

Blood Foundation is a small NGO based in northern Thailand near the Thai-Burma border. We are a group of volunteers from different nations committed to serving the various people of this region through a series of education, health and income-generation projects.

The last half year has seen a steady influx of people into Fang Valley to join our programs. We continue to work with the migrant workers around Fang and aim to raise awareness of the situation in Burma while promoting a message of good faith and interconnectedness.

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**Monk for a Month - Guided tours on the path of enlightenment.**



Monk for a Month continues to be a cornerstone of the organisation and in the last six months we have again been blessed to receive a steady stream of wonderful people coming from all over the world to do the program. Each of the guests have entered solemnly into the temple experience, some men and women taking the eight precepts, some men ordaining as novices and some electing to remain as lay practitioners during their stay.

There are many special aspects to this unique program; the association with Dr. Aphisit for which we are most grateful, the contact between guests and the young novice monks and of course people having the opportunity to gain real insight into Thai Buddhism. One of the most wonderful facets of this program continues to be exposing the guests to the situation of Shan migrants in the Fang region, introducing them to our Blood Foundation projects and informing them about the ongoing crisis in Burma. It is this very coming together of personal-spiritual development with the wider urge to practical service that makes Monk for a Month what it is.

*"The setting itself was extraordinary in that it offered the peace and tranquillity of a temple, a spiritual environment but very much a part of the community. My stay was all the more meaningful due to the engagement with the struggle and lives of those in Burma - it made Buddhism truly come to life."*  
**Hans Wahl, INSEAD Social Enterprise Program.**

Graham Ross joined the team in September 2009 after replying to a throwaway facebook post. Since then Graham, who was on the program himself around May 2009, has worked with great enthusiasm as the key Guest facilitator down at the temple. Graham works hard to make sure that the experience for each guest is as comfortable, meaningful and as personalised as possible. He has become good friends with many of the guests, due to his cheerful nature, service-mindedness and keen Scottish sense of humour.

Arjan Fred, the Dhamma instructor for Monk for a Month ordained in May 2010 as a monk at Wat Sri Buang, the temple where the program is run. Having Fred on hand at all times has been a great thing for the guests. Fred has entered into

this with no time limit of how long he may stay. We wish him all the best on the sacred journey and enormous thanks for the great commitment to sharing the Dhamma with foreigners on the program. Fred also has formed a special connection to the children of the Daylight School, he regularly saves goods such as soy milk he receives on his morning alms to take and give to the poor Shan students. They have all grown very fond of the friendly foreign monk!

Our Guest book is now almost full and we are all blown away by all the gracious, loving, warm-hearted entries. For many people coming to the temple has clearly been a significant life-event and we all feel privileged to be a part of such journeys.

We have also enjoyed some lively discussions and interactions on the Monk for a Month facebook page, where we connect to many past, future and potential guests. More than 70% of our visitors come though facebook, a figure that is slowly dropping as we get an increase in direct referrals.

Monk for a Month is set to continue to be a small engine pumping away bringing new people, new ideas and new resources into the system to feed, support and grow the work we are doing.

# Learn to Live - Empowering Shan State's greatest resource for systemic community development.



We completed the third training of the Learn to Live program in early May 2010. This training was a similar format as the previous two, being a 2 week intensive training of monks from Shan State in north eastern Burma. The program which began largely as a teacher training has now evolved into an integrated three-fold model of development, transferring knowledge and skills in the fields of education, community health and economic development.

The majority of these monks are coming from areas in central Shan State that are inaccessible to foreigners and many of their communities are actual combat zones. The Shan people here suffer much persecution and are deprived of civic resources such as schools and medical clinics. Credible reports are that education across Burma accounts for less than 1% of GDP compared to over 50% going to the military war engine which exhausts the country's resources on a conflict in which the only enemies of the state are the people themselves.

**There are areas of central Shan State where those receiving a Primary Education number around 4% of the population of school-age children.**

Compare this to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which state:

*By 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.*

In the quest for universal primary education as well as many of the other development indicators mentioned in the MDG,

the monks across Shan State – the Shan Sangha, represent the single greatest resource available in the drive towards healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities across the Shan population of some 5.5 million inhabitants.

The idea of monks engaging in Community Development has a wide degree of acceptance among the younger generations both in Thailand and in Burma and many abbots are focused on providing such practical assistance for their lay communities in what is variously known as Applied Buddhism or Socially Engaged Buddhism.

**So the Learn to Live program's mission is to equip the Shan Sangha with the necessary skills and knowledge in order to support the monks' own ambition of improving education and community health as well as fostering economic development in this stunningly beautiful land so blighted by human hands.**

We have now completed the training of 30 abbots and monks and we are planning the next training for later in 2010 after the rainy season. This training will depart from the former model and focus solely on economic development, which will be largely trainings in integrated agriculture and improved farming techniques, as well as basic business training. For this purpose each venerable monk will be accompanied by a lay person from their local community who will act as the community business manager and handle the day to day running of the micro-economic operations. With funds created from their projects the monks will have the

resources to develop their schools, clinics and a host of other community-empowering initiatives. It's ambitious, it's far seeing, but in order to effect real change in Shan communities we all need to be in it for the long haul.

Learn to Live is a network with the principle members being Blood Foundation, Partners Relief and Development, Khom Loy Development Foundation and the Shan Sangha.



# Daylight School - for Shan migrants.



In late 2009, we were alerted to the predicament of a number of Shan migrant families living on orange farms hard along the Thai-Burma border. Many of these were recent arrivals to Thailand, having fled the conflict in their native homeland. Being in Thailand with no papers and not speaking Thai language makes them extremely vulnerable to the point that many of the families dare not leave the farm of their employment for fear of being arrested and sent back to Burma.

Working on the orange farms of Fang is the staple job for the local migrant labour. The working conditions are dangerous on account of the many poisons used on the crops and the living conditions are extremely basic, with most families living in a tin shed.

So the opportunity for the Daylight school was proposed to us by Shan teacher Kru Lan Mao who we know and have worked with before. He organised the families and found more than 20 students who were not attending any school. Kru Lan Mao is the

Head Teacher of the school and his care and dedication to his students inspires all who visit this place.

Daylight School opened under blue skies on February 2nd 2010. During the annual school holidays in April and May we refurbished the building on the bottom of the farm and it was ready for the first day of the new school year on May 17. We are deeply grateful to Chris Savard as well as Graham and Mew for their efforts in so beautifully restoring the old building.

Now the school has 22 students in fulltime primary education. There are another 10 younger ones in the nursery which is now run by the families themselves. We provide a warm meal at lunchtime and the students are studying Thai language, Mathematics, English as well as Shan language and culture.

The school costs around UDS\$500/month to run and has been funded to date by major contributions by One World Collections in Australia, Khom Loy Development Doudation and CBS De Tarissing Shool from Holland. We are in the process of seeking ongoing funding to secure the long-term future of this important project.



# Parliament of the World's Religions - Hearing each other, healing the earth.



## Imagine an event like the World Cup but for religion instead of football...

OK it's not a perfect analogy, the Parliament of Religions is more about cooperation than competition and they definitely use different kinds of trumpets. But certainly the colour, the diversity of people, the pageantry and the sense of a global community are present in both.

Every 5 years the world's religions come together in a remarkable display of harmony, diversity, pluralism and human brotherhood. Cardinals from the Catholic Church, holy men from India, Buddhist from South East Asia, Jews, Muslims, monks, nuns, spiritual teachers, thinkers and leaders from all spectrums come together for one week to discuss Life, The Universe and Everything. It is a wholly remarkable event.

Blood Foundation was honoured to take part in the 2009 Parliament of World's Religions in Melbourne last December. Our presentation was on:

**"The reality of the Universal Human Family and its bearing on: a) Indigenous / European relations in Australia; b) the efforts to bring peace and justice to war-torn Burma and c) as a working foundation for action-based interreligious cooperation in healing the earth."**

We had a dream team of presenters lead by Professor Jim Bowler, followed by Paul Howorth and Kate Bengé. Jim began by presenting the convergence of mind, matter and

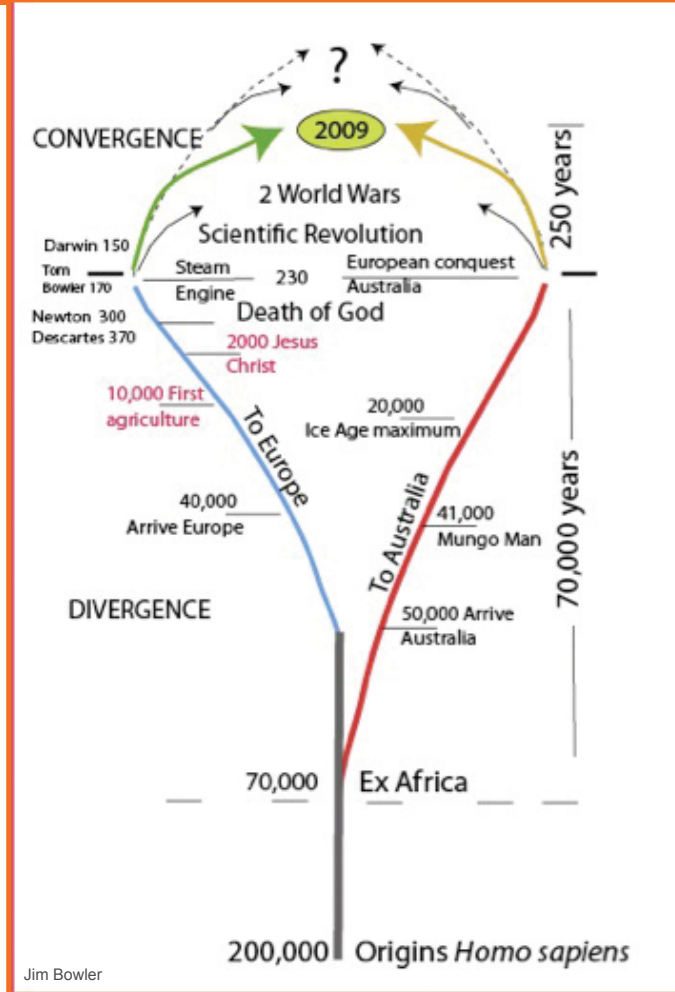
spirit harmonising the realms of science, philosophy and religion. He presented this from his unique perspective as a distinguished Earth Scientist and a thinking catholic. He gave a wonderful synopsis of his own spiritual and intellectual journey and the wider significant of recognising the sacredness of nature. Set against the backdrop of the historic discovery of Mungo Man, it was a thrilling, clear and entertaining presentation.

Paul then followed on, building on the theme of harmony and convergence and going onto discuss his professional area of justice and development for indigenous Australians and looking to practical and respectful ways to engage our aboriginal brothers and sisters, from whom we all have much to learn.

Kate, a young women from Wellington, NZ, who had spent a month volunteering with Blood Foundation earlier in 2009 was our third speaker. As such Kate was representing the projects and ideas of the work here in the field. At 19 Kate would have been one of the youngest presenters at this Parliament and showed great talent and maturity in taking the themes of the talk and applying them to Monk for a Month, Learn to Live, the situation in Burma and the work of Blood Foundation

We were very proud of all the presenters and it was a truly wonderful exercise for all of us who were there.

Special thanks go to Gina Flash for her incredible work and tireless commitment in providing the visual presentation and to Peter Forell who captured the talks on video.



Jim's diagram of the divergence and convergence of two remarkable journeys to the one destination; European Australians and Mungo Man and his people.



## Volunteer Program - Cultural exchange



We have renewed our volunteer English teaching program at Moug Chum. Following the amazing work over 4 months of James Hallamore and Jamie Hamley we have rebooted the program and are offering volunteer placements at this picturesque wonderful school under the guidance of Pi Pui.

Sam Botts White was with us for a month in May 2010. Sam, a former Monk for a Month guest came back to volunteer as an English teacher and did a great job preparing and delivering lessons. It's always great to see people coming back and we all enjoyed having Sam around again.

In June/July we had Bianca Basch, Clémence Corthouts and Rebecca Tippmann teaching at Ban Wiang School in Fang township as well as teaching the children at Moug Chum on the Burma border.



## Fang Valley - Journeys of the Spirit.

Our next project is to offer a variety of packages that combine the Monk for a Month temple-stay, the volunteer program, Hilltribe homestays at Nong Tau, Doi Phumune and Doi Ankhaan with training in social enterprise, emerging philosophy and service-based living.

We are combining all these existing components into an integrated experience of deep tourism. By offering such many-sided adventures we hope to attract more visitors to Fang Valley, thereby growing our organisation and building our capacity to accomplish greater things together.



## Nong Tau Evening School & New Beginnings Shan migrant education.



The village evening school at Nong Tau is continuing well. In April, teacher Aer had her first holiday since the school opened as a Freeschool in 2005. There are consistently 20-25 Lahu village children here 5 nights a week, learning Thai and preparing themselves for entry and success in the Thai education system. Located in the hills along the border region, this twin Black and Red Lahu village is in a picturesque location and the option of visitors doing overnight home-stays here now exists through Fang Valley – Journeys of the Spirit.

We are pleased to announce the opening of a second New Beginnings school on a rice farm located 20 minutes from Fang township. Following on the success of teacher's Aay's school based on an orange farm in Song Char we now have this second school for Shan adults and children under the supervision of teacher Deng.

New Beginnings is an evening program three nights a week that teaches Thai language to Shan migrant work-

ers and their families. Speaking Thai is the one skill that can really change the circumstances of vulnerable migrants and informal refugees. Recently three young adults from the Song Char school were accepted into the local government non-formal education program. This puts them on track to having increased official status in Thailand which means vastly improved rights, life-security and opportunities. We are thrilled for them, wish them good luck in their studies and hope that many more of our students will be given this chance.



## Novices Scholarship Program



In May 2010, we saw the graduation of three of our beloved novices who have now left high school and Wat Sri Buen Ruang behind to make their way in the big wide world. Novices Joy, Chatree (not pictured here) and Auythachai (Ay) were an indelible part of the experience for many Monk for a Month guests.

All three have now received support from past guests, either directly or through the Novice Scholarship fund to help them on their forward journeys. Joy has disrobed and is now at university in Chiang Rai, Chatree, also now a layman is working for a year in Chiang Mai and Ay has elected to remain a monk and is studying at the Monk's university in Chiang Mai. They are all greatly missed at the temple and we wish all these great lads much success in their future careers.

## Baby Liam

On October 20th Liam Francis Bowler came flying out into the world in a Chiang Mai hospital. Brave mum Jildou endured a labour of more than 24 hours while Ben was completing the 2nd Learn to Live training up north, although he did make it for the last 5 hours before the birth. Liam has seen much of the world in his first 10 months of life, including his Aussie grandparents' spectacular 50th wedding anniversary in Melbourne as well as summer in Holland with all the excitement of the world cup finals. He is already famous on facebook and is widely considered to be adorable.



# Thank You!!

We have received such great help and support from many different people, we just cannot do what we do here without such generosity and commitment from you all. Not everyone is on this list as it's just not possible to thank every single person who has contributed to the cause. So special thanks go to:

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