

Paws for a Cause - Baan Non Rung School **(17th-19th February 2013)**

Baan Non Rung is another village school that has been included in “Paws for a Cause” project of the Lionheart Society. The project has been running from academic year 2012 - 2013 and will continue until academic year 2013-2014.

Baan Non Rung is located at Moo 5 Baan Non Rung Tambon Krisana Ampher Si Kiew Changwat Nakhon Ratchasima, 10 kilometers from Baan Sub Tai School. The students of this school come from very poor families living in nearby villages of around 100 households. The majority of these families are agricultural workers in sugar cane or tapioca plantations or rice field farmers; while most of the younger parents are employed in Bangkok. A lot of these children endure life of uncertainty with families having domestic problems in which many are separated from parents who may have remarried and have moved to the city. In these cases, the children are left behind where they are tended by their aging grandparents.

Baan Non Rung is a small elementary school which opened in 1969 having students from Kindergarten 2 to Year 7. In the academic year 2012-2013, the student population is 66, divided into the following levels:

K2 = 11
Y1 = 7
Y2 = 5
Y3 = 11
Y4 = 9
Y5 = 4
Y6 = 10
Y7 = 9



The school has three teachers including the principal, Mr. Khomsan Khunkratok who has been holding his post for the past two years. Unfortunately, as this is a small village school, government support is barely received resulting in the consistent problem of inadequate teaching staff and other basic educational facilities. Each classroom is shared by various levels learning at the same time. One room is shared by K2 and Y1; another by Y2, Y3 and Y4; another by Y5 and Y6; and Y7 is the only level having its own classroom as this is the last year before going to secondary level so there is more serious learning that requires more concentration.



The teachers are not able to teach effectively as one room is shared by different levels and having to conduct these classes simultaneously is truly a demanding task. The students struggle to understand what is being taught as they are given very limited time to learn. In one classroom,



together on the left side of the classroom while the Y3's sit on the right and the Y4's are seated all the way at the back of the classroom. Each level is taught accordingly and is given exercises while another group listens to the teacher. In addition to this, there are eight subjects required for each level to learn so the effectiveness of both teaching and learning is hardly achieved. The constant division of time and attention to these students create a very weak and unstable learning environment. If a teacher is required to attend a seminar or meeting elsewhere, then the students in that class need not come to school as there is no substitute teacher available. The remaining two other teachers are not able to replace the instructor as they themselves are totally occupied and burdened with managing their own classes. Thus, the test results of most of these students are very unsatisfactory.

This wooden-structured school has been built for over 40 years but has never received any repair nor maintenance budget normally allotted for public schools in the country. Sadly, the government has set up a new policy of closing down small village schools in order to encourage the children in that particular area to attend middle or bigger- sized schools (with more teachers) as a way to reduce national spending. In reality, this is very difficult for distant villages since these locals are very poor. The children normally walk to school and anywhere else farther from home would necessitate them to take either a



public transport ("song taew") or bicycle ride. Both of which would require money that the locals are definitely short of. If the school is too far from where they live and walking is not an option, they are forced to stay home and lose the opportunity to receive any formal education.



The reality is that the existence of these small village schools is inevitable even if there is a problem of staff inadequacy and low standard of teaching. But sadly, no matter how passionate the teachers are in their chosen profession who are assigned to these small schools, the lack of government support and assistance from public or private organizations significantly affect their sense of commitment and determination in helping these children. After some period of service, they eventually request for transfers to other (bigger) schools, thus leaving Baan Non Rung with insufficient staff again. Many times, the villagers themselves have even contributed their own money and pulled together their meager resources for any necessary school repair or construction.

Most students who finish the primary level are required to carry on to obligatory secondary level by the government until Y10. Regrettably, most of these students discontinue at Y8 or Y9. They are forced to leave school due to situations at home and are either needed to help their parents earn money or look after their siblings. Luckily, they live simple lives and food may be found in their natural environment, preventing them from starving or having to shoulder costly food expenses.

From what we have seen from the current school situation and learned from the students and teachers, we have come to realize that their problem is indeed serious - probably more complicated than we had expected and much bigger than what we can actually handle. However, we still believe that in our own small way, we may be able to offer at least some form of help or support and bring a bit of happiness to these unfortunate children.

During the half-term break, 18th-19th February 2013, the Lionheart Society visited Ban Non Rung School and donated much needed learning materials, sports equipment as well as some monetary assistance for some deserving students. We also performed actual teaching of academics and arts to various group levels. It was again, a very memorable trip for everyone; the children were so happy and enthusiastic for the care and attention we have generously given them on this rare occasion.

For the next school year 2013-2014, the Lionheart Society will be returning to Ban Non Rung School to visit the children and conduct regular follow-ups thereafter.



Donations from Year 4

Year 4 students and teachers have worked together to sell arts and craft products to parents in order to purchase learning equipment to be donated to Baan Non Rung School - one of the schools the Lionheart Society is supporting.



Year 4 students and teachers who have contributed to this generous donation.



