



*Encouraged to live  
Empowered to create*

## Newsletter 2025



Dear Friends,

One of the highlights of 2025, was celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Hands of Hope in February. Producers from over the years, gathered together to reminisce and catch up with what had transpired in their lives since leaving the project. Others sent messages. Our toddlers - with us through their formative years and later in their school holidays - returned, now aged 18 and 19. We remembered those who had died, international volunteers who had worked with us and the huge number of customers from four continents.



For the first time since Covid impacted people's lives causing difficulties and disruptions and decreasing the number of workers in Hands of Hope, we have benefitted from fulltime employment for the group. For this, we have YOU to thank, for the steady orders that provided work throughout the year.

In February, after receiving a '20 years uninterrupted attendance' award, Pit left the project for another province, joining family and becoming a farmer. We miss her daily presence but regularly hear from her. She also returned in August for two weeks to help with orders.

Following Pit's departure, Jiem returned to the project after working as a carer in the Garden of Friendship. We 'poached' her back but she still works in the Garden at weekends. She has been a great asset throughout the year. Another returnee has been Wasana, who returned after health issues made working outside difficult.



Pik



Got



Sanit



Jiem



Gay



Samorn



Nuphit



Wasana

The current group may be smaller than the years prior to Covid but they manage a prolific amount of production. Just this year, they have created 2,804 Christmas cards, 3,175 all occasion cards, 572 various Christmas decorations, 84 Nativity sets and 528 boxed angels. Additionally, there have been 700 other items including, gift tags, notebooks, flowers, gift tags, earrings and gift items. As you can imagine, the workroom was a hive of activity every day.

Outside the room, the group was also engaged with our fish raising project. This year's sales far exceeded last year, with 731 kgs of fish sold fresh and an additional 290 kgs processed for drying. It is very much a group effort feeding, catching, weighing, killing and cleaning. For drying in the dehydrator, additional tasks of 'butterflying' the fish, seasoning and placing on the racks, weighing and bagging once dry, are also undertaken.

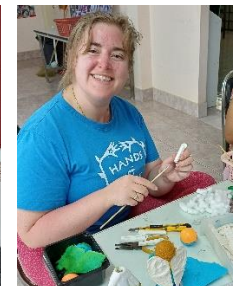






Four large sturdy nets were attached to the pier this year, replacing a number of our smaller hand made cages. These have worked well, providing more space for the fish and making feeding time less frenzied. The dehydrator was also put to use drying a surplus of tomatoes, an abundant yield of jackfruit from our one tree and pureed mango....though this took a lot of preparation. Gay took charge of the gardens and has, over the year planted, tended to and harvested....sweet potatoes, cucumbers, chillies, lettuce, eggplant, papayas, mulberries, custard apples and limes.

Welcoming visitors to our project is always a delight and this year was no exception. In fact, 19 of our visitors were on their first visit to Nong Khai and it was great to be able to see life as we know it, through new eyes. In April, we welcomed back Lauren - volunteer through Good Shepherd in the States – who had worked in our project 2016 – 2017.



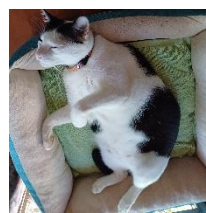
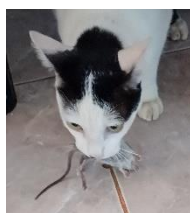
Patty, Greg and Gina – Australia

Richard and Anita – England

Sina and Conor – Ireland

Lauren - USA

We were able to join the community in the Garden of Friendship for special celebrations throughout the year – especially the celebration of Songkran (water festival) and Mothers' Day. Hands of Hope grew from the Outreach Programme and we have a strong connection. We are grateful to Sr Pranee and the staff for their continued presence in our lives, offering advice and assistance where needed.



Our annual newsletter wouldn't be complete before mentioning the other daily attendees of the project – all with important roles. Munjai alerts us to snakes in the compound and visitors at the gate; Kanom quality controls the saa paper; Tua Lek keeps vermin numbers down; and Chilli .... well, Chilli just chills out!

At the end of 2024, we put the future of Hands of Hope in **your** hands and you responded so positively, that we have continued for another year. If we can continue to receive orders regularly, then we will not need to close our doors. Early orders in 2026 will be very much welcomed, indicating that you wish to continue our valued partnership and keep creativity alive. We value not only the work you provide but our friendship – feedback through emails, visits and calls. Great thanks too, to those who have supported us through donations, which are used for the social welfare needs of the producers and their families.

We do indeed, have so much to be grateful for as the year ends.

*With love and gratitude – Antonia and all*



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