



BAAN DOI Newsletter

No. 14 / December 2015

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Dear BAAN DOI Friends,

recently Barbara and I had something special to celebrate, 8 years in Mae Sai! Already a whole quarter of our lives we've spent here in the north of Thailand. Incredible! We have never regretted our choice, on the contrary. Our work at BAAN DOI still fulfills us, and the fact that we can help more and more children, motivates us to keep going, because there is still much to do.

Here in Mae Sai, at the border with Myanmar and Laos, illegal immigration is on the daily agenda. Many of the people living here are stateless. The resulting problems are poverty, lack of health care and human trafficking.

Scott Norman devotes an article on the topic of statelessness in this newsletter

issue. David Grad, who has completed an internship at BAAN DOI will tell us something about his thesis. And Lylia Gerard, the first volunteer at BAAN DOI, is reporting about her visit after 6 years and what has changed at BAAN DOI during that time.

Christmas is coming and our children are looking forward to the celebration and, like all children, especially to the presents.

We wish you all

***Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!***

Graziella for the BAAN DOI Team

Graziella and Barbara with their daughters



The BAAN DOI children





Lylia in 2009 together with Graziella and the first BAAN DOI Kids (left)

Lylia together with her partner Roger und Graziella's daughter Felicia exactly six years later (below)

Six Years Later

In November 2009 Lylia travelled for the first time to BAAN DOI. In this article she is going to describe her newly formed impressions, six years later.

The first volunteer

At the beginning of November 2009, I have come to BAAN DOI for two months. At that time I visited my friend Graziella, with whom I had studied in Fribourg. On the area of BAAN DOI there were a children's house, a sanitary house and a small kitchen with a lounge.

Barbara and Graziella had founded BAAN DOI and took care of three children. In the two months of my stay another 15-year-old girl came to live at BAAN DOI. We met her in very bad health in a small room together with her grandmother and her little sister. The girl affected by HIV, was taken care of in the BAAN DOI orphanage and within a short time her health got better. Today she is 21-years old, has high-school degree and is working in Bangkok in a sewing machine company as an English translator.

The first website

I came to BAAN DOI to program the first homepage. So In the two months I was working a lot on the computer. In addition, I could participate in the life of BAAN DOI and help here and there, and enjoy the great food of Pa Tu (our cook and nanny).



The first trees

Now, exactly six years later, I returned to BAAN DOI for a short time – and I could almost not recognize it. The trees, which six years ago were just planted and which we needed to water every day have grown up to the sky. It has become a green oasis. Unbelievable how much trees can grow in six years!

And as the trees also the BAAN DOI family has grown. There are three new children's houses and now 20 children are living in the BAAN DOI orphanage Pa Tu has a much bigger kitchen and the kids are jumping happily on the trampoline.

I wish the whole BAAN DOI family to continue with so much enthusiasm and so much heart - and I'm curious how BAAN DOI will look like in another six years.

See you in 2021!

BAAN DOI has been supported from the beginning by people of Barbara and Graziella's hometown. Some also helped actively on site at BAAN DOI.

We appreciate the support of volunteers at the orphanage. For 2016 our team is already complete but we are very pleased about visitors. Please contacts us and let us know if you would like to visit.



Sleeping boy at the border crossing to Myanmar

Statelessness

*Written by Scott Norman,
Volunteer at BAAN DOI*

Take a moment to think of the things that identify you, things that help others identify you, for example your birth certificate, your drivers licence, your student ID card, your bank account and even your passport. I want you to close your eyes and imagine these things sitting in front of you, maybe you have your birth certificate laminated or perhaps you can see the shiny cover of your passport (maybe even dream that bank account has a little more than it does). Now just take a breath and imagine these things disappearing from your very eyes. Your birth certificate is gone, your drivers licence and all those other things that identify you are gone.

For most of us in the developed world this is hard to imagine but sadly for millions of people round the world they don't have these documents and in most of these cases these documents simply never existed and may never exist.

No passport? So what? We can live without international travel. No bank account, well more difficult but there are ways. But how do you find a job and earn a living with no way to identify who you are? How do you survive in a situation of statelessness? The answer is often heartbreaking.

Statelessness offers you limited options in life, it's difficult to get a job, education is no longer an option, government health care is unavailable and private health care is unreachable with no steady income and day to day life can force you into things you never imagined.

In Southeast Asia people are generally poorer than the rest of the world and statelessness is a big problem, not just in the rural communities and villages. Woman, men and children find themselves begging and even turning to crime, begging and stealing just to be able to survive, often living on the streets, alone or with their children.

Human trafficking is a global problem, we see problems of this in so many countries, from Australia to China. Human trafficking is real and is everywhere. Human trafficking is broad, a result of it could be someone selling their body for sex to support themselves or their families, it might be the man who becomes a masseur and finds himself engaging in sexual activity to get more income, it is the lady who sits on the street with a dirty cup asking for money, it is also the man and woman who make money from children they make beg on the streets, who threaten, intimidate and force people to become sex workers.

Statelessness is a state of being and a state of mind, it is the most degrading limitation that a man, woman or child could experience.

It is hard to imagine, it was certainly something I never wanted to see with my own eyes, but as I complain this morning about my shower being not hot enough or yesterday when I was complaining that my landlord may raise the rent, millions of people are living in a state of limbo, with no legal rights, with no security, often with no support and the most heartbreaking of all, often no hope.

In BAAN DOI we are often confronted with children who lack any documents and are stateless.

Often it is unclear when and where they were born. In connection with HIV / AIDS statelessness could be a death sentence, because the access to medical care is denied.

One of the main objectives in caring for the children at BAAN DOI is therefore, next to health care and education, to verify their identity.



David with the kids after the dream catcher workshop

My Time at BAAN DOI

When, in spring 2015, I received the news that I was accepted as an intern in BAAN DOI I was very happy to get the opportunity to do this in northern Thailand. As always, if you go to a foreign country, in the first few weeks everything is new and you feel a stranger to yourself. But not so at BAAN DOI. After only a few days I felt well received and that I was welcome.

The first few days I lived in the orphanage so I could get to know the children and the daily routines first hand. It was a pleasure to experience the children eating breakfast together in the morning and in the afternoon coming home from school and playing. On their faces I could recognize that they were fine, even though sometimes they had to do homework until late. Sometimes I wish I could have granted them to just have time to play the whole evening.

I personally did not know BAAN DOI until one year ago, and so I was even more surprised when I found out about the major changes and the rapid growth of this actually quite young project. "What a great thing to accomplish in such a short time!" I thought to myself. But I understood very soon that this is not only to ascribe to the people working on the spot, but also to the many people in Europe, who support this project through donations, time or know-how. The maintenance of this structure over thousands of kilometers, takes a lot of time, effort and above all idealism, con-

viction and hope to achieve the goals. But there are no doubts any more, BAAN DOI exists, works and is continuing to grow, thanks to the many people who support the project locally or from Europe. When I understood that, in addition to my role as an intern (where I dealt with the social work subjects), also came the role as an active supporter. I decided to devote my remaining time (of about) 2 months, fully to BAAN DOI. I asked myself what I have to give beyond my time and attendance.

In school we learn how to pay attention to resource-orientation, so in regards to those with whom you work, already have and to use and strengthen it (their strengths and talents). Theory is right and beautiful, but I realized that it was primarily concerned with, what I was able to do, to share and to use.

So it was that, because of my long career as a paramedic, I held a first aid course together with the children. From simple bandaging to salvage techniques and recovery position we practiced everything to

From David's internship report: "This internship has considerably influenced my future path. ...

Especially in the case of ethnic minorities, they should not only put efforts in primary care and security, but in helping them to share their own culture and their knowledge.

My experiences with the Akha hill tribe people were a significant reason to develop this inner attitude.





David during his farewell evening

give the children security and knowledge that they can use in an emergency case. For me personally, it was a wonderful, fun experience which I would not have wanted to miss.

Every Sunday I was teaching English at English Star in the BAAN DOI office. A task which at first was very challenging for me, since I could not speak Thai and the little children only very little English. I learned, that especially children can communicate and understand very much nonverbally. So it turned out that we learned from each other. I taught the pronunciation of words of daily use in English and they tried to teach me them in Thai. Finally, I must say that the children have learned probably faster than me. With a smile on my face I look back at the time in the English classroom, since then, I have great respect for the people who teach others. It is a challenging task, where you will always be lovingly pointed out to your own blind spots. And you learn a virtually infinite patience with your counterpart and with yourself.

At the end of my internship we made some dream catchers and the children could write their wishes on strips of cloth and hang these on the dream catcher. So in the future they should be spared of spirits (many children are afraid of ghosts) and realize their deepest desires.

While I was there, two more children have come to live in the BAAN DOI family and I was able to experience how the other children, welcomed the “new ones” and helped them settle in. It is a challenge to adapt from one day to the next one to new people and a new environment, but due to the loving care of the children and especially the caretakers on site, it did not take long until they felt comfortable and already an integral part of BAAN DOI. Each child brings something wonderfully unique into the group, and BAAN DOI is trying to support this, while the cultural and individual characteristics of each child are valued and respected.

At this point I want to express my deep gratitude and respect to all the people I have met and who have welcomed me with an open heart and with confidence. My thanks go to the staff and the children of BAAN DOI who welcomed me, and from whom I could learn so much, as well as learning from me. I am convinced that the project BAAN DOI will continue to grow and attract many joyful people, who understand their importance in this global healing process.

I am looking forward to a reunion with the children and am excited to see what has changed at Baan Doi in the meantime.

Namaskar, thank you!

David Grad studies Social Work at the University of Applied Sciences “Oberösterreich” in Linz, Austria and has completed an internship at BAAN DOI.

An internship at BAAN DOI is a great opportunity to immerse in the Thai culture and to learn and experience new things on many different levels. It requires a high degree of autonomy and self-responsibility. BAAN DOI accepts applications for the year 2017.

Thank you very much



BAAN DOI – Home and
Healing Center for
Children

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