

Thailand Report by Nao and Jim

Greetings to you all on a warm breeze from Thailand!!!!

We hope you all are doing well and happy in your lives. We have lots of exciting news to share with you about things here in Thailand and the new developments of the whispering seed. The last eight months here in Thailand have been quite an incredible adventure!!!

New Land, New Directions:

First of all, we want to share with everyone that we have finally found a new piece of land to be the home of the whispering seed. Back in January while we were in India, we found out that the owner of the land in Pittsanulok was no longer willing to sell or rent the land. We have been looking for another place since then and just bought a small piece of land in western Thailand along the Burmese border. The land is about 15 acres and is situated in a beautiful valley along the river about 9 kilometers from the Burmese border and only cost \$2,500. The land was purchased entirely by money that was raised by the Rainbow Caravan, Rin, Tuk and Dtu, three wonderful young people supporting our dreams (read more about them later). Pictures of the land will be up on our website in the near future!!!

After spending time here in the border area near Burma, it became clear that this is where there is a huge need for the type of work we want to create and there are many children in need of care. The area is mostly Hilltribe groups and Burmese migrants (refugees), of which many of them do have citizenship within Thailand and therefore are lacking basic human rights. They cannot leave the area because of military check points all along the roads which if caught, will sent them back to Burma. Malaria, dengue fever, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS are prevalent in the area and a lack of access to medical treatment causes even more troubles. As we learned more about the many issues and struggles that both children and adults face in this area, it made sense for us to move our project into this area.

The majority of the people close to where we live do not speak Thai, with Karen, Mon and Burmese being the main languages. There is a Karen family living on the land with us and we have to have their 7 year old daughter translate from Thai to Karen to speak to them. There is a school run by the Thai military very close to our land offering basic education for many of the children in the area who do not have citizenship in Thailand and a refugee camp located just a few kilometers up the road towards the border.

We just moved everything here a few weeks ago from our farm in Pittsanulok have been planting trees and rice. We just completed our first bamboo house on the land, it is too wet during the rainy season to make bricks, but we will start mud brick building in October.

Struggles:

A Little One Brightens the Day and then moves on!! Last month, we were able to take a young Burmese girl into our care but only for a short period of time. Her name is Nong and she is 2 and half years old. Most of the Burmese people in the area are here in Thailand illegally. Just after we took Nong into our care, the Thai government opened a new policy for all Burmese migrants in this area to be placed in the refugee camp. The United Nations came and demanded her back to be placed in a refugee camp, actually just a few kilometers up the road from our new land. We were assured that she would be safe, but just two days before they took her, we got word that 6 people had been shot within the refugee camp. We have not heard about her since she left, but we continue to hold her in our prayers.

More thoughts about the past 8 months:

Thank You to the Rainbow Caravan: Rin, Tuk & Dtu

Nao's sister Rin and two friends, Dtu and Tuk created the Rainbow Caravan about 3 months ago. They planned to work together, traveling to different countries for eight months to raise money to purchase the new land for whispering seed and create a youth cultural exchange through music. Because the new land was so inexpensive, they were able to raise over half of the money needed by traveling around Thailand playing music and raising donations. To help with the other half of the money needed, they set up a traditional Buddhist alms giving ceremony called Pha Pha. On July 11th we held a full day ceremony at a temple along close to the Cambodian temple. Within three months, they raised all the money necessary to purchase the land!!!

Now that they have reached their goal within only three months, and without leaving Thailand, they are making new plans. Dtu will continue to study and share his music with children in Thailand and will help us work on the land of whispering seed. Once children come into our care, he will be a music teacher for the kids, teaching traditional Thai music. Rin and Tuk are looking into traveling to the US to join a Teacher Education Program in an alternative school. More information about their project will be up on the website soon!!

Interns from Korean alternative school, Haja Center:

Hayashi and Shank arrived in Thailand about 2 weeks ago to spend 2 months working with the whispering seed. They are from an alternative school in Seoul, Korea which we have had collaborations with for the past three years. They are wonderful young men with lots of ideas and energy. Hayashi will be focusing on doing art projects with children in our local area and Shank is focusing on playing music with children and making bamboo instruments. More from them in the next newsletter!!!

501 C3 nonprofit, charitable status!!

About three months ago, we heard back from the IRS that the Whispering Seed has officially been accepted

as a 501 C3 tax exempt, nonprofit charitable organization which we are very happy about. Now the fun begins keeping up with all the paperwork!

As for our status in Thailand, new laws state that we have to register as a Thai foundation/NGO. Unfortunately, this requires us to deposit \$5,000 US in a fixed account which we cannot access. Because we do not currently have the funds to do this, we are looking into register ourselves temporarily under another children's foundation here in Thailand. Once funds become available, we will pursue the paperwork to establish ourselves as an NGO here in Thailand.

Permaculture Course, Mud Brick House and really big snakes!!

We held the first Permaculture Course and Natural Building workshop for 6 weeks at our farm in November and December. This was the first Permaculture Design Course to be held in Thailand. The course went incredibly well and 27 people, from Thailand, Burma, Australia, Israel, England, France, Spain and the USA graduated from the program and received Permaculture Design Certificates. We are planning to continue this course at least once a year. We also finished our first mud brick house, the Giant Hobbit House during the training. There are lots of fun photos of the house on our website, www.whisperingseed.org there is a link on the home page to the photos of the house. We also made a wonderful mud brick oven and are now able to enjoy baking lots of fresh banana, coconut and pineapple breads and cakes and even have the treat of focaccia bread once in a while!!!

While we were staying on the land in Pittsanulok, we had many encounters with some slithery friends. One morning our friend found himself in the kitchen with a 10ft king cobra!!! Another afternoon, Peter was lounging in the hammock and a 6-7ft. snake, maybe a constrictor slithered under him. And finally, one evening we were all taking a bath in the river and a 6 foot snake crossed the river just behind us and then came towards the dock to see what we were doing. It was quite a site, all of standing wet on the dock throwing coconuts into the bushes to chase it away!!! There seems to never be a lack of surprise or amazing these days!!!

Travels to India:

In January, we traveled to India to participate in the World Social Forum and a smaller conference called "Unfolding Learning Societies" hosted by Shikshantar. We then went to Orissa to planning meetings for the 12th International Democratic Education Conference we will be hosted there this December. It was a wonderful time to connect with several group in India. We made some wonderful connections and we hope to plan some future projects in collaboration with some of those groups.

Sad stories of Land Searching:

Our continued searches for land brought us to many places throughout Thailand. About a month and a half ago we had found land, not far from our new place that we had intended to buy. We actually packed everything from our farm in Pittsanulok and were just about to buy the land when we found out that it was situated down stream from one of the largest lead mines in Southeast Asia. After lots of research and horrible stories of lead poisoning, villagers deaths, and children being born with birth defects, we decided it was not a safe place to live. Unfortunately, these are many of the struggles of the land and the people here in the border area.

New t-shirts to support the whispering seed:

The last bit of news, is that Nao has designed two wonderful t-shirts, which she painted, for the whispering seed. We are planning to sell these to help raise funds for future projects. The shirts are ready to go out to people. If you are interested in helping us in any way you can, please let us know.

So, that is the news of where things currently are with the whispering seed and all the new changes that have occurred in our lives.

We hope all of you are well and we look forward to hearing from you all. We will be writing another newsletter in a week or so because so much has been happening over the past 9 months.

Many warm thoughts to you all and many blessings!!!!

nao & jim

[home](#)