

GoHF Report by Mr Renato G Porzio May 2019.

The Gift of Happiness Foundation aid Giving Projects aimed at supporting families in need who are living on a garbage dump and shanty town communities

SUNDAY & MONDAY MAY 5 & 6th, 2019

Not too early morning, on Sunday, May 05th a few Go Happiness volunteers, Eddie Haworth, Nicol Burr, myself and a young student who is my step-son, Khun Tunlakhon (*nickname 'First'*). We all set our course along the main Road leading to Samut Prakan located alongside the estuary of the "mighty" Chao Praya River near Bangkok.

Some of us had been there before, and on that occasion, we discovered there are many poor communities in the area, so Eddie decided to return and find out how best we could help those needy people.

Our first stop was at a shanty town community called Thai Baan Soi 40, where we contacted Miss Rattana, who is the leader of the community that houses several hundred people, elders and children.

We handed out Go Happiness information sheet explaining the "good reason" why we were visiting the community.

And we were delighted to see how the people were very impressed with the idea of receiving some free aid from Go Happiness and are now looking forward to the charity's next visit during the weeks ahead.

We drove to another slum community not so far from the first one, and we are welcomed by a few children playing with a broken plastic truck, and three gentlemen who are resting under a big tree, trying to avoid the scorching sun; "temperature was already 39 degrees Celsius" and still quite early in the day.

Our Thai speaking student volunteer Khun First handed out another Go Happiness information leaflet and explained what the "Gift of Happiness Foundation" is doing.

One of the three gentlemen, Mr Bet, produced a very nice and warm smile, and heartily thanks us for being there.

He explained that they do not receive any help, and although the community is not very large, they have about twenty children, and they are in bad need of clothing, toweling and bed sheets. We can see from their happy expressions that they are sincerely looking forward to our call during the coming weeks.

We proceeded along a large double carriageway road; the divide, between the two carriageways, was covered by large cloths and spread with small shrimps, drying in the very hot sunlight.

We stopped the car near a wooden shed, where some people and children were resting, and few workers were making shrimp paste in a large drum, placed over a fire; they kept turning the paste inside the drum, and we could see only their eyes, as they were completely dressed in order to protect themselves from the acrid fumes; "the smell is not inviting at all".

Khun First again explains the reason why we are there, they read the leaflet, then called Mrs Pa Renu, who is the leader of the community, but she was not there, as it was Coronation day of the new King of Thailand, and she was celebrating the auspicious day with leaders of other communities in the area.

Khun First explains that we will call back again during the following weeks, and the conversation brought hopeful smiles on the faces of all the people who were around us.

Eddie then drove the car along some very bumpy and dusty rough tracks leading to a place known in the Thai language as "the bottom of the landfill or dump place". In English a large garbage dump.

Immediately we understood why such a sad and unpromising name had been so aptly bestowed, as both sides of the dusty track were full of plastic, bottles, and bags of stinking decomposing rubbish.

At the very bottom of the track, a tiny and very basic "mum and pop" shop offered us the chance to have a tin of iced coffee, and few words with the owner of the shop, Miss Boonchu, who was eager to take the lead in helping us to help the people who live on the dump close to her shop.

She gave us her phone number and directed us to the saddest part of the landfill site; we drove along an incredibly rough track in Eddie's 4x4 off-road capable truck, and Eddie noticed a big sign, which gives notice that the land there has been purchased by a company who intend to develop the land in the very near future.

In a couple of hundred metres down the track, we meet quite a few people, who welcome us with the usual warm Thai smile even though we were the only Westerners they had ever had venturing onto their dump site.

First explained what the GoHF does, and we got to know that there are tens of people living there, including quite a few children.

But, the so sad news is that because a company has bought the land, they are being evicted, and by the end of May, they must all be gone.

First asked an old lady how long she has been living there, and we froze when she told us that after forty years, she has to leave the place, with nowhere to go.

I am sure the people who surrounded us by then, now in tens, and some children, sincerely deciphered our expressions.

We ask if they will move altogether, and where, and, again, the answer was tragic; they do not know where, and they have to support their families and children.

We promise to be back soon, and we left in silence, accompanied by warm waves of farewell.

On the way back, still driving along the dusty track, which was surrounded by rubbish, we stopped the car near a little bridge.

A small, yet smelly stream flowed and wound its way into the large village straddling both sides of the stream and well hidden behind some thick vegetation.

First handed over the GoHF information leaflet to Mr Tee.

He is a moto-taxi driver and lives deep inside the "shanty" village.

Mr Tee is indeed very happy to meet us and told us that there are hundreds of people living there, elders and children.

He was heart warmed by the presence of our small "expedition", and hopeful that the GoHF will be able to help in any way possible.

Nicol walked along the footpath, which runs inside the village, and was soon "embraced" by the vegetation and small, wooden, decaying huts.

This is a very large community, and we promised to be back soon, bringing many goods, and, hopefully, more smiles to these so nice people.

We took our leave, and we all realized that today we had met many, many people, elders and children in dire need, but they endure such not happy situations with great dignity and warm hearts.

MONDAY MAY 6th2019
COMMUNITY LIVING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LANDFILL
MR. BOONCHU

May 6th2019 is a very auspicious day for all Thai people and Thailand on the whole. It marks the third and final day of the King's Coronation Ceremonies, and what a better way to "Make Merit" than visiting the poor community living at the bottom of the landfill site?

Early afternoon, together with First, we set course towards the dusty track which leads to the end of the huge landfill area, which extends on several acres of land.

First had a previous phone call with Mr Boonchu and asked him to alert the community about our visit; more especially, to have all the children ready to receive clothes, towels, toys, toiletries. There they were, waiting for us under the shade of a big tree.

Children, parents, and some elder ladies who have difficulties to walk, but all shared happy welcoming faces when they saw the Gift of Happiness car approaching.

Eddie and First unload the big bags full of goodies, and many suitcases which will be very handy when they will move away at the end of the month.

It is a feast of children and parents "fishing" among the clothes, which lie on a plastic carpet that has been laid down on the ground.

It is very inspiring witnessing how "few" items of clothing can give enthusiastic happiness to people in need.

An Irish top hat made one young girl super-happy and all the other children received many gifts of toys that made them just as happy right there on that day.

Some parents took me to a house, deep inside the garbage, and I meet an elderly woman who apologized for not being able to walk to the car to receive her portion of goods and give appropriate thanks.

It is heart-warming to see that some more fortunate parents, have spared a thought for this old lady, and brought her what she may need; sharing is a principle which runs high among these communities.

Another elder lady expresses her warm thanks to Eddie, by producing a traditional Thai bow with hands together.

Yes, there was not a better way of making merit on this so auspicious and important day for the Thai people.

Long Live the King!

Renato G Porzio.