My Field Trip to Laos

with the
Child's Dream
Laos Project Team

May 2012

An ‘exclusive’ report from a volunteer 😊

Janine Laurent
Day 1

Summary of today

Totally sleepy
Friday morning at a sleepy 5.30am we leave Chiang Mai in our pick up truck...

BUT:
This is us at 8 am HAPPY FACES!

we drive and drive...
VROOM VROOM

Oh great. I packed lots of healthy stuff for my breakfast (cereals, fruits, nuts) and this is what we are eating: Steamed whatever-is-inside-SAUSAGE from a street food shop!!!
Actually it's delicious and I'm having 3 !!!hahaha
THANKS to my colleague for buying them!
We go through various phases during our 16h drive...

**STAGE 1**
happily smiling and singing to music...

**STAGE 2**
Well this is the crew 1h later, sooo sleepy

**STAGE 3**
...sunk into the pillow!
But finally, after nearly 1,000km and endless driving...

We are at the border!!

Lao PDR - The adventure can begin!!!
Day 2

Summary of today

Totally exhausted!
My first REAL field work day! I'm excited

We drive to our first village. The first ADVENTURE begins...

**ADVENTURE >FLOOR<**
chatting, discussing, eating...all is done
SITTING ON THE FLOOR.

Given the fact that I can do so for about
**FIVE AND A HALF minutes MAXIMUM**
and then inevitably my legs will fall asleep and I will have to move them LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-...
This is going to be FUN.

The community people are really engaged in the discussion. Oh nooooo.
The meeting seems ENDLESS....
What do I do with my legs??????
LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-RIGHT...hoping nobody notices!!

Later for lunch – SITTING ON THE FLOOR – again!!
My legs are **DEAD**. My bottom is **NUMB**.
Day 3

Summary of today

Totally exhausted from yesterday
:P
My best friend of today...my PILLOWS

Well to be totally honest, today NOT MUCH is going on in my brain
Blblblblblblbl
Too exhausted!

So here are two of my important companions on our tour..

My pink fluffy neckholder pillow.

My wonderfully comfortable, soft, cushioned pillow that I 'borrowed' from my guesthouse.
BEST. IDEA. EVER.
Day 4

Summary of today

Totally exhausted from yesterday and before yesterday

But never mind, since...
...there are exciting travel adventures along the way!

Pot holes!!
**AWESOME At 80km/h 😊**

The famous shaky suspension bridge!

Muddy, bumpy roads!
**YIPPIEH!!!**

Space for 1 car only on thin wooden planks **OOPS.**

Crossing a river using 4WD!!
**YEAH!!!**

Water splashing as high as the windows when we drive through the puddles **LOVE IT!!!!**
Day 5

Summary of today

I'm losing track of being exhausted from yesterday and before yesterday and yester-yesterday...
which day are we?? where am I ??
this is so much FUN :)}
...whereas my colleagues are restless in surveying the school projects, talking to communities, and students...! No loss in energy on their side it seems!
Day 6

Summary of today

Time to go back.
Tick the boxes:
- muddy roads? TICK
- bumpy roads? TICK
- dirty car? Let's see...
My personal ambition...getting the car

AS DIRTY AS POSSIBLE

Stage 1 – little bit

Stage 2 – more

Stage 3 - YEAH

Ok, the Laos team tells me THIS IS NOTHING.

Boooooh
But I'm still proud :)}
Summary of all days

My learnings

See next pages...
Learning No # 1

Take a **THICK**...
No sorry. Let me start again.

Take a **REALLY-THICK** pillow with you.
Approximately THIS THICK

**WHY?**

The car is comfortable **BUT**
1,000km to go
1,000km to come back
AND MANY MORE km in Laos

bumpy roads
potholes
bumpy roads
potholes
...

Believe me
YOU WILL NEED
THIS FOR YOUR
BACK TO SURVIVE!!!!
Learning No # 2

The journey might take ‘A WHILE’...since there are a lot of FRIENDS that you meet on the road...

Mr **PIG** just casually crossed the road

Why stressing out because of an approaching HUGE car???

Of course there are also

- **COWS** lying in the middle of the street
- **DOGS** sleeping in the middle of the street
- **DUCKS** crossing...

But we at Child's Dream have a big ❤️

**WE STOP FOR EVERYBODY!**

(well, there is not much else you can do!)

ARRIVAL?? **HOURS** later...
Learning No # 3
If you travel with this team, but you are always hungry like me, immediately learn this word and scream it as often as you can

G-I-N !!! (Thai for: EAT)

(because: they will NOT STOP and WASTE TIME on something MINOR like eating, I can tell you)

I just ate some blood* and I can still smile :) hehe

*Laotian dish made of pig blood
Learning No #4
In Laos, sometimes also chicken go to school...😊

1. gak gak entering the classroom

2. Walking to their desk

3. Hop and hop – school can begin!

Note to other unaware foreigners like me: when writing reports in the office I always wondered about the point 'buffalo walking on school ground?' on the checklist document Child’s Dream has. Really? Is this possible? Let me tell you ... It is!! This can really happen...chicken, pigs or buffalos, all happily wandering around on school ground 😊
FINAL Learning

Can there be something more important than this?

Driving ALL this way, on bumpy roads, having long exhausting days in the heat, searching for remote schools, finding students ... And then, seeing the kids, smiling faces, happy communities.

Really, I don't think so :)
CONCLUSION

Man, this girl and this guy from Child’s Dream are TOUGH. I have no idea how they do this. AMAZING.
On the road all the time. Motivated until the last minute. Won't rest before the last student is found in the smallest corner of the country.
For 7 days in a row. And they will do the same again the next weeks. Just AMAZING.

And I'm such a wimp!!!
Kob Jai Lai Lai* – Thank you so much

To my fantastic colleagues and all the people in Laos who greeted me with a warm welcome for making this trip such an awesome experience!!

Thank you Child's Dream for allowing me to go!

*Thank you very much in Laotian

area in Laos we went to

Just a bit more...
Final impressions from the trip...