

# Our Experience in Tuao



22 to 25 May 2009

Green plains, vast spaces, bumpy roads, warm hospitality, warmer climate, great brethren – these were the things that sum up our trip to Tuao, Philippines.



## **Day 1 – Friday, 22 May 2009**

We thanked God that our trip from Singapore to Manila to Tuguegarao was uneventful - there was no flight delay and we reached the town of Tuguegarao at 11 a.m., about 11 hours after we left Singapore. Bro. Ting Chew called Bro. Jhun Ma and was told that he would be arriving soon on a 'tricycle' with Elder Beng Chuan. We spent the next 15 mins wondering how we would fit into the 'tricycle', which was similar to our trishaw, except a passenger seat was attached to a motorcycle instead of a bicycle.

To our relief, a lorry followed the arrival of the tricycle. We sat in relative comfort on cane armchairs lined on one side of the lorry. As we left the airport and went into the little town, we picked up huge canisters of mineral



water, vegetables and even fresh tilapia (fish). Then we were on our way to Tuao. Green plains of padi and brownish fields (being prepared for planting) were on both sides of the

road, stretching as far as our eyes could see. Some parts of the road were unpaved so granite dust and tiny stones flew around. There were potholes aplenty so we had a bumpy 'massage'. After about an hour of 'bone-shaking' in the lorry, we arrived to a warm welcome by the church in Tuao at around 1.30 p.m. Our 10 interns were having their lunch break and we relayed to them the well-wishes of their parents. Then we had our first of the many delicious 'Tuao' meals prepared by Sis. Babe while the interns continued with the final session of the VBS.

After lunch, we observed the VBS. Our interns were doing a good job and the large group of about 50 children was well behaved and enthusiastic. The singing was loud and clear and we could see many smiling faces as the children eagerly completed their craftwork. The rest of the afternoon was spent wilting in the heat and getting to know the members here. Time seemed to have stood still in the sweltering heat.

Dinner was another wonderful meal which ended with fresh watermelon for dessert. Then we were squeezed into two tricycles with our luggage and two brothers drove us to Cassily. After half an hour of bumping along the dark country road and being chased by barking dogs we finally arrived at the 'best' accommodation in Tuao.

Amidst the darkness, we could see a row of lighted 'chalets'. Each chalet consisted of a common toilet with shower facilities and

two air-conditioned bedrooms with two double beds each. Mosquitoes, ants and a myriad of bugs kept us company as we took our cold showers and went to bed. After the heat of the day, we actually shivered in the air-conditioning as we were only provided with two thin bed sheets as blankets. However, we were overcome by exhaustion and had no trouble falling asleep.

### **Day 2 – Saturday, 23 May 2009**



We literally woke up with the birds at 5 a.m. The sun rose and Cassily looked like a pleasant, tranquil resort by the lake in the soft morning light. There were many small pavilions on the lake, which could be used to host various functions. Our ever efficient brethren were at our doorstep early, at 6.30 a.m., so by 8, we were back at the church building.

It was a relaxing Saturday. The VBS graduation programme was held in the morning and while our interns had a care team meeting with the Tuao youths in the afternoon, the adults, had more 'really warm' fellowship with the Tuao brethren. Sister Babes has already set up a good Bible class programme. There are 3 children's classes, the youth class and the men's and ladies' classes. Brothers Jhun Ma and Oscar, and sister Babes have really worked hard and there has been phenomenal growth in the three years since the church was set up. We had nice, long discussions while preparing for the Teachers' Workshop on Sunday. We were impressed with the youths as they worked hard -pumping water

from the well, helping with the meal preparation and playing/taking care of the many little kids running around.

### **Day 3 – Sunday, 24 May 2009**

An earlier start brought us back to the church building by 7.30 a.m. After a delectable breakfast, singing began in the main hall of the church. The enthusiastic voices of both adults and children joined together in melodious harmony, displaying their love of singing. Bible classes, then worship, followed. Deacon Swee Aun preached about God's providence in taking care of baby Moses.

It was 'Awards Sunday' in Tuao. The children received medals for their good behaviour and brilliant memory work. Evidence of their hard work was shown when they recited all the 66 books of the Bible and the Beatitudes. Wow!

The ever-efficient sister Babes had already prepared lunch before bible class began and the meal was ready within minutes. Then, the locals had their siestas and the youths washed their clothes.

At 3 p.m., the Teacher's Workshop was held in the main hall. Two stand fans provided very little relief from the sweltering heat. I managed to give my 20-minute Powerpoint Presentation on teaching children. Then sister Caroline wowed the audience of about 21 (mostly ladies and youths) with a display of home-made crafts. We wanted to show how teaching aids, with a bit of creativity, can be made with just about anything. Then the audience was divided into groups of 3 to prepare a lesson plan and a teaching aid. In the final part of the programme, the 7 groups presented their lessons. Simple prizes were awarded to the best three groups. Caroline and I were so happy to see how everyone put in their best efforts.



Our amazing sister Babes and her helpers once again prepared a sumptuous dinner, aided by the bumbling efforts of our interns. An

hour of de-brief followed. As the interns shared their thoughts of what they had experienced in the past week, we were really thankful to God for giving them this opportunity to learn and mature in their faith. Then all the adults, including elder Beng Chuan, returned to Cassily for their final night in Tuao

#### **Day 4 – Monday, 25 May 2009**

The journey back to Singapore was filled with special moments. The day began with brother Jhun Ma and sister Babes arriving with our breakfast of buns, sunny-side eggs and mangoes. Then, half a truckload of people accompanied us from Tuao to Tugegarao town. 18 adults and 4 children were packed



into the same lorry we arrived in. In addition to our luggage, there were empty cartons of water, empty baskets and even a plastic chair. The residents of Tuao were going to do their marketing in town.

Bumping along the dusty, granite road, I discovered a new way to use my scarf. Doing



what the locals did, Caroline and I covered our noses and mouths. We were amazed that the 4 children obediently sat or slept through-

out the journey without fuss.

We made 2 stops – one at a local petrol station and another at a roadblock by the police. The petrol station consisted of 2 small, rusty tanks of oil and a brown, rusty pump. It was located at a local rice processing plant where sister Jovi worked. We experienced a moment of anxiety at the roadblock since the driving license of our lorry driver had expired. However, we were soon rushing along the road again.

Alas, the mad rush was all for nothing. Our flight was delayed by 2 ½ hours, and then delayed again, and we missed our connecting flight. By the time we reached Singapore, it was 11 p.m. We had spent more than 12 hours on the road and in the air.

All in all, it has been a wonderful experience. We were served at every meal by our own PP interns and enjoyed sister Babes' wonderful cooking. The locals and the interns also did the washing up. Most of the time, we just sat back and relaxed. Best of all, we were able to see God's hand in the lives of the brethren in Tuao and praise Him as the God of every nation.

*Written by Wai Leng, with input from Caroline.  
Illustrated by brother Ting Chew and deacon Swee Aun  
Supported by elder Beng Chuan*



## Interns At Work...



## Sunday worship and Bible Classes



## Vacation Bible School (VBS)



## Other Activities