

Newsletter March 2020



As this letter is being written, the global coronavirus health crisis is unfolding before our eyes and is mobilizing international attention and action. And it is only right that we do everything in our power to limit the spread of the virus and its damaging effects. Acute epidemics (such as Ebola, SARS or other viruses) regularly affect a few thousand people or even more, masking chronic diseases that do not make any noise but have been raging inexorably for decades.



Community health: remarkable work is being carried out by our teams, who often go away for several days to teach and live with the villagers in often rudimentary conditions. An evening in the village gave me the opportunity to follow an interactive agricultural training course given in the village of Lengmai. During their stay, our teams verify if the 10 standards are respected (evacuation of waste water, use of toilets, food cooked and not raw, presence of mosquito nets for sleeping, ...)

Malnourished children receive a check-up, children are taught to wash their hands and brush their teeth. The gardens are visited and agricultural advice is given.

Salavan :

Our support to the provincial hospital proves to be paying off and in particular for the pediatric service: it wins first prize for the quality of care given to hypotrophic and premature children in particular through the setting up of a kangaroo unit.

The community health project in the province's 10 target villages was also praised by a foundation manager during her week-long visit. This foundation continues to support this work financially and has been doing so for many years in other provinces. This commitment has a real impact on the living conditions of the villagers and produces substantial income for the most motivated among them.





Sekong :

With the medical team of Sekong, I had the opportunity to spend two days in Datchung, 2h30 away from Sekong. This district hospital is composed of a young and motivated team, often volunteers waiting to be hired. SFE's bi-monthly support focuses on training and diagnostic assistance with visits to the different departments and presentation of medical cases. Some essential surgeries are possible when the anesthesiologist and surgeon are not in training, otherwise patients are evacuated to the provincial hospital in Sekong. At the request of our local partner, we have set up a multidisciplinary group to improve the quality of the operating room. This group has already been able to define areas of intervention that will be adapted to reduce the risks for patients undergoing operations in the province. These approaches are supported by the reference documents published by the WHO "Making Surgery Safer". Various activities will be implemented such as improving equipment maintenance, human resource management and training of medical staff.



Attapeu and Vientiane:

The project starts with a pilot phase that will run through the year 2020. We will take advantage of the experience gained and the strong links forged over the years with health actors in the Attapeu province, and also through the partnership with a Lao psychiatrist from Vientiane province. The latter has set up various projects over the last ten years with people with disabilities in the field of mental health in order to promote their inclusion. Her new project will be part of SFE's work starting in October.

Terra-Care Project :

This is one of our new challenges for the year 2020. This new project dealing with drinking water and sanitation will be extended to the 4 provinces of southern Laos. It is a partnership with the private non-profit company "Terra Clear". The SFE will take care of the distribution of water filters produced locally by Terra Clear, and subsidized by the SFE for the poorest families. This distribution accomplished at low cost will be accompanied by education on sanitation.

This project is particularly innovative for its carbon footprint. A single filter can reduce a family's annual carbon emissions by one ton.

At the moment, this new Terra-Care project has not obtained all the funding necessary, but we remain hopeful that we will find the enough funds by April to start this crucial project that saves so many easily preventable deaths, especially among children.



Thank you for reading this letter and for continuing to support the SFE's long-term work,

Philippe Klopfenstein, chairman of the SFE