

## Newsletter Distribution

Previously, when it was issued only twice a year, we were not able to cover all of our project activities and the interesting topics from their regions of operation; from now on we will try our best to help you feel closer to our activities.

We will distribute this newsletter to those who showed interest in our activities. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter anymore, please feel free to e-mail us at [nomad@nomad-int.org](mailto:nomad@nomad-int.org).



*Information about recent project activities*

## The Reading Diaries from Thailand Has Arrived

The schools in Thailand that participate in the library project are operating a variety of reading promotions and activities aiming to encourage the habit of reading books. One of the reading promotion activities is for children to summarize the plots and write how they felt about the books in what we call a "reading diary". We present an excerpt of an actual reading diary of a girl from Kaeng Kanna Elementary School in the column on the right.

Although we rarely see road stand vendors in Japan anymore, they can still often be seen in Thailand everywhere and are a regular part of the backdrop of people's daily lives. However, it seems there is an unexpected hidden problem. Let us see what the book taught her.

## Georgian Library Project Will Begin

The new project will support the renovation of two library rooms in the capital city Tbilisi's Children's Library, and books in Georgian.

After achieving independence, the country of Georgia, which possesses a unique culture and writing system, has transitioned its educational system from Russian to Georgian. We are helping to provide a comfortable and pleasant environment in which children can read books in their own language.

We have received grants for this project from the Hiroshima Peace Stone Foundation and the Japan International Cooperation System.

Date: 12 August, 2003

*Reading Diary from  
Children in Thailand*

Title: "Mrs. Jaew's Story"

Outline:

Mrs. Jaew who sells fried bananas is a strong and a stubborn woman. "How about fried bananas, how about fried bananas?" she shouts in a clear beautiful voice to entice customers to buy one. Then a customer comes and says, "I would like to have 10 bhats of fried bananas." Mrs. Jaew puts the bananas in the bag made of newspaper, but the customer is reluctant to take it and asks her to put the bananas in a cleaner bag. She angrily says, "If you don't want my bananas, go away!" Mrs. Jaew continues to use the newspaper bags to put fried bananas in without being concerned with how the lead contained in the newspaper can affect people's health.

One day her son Joi gets sick from eating fried bananas in newspaper bags everyday. Mrs. Jaew takes her son to the hospital, where the doctor says that Joi's body is full of lead. The lead poisoning causes anemia, kidney trouble and heart disease.

Mrs. Jaew finally understands that lead is bad for our body and starts using clean bags instead of newspaper.

How I felt:

I learned that bags made of newspaper could cause lead poisoning. It made me feel afraid.

In Thailand, the intensification of environmental problems, such as people dying from the pesticide residues on raw vegetables, has been pointed out. In the middle of this sensitive society, it seems that the problems of safety and environment are also being addressed in children's books.

*News Flash!*

## The Picture Books Written by Thai Children Have Arrived

On May 5, five new picture books with stories and pictures created by children in Thailand arrived. The books are full of creativity and color, and are enjoyable works. We will introduce them in the next issue of Newsletter. Please look forward to it.

## From the Project Site

*Report on the social and educational situations of the regions with which we cooperate*

### What Are Thailand's School Like?

In Japanese schools, which start each year in April, children by now have become accustomed to their new schools and classes. In Thailand, schools, which run on a two-semester system, begin around May 10; so the new year is just beginning. Their year, including a vacation from mid-October to early November, will finish with final exams in March.

Wearing the uniforms of their individual schools, each morning the children go to school, walking or riding bicycles; those who live farther away ride buses or three-wheeled motorcycles. At the morning assembly, everyone gathers before the national flag to sing the anthem and then recite a Buddhist sutra. Students study according to a class schedule, and, just as in Japan, school lunch is offered. However, candy and juice are sold within and nearby the school grounds, and eating and drinking is permitted outside of class time. It appears slightly more lenient than Japanese schools.

At school, it is common to see children place their hands together in a sign of respect as they pass teachers in the halls. The Thai tradition of respect for elders and teachers is even now preserved in the moral teachings of family and society.

### Messages from Local Staff: The Daily Life of Local Staff in Thailand and Georgia

#### From Thailand

(Bangkok: Yagi)

In Thailand, April and May are the hottest months of the year. During the day, one often sees adults taking a nap in breezy, shaded places. Unlike the adults, the children on summer vacation play, energetically. In the elementary schools in the mountains of Nan Province, one can see children excitedly diving into the river. In Bangkok, the first squall in this season occurred yesterday: it means the rainy season is soon to come. In tropical Thailand, the seasons also rotate in this way.

#### From Georgia

(Tbilisi: Rusiko)

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia has suffered from economic crises. In November, 2003, the former president Shevardnadze was forced to resign in a bloodless coup. In the beginning of May, the new government paid civil servant salaries and pensions that had not been paid for more than 8 months. New hope finally began to spread among the formerly uneasy people. In order for the new government to stimulate the country, it is necessary to reform the taxation system, which has kept away the foreign investors.

## From the Office

*Information from the executive office*

### Lecture Presentation Was Held

On Wednesday, April 14, we held a lecture presentation in the Sendagaya civic hall. The staff who had temporarily returned from Thailand reported on the library project as well as on the recent local news.

It was unfortunately a rainy day, but seven people kindly came to the meeting. During the Q & A session as well as the break, many enthusiastic questions were raised even though the group was small; we were able to hold the meeting in a very friendly atmosphere. We give some of the comments of the participants below.

“It was very interesting to hear how the project developed depending on the local situation and needs.”

“To not merely support books and libraries, but further make efforts to promote reading itself is an extremely worthy endeavor.”

“It is a wonderful idea to adapt the experience in Thailand to other countries.”

We would like to hold this kind of meeting regularly from now on to let more people know about our activities. We plan to report our new Georgian library project at the next meeting.

### Information about the General Meeting

The general meeting of 2004 will be held as follows. If you are a member, please participate in this meeting.

Date : Sunday, May 30, 2004, 2 pm

Place : Nomad International Office

### Volunteer Recruitment

We are seeking volunteers to help update our website or edit the newsletter. If you are interested, please contact us.

#### Notes from the Staff

- How was our first newsletter? Please let us know your comments. There has been some personnel transfer in our office due to the new year. We all hope to try our best, and are hoping for your continued support. ( Fukatsu )
- The long vacation is over, and the busy days have returned. Although the days pass by quickly, the picture books written by the Thai children made me feel relaxed. ( Tajima )