

Dear Bamboo Schoolers,

this week has been a very hectic one, involving hours and hours in busses, goodbye tears, basi celebrations, history lessons, reality checks amongst many other things.

First of all we had to say goodbye to the outstanding Silke and Klaus, our construction/nursing volunteer couple from Germany.

They volunteered with us for about 3 months and kept on amazing us by their outstanding, hardworking, heartwarming contribution.

Silke taught a woman how to walk again (after suffering from a brain stroke, leaving her with half of her body paralyzed).

When I met this woman for the first time, I would have never imagined that in only 3 months she would be able to walk on her own, with the help of a stick (only!). One could even call it a medical wonder or simply a strong will (super strong will) and dedication. It is very inspiring.

Klaus helped building the school and put as much effort into it as all our construction workers combined.

When we met Kua, the only orphan boy in the village, he humbly spoke out his wish to have a little table and chair so he could do his homework at night. Klaus was as touched by this request as all of us, and built the table and chair in no time – and very professionally!

A beautiful basi celebration was held for the couple by the villagers as a token of appreciation for their dedicated work in Ban Khon Khuen village.

It was our utmost pleasure and honor to have worked with these special and hardworking volunteers.

We wish them all the best and hope to have the pleasure to see them again in the future!

DANKE Silke and Klaus!

Shay, Franki and I had to cross the border to Thailand for our visa run (a Lao Visa can only be extended 2 times and then one has to leave the country and reenter), which implied having to take a 13 hour sleeping bus ride from Nong Khiaw to the capital, Vientienne. Not the most enjoyable activity to do.

The concept of a sleeping bus is good, but not when the driver pretends to be driving as fast as on a German Autobahn (highway), on these curvy Lao highways, blasting techno music throughout the e n t i r e night.

Being in Vientienne we took the opportunity to visit the COPE museum (they build prostheses for people who were harmed in a bomb explosion) and learned a little bit more about the harsh reality of life in Laos. The figures of remaining unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Laos is shocking and makes you feel very sad for this beautiful country that wasn't even involved in any war and was innocently attacked during the Vietnam war (the Vietnamese transported their weapons through a trail in Laos so the American forces bombed that area,

in order to "close" it-the Ho Chi Minh trail. Apart from that, as the war ended, all the remaining bombs couldn't be taken back to America, so they dropped them all over Laos). No wonder the „Vietnam war“ is here called the „American war“  
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As per Mohsin, this was his past week at the hospital:

"This week in Nong Khiaw district hospital, I continued to see patients as usual; however, this week the hospital received a large shipment of medication, so I assisted in taking inventory and stocking the medicine. It was a good opportunity to see the formulary and suggest additional medication.

Apart from that, I saw two interesting cases this week. One involved a local guy who I've been seeing for a few weeks. His wife had a very complicated medical history and needed to go to Vietnam to receive treatment. However, before returning, the doctors there suggested she needed a surgery to remove a tumor. So because there is a lot of potential miscommunication, I asked to see his reports and had my friend translate the Vietnamese reports. Sure enough I explained to him that it isn't a tumor and that there are medical options she can try before having the surgery. He was very grateful and said he would come to the hospital after the new year.

The second involved a young Hmong woman who was in extreme agony with stomach pain. After a thorough workup, we determined she needed to have surgery and asked her family to go to the nearest surgical center in Nambak, however the family and the village did not have enough money for her to have the surgery, so the patient returned home with some medication. It was unfortunate, but highlights a problem I've seen quite often here. Providing effective surgical care to the region because of the geography and finances is something that has a huge room for innovative solutions and improvement."

This upcoming week we are expecting Lao New Year. It will be very interesting for all of us and we hope to make it out in one piece.

We have been told that the entire village parties day and night, and most of the shops are closed.

Apart from that, it is a tradition to throw water at each other, so we have equipped ourselves already with dry bags and hope that our electronic devices will survive this week too.

We wish you all a great start into the week and will tell you our adventures in the next Sunday Newsletter!

Greetings from Nong Khiaw,

Isabel