SITTING AT THE BACK

Posted on February 26, 2008 by Sue

Category: Observations

I'm sitting at the back of a strategic planning workshop in Chiang Mai, Thailand, copying material onto CDs for the participants to take away and half listening to the session. It's been interesting to travel with Eddie on this trip, seeing him 'do his stuff': explaining various planning processes and demonstrating the art of group facilitation. Fascinating watching him and his two other colleagues leading the workshop, seeing their interaction as they plan and rethink the workshop in mid-flow according to what the participants need. It's been a good opportunity to meet many of the colleagues Eddie works with that I haven't met before, and great to chat with participants from Africa and Asis about the work they are involved in.

This is my first ever visit to Asia, and we are certainly enjoying Thai hospitality as well as sampling the various cuisines available in Chiang Mai in the evenings. I'm finding it frustrating though that I don't speak a word of Thai - I have at least learned how to say 'Hello' and 'Thank You' but it would take quite a bit longer to get a handle on this tonal language and its script.

Whilst being here though, my thoughts are also turning to Madagascar where Cyclone Ivan and the heavy rains in its wake caused a lot of devastation, particularly on the east coast of the island. There were more than 40 lives lost and many homes destroyed, but because of the disruption in communications following the cyclone I haven't heard any news from the Betsimisaraka translators I've been working with so I'm wondering if they have suffered any losses.
Meanwhile the workshop here is almost over and tomorrow we fly home via Bangkok and Paris. It will be really nice to arrive back in Southampton directly from Paris, though our bodies will no doubt me confused about the time of day.... It's exciting to visit different places in the course of our work, but it's also fairly tiring and I'll be glad to get home. When this session is over I'll be heading for the pool on the 10th floor of the hotel to catch the last hour of sunshine - a little exercise will be very

welcome after sitting all day in our air conditioned meeting room.