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Huay Poo School Volunteer Report

Start Date: January 17<sup>th</sup> 2011  
End date: March 10<sup>th</sup> 2011

Teaching at Huay Poo School was a life changing experience for me.

From the moment I got there, the teachers and director were lovely, always going the extra mile to make me feel welcome. They really made the whole experience so nice and easy.

There are six teachers and one director at the school. They all live there during the week and go back to their families in the city for the weekends. That means that volunteers too get to spend the weekend in Chiang Mai, which is one of the nicest cities I've ever visited.

We all lived at the school ground. I shared a basic but very comfortable wooden house with one of the teachers. The school has 7 classrooms, a library and praying room, the teacher's room, the director's office and the students' dormitories. A new library and canteen have just been built by the people from the village.

I taught English to grade one to six, for two hours per class every week. Their level of English is really basic and communication was difficult at times. I needed to keep the lessons as interactive and enjoyable as possible to make sure the students were engaged and didn't get bored. They love to play games in the classroom and outside, especially if they involve running around and competing against each others.

The students are very polite and respectful. We spent most of the time playing games and there is no better feeling than watching the children laughing really loud, while learning their numbers, alphabet, colors etc.

As Thai isn't their first language (they speak their own dialect at home), they put a lot of effort on learning Thai and English simultaneously since they start grade one.

Leaving the school was tough for me. I will never forget the leaving party and ceremony. I tried to hold my tears, (very unsuccessfully), for most of the day. I will never forget the students or the teachers who, for two months, were my family in every way.

What I found most challenging at the beginning was the motorbike ride, to and from Chiang Mai, for over 4 hours every weekend (which I learned to appreciate). Also the nights and mornings can get really cold and there is no hot water to shower with, not to mention all the different types of spiders... These are little things you get used to in no time though.

Overall, teaching and living at Huay Poo School was a great experience for me, and I hope it benefited the students as much as me. The following lines might give you an idea of whether this might be for you too:

Do not volunteer in Huay Poo School if:

- You hate insects, especially spiders or don't feel comfortable living in the nature.

- You don't like super tasty Thai food.
- You are not comfortable riding on the back of a motorbike for 4 hours every Friday and Sunday while enjoying the beautiful northern Thai scenery.
- You can't cope with heat or cold.

Do come and help almost one hundred kids broaden their opportunities in life if:

- You enjoy working with children and want to give hill tribe kids the same opportunities city kids have.
- You like Thai culture and want to learn more about it.
- You want to live in the nature and enjoy the peace of the countryside. Be surrounded by beautiful scenery, green mountains and rice fields with buffalos, dogs and chicks running around free.

The weather can get very cold at night and extremely hot during the day, so be prepared for that. Bring summer and winter clothing, a hat and sun protection. They have enough blankets to keep you warm at night. You might also want to bring reading material and other things to keep you busy. You will have plenty of time to spare. I do recommend trekking on the surroundings of the village in the evenings, playing football or badminton with the students and walking down to the river through the rice fields.

I really wish all future volunteer an experience as successful and fulfilling as mine. Feel free to contact me if you have further questions. Child's dream will give you my details.