



Jimmy & Rosalynn  
**CARTER**  
WORK PROJECT  
THE MEKONG BUILD 2009

# SIX MONTHS LATER

MAKING AN IMPACT. CHANGING LIVES



## The impact of a home

THE VOLUNTEERS have long gone. The decorations have been put away. But the memories are sharp. The lives of more than 160 families were changed for the better during the one week of the 26th Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project last November. The changes are continuing as, day by day, each family in each community turns their house into their own home. In the following pages, you can read about the impact a decent home has had on some of the Carter Work Project families. These new lives have been made possible thanks to the generosity of you, our donors and supporters. Again you have our heartfelt thanks.

Blessings.

Rick Hathaway

Vice President, Asia-Pacific

Habitat for Humanity International

## Thailand Nong Kon Kru, Chiang Mai

A "New Community" takes shape



THE DEDICATION IN JANUARY of a community center at Nong Kon Kru, the main site of the 2009 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project, marked a new beginning for 82 families in northern Thailand. "We gave a name to this community in Thai, *Ban Mai Sa Makee*, which means 'New Community, New Unity'," said Habitat home partner and leader of the community Kumsaen Suon.

In the weeks and months since the 2,000 volunteers from 32 countries departed, families have been moving into their new homes. Among the first was vegetable seller Guan Matip (*above with husband Tanagon*). She was only too glad to bid farewell to her old house built over a polluted canal and prone to flooding during the annual rainy season. "I always thought that it would be impossible to have my own cement house in a clean new community, but my dream has come true."

Already the community is changing. Several families have added extensions. Others have started businesses in their homes. The houses are all well maintained showing the pride that the families take in their homes.

One of the greatest impacts has been the creation of a secure and healthier living environment for children to play and grow.

## UPDATE

# A lucky change

*A pig farmer with presidential connections makes a new life*



CHUNKUM DUANGTIP COULD HARDLY wait when he was moving into his Habitat house in late December 2009. As the truck loaded with his family's belongings stopped in front of his new house, he jumped off from the back of the vehicle and raced to the door, key in hand.

As he opened the door, he smiled: "We have been waiting for this day for many years and now it is finally here."

Some six months later, Chunkum has extended the front porch. Flowers in bloom surround the house adding color and shadows. His wife Kamnoi, 39, added: "We are always busy here with keeping the house clean. It's such a good feeling knowing this is our home."

The week of building their home with volunteers will remain a highlight in their lives, not least because Chunkum and Kamnoi were working alongside Habitat for Humanity's most famous volunteers, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn.

Looking around, Chunkum pointed to the walls and said: "Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter worked on that wall. And that one too. They both worked very hard on my house along with all the other volunteers. We will never forget their generosity."

"Although I cannot speak English, and could not speak to them so much unless with the help of a translator, I felt proud to work alongside Mr. and Mrs. Carter," said Chunkum.

He added: "The community here has been very successful with working together ever since we began to contribute sweat equity (before the build week). This was very helpful in bringing the families together and getting to know one another prior to the build."

Nursery teacher Kamnoi and their three children, aged four to 15, have made many new friends.

Home used to be a housing unit provided by the pig farm where Chunkum works. Chunkum still works at the farm, but also has a job at a water filter company. The money he earns from his second job goes toward the family's monthly mortgage repayment.

"We feel that we have been so lucky," said Kamnoi. "There is a freedom here in the community we did not experience when we lived at the pig farm."

"The air is cleaner, the children are healthier and they do better in school because they are happier here," she added.

## UPDATE

# Thinking of extending

*Recent months have brought many changes for Phairat and his family*



PHAIRAT SAE-UWA AND HIS FAMILY were featured in a Habitat video prior to the 2009 Carter Work Project. Today, that video records a life that has changed in very many ways.

Phairat used to work as a cleaner at a local mosque during the day and helped his wife Sengchan to sell home-made soy milk in the evenings.

A month after the completion of the Carter Work Project, thir-



ty-two-year old Phairat had his own cart selling barbecued fish and chicken. Now half a year later, he is helping out at a Japanese restaurant operated by his sister and other family members near Chiang Mai University. "They need the help at the moment so I have put my cart business on hold for now," he said.

Sengchan, 23, has stopped selling soymilk to care of their two-year-old son, Rudee. "He is a full time job for me," she said with a laugh.

The most significant change is their living conditions. Since moving from their cramped quarters in the local mosque in late December 2009 (*photo above*), the family has space. "We are now home," said Phairat. It is a home he can be proud of as he contributed his own labor, or sweat equity, at the build site before the volunteers arrived.

"It was a great experience helping to build this house," said Phairat. "The volunteers were very friendly to us and I will never forget their hard work and dedication as we worked together, building our house, brick by brick."

Phairat is looking to the future. "We plan to cover the kitchen area when we have the funds. For now, I am the only one earning money so we must be careful and save our money to make the mortgage payment first, then save for the improvements on the house."

## UPDATE

# Sewing up the future

*Floods are a thing of the past for Wanida Sotkrang's family*

**FOR FORMER INFORMAL SETTLER** Wanida Sotkrang, moving into her Habitat house marked a total transformation. For more than 16 years, she had to walk through murky sewerage waters to get to her old house whenever the annual rains brought floods. "We learned to live with it because at the time we had

no choice. I had a small sewing business in the home but it was so small I found it difficult to do very much."

Since Wanida moved into her new house in late December 2009, with her son Ekachai and daughter-in-law Maliwan, her passion for sewing knows no bounds.

Within a month of moving in, she had tiled the floor and installed three sewing machines. "Here I have plenty of room and I enjoy working in my house," she said. Although she has a day-time job cleaning apartments at a Chiang Mai condominium, she continues to work after returning home, paddling away on her sewing machine.



"I have always enjoyed sewing. I do piece work where I can earn up to 160 baht (about US\$5) per day," said Wanida. She sews shirts and stuffed toys for a local clothing business.

Her industrious nature was already evident during the Carter Work Project week when she worked with volunteers to mix cement, carry blocks and paint the walls of her home.

"I remember Mr. Francis from Delta Airlines who was the house leader. He made us all laugh when we were working. I could not understand all of what he was saying, but when I saw the kindness in his eyes I too laughed with him and the other volunteers."

"I feel so free here in this community. It has been a dream come true for me and my son. We will enjoy this house for many years to come and with all the new friends we have we will enjoy it with them."

# Vietnam

## Dong Xa village, Ke Sat district, Hai Duong province

*Fond memories and a new kindergarten*



In January 2010, after a formal handover ceremony, the Habitat families started to move in. This enabled them to celebrate the most important festival in Vietnam, *Tet* or Lunar New Year, in the comfort of their new homes. This was a major change for the majority of the 32 beneficiary families, fishing people who had lived on their boats for generations.

More than half of the families have now moved into their homes. Most of the others have moved in belongings and furniture. They will properly settle in just before Christmas 2010 when they have to stop fishing due to the onset of the monsoon season. At least three families have made further improvements to their new homes, adding an extra room or building a new kitchen or toilet.

A community center was formally handed over in January 2010 as well. By this September, the Dong Xa community will also have a new kindergarten. At

**CHILDREN ARE THE MAIN SOURCE** of noise in Dong Xa village now that the drone of drilling has stilled, the dust has settled and the volunteers from 2009 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project are long gone.

least 35 children aged between three and five will no longer have to cross a river several times each day, as they do now, to go to kindergarten.

However, the children still remember and miss their volunteer friends. As do their parents. Mementoes in their houses point to a lasting connection with the volunteers: a water bottle, a name badge, a volunteer's T-shirt, a Swiss knife, and plenty of photographs.

The Habitat home partners are thankful for the help they received. At the handover ceremony, candy seller Pham Van Chung echoed the sentiments of many when he said: "I don't know what else to say but thank you, thank you and thank you."

Americans made up the largest foreign contingent of the nearly 600 volunteers who built with families during the Carter Work Project last November. Others came from New Zealand, Thailand, Singapore and Canada.

The largest single group — nearly half the total — were Vietnamese helping out their fellow countrymen and women.



# A safe home & a revitalized business

*Two families in Vietnam recount how their lives have been transformed*



**FISHERMAN CAO VAN BINH** and his family are used to the trials of a fishing life. Fifty-two-year-old Binh used to live on a small fishing boat with his wife, Cao Thi Sat, 49 (pictured above). His son, Cao Van Hua, 21, lived on another small boat with his wife Doan Thi Mo, 18, and their young son, Cao Van Vu, who is now approaching his first birthday.

After the birth of his grandson, Binh was even more conscious of the perils of living on the water. Children living on fishing boats can fall overboard; each year some are drowned. Now, the family can be at ease as they live on land in a Habitat home.

For boat families like the Caos, electricity was a luxury and easy access to fresh water non-existent. When the weather was too hot, they resorted to paying the equivalent of 30 US cents a day to plug a fan into a neighbor's electricity supply. Now, the Cao family pays US\$3 a month for enough electricity to power their fan, a television as well as a water pump.

The water pump has had a major effect on their lives. Polluted river water is a major health risk for fishing families. In the past, the Caos would either have to buy drinking water from people ashore or rely on the generosity of neighbors. Now that they have a water pump, the family enjoys saving money and the prospect of significant health benefits.

The Cao family's secure and comfortable home would not have been possible without the Carter Work Project volunteers whom Sat remembers with great fondness. "It was a lot of fun, very enjoyable. A family of four and two volunteers tried to squeeze in my tiny boat," she recalled. They even wrote their names on the walls of the house so that she could remember them, Sat said.

Now the Cao family has plans. They want to extend their house by adding at least one more bedroom. To further increase living space, they plan to relocate the indoor toilet to outside the house.



**PLYING THEIR DAILY TRADE SELLING** candy in Dong Xa, Pham Van Chung and his wife Nguyen Thi Nguyet were resigned to a meager income. "The candy shop's profits were just enough for my grandchildren's snacks," recalled Chung. The 58-year-old former paddy farmer turned to the small business after he had to sell his paddy field several years ago.

Living conditions were cramped. His family of seven shared a one-room house. Chung was worried that his three young grandchildren, ranging in age from two to eight, would have no space to grow. His son, Pham Van Hiep, worked as a truck driver while his daughter-in-law, Thi Song, tailored clothes from the back of the family house. The sewing machine she used was old and slow, but business was even slower.

Since the Pham family moved into their Habitat house, Song's business has never been better. The house is near a main road so there are lots of customers. The family has bought a second sewing machine to keep up with demand. Song is busier than ever, said her husband.

Soon after they moved in, the Phams received a package from American volunteer Rick Damato. He had written an article about his Carter Work Project experience in U.S. magazine *Roofing Contractor*. Said Chung: "These volunteers come from all over the world to help. They are very compassionate about poor people like us. I treat all of them as my own family members."

## UPDATE

# "All we desire"

*The Caos have already expanded their Habitat home*



A fisherman for the past 10 years, Hoi's earnings used to go into renting their old premises for his family of five. Once Habitat for Humanity Vietnam had handed over their new home, the family quickly decided more space was needed.

To expand their Habitat home, the family borrowed 12 million dong (about US\$630) from relatives and neighbors. Contributing their own labor, the Cao family took 20 days to complete the extension in time for the Lunar New Year. This year marked the first time that the Caos were able to celebrate the important occasion in their very own home.

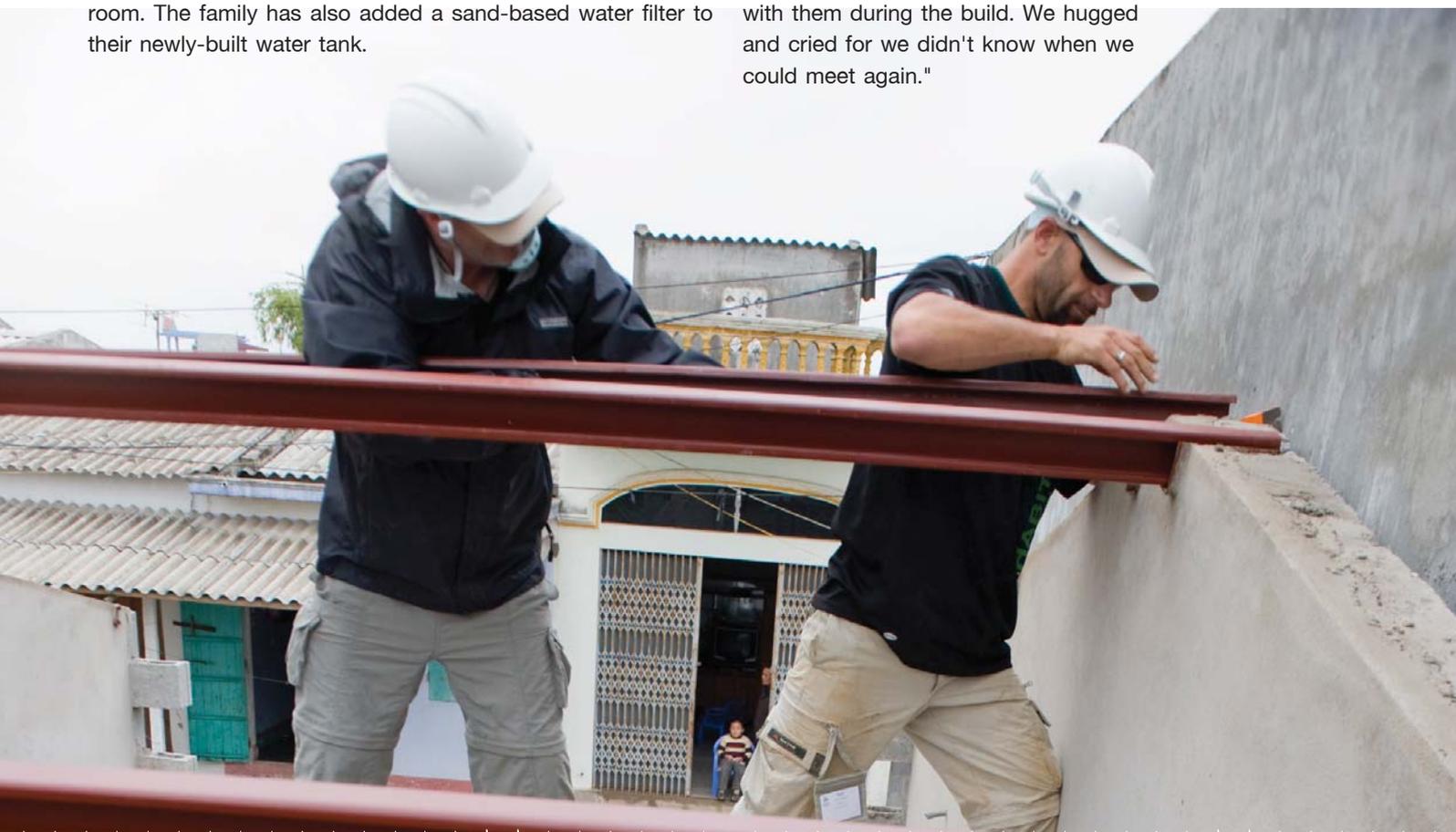
But having spent money on the extension, the Caos cannot yet afford to make their home "beautiful". The living room remains bare with an old cupboard brought from the boat as the only furniture. The new rooms are unpainted.

Still, nothing beats the feeling of having a home to call their own. The Caos enjoy the family togetherness. They are hoping that five-year-old Cao Van Chung will be able to attend the kindergarten when it is completed in September. They also plan for the day when their second son, Cao Van Huynh, 18, gets married in their new home.

**ANY CARTER WORK PROJECT** volunteer walking into Cao Van Hoi's home will be pleasantly surprised by the change. An extension has nearly doubled the size of the house. The Habitat kitchen area has been converted into a bedroom, and a new kitchen and toilet have been added along with a storage room. The family has also added a sand-based water filter to their newly-built water tank.

"This is all that we desire," said Hoi with a bright smile.

His wife Cao Thi Sim recalled the hardworking Carter Work Project volunteers. "The volunteers did not ask for anything, we all tried to complete the house together. We shared food with them during the build. We hugged and cried for we didn't know when we could meet again."



# Cambodia

## New Life Community, Oudong, Kandal province

*New opportunities and solar power*



Yet others learnt how to make soap. These, and other planned income-generating training sessions, offer a fresh start for families who had relied on scavenging for recyclable materials on a now-closed municipal dumpsite in Phnom Phenh.

To go with their new two-room Habitat homes, they have power. Each of the 21 families received a solar power panel for their electricity needs again thanks to the generosity of Australian donors Paul and Aileen Munn. A communal 30-m. deep well has also been modified and equipped with a solar powered pump that can fill a 10,000-liter tank to supply the needs of the whole community.

**THE NEW LIFE COMMUNITY** in Oudong, Cambodia, has lived up to its name since last November's Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project. As leader of the community Chea Chandy said when the project was launched several months earlier: "I hope the new generation will have bright opportunities for their lives."

Looking at what has happened since November, Chandy is not far from realizing his hopes. Not only do 21 families have new homes, they are also finding new ways of earning a living.

In March and April 2010, many residents signed up to learn new income-generating skills. The workshops, organized by Habitat for Humanity Cambodia, took place in the community center and on a construction site. Some learnt to become builders. Others learnt to raise poultry: chickens and ducks.

Activate Church from Adelaide, Australia, donated 24 sq. m. of floor matting to each of 15 of the families who could not afford floor coverings.

About 250 volunteers from both overseas and within Cambodia worked with the Habitat home partners during the Carter Work Project. Most volunteers were from the United States with contingents also from New Zealand, Korea and Australia. Fifty-three were young Cambodians who volunteered as part of Habitat's Cambodia Youth Initiative.

At the dedication of homes after the end of Carter Work Project, home partner Hout Da spoke of the volunteers with fondness. "I will miss everyone. They have become a part of my family, helping me build our home. I feel like I have more brothers, papas, mamas, sisters, daughters and sons."



# A busy schedule & safe children

*From a dumpsite to a new life in Oudong*



THE LIFE OF EK SREY HAK is hectic, and a far cry from her days of scavenging at the Steung Meanchey dumpsite in the capital Phnom Penh. Her day starts at 5 a.m. when she wakes up to clean her house, does the laundry, prepares breakfast for her family and sends her children, 12-year-old Pon Supara and Pon Sunalee, 10, to school.

Then she is ready to open her shop. Srey Hak sells snacks and foods and many of the small daily necessities of life from one of the rooms of her Habitat home.

When she has a lull in between attending to customers, Srey Hak practices her handicraft skills. She weaves baskets and makes palm leaf birds as souvenirs to sell to tourists heading to nearby Oudong Mountain. At the end of the day, she helps her children with their homework before they go to bed.

Srey Hak is actively involved in the various Habitat livelihood training initiatives offered in the New Life Community. Having learned how to make liquid soap to sell in her shop, she is now part of a Habitat project which enables community members to earn additional income from their homes by raising poultry for sale in the market.

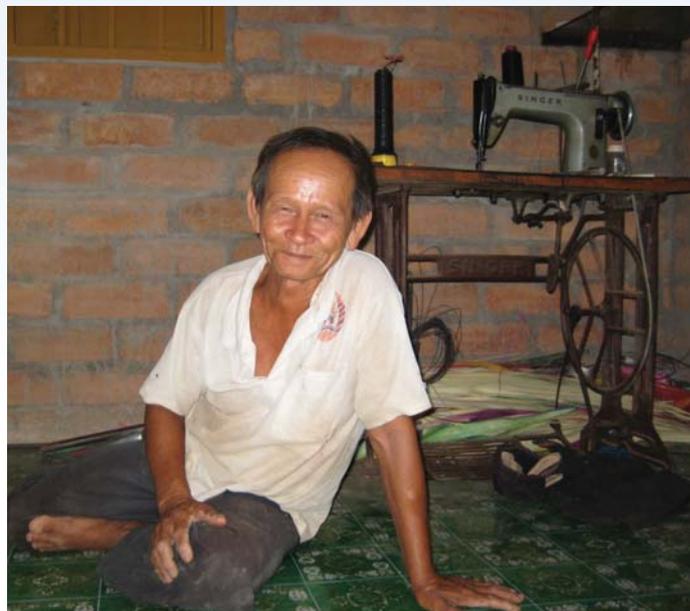
In April, Srey Hak joined a two-day construction skills training session conducted by HFH Cambodia. She now earns extra money working on a nearby Habitat project site.

Welling up with joyful tears for what she has, Srey Hak plans to expand her shop and take part in more income-generating activities. "My greatest hope is that my children are able to study and receive a good education," she said.

CHEA HOUT, THE 71-YEAR-OLD patriarch of New Life Community, can claim to know most of the members. Of his 72 relatives who live in the community, 52 are his grandchildren.

Sitting on the floor of the family room in his new home, Hout, who is rarely seen without a smile, had an extra sparkle in his eyes and smiled all the more brightly when describing life as a first-time home partner.

Hout never thought he would see the day when his family would have homes of their own. "My children are all good people, and I am so happy that we can all be together now," he said.



When they were all living at the Steung Meanchey dumpsite, he could hardly keep track of his grandchildren, but now he can see them every day. Hout's wife, Say Kim, often cares for the children of the community while their parents are working.

Since moving to Oudong, Hout's health has improved drastically. When he was making a living from repairing shoes at the dumpsite, Hout suffered back pains and for some time was not able to walk. Now the back pain has gone. He is even able to work as a construction worker at a Habitat build site. For additional income, he is one of the many community members raising chickens for market.

Hout is proud to share that visitors are always very impressed with his new home. He hopes that more families from the Steung Meanchey dumpsite will be able to move to Oudong.

"When they do so, I will share with them the happy life that I have in the New Life Community," he said.

# "A simple guy"

*One family is earning and saving*



CHEA MARADY WAS SO HAPPY AND EXCITED during the first night in his new Habitat home that he could not sleep. He moved into his home in Oudong with his wife and two children in November 2009, soon after the completion of the Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project.

Life at the New Life Community is very different from his former days at the old Steung Meanchey municipal dumpsite. Living and working at the dumpsite meant that his daughters were often sick. He had to take his two-year-old Hout Sreyha to the doctor two or three times a week. Since moving to the New Life Community, however, neither Hout Sreyha nor her seven-month-old sister, Hout Karuna, have needed to visit a doctor. The whole family is experiencing improved health and well being.

Now that Marady has access to a community well and solar panels, he is able to save money that used to be spent on buying clean water and electricity. He is keeping the savings to repay the loan for his Habitat house and for his family's emergency needs.

Like many in the community, Marady works as a skilled construction worker at a nearby Habitat build site. He has also participated in Habitat livelihood training sessions. He learnt to make liquid soap, and now sells bottles during his lunch break. At 1,000 riel (about 25 US cents) each, Marady can sell about 20 to 30 bottles a day. This money is for his daily expenses while his wages from building work are saved. He is also learning the art of raising and selling ducks.

overwhelmed. "I never thought such important people would ever come to my home. I am just a simple guy."

Today, Marady is simply committed to being a responsible Habitat home partner and a husband and father who takes good care of his family's needs and health.



Someday, Marady hopes to have enough money to set up a radio repair shop to utilize the skills he learnt at the Pour un Sourire d'Enfant vocational school in Phnom Penh.

When the Carters visited his house after the end of the project in November 2009, Marady was

# China

## Qionglai city, Sichuan province

Handover due in October



The three buildings, featuring a total of 402 units, are part of the second phase of a low-cost rental housing project by the Qionglai government. The units are scheduled to be handed over at the end of October 2010.

The city authorities will then select low-income families who meet a list of criteria to be tenants. On average, families are expected to rent each 45 sq. m. housing unit for about 90 renminbi (about US\$13) a month.

Among the prospective tenants is Zheng You-zhen (*photo left*). The 56-year-old trishaw driver lives with her ailing husband, Chen Shuiqing, and grown-up son, Chen Ning, in a rental house on the outskirts of the city. Zheng's husband, has been frail since an operation to remove kidney stones 15 years ago. Zheng suffers from the same ailment but has not sought treatment.

Zheng shared her aspiration: "I hope to have my own house. That will help my son's marriage prospects."

THE SUN BEAT DOWN IN Chiang Mai, the main site of the 2009 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project. But at another Carter Work Project site, in Sichuan province, China, volunteers battled bone-chilling November cold to build brick walls about two meters high. As crew leader Olivia Wong left the site in Qionglai city, she said: "We cleaned up everything. The only things we left behind are the walls we built and the love."

10 More than 200 volunteers worked on three blocks, under the supervision of local skilled workers. About half of the volunteers came from Hong Kong and China with several from the U.S., Korea, New Zealand and Australia.

Local construction workers continued with the work started by the volunteers. Half a year later, three blocks of six-story-high buildings have been completed. Outstanding work includes decorative motifs on external walls, and wiring and fitting out inside the units.



# Laos

## Ban Chan Savang village



THE SMALLEST OF THE 2009 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project sites was in Laos. Fewer volunteers and fewer families did not mean less commitment. The home improvements, however, paved the way for better economic opportunities and more adequate sanitation facilities.

Twenty families worked with Habitat for Humanity's local partner, Community Development and Environment Association, during the Carter Work Project. The families were resettled in Ban Chan Savang village, about 15 km. from the center of the Laotian capital, Vientiane. Their former homes had been destroyed by a fire.

Working with volunteers from Thailand, Korea and the U.S., the families made improvements such as roof extensions, new toilets or concrete floors.

After the Carter Work Project ended, CDEA assisted families in surrounding villages to make another 18 house repairs and built three toilets.

### UPDATE

## "Touched"

### *A roof extension provides an income*

SAENG ALOUN LATTANAVONG AND VOLUNTEERS extended the roof of his house and installed shutters on the windows of his house during the Carter Work Project week.

Saeng Aloun's wife, Phoukhong, was able to use the overhang to set up a sundry goods shop outside their 32 sq. m. house. Daily takings from the shop average about 20,000 kip (US\$2.50) which helps to cover some of the family's expenses.

This is one of several sources of much-needed income. As a member of the village's economic committee, Saeng Aloun takes home about 80,000 kip a week. On weekends, he sells fruit in a tourist area near his village, earning an additional 200,000 kip per week.

The couple has three young children who study in the village primary school.

Months later, the volunteers remain a special memory. Phoukhong said: "I am touched by the volunteers who arrived to do the work in such a short period of time."





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