

Dentaid Despatch 46

Published in Dental Practice in October 2006

The first Dentaid project for CAMBODIA!

Having suffered more than two decades of civil war, together with the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime that killed nearly two million people, Cambodia is left with a legacy of poverty, poor health, destruction and human rights abuse. Only 26% of the population has access to adequate drinking water. The country has to cope with between four and six million mines and other unexploded ordnance.

In 1999 a group of rural Cambodians founded a non-governmental organisation – The Khmer Association for Development (KAD) – to reconstruct, redevelop and improve the lives of the country's suffering people.

In Cambodia, poor oral health is a serious issue. Results of a study by KAD show that of the 1000 adults and children surveyed, only 6% had healthy gums and teeth. 94% suffered varying degrees of mild to acute dental health problems. These are exacerbated by hazardous traditional local practices such as poking needles or sharp instruments into cavities in an attempt to provide pain control, or by inserting cotton mixed with acid, salt and seasoning into the decayed tooth. This may give temporary relief but often causes painful ulcers of the cheeks and lips.

In cooperation with the Cambodian Dental Association, KAD is trying to eradicate such practices through good dental health education, targeting schools and teachers in particular. However, other health issues such as HIV/AIDS and avian flu are given priority over oral health and the organisation has encountered many constraints.

The community is generally very poor and unable to afford dental services. With limited income and funds, KAD is finding it difficult to provide comprehensive oral health education and necessary treatment and has asked Dentaid for help to provide two complete dental surgeries and instrument kits.

