



# It made me stop to think...!



**A**s a grandmother I only want the best for my grandchildren, especially at Christmas. While out shopping at a well-known toy store last week we mentally ticked off a few things that would be perfect for presents for our 1 year old grandson and 3 year old granddaughter and feeling pleased with our ideas we came home and I opened my emails to do a little work.

For 8 years now my husband Andrew and myself have worked in the slums of Pattaya with the poorest of families and the street kids. We pay for uniforms and books and registration fees for schooling in the local Government Schools. We provide fresh water tanks and water and basic medicine and materials for them to build their shacks

on land that is infested with mosquitos and rats, and surrounded by stagnant water. The problems are many and it is hard to know where to start. But we have learnt through patience and time, to LISTEN to what the people themselves want and not try to move them into sterile surroundings where they would have no friendship network and would struggle to live among others who look down on them.

When we listen carefully we hear one thing again and again 'Please help me educate my children, so they may have choices in the future'. So simple yet a far-off dream for many of our people.

To achieve this, and get the project started, we sold our home in Belfast and set up a community office in the slums, and after living among these wonderful people for over a

year we decided to return to Northern Ireland to work to keep ourselves and to fund the project. We return a couple of times a year and rely on a Thai lady to live in and co-ordinate with the daily needs of the families.

Thank God for internet as we converse daily on Facebook Chat and email and feel we have kept administration to a minimum because of this.

The first email on my return from shopping was from Khun Noi, our manager in Pattaya, and the only person who is paid a salary in the project. She was full of joy as Nok a lovely lady in the slums had been rifling through the garbage looking for cans and bottles to recycle when she came across a few toys that had been discarded. She brought them back to her shack and washed them for little 3 year old Top. The look on his

face was heartening, he never asks for anything as he knows he will never get it. These toys that some young ex pat boy had loved, but now had moved on from, were like presents from heaven and I know Top will carefully treasure them and pass them on intact to his younger brother.

We will make sure they have food, clean water and a basic roof over their head as long as we can. If possible I will try to include a little treat now and again, as surely every child deserves this.

As for my grandchildren, I will think long and hard this Christmas, and make sure they feel loved and special and of course there will be a present under the tree, but this incident really made me stop and think..!

**Roisin Hall**



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4 Harris Crescent, Dunmurry, BT17 9EQ



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