



Disabled dancers celebrate the renewal of funding for the Emergency Surgical Hospital in Battambang. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Provincial surgical hospital saved

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HELICOPTERS descended, disabled Khmer dancers gathered and Emergency Surgical Hospital staff and trauma patients celebrated the news that their hospital in Battambang, which was on the brink of closure, would remain open thanks to a new bout of continual funding.

Two months ago Emergency Surgical Hospital, which is responsible for more than 3,500 surgical procedures per year, including half of all Cambodia's landmine victims, was

told it would be shut down because its funding from Italy had dried up.

Enter Dr Haruhisa Handa, a Japanese philanthropist and Cambodian humanitarian, who, at the weekend announced the indefinite financial support of the hospital by The Handa Foundation, allowing it to remain open and fully operational.

The Handa Foundation, an initiative of Dr Handa, founds and funds Cambodian hospitals, schools and orphanages to help recover the nation from its history of war and trauma,

including the University of Cambodia and the Sihanouk Hospital in Phnom Penh.

"The hospital in Battambang provides a very important service to the region because it handles complicated traumas and has excellent quality," Dr Handa said.

"The amount of suffering, had it closed, would have been terrible."

Emergency Surgical Hospital medical coordinator Dr Nicola Donati said; "I remember the day I received the news from Emergency that they were not able to run the hospital any-

more. I was scared because this hospital had to be kept alive."

According to The Handa Foundation country director Kevin O'Brien, the nearest medical facility in the country that operated on traumas received at Emergency Surgical Hospital was a five hour drive away in Phnom Penh.

"Many patients would simply not have survived such a trip," O'Brien said.

Dr Handa said he would support the hospital for as long as he was able to, adding he hoped that would be "for another 10,000 years". ■