



## Development Projects in Myanmar

### Better Houses for Cyclone Nargis Survivors

As our boat chugs through the tiny waterways of the delta area, we pass house after house after house, all bearing the AMURT logo. Residents and children wave and call out to our engineers Ko Myo and Ma Khaing, who had supervised the construction of the 431 houses (and the repair of 28 houses) in five villages to date. AMURT & AMURTEL is currently constructing another 82 houses in two villages and seeking funding to build many more.



The happy villagers are more than grateful for their new houses. Based on traditional architectural design but improved by an extra sturdy solid timber frame, the new houses consist of a core unit (12' x 12') and a verandah (12' x 6') provided by AMURT & AMURTEL, with extensions provided by the house-owners. They are built to withstand wind speeds of 80mph and the highest tidal surge.

In an innovative community-based approach, village construction committees take responsibility for the storage of equipment and supplies, security and transportation. Wherever possible, local carpenters and unskilled laborers are recruited, and the whole community is involved as volunteers.

International NGOs estimate that 450,000 houses were destroyed and 340,000 damaged by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008, and more than 2.5m people affected. Today, more than one year later, only about 17,000 new houses have been constructed while the damaged houses have mostly been patched up with weak, temporary materials. Much more is needed to help the cyclone survivors.

### Schools Double as Disaster Shelters

AMURT & AMURTEL built five primary schools and one middle school in five villages in the delta area. All the schools are built to act as community shelters against future cyclones. They are equipped with disaster risk reduction features to withstand wind speeds of more than 100mph and earthquakes measuring up to 7.5 Richter Scale. The floor level is above that of the highest tidal surge.

Instead of individual classrooms, the schools consist of one or more big halls to hold 2,400 persons in times of disasters. The big halls help the short-staffed teachers manage more than one class each. They also serve as gathering places for community functions. A rainwater collection system, sanitary toilets, a library, health corner, administrative room and covered corridors are other features of our well-designed schools.



At Kan Su (pictured above), the children have just moved into their new school building. They love the airy spaciousness and light provided by the high ceilings (12 feet high) and many windows and promise to take good care of their beautiful new school. AMURT needs funding to make safe pathways across the ponds around the school.

More inside!

- Early childhood education in Myanmar
- Motivation and education in Malaysia
- Community development in Haiti
- HIV/AIDS programs in Africa



## Myanmar: Early Education Program

Daw Aye Aye Soe is very happy with her little daughter's progress. Since she started attending classes at AMURT & AMURTEL's Child Centre in Leik Kyun village 10 months ago, four-year-old Aye Su Khaing's (pictured below) vocabulary has increased by leaps and bounds. She has learnt to recite nursery rhymes, paint, and express herself very well. She didn't play well with other children previously, but is now a very sociable little girl. She loves school so much that she is always among the first to arrive at the Child Centre every morning. All the parents, teachers and villagers agree that the children attending the Child Centres are physically bigger and stronger and, mentally more alert with more social skills than their older siblings at that age.

AMURT & AMURTEL's four Child Centres in four villages started operations in October 2008. Around 200 toddlers aged between three and six years old attend the sessions, which are run by 13 teachers and assistant teachers. Started with the aim of providing a safe haven for the little children traumatized by Cyclone Nargis, the project has now evolved into an Early Childhood program to develop the children through play therapy and informal education that includes story-telling, art, gymnastics, song, dance, play and fun as well as basic learning.



The children are also given high-nutrient biscuits and a nutritious cooked lunch daily. The program is scheduled to run till end March 2010, and AMURT & AMURTEL welcomes sponsors to extend and expand the program to other villages as well.



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*A Gift from the Heart  
brings trees to Haiti*

# Malaysian Programs

## Motivation Camps: Reaching their Highest Potential

*"I hope we will get more of such motivation sessions because they will help us to do well in life."*

*"This is the first time I have attended something like this – thank you for an enjoyable and educational weekend!"*

*"Thanks to your stimulating program, I will get 7As in the year-end exams and I plan to become a doctor!"*

*"The study techniques were very useful, they will help me do well in the exams."*

These were some of the responses voiced by students who participated in a motivation camp conducted by AMURT & AMURTEL at the Tamil primary school in Semenyih outside Kuala Lumpur recently.

At the recent Motivation Camp in Semenyih, the Year 6 students were taught the secret of programming their subconscious minds to achieve their desired results. While the immediate objective is for the students to pass the primary school leaving examinations with good results, the long-term goal is to teach these young people that the sky is the limit – to boost their self confidence so that they may reach their highest potential.

Elements of the overnight camp include an introduction to the ABC's of mind science, a yoga asana session to learn relaxation and concentration exercises, an obstacle course to create awareness of life's challenges and the need for teamwork, a soul-searching session to recognize personal shortcomings and mistakes, and a motivation session to move forward into the future with optimism and confidence. There was also a session on various study techniques, a graduation ceremony and a special session for parents to remind them of their roles in guiding and developing their children.



Headmaster Mr. S. Thanaseelan of SJK (T) Ladang Semenyih was so impressed with the motivation camp that he has expressed his desire to join AMURT & AMURTEL in conducting similar sessions elsewhere. At SJK (T) Bukit Darah, headmistress Mrs. Rajendra was so pleased with the motivation camp conducted in May 2008 that she requested AMURT & AMURTEL to hold fortnightly sessions for her Year 6 students. That year, the school's passing rate for the primary school leaving examinations jumped significantly from 47% in 2007 to 67%. The fortnightly program is still ongoing today.



## English tuition classes at Tamil Primary School

AMURT & AMURTEL conducts after-school English tuition classes for Year 3 students at SJK (Tamil) Effingham in Petaling Jaya, Selangor two times a week. The objective is to help the children improve their standard of English which is currently a compulsory subject for the Year 6 UPSR examinations.



## Fun, Games and Stories

AMURTEL's fortnightly sessions for Year 1 children at the Bukit Darah Tamil Primary School outside Kuala Lumpur bring them fun and games through Kids' Yoga and helps them to practise listening and speaking in English through volunteer Hemawati's (above in orange) captivating stories.

## Haiti: Community Based Development

AMURT & AMURTEL's strategy in Haiti has been to develop projects in close collaboration with local community networks, in the process reinforcing the capacity of these networks to manage their own projects. A key element in this community approach is the training in organizational leadership prior to the development of both small and large scale community projects. This accompaniment model of community-based development has allowed AMURT & AMURTEL



to facilitate a dynamic process of transformation, starting from the bottom up, and spreading through a large geographic area in the NW of the island. Currently, our teams are leading a large-scale environmental initiative focusing on soil conservation and reforestation, as well as road and irrigation canal construction involving more than 85 villages and 2,000 workers a day.

An interesting example of blending Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) with community development is the recently completed modern iodized salt production facility. The factory will have a production capacity of 8,000 metric tons of iodized salt annually (approximately 25% of the national demand for salt). The project will be co-managed by a network of women's associations from the surrounding villages. The revenue will be used to create a Local Community Development Fund supporting micro-credit programs and low interest loans for local development initiatives. This model of decentralized management brings PROUTistic solutions to Haiti's stifling socio-economic crisis.

## Kenya: Reducing the Impact of HIV/AIDS

With major financing from the US Government, AMURT is dramatically expanding its work to address the problems caused by HIV/AIDS in three provinces in Kenya. Specifically, AMURT will organize care and protection for 3,000 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) within their households, care for 1,000 people living with HIV/AIDS who are homebound, start youth clubs that impart life skills, youth empowerment and vocational training to 900 youth, and reach one million people with messages related to HIV prevention. Part of our strategy will be to strengthen people's organizations, community-based organizations and local government structures to ensure that the programs we are starting continue well into the future. In this way civil society is strengthened and people are empowered.

AMURT has a dedicated staff of 30 people in Kenya - individuals motivated to help their fellow Kenyans with tireless energy and innovative ideas. One of these ideas is to start children's rights clubs in primary schools, so that children, especially orphans, are aware of their legal rights. Already Paul Atanga, AMURT's OVC In-charge for Nyanza Province, has taken up the case of a child abused by a teacher, and of a child forced to repeat a class three times, which is illegal according to Kenyan law.



We are providing many other services for children, including Saturday events where they get health screening, nutritious food and sports activities; and creative programs in drama, music and marital arts at the nine youth clubs we are sponsoring.

Team  Talk

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