

Frowning stomachs in the land of smiles

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Rice season is over, fish season is over, and many don't have food. But there's still hope. A project known as Meals on Flip-Flops is here to help. 7 in every 100 people in Thailand are underweight.

This is usually caused by lack of food. The life expectancy is also quite low, 72 years old. According to the UN Thailand's website, "Rapid economic growth and increased agricultural productivity over the past two decades have seen the number of undernourished people drop by almost half." This is still rapidly increasing, and without projects and organizations such as Meals on Flip-Flops, it will keep on growing. Most people in Thailand are farmers, meaning that they farm food.

Mostly everyone supports themselves through farming, which is shown in their employment rate, 0.56%. People usually farm because crops are easy to grow there, they don't need educational experience, and because they can use all their crops to feed their family, instead of needing money to buy food. If they have an excess of crops, they can always sell them in the market for money. However, many people still go to the market to buy foods such as eggs, which are easier to buy than actually raising a hen.

Crops are the main source of food and money for Thai people. One extremely popular crop is *Ipomoea aquatica*, commonly known as "water spinach" or "morning glory". It's a part of most of Thai people's diets because it only takes one month to grow! People mass produce this crop as well as rice. Rice takes 5 to 6 months to grow, so it's also an easy crop to grow. People in Thailand usually grow it because it doesn't need to be watered, and can be grown in just a body of water.

People store rice in small huts on stilts, to protect it from animals after rice season. This is one of the most important buildings for a Thai 2 family, because this food supports them for half of the year, when rice season is over. What is Meals on Flip-Flops? Meals without flip flops is a project created by the service group “ Rustic Pathways” to provide food for those lacking it. The project enables kids to make their own food, through the steps of buying, cutting, cleaning, cooking, and finally bagging, to hand out to the poor. It sounds simple, and it is.

Not only is it simple, but the food smells and looks delicious. Does it really benefit? 7% is a really small number for malnourishment, right? This is true, comparing it to other countries. However, that doesn't mean that they don't need free food. The average salary in Thailand is about 8, 000 baht/year. That might not sound bad, but that's only about 250 dollars, or 900 dirhams.

But when you do the math, it would take 50 years to buy a cheap car. This means that most people in Thailand try to reduce their spendings to invest money in greater things, such as a car. So handing them food lets them so they can their money for one meal, and every meal counts. Not only that, but it also benefits you, for helping someone. It makes them happy, and makes you happy, so it's a win-win scenario!