

Last Summer, Sjoerd van Beek and me (Lukas van Steyn) had a really nice experience as we joined Borderless Dentists during our summer holidays. Sjoerd is working as a dentist since three years now and has joined several dental health projects in south east asia. I am a 5th grade student dentistry at the Radboud UMC Nijmegen, and this summer was my first experience as a dental volunteer.

In the internet we searched to find a NGO and via the website of Borderless Dentist we read some information about this beautiful project in the West of Thailand, and so we sent a mail and got in touch with Dr. Taka. He sent us some basic information and made us a scheme for our 8 days visit with a variety of dental treatment programs at 3 different immigrant migrant schools, an orphan house (heavenly home) and some less intensive visits to the dental Clinic for migrants in Mae Tao, a visit to the border and a daytrip to a national park in the region.



At the Mae Sot airport Taka picked us up and we went by Jeep to Phannu house, the hotel where we stayed during the project. He kindly explained us everything about the project, our program during that week and gave us some information about the Birmese refugees, the camps and the immigrant schools in western thailand. That evening we met Judith, a 6th grade dentistry student from Spain whom joined Borderless Dentists as well before she would graduate.

Next morning, after a very nice breakfast in a restaurant across the street, we went by Jeep to the first Birmese immigrant school. At the moment we arrived, some elderly children came and kindly helped us taking out our bags with dental equipment. As we walked through the hallway, cute children from all classes were smiling and waving, some looking somewhat anxious, some looking suspicious, but most of all very happy and nice children. Nothing was like I had expected from the poor refugee children in this rural area. As we prepared our dental equipment in the room upstairs for check ups, sealants, scaling, restorations and extractions, the elderly children gave us a hand and the school teachers (all Birmese immigrants as well) asked all the 6 and 7 year old children to come upstairs for the check ups.

Maybe it was because most of the children had seen a dentist before, but they were all very brave, all children exactly did what the teachers told them to do and kindly waited for their turn. I began to like the children. During the morning we treated some 70 children, who's teeth were almost all very badly damaged, sometimes even the young



permanent molars with big caries lesions. Taka explained us their alle at very much sugars and even though the brushing programs at school, their dental hygiene is very poor. After a long day of treatments, the headmaster of the school thanked us for the work and invited us for dinner at her home. It was a really nice experience, having a real Burmese meal and eating with an immigrant family and to hear their stories.

Next day we went to heavenly home, an orphan house, where a mother and father take care of 80 orphans from all the region. It was one of the most beautiful things we had experienced yet. The children all played together, no one arguing. The elderly children helping the younger ones brushing, eating, doing their own laundry and at the end of the day all singing together. Upstairs we did check ups for all the children, taka kindly explained us much, so we could do check ups ourselves and got known with the treatments.



In the next days we visited some three other schools, where we did the same check ups and treatments. We also had a visit to a hospital in one of the biggest refugee camps where some 50.000 refugees live. One day we planned a daytrip to a scenic national park in the region.

Back home we were very happy, we joined the Borderless dentists and helped to make the lives of the Burmese immigrant children somewhat better. It gave us a very nice feeling. And so we would recommend all dental students and dentists who like to make a difference for these children to join Borderless dentists.



Sjoerd van Beek,

Lukas van Steyn