

Baan Unrak

Baan Unrak children's home, established in 1991 in Thailand, gives destitute children and abandoned mothers a home and hope for a better future. Baan Unrak, the "Home of Joy," provides basic needs to more than 140 children, and support to several abandoned mothers.

Unexpected beginning...

In 1986, Didi Ananda Devamala came to Thailand to work on an agricultural and environmental project. Upon arrival in Thailand, she worked as an English teacher. She also opened a small study center for children in a slum.

Three years later, Didi went to Sanghlaburi to start her agricultural project. An abandoned wife asked Didi to help her take care of her child. Both mother and baby suffered from severe malnutrition and other illnesses. So she thought that she could provide some temporary help.

People heard that Didi could look after abandoned children. The villagers saw how she was helping the children and trusted her. The number of children staying at the house increased day by day, and Baan Unrak became an orphanage. Today, there are about 150 children. The project is managed by Didi Devamala and Didi Aanuraga (Baan Unrak School), by local staff and by volunteers from around the world. Baan Unrak also employs housemothers who provide love and care to all the children, and especially the infants.

Between 2004 and 2006, the number of children increased dramatically. The home became crowded and it was decided to buy some land and build a bigger children's home. In June 2006, the children moved into the new building. Now the project is able to properly take care of all the children.

During the last ten years, Baan Unrak developed various small scale projects, such as opening an education center and starting income generating activities. These benefit both the children and the community, and establish another link between them. We also start a farm and we are growing organic vegetables and fruits, as well as spices and herbal medicines for our own consumption.

Baan Unrak children's home has become a community development project, with the aim of making the home more self-sustaining. The project uses local

and available resources and promotes environmental concern among the children and the community.

Baan Unrak School

For several years, we tried to send Baan Unrak's children to Thai government schools. They faced many barriers such as language (most of the children do not speak Thai when they arrive at Baan Unrak), or a difficult personal history. Moreover, the government schools were overcrowded and provided our children with a poor quality education.

To further our mission, in 2004, we opened a school for Baan Unrak's children. In addition to providing education to the children, the goal is to build an environment where students can develop all parts of their minds and become active learners.

Many volunteers from around the world come to teach English. The children need to be fluent in Thai and English, to ensure their future integration into society. We try to give each child an opportunity to continue his/her study at the high-level school, in Bangkok or in Kanchanaburi.

Baan Unrak school includes a nursery and kindergarten. This provides care for the youngest children and gives their mothers, who come to us in emotional distress, an opportunity to rest.

Baan Unrak school also welcomes children from the surrounding area. Children of migrants or hill tribes people often face difficulties integrating into the government schools, as they are often unregistered. In 2006, Baan Unrak school was providing education to 180 children, more than 100 came from the community.

