

Wave Fund Newsletter - Spring 2007

In March of this year Adam Masters, a neighbour of Richard and Ness Bush, made a visit to one of our sponsored children – Arada – during a trip to Thailand with his girlfriend, Pen. The visit was arranged with the kind help of Mr Tim Laven, manager of the Cape Panwa Hotel in Phuket. Adam took along some presents for Arada from the Wave Fund and spent a memorable few hours with her family.

Adam has given us a report and some photographs of his visit, which are shown below.

We were met by Ruttana and Suganya in the morning at the Cape Panwa Hotel. We set off in the Red Cross minibus at 9.00am and from the start my girlfriend Pen got chatting to them about their jobs and the projects they work on. Pen was able to act as a good translator for me right from the start. About an hour into our journey we stopped off for a comfort break to buy some snacks (Pineapple crisps, drinks etc.) and to enable me to have a cigarette with our driver and take photos. Two and a half hours later we arrived at Arada's House.

On arrival, Arada's Uncle (Vichen) and her grandfather and grandmother welcomed us into their front porch and provided a refreshing cold drink and biscuits. Arada was with her Uncle and four other local boys and one local girl.

The most memorable thing that sticks in my mind is how giving and friendly they are. In comparison to the luxuries of life we take for granted they have only very basic amenities, yet will give what very little they have without hesitation.



Arada was very shy when she first saw us and was reluctant to open the presents we bought for her (school bag, baby doll and water pistol). Her uncle told us that she had been asking all morning when the foreigners were coming. After about half an hour she stated to become more relaxed and smiling for the camera and generally showing her true nature of a playful and happy child.



(left) Arada shyly accepts presents from Adam, and (right) Arada with her uncle and grandparents

Her Grandfather proudly showed us photos of her parents who were working in a hotel as chefs on Phi Phi Island when the Tsunami hit. Vichen explained that when they saw on the news that the tsunami had hit Phi Phi that they knew straight away that they had lost them. It took two years to recover their bodies and have them returned to their home for burial near their house. 10 days before the Tsunami her parents came home to visit Arada and that was the last time they spent together. Arada is too young to know what happened and only knows her grandparents and uncle as her mum and dad. They told us they will tell her when she is old enough about what happened to her parents.

They have lived in the current house (concrete built hut type building) for 5 years. The grandfather built the house from money sent from Arada's parents. Before they lived in a wooden hut.

Arada's uncle works farming sap from trees to make rubber and out of season works locally finding any job he can. He appears to be the only person who earns money to support the family.

Vichen explained that, 4-5 months after the Tsunami, many children were apparently abducted by men in vans, posing as charity workers, to sell the children. Because of this they never let Arada leave their side and Arada is very cautious of strangers. This showed when we went to leave and they asked Arada to give us a kiss goodbye. She went very shy again and they explained it was because we were standing close to the van and the van door was open.



Arada with Pen and Adam



During our visit all of the local children and a few local neighbours sat with us on their porch and all were welcoming and friendly. One neighbour fetched dried mussels, picked from the local beach, to give to us and Vichen gave us a tin pot to put them. I sat and smoked traditional cigarettes with her grandfather and he smoked my cigarettes.

I asked about the facilities they have in their home and, in particular, about their water supply and they took us to see their own water well. We pulled water from the well together. This gave me an idea to fill Arada's Water pistol and Arada's true colours came to life as she played and giggled non-stop, squirting me and some local boys. She came back to the well with me and some local boys to refill the water pistol and, as I filled the pistol, she stood there giggling with her friends which made me laugh. This is probably my most memorable experience of the whole trip as I sat giggled with Arada and two of her friends. The simplest of toys that we take for granted proved to be so appreciated by the children.



A happy Arada plays with her new water pistol!

As we sat chatting back on the porch a local turned up on a motorbike (her face painted yellow to make her skin pale or to protect from sun?) selling puddings so I bought some for everyone and we ate pudding together.

Her Grandparents and uncle offered to cook us lunch but we declined as time was getting on. We did however go out to collect fruit from the trees with them. I was also able to watch a local fisherman tie up his morning's catch of crabs.

There is a real sense of community sharing and support as whilst we were there all of the neighbours sat chatting together and all of the children played together.

We spent two hours with them and it was one of the most positive experiences of my life. The Red Cross charity in the name of the Thai Royal Princess is clearly having a positive effect on the lives of children Like Arada. Arada was very comfortable around Ruttana and Suganya who have clearly visited Arada many times.

We bid farewell on Lagon and left them receiving smiles and waves as we left.

Adam has kindly offered to continue to help with Wave Fund events and fund-raising and is planning a sky-dive in the not too distant future!

Well done Tim and Pen and thank you for recounting your visit. It's lovely to see how Arada is growing up and looking so happy and so obviously loved and well cared for by her uncle and grandparents.