



M'LOP TAPANG HEALTH CARE PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT 2007

The Healthcare Situation in Sihanoukville

The children and families who live and work in the streets and slums of Sihanoukville are continually being exposed to unhealthy living conditions. Poor hygiene results in weakened immune systems, leaving them highly vulnerable to infections and respiratory diseases. Many suffer chronic skin infections such as scabies, fungal infections and head lice. Although these are not typically thought of as severe illnesses, left untreated they can quickly become life-threatening. Sihanoukville's only public hospital is severely under equipped and understaffed, making medical treatment unaffordable for the town's poorer residents. Also contributing to this issue is the indifferent attitude with which health care workers treat patients.



M'Lop Tapang Medical Care 2007

The goal of M'Lop Tapang's Health Care Program has always been to ensure free access to medical care for every vulnerable child in Sihanoukville. Our program objectives are to:

- provide efficient, comprehensive, holistic medical care to the children & families of MT
- provide medical care with compassion, empathy and respect for the individual patient
- educate families about basic hygiene and prevention from illness
- educate and empower children to better manage their own health – and their family's health

Our holistic approach to patient care has proven to be more cost effective as our focus is on prevention, early diagnosis and treatment. We have found that providing care with empathy and concern has encouraged patients to come to us early with health issues, allowing us to treat problems before they become epidemic.



In 2007, our health care program continued to grow and develop with a particular focus on health education and health promotion, both in the communities around Sihanoukville and within MT's Day Centre. Recognising the need to build the health and medical safety knowledge of all MT's program teams, we made it a priority this year to ensure that all of MT's staff members were trained in basic first aid and that they continued to receive ongoing health and hygiene education. The addition of our new Health & Hygiene Educator late this year has already contributed to a dramatic increase in the number of regular health education classes being provided to the children.

CENTRE-BASED HEALTH CARE

This year, the medical clinic at MT continued to serve the children who come to the centre regularly, families of MT children, walk-ins, and also referrals from our outreach team. It served as a base for assessing all new children to MT as well as conducting follow-up health evaluations. Our nurse-run medical team provided daily assistance to the children at the centre in the form of basic hygiene (bathing, lice treatment and dental care), medical care, emergencies, health education, and information.



The clinic focused largely on health promotion, minor treatments and assisting patients to access existing health resources. Most emergencies and severe medical cases can only be treated in Phnom Penh, and as a result, this year we helped 367 patients to receive specialised care from external facilities by arranging transportation, communicating with medical staff at these facilities, and providing patients with much needed financial support.

M'Lop Tapang's New Clinic

In October of this year, MT moved into a new centre with a larger medical clinic, allowing us to provide better care for all of our patients. The new clinic includes an examination room and a larger treatment & recovery room, providing much needed privacy for the patients, medical personnel, and parents for consultation, examination & education. Already we have noticed a reduction in the need for services from our local clinic.



Volunteer MDs

With coordination assistance from MT's medical staff, this year we were able to host All Ears Cambodia, a professional organisation specialising in hearing problems, as well as a professional dentist. A total of 200 children and caregivers were able to receive free hearing aids and ear infection care, and 46 more received professional dental work as a result of these collaborations. Our capacity to host international volunteer doctors has greatly improved with our new, larger clinic space, and we hope to expand this practice and make even better use of available resources in 2008.



HEALTH EDUCATION

The M'Lop Tapang medical team aims not only to treat ongoing illnesses but also to focus on future health. We believe that health prevention is the key to a healthy future for our children and families. In order to increase the amount of health education offered both in-centre and throughout the community, in November we hired a new Health & Hygiene Educator, who quickly established a consistent health education program within the Day Centre. This program has already begun to produce a positive notable impact on the hygiene patterns of the kids.

Our centre-based health education focuses on:

- Hygiene
- Brushing teeth
- Clean water
- Healthy foods
- Understanding our bodies
- Reproductive health
- Exercise
- Disease
- Disease prevention
- Self-care



This year our team also coordinated health education for the young women in M'Lop Tapang's Girls at Risk and Vocational Training programs, focusing not only on the issues mentioned above but also on sexual health. We also supported the children in MT's Special Needs Program, which provides specialised care for children who suffer from both learning and physical disabilities.

OUTREACH HEATH CARE & HEALTH PROMOTION

The medical team works with MT's existing outreach activities to broaden the scope of its health education and care to the community. In 2007, we travelled regularly with the Mobile Library to various locations in and around Sihanoukville in order to conduct health education and awareness sessions with the children and parents who live there. Our experienced nursing staff used these opportunities to address health issues, conduct follow-up care, and assist community members in accessing the medical care they needed.





The team also continued to make use of MT's shelters in the communities of Phnom Kiev and Phum Dong by providing health education and medical care to those children and caregivers who were not able to attend the main centre. We were able to assist many poor families living in these communities through the use of the shelters. As a result of our constant presence, the children and families have grown to trust our team and know that they can come to these shelters with any concerns at any time. The MT medical team followed up on every referral given to us and worked to ensure that problems were addressed quickly and efficiently. This occasionally meant seeking out children in more remote communities to assist them with medical issues.

Beneficiaries of MT's Medical Program in 2007

Medical Activity	Monthly Average 2007
Number of children & caregivers treated in clinic	352
Number of children & caregivers treated in MT communities	234
Number of children & caregivers receiving referrals to external facilities	29
Children & caregivers receiving health education	192