

Weekly newsletter

Dear Bamboo Schoolers,

after a monthly holiday break we are back on track and ready for upcoming adventures, tanked with new energy in order to continue contributing to our sustainable projects here in Laos.

Immediately after our holidays we were busy preparing the upcoming medical project involving our great ophthalmologist from Germany. Please welcome, once again, Dr. Karl Heinz Lung to the team. He has been coming to Laos for over 8 years now, treating eye patients and donating glasses that he brings from Germany. This time he has been supporting us for 1 week already and will stay until the 30th of July.

Since his arrival we have seen over 109 patients in Muang Ngoi (Karl Heinz opened up shop in the clinic that was built by us) and in the villages of Ban Phonsana, Ban Khon Khuen and Nong Khiaw.

Initially we wanted to visit all of our project sites, especially the very poor ones on top of the mountains (Ban Hoay Lor, Ban Mok Leap, Ban Mok Eauy, Ban Gong Muan) but since we are in the middle of the rainy season it would have been potentially too dangerous to go up there by truck – and especially going down later!(the road gets very muddy and the trucks tend to stay stuck in deep clay or drift down from the „road“-scary scenarios). So we decided to just stick to the mentioned villages by the river.

From Ban Phonsana, we informed the surrounding villages to come and get a free eye examination, however we were notified that most of people in the other villages were busy or couldn't get down the mountains due to the rain (it gets very slippery).

In most of the treated cases people were diagnosed with the need of reading glasses, of which we didn't have all too many and therefore had to choose very selectively who would get them (the poorest candidates).

However, we also witnessed about 14 cases for surgery, mostly cataracts. Some of them could have been operated in the clinic in Nong Khiaw and some in Luang Prabang.

Unfortunately most people decided against an operation since they were either too scared of it or didn't feel comfortable traveling so far away to Luang Prabang. It will take some time and repeated efforts to establish enough trust- thankfully Karl Heinz will keep coming!

Tomorrow will be our last day in the hospital at Nong Khiaw. From there on we will have 4 patients from Ban Khon Khuen and Nong Khiaw who will definitely join us to Luang Prabang, where Dr. Lung will do surgery in the operating theatre of the eye clinic, using the state-of-the art laser machine he has donated two years before!

Having Dr. Lung here made us realize how important eye doctors are and how much need there is for eye glasses! There is not a single shop in Nong Khiaw that sells glasses, let alone an eye doctor! Due to the lack of this very essential necessity people in the villages faced complications related to old infections and some of them even went blind because they never went to see a doctor. In one case we had to tell a 65 year old woman that she would stay blind on both eyes for the rest of her life because she didn't reach out for medical treatment when her complications started (3 years ago)...

It was also very interesting to see that about 98% of the people were able to see distant things clearly but were near-sighted therefore needed „reading glasses“ (the average diagnose was +2,5).

Finally it will definitely be interesting to see how many patients will actually join us to Luang Prabang to get operated!

For now we wish you a happy remaining week and will keep you updated on the upcoming surgeries!

Sok Dee!

Isabel

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Isabel Montano