

EVERYTHING AND MOVE TO THAILAND TO HELP THE MANY YOUNG VICTIMS OF PATTAYA'S SEX TRADE



mortgage and credit cards and no job or whether you have no home but squat on the side of the road eating whatever you can cobble together and working for long hours for slave wages.

"One of the contributing factors is their low sense of self-worth. They believe they cannot change their incarnation. But with education, poverty can be cured and furthermore education gives you choices".

This is one of the reasons why the couple decided towards the end of their year-long stay that they would start a new project aimed specifically at educating the street kids from the slums.

According to Andrew: "We were feeling overwhelmed by the whole situation and felt that we might as well head home to Belfast because we were not making any difference. But it all changed in the last three weeks of our stay. People came to us and told us how the money they'd received helped them with their rent or assisted in some way. There is a huge need for help."

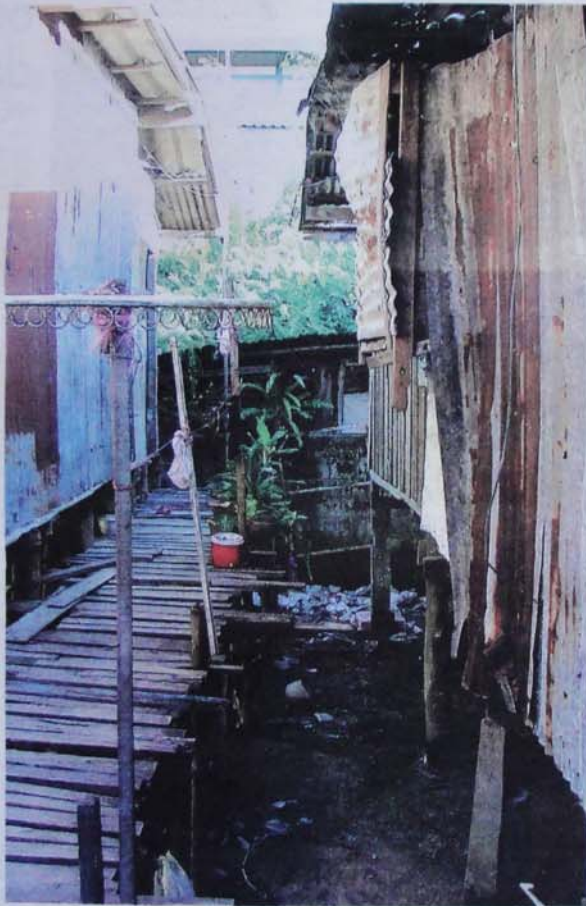
**Hope**

Three years on, the project they founded now supports the schooling of 150 Hopechildren and ensures their lunches, uniforms and books are paid for. Kate's Project Centre of Hope, which was named after Roisin's mother, also ensures that families of the children receive a food-drop once a month while the rents of 25 families are paid or part-paid.

Andrew explains that this small Centre of Hope costs between £35-45,000 a year to operate and a lot of that money has come from their own personal money or fundraising. With just four major sponsors behind the project, it is a constant headache to find the money to cover their bills.

"What started with a couple of children has mushroomed. Like many families, we have failures and successes," explains Roisin. "We work with transient people who will move from place to place sometimes because the landlord throws them off his land in order to develop it."

"To date we are proud that we have never turned down any reasonable request for help from the children. Our fear is that without this help they will once again become the prey and fodder of paedophiles. The problem is huge, with



Clockwise from top left: Andrew and Roisin present a young boy with a gift; talk to a Pattayan blind man; and a typical view of one of the slums in which the people who Andrew and Roisin help live

hundreds of thousands suffering."

In Andrew's opinion, "Irish people are blinkered when they go there. They go to Beach Road and its bars but 'Boystown' where young men sell themselves shocked me."

They have no regrets about their initial decision to sell all and give to the poor. For Roisin it was a spontaneous response. "We made our decision on the spur of the moment, it felt right and afterwards we felt a great sense of freedom. We jumped and God caught us! This is always the basis of our faith and we continue to trust that God will take care of us and our extended family."

She says they will never return to their 'old life, rather they are committed to working to raise money and awareness of this injustice.

Andrews sums their philosophy up: "As a man in my 50s I began to realise that life means more than simply gathering possessions that you can't take with you - so go out and make an impact with your life! I'm happiest when I know that I am helping someone and seeing the children attending school."

For further information see [www.katesproject.co.nr](http://www.katesproject.co.nr) or contact [katesproject@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:katesproject@hotmail.co.uk) or Tel: 0044 (0) 2890 325 339.

