

Baan Dada

Baan Dada is a Children's Home and community economic development center located on the Thailand/Burma border. Baan means "house" in Thai and Dada is Sanskrit for "brother." Baan Dada is home to approximately 60 disadvantaged or orphaned children.

About

Baan Dada children's home and community services is a project of the Neohumanist Foundation. It started as a boys' home in Huay Ma Lai village, Sangklaburi, Kanchanaburi province in 1994, in an effort to protect the growing number of disadvantaged children in the area. Sangklaburi borders Burma (Myanmar) where many refugees and migrant families moved to this area due to poverty, disease, and political repression by the Burmese military Government.

There are currently two Dadas at the home who are responsible for the development of the children, the home and many community based projects in this area. Dada is a Sanskrit word meaning brother.

The main objective is to empower the children through education, formal and non-formal. They are encouraged and taught many skills, from playing musical instruments, sewing, fixing motorbikes, art, languages and technical skills. The children are taught to respect all people, creatures, religion and to practice vegetarianism. This is based on the Neo Humanist's philosophy "love for all created beings in this world".

The home also provides jobs for single Mothers, refugees and local families who help care for the children, assist with farming, construction and weaving projects. Baan Dada is an independent community based project that supports the people in the surrounding areas. It has initiated several community services, and livelihood projects.

The home is proactive in helping ourselves. This is one of the long term goals we wish to achieve. We are doing this by selling hand-drawn cards and bookmarks by the children, planting rubber trees for future harvest, and performances by the children of cultural dancing and music. Of course, we also welcome support from volunteers and donors

Location and Background Information

Baan Dada is situated in Huay Ma Lai. This is a remote village nearby Sangklaburi in the north-western part of Kanchanaburi province in western Thailand on the border with Myanmar - approximately a seven hour drive from Bangkok. Huay Ma Lai is situated in a beautiful natural setting near one of the few remaining rainforests in Thailand, however the political situation in Burma has greatly effected this area. The village is a home to a population that consists not only of Thais but also largely of Karen and Mon coming across the border. These Karen and Mon are persecuted by the Burmese military dictatorship and many have been driven from their homes to seek refuge in Thailand.



These so called hill-tribes are not fully recognized as Thai inhabitants and therefore don't have the same rights as the Thais. They face major obstacles in acquiring adequate health care, education, and employment opportunities. To protect the social, political and economical well-being of Thailand they are not allowed to leave the area without permission of the government.

Ecological destruction has changed the face of the area following construction of a dam in 1982, which generates power for use in Bangkok. Local villages faced mandatory relocation and lost their traditional land and jobs.

Most of the population has a low level of education and is living in impoverished conditions along with those living in the five surrounding communities of Huay Ma Lai: Ban Mai, Lo Kani, Yakadi, Huay Kop and Monsoto. They are presently dependent on bamboo and thatch for construction and often persist in illegal logging to sell or use in building, increasing the serious stress on the local eco-system. Lack of employment, proper medical care, education and sanitation has reduced family life to a struggle for survival in this remote, undeveloped area.

The villagers cannot obtain enough funds to increase agricultural production, a practice in which the community is most highly involved, by buying more livestock and implementing modern agricultural methods. As a consequence the community remains stuck in the cycle of poverty.