

Project Starfish is one of the many organisations that work in collaboration with the global company HAGAR International. Their objective is to help victims of trafficking, slavery and abuse. They provide many services to enable these victims the support and encouragement needed to turn their lives around and become good citizens within their communities. Our team heard a story where HAGAR and the FBI paid the fares to the USA for this young lad to testify against his abuser. This same young lad is now completing an Engineering degree in Cambodia. HAGAR often receives referrals from other organisations and is now working on the male abuse and entrapment on fishing vessels in the Pacific. They offer training to these outlying organisations to look for the signs of abuse, slavery and to be alert and aware of forced marriages. Our team participated in a 10 km walk that was part of the annual HAGAR Triathlon and received a medal. There were 12,000 participants in 2019. It was a 4 am start!

It was an eye opener to witness the lack of Health and Safety. However, the team did not spot any misadventure or mishaps! The drying room was designed for the roof area to be smaller than the concrete floor to slow down the erosion of the nearby banks. The water pouring from the roof edge was washing away the soil and threatening the stability of the earth underneath the drying area. Spouting was not required as they block up with leaves and there is not a regular maintenance schedule. The concrete was hand mixed on site and the old concrete was broken into pieces to be used for fill. Dengue fever forced the closure of the school for a day, many of the children provided extra labour when dismantling the old concrete. Fortunately our team were not affected by the virus, however they did see the authorities take the necessary precautions to ward off the spread of this disease.

Their work in the orphanage was very rewarding for all. Jess expressed her concern over the lack of adult supervision but noted that the boys and girls all look out for each other with the seniors stepping up to provide support and guidance to the younger set if required. Hearing the stories surrounding these rescued orphans and their new life in the orphanage was at times heart breaking but there was light at the end of the tunnel.

I also had the pleasure to present cheques of \$2500 (proceeds from our November 'Spring Garage Sale' – plus a top-up from the Charitable Trust) to Rebecca Honeybone representing 'Heart Kids SC' (money to be used to purchase 'Coagulation Machines' for families) and Robyn Baldwin representing 'Multiple Sclerosis NZ'.

Next week we will be hearing from Liz Gregory with “A glimpse into the real Gloriavale”. This is also a partners night.

Enjoy your weekend. Bev