Ban Nong Mai Tai School
29 June - 01 July 2014

Ban Nong Mai Tai School is the most recent school that the Lionheart Society has opted to support at the same time with the Ban Non Rung School. This 40-year old small rural school is located at Ampher Si Kiew, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. It has 70 students from K2 to Y7 and two teachers assigned to conduct all the lessons for all levels. Only until recently (two months ago), an additional male teacher was hired to relieve some of the teaching work load. This was a very helpful, as in the past, it was always a problem when one of the teachers had to be away to attend regular meetings with the Ministry of Education leaving the other teacher on her own to handle all the classes, an almost impossible task for anyone to handle.

Seventy percent of these children live with their aging grandparents. They come from destitute families where parents are always away finding menial labour in the city or work as farmers or tapioca field workers. Travelling to school is usually by foot as they do not have extra money to spend for any transport services. Similarly to the cases of other small-sized village schools in the area, if it is to be to be closed down due to its low student population, these unfortunate children will lose any opportunity to receive any formal education and eventually are forced to just stay home or work at a very early age.
Ban Nong Mai Tai School and other rural schools in Isaarn province all face the same problem and same dismal fate of their students. After Y7, it is mandatory for students to continue to secondary school (required by the Education Ministry) but in reality, only 20 to 30% are able to do so. A majority of these teens leave school to look after their own families, tend to their younger siblings as their parents maybe away or may have abandoned them completely. Sadly, inadequate adult supervision and lack of proper guidance turn these immature young adults into juvenile delinquents with no purpose in life or any bright future. Young girls impulsively get into early sex or accidental pregnancies, and then wind up living together with their young partners who are most often out of school as well. These young boys end up joining gangs engaged in petty crimes or regrettably become drug addicts. These problems are commonly found among teenagers in rural areas all around Thailand where education is out of reach or insufficient.

The school annually receives government support of 60,000 Baht. Teachers are expected to budget this amount to cover all the operating costs of the school for the whole year: This money is barely enough to pay all these expenses leaving nothing for renovation or improvement except for any urgent situation that needs to be attended to immediately. Following are the regular expenses incurred every year:

- Water and electricity
- Maintenance of school building
- Excursions
- Girl scouts and Boys scouts camps
- Extracurricular activities outside of school
- Transportation for outside of school competitions
On this initial visit, the Lionheart Society took the opportunity to meet the teachers, the students and survey the entire school area. In order to have accurate information which can be very functional in establishing what are the areas of support we may be able to assist with, we have prepared for each member an "Observation and Interview Sheet" (sample form attached). This serves as our basis for choosing the course of action we need to take in order to maximize our support as well as assess and decide what the school and students really need and prioritize them accordingly depending on the urgency of each case, a procedure we have been doing for the past years whenever we intend to help a particular school or institution.

Each member takes note of all the relevant information about the school, its staff and students. Thereafter, we set up a meeting to discuss all our findings and gather up all useful data and eventually decide on what we can help with, how and when. During our forum, we share ideas, voice out suggestions and collaborate on the best plan of action to be taken.
At the end of our meeting, we all had the same evaluation that this school does have quite a number of serious problems that are definitely in need of much attention. Following are the main problems of the school:

- Both drinking water and tap water are dirty because the two water tanks are very old and extremely filthy; they have never been cleaned for the past 20 years due to their inaccessibility, far too high and too deep to be reached. This tank receives water from a nearby temple through a pipe as the school does not have its own water source and water is released only from time to time. The water is then distributed to the taps as well as through a water purifier. Sadly, this purifier is also very old, rusty and does not actually filter well anymore, at times this machine incurs a short circuit posing hazard to the children or may even cause unsuspected fire. This rationing clearly affects all these unfortunate children as there is never enough water for everyone’s consumption and use for other purposes and as a result, everybody is required to bring his or her own water container to school every day. During dry season, the situation even gets worse.

- 30 year latrines are in extremely bad condition and not enough water from the taps. Its distant location from the main building poses a risk (molestation or kidnapping) especially to small children as they walk on their own (not enough staff to accompany them) when they need to relieve themselves. Moreover, as these toilets are always damp and dirty, the children are forced to take their clothes off to prevent them from getting soiled or wet.

- Playground facilities are very old, rusty and not safe to use, needs repair or maintenance.

- No infirmary or any medical facilities.

- Inadequate sports equipment.

- Parts of school structure need major repair.

- Classrooms are hot, not all are equipped with electric fans.

- Inadequate sleeping cots for small children.

- Inadequate toys for small children.

- No laboratory equipments (students are keen on learning science and performing experiments).

- Inadequate computers, only 2 at present, 1 for teacher use and 1 for students (shared by 10)

- There is a chicken coop donated to the school but no vegetable or mushroom patch or breeding ponds for fish and frogs that may able to teach them self sufficiency and sustainability.
Additionally on this trip, the Lionheart Society received a generous contribution of 7000 Baht from Prance, Ingke and Minnie from their “New School Bag” project conducted at Harrow. This donation was used for the following:

1. Scholarship funds for 5 students who excel academically or perform well above others (1000 Baht each student)
2. Teaching and learning materials.

We express our warmest gratitude to these girls for sharing their well-earned profits for a good cause. This significant amount will go a long way and will definitely make a lot of children happy.

After the visit, we exchanged ideas, shared thoughts and suggestions and concluded on what was needed to be done. We prioritized each issue according to its urgency as well as our own capabilities in achieving them. The details are as follows:

1. Donate 2 big plastic water tanks (2000 litre)
   14,000 Baht/tank: 28,000 Baht
2. Donate 1 set of water purifier 17,000 Baht
   *Items 1 and 2 are priority issues
3. Sports equipments requested by students: Volleyball, Futsal, Takraw, Petong (will be donated on our next visit)
4. Laboratory apparatus and equipments
   (will be donated on our next visit *from Pat)
5. Computer
   (will be donated on our next visit *from Prance)

New latrines for small children, construction will start next year and funds will be coming from our yearly organic vegetable sales.

We hope that in the coming years, Ban Nong Mai Tai School will be a better school and their students happier. There is no doubt that with determination and optimism, they will be able to help themselves and be self-sufficient as well.

Next year, the Lionheart Cubbies will start managing these activities on their own. We are looking forward to the continued success of all these projects and hope that Lionheart Society stays strong in all its endeavors and future undertakings.
## Observation & Interview Sheet

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Trip Reflections

Today we visited two different schools. On our first school, we taught the kids arts and craft and also gave them some equipment.

On the second school we gave them some educational resources and then interviewed the teachers and kids on what they want. We also looked around the school to see what they needed.

I really enjoyed helping the kids out with arts and crafts. First we gave them pots for them to draw and decorate then we helped the kids carefully put some soil in the pots then after that, cactuses. The kids really enjoyed it. I feel good after helping them and I would like to continue helping them more.

Kaopod Ladavalya (C8)
Today we went to two schools to support the students there. On the first school we gave stationeries and books to the children in which they were very happy. I also taught the kindergarten to do arts and crafts like drawing on a flowerpot and drawing pictures. There are only two children in the class who still have their mum and dad with them. It makes me realize how lucky we are.

On the second school we also gave them stationerlies and books. We looked around the school and interviewed the children and teachers. Having to look around the school I felt that our school is a very good school. Their school has a very dirty toilet and a very wrecked playground. Seeing the school made me appreciate what I have and feel like guiding the students towards a better future.

Prance Thongyai (S8)
Today, I visited two schools with the Lionheart Society. These two schools were very small so the government didn’t support them, which was why they needed our help. It made me really happy to know that at the first school, the students have been waiting and asking when the Lionheart Society was coming everyday for the past year.

First, we gave out sporting equipments and educational supplies to the students. As soon as we finished giving out everything, the students immediately sat down and opened the folder containing the school supplies; all their faces lit up. I could tell that they were very excited and happy to be receiving gifts from us. When we receive gifts, we feel this happiness that only lasts for a short while but when we give things to other people, you get a feeling much better than when you are the receiver. After that, I took part in the arts and crafts activity, which we taught to the kindergarteners. Even though we made quite a big mess, it was still very fun for me and especially the kids. A lot of the time, kids kept asking me, ‘Is it pretty?’ and begging for our attention. This was because that nearly everyone in the class didn’t live with their parents so they didn’t get all the love they needed. When we were leaving, all the kids ran to wave to us which made me feel very special and happy.

I found out that the Lionheart Society benefited the school in many ways. I was told that at first the school barely had anything, now they have a new dining hall, a lunch project, new toilets and many more because of the Lionheart Society. The last school we went to was a new school that we never helped before. We went to observe around the school and classrooms and also got to interview the teachers and some of the kids. We planned a lot of things that we were going to do to this school in the near future. I felt very glad to be helping out with a new project. At the end of the day, I felt very happy that I had helped the less fortunate kids. I knew that I was very lucky to not have been born like them, but there are a lot of people in the world like that. In the future I would do a lot more
things with the Lionheart Society to help support the new school and other schools coming up.

Bambi Kiatanant (S8)

Today I went to visit two schools in the Nakorn Rachasang province along with the LHS. We donated school supplies and sporting goods to the children. Then we taught them things and played games with the children.

The second school was also not so good. It was LHS’ first visit here and it was clear that they had insufficient funds to run the school. We asked questions and discussed some issues with teachers and students. We plan to give them a better water supply and better toilets.

I feel these schools really need our help and we should do our best to help out. I believe we can support them with all their needs.

Tabby Kiatanant (S9)
Today, I and my people: The members of The Lionheart Society, visited two different schools. As we got closer to the first school, it became apparent that they had insufficient funds to run the school efficiently. Even though they seem to have all the necessities that every school craves, they were mostly acquired from our 3 years of donations. Some of their facilities however were dilapidated and not fit for student use. In addition to this, the facilities were not only poorly built but were too small; a good example of this would be their dining hall. Before we crossed paths with them, these children barely had any food to eat as the school was quite poor and could not provide the nutritious meals that we wish to provide them with. This led to our project in which we gave them food and means of making their own meals. Moreover, over these 3 years I have seen a great improvement in the school which makes me proud of what we have done for them.

After that we went to the other school. At first sight it may seem that they’re quite well off, but we mustn’t judge a book by its cover. Their water supply was quite filthy and they only had 3 teachers which meant that it’ll be extremely difficult to run the school as there were 70 students. Within the next few years, our plans are to provide them with clean plastic water tanks and new toilets for both sexes and also to give them learning equipment as well as many other things which we determined they needed from interviewing the students and teachers.

In conclusion, I feel that these schools need our help and funding, these children have a bright future ahead of them, but as of the moment they are deprived of the things that make a good school and therefore it is our duty to guide them and ease their way.

Pete Yontrarak (S9)