

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



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Chiang Rai, Thailand

FLOOD CRISIS IN CHIANG RAI



This year's long rainy season is one that I will never forget. On September 11th, due to heavy rainfall from Typhoon Yagi (the strongest typhoon in decades, that originated in China), Chiang Rai suffered the worst floods ever in recorded history, and the areas closest to the Maekok River were deluged with

muddy water as the river broke its banks and broke bridges. After continuous, heavy rain since the day before, on September 12th, at about 4am, my staff started sending me photos of the badly-flooded Girls Home. My house was also flooded - ankle-deep inside and knee-high outside, and my water and power had been out since the day before when the heavy rain started. I called my staff and was told that her, the girls and the volunteer were stranded upstairs and, like me, had to wait till sunrise to assess the damage and our next move...

The previous night, the girls had put some furniture and belongings up high, expecting a knee-high flood like last year but nobody expected the water to reach shoulder-height. Being close to the river, being hit by the remnants of super-typhoon Yagi, and the fact that water had seeped in through the cement brick wall from our neighbors' and our tiled floor, and that the Girls Home is built on low-lying land meant we were pretty powerless to prevent the flooding and had no choice but to wait for the water to recede. In the afternoon, my staff was able to contact local government rescue workers and the girls were evacuated by boat and went to stay at the Boys Home further away, which was unaffected.



Meanwhile, at first light, I had climbed my ladder over the neighboring wall into my mother's empty house. I did 5 trips/climbs, wading in the water, with my 2 small dogs, 2 backpacks of clothing and one garbage bag filled with water, snacks and supplies. That left me utterly exhausted; now in a dry house but still with no power or running water. When my phone battery died a few days later, the housefather was able to park at the closest blockaded road and wade in to check on me, and take my phone to charge. He brought it back with fresh food that the girls cooked for me, as I had to rely on food and water donated by local government workers in boats, and share it with my dogs. But since there was no electricity, any extra food spoiled in the humidity. On the 5th day, the water had receded somewhat and the water and electricity was back on for me. The girls, meanwhile, were enjoying 'camping out' at the Boys Home and were eating fresh fish from our pond, fresh eggs from our hens, and bamboo shoots foraged around there. Friends of the staff, a few foundations who knew us, and one of our sponsors from Bangkok kindly donated food and things for their immediate needs, such as bottled water, rice, canned fish, instant noodles, towels, rubber boots, anti-bacterial soap, thongs, toothbrushes/toothpaste, basic medical kit, clothes and, later, a new water cooler.

This photo (below), taken from the upstairs window on the morning of September 12th, shows the shocking water level. When the water finally receded somewhat, everything was covered in mud, from the river. One foundation brought in their power washer to help and parents of our kids from Mai Pattana village drove down to help with the clean-up, rigged up their small water pump, and even brought fresh fruit and vegetables from their fields, for the kids. Our rice storage hut also had water damage, and we could only salvage the top 4 sacks of rice highest on the pile. The rest had hardened with mold. Since it was almost end of Term 1 and the children's school was also flooded, the students went home early for term break. The College girls had to wade back in to get their uniforms to sit their term exams, and also went home for the break, so the Foundation is closed for 2 weeks now. With all the donated rice, it *should* be enough to see us through till early December, when we usually buy our annual rice supply. Luckily, our motorbike is fine.



FUNDRAISING APPEAL

We discussed flood prevention with a contractor, and there are 2 ways to prevent flooding this bad, before the next rainy season. One way is to re-tile 3 main rooms where we noticed the water was seeping up through cracks in the tiles. Tiling project cost = B40,000. Another project is to cement the long back wall to stop water coming in through cracks, and installing an in-ground gutter system, including digging 2 large water storage areas underground, as we have nowhere to drain water out of the property. Flood Prevention project cost = B65,000. As usual, major construction work like this will be done during the long summer break (March-May) when the students are away, so there is plenty of time to help raise money.

VIA, the volunteer organization in Germany, has made an appeal on our behalf, to see if they can raise enough funds to replace our 3 computers and printer. We will also have to buy new desks, school supplies, school shoes/socks, books, games, and sports equipment for the children.

OUR VOLUNTEERS

On September 3rd, our German volunteers Maite and Mikka arrived. They were sent to us through VIA, and will be living at the Homes and teaching English for one year. In their first week, we took them to attend the annual Akha Swing Festival so they could experience Akha culture firsthand.



THANK YOU SO MUCH

To the thoughtful Suwasin family (who sponsor Pawut) in Bangkok for their quick response in mailing us dry food, rubber boots and anti-bacterial soap that we needed, and the surprise cash donation that enabled us to buy a new fridge, 2 rice cookers and a fan as soon as the house was cleaned.

To Marc Mitchell, in Bangkok, for his generous donation that enabled us to buy a new kitchen cabinet and will be used for buying more things we need when Term 2 starts.

To Annette Pilloni and Bruce Millar (who sponsor Tatdao) who donated AU\$500 towards the flood relief.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

Last, but not least, thank you to the parents who came to help clean up the mud, the wonderful Chiang Rai and Akha community who stepped up to help or donate goods, and our helpful volunteers who had to put up with a crisis situation that nobody anticipated.



*If you would like to VISIT, FUNDRAISE OR DONATE
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