

January 2010: News from Baan Tharn Namchai

Tsunami 5 years on

December 26 marked the 5th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami, an event which tragically took away many lives in Thailand and other countries around the Indian Ocean. For the survivors, their lives will never be as they were before. However life moves on and a full programme at the Duang Prateep Foundation's Baan Tharn Namchai orphanage for tsunami victims in December proves that as well as looking back with sadness, there are many reasons to look forward with optimism.

Much of the optimism comes from the commitment of orphanage director Rotjana Phraesrithong and her colleagues over the last five years. From the dark days immediately after the disaster, to the more stable situation now, they have unstintingly stood by the children who need help, both the children in the full time care of the DPF, now numbering 67, and the children in the wider local community who were also all victims of the disaster.

Optimism about the future also comes from the friends who support the orphanage. December saw many friends from the Thai community and friends from abroad give the children at the orphanage moments to treasure, which will linger in the memory, alongside memories of the disaster.



With the commitment of the Duang Prateep Foundation and benefactors alongside the dedication of Rotjana and her colleagues, the children at the orphanage are ensured of the support they need to achieve their education, development and personal goals in 2010 and beyond.

On the 5th anniversary of the disaster, 70 children and staff from the Baan Tharn Namchai orphanage joined a crowd of over 1,000 at the official tsunami commemoration event at the tsunami memorial at Baan Bang Niang (photo left).

The government has announced that after holding official annual commemoration events for the first five years after the disaster, the next official tsunami commemoration will take place on the 10th anniversary, December 26 2014.

Earlier in the month, a happier special event was celebrated with 70 children and staff from the orphanage joining some 3,000 others in a parade to celebrate the King's Birthday through the district town of Takua Pa, a short distance from the orphanage. At the conclusion of the parade, candles were lit in honour of His Majesty.

Media interest

The 5th anniversary of the tsunami prompted a flurry of media interest in the orphanage and the children. After visits by teams from the BBC and The Sun (London) in November, December brought teams from Thai television channels 3 and NBT, Reuters, NHK of Japan and Nishi Nihon, also from Japan.

Santa Claus and other visitors

Santa Claus came early to Phang-nga, not from the North Pole, but from Australia in the form of benefactor Tony Love-Linlay. Tony brought presents for all the children at the orphanage and also for 30 children at the DPF youth and children's recreation centre in the Baan iTV village.

Tony also donated three new computers to the Baan iTV, to be used by children and youths in the local community.

The photo shows Santa Claus with project director Rotjana Phraesrithong to his right with children and staff outside the DPF children's centre at Baan iTV.



Also visiting in December was Kay Spencer, the Managing Director of the National Associated Retail Traders of Australia (NARTA) the key sponsor for the Hands Across the Water building opened in January 2009.

Kay and her husband met children and staff at the orphanage and also visited the rubber plantation the DPF now owns nearby.

Also visiting the orphanage in December was a group of ten people from Singapore, led by long-time benefactor of the Duang Prateep Foundation, Mr. Charles Loh. The visitors donated presents to be handed to the children on Christmas Day as well as other toys and snacks. In return the children entertained their visitors with dance performances. The visitors were also able to meet DPF chairperson Prateep Ungsongtham Hata and foundation trustee Dr. Sant Hattirat.



The photo shows Charles Loh standing 5th from the right, to his left are Prateep Ungsongtham Hata and Rotjana Phraesrithong, with Dr. Sant Hattirat on the right. Also in the photo are other visitors from Singapore and children and staff at the orphanage.

The Thai Royal Navy also came visiting in December. Seventeen sailors from the Thap La Muu naval base a short way down the coast from the orphanage came to donate lunch and to learn about the situation of the children and staff.

At the end of the year, a group of students from Thammasat University in Bangkok visited the orphanage to host a 'love reading' camp over two days. Seventeen children and staff at Baan Tharn Namchai joined the students in the activities. The occasion was a mutual learning experience as the Bangkok students learnt about how the Nithan Caravan puppet troupe based at Baan Tharn Namchai use puppets to tell stories and encourage literacy.

Closer to home, 50 youngsters and staff from the Duang Prateep Foundation's New Life Project at Chumphon travelled across the peninsula to visit the orphanage. During their three days at



the orphanage, the youngsters visited the Baan Nam Khem tsunami museum and the tsunami memorial. They met representatives of a local fishermen's network and they helped plant bamboos at the DPF rubber plantation.

The photo shows youngsters and staff from the two DPF centres.

Also visiting the orphanage during December were three DPF managers from Bangkok, led by Ms. Phenwadee Saengjan. The visitors were at the orphanage for three days to carry out year end performance reviews for the staff and to discuss plans for 2010.

Children's performances

The Christmas and New Year festivities provided opportunities for the children at the orphanage to show their talents to visitors at local hotels.

On Christmas Eve 30 children went to sing Christmas songs at the Sarojin Hotel.



The photo above shows some of the children joined by hotel guests.

On New Year's Eve 20 children put on a Thai dance display for guests at the C and N Hotel on Ko Kor island. Earlier in December, 15 children went to perform dances at the Emilron Hotel (photo left).



Meanwhile amongst the year-end special visits and events, staff and children found time to arrange their own year end and Christmas party which took place on December 25.

A total of 350 children from the orphanage, Baan iTV and Bang Muang attended the event. Every child and adult was given a present and there were dance performances, games and food to enjoy.