

**Project Report**

*Information about recent project activities*

**Let Us Introduce the "Story Telling Project"**

For the sake of improving the environment for reading, Nomad International has supported the construction of libraries and the promotion of reading in schools in farming communities in the northern part of Thailand since 1998.

The "Story Telling Project" is based on the children's reading experiences in previous programs and is for those children to create their own stories and illustrations to make original picture books. Before we started on the reading support programs, reading was not habitual among children in this region but now, they are making books for themselves.

Since we initiated this project in 2003, the children have put together five books. We would like to introduce the stories of these books as well as how they were made.

**<How the Picture Books Were Created>**

Nineteen students from the 4th grade to the 6th grade who were particularly interested in reading joined the project from three schools in the province of Phitsanulok. They attended the camp workshop and collectively created their original books through group work.

The workshop was held in the coastal city of Hua Hin, three hours south of Bangkok by car. The children, coming from inland villages, were overjoyed at the sight of sea for the first time in their lives.

Finally the workshop started. First, each member introduced his or her favorite words and phrases from the books they had read so far. Then, the children were divided into groups of four and each group created one scene based on their favorite words and phrases. With the instructor's guidance and help, the next step was the combination of these scenes in groups of eight; ultimately, they were put together into one story. This was certainly an ingenious way for children to learn how to share some ideas and to generate a story.

Children also worked on the illustrations for the story they had created. They freed up their imaginations and drew pictures of the animals and plants appearing in the scenes. Each member drew what they love to do and were good at, and combined these illustrations into the pictures of each scene.

The sketches were then scanned into the computer and colored using the graphic software. After learning how to use the software with many trials and errors, the vividly-colored pictures for the books were completed. In addition, children edited the text attached to those pictures. As the introduction of computers is slow in rural schools in Thailand, the workshop gave the children a precious opportunity to use them.

**<As a Model Activity to Promote Reading>**

The books which had been produced in this way were handed out to the 21 schools participating in the Library Project. Seeing this achievement spurred these schools to initiate their own projects creating picture books, utilizing the same process mentioned above. Moreover, the local counterpart organization introduced the activity at their seminars held across Thailand, and the project is receiving attention from the Thai educational community as a progressive approach. The program is expected to expand as a model to raise children's interest in reading, promote proactive reading, and cultivate their imaginations.

*Original Picture Books  
by Thai Children 1*

Introduction of Stories

"Oh Piggy has No Ears!"

There was a pig who liked to play pranks. One day, the pig ran into a rabbit and he threw away the carrot that the rabbit was eating. The moment that the rabbit showed a sad face, a small piece of the pig's ear broke off. However, he went on playing pranks on his friends, and his ears were finally...

*Original Picture Books  
by Thai Children 2*

Introduction of Stories

"Old Witch Greedy Guts"

One day, an elephant, a bear and other animals were playing together happily. A bird flew in there in a panic to tell them that Old Witch had cast a spell and turned their friend cat into a frog. They knew Old Witch loved to eat, so they baked a cake dosed with medicine in hopes of trying to get the cat back, and...

The themes of the stories are mainly moralistic and it is worthwhile to compare the moral code told in Thailand with that in Japan as the key to understand a different culture.

*If you would like to have these picture books, we will send the simply-bound ones for 500 yen per book + mailing fee. Please feel free to inquire. We will introduce the remaining three stories in the next issue or later. So, please don't miss it!*

*The illustrations will be uploaded on our website soon.*

## From the Project Site

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

#### Schools in Russia and the Study of the Japanese Language

( We got the information about the educational situation in Russia from Mr. Boris Malyshev, our collaborator who is visiting Japan at the moment. )

Children used to start going to school from the age of seven during the Soviet era. Eighteen years ago, the school age was changed to 6 years old, but children can still enter school at 7 because of illness or based on the parents' wishes.

The Russian educational system consists of an Elementary School Course (1st to 4th grade), Junior High School Course (5th to 8th grade) and High School Course (9th to 10th grade). Students in elementary school learn Russian, art, math, physical education and environmental basics. In junior high schools, students study geography, history, literature, math, Russian, foreign languages, biology, physics, astronomy, science, technological design and other subjects.

Russian children are more and more interested in foreign cultures and languages these years. During the USSR era, students started learning foreign languages from the 5th grade, but now many schools teach them from the 1st grade. Foreign language courses include English, French, German, Spanish, and even Japanese are taught in increasingly many schools. From Moscow to Vladivostok, 52 elementary and junior high schools across Russia now have programs for students to study Japanese. The number of these schools is expected to increase in the future.

A few years ago, I myself taught Japanese to students aged from 16 to 35 years. All the students were interested in Japanese culture and tradition, and studied the language diligently.

#### Message from Local Staff: The Daily Life of Local Staff in Thailand

From Thailand

(Bangkok: Yagi)

In Thailand, children and adults often wear a pendant featuring the Buddha. Buddhism seems to be closer to the Thai people than to the Japanese. One can see endless crowds of people praying in the temples in Bangkok. Every one knows a lot of Buddhist anecdotes and the historical origin of the temples. Once you step into the temple, the noises of Bangkok fade away and a pleasant breeze blows. The calmness of the Thai people might come from such places.

## From the Office

### *Information from the executive office*

#### Looking For Volunteer Staff

We are looking for new volunteer staff in the following two areas. Please contact us at 03-5784-2201 or [nomad@nomad-int.org](mailto:nomad@nomad-int.org).

##### Volunteer for Thai Language Translation

Job Description: Translation of the reading diaries written by Thai children, the reports and the receipts in Thai language.

Hours: as needed (please register first and we will contact you when a job comes up)

##### Research Volunteer

Job Description: Research on the introduction of the Internet into school education and its educational role, the digital divide, and more.

Hours: once or twice (or more) per week. (working hours negotiable within 10:30AM-7PM)

We are currently planning a project to introduce the Internet to the elementary schools located in the farming area in Thailand. We are looking for a staff who will gather the necessary information on planning the project.

**Recruiting New Members** Our activities are made possible through the support from citizens. Please support us by becoming a member today! Individual Regular Membership is 6,000 yen per year (2,000 yen entrance fee) or Supporting Membership is 2,000 yen per year (1,000 yen entrance fee).

#### Site Visit and Survey in Thailand

The office staffs from Japan visited the project area in Thailand from June 6th to 16th. We had several meetings with the local counterpart organization and the teachers from the schools involved, and conducted interviews with children and other people in the community to discuss the achievements and problems of our projects. We will report more on this in the next issue.

Newsletter in email version is available

To subscribe, please contact [nomad@nomad-int.org](mailto:nomad@nomad-int.org)

#### Notes from the Staff

- I visited Thailand. We conducted a survey through a translator, but I realized keenly that indeed the knowledge of the local language was essential to understand the children and teachers there. It motivated me to start learning the Thai language after coming back to Japan. (Fukatsu)
- I was astonished to find that children in Thailand were so good at drawing. The colors they used were so vibrant and each character is lively. Once again I felt how wonderful a child's imagination is. (Tajima)