Readers are encouraged to visit our website at Wehelpwarvictims.org and view our latest videos. We continue to document the ways in which old bombs and landmines compromise the quality of life for people throughout Laos.

Don't Bring That Here!



While we were busy discussing plans to destroy a large general purpose bomb, an elderly man walked into the village carrying a baby on his back and a cluster bomb in his hand.

It was not the first time a villager attempted to hand-deliver ordnance but it was the first time that the excitement occurred while our camera was running. This film provides an excellent “fly on the wall” view of how our team destroys ordnance in the middle of a settlement.

A Challenging Day



Life for a family in Phongsali changed dramatically when a road crew cut away the hillside above their garden and uncovered numerous cluster bomblets. The crew declined to destroy bomblets that tumbled right into the family's garden. Local authorities begged off, pleading that they lacked sufficient resources to tackle the problem.

This film shows our team at work in the garden, successfully destroying many life-threatening bomblets lodged in a steep bank above our heads. Truly, “a challenging day”.

We Help War Victims is a registered 501(c)(3) public charity under the US Tax Code.

WHWV is sustained by a broad network of friends and supporters. Financial support comes from individual donors and organizations such as school groups and religious congregations. Contributions to WHWV are tax deductible.

To donate please go to: Wehelpwarvictims.org



Supporters Insure Our Return to Laos

Thanks to generous supporters throughout the United States and abroad We Help War Victims will return to Phongsali Province to continue removing threatening ordnance and assisting villagers with their needs.

Book Box Libraries



We Help War Victims has provided many impoverished villages with their first libraries. A donation of \$250 purchases a “Book Box Library” that contains approximately 200 books, all in the Lao language.

Ninety-five percent of all schools in Laos lack reading books, and it’s a sure bet that if the village school lacks books that there is no other source of reading material for either children or adults. Children lack opportunity to develop their reading skills and their parents, perhaps once able to read, inevitably lose their literacy through lack of practice.

WHWV works in cooperation with the National Library in Vientiane to stock the sturdy, well-built library boxes with appropriate books. Then, when our team moves into a village to conduct rapid response clearance of UXO, we deliver the Book Box Libraries to schools serving the area.

Hats off to the members of the Altrusia Club of Wausau Wisconsin for their recent donation of two libraries that will be delivered to schools in Phongsali Province.

Treatment of birth defects



Because we are the first clearance organization to provide services in Phongsali, we are usually the first humanitarian organization to set foot in selected villages. As a consequence, villagers appeal to us for relief from a wide range of problems.

While our primary objective is the removal of UXO, we can’t turn our back on people in need.

A good example is the help we provide to children with birth defects. We take children with cleft lip or palate to Vientiane where physicians can provide corrective surgery.

When we find children with orthopedic problems, such as clubfoot, we transport them and their families to one of the rehabilitation centers run by COPE (Cooperative Orthotics and Prosthetic Enterprise).

Here’s a shout for Yer Thor who raised funds to provide corrective surgery to children born with cleft defects.

Wheelchairs and artificial limbs



Often, one of our donors has had a personal life experience that has left them with a heightened empathy for people with a special need. Recently, we received donations specifically designated for providing help to villagers with limited mobility.

One donor cited the challenges that her wheelchair-bound son has faced throughout his life in America. Witnessing first-hand her son’s struggles has given her a special empathy for all people with mobility needs. Her donation will permit us to provide a disabled villager with a high quality wheelchair manufactured by technicians (themselves disabled!) at the Wheelchair Workshop at the National Rehabilitation Center in Vientiane.

Another donor, whose father suffered a traumatic amputation as a youth, has provided funds for the purchase of a prosthetic limb for a victim of an accident with old ordnance. Laos has thousands of amputees using crude, homemade artificial limbs. This donation will ease the suffering of a villager and will surely improve someone’s ability to work productively.