

Weekly Newsletter

Dear Bamboo Schoolers,

First of all, we apologize for the delayed newsletter but it's only once a year that our chairman, Bodo Peters, visits. Therefore, we have been more than busy over these past two weeks and here is what we have been up to:

Since the last newsletter we embarked ourselves on a 3 day kayak tour in order to reach 2 remote villages by the Nam Hub River (that can only be reached by very small boats) hoping to find out if these were in need of water filters. As it turns out the head of both villages informed us that they are fine by boiling the water that they get from the river. For us it would also be a challenge to logistically transport the filters to such remote areas (only reachable by water) and were therefore happy to hear that these villages were sustainable on their own. During this tour our camera crew – Eugen and Marvin- who had come to produce our new image film could also record some footing material about life in the jungle.

Furthermore, Bodo and I had a very important meeting in Vientiane with the vice president of the National Front of Lao Development (and also president of the Lao- German friendship association) in order to discuss the future of Bamboo School.

After 11 years we managed to finally be an officially registered NGO in Laos due to the support and cooperation of the Lao-German Friendship Association. **Now we are officially and legally able to help in Laos-** at least, that`s what has been said...

However, since nothing is easy or uncomplicated in Laos it implies that our future volunteers will need to apply for a visa already in their country of origin. Once they have this, their volunteering papers (a permit letting them volunteer under a tourist visa) will be processed in Vientiane. This process will approximately take 1 month time. As you can see, it is not always easy to help countries in need.

After coming back from the capital we embarked ourselves to visit our first school in Ban Houy Lor, to be followed by a visit in Gong Muang, Mok Euy and Mok Lep. However, due to the heavy rain in the past couple of months and weeks, our little tractor simply did not manage to reach even one village on the way to Houay Lor. Therefore, we had to cancel our trip to all of the remote villages and decided just to hike up to Mok Lep. Here, the villagers proudly presented the water tank to Bodo and thanked him and the Bamboo School for the continuous support in this village throughout the years.

After receiving a generous basi celebration and after homestayng the night in Mok Lep, we went to successfully film and visit our project villages by the river (Ban Phonsana, Ban Hatsa, Ban Sopkin and Muang Ngoi).

Back in Luang Prabang, Bodo, our camera team and I went to the technical college to greet and film our scholarship students. Initially 4 started college and now only 3 are continuing with their higher studies. The one student that left, luckily found a job as a mechanic (which is what he was studying). The three remaining students will continue with their accounting studies and still have 2 remaining years to go.

Overall, it was a very productive, important and nice time having Bodo and the camera team here with us, having them witnessing all of the day to day challenges that we face here in Laos.

Last but not least we had to part with our field manager, Satheet Somsang, who is no longer working with us. We thank him for his help and effort in these past couple of years, first as a translator and later on as a field manager for one year, and wish him all the best for his future endeavors.

We wish you all a happy remaining week from rainy Laos!

Isabel Montano

General Manager