

Weekly Newsletter

Isabel's final edition

Dear Bamboo Schoolers,

I never thought that I would be writing this last (beginning part of the) Weekly Newsletter. The time in Laos seemed to be frozen in so many moments and yet it flew away so fast.

So here it goes: What a year. The End.

Just kidding. But really: what a marvelous, fulfilling, tough, hard, hot, wet, painful, enriching year this has been!

I would like to start thanking the (most amazing) volunteers that accompanied/ stood by me on this crazy journey this year. It wouldn't have been the same without them and I was truly blessed by witnessing their great efforts, hard work, donations, contributions, "surpassing expectation"- mindset and company in Laos (just to name a few descriptions since not all can be put into words). In chronological order since January 2017: Thomas, Martin, Franki, Pat, Klaus, Silke, Mohin, Shay, Warrick, Marco, Karl Heinz (Dr. Lung), Bri, Peter, Katja and Harald: I truly thank you from my heart! Not only were they all outstanding volunteers but also became close friends and simply are people that I will always look up to and had the luck of being able to also learn a lot from them. It might seem easy and always a lot of fun to volunteer and work in Laos but the reality is a different one.

From building a school in 40 degrees heat to not having water to shower for 5 days (or more...and eventually not even having drinking water), to getting scorpion bites (our volunteer Martin got stung in the neck!), food poisoning, dengue fever, eating squirrels for breakfast, falling down while hiking down from project villages, to leaches bites and at times way to much Lao Lao to drink (that couldn't be refused since it was offered by the chief of the village), witnessing extreme poverty conditions (some villagers survive on less than 1\$ per month), orphan children that can't afford financially to go to secondary or even primary school, learning that teachers, nurses, police officers don't earn a salary in the first 4 years, is just an extract of the lessons that our volunteers and us managers are confronted with when helping in Laos. And that's why I look up to them and am so thankful for having been part of this experience.

Furthermore, of course, a grateful thank- you to the board and donors in Germany (and in other places around the world) and their continuous effort to help the people here in Laos for over 11 years.

I am more than sure that Michael will learn a lot of new things and have interesting experiences in his upcoming year. Having met him by accident at the WIG bazar in Vientiane was another of my Laotian blessings, since he (as a hydrologist) is a great asset to our organization. And he enjoys hiking too! I wish him and Bamboo School all the best for the future and hope to see a lot of new projects in the New Year!

But enough about me, let's see what Michael has to say in his first Weekly Newsletter!

Kop chai lai lai der and hope to keep in touch with some Bamboo School followers
(montano.isabel15@gmail.com):

Let me introduce myself, I am Mike, I'm a hydrologist at heart and it is my pleasure to be the new General Manager with the Bamboo School Foundation in Laos. I have recently finished working with another NGO in Laos, Abundant Water, which is based in Vientiane, where I was a volunteer WASH Officer for the past 6 months. I bring with me a passion for development work and in particular WASH centred projects.

Over the past week I have had the good luck to learn from Isabel (current GM) about how the foundation works and hear some of her stories about working with the villages over the past year. I have travelled through Luang Prabang, to Ban Muang Ngoy and Ban Don Khoun to see the ongoing and completed projects.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful Isabel Montano for all her hard work; travelling with her and seeing Laos from her perspective has been an emotional experience. I hope that going forward she will consider staying in the humanitarian sector, as I think she has a lot to offer.

Greetings from Nong Khiaw!

Michael Stephens

Some photos attached also
Cheers,





