

The Ayui Foundation is a non-religious, non-government organisation that provides a home, educational opportunities and future pathways for disadvantaged Akha hilltribe teenagers.

Ayui Foundation NEWSLETTER



Sumalee Milne, OAM
Director

October 2023

Chiang Rai, Thailand

FROM THE DIRECTOR

We have finally reached the end of the first term. It has been a quiet few months, mainly because there are not many activities to do during the rainy season.



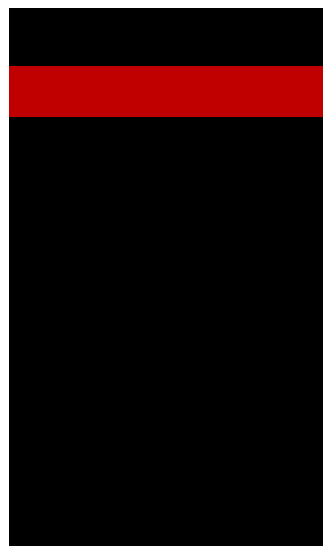
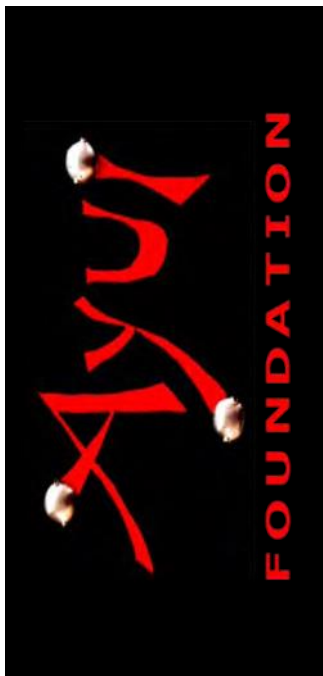
In early July, I was honored to be invited to the engagement of former graduate, Ahlae, at her aunt's village. Ahlae was brought to the Ayui Foundation by her aunt in 2010. She was born in Burma but her father (and later her step-father) died, so her mother sent her to live with her aunt in Chiang Rai to get an education. After Ahlae graduated from high school in 2013, she helped her aunt sell local souvenirs to show gratitude for taking her in all those years ago. Ahlae now sells food in a local market, and is a very outgoing, confident woman.

She is engaged to a Thai man, and his parents also attended the traditional Christian-Akha event, which included giving a dowry to her mother. Ahlae's mother was able to get a weekend-pass at the Burmese border to attend the event, and it was lovely to finally meet her.



We are very grateful for the second half of the bequeathment from the late Richard Hield, which enabled us to purchase a newer second-hand pick-up truck, which is our most important asset. Our previous truck was 14 years old, and really

needed to be replaced because we sometimes use the truck to go up mountain roads. We were able to purchase a second-hand Isuzu that is only 4 years old, with only 1 previous owner, and add a new roof and seats for the back. Our new truck is definitely an improvement on our old one, especially as the back seat has doors, making it easier for the students to get in and out, so they are very happy with it.



NEW VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



Since many non-profits are now offering paid volunteer programs due to financial necessity, and since our new Housemother previously worked as the volunteer coordinator for the popular Mirror Foundation's volunteer teaching program (now closed), the Ayui Foundation has revised our volunteer program. It focuses on teaching basic English to hilltribe children at the kindergarten and primary school levels during school time, and includes transport, accommodation, and meals at the Foundation. This well-coordinated volunteer opportunity will cost about B1,700/day for 2 weeks of volunteering. No teaching experience is necessary because our staff, who graduated with a Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education, will give a training on planning lessons as part of the orientation and provide teaching materials. Please see our website www.helpinghilltribekids.com for more details, and help spread the word. If you are looking for an unforgettable experience, fill out the application form and come join us here in beautiful Chiang Rai!

Since many non-profits are now offering paid volunteer programs due to financial necessity, and since our new Housemother previously worked as the volunteer coordinator for the popular Mirror Foundation's volunteer teaching program (now closed), the Ayui Foundation has revised our volunteer program. It focuses on teaching basic English to hilltribe children at the kindergarten and primary school levels during school time, and includes transport, accommodation, and meals at the Foundation. This well-coordinated volunteer opportunity will cost about B1,700/day for 2 weeks of volunteering. No teaching experience is necessary because our staff, who graduated with a Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education, will give a training on planning lessons as part of the orientation and provide teaching materials. Please see our website www.helpinghilltribekids.com for more details, and help spread the word. If you are looking for an unforgettable experience, fill out the application form and come join us here in beautiful Chiang Rai!

AKHA SWING FESTIVAL



This year, due to heavy rain, we didn't take the children to the annual Swing Festival, an Akha cultural event held in villages in September to celebrate the end of the planting season. Instead, the Ayui Foundation staff were invited to the nearby Akha Cultural Center for lunch for a small celebration. It was nice to see the Akha women looking so proud in all their finery.



INTERVIEW WITH AN AKHA ELDER

This is the fourth part of our series of interviews done by the students during term break. Most students interviewed their own grandparents, so it was also a bonding exercise where they got to learn about their family history, which is important for their self-identity.

The interview questions were:

1. Tell me about your life, from when you were little, up till now.
2. What Akha customs are no longer practiced, and why?
3. How is life different now, compared to before?
4. What do Akha youth have now, that you didn't have when you were young?
5. What do you want to say to the new generation of Akha youth?

**Ahdor Wui-mae, 75, female, lives in Baan Doi
(Interviewed by Nalinthip)**



I was born, and grew up, in Burma. I lived in the mountains, very undeveloped. We worked the fields for our food, as we didn't have much else. At that time, there was no electricity. Everything we needed, we made from natural resources. The villagers were later driven out because there were limited natural resources for the large number of villagers to share. So, my family moved around often, just walking on our bare feet and using horses to carry things. We eventually ended up crossing the border into Thailand and had to look for land to settle on. We lived with the forest, with nature. We drank from and bathed in nearby streams, and farmed the land. I had 8 children but 3 died, for different reasons. We have raised 5 children. Now we have moved and live right in town, and we are never moving again.

We no longer have traditional ceremonies to appease the spirits. Before, if someone fell sick, there would be a ceremony to sacrifice a pig or chicken for the spirits. We believed that this would make the sick person better. This was a ceremony for those who believed in spirit worship, before. *[Animism was the traditional belief system of the Akha]* These ceremonies are no longer done because most of the Akha people have converted to Christianity now.

Before, transportation was difficult. It was not convenient to travel. We lived in undeveloped areas. It's different than today, when we have access to many conveniences. It's not difficult to do things, like before. We live in better houses, and transportation is not hard. New technology means many things we use are better now. Things are more convenient, especially when you compare it with before, when we didn't even have electricity. We used to use horses or buffaloes for transport. But the vehicles we have now make travelling easier and faster.

Now, the Akha youth have telephones, TVs, computers, Notebooks, motorbikes, and many other conveniences.

I believe the Akha youth of today are very lucky that they were not born in the time when life was so hard, in the past. I want to tell them to study hard. Collect as much knowledge as you can so that you can get a good job, so life won't be hard when you are older. **And when you are older - no matter where you end up - don't forget that you are Akha.**

THANK YOU



To our friends, Glenn and Esther Stein, for inviting the kids for another swim and for the delicious BBQ ribs.



To Chiang Rai resident, Alan Bray, for donating his exercise machine and taking the time to demonstrate to the boys how to stretch before using it and how each piece of equipment is used.

To long-time supporters at the Rotary Club of Glenorchy for their \$250 donation, which we used to install 2 simple roll-down shades at the Girls Home and purchase sacks of chicken and fish food for the Boys Home.



*If you would like to VISIT, FUNDRAISE OR DONATE
please email us at ayui.foundation@gmail.com
www.ayuifoundation.org*

See www.helpinghilltribekids.com to volunteer



For donations in Thailand
ธนาคารไทยพาณิชย์
SIAM COMMERCIAL BANK
Acc no: 5072669424
Acc name: Ayui Foundation



Visit www.ayuifoundation.org for online tax-deductible donations in Australia.