



The Damien Foundation in Laos

Programme

The National Tuberculosis Control Programme is managed entirely by local personnel and comes up against the same problems as those met by other programmes in Laos, namely limited access. This leads to health care centres being under-utilised. Moreover, government administrative procedures sometimes delay activities undertaken on the ground.

Currently, the tuberculosis control programme is being decentralized and integrated into more peripheral health care structures. These are developments which we encourage and support, because they inevitably lead to more accessible health care centres.

The main partners in the struggle against tuberculosis are the government of Laos, the Global Fund, the WHO and the Damien Foundation.

A gentle way of life

Laos is a mainly Buddhist country where time ceases to exist. Far away from our stressful existences back home, it is reflected by the pace of the anti-tuberculosis programme. We do progress, but at a slow pace.

Our support

In 1993, after a request made by the government of Laos, the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease contacted the Damien Foundation and asked them to support the National Tuberculosis Control Programme in Laos. This was achieved in 1994, and more financial and technical support will be forthcoming.

From 1995 to 1998 and from 2000 to 2004, the Damien Foundation appointed a consultant to Laos who worked there full time. From 1996 to 1998, the Damien Foundation also received co-financing from the Belgian state. Currently, our support is mainly technical and concerns medical and management training. Since 2003, the programme has received considerable support from the Global Fund. Assisting the programme on tuberculosis by providing medical training and training in human resources management was vital in order to improve the detection capacity and ensure permanent treatment of patients.

Successes and challenges

The results of the programme are positive and the personnel is increasingly more motivated and more highly trained. The great problem we are left with is the programme which does not reach a sufficiently large segment of the population owing to its poor accessibility. A positive step has been the progressive decentralization of tuberculosis-related services on to more peripheral health care units.

The management of the tuberculosis control programme also needs to be improved to reach optimum efficiency. The Damien Foundation will be taking a consultant on part-time to assist the board of directors with the management of the programme.

Summary

Start of the project	1994
Project type	Only tuberculosis
Population covered in 2006	5.734.422
Patients detected and treated in 2006	4,062 tuberculosis patients
Expenditure in 2006	€ 43,850