



building hope



The opening of Kantha Bopha IV Hospital in Phnom Penh. King Sihamoni cuts the ribbon with Dr. Beat Richner (right) and Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen (left)



Funded by donations, the Kantha Bopha Hospitals provide western standards of healthcare to poor children in Cambodia totally free of charge



There is no prevention against TB. Every infected person or every sick person must be treated in order to stop this endemic of tuberculosis



This is an edited speech made by Dr. Beat Richner, founder of the Kantha Bopha Hospitals, at the Dec 2005 opening of Kantha Bopha IV Hospital in Phnom Penh

The inauguration of Kantha Bopha IV is a milestone in the work of the Kantha Bopha Hospitals in Cambodia over the last 14 years and also a milestone for Cambodia's public health service for children.

In February 2004 we were offered the land on which to build this new hospital for US\$2.5 million. So I asked one million of my Swiss compatriots to contribute 20 Swiss Francs each. This is how we raised the US\$15 million to construct the new hospital. So I would like to thank my Swiss compatriots and the thousands of private donors who helped us with the purchase of this land and the construction, and who importantly also help to provide the US\$16 million annual running costs of the Kantha Bopha Hospitals.

Today, just 16 months after the corner stone ceremony presided over by Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen, we have a complete and fully equipped hospital with 555 beds. A result of wonderful teamwork.

Kantha Bopha Hospitals admit 75,000 severely sick children a year in Cambodia, 40,000 in Phnom Penh and 35,000 in Siem Reap. 80% of these hospitalised children have no chance of survival without the treatment they receive at Kantha Bopha. The treatment is totally free of charge and Kantha Bopha treats 85% of all Cambodian Children.

World Health Policy for the Poor World has failed. For example, tuberculosis has not been correctly diagnosed in Cambodia. The same standards of diagnosis need to be applied to children in Cambodia as they are in Europe or in USA, otherwise you miss the diagnosis. But this goes against World Health Policy which claims the standard of technological equipment in poor countries must correspond to the economic reality of the country.

The other dogma dominating present World Health Policy for the poor world is prevention. First of all it has to be a cheap prevention. But there is no vaccination against tuberculosis. The BCG vaccination is useless. The BCG vaccination is dangerous. The most severe cases of tuberculosis we find in children are in those who have received the vaccination. There is no prevention against TB. The focus must be on neutralisation; that is, every infected person or every sick person must be treated, in order to stop this endemic of tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis has to be treated as early as possible; not when the child is already blind or dying. And the first signs of tuberculosis can only be found by a CT scan of the lungs. That is why we installed in Kantha Bopha IV our third CT Scanner, the same model that is installed in hospitals in Europe and the USA.

40% of Kantha Bopha's surgical operations (in Phnom Penh 30 per day; in Siem Reap 20 per day), are cases of tuberculosis. So surgery too has an impact on the health of children. That is why we have installed four modern theatres in this new hospital.

For surgery you need the correct high-tech machines for sterilisation of the materials. That's why we installed 4 high-tech autoclaves for blood transfusions, so desperately needed for the thousands of dengue fever cases in shock, for hundreds of malaria cases in shock, for our 50 surgical operations per day, for bleeding mothers before and after our 40 deliveries per day...for all these blood transfusions you need a laboratory of the same standard used in Europe or in USA. Otherwise you would be a criminal by contaminating thousands with incorrectly screened blood. That is why we have installed a modern sophisticated laboratory here under the direction of Dr. Denis Laurent.

H.E. Walter Fust, Director of Swiss Cooperation for Development, was quoted as saying that "For this Hospital we do not pay a single stone." That is why you can see these holes in the wall at the front of the building!

The Swiss government (similar to other governments of the so called civilised world) still believes in the failed and failing World Health Policy for the poor children of the poor world based on the dogma already mentioned. This policy is causing suffering and millions of fatalities worldwide. Yet still today this policy is practiced.

In the small Swiss town of Geneva, where the luxurious headquarters of the World Health Organisation is located, there are 22 CT Scanners installed in the private health sector alone. Yet here, for the whole of Cambodia they tell you a CT Scanner is not appropriate, because it does not correspond to the economical reality of the country. Until this World Health Policy for poor children in poor countries is changed, there will never be a better future for these children. 