

BAAN UNRAK - THE HOUSE OF JOY

Baan Unrak (meaning House of Joy) is located in Sangkhlaburi, a remote rainforest area of western Thailand, on the border with Myanmar (formerly Burma). It is a facility which hosts 130 children and 20 mothers from Burmese minorities (Karen and Mon) who are fleeing poverty and persecution from the Burmese government. The shelter home was created in 1991 by Donata Dolci from Italy, who arrived in Thailand in 1986 to begin an agricultural and environmental project, remaining then in this country. An initial activity as a small shelter home has expanded over the years. Thanks to the spread of word between the local population about the activities of assistance to abandoned children and single women with children, the center has become a reference point also recognized by the Thai government, which awarded Donata Dolci the "Best volunteer of the country."

Baan Unrak is not only a shelter home that allows young guests to meet the needs of survival, but it also provides a variety of education and training activities aimed at giving them a future, leaving behind the harsh and often violent stories suffered in the past. Since 2004, the shelter home has been equipped with infirmary, a kindergarten and a primary school where volunteers from all over the world teach children the English language, too. Further activities include sewing, cutting and weaving courses for mothers. The association Amurt is responsible for Italy for coordinating reports and actions to support the Baan Unrak shelter home; a Florentine office of the association has been taking care for several years of the support and the visits from volunteers to the center.

The shelter home is located on the edge of the jungle and is not equipped with outdoor lighting; this fact endangers the safety of its guests at night.

The contribution of the City of Florence will ensure the funding and will provide a lighting system, also equipped with some street lights and solar panels. The use of equipment powered by solar energy aims to introduce in the shelter home the use of renewable energy sources, increasing the autonomy of the structure. The new lighting will work as a deterrent to theft and damage to the equipment, which have already occurred in the past, but mainly to improve the safety of children and women guests and protect their physical safety.

<http://www.baanunrak.org/>

<http://www.amurt.it/index.php?lan=ita&mod=progetto&cat=04&pag=1&id=0000000028>