

Khmer Association for development Cambodia



The Need

In 1999 a group of rural cambodians founded an NGO called "The Khmer Association for Development (KAD)". Cambodia suffered more than 2 decades of civil war and the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime that killed nearly 2 million people. Left with a legacy of poverty, poor health, destruction and human rights abuses, KAD was established to participate with other NGOs to reconstruct, redevelop and improve the lives of people who suffered under such atrocities. In Cambodia, poor oral health is a serious issue. According to a dental health survey conducted by KAD - who work closely with the Cambodian Dental Association - of 1,000 adults and children surveyed, only 60 people (0.6%) had healthy gums and teeth, the other 940 people (94%) suffered varying degrees of oral health problems. The problems included dental decay, missing teeth, periodontal diseases, dental caries, acute and chronic pulpitis, acute and chronic periapical abscess, gingivitis, periodontitis abscess, acute cellulitis and root stump, all very painful yet easily treated conditions. Oral health is generally overlooked in Cambodia because it is not thought to be as necessary as other health problems like HIV/AIDS, bird flu etc. In the seven years that KAD have been working in dental health project implementation, they have found that a lot of dental problems are exacerbated by the dangerous traditional practices carried out by local people. For example, patients with toothache often poke pointed needles or sharp instruments into decayed teeth to try and relieve their pain. These pointed needles or instruments often break off in the tooth causing further problems. Patients also try and get short-term relief from pain by inserting cotton mixed with acid, salt and seasoning into decayed teeth, although this gives temporary relief, there are teeth to try and relieve their pain. These pointed needles or instruments often break off in the tooth causing further problems. Patients also try and get short-term relief from pain by inserting cotton mixed with acid, salt and seasoning into decayed teeth, although this gives temporary relief, there are very painful side effects of large sores in the mouth and on the skin and around the lips.

The Project

KAD have been co-operating with the Cambodian Dental Association to try and eradicate such practices through good dental health education. They plan to target school children and staff, teaching them about oral health self-care including correct tooth brushing techniques and the importance of a good diet. KAD want to continue to teach the importance of good oral health and to treat its target communities. So far, this has not been easy and the organisation has encountered many constraints. Community people are very poor and are unable pay for dental services, those who may be able to afford the treatment, and who suffer from dental pain, will not seek treatment until it is an advanced problem and far more difficult to rectify. With limited income and funds, KAD are finding it even harder to provide comprehensive oral health education and necessary treatment throughout the communities.

KAD approached Dentaid for two new complete dental surgeries and instruments for the Kien Svay district in Kandal province. The provision of this vital equipment will enable KAD to have much more opportunity to help provide the poor communities with dental services as part of involvement in rural poverty. The surgeries arrived in Cambodia in September 2007.

