

January - March 2003

LAND MINES ARE A CURSE

By David Skeat

Land mines are an evil legacy of past wars. At a conflicts end millions of landmines and unexploded ordinances (UXOs) have been left behind by retreating armies. Most of these deadly booby traps are to be found in the fields and forests of poorer communities who live close to old battle zones. The result is that today women, children and every day farmers are having their limbs blown off or are being killed by landmines as they go about their daily routines.

A few years ago I was in the area of Laos that was once known as the *Ho Chi Minh trail*. This small area of land was the major arterial for weapons to be transported to the Viet Cong Guerillas and was mercilessly carpet bombed by allied forces. Not all of these bombs went off and many still lie in the alluvial clay ready to explode. Mine fields in the region were also set by the Viet Cong to protect the route from attack from ground forces. Even 25 years after the end of the Vietnam war this area is still rife with UXOs and people are still risking their lives by ploughing their fields.



Another country that has been vastly effected by the scourge of Landmines is Cambodia. The World Health Organization web site makes this comment about public health in Cambodia; *a major factor affecting the well-being of women and children is physical disabilities resulting from land-mine-related accidents. An estimated 4.2/1000 persons are amputees resulting from a land-mine explosion. In the under-15 age group, 21% of disabilities are due to land-mine accidents.*

Victims of landmines find it hard to find work thus making it hard for them to provide for their families. Many landmine victims are left destitute because of the injuries they have sustained through no fault of their own. This has always been a situation that has concerned me but until now ARMS has not had the means through which it can address this tragic situation.

Reverse The Curse Of Landmines is a small group of people who are not only concerned about the Landmine problem in Cambodia but they are determined to do something about it. The vision of Reverse The Curse (RTC) is to set up a business in Cambodia that will provide employment and care for the victims of landmines. By providing employment RTC will help each victim in its care to better provide for themselves and their families. This we hope will help restore some of their dignity.



Local Community Members Gather Around Their Latest Land Mine Victim

Through an amazing series of events ARMS and RTC have joined forces to set up a project in Cambodia that will provide employment for the victims of Landmines in that nation. RTC is now a ministry of ARMS and you will be hearing a lot more about its dynamic vision in the months to come.

The Director of the RTC project, Marion Fromm is a compassionate woman who wants to make a real difference in the lives of those in Cambodia who have had their lives devastated through landmines. Marion will lead the project in Cambodia once it is established there. Please pray for Marion and her team as they prepare the ground work to begin this much needed project.

Marion has authored the article you find inside this issue of Focus On Mercy. We hope that you will be as excited about Reverse The Curse as we are.





Some Facts About Landmines

According to UNICEF there are more than 115 million landmines scattered in 68 countries. An estimated 2.5 million new mines are laid each year.

Landmines kill or injure over 2,000 people every month, and approximately one-third of them are children under the age of 15.

As much as 35% of land in Afghanistan and Cambodia is now unusable due to landmines

One out of every 245 people in Cambodia is an amputee due to landmine injuries.

There are more than 250 million antipersonnel mines stored in the arsenals of 105 countries. The largest stockpiles are believed to be held by China.

Over 400 million landmines have been laid since the beginning of World War II. Up to 80 million are still alive today in hundreds of thousands of minefields around the world.

A land mine can remain active for over 50 years. They are usually left behind long after conflicts have ceased.

Landmines can cost as little as \$3 to produce. But they can cost up to \$3000 per mine to remove.



...“the presence of a landmine is evidence that war is not *really* over” ...

Refugee / IDP Malaria Project



For more than two years ARMS has been providing training for Primary Health Care workers in the prevention and treatment of Malaria.

Malaria is a life-threatening parasitic disease transmitted from person to person through the bite of a female Anopheles mosquito.

Malaria causes at least 300 million cases of acute illness each year, and is the leading cause of deaths in young children in the third world. Women living in endemic countries are four times more likely to have symptomatic malaria attacks when they are pregnant

Although Malaria has been nearly eradicated in some of the world's richer countries it is still highly virulent in poorer tropical and subtropical nations. A person who recovers from a serious bout of Malaria can be subject to impairments caused by the disease. These can include brain damage.

Through Steve Gumaer ARMS has sent across medical personnel who have provided advice and training to the workers who are going into the forests in Burma to care for the Internally Displaced Peoples there. This training is having very positive results.

At the present time this project needs approx \$2,000 to purchase Malaria testing kits and to pay for the refurbishment of a microscope used by Jonathan and his team of PHC workers to identify and treat the disease.

In the month of February ARMS is holding an appeal to raise these funds as the need is extremely urgent. If you would like to assist us in providing this much needed aid then please use the form on the back page of Focus On Mercy or contact the ARMS National Office



FIRST HEKAN HOUSE TO BE BUILT IN EAST TIMOR

ARMS and Mobile Mission Maintenance (MMM) are pleased to announce that the first Hekan house will be built in East Timor in April 2003.

The building of this house will signify the final stage of the Hekan design and testing process. The Hekan prototype built in Melbourne has surpassed expectations and is now ready for testing in the field.

Both ARMS and MMM feel that once Hekan has been tested in East Timor and any needed adjustments made to the design, then Hekan houses can be freely built by trained ARMS building teams.

Hekan designer Don Langley is very pleased with the outcome to date and he and his team at MMM have done a wonderful job in completing the prototype.

Final costings are not yet available but Hekan houses are expected to remain cheap to build, quick to erect, and will meet Australian building standards.

Further information about Hekan houses can be obtained from Neville at the ARMS National Office or by contacting the Mobile Mission Maintenance office in Whittlesea (Vic.)

VIDEOS BRING MUCH MIRTH TO REFUGEE CHILDREN

Thank you for the donations and the videos you are sending to the children in the refugee camp. They really are bringing a lot of joy. So far we have supplied Pehlu and Corina with nearly 20 videos and the feed back we have had has been great. In the first batch of tapes we sent were two *Bananas In Pyjamas* videos. Steve Gumaer emailed me to say that they had arrived safely and that he had actually viewed them on site with Pehlu's children. His comment was ... "thanks for the videos Dave - those *Bananas* are something else. The kids loved them".

It is hard for us to imagine how this simple act of kindness is bringing so much joy to the lives of these children who of themselves have nothing.

In our next shipment we would like to send some documentary / educational videos and are on the look out for wildlife specials. Perhaps after the success of *Bananas In Pyjamas* we should send a *Crocodile Hunter* video!

Donations or videos can be sent to the ARMS National Office.



NEW PROJECT IN EAST TIMOR

Soraya Nepomuceno has been a friend of ARMS for many years and is co-founder of the current work in Dili, East Timor. Soraya has played a crucial role in East Timor and on several occasions has acted as an interpreter for me. She is currently working in the ARMS National Office in our child sponsorship section.

For some time Soraya has wanted to found a specialist work amongst children in the poorer areas of Dili and feels that now is the time for her take this new direction. Her new project is aptly named *Kids Ark*.

Kids Ark will commence its work by providing half day child care and daily children's programs in Dili. By offering these programs Soraya will be providing an essential service to the poorest of families. Santa Cruz has a large population of homeless children that spend most of their time on the streets. Some families cannot afford to educate their children. Kids Ark will provide a refuge for these kids that will give them one main meal

a day, a place that they can feel welcome and educationally based activities that will help prepare them for the time when they can go to school. Once she has established this program Soraya hopes to expand it so that a full Preschool program can eventually be offered to the younger children.

Soraya will return to Dili in May of this year to commence the new work. Soraya loves kids and kids love Soraya. I have travelled with her in parts of East Timor where the kids all run up to her calling out her name and cuddling into her - she really has an amazing gift with children.

ARMS is currently raising funds to help Soraya establish Kids Ark in Dili. If you would like to help, or have Soraya come and speak at your church or interest group then please contact ARMS or email Soraya on soraya@arms.org.au. Alternatively, you could visit the Kids Ark Website <http://www.ywamconnect.com/sites/easttimorkids>



Reversing The Curse Of Landmines

By Marion Fromm

It is a well known fact that land mine victims can be treated like lepers, even in the communities in which they live. This was made clear to me when I visited Cambodia four times between 1997 and 2000. In the churches that I was visiting, I noticed that there were no landmine victims in the congregations. What was a real shock to me, was the fact that the local pastors who translated for me would not speak to the limbless beggars on the streets, and no church outreaches were planned for these poor rejected people. When I asked one pastor about this, he told me that local congregations would not accept landmine victims if they came to their churches. He explained that the rejection by the local people was part of the Buddhist mindset that sees imperfect people as worthless. When I heard this it nearly broke my heart. I challenged this pastor and his church of the need to reach out to these people, but subsequent visits showed me that nothing had changed. The plight of the landmine victims became a deep concern in my heart for years; but I wasn't sure what to do.



The Stark Realities Of Landmines.

One Sunday morning in June 2000, I was at church and I had a vision of a large area of vacant land that I recognised as being similar to land that I had seen in Cambodia. I saw a factory appear on the land and later a dormitory-style housing block and finally a church appeared. In seeing this vision I felt that God had challenged me to establish a sheltered workshop factory for people that are disabled by land mines, to give

Not much is currently being done to give amputees employment and self-esteem in Cambodia....

them quality of life, meaningful employment and assisted living. I believe that through the resulting love and care shown to these people, a Church fellowship will develop that will not reject them, but include them and give them full expression of their love for God. This vision was the birth of what has become known as "Reverse The Curse Of Landmines".

Reverse The Curse has the potential to become a prototype for other places to emulate in their care for people with land mine related disabilities. Not much is currently being done to give amputees employment and self-esteem in Cambodia and other countries where there are land mines. Usually begging is their only source of income, if they cannot work on the family farm, but it is soul destroying and with the ever-increasing



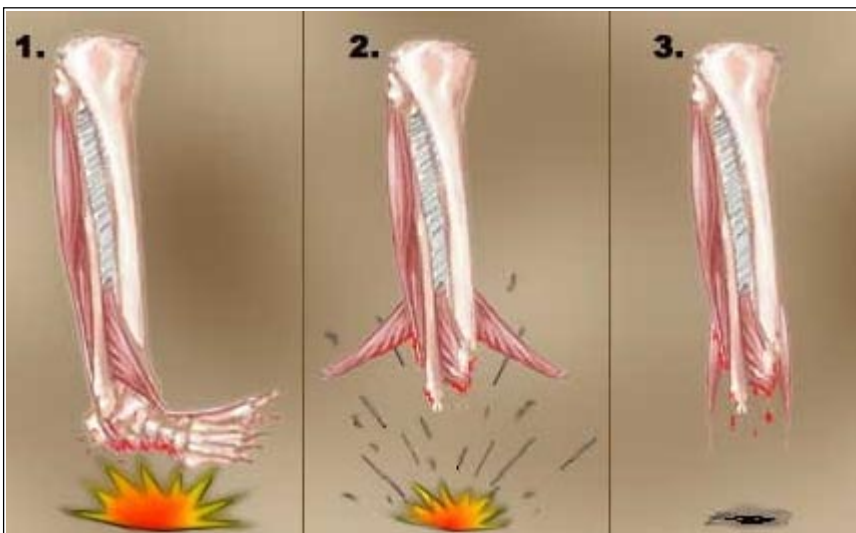
Less Than The Size Of A Dinner Plate; Yet The Damage They Do Is Horrendous

instances of injury being suffered through landmines, there are increasing numbers of people begging in the towns and cities all over Cambodia. There are currently more than 300,000 victims in Cambodia, with an increase of approximately 500 per month. At the current rate of detection and demolition, it will take more than 40 years to eradicate all the land mines in Cambodia. As you can see, this is a serious long-term problem that cannot be ignored.



Children Going To School Close To A Mine Field

This whole situation has impacted me greatly. I visited Cambodia in 2001 and again in 2002, when I contacted Cambodian Government departments and received their encouragement for Reverse The Curse. Plans and cost estimates for the factory, disability housing and training centre have been drawn up



What Happens When Someone Treads On A Mine

1. The initial blast tears the foot apart, causing the foot and toes to peel away from the leg.
2. The action of the blast forces dirt, mine fragments, bone and tissue to be driven deep up into what is remaining of the leg, the genitalia and torso.
3. The outer leg skin returns into place and hides the full extent of the damage.

in Cambodia and RTC are praying for God to draw together a team of staff, which will include factory management, production, marketing, administration and of course, finance.

There are currently more than 300,000 victims in Cambodia, with an increase of approximately 500 per month.

The Reverse The Curse project in Cambodia will commence operation by producing a range of high quality confectionery made from dried fruits and nuts. These products will be marketed first in Cambodia, and later exported to the West. Each item will have distinctive packaging, so that the consumers who buy it will know that they are assisting those with land mine related disabilities. Reverse The Curse will train Cambodian staff in management; production, marketing, accounting and office procedures so that ultimately the amputees can run the whole project

themselves. The centre will be a contact point for other amputees and will offer development courses that will cover areas such as health and hygiene, living skills and access to trauma counselling. In the long term, a local Church in the community of the disabled will be established.

To begin, Reverse The Curse will need to buy approximately 2 hectares of land on which to commence this project. Reverse The Curse will promote locally based micro enterprise projects that will encourage the production of crops such as cashews, peanuts, dried mango, pawpaw, pineapple and coconut. Thus the local community will also prosper through their association with the Reverse The Curse factory. Funds raised through the project will fund other factories. The estimated cost of this project is US\$500,000.

It is amazing how many people have already shown their support for this vision. My local church (Morphett Vale Baptist) has made Reverse The Curse (of Land

Every 22 minutes - somewhere in the world, another man, woman or child will stand on a landmine

mines) project one of the ministries of the Church. We hope that other churches will also follow suit.

Reverse The Curse is in need of your assistance in prayer, in giving and in helping us to get the message out about the plight of landmine victims in Cambodia. If you can help, please contact me at the address below.

Cheques should be made out to;

"ARMS- Reverse The Curse."

Marion Fromm
Director
REVERSE THE CURSE (of Land Mines)

12/11 Mc Mahon Road MORPHETT VALE
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A Lot Of Victims Are Only Kids

The Back Page

Appeal Brings Christmas Joy

The annual ARMS Christmas appeal that provides Christmas presents for refugee children and Christmas dinner for families in the Mae - la and Ler Ber Her refugee camps was again a huge success.

Over \$2,400 was donated. This provided presents and Christmas dinner for more than 1600 children and their families.

Partners' donors in the US also provided donations to this appeal which meant that many many more families and children were able to be included.

Steve Gumaer says that the distribution of gifts to the children at Christmas is one of his favorite things to do. *"You never get tired of seeing each child's face light up,"* he said, *"as they receive their very own Christmas present that has been sent to them by some one they don't know. It is a real testimony to them about the love of God."*

It just goes to show that even small acts of kindness can bring hope to those who find themselves in the most dire of situations.

Penny Wilcox

Paul and Penny Wilcox were recently in Australia for a couple of months furlough. As many readers will remember Penny had a serious scare with cancer just over 12 months ago.

The good news is that Penny's cancer is in remission and the doctors have cleared her to return to Chiang Rai and continue the work that she and Paul have started amongst AIDS babies there.

The Wilcox's have a new property on which to base their work and have new staff arriving in the next couple of months.

We are all very thankful for this turn of events and together with the Wilcox family look to the future with eager anticipation.

RESCUENET

Rescuenet has received a substantial donation that has enabled it to buy much of the team equipment it has desperately needed in order to deploy.

Further finances are still needed to help individual members with their own kits, but this single donation has made things alot easier.

Please keep us in your prayers.

Focus On Mercy

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A Ministry Of Youth With A Mission Australia

Response Form

I would like to become a supporter of ARMS and will regularly pray for its ministry and /or give a monthly gift of \$ per month. I enclose a gift of \$ towards:

National Office Support

Videos For Orphans

RescueNet

Reverse The Curse

IDP Malaria Project

Kids Ark

Name.....

Address.....

.....Post Code

Contact Number

Please debit my credit card (circle one) Visa Mastercard Bankcard

Expiry Date/..... Signature

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