

Doctor Beat Richner, Kantha Bopha Children's Hospitals, Cambodia  
Siem Reap/Angkor and Phnom Penh, October 25, 2008

## **Forty seven cases of meningitis - sixty one cases of brain stem infection - all on October 25, 2008**

On October 25, 2008 a total of 47 children with purulent and tuberculous meningitis and 61 children with brain stem infection were hospitalized in our five children's hospitals of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap/Angkor. Where else would one take care of all these? remains a question nobody seems willing or able to answer!

Kantha Bopha is the only institution in Cambodia that offers correct and efficient care free of charge for these children. Eighty five percent of Cambodians are unable to pay even a small amount of the costs for their children's treatment. They would have to borrow money, sell their oxen, plows and land, their existence being in ruins.

In 30% of all children admitted to our hospitals for brain stem infection, Japanese encephalitis is the causing disease. Efficient vaccination against Japanese encephalitis is available and is being performed as a routine procedure for all children in Vietnam and Thailand, free of charge. For unknown reasons, Cambodia's children are excluded from this preventive benefit. In the past two years, however, 1500 children per day are undergoing immunization against this disease in the Kantha Bopha children's facilities, free of charge. For this campaign we have to pay seven million USD.

### **What are the reasons leading to the factual discrimination of Cambodian children?**

Is it corruption? – Kantha Bopha Children's Hospitals have been without the least corruption for the past 17 years of their existence. That is why, among other causes, that the cost effectiveness of the Kantha Bopha project has been rated by international screening to be the leader worldwide. Corruption in health care is a killer, as one can well observe in Cambodia's health care facilities outside the Kantha Bopha hospitals. Therefore, the actual contribution of two million US dollars per year by the Cambodian government is transferred directly to our foundation in Zuerich, Switzerland upon the instruction of Prime Minister Hun Sen. Although corruption is "the devil's", one must admit that European colonialism has introduced the vice in the "weaker" countries far away from home by their way of governing and living there and exploitation. On November 9, 2008 Cambodia will celebrate her 55 year of independence from French colonialism. This history is not very old, after all.

Whether the factual discrimination of Cambodian children may have geopolitical, strategic or economic reasons from wherever originating, is beyond my competence of judgment. I am and I shall remain a children's doctor.

It is thanks to Your donations, the 300 millions of sponsored US dollars we got during the last 16 years, that hundreds of thousands of children's lives could be saved and prevented from invalidity and chronic disease. We thank you for your continued and urgent financial support. Any amount helps to save, cure and prevent.

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