

# ***“THE YELLOW BUTTERFLY” THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MIVAC TRUST***



(Mines Victims & Clearance Trust)

**ABN 116 672 477 96**

**Patron: Colonel Alex “Sandy” McGregor RAE (Retd)**

**Postal Address: PO BOX 967, SANDY BAY. TAS. 7006**

***October 2005 Edition***

---

Welcome to the first edition of “The Yellow Butterfly”, the newsletter of The MIVAC Trust. Over the past twelve months much has occurred to reshape The Trust and cause an expansion.

In June 2004, a new Trustee was appointed to expand the Trust into NSW. Since then NSW has developed into a fully-fledged Chapter of the Trust. More on NSW Chapter further on in this newsletter.

## **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

In August 2004, The Trust signed a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with Austcare to jointly fund a project in Cambodia. The Trust was to raise, as its contribution, \$A25, 000. Austcare would provide the balance. This MOU provided The Trust with Deductible Gift Status and as such we could offer donors a tax receipt for all donations. This MOU is valid for two years and maybe renegotiated should the outcomes be acceptable to both parties.

## **BOXING DAY TSUNAMI**

Batticaloa (pronounced Batty ka low) is located on the central east coast of Sri Lanka approximately 270 Km (eight hours drive) from Colombo. After the civil riots of 1983 many Tamils (the ethnic minority) from Colombo sought refuge and resettled among the predominantly Tamil population of Batticaloa.

Later, heavy fighting between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers) and Sri Lankan military caused the deaths of over 17,000 LTTE and more than 60,000 civilians on the east coast alone. (Numbers of Sri Lankan military dead in this area are unknown.) A ceasefire agreement in 2002 enabled the LTTE to move about freely unarmed. Today the Sri Lankan Army and Police Force heavily patrol Batticaloa. Although shootings



**Orphanage Dormitory Buildings**

are frequent, fighting has stopped.

Landmines around the area have been cleared by MAG (Mine Action Group) and no longer present such a serious threat. By mutual agreement the LTTE and Government have ceased the indiscriminate sowing of mines and now only lay well marked mine fields around military bases. The local population is aware of these areas and keeps well away.

On 26th December 2005, the Asian Tsunami devastated the coastal region of Batticaloa district. Between 6000-8000 people were killed. The inaccuracy of the casualty statistics provides some insight into the scale of the tragedy. Many villages were completely washed away with no survivors to provide accurate figures. The Dutch Bar, a large sand bar that juts into the sea and forms a beautiful salt-water lagoon between the town centre and coast, was particularly affected. Many of those not killed by outright by debris were washed into the lagoon and drowned.

Because Batticaloa is an area of complex conflict, much more of the effort of the International NGOs has been focused elsewhere in Sri Lanka.

After learning of the devastation to the communities in this war affected area, The MIVAC Trust sent Sri Lankan Australian members, Brendan Boucher and David Mariadason to meet with local government, community leaders and NGOs to conduct a feasibility study and plan a re-construction project. The Government of Tasmania has invited MIVAC to apply for Tsunami relief funding. MIVAC Has drafted a proposal and is awaiting confirmation from the Tasmanian Government. Drawings, plans, costings and schedules have been prepared. In the meantime the situation at Batticaloa is quite desperate. Thousands of displaced people survive on food and water rations in temporary camps around the Batticaloa district.

The Batticaloa orphanage was established in the Dutch Bar in 1983 by local organisation, Servants of Jesus, and received funding by the Jesuits. It provides a home, training and a future for children orphaned as a result of the on-going conflict. Before the tsunami, it housed thirty girls and boys between the ages of eight and sixteen. Since May,



**Orphanage Classroom**



**Orphanage Market Garden**



**Orphanage Aquaculture Pond**

about 40 are now under direct care. It is anticipated that many more children will be admitted as and when the orphanage can erect buildings and facilities to cope with them. The orphanage and the priests serve the wider community, including all faiths, in many ways.

The orphanage was completely destroyed by the tsunami. It was approximately 400 metres from the sea; the force of the surge tore the foundations, breaking the walls and collapsing the roof. The market garden, aquaculture ponds and two sea going fishing boats used for income generation were swept away. The two boats owned by the orphanage can still be seen lying broken on the opposite side of the lagoon. Fortunately, most of the children were away from the orphanage for the Christmas holidays. However the manager of the and his wife were killed while pushing the few remaining children to safety in a large tree.

Currently, children are temporarily resettled throughout the community because there is no other funding or proposals to reconstruct the orphanage. The Jesuits, under the direction of the Father Joseph Mary, have been effective in trying to establish some normalcy in the lives of the community with very little to work with. Through limited funding from the Jesuit Relief Services, Father Joe has provided temporary housing, conducted a cleanup of the area utilising heavy equipment, and are the first to commence the construction of permanent housing. There is much left to do and apart from the practical value, reconstruction of the orphanage would provide a focal point for the children and wider community from which hope, re-construction and re-development can spread. The psychological aspect of this to this devastated community cannot be underestimated.

Reconstruction of the orphanage fits with the criteria set by both MIVAC and the donor. The building to be constructed is community infrastructure that will be used in the education and development of the war affected children within the community. The Batticaloa area was subject to landmines, but this threat has been removed. Furthermore the Boxing Day Tsunami has devastated the area. The orphanage is not in receipt of relief funding from the Government or major NGOs. The orphanage and surrounding community is currently in a wretched state and



**Father Joseph Mary shows Mivac's David Mariadason the site where he found a body under a fallen tree several days after the Tsunami. Note the remains of a house (foundation only) and the local school in the background.**



**A father washing his son under an fresh water tank.**



**Villagers.**



requires immediate assistance. By assisting the orphanage directly we will also assist the local community.

Brendan Boucher - Mike Roberts - David Mariadason

Currently, as of early August 2005, enough funding has been made available to allow engineering plans to be drawn for the orphanage. Its construction will be commenced as soon as more funds are forthcoming. Brendan will be supervising the project, on ground in Batticaloa



**Father Joseph Mary approaching the entrance to one of the many refugee camps located on the Dutch bar, Batticaloa**

## TUN NUB CAMBODIA

The MIVAC Trust has recently conducted a rural development project in a remote former refugee's land mine affected settlement in North West Cambodia.

MIVAC donated AUD 6000 to provide water pump wells; water storage jars for household storage, and sufficient building materials for the villagers to construct a school/community centre building.



The project was conducted in the village of Tum Nub. Tum Nub is in Stung Treng Commune, Sala Krau District, Pailin, and is approximately 25 Km to the north of Pailin. It is home to 150 families and is typical of many newly settled and impoverished communities within the Pailin region. Sala Krau District is acknowledged as one of the most densely land mined areas in Cambodia. Tum Nub is pretty well in the middle of a bloody great minefield- the Khmer Rouge were still planting them in 1998, the minefields include all types of mines including anti -tank and the one many of us know so well, the US M16. It will take many years to clear the area.

These are some of the most densely mined areas in Cambodia. These people, who have absolutely nothing, moved into these cleared areas at their own volition attracted by the undeveloped, and what they believe, to be free and open land. The basic and urgent needs in these places is water (plenty of it about 15-30 metres below them), water storage jars to catch rain, mosquito nets (malaria is killing many each year-mostly children and the elderly).



The village of Tum Nub was selected because the village was very remote, the nearest water point was 7 km away and the population includes a higher than usual number of widowed and single parent families. This is due to the high casualties suffered by the men in the fighting of 1998, and more recently landmine detonations and desertions by many of the men who had been soldiers on both sides. The population numbers and size of area made Tum Nub the ideal village to benefit most from the available funding. The village also met the MIVAC funding criteria in that it is a landmine and conflict affected community

A MIVAC Trust member coordinated the project. Mike Roberts had previously been in the area as adviser to a local Cambodian NGO. With the advantage of local knowledge and the help an extremely competent Cambodian organization called the Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT); a very successful project was the outcome.

As a matter of interest, CRDT was set-up and run by a MIVAC member, Brendan Boucher. Under Brendan's very competent leadership they have been doing some great rural development projects, in many cases with funding from AusAid. See: <http://www.crdt.org/>.

## KAMPI DISTRICT CAMBODIA

The project aim was to provide village development in exchange for community co-operation with conservation of local fisheries and critically endangered Mekong dolphin habitats.

Kampi Village is home to 124 families on the bank of the Mekong River, 13 km from Kratie Township, Kratie Province, northeast Cambodia.

The Project Co-coordinator of Mekong Dolphin Conservation Project (MDCP), Ms. Isabel Beasley, engaged CRDT assistance. MDCP's ongoing research, conservation and government capacity building efforts are vital to the study and survival of the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin. Furthermore, MDCP are the only organisation globally that are undertaking these important activities.

CRDT is working in close collaboration with MDCP, to undertake community development activities to improve the food security, increase incomes and improve sanitation and the living standards of the people living in Kampi village. These development activities include;

- supply and construction of clean water and sanitation facilities;
- provision of livestock, such as pig, ducks and chickens;
- appropriate agriculture training, seed supply, rice intensification, land based fish culture training; and supply and establishment and formalization of a Village Development Committee.

The project is being supported by AusAID – (Australian Government Agency for International Development), through their Community Development Fund (CDF), with MIVAC contributing AUD2,500.



Water supply is the biggest problem. Currently, villagers draw untreated water from the Mekong River for all their needs including personal consumption. In addition to access to clean drinking water, a more convenient supply of water is critically required for the watering of livestock and agriculture and land-based fish culture ponds. These ponds provide a regular source of protein and income and represent a sustainable alternative to removing fish from sensitive dolphin habitats. This activity minimizes the threat of accidental dolphin catch in fishing gear (the primary threat to the dolphin's survival). During initial project implementation,

it became apparent that the village was located in an area of high arsenic concentration. This poses significant problems for the success of the project, potentially preventing the supply of standard pump wells due to the associated risks of poisoning. Without being able to provide a convenient supply of clean water, the project objectives may not be effectively and sustainably realised.

MIVAC will be recognized and published as a full partner in this village development project, as well as a contributing organisation to the main Mekong Dolphin Conservation Project.

Mike Roberts asked that the MIVAC grant be directed to construct physical assets that MIVAC can identify as resulting from their contribution. Whilst it is difficult to identify exactly what/how much MIVAC funds will provide at this early stage, and before the abovementioned study is completed. However, MIVAC funds will be directed to the provision of clean water & sanitation facilities and/or the construction and stocking of fish culture ponds, items that can be clearly identified with the MIVAC grant.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership is always an issue. We need new members, especially ones with work skills such as graphics design, Web Design, Trades, School Teachers, business managers, media & PR personnel, fund raisers and negotiators, legal practitioners and Corporate Groups and Clubs.

So give yourself a target for the months prior to Xmas 2005, sign up two members for MIVAC.

## **NEWS OF NEW CHAPTERS**

As mentioned earlier, The Trust has expanded into NSW and a new Chapter was formed in July 2005. Since then this chapter has forged ahead, enlisting new members and setting out a business plan and KPI to measure short, medium and long-term goals. New members come from a range of occupations, such as business leaders, travel agents, schoolteachers and housewives. A Newcastle Sub Chapter is also being forged and discussions with its instigator, Don Patterson, are on going.

A number of initiatives are on the drawing board, including a Tour Program in 2006. This tour program is based on travel to Vietnam, with interaction with former Viet Cong D445 Battalion Members and a live minefield. Funds raised from these tours will aid MIVAC in its ongoing work. Our Travel Partners are Travelscene American Express and The Australian Vietnam Veterans Reconstruction Group (AVVRG) Without AVVRG assistance we could not have achieved our goal in such a short time.

The next edition of the newsletter will contain more on the Travel Tours and how you can become a tour leader. As a tour leader you must first pass assessment by the Trustees and once approved and you raise 20 PAX, your travel is deemed free of charge. Hence this is a major incentive to become a tour leader. So if you are interested, email or call me at [jprtc@iprimus.com.au](mailto:jprtc@iprimus.com.au) or 02 9626 3376.

The NSW Chapter is also planning a campaign to take MIVAC into the classroom and teach children about land mines and what it means to live under such a threat. We are hoping to launch this early in 2006.

In 2007, to coincide with Land Mine Action Week, we are seeking to conduct an International Forum. Planning for this will commence in February 2006.

Other Chapters are actively being sought with a Trustee identified for WA. This chapter has the support of WA Sappers and other charity groups.