

knowledge from mother to daughter. In some outlying districts, many women have 10 or more children; some are either unaware of birth control techniques or unable to afford condoms. "Nobody comes to explain to them about health care," says Kao Chheng Huor, head of the WFP office for the provinces of Kampong Thom and Preah Vihear.

But in Kampong Thom, which according to the joint UNICEF/WFP survey suffers the highest rates of child malnutrition in the country, it quickly becomes apparent that the heart of the problem is mind numbing poverty. "I had no choice, I had no other way except to send my children away," says Hol Ny, her eyes wet with tears. The 40-year-old widow, bereft of land or cattle, recently allowed three of her six children to go work for other families, some of them total strangers; the \$15 she received per child must feed her and her three youngest for the next year. In her village of Srayou Cheung, at least six other families have similarly sold their children into bonded labor; some say they have had to forage in the forest for food. Hol Ny's neighbor, a 41-year-old divorcee named Pich Mom, sold her two sons for two years each. "I was sick and couldn't earn any money," she says. "It's hard for me to live without my children, but I think I did what was best for them."

For the past four years, Cambodia has actually recorded a small rice surplus estimated to reach 30,000 tons this year. This bounty, however, is distributed poorly, and many farmers simply cannot afford to buy what is available. (In a country with a per capita income of only \$300 a year, about 36% of Cambodians live below the official poverty line; last year the WFP assisted 1.4 million people, 15% of the population, with its food-for-work program.) Even those who have rice often have little else—perhaps a little salt, or the fermented fish paste called "prahoc"—to round out the dish. That little is not nearly enough: rice, while high in calories, has relatively few nutrients.

The WFP says Prime Minister Hum Sen was shocked by the U.N. surveys, and he now insists that eliminating malnutrition is a top priority. "Now that the fighting is over, we expect everyone to work on this issue," says Nouv Kanun, the energetic secretary general of the newly created Council for Agriculture and Rural Development.

A conference of Cabinet ministers and provincial authorities last month endorsed a 10-year, \$90 million plan to tackle the root causes of malnutrition, focusing on crop diversification and awareness campaigns about nutrition, health and hygiene. Still, the damage that is already evident will plague Cambodia for years to come. "If you are malnourished from six months until you are five, you are going to be handicapped for the rest of your life," warns Davies. "You will never be able to develop your full mental or physical capacity." Perhaps now that warning can be heard.

#### POL POT'S LEGACIES—ILLITERACY AND MALNUTRITION—HAVE NOT YET FOLLOVED DESPOT TO THE GRAVE

WASHINGTON.—U.S. Rep. Tony Hall, D-Ohio, today detailed his impressions of humanitarian conditions in Cambodia and warned that problems of desperate poverty—especially severe malnutrition, scarce schools, and wide swaths of mined land—are undermining the victory over those responsible for the death of nearly two million Cambodians. Excerpts of Hall's remarks follow.

"I visited Cambodia's capital and two rural provinces April 8-11 to get a firsthand look at the problems of poverty, and particularly the terrible malnutrition that has left Cam-

bodia's rural villages populated by stunted people—and one in 10 wasted by hunger.

"What I saw in Cambodia's rural villages reminded me of the time I spent in Thailand 32 years ago as a Peace Corps volunteer. People in Cambodia seem to be frozen in time, and you cannot escape the nagging feeling that Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge have won, that they took the people backward in time and stranded them there.

"I was surprised to learn that in Cambodia, malnutrition is not the result of a lack of food. It is caused by the failure to teach mothers that they don't have to wait three days after giving birth to breastfeed the baby; that children should be fed more than just rice; that fish or fruit or vegetables won't make toddlers sick; and that without basic sanitation, disease will undo all the good of proper nutrition and care.

"People need more traditional education too—four in five rural Cambodians can't read or write, and just 20-30 percent of children are in school. That means they can't take advantage of their position at a crossroads of the regional economy. And education is only the beginning of Cambodia's problems.

"Without roads, it is impossible for rural people, who are 85% of the population, to get their products to market. Without irrigation, most can only raise enough food to keep their families alive. With even a few more roads and water systems, Cambodia could feed itself and earn enough to fund some progress.

"Malaria, TB, dengue fever, and the growing rate of AIDS infections need to be fought more seriously. It is appalling that Cambodian children still die from measles and other easily prevented illnesses. Even the most basic things, such as iodizing salt to prevent mental retardation, are not being done.

"The country desperately needs economic growth. The government's plan to demobilize 55,000 soldiers and 23,000 police will put a lot of young men with guns into a society that is very fragile. Aid cannot create an economy, and I hope the government will invest the money it now spends on the military on improving its people's opportunities.

"Cambodia's people need peace—and a period to find their way forward after 30 years of civil war. It is hard to imagine the trauma of the generation that endured the 'killing fields,' or their children—who now are raising children of their own. One aid worker told me that the pictures children draw almost always feature guns or weapons—because violence and war are so familiar to them.

"For peace to last, it will take more than the trial of war criminals. Two decades have passed since the Khmer Rouge were run out of power, but Cambodians remain among the poorest people in the world. It is in their lack of education that you can see that, even though Pol Pot's military is defeated, he achieved his hideous goal of turning Cambodia into a primitive place.

"After the mid-1997 coup, the United States cut its funding for private charities working inside Cambodia—from \$35 million to \$12 million. That is unacceptably low, given the election last year, and it is only hurting poor Cambodians who already have suffered unimaginably. Whatever Congress and the Administration think of Cambodia's government, we need to find a way to help its poor, and I intend to press the United Nations, the United States, and other countries to do that.

"The overwhelming majority of Cambodians, whose lifespan is just 47 years, don't know what peace is. If the areas long held by the Khmer Rouge aren't opened with roads and other basic infrastructure, if the people do not have an opportunity to get some basic

education—if ordinary Cambodians don't see progress in meeting their basic needs, the peace that is holding now may not last.

"We have an opportunity today that has not existed in three decades, a chance to introduce Cambodians to the fruits of peace. The international community should make the most of this chance by investing in Cambodians and their future—and the United States should lead the way."

#### INTRODUCTION OF HOME HEALTH ACCESS PRESERVATION ACT

**HON. VAN HILLEARY**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 25, 1999*

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, the Balanced Budget Act (BBA) made many changes to Medicare and the home health industry. These changes decimated the system and have left behind them a long list of closed home health agencies and patients without care. In response, many of us in Congress desperately sought a solution. Unfortunately, we were unable to come up with one true vehicle that could pass into law.

This year we come back again. Our efforts will be just as aggressive but a little wiser. Instead of competing against one another, we in Congress will now work together to fix the problem. That is why I have joined with Congressmen MCGOVERN, COBURN, and WEYGAND to craft legislation that will help our seniors in need. Joined by Congressmen RAHALL, MCINTOSH, HOOLEY, WAMP, BARTON, and ACKERMAN, we plan to push forward legislation that aims to help the neediest of home health beneficiaries and agencies.

The first patients that will receive the aid are those that are considered "outliers." Outliers are patients who have unusually high cost maladies. Under the BBA system, many agencies are unable to give them care at the risk of being run out of business because they are so cost prohibitive. We create a system that sets aside 10 specific ailments that would make a person eligible to receive this outlier status. Once they are identified as an outlier, agencies who take these individuals could draw from a newly established \$250,000,000 Medicare fund to cover the added expenses. This will mean more of our poorest, oldest, and sickest receiving the medical coverage they so desperately need.

Another benefit of this legislation will be the establishment of a repayment plan for agencies who have been treating these individuals. Many of them are now almost out of business due to their charity and the inaccuracies of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) in assessing their plight. We offer an interest-free 36-month grace period to these agencies in order to repay these overpayments and settle any miscalculations on behalf of HCFA.

I urge all other Members who see the need for a reform in home health to back this legislation. The Home Health Access Preservation Act of 1999 is a common sense way to help our seniors in their time of need.