

CHARIS volunteers aid Myanmar refugees in Thailand

By Lilynne Seah

From June 16 to 22, the Caritas Humanitarian Aid and Relief Initiatives, Singapore (CHARIS) deployed a mission team of 12 volunteers to interact with and assist residents in maintenance work at the Ban Mae Surin refugee camp.

Located deep in the forest along the Thailand-Myanmar border, Ban Mae Surin houses close to 3,500 residents with majority being Karenni refugees from the Kayah state in Myanmar. The residents lead a simple village life without electricity and access to the world outside.

When a deadly fire broke out last March, 37 residents were killed, including a Catholic Office of Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR) camp staff. To help rebuild what was lost, CHARIS provided COERR with a grant to reconstruct the Social Service Centre and Child Friendly Space.

COERR, under Caritas Thailand, has been providing humanitarian services for 30 years over



Two volunteers painting a mural for the Child Friendly Space.

nine camps along the border, including Ban Mae Surin.

The volunteers renovated the two communal centres and paint-

ed wall murals and fences for the residents.

Volunteers also visited the COERR agricultural and voca-



Visiting the COERR agricultural centre where residents rear animals for consumption and livelihood.

tional centres, which help to provide livelihoods and sustenance for the residents.

One of the volunteers Ms Irene Pinto, 51, said, "This trip truly showed me the meaning of how love and life have no boundaries."

CHARIS is the umbrella body for the Singapore archdiocese's overseas humanitarian aid. For more information about CHARIS mission trips, please email info@charis-singapore.org or visit www.charis-singapore.org.

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