

Dear Bamboo Schoolers,

this newsletter will be a bit different since we were celebrating the Lao New Year this previous week and therefore everybody at the construction site in Ban Khon Khuen was on holidays, as well as most of the doctors and nursing staff at the hospital in Nong Khiaw.

What is the Lao New Year exactly? Here's a resummed summary as per tourismlaos.org website:

"Officially the last day of the year, 13th April is traditionally a day of renewal, the main symbol of which is water. Buddha images are washed, temples repainted and homes cleaned from top to bottom. In the afternoon, young people pour water on the hands of their elders and ask for their blessing in the year ahead. Much like a New Year toast in western cultures, this is sometimes followed by a short speech from parents or grandparents. During the speech, elders give their blessing to their family, as well as highlighting important family events such as births, deaths or marriages.

The blessing of relatives, friends and even strangers with water continues throughout the festival. Traditionally, you wish someone 'Happy New Year' ('Sok Dii Pimai'), before pouring water over their head, symbolizing the washing away of sins committed in the past year. These days, water is also shot through water guns or thrown from buckets and pans, creating an enormous water-fight that's impossible to avoid".

...and it really couldn't be avoided to get wet. Unfortunately it rained most of the days, however the second the sun came out, even for just a little bit, the celebration spirit was more than noticeable.

However, finally the parties come to an end by tomorrow it means to continue with the hard work for us.

Shay and Franki will be going back to the school construction site in Ban Khon Khuen to spend their last 2,5 weeks there, volunteering for Bamboo School.

Afterwards, at the beginning of May, they and our American doctor Mohsin will end their volunteering time with us since they have to go back to work, studying or volunteer at different projects abroad.

It's very hard to think that their time, like Silke's and Klaus' are also coming to an end soon and it's something that I personally don't even want to think about since it's very saddening to let go of such talented and lovely people.

However, great memories created by some immense effort and hard work from their side will always be reminded and appreciated by our foundation.

As per Satheet and myself, we will be heading to deliver 15 school tables and chairs in Ban Mok Euey. We previously donated CGI (corrugated iron) sheets for them to build a new school (made out of Bamboo by the villagers) and since the construction is finished on their behalf, they anxiously expect the tables and chairs to arrive in order to start the classes in the new school.

Furthermore we will head on to visit Mok Lep, who has finished building their water tank, which had a little architectural defect during our last visit.

After that, we will hike to Ban Phonsana and up to Ban Phonxay; a village that I personally have not been there yet. To do some research for a potential documentary.

From then on we will visit 5 new villages that have requested water filters from us. We will check the conditions of the village, analyze the situation, consult with the board in Germany and make a decision regarding which village will be receiving these.

As Franki and Shay will leave the construction site, Satheet and I will be on site in May, in order to help with the last necessary construction requirements since we hope that the school will be finished by the end of May(fingers crossed).

We look forward about telling you of our upcoming experiences and wish you a marvelous start into the new week!

With kind regards,

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Isabel Montano