

Project Report

Information about recent project activities

**The change of the reading environment in rural areas
~ The report of the stay in Thailand (1. Nan Province) ~**

It has been six years since our library projects in Thailand started in 1998. The first stage of our project was building school libraries, and we sought a more effective way to expand the result of the improvement in reading environment. It has now stepped up to mobile libraries, family libraries, the promoting of reading books and so on. Our Japanese staff stayed for about one month in November with local families in Nan and Phitsanulok Provinces, in the project's school districts, in order to inspect what these project activities have affected and to consider our project's further activities, concerning social and cultural background in the local areas. We will report about this in two parts. This time, we would like to report about Nan Province mainly. We found that our project activities have affected areas all over the district and the reading environment there has been gradually enriched with the help of local's self-effort.

Library as a comfortable place

At Ban Wang Yao Elementary School in Nan Province, which we inspected, it was seen every day that over fifty students came to the library after lunch and were eagerly reading books sitting on a floor. With many books for kids and friendly decorations, we learned the library has become a comfortable place for kids. Also from the kindergarten adjoining the school, kids came over and ask female staff from our counterpart organization to read books on the shelves as they are not yet able to read alphabets. For these children growing up with colourful picture books, "Books always amuse them." This could refer the big change from before our project supported them, when they only had textbooks and dictionaries as books.

The library is not only for current students. A teacher who is said "she lives at the library" opens on weekends if possible, so graduated students sometimes come to read books. A teacher from a local high school says that the students graduated from this elementary school tend to read more books than the others. They seem to take their reading experiences set at the elementary school over their high school life.

The influence of our library project's activities are spreading over local areas

This library is known as a "beautiful library" among teachers at other schools and is very popular. With recent education reform, for those teachers, who now have to arrange the plans for their classes by themselves instead of nationally-standardized teaching guidelines, the library has a role as a resource center. The influence of our activities is seen all over the district as teachers were stimulated by their visit to this library and are trying to improve theirs.

In this district, the local's efforts to improve reading environment has been seen as a high school sent their proposal to local government to build new library, and the province library widely increased their stocks with the library budget. The other changes we saw there are that more people at restaurants and local halls have been reading newspapers as their delivery lines became more efficient thanks to recent improvement of transportation, and a rental book shop had opened three years ago and it had been mainly used by high school students.

These improvements of the reading environment over the district can be considered as due to the recent recovery of the economy from the currency crisis in 1997, the improvement

*The interview of
a teacher*

We interviewed a local school teacher who takes care of the library.

Q. What was the biggest change since the library opened?

A. The students' study habit has changed and they have been more interested in learning. It has affected their future aspirations.

Q. Did you see effects that you had not expected before starting the library activities?

A. We had first thought the effect of our library would remain at our school, but it had spread in and outside the district, which made me surprised. Other school teachers were impressed by our library and they are trying to improve their libraries.

(Ms. Boonprom, a teacher at Ban Wang Yao Elementary School in Nan Province)

She, living behind the school, works very hard and is well liked by students and parents.

of transportation, and the generally rising social expectations towards education; additionally, our library activities might be considered a factor. One reason why this worked efficiently could be because Nan province was a "closed community."

People have a very close relationship in Nan province. It is their daily life to have meals at a neighbour's house and to communicate with others braiding bamboos which is people's side business. Teachers live in the village and are respected as a counselor for various problems of the local people. After graduating from elementary school, children go to the high school which is only one in the district. As mentioned, they actively and deeply communicate within the district so that information easily spreads through locals. But the mountains surrounding the district make people blocked in on the other hand. Their closed living environment could encourage our activities to easily stimulate the district. Contrast with Phitsanulok Province, our next place of report, this is an interesting element to consider in our activities effect.

From the Project Site

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

Tsunami, general election, and future Thailand

(The Sumatra earthquake and tsunami at the end of last year were a disaster of unprecedented magnitude. In Japan, there has been great concern about the situation. How about in Thailand, one of the countries affected by the disaster? Our local staff in Bangkok has reported on circumstances scarcely touched by the Japanese media.)

The most disastrous tsunami in history shocked Thailand. However, earlier this year Prime Minister Thaksin refused the offer that developed countries had considered to freeze the debt of devastated countries. He said "The help from overseas should be given to worse devastated areas. Thailand will recover by itself." He also announced to complete the recovery within one year.

Since the term of the house of Representative expired on January 5, the general election will be held on February 6. Current Prime Minister Thaksin is expected to hang on for another term. His response to Tsunami damage has increased his value.

In the last four years, the Thaksin Administration has worked out to develop rural areas. As their main strategy was "One Tambon One Product" (Tambon means an administrative region), they supported to commercialize and sell locally specialized products. These products are now seen at a special corner of One Tambon One Product in supermarkets and department stores anywhere in the country. They have also established 78,000 of village funds in domestic to finance farmers. Although some of these were criticized as "pork-barrel policies," they have done effects comprehensively. Even though the profit had not spread over the nation, their policies made a certain measure of success.

Prime Minister Thaksin's response after tsunami like mentioned earlier glimmers of his aim to be economically independent and become a leader of the region. But his achievements in the last four years have proved that his policy is not only bravado. Now Thailand might be standing at their turning point again with recovery from the disaster and the election.

(Reported by Yagi, Our local staff in Thailand)

From the Office

Information from the executive office

Our activities' report session will be held!

= Send books for kids ~The library project and the activity to encourage reading books:

The experience in Thailand and The Republic of Georgia =

We will report on how our successive library projects have affected the areas and how these experiences will help the new project in Georgia. Our staff who visited these countries will talk, with recent photos, about Nomad's international support activities, based on the latest inspection in Thailand (November, 2003) and visit to Georgia (February, 2005). You'll learn more than you could read in the Newsletter.

After the reports, a small party will be held to allow participants to socialize and exchange information. We will also introduce books and products related to Thailand and Georgia and sell the picture books created by children in Thailand. Looking forward to seeing you.

Date: 2005/02/23 Wednesday 19:00~21:00

Place: Waseda Hoshi-en, Hoshien-kaikan Building No.1, 50 people hall on the first basement level
(5 min. walk from Waseda station on Tokyo Metro Tozai line)

Session fee: free

* Please let us know your name, address, and contact number by email, fax or telephone before the session.

Let's send 1000 books to Thai kids

This year's library project in Thailand is to send about 1000 books to 11 schools which are the base of the project. However, because of lack of the budget, it has been difficult to carry on our project. Many children are waiting for new books. We do need your support not to take children's reading habit down.

We gladly accept donations from units of 1,000 yen. (We can send four books to kids with 1000 yen.)

<Account transfer information>

Postal Transfer, account number: 00100-2-14174

Account holder: Nomad International

Mizuho Bank, Shibuya Branch,

Account number: 3507509

Account holder: Nomad International

*Please write your name, address, and a note stating it was a donation to the library project. If you transfer into Mizuho Bank, please notify us by E-mail, Fax, or postal mail.

Notes from the Staff

- Sumatra tsunami was inconceivable disaster. I hope that devastated people will soon rise up from grief and restart their usual life. (Fukatsu)
- With the experience of last year's new effort and the meeting of new people, we will expand Nomad's activities more widely this year. You can expect us. (Tajima)
- We often hear the news of natural disaster these days. I wonder if they were related to global warming. I strongly hope this year that people live without suffering from disasters. (Ito)

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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).