

Weekly Newsletter 06. März 2018

Greetings from Nong Khiaw,

The last few months have been a nerve-wracking wait for everybody at Bamboo School (BS) as we are in the process of renegotiating our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with relevant authorities in Laos. The MoU is crucial to our work and enables BS to obtain visas and bring volunteers into Laos. Despite difficulties with the paperwork, BS is still supporting the villages of Muang Ngoi Province, we have recently donated 165 metres of fencing to Ban Mok Leap for their school yard.

We have had the good luck to be visited by two previous volunteers, Silke and Klaus, who during their time with BS helped to build the school in Ban Khon Kheun. They have just started their epic journey with their bicycles from Laos all the way to Germany. They make my travels look positively tame by comparison, best of luck to them both!

BS has recently travelled to Ban Mok Leap, Hoay Loar, Phonsana and Phonxai to undertake baseline monitoring and evaluation surveys for upcoming water filter and soap projects. Phonxai is not a village which we get to travel to often, only accessible by an hour plus hike in dry season or two-hour boat trip up a tributary river in wet season. This small Khmu village is in dire need of support for their education and healthcare; they are one of the more difficult to reach villages. Despite their lack of many of the basics, the people in Phonxai were welcoming, immediately having a Baci ceremony and asking us when the next time we would visit. They are a village which has tried to deal with their own problems making their own school and water tank in previous years – however in both of these cases resources and knowledge about how to work materials, such as concrete, are low. Their basic infrastructure is slowly falling apart. Let us hope that BS can secure an MoU and move on to spending our energy on the areas it's needed!

It is my pleasure to have finally provided training and the first Abundant Water filter to one of our good friends in Nong Khiaw. This filter roll-out training will be crucial to the upcoming project out in the wilds. Not just to hand out filters and stickers; but to help support village learning about the positives of clean water. It's importance to keeping children in schools, adults fit/able to work and most importantly providing clean water to young children who are most at risk of suffering from diseases such as diarrhea, which can be fatal for them in areas where there is limited healthcare support. We hope to start the water filter roll out this month!

Good luck from Laos,  
Mike Stephens