

# **LIFE NOW! !**

## **Diary 10-12 Feb 2005**

### **10 February 2005**

A group of EMPOWER street performers "Honey Bee Special" from Chiangmai, Noi, Supin (Batik trainer) and me, all 8 people, arrived Phuket for the second phrase activities.

Our program today is to look at the rented house which Kaew, EMPOWER volunteer in Patong has found for us. The house is located right in the center of community where many women bar workers live, and it is walking distant from Patong beach road. We are all happy with the house, and now it is EMPOWER drop-in center, for Patong workers.

### **11 February 2005**

We set off at 9 am, to Takuapa district of Phan-Nga province, 80 some Km away to the north of Phuket island. We arrive 2 hours later at a relief Camp for Baan Nam Kem Villagers at Bang Muang sub-district. We meet with the Youth Art Group whom we work with on batik and screen print project, and 2 other NGOs who works in the same relief camp.

### **Current Situation:**

**This is the time that anyone should go back to the village and rebuild their houses, or fix their boats...**

At the meeting we assess the situation, that the current issue concern most villagers is about their land rights. Many of the villagers do not have land ownership paper. Now their houses has been destroyed by the waves, land owners take the opportunity to reclaim their land rights and do not allow them to return to where they use to live. However, the new land provided by the government is far from the sea shore, which makes their lives difficult since most of them are fishermen.

Many houses is being rebuilt by the help of the government troops and vocational volunteer students. The problem is the rebuilding plan has not consulted with the villagers who own the houses. Many questions the government why do not give them tools, when they can rebuilt their own houses, or why not use local villagers contractors to build houses.

However, the current circumstances allow them to have hope that they will be able to return to their home soon. Many people still afraid that the waves may stuck again, since there are often small earth quakes, and monsoon season is arriving, which means storm can worsen the situation. But many afraid that if they return to their home, then the government help will be stopped.

### **LIFE NOW! ! In Progress: The Village Art Center**

Witawat a workshop coordinator of Baan Nam Kem Youth Group, suggested the group should learn hard and practice more from the art workshop, so they can pass on their knowledge to younger ones in the village. He also suggested that they need help to set up the village art center, so they can organize art workshops in their village. They also would like to built archive for people who lost their lives to Tsunami, as well as collecting tools and artifacts of villagers to keep the history of the village.

They showed us numbers of batik paintings they made, all of them made on site in the village where they go everyday to see their lands and houses to remember places where they use to roam around and played with friends. They show us the plan of the village art house, which looks like one big garage shop, include workshop area, exhibition front room – the building cost around Baht 350,000.

### **Boat and Breathe Tank:**

One of the Moka tribe who attended the meeting, said his group of about 8, who earn their living from deep sea lobster catch by hand, which they have to dive 10-15 metre. They would like to go back to the sea but they need a small boat, and an oxygen tank (they can make locally), this would cost around Baht 200,000-.

### **Other products:**

There are several income generating projects in the relief camp, run by NGOs and community projects, such as basket weaving, shoulder bag and batik scarf and handkerchief. Most participants are children and house wives, who have free time to spare. However, all products made in this sectors are partly bought by project holders and sometimes visitors also help to buy them.

### **12 February 2005.**

We spend today, investigating beach villages around Phuket Island.

**Bang Tao beach:** Hotels and bungalows is being rebuilt and many businesses begin to open as usual. However, one fishing community has been moved to contemporary houses, as the land lord where they rent their land, take the land back for further development. Some of the boat has been back to the sea, but several still stranded on the shore, and unable to repair. Most people still waiting for their new fishing boat.

**Nai Yang Beach:** though this is a claimed land for reserved forest, but most of the local community has lived here much longer then the law. The dispute between the government forestry department and the community is to be escalated. We have make connection with local women's group, who promise to give us information about missing people in this community.

**Kamala Beach:** where half of the village has been destroy, including part of the school and temple's monk residents. Villagers we met at this village, complaint

that they have not yet received any compensation from the government, now many people is out of job, and many family do not have enough money to send to their children study in Bangkok. Have recruited 2 contact persons here who can help report, on loses and missing people.

These are beaches most effected besides Patong beach. Though economically, Patong has much more damaged than the other three, but in Patong area local community has not beed effected, unlike the other three beaches mentioned.

That evening EMPOWER's performers group perform in Patong bar area, which is to announce our new center in Patong area.