

SAI LOM RUDURAUN A Warm Breeze from Thailand

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Nong Thawa & Seri, young Karen girls from our village
with tanaka faces.

Greetings dear friends & happy new year!!!

As I look out from the office at the lake here in Sangklaburi, I am reminded of how drastically the season change in this part of the world. It has been a while since we have written to share our stories. Back in May, just as the heat became almost unbearable, the rains began to fall, changing our little farm in Wiakhadi from a dry dustbowl to a lush, rich green jungle which you could hardly make your way through. From the end of May straight through until mid October, the rains have fallen, making life here soggy, wet and a bit moldy!!! The rivers and lakes have swollen to their fullest capacity, the grasses and trees have grown, overtaking everything in their path, preparing for the next many months of the dry season when we will see no rain again until the end of May!!

The lake is full here at the office and has come up all the way under the building. The sun is out and the cool breezes have begun to blow, making the next two months some of the most pleasant weather, with cool mornings and evenings.

The cool fresh winds that blow have also brought us new energies towards our projects. This issue of Sai Lom Ruduraun will have two parts, as it has been a while and many things have happened here at Whispering Seed.

Newest additions to Whispering Seed Family!!!

Over the past six months, we have had many major changes here at Whispering Seed. The biggest one and most exciting is that we now have 3 children living with us. All of the kids are Burmese and have come to us speaking only Burmese language, no Thai at all. They all were living either in Burma or just inside the Thai border in a small town just about 20 kilometers from here. The kids were in families that were affected by HIV/AIDS.



Suanchai joined our family about 4 months ago. He is about 3 ½ yrs old. He was very sick with malnutrition and had been diagnosed with thalassimia, a form of sickle cell anemia affecting people of Asian decent. After much testing and misdiagnosing, we found that he really just needed lots of good food and hugs. He is now running around playing, laughing, learning to speak Thai, English and Karen, along with his continuing to speak Burmese.

Ae Aow has been with us the longest, for about 6 months. She is almost 11yrs old. She came speaking no Thai at all, and now is completely fluent in Thai. She is learning to read and write the Thai alphabet. She is also very excited about learning English and is learning to speak a little and is very close to being able to read in English. She attended school a long time ago in Burma for just a few years. She loves making pancakes in the morning for breakfast!!



Ae Aow & Suanchai



Ee wuay at the temple

Ee wuay just joined us about 4 weeks ago. She is 13 years old and does not speak Thai. She is very happy to be an older sister to Suanchai and Ae Aow and is quickly adjusting to being with us. She attended a few years of school in Burma and learning a little bit of English there. She is very excited to learn to speak, read and write in English and is also beginning to pick up Thai. She loves playing in the water out at the land and is beginning to learn how to swim.

The situation facing many children here in this area is that they have at least one parent, but the living conditions for that child do not support them to be able to stay with the parent. Often children are then taken away from their families, due to abuse, neglect, parents using drugs or in jail and more and more parents suffering with HIV/AIDS. This is why it is crucial and most important for us to really assess the child's situation and make sure that removing them to come and live with us is the best situation for them. Often, many children seem to be taken from their home too early, when the family may just need a little support to help raise the children. Over the past few months, many children have been referred to us, but after looking further into the situation, it was best for the children to stay with their families. Our aim is to support families to live together as much as possible and only take children that have been orphaned or are in situations where they need to be taken out of the family to ensure the best for their safety and well-being

Growing in New Directions!!

Besides the new additions of Suanchai, Ae Aow and Ee Wuay, the Whispering Seed is at a place of transition, ready to grow in many new directions.

It has become clear to us over the past few months that the projects we have started are important and necessary and that they are all ready to expand and develop even further. At this time, it is still just Nao and myself working to keep all of our projects growing and it is now time for others to step in, helping us with this growth and bringing new ideas and inspirations. We are unsure how things will develop from here, but we are getting ready for many new changes and lots of exciting progress over the next few months.

The second half of the newsletter will have some of the upcoming projects and those in development. If you have ideas, energy or would like to come help in anyway, we would love to have your support and input.

Some projects over the past few months

Visits with friends, Burmese Language & Tibetan Doctor:

Over the past three weeks we spent time in Chiang Mai. Jim was taking an intensive 2 week Burmese language. This gave me the fundamentals of the Burmese script so that I am now able to read and write in Burmese and also a good grounding to begin to start speaking in Burmese.

While we were in Chiang Mai, stayed with dear friends at Pun Pun Community and had the chance to learn more about how they are working with their community. It was wonderful to see the growth of Pun Pun, since they too are a fairly new community. We are trying to find ways to work more closely with them, here is their website at www.punpunthailand.org.

We also were able to spend 4 intensive days working with a Tibetan doctor from Dharamsala, India. He is the primary doctor for His Holiness, The Dalai Lama. It was great to learn more about the Tibetan approach to healing and its similarities to Ayurveda. Both Nao and I look forward to studying more about this and to be able to share it with the children and people here in the local area as an alternative to the mainstream Thai medical approach of heavy use of antibiotics.

Alternative Education training in China

Nao and I spent about three weeks in Yunnan Province in southwestern China in August. We were invited to lead a training to a group of mostly Shan and some Kachin (ethnic groups within Burma) in alternative education. It was a wonderful training and we were asked to stay a bit longer to work more in-depth with them. The training was held in a small border town just inside China along the Burmese border. It is illegal for this type of training to be held within Burma, thus they workshops had to be all held just over the border in China.

Out of the group of 20 youth, almost half of them were very interested in alternative education and were committed to working in some type of education. The ideas we shared were new to most, and everyone in the group was excited to experience new way so learning and teaching....We met with several of them that were ready to go back into Burma an start alternative schools or projects but wanted to spend a little time in some type of internship where they could really experience working with kids in new ways.

We are trying to set up a way for a few of them to come to work with us here at Whispering Seed for 6 months to a year type of teacher training program. They would intern with us and also spend time at other children's projects around Sangklaburi. Once they are ready, they will go back to Shan State in Burma and begin their projects. We are still trying to get funding to help this project to happen.

Following the training, we visited and ancient city in China up towards Tibet that is a village all made of mud brick houses that are about 800 years old. It was great to see the different ways they used the bricks and just to see houses that old made of mud was very inspiring.

Visit from friends at Moscow International Film School, Russia

Just before our trip to China group of students and staff from MIFS came to visit us here in Sangklaburi. They shared an evening performance with us here at the office. For this expedition, their focus was to celebrate and commemorate the life and work of the famous Polish doctor Janusz Korcak. Korcak was an incredible man who lived and fought for the rights of children. He ran a large children's orphanage in Warsaw, Poland, but what was so unique was that he ran the orphanage democratically with the children and always put the rights of the child first.

When Hilter's regime came through Poland, the orphanage was forced to move into the ghetto of Warsaw where they saw very troubling times. As the ghetto was liquidated, Korcak, because of his high status as famous doctor, was given several opportunities to leave the ghetto safely and work in Germany. He refused all the offers. He proudly walked with all of his children to the trains where they were all then sent to their deaths at the concentration camp at Treblinka.

Janusz Korcak has been an inspiration in the work here at Whispering Seed and also for those at MIFS. Was truly a pleasure to the Russian group here to share the story of Janusz Korcak with the local children through song, dance, puppets and theatre. We are looking forward to working with MIFS again in the near future!!

Upcoming Projects for 2006!!!

Here is a short list of upcoming projects for the new year. More details come in the next issue in a few days!

- *Alternative Media and building a mud brick dark room at Whispering Seed office-**January-March**
- *Youth Community Service trip with Karen hilltribe children to work with Cambodian refugee children at the Cambodian border-**February**
- *Holistic Learning Teacher Training Program-**April**
- *Planting Sustainability Training (Permaculture, Alternative Ed., Community Building & more)-**May**
- *6 month Teacher Training Internship-**October**
- *Harvesting Sustainability Training(Permaculture, Alternative Ed., Community Building & more)-**November**
- *Alternative Education & Sustainable Living Gathering???

Well, that's all for this issue. We will send out the second part in a few days. Thanks for taking the time to share in our stories and our lives!!!!

Many blessings for a safe and healthy time as we move into the new year!!!!

Sincerely,

Nao, Jim, Suanchai, Ae Aow & Ee Wuay (The Whispering Seed)



