

## A Further Note from Thailand Sattahip - Superficiality Hides the Reality



The sweet smell of the sea and the pristine azure sky creates a positive impression. Sattahip is just 30 minutes south of the sex tourism playground of Pattaya - not that counts for anything to our migrant families. So, take a right turn off the highway onto a long, narrow, winding road and you soon realise that this road to the coast is a **one way in** but a **no way out** for scores of Burmese migrant families.

Somehow, they survive in absolute destitution and squalor, eking out a living drying hundreds of tons of silver-sided sardines for Asian markets. There is no factory here as all the salting, cooking, drying and sorting of these fish is done in the open – well until the rain comes and then there is pandemonium! Our Living Water Foundation (LWF) conducts a school here for about fifty 7 to 14-year-old children. The school is totally dependent on LWF. The volunteer teacher (a local pastor) and his wife are Burmese and live in the community too. LWF counsels the families, supports the school and provides one excellent meal every school day thanks to Marys Meals Scotland.



Sattahip itself can be a very dangerous place to be. A serious form of **'mafia'** operates these fish-drying farms and wharfs. Migrants who may try to escape could easily disappear only to turn up as blanched bones on the hillside months later. As we slowly drove past the finger wharfs, unsettled Thai and Burmese **'broker'** eyes were glowering when they noticed a **'Farang'** (foreigner) in a solitary car passing slowly by. Two motor bikes tailed us. Could they have taken us out had they wished? We could only guess. Police do not enter this place. Drugs and murder can go unchecked here.



These lovely oppressed Buddhist migrant workers are truly society's grassroots, trampled down, dried out and eaten by greedy people seeking something for nothing. Sadly, alcohol and drugs can be the workers only release. Our LWF's weekly visits bring much hope and joy to the kids and families. It **is** worth the risk. Our next visit in a few days' time will be to run a fun day for the kids with prizes and despite the 38C heat and dust, even ice cream too somehow!

**Paul S Murphy**  
In Thailand.