

## **My first trip with the North Team**

Life is just so wonderful! My name is Opor. I'm an internship student at the best organization, Child's Dream Foundation, Chiang Mai. It has been more than one week now since I was accepted during late October 2010. I feel deeply honored to have an opportunity to be a member of Child's Dream family.

After my third visit at Child's Dream office, it seemed to me that they did not really have a plan to host a trainee yet. I would have told myself then that "I give up", but deep down in my heart, I could feel something wonderful was about to happen...

Therefore, I encouraged myself to try it one more time by sending my inspiration essay to P'Tai. Finally, a few days later I received an acceptance e-mail and that was when a wonderful life began!!!.....

I still remember my feeling on October 28, 2010, the first day at Child's Dream office. The first thing that I saw was a group of people sitting together smiling, laughing and having breakfast. That was the best welcoming ceremony ever!!

The first week at Child's Dream was to collect the information about the staff's responsibilities in the organization by having individual meetings. At first, I was not sure if anyone would like to take their time talking to me. I thought it might have been something not quite necessary...

However, it was a surprise!! Everyone was willing to take their busy time to spend with me. This is only one of the million wonderful things at Child's Dream Foundation. Additionally, my first week passed by so fast and I was already looking forward to starting my second week which was to join the Northern Thailand Project Team to Chiang Rai. This was going to be

my first field trip experience with the team. I was so excited and couldn't wait to have this new experience with them.

**On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2010**, the morning sunlight made my day more exciting. I woke up early and got ready to travel with the North Team to Chiang Rai. There were four of us: P'Jack, P'Tha Wha, Nui and myself.

We left for Chiang Rai around 8:30 a.m. Our first stop was at Baan Pongtawe School. P'Jack and Nui gave me brief information about this school. In my opinion, these two people can form a very good team. On the way to Chiang Rai, Nui never seemed to stop working; she made phone calls to schools to confirm the appointments and inform them that we would pay them a visit.

**At Baan Pong Thaewee School**, Viang Pa Pao, Chiang Rai, we spent about 2 hrs visiting and checking the school's management. I separated from the group to check on the stationery bank and had a conversation with a teacher of grade one class.

The teacher told me a story of two special needs boys; these two boys are orphans and their comprehension is much slower than other students. Nevertheless, she told me that she is now trying to help them by setting up special classes after school hours and now the boys are making progress. I wish there were more teachers who were willing to sacrifice for these special needs children like her.

**Baan Pabong Tao Koon Chan School** was our second stop. This school is only half an hour away from the first school. This school seems very well-organized and the school director seems to have a wide vision and be very well-educated. Most of the students here are Thai-Akha ethnicity and there is one outstanding girl who is very good at traditional Thai instruments. She is very pretty as well and I was very impressed.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2010, we visited Baan Pha Daeng Luang School, my favorite school. This was the first time for everyone to visit this school. Along the main road, a signpost bears a sign of 10.8 kms to Baan Pha Daeng Luang School. However, when we passed the sign, there were no longer any signposts along the way. It was quite difficult; besides the road condition was not good. We had to ask the villager how to get there. Though it was only 10.8 kms away, it took us more than one and a half hours to reach the school.

It was worth it, though!!! The small school is located in the midst of high mountains in Chiang Rai Province. This school is not just the school, but it is also the home of the students. 70% of the students escaped from the war zone to the Thai border in the hope of starting a new life.

The students are so lovely. We arrived there almost at lunch time. Once we arrived, we heard the lunch bell ring. All those little ones hurriedly ran up to make a queue and slowly moved along to take the lunch plate from a teacher, and there were older students from grade 5-6 helping those little ones to sit properly in a comfortable position.



**Figure 1. This is a wonderful thing!!**

After meeting with the school director, we walked around to survey the school and the school director informed us about the dormitory issue. The issue was the room is too small while

there are too many students!! This is the issue which the North Team needed to bring up to discuss further with the Project Proposals Evaluation Committee (PEC) back in the office.

As for me, I would love to see a Child's Dream's dormitory stand in this school area. Three hours had passed by so fast, I really wished I could spend more time here but we still had to visit one more school for today which is in Doi Wawee area. Oh well, I had to say good bye to Pha Daeng Luang School and I really wished to see it again.....

**Baan Mae Mong Yao School** was the smallest school of this trip. It is located about half an hour away from Wawee Village. There are about 30 students attending this school.

To be honest, I was very tired and I thought it was not fair for the school if I stopped and only looked for beautiful things. Therefore, I refreshed myself and tried not to think of the tiredness. At that moment, I suddenly found an amazing picture that I must take: a little boy with his broken legs trying to walk with wooden crutches. This boy makes the effort to travel 5 kms from home to school every day.

The effort of this little boy has taught me a lesson: "Opor, look at him!! His house is 5 kms away from the school; he wakes up early because he wants to study and he loves to sing the Thai national anthem in the morning.

On the top of that, he has to walk with wooden crutches, but (then I thought of myself) you are only 5 minutes away from the university and you are still too lazy to attend your classes?? "



**Figure 2: My Teacher: the little boy with the wooden crutches!**

**On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2010**, we were at **Baan Muang Karn Secondary School**, Chiang San District. This is a large school with about 200 - 300 students. We had a meeting with the school director, the teachers and the constructors about the new dormitory. From CD's side, P'Jack explained the agreement and the procedure of dormitory building.

After the meeting, we had a look at the dormitory building area to set up a building plan and discussed with the teachers and the constructors. After that, we joined lunch in a small restaurant near the school and then we left for Chiang Khong Withayakhom School to visit one of our scholarship students.

**At Chiang Khong Withayakhom School**, P'Jack and Nui went into a meeting room to discuss with Ah-tid (the scholarship student) about his issues; I thought he might get uncomfortable if I was there, so P'Tha Wha and I decided to wait outside.

Last but not least, my first trip with the North Team to Chiang Rai was unforgettable. Even though it was only three days, I have learned so many things and I would have no idea if I were not here with CD as an intern. Where else could I find this great opportunity?

Thank you, everyone who has offered me this opportunity. Thank you, the North Team. Without you, I would have never known that "Life is just so wonderful"....:) Opor Srisuwan.