

## Baan Sub Tai

(March 2012)



After the Lionheart Society had helped Baan Nong Taa Kaew School in Nakhon Ratchasima province for 2 consecutive academic years, we are moving on to another school for academic year 2012 - 2013.

A number of schools were considered but eventually decided on one having seen the school's very poor condition. This school is Baan Sub Tai provincial school in Tambon Krisana, Amphur Si Kiew, Nakhon Ratchasima. Most of the children in this school come from the poorest parts of the village and have seldom received any major help since. Meeting up with the School Principal of 6 years, Khun Chaliew Pinwiset, the teachers and students, a number of relevant and useful information was taken regarding the school.

Baan Sub Tai is the official provincial school of 3 combined villages with around 210 students from K1 to Y5. The students come from three villages namely, Mu Baan Sub Tai, Mu Baan Nong Chaeng Noi and Mu Baan Don Hua Man. There are 12 teachers including the school principal and 25-30 children are accommodated in each classroom.

Most of the parents of these children are farmers. Their families are very poor going through simple hand to mouth existence. Others are left with relatives, having to fend for themselves while their parents seek labour in Bangkok.

When students finish Y5 from Baan Sub Tai Provincial School, they may continue to secondary level (Y6 -Y11) at Baan Krisana District High School, 6 kilometers away. This is a government subsidized school offering free education until Y8.



Paws for a Cause

Government support program:

- 1) 1900 Baht (63\$)/per student/per year (management of funds - school responsibility)
- 2) 360 Baht (12\$)/per student/per year for school uniform (1 set) and PE uniform (1 set)
- 3) 13 Baht (.43\$)/per student/per day for meals (if the number of students is less than 120, government covers all but if number is more than 120, government only covers 80% (sadly, never enough).



Because of this problem, the students have always had shortage of meals. This in turn, gave the idea of creating a "lunch" program that would be of great help to these children. This plan involves teaching the students about self-sufficiency by growing their own fruits and vegetable according to

climate and weather. This will not only provide their basic lunch meals but they may even take these crops home to their families. Simple animal breeding (chicken, fish and frogs) will be introduced as well.

Unfortunately, at present, there is still an existing problem regarding the shortage of human resources especially in the education field. Most teachers who are assigned to teach in these provinces are newly graduates having to go through training normally conducted by the school principal. They are given 2 years of teaching experience and then moves back to their own home province to continue their profession. This quick turn over is repeated continuously resulting in less continuity in both teaching and learning.



Since most of the people in these villages have none or very limited education, there is barely anyone who maybe qualified to teach. The Mu Baan Sub Tai has a population of 1300 and has so far produced only 3 college graduates in the last 5 years. The students and their families are so poor that more than 40% of these children never reach Y8, way below government expectations. This problem is very common in these parts of Thailand where there is actually a law that penalizes parents (1000 Baht) for failure to send children to school till Y8. Sadly, this law has always been ignored and never taken seriously by both parents and government officials.

Moreover, since a large majority of these children are just left tended by their aging grandparents instead of their own parents (parents work in Bangkok), insufficient parental guidance and supervision has brought about very little interest in education. By Y6-Y7, most children have left the school whether secretly or not. They join gangs, get into early pregnancy or engage in illegal activities. And when this happens, most of them end up in jails or rehabilitation centers further preventing them from continuing their education. These delinquent teenagers become sources of crimes and create a very weak and unstable society – a very serious problem that definitely needs government attention.

Another important issue concerning this school that we have taken into account is accessibility. Getting to school by foot is normal among those who luckily reside around the area but for others who live farther, a "song taew"(village transport) or bike ride is necessary. Using the bicycle definitely is more popular since public transport is not free. But not everyone has a bicycle of his own so to help out these students, the school has then introduced a "Rent/Lend a Bike" scheme.



Additionally, Baan Sub Tai School has a small daycare service/program with 30 children ranging from 3 - 4 years old with 2 adult caretakers. This daycare is operated directly by the "Ongkarn Borihan Suan Tambon" and is overseen by the "Ampher". The children who are registered in this daycare have the chance to continue their studies (from K1 onwards) in this school as well.



During our conversation with the staff and students, we found out that the budget for availing of teaching and learning materials, academics and sports equipment, building maintenance and other necessary expenditures are never enough. Having to constantly face this problem, village schools have turned to charity programs such as Temple fairs to raise funds. The money collected from these activities help finance library, canteen, fence and toilet construction. Baan Sub Tai School was built in 1976 and has never gone through any renovation (by the government) yet since.

For K1 to Y2, classes are taught by one teacher who covers all the subjects. In Y3 to Y5, students learn from different teachers accordingly. Unfortunately, many students are not very enthusiastic in learning. In an effort to promote interest in learning especially in reading, the school introduced a program called "Love Reading", hoping to encourage students to be more serious about their education.

Most children enjoy engaging in sports such as football, "ta kroh", betong, volleyball and badminton although the school prefers the students to concentrate on academics. In many occasions, the school has also been represented by their more abled students in Prep level in various academic competitions among provincial schools.

Last year, the government has provided computers to their school but was unexpectedly stolen right after installation. Since this was the school's responsibility, they had to put up a "Ngan Wat" (Temple Fair) in order to raise funds to purchase new ones. At present, 3 students share 1 computer.

From all this information, the LHS has decided that Baan Sub Tai School is the next appropriate school for our project. As planned, we will work with this school for 2 academic years and hope to achieve favorable results. Although we are aware that the problems of this school may exceed our own limitations since some issues are of national level, we will do our best. The educational system of provincial and village schools (especially in remote areas) are more technical but we intend to work things out. Our determination to act as inspiration to these children to take education seriously to have a better and brighter future remains firm. Good education will no doubt elevate them from poverty and free them from deprivation.



Interview (1) Boy: Noom Y4

I have been in this school since K1. I live with my grandparents because my parents work in Bangkok. They rarely visit me. During lunch break at school, I play football with my friends. We have about 5 balls but this is not enough. I hope we can have more. We also have 2 pairs of goals but there is no net. It would be better if there was. I also like to play "ta kroh". I wish we have balls and net. I do not go to the library very often. I prefer playing sports than studying in class.



Interview (2) Girl: Soraya Krahan Y5

I have been in this school since K1. Then I had to leave for a while because my grandparents asked me to work in a tapioca field. Work was very hard and I only received 3\$ a day but since we are very poor, I was forced to do it. Later on, the school teacher came to our house and convinced me to go back to school. They told my grandparents that preventing me from attending school until Y8 is against the law. Having no choice, they allowed me to go back. I visit the library sometimes but I do not read a lot. But if I do, it's mostly cartoons like "Doraemon". I do not read English books at all. During lunch break, I play volleyball with my friends. I would like to have a badminton racket. The younger kids at school play "tug-o-war" but they would also like to have "hula-hoops" like other kids in other schools.

