

Wiping Tears and touching hearts:

Volunteer Ladies with Tuberculosis
Patients in Chiang Rai, Thailand



Printed by : TB/HIV Research Foundation, Thailand (THRF)

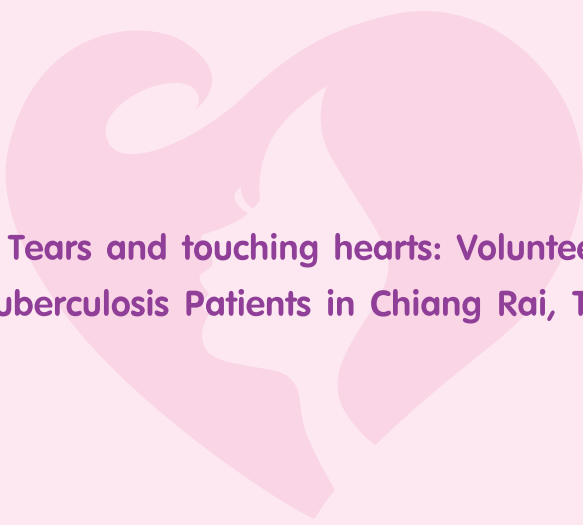
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*Follow in His Majesty's Footsteps
in the Fight Against Tuberculosis*



...The scourge known as Tuberculosis has seriously afflicted the Thai people. If you have the Nam Jai (kindness) to help, please lend us your hands now to join in the struggle...

From an article entitled "Tuberculosis" written by His Royal Highness Prince Mahidol of Songkla (The Father of Modern Medicine), published in Public Health Magazine No.18 Special volume 24 September 1920. pages 1-28.



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Authors : Jintana Ngamvithayapong-Yanai, Sarmwai Luangjina

Thai to English translation : Peter Brierley

English editing : Gary David Israel

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Table of contents

Pages

o	Follow in His Majesty's Footsteps	
1	The birth of the Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB)	
o	Why the fight against tuberculosis (TB)?	8
o	Who are the VLATB Ladies?	9
o	How has the VLATB been helping?	11
2.	Wiping tears and touching hearts: Five patients' stories	15
o	Chai's story: VLATB fights the sky, the rain and the tears	17
o	When the volunteer ladies made a male patient cry	20
o	The volunteer ladies and a senior couple with TB	22
o	Yod's story: an alcoholic barred from his church	24
o	Wiping tears and touching the heart of a migrant patient	28
3.	Ladies and gentlemen volunteers of Nong Khiew, a hilltribe minorities community with the highest TB prevalence	33
o	Annex : Ten Important Facts about TB	38



1

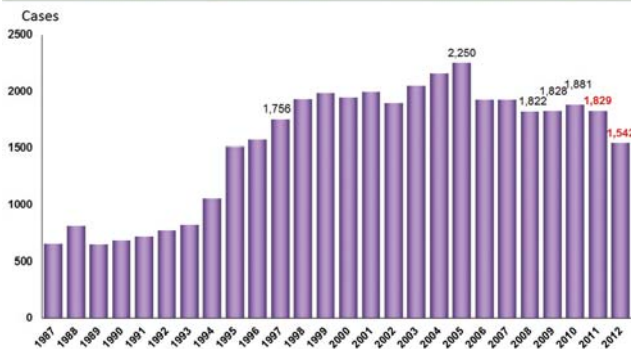
The birth of the Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB)

The birth of the Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB)

Why the fight against tuberculosis?

- o Tuberculosis (TB) is a curable disease but deaths from TB in Thailand amount to 1.4 deaths every single hour. In Chiang Rai Province, on average, a person died with TB every 36 hours (data: 2012).
- o Since 1998 the World Health Organization (WHO) has reported Thailand as one of the 22 countries with the highest TB burden.
- o TB is an infectious, airborne transmitted disease. Without treatment, persons with TB can spread the disease to other people.

Figure 1: Number of all cases of tuberculosis in Chiang Rai, Thailand 1987-2012



Source : Chiang Rai Provincial Public Health Office



Who are the VLATB Ladies?

The Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB) ladies are a group in the Northern Thailand Province of Chiang Rai formed by the members of various other ladies groups. Generally, the ladies of the group are of a higher socio-economic standing and are aged between 48 to 79 years. One part of the group of ladies are retired locals and also provincial government officials. They include the wives of senior government officials. Some representatives of the VLATB ladies are; the Head of the Chiang Rai Provincial Red-Cross Chapter who is also the wife of the Governor of the Province as well as the wife of the Director of the Provincial Hospital. Many of the ladies are also influential in commerce and are members of more than one women's organization.



9 women's organizations in Chiang Rai such as The Provincial Red-Cross Chapter of Chiang Rai, The Women Volunteer for Civil Defense Association, The National Outstanding Mother Group, Business and professional women's association, The women's cultural promotion association.

The history of the VLATB group

In January of 2009 the TB/HIV Research Foundation Thailand in collaboration with the Japan Anti-Tuberculosis Association (JATA) organized the first workshop to explore the feasibility of establishing a group of lady volunteers to support TB care and TB eradication. At this first meeting, held in Chiang Rai, representatives of nine women's organizations took part, detailed explanations were given about TB statistics and the existing problems of TB care in Chiang Rai. The attendees were also given examples of the work carried out by similar lady volunteer groups in Japan and how their work had contributed to TB control in Japan. What came out of the meeting was:

- o Most of the ladies attending the meeting had not previously heard of the situation regarding TB and many were under the [false] impression that TB had, in fact already been

eradicated. All were aware though of the fact that the spread of AIDS is a major problem in Thailand.

- o All of the ladies agreed that an organized group of volunteers in Chiang Rai would be able to make a difference

Following this first meeting of kindred minds, two further meetings took place in close collaboration with Chiang Rai Regional Hospital and finally in May 2009, those members present resolved to form a group to be called the Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB). The ladies made the first donation to start some activities and elected a Chairperson, and other committee members for the organization of the group's actions in the fight against TB in Chiang Rai



The logo of Chiang Rai Volunteer Ladies Against TB (Eradicating TB with women's hands and hearts).

How have the VLATB been helping?

The VLATB are helping TB patients in three main areas:



1. Fund-raising to assist patients with transport, food and general living expenses

2. Home visits to low-income patients and patients with extreme difficulties such as being rejected by their local communities



3. Packaging daily dosage of anti-TB medicines for distribution to make the medication regime easier to follow for patients.

Table 1: Results of the efforts of VLATB ladies in Chiang Rai Province

Activity	Result
1. Fund-raising December 2009 -December 2013	Total funds collected amounted to 506,987.50 Baht Assistance with travel costs and other expenses to: 191 Thai, 127 hill-tribe minorities and 23 Myanmar migrant workers.
2. Home visits to the extremely poor patients June 2009 - December 2013	In total 65 patients were visited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 47 Thai o 8 hill-tribe minorities o 10 Myanmar migrant workers
3. Packaging daily medicine August 2009 - December 2013	Total 66,150 packages

Note: approximately 30 Baht = 1 US\$

A large, stylized heart shape in a light orange color. Inside the heart, there is a white silhouette of a woman's profile, facing left. The number '2' is centered within the heart, overlapping the woman's profile.

2

**Wiping tears and touching hearts:
Five patients' stories**

Wiping tears and touching hearts : Five patients' stories

Regardless of the country's economic status, research from both rich and poor countries shows that tuberculosis is a disease of poverty. People suffering with TB in the Northern Thai Province of Chiang Rai agree. Not only living with poverty, many patients also live alone and find that their communities and societies find their plight offensive which makes for even more discouragement from seeking proper treatment for the condition. The Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB) group arranges home visits to TB patients who are undergoing treatment from the Chiang Rai Regional Hospital. Patients receiving home visits are already established as being severely underprivileged having at least one or more of the following situations:

- o No Health Insurance card
- o Insufficient money to pay travel expenses for the next hospital visit
- o In the past one month having less than 100 Baht for living expenses for the whole family
- o In the past month having insufficient food to eat or enough money to buy food
- o Shortage of funds with no family or friends to loan them money to cover expenses.

The following five patients' stories give good examples of the volunteer work undertaken by the Chiang Rai VLATB group during their home visits to tuberculosis patients and families. As a result of the home visits, with the encouragement and kind words of the

volunteer ladies, most patients completed treatment for TB. Although one of the patents died, he was still able to grasp the sense of the human touch coming from the volunteer ladies.

Let's appreciate how the volunteer ladies against TB made a difference in the lives of people with TB and TB with HIV co-infection.



Chai's story: The Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB) fight the sky, the rain and the tears

"Home" is one of the four essentials of life. This is also certainly true for poor and needy tuberculosis patients such as Mr.Chai. Despite having a house, his house does not provide shelter from the sunlight or the rain that leaks through the roof and onto his mattress. The weather even brought the rain to greet the ladies of the VLATB when they visited Chai's home. Even so; the ladies of the VLATB, in their indomitable way, were able to plod through the weather to provide encouragement to Chai. His Majesty King Vajiravudh once pronounced...

***"Compassion does not come easily,
but when it comes it feels like manna from heaven"***

Six of the VLATB ladies went on a house visit this day to visit Chai. No-one made the ladies go, they chose to go of their own will. Even though the weather was very wet and everywhere was a muddy mess the ladies still chose to walk on up the steep approach to visit poor Chai, a TB patient there. As usual, in these situations the home of Chai was far from the main road, four kilometers in fact. Typically too, there was no public transport to the village. When the ladies finally arrived at Chai's house they were then faced with yet another obstacle in their way, a steep flight of rotting wooden stairs that actually looked quite dangerous. The only way to reach Chai though, was to face the daunting climb up a rickety flight of stairs. When they finally reached the sloping level of Chai's shack, they found him lying on his mattress in an excuse for a bedroom, with its leaking roof.



The leaking roof made the volunteer lady's blouse wet with the rainwater.

Chai, in his early thirty's got tuberculosis and his troubles were made worse with an HIV infection as well. His education had reached the second year of junior high school before he had been forced to leave school to find work in Bangkok along with his mother who is also living with HIV. Chai is gay and once had a boyfriend but they had split up. In the ten years since Chai and his mother had only had the chance to return to Chiang Rai two or three times. After contracting both TB and AIDS Chai was unable to work in Bangkok anymore, he found the cheapest way to travel and returned home where he took refuge with his seventy-five year old grandmother, Pan. Before this Grandma Pan had lived alone and had eked out an existence by growing a few vegetables and having a fish pond which supplemented her usual old-age pension. Chai's return home, while it was good to have company also created a great strain on Grandma with the increase in living cost. Despite her advancing years Grandma knew she could not turn away her charge and resolved to look after her grandson in the best way she could manage, Grandma knew she was all he had left. Grandma honestly told the LAVTB ladies...

"I need only ten Baht a day for my food but I give Chai 50 Baht to eat. I didn't even have money for a new pair of sandals"

Grandma Pan told the volunteer ladies of the suffering she and Chai had endured. Chai was sitting there and heard everything that was said. He said nothing but the tears started to flow. As soon as the VLATB ladies gave their usual pep-talk and gifts the faces of Grandma Pan and Chai lit up in delight. They were just so delighted and grateful to have received this visit from the VLATB. The encouragement that they had both received on this day made Chai much more diligent in his medications so that his health could improve allowing him to reverse the care taking responsibilities, he could thus take care of Grandma Pan for a change. Sadly though, six months later, because of a severe complication from HIV infection poor Chai lost his fight and died. Grandma Pan was heard to say...

"Even though my grandson has died, I am so proud to have helped him as much as I could. Proud too, to know and have been visited by the volunteer ladies, as well as for the encouragement to both of us. I wish all the ladies good fortune, good health and happiness."

During this year's rainy season, Grandma Pan need worry no more about sleeping in the rain. As a result of the visit by the VLATB ladies, there was a sponsor for a new roof to be erected in place of the old leaking one. Thanks to the kind support from funding raised by the VLATB group.



When the volunteer ladies made a male patient cry

*"I am so happy, the tears fall of their own accord.
Thank you so much for helping me and giving me back my life"*

Who would think that an elderly man, we'll call him "Ma", having passed more than sixty summers and sixty winters could be reduced to tears because of the visit of the Chiang Rai Volunteer Ladies Against TB group. The tears of gratitude fell like rain after suffering from tuberculosis alone and afraid hardly able to walk because as well as his pulmonary tuberculosis Ma was also finding it very difficult to walk or get about without his old bamboo cane. In his condition he was completely unable to get to the hospital for treatment either. Ma was known to all the villagers as an alcoholic, his wife had left him and he was alone in a shelter he had constructed in the ruins of an old cement building that had been partially demolished. He had built his shelter from scraps of wood and other parts he had come by. His hovel had been built in the area of a rice mill run by his relative who had courteously allowed him to stay there. Previously, Ma had worked as a manual laborer earning a daily wage. After the onset of his tuberculosis though, he was unable to work and had to rely on members of the family to offer him what food they could spare. Sometimes if there was no food left over, Ma was not able to eat at all.

Ma had a terrible, wracking cough which went on for six months before he visited the hospital for a check-up. Unfortunately, the results of the tests Ma were given showed clearly that he was suffering from TB. He was in such bad condition that his body weight had been

reduced to only 45 kilogrammes. After only two months treatment, Ma was so surprised to receive a visit from the ladies especially as they went to see him in his shack and gave him so much cheer and encouragement. As well as all the good and kind words the ladies also provided food and many useful household items to improve his living conditions and even gave him some money to help him out with food and travel expenses.



Ma continued his treatment for nine months after which his health had improved and he had regained five kilogrammes of his lost weight. In fact, he was so well that he was able to find work in a furniture shop and is earning 150 baht per day. Before the visit

of the Chiang Rai Volunteer Ladies group Ma was feeling depressed and believed that his fate was to live alone and suffer in this way.

It is not surprising then that the show of love for humankind and encouragement brought him to tears



The volunteer ladies and a senior couple with TB



*Sappithiyo wiwachanthu
Sapparokho winussathu
Ma Thapawanthayo
Sukhi tikayuko pawa
Aphiwatanaselissa nijjang wudhapajayino
Jatharo thama watthanthi
Ayu wanno sukkhang palang*

Mr.Lert, a 77-year old man with TB. Although Lert had never been to school, he forced himself to learn the Buddhist blessing in Bali by rote so that he could pass on this wonderful message to the ladies of the Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB) during their visit to the home Lert shares with his 78 year-old wife Kham. Kham had contracted TB from her husband too and both of them highly appreciate the support from the VLATB group. For poor people like Lert, giving this ancient blessing is the best thing they can do to pay gratitude to these volunteer ladies.

Lert and Kham as a couple knew nothing but suffering. They lived with their forty year-old mentally debilitated daughter. The daughter was lucky though as she had managed to find work in a local petrol station and was able to provide some finances to her family to the tune of 3,000-4,000 baht per month. Lert's other children were also poor and did their best to make a living, they rarely had the chance to return to visit their parents though. Despite this the elderly couple were able to get through with this shared income and the small support they

received from the local government, as well as planting a few vegetables in a small plot. The three of them; father, mother and daughter, lived in a small cement house, which actually was not completed, about three hundred metres from their nearest neighbor. Their little hamlet was over three kilometers from the main road so arranging travel was both very difficult and expensive costing around 200 - 300 baht per trip.

Even though the house was so remote and in such a poor and ramshackle state; five ladies of the VLATB made their visit to see Lert and Kham. During the visit they were able to dispense their usual enthusiasm and even offer some financial assistance to get them to and from the hospital as well as gifts of household items. Lert was so happy that he could only smile and say...

"Thank you very much for your visit to us poor folk. Without your visit, we had no idea how we would survive."

After receiving this wonderful boost from the VLATB ladies Lert was able to maintain his medication regime much better and Kham, living in such close proximity to her husband was able to get a full check-up and receive her own medication too.

A happy story in the end, Lert and his wife Kham were able to be cured of their TB and live on to take care of each other and give their blessings and wishes for the VLATB ladies to continue their good deeds to many other folks in similar circumstances.



Yod's story: an alcoholic barred from his church

This is the story of a forty-nine year old man, his name is Yod and he is a Christian. After only two visits by the Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB) group to his home, Yod had changed his ways to stop his excessive drinking and become sober and was once more attending services in his local church.

Alcoholic...Sickly...Unemployed...Barred from Church

This was the second attack from tuberculosis for Yod. For the first attack he discontinued the treatment as he could not afford the travel cost from his home to the Chiang Rai Regional Hospital to regularly collect his medication. As well as the tuberculosis he also suffered from being diabetic and had other afflictions too. His decaying body was a mess, he was so skinny and his breathing was very bad. In fact, he was so sick that no-one would even think about giving him employment for fear that he may die in the workplace.

More than ten years ago, Yod had had a fairly normal life with a wife and a small baby. His wife had left him and their two-month-old baby. It was lucky for Yod that in the village there was a sympathetic teacher that was kind enough to take Yod's child and to raise the child as their own.

Yod lives in an old wooden house with broken windows that he cannot even open as the windows have been boarded up. It is a lonely existence, as his ramshackle home is separated from the rest of the village, located on a mountainous area, eight kilometers from the nearest proper road. There is no bus service, only motorcycles

whose owners' agree to take passengers on important trips from time to time.

Yod's younger sister, Ratri lives close by, in another dilapidated house; both she and her husband are infected with HIV and live with their four-year old child. They make their living by working for a meager daily wage in the same way as many people in their situation. They are lucky to have an area next to their home where they are able to supplement their foods by planting some vegetables and such. They occasionally have enough to feed visitors from their efforts too.

Usually Yod lives alone and has faced rejection by the other villagers because of his alcoholism and has even been barred from entering the church because of the disruption he had caused. The visit by four ladies from the VLATB ladies provided much needed encouragement and a feeling of warmth and to the surprise of Yod and the other villagers because for many years no-one had visited this remote area but here, suddenly there they were. The VLATB ladies had arrived all the way from the city all bedecked in their fine clothes asking where they could find Yod.

"What do you feel when you take your medicine?"

"We come to give you an encouragement to be cured from TB. Please be patient to complete the medication"

"We hope and wish that you will become well again"

The gentle encouragement of the VLATB ladies and their expressions of concern for their fellow man, as well as the package of household goods donated by the local branch of the Red Cross Society. Not only that, but the further donation of money for transport and a new set of clothes brought Yod to tears.

***"Thank you so much. I didn't know what I would do,
I couldn't work and no-one would employ me"***

The VLATB ladies not only donated gifts and encouragement to Yod, their visit also gave encouragement to his younger sister, Ratri who had, by chance, just returned from the fields and so had the chance meeting with the VLATB ladies. Ratri was so grateful for the assistance provided to her elder brother too.

"We are just poor people, we didn't know what to do. I am so, so happy that you ladies came to visit my brother to give him some encouragement."

Ratri spoke through her tears, one of the VLATB ladies was so moved that she held Ratri tightly and said...

'Help each other, take care of each other and always encourage each other'

The home visit on that day gave much happiness and Yod, together with his younger sister, Ratri were so happy to have received the ladies visit that she proudly showed off her vegetable and herbal garden and gave a return gift to the ladies of some of her fresh vegetables and herbs for them to take home.

How do home visits give new life to TB patients?

As well as taking medication for over six months. The first home visit gave the ladies of the VLATB group a clear view of the suffering and difficulty for people like Yod who had to travel to the clinic every day

for injections to relieve his diabetes symptoms. When he spoke he wiped away his tears explaining that his lack of strength and the very hot weather made the twelve-kilometer journey from his shack to the clinic and back take him at least half a day. Later the ladies of the VLATB returned for a second visit and generously donated a bicycle to make his daily trip easier and more convenient.

When the church minister and the villagers became aware of the assistance and donations provided by the ladies of the VLATB group the Christian group in the village also came to visit and gave blessings of their church making Yod feel that his life



had value after all. He then decided that he would give up his drinking and smoking. After all this, Yod was welcomed back into the village church where he now attends services every Sunday.

When asked about his feelings regarding the home visit and everything from the ladies of the VLATB Yod replied..

"I am so, so happy and proud that the ladies came to visit me. Many ladies came and gave me help and sharing. I am so happy for, the encouragement that I received that helped me to gain the strength to beat the tuberculosis that was making me sick"

A sincere thanks to the volunteer ladies against tuberculosis!



Wiping tears and touching the heart of a migrant patient

"Aor Bu Aue Ja... Aor Bu Aue Ja"

Ahmee, a tuberculosis sufferer with HIV co-infection is a migrant worker from Myanmar and is thirty-eight years of age. Unable to speak the Thai language, she utters her heartfelt thanks to the Volunteer Ladies Against Tuberculosis (VLATB) group in her native, Lahu Language.

Ahmee had been lucky to receive a home visit by the VLATB ladies. Even in her mother language the emotion was clear in her voice, she was barely able to speak because she was close to tears. Many of the VLATB ladies had joined the outing this day and their enthusiasm and encouragement was truly moving. Even though Ahmee and her family are not truly Thai, the hospitality and love of their fellow man exhibited by the ladies was freely given.

The life of Ahmee is typical of the lives of many tens of thousands of other migrant workers who venture into Thailand's most northerly province in the hunt for work and some sort of income, in order to sustain themselves and their families. Ahmee had been in Thailand close to ten years already but still she had not mastered the local language and was not able to seek health welfare from the state as her immigration had not been documented. Ahmee's condition had been chronic for some time and as she did not have proper immigration documentation she was only able to obtain occasional help from small



private clinics that don't ask too many questions. Her condition was made much worse because as well as the tuberculosis she was also HIV positive. She was suffering with serious headaches too, making her believe that the end was near for her.

Desperately worried about his wife's condition, Ahmee's husband was left with no alternative but to carry his wife to the Chiang Rai Regional Hospital for treatment. Neither of them were able to work, this was due in part to her sickness and also the necessity of providing essential care. They were caught in a never ending cycle of wanting to work to make money for living and care and not being able to do so because of the sickness, a vicious cycle indeed.

The shack where Ahmee received her visitors on this day was just made from bamboo with sheets of old tin, a feeble attempt to keep out the worst of the weather. The roof was made from a rough thatch and

there were no windows. This poor shack was located on a steep hillside over four kilometers from the nearest trafficable road where public transport passed only intermittently. The VLATB ladies were lucky as they had brought along with them one of their own who was able to act as interpreter, so they were able to hold a reasonable conversation and enquire about Ahmee's true situation and provide much needed encouragement. They were able to explain clearly too, how important it is to complete anti-TB medicine. Improving air ventilation inside the house can also reduce the risk of TB transmission to other household members and to general health.

Ahmee, comparatively speaking, when compared with many other migrant workers can be considered as very lucky. She received the best treatment to cure her TB and also received antiretroviral drugs to manage her HIV infection as well. After her cure and the strength of her mind and body returned, she and her husband were able to return to earning a good living and in time were able to build their own cement house. They both heeded the advice they had been given by the VLATB ladies and made sure their new home had enough windows to give plenty of fresh air in the house.

***"Aor Bu Aue Ja...Thank you ladies of the VLATB
for all your help"***





3

**Ladies and gentlemen volunteers of
Hnong Khiew: a hilltribe community
with the highest TB prevalence**

Ladies and gentlemen volunteers of Hnong Khiew: a hilltribe community with the highest TB prevalence

Why "Hnong Khiew Community"?

- o The 2007 tuberculosis data of the Muang District, Chiang Rai tells us that the Hnong Khiew Community in the suburb of Mae Korn has one of the highest incidences of TB. Of the 623 community people, 8 persons had TB and 2 had died too. Moreover, 4 people were infected with multi-drug resistant TB strain.
- o The Hnong Khiew Community is made up of various hill-tribe minorities, Lahu is the major tribe. Ninety percent of people follow the Christian religion. It is one of the poorest communities in Chiang Rai with average personal earnings around 1,300 baht per month. This can be seen amongst TB patients there to be the main reason why they either fail to seek treatment or fail to continue the required medication regime even after it is sought.

The start of the lady and gentleman volunteers of Hnong Khiew community against TB.

The Director of the Mae Korn Health Center recommended Ms. Peethong Poosang, an enthusiastic volunteer lady in the development of the Hnong Khiew Community to attend the first workshop on "*The role of the volunteer ladies in TB care*". After attending the workshop, Pethong thought that she could help to solve the problem at the village level

and so proposed a project to the Local Government Administration Office. She proceeded the community TB care activities by coordinating with the Volunteer Ladies Against TB (VLATB) group, Chiang Rai Regional Hospital and the TB/HIV Research Foundation. When Peethong started the activities, she firstly involved the local village women. Then, she engaged a group of junior high-school girls, and later a group of volunteer men also participated in the community TB care activities.

How to fight against TB in Hnong Khiew?

The following activities against TB in the Hnong Khiew Community started in 2009 and continue to this day:

1. Dissemination of information about TB

- o Raising a broadcast tower and having high school students make tape-recordings to broadcast information
- o Passing on TB information to people attending the community church service each Sunday. In order to reduce TB stigma, the cured TB patients in Hnong Khiew were invited to share their experiences with TB and how they were cured.
- o Designing posters and information leaflets in the Lahu language for distribution in homes and shops in the village.

2. Early detection for TB cases

Joining with high school students, and volunteer groups to find people with TB symptoms and advising those same people to seek medical treatment at the hospital as well as helping to sponsor travel expenses for the suspected patients.

3. Empowering TB patients with home and hospital visits

- o Whenever people from the Hnong Khiew Community are diagnosed with TB and require treatment either at the hospital or at home, a group of volunteers will visit the patients and will give some food and encouragement to the patients.
- o To make sure that the treatment is continuous, assistance with the costs of travelling to and from the hospital are provided, 150 Baht per trip.

4. Establishing TB patient fund

- o Most patients are simply manual labourers and make their living by offering their labour for a daily rate of pay. When they are too sick to work they do not have income. The TB patient fund allows TB patient to borrow up to 1,000 Baht per time to assist with general living costs. Patients are given time and only need to return the money when they are better and able to return to work.





Fund-raising through donation of the community members in the new year festival



Providing TB education at the Sunday church by involving ex-TB patients

- o To keep the patient fund topped up, the volunteers arrange fund-raising activities such as inviting guests including the VLATB group to take part in the community's new year celebrations
- o This patient fund also supports travel expenses and meals for persons with suspected TB symptoms to timely access clinical investigation at the hospital.

Outcomes of the volunteers' effort

- o From 2007 to 2013 the Hnong Khiew community volunteer group has been able to assist in the early detection of eight TB patients with every one of them being fully cured.
- o As a result of the intensive early detection of TB cases in the community and ensuring the treatment completion of all patients, the number of TB patients has been reduced with no new TB cases having been recorded in the last year.

Table 2 : Number of TB patients (all types, all age group) of Hnong Khiew community 2007-2013

Year	Number of TB patients recorded in TB register	Number of TB patients identified by the community volunteer group and recorded in TB registry	Completed treatment and cured	Treatment Interruption and loss of follow up	Deaths
2007	8	Not yet started the activities	5	2	1
2008	3	1	2	0	1
2009	2	0	2	0	0
2010	6	5	6	0	0
2011	2	2	2	0	0
2012	1	0	1	0	0
2013	0	0	0	0	0

Previous Lahu TB Patient

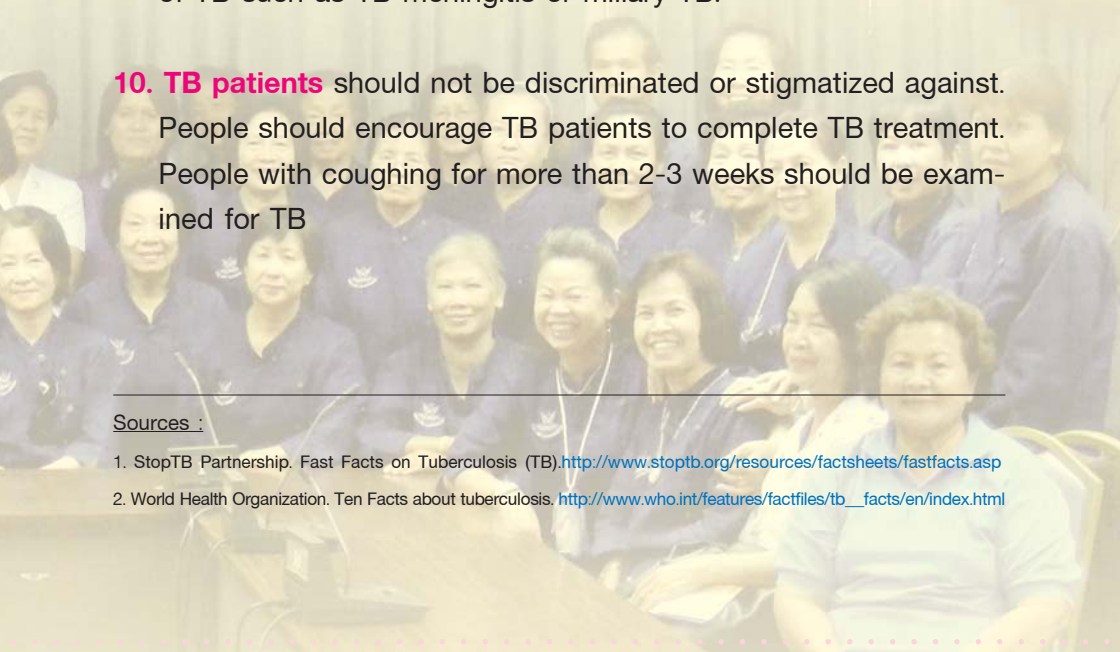
"I thought I was going to die, I was really so, so sick. Thank you to the volunteer group for helping me get back to the hospital to continue my treatment until it was finished. Since being cured I have given birth to a wonderful baby boy. I am so very happy"



Ten Important Facts

1. **Tuberculosis (TB)** is caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*). TB is spread from person to person through the air.
2. **TB** can infect any part of the body such as the brain, bone, lymph nodes but most often attacks the lungs (pulmonary TB).
3. Without treatment, when TB patients cough, sneeze, spit, laugh or speak, they propel the TB germs into the air. A person can be infected by inhaling TB germs.
4. Infected people may not feel ill or show any symptoms if their immune system can keep the bacteria under control. About one-third of the world's people are infected without showing symptoms.
5. However persons with compromised immune systems, such as people living with HIV, malnutrition, diabetes, cancer, or heavy smokers and drinkers have a higher risk of falling ill and developing an active TB disease.
6. The common symptoms of pulmonary TB are coughing for more than 2-3 weeks, fever, weight loss, night sweats and loss of appetite.

about TB

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- 7. TB** is curable. However, when left untreated or an extreme delay in seeking care, TB can kill. In 2012, TB killed more than ten thousands people in Thailand and about 1.3 million people in the world
- 8. TB treatment** usually takes 6 months. Treatment is not only important for curing TB patients but also preventing TB transmission to other people.
- 9.** There is no effective vaccine against TB. BCG vaccination for new born baby may only reduce risk of mortality from the lethal forms of TB such as TB meningitis or miliary TB.
- 10. TB patients** should not be discriminated or stigmatized against. People should encourage TB patients to complete TB treatment. People with coughing for more than 2-3 weeks should be examined for TB

Sources :

1. StopTB Partnership. Fast Facts on Tuberculosis (TB).<http://www.stoptb.org/resources/factsheets/fastfacts.asp>
2. World Health Organization. Ten Facts about tuberculosis. http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/tb_facts/en/index.html

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TB/HIV Research Foundation (THRF)

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Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS are global health emergencies and Thailand is not spared. In 1992, a group of Thai and Japanese doctoral students carried out their multi-disciplinary dissertations on tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS in Chiang Rai, the northern most province in Thailand. They soon realized the importance of research in providing knowledge as an effective tool for prevention and control of the diseases. After having worked in the field for more than 10 years in close collaboration with the Research Institute of Tuberculosis, Japan Anti-Tuberculosis Association, they firmly believe that successful prevention and control programs require not only research but also human resources development and technical collaboration at community, national and international levels.

The Foundation was officially registered in Thailand in June 2002 as a non-profit organization, with the aim to drive research on tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS forward. It has since been conducting and supporting biomedical, health and social sciences research on tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and other related problems. It has also supported human resources development and provided consultations in the fields of tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

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