The Vanuatu Dental Care Service (VDCS) recently completed their 2013 inter-island outreach, delivering their “Helti tut—Helti laef” Message, along with dental treatment, throughout the Shefa, Malampa and Torba Provinces.

Assisted by Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) with transport and logistical support, 15 islands were visited throughout July, August and September, where a total of 33 clinics were conducted. Along with the screening of 732 people (and the treatment of 506), 16 Helti tut—Helti Laef presentations were delivered to more than 600 people.

As Dental Care workers Morinda Toara and Bob Natuman say ... “The Helti tut—Helti Laef message is very simple as we show in this poster from our presentation...”

Whilst some islands were easy to access, getting ashore at Mere Lava and Merig presented a few challenges.

As a volunteer dentist and long-time supporter of the Vanuatu Dental Care Service, Dr Barry Stewart makes some dental observations from his work and research in Vanuatu:

“From our observations, the DMFT Index (ie decayed, missing & filled teeth) for Port Vila, where exposure to a Western sugar-based diet is probably at its greatest, is around 6, which is extremely high. This means that in 6-7 year olds, on average, six of their primary teeth are either decayed or missing because there is little evidence of teeth being filled. In the northern, remote Torba Region where “rubis kaekae” is less prevalent, the DMFT Index is between 0.5 and 1.0 — low. Although it’s interesting to note that the DMFT Index for Sola, a regional centre where access to sweets and fizzy drink is greater, is around 4.”

Dental Care Reaches Outer Island

Dental Results From The Field

Our teeth are like a coconut — HARD on the outside, SOFT on the inside. And like a coconut, if the outside gets damaged then the inside will go rotten.

So clean your teeth every day to prevent germs from attacking and damaging your teeth — and enjoy a clean, sparkling smile.

1. Eat well
2. Drink well
3. Clean well
4. Regular check-ups

Above, Landing the Dental Care team at Mere Lava.

Above, The island of Merig where the team landed to check on the dental & medical needs of the 22 person population.
Morinda reports on life at sea and work on land ...

Dental Care Worker, Morinda Toara led the dental care outreach in July & August to the Shefa and Malampa Provinces:

by Morinda Toara

Sailing Experience
I had this feeling of excitement when I volunteered to go on our first mission to the Shepherds group. I have never been on a sailing boat before so I was really looking forward to the trip.

During the first five days things went well until we set off for Emao Island. The sea was quite rough and the wind was strong, I felt uncomfortable on the boat. As we tried to anchor at Marou village me and Helen already made up our minds to sleep ashore. We couldn’t stay on the boat because it was rocking and it made me feel sick.

On our way to Mataso the weather was worse. I was shaking with fear and cold, thinking of what would happen to the boat and how am I going to survive. While all these thoughts of fear came to me, I know that we will make it thru. Seeing the Australian volunteers relaxing and laughing away gives me courage and that we were safe. Due to the bad weather we couldn’t make it to Mataso, Makira and Tongariki.

The second mission to Malekula was fine - better than the first one. Sometimes we experience rough sea which makes me feel sick but I managed to complete the mission.

As part of my work, sailing was a challenge for me. When I feel sick I couldn’t do my job properly. Sometimes I got wet and cold, but I thank the Lord for this challenge. It strengthens my ability to face such situation.

Work Experience
Working in the two missions was a good experience for me. I met many people with dental problems and talked to many children. As we give our talks the people seem to understand the importance of dental health. We asked questions to each other, and by responding, it gives me confidence and helps me improve my presentations.

I enjoyed talking to children because they always pay attention. They always tell the truth when I asked them questions but sometimes they will lie if they are scared. Sometimes a few of them will cry as we entered the classroom, thinking that we were going to give them injection. But as we explained to them about our work, they will stop. Working outside Port Vila is not always easy due to transportation. Sometimes I had to walk an hour from my village to another to do the Education Talk and then back. It’s always tiring but I enjoyed it anyway.
**Bill Stoney to the Rescue**

Whilst the primary focus of the Vanuatu Dental Care Service is one of **EDUCATION** and a message of **PREVENTION** through daily cleaning, eating well, drinking well and having regular check-ups, the need for **TREATMENT** cannot be ignored—just ask anyone who has suffered toothache!

To provide much-needed treatment, as well as acting as a teaching base for Ni-Van (local) Dental Care Workers, the PCV Health Dental Clinic has now been established.

Enter **BILL STONEY**...

In Melbourne Bill is something of a legend in the dental equipment supply and servicing fields and having taken an active interest in the development of the Vanuatu Dental Care Service over several years was more than willing to spend a week in Pt Vila installing equipment and training Bob and Morinda in its care and use. Not only that, on seeing there was no suction unit to go with the chair, Bill made a call to the dental manufacturer **Cattani** whose generosity in donating a suction unit to was a wonderful bonus. As for transport costs, Bill picked up the tab for that, which was fantastic. **Tank Yu Tumas Cattani & Bill!**

Further help was provided by fellow dental equipment engineer Peter Copp and electrician and MSM sailing crew member Dave Mears.

The email from dentist Barry Stewart, after the first two days of actual "chair time" says it all:

"...fantastic news regarding portable suction Bill. The 26 patients we treated over the two days were really grateful for the new clinic... Thanks to you for overcoming the many challenges! The stats are — 7 fillings (single surface), 10 fillings (multiple surface), 15 Extractions (routine), 4 Extractions (difficult - sectional), 6 X-rays, 5 Exam and/or Scale & Clean. Kind regards, Barry"

**Richard Tatwin**

The Vanuatu Dental Care Service has been a long-term dream of Richard Tatwin and the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. To see it through the planning and development phase and now operating alongside the other health care services has been an amazing answer to prayer. As Richard says ... "we now have a foundation on which to build a dental service that will reach out to all the people of Vanuatu and at the same time train local dental health professionals".

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**DENTAL OUTREACH STATISTICS**

Dental outreach to the Shefa Province in July, Malampa in August and Torba in September resulted in the Vanuatu Dental Care Service examining 732 patients, with 506 receiving treatment. This included 579 extractions and 22 referrals for further treatment. The “**Helti Tut Healthy Laef**” presentation was delivered 16 times to a total audience of over 600.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province / Location</th>
<th>Dental Exam / Screening</th>
<th>Dental Treatment</th>
<th>No of Fillings (inc ART)</th>
<th>No of Extractions</th>
<th>Dental Referral</th>
<th>Dental Education</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Shefa / Shepherds</td>
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<td>101</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5 / 75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malampa / Malakula</td>
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<td>223</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 / 189</td>
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<tr>
<td>Torba / Banks &amp; Torres</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 / 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>732</strong></td>
<td><strong>506</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
<td><strong>579</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>16 / 614</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Mama rubin rubis tut**

A recent study published in the Journal of the American Dental Association studied the:

"... relationship between the oral health of young children and that of their mothers."

**Method of approach ...**

The study looked at a sample of 1,184 mother/child pairs for children aged 2 through 6 years and an evaluation was made of the decay (caries) in both the mothers and the children.

**The results ...**

Where mothers had a high level of untreated tooth decay (caries) children were more than three times as likely to have higher levels of caries experience compared with children whose mothers had no untreated caries.

A similar relationship was observed between mothers’ tooth loss and caries experience among their children. The children of mothers with high levels of tooth loss were more than three times as likely to have higher levels of caries experience compared with children of mothers with no tooth loss.

**Conclusions...**

Mothers’ oral health status is a strong predictor of the oral health status of their children.

**How should we respond...**

Preventive action such as regular check-ups and daily cleaning with a tooth brush and fluoride toothpaste is essential, along with addressing the tooth decay and oral health of mothers.

Studies show that children are three times more likely to suffer poor oral health if their mothers also suffer poor oral health.

**Assessing the Relationship Between Children’s Oral Health Status and That of Their Mothers**

Bruce A. Dye, DDS, MPH, Clemencia M. Vargas, DDS, PhD, Jessica J. Lee, DDS, Laurence Magder, PhD, MPH and Norman Tinninoff, DDS, MS

The Journal of the American Dental Association February 2011 142, 173-183 © February 2011
The generosity of so many people and organisations in helping to establish the Vanuatu Dental Care Service has been an amazing thing to see. For any one person the task would be overwhelming, but together, the diverse skills and contributions of many has meant much has been achieved in the last 12 months.

A massive thank you to all:

**Companies & Organisations:**
- GC Australia (for ART books, manuals, instrument kits and materials free of charge)
- Henry Schein Cares (for consumables at heavily discounted prices)
- Henry Schein Software of Excellence (Oasis software free of charge)
- Alldent (equipment installation & service)
- Dentalife consumables free of charge
- Cattani Australia (for portable suction unit)
- W&H Australasia P/L (for dental motors and handpieces)
- Family Dentistry, Croydon, Victoria (Assistance with quotations & donations of materials, sterilization of instruments, moral support and encouragement)
- Dental Health Services of Victoria (Health Promotion and Communications)
- The University of Melbourne (for the contribution of staff and use of the Dental School pre-clinical laboratory free of charge)

**Other associated individuals:**
- University staff members, Associate Professor Roy Judge, Prof Martin Tyas, Ronn Taylor, Sue Dobell, Alan Eddy and Chris Owen
- Sue Kearney, and staff at DHSV Health Promotions and Communications, including Gillian Lang;
- Dentists, Dr Tony Burke, Dr David Goldsmith (Ballarat Dental Group), Dr Glenda Harris, Dr Garry Hibble, Dr Dom Jayasekera, Dr John O'Grady, Dr Jamie Robertson, Dr Paul Schneider, Dr Lyndon Sheppard, Dr Barry Stewart, and Dr Tami Yap
- Dental nurses, Liz Broadbent, Vicky Silcock, and Sarah Packer
- Dental Engineers, Bill Stoney (Alldent, dental equipment services)
- Peter Copp
- Individuals, Stephen Haynes (Manager, GC Australasia), Jessica Chasen (Henry Schein Cares) Andrew Stray (Proprietor, Dentalife), Christopher Jobson (Territory Manager, W&H Australasia) Andrew Clark (CEO Cattani Australia), Dave Mears
- Volunteer dentists enlisted for 2014
  - Dr Helen Marchant, Dr Ken Heath
  - Non-dental:
    - Ballarat Rotary, Ringwood Rotary, Uniting World and North Ringwood Uniting Church

**Tut-man Bob**

Normally shy and reserved, Bob comes alive when faced with a receptive audience and the prospect of delivering another Helti Tut Helti Laef talk.

Here we see Bob in front of a school group at Losolava on the island of Gaua.