

Internship Report

Philanthropy Connections-Victor Ong (1-31 July, 2013)

After spending one month in Chiang Mai working for Philanthropy Connections, I have to say that Philanthropy Connections is a charity that is really different. In my one month internship, it was very interesting to see Sallo and Vanessa go to local organizations they have identified as possible projects for sponsors to fund on motorcycles; the amazing thing was not the motorcycles, but that everyone in the office was involved-including interns. This was not simply an organization that had a mission and a vision which was reformulated after a number of years, whereby the man on the top gathers everyone to state the new mission and vision or restate the old ones to get the rest to follow and try to realize them. To me, Philanthropy Connections was an assembly of like-minded individuals who were driven by passion to fulfill its permanent mission to empower vulnerable people by supporting local organisations that are most capable of finding solutions to the diverse problems these people face.

Working with Philanthropy Connections as an accountant organizing the financial infrastructure and publishing the financial reports and the corporate handbook had some highly inspirational moments. Sallo emphasized full disclosure and the tracking of monies to ensure that all money donated for a certain project stays with that project. Having seen the financial statements of other projects, this is amazing given that charities often do not have this control in place, even for large, established ones which have an army of accountants. It is really the conscience that matters, and in Philanthropy Connections, the conscience is that donors' money will only be used for their stated purpose and this is accountability at its best.

Overall, I had very interesting moments in the internship. Good food in Chiang Mai, discovering the endless night markets and even getting mistaken for a Thai on many occasions made me feel very welcome in a land of smiles. The internship was extremely meaningful because it brought me into contact with the less fortunate and it was really their tenacity, their choice to smile amidst their unfortunate circumstances that touched my heart.