



Northeast India Study Abroad Trip

By Sharon Ishii-Jordan, Ph.D.

The Beginning

The impetus for this Faculty-Led Program Abroad (FLPA) to Northeast India was an immersion trip in which Dr. Ishii-Jordan was invited to participate with 7 other individuals from around the Wisconsin Province of the Society of Jesus in January 2006. The purposes of that immersion were to have both lay and Jesuits journey together to visit one of the international Jesuit provinces that was matched, or “twinning”, with the Wisconsin Province, learn about the indigenous people of the area and the work of the Jesuits with them, and discuss ways to strengthen the twinning relationship through projects that could be initiated by lay partners. The 8 members of this first immersion group were split into two sub-groups with different itineraries. Dr. Ishii-Jordan’s sub-group visited Jesuit-built schools and women’s groups in a number of villages across the Kohima region in the Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya, and Nagaland.



Village schoolyard

The First Student Trip

During the next 18 months, the plan for a Creighton FLPA to Northeast India emerged with the appropriate paperwork completed, university/province approvals secured, support on both sides of the world joyously given, and itineraries designed. Both undergraduate education majors and teachers taking graduate courses for an ESL endorsement embarked on the first FLPA with Dr. Ishii-Jordan and Fr. Richard Hauser. The students learned about the cultures; met with religious, educational, and political leaders of the region; interviewed tribal elders; learned to live simply with no running hot water; engaged in discussions over course readings that spanned education, linguistics, sociology, and anthropology; demonstrated new teaching strategies; conversed with young men of the region studying to be Jesuits; learned the importance of singing; attended a funeral; and attended a First Communion celebration. The students were deeply moved as they wrote reflections of their service and their experiences connected to the Ignatian charisms of the Education Department: *cura personalis, magis*, contemplation in action, and men/women for and with others.



Khuzama orphanage



Northeast India – Kohima region

The Plan

The members of the sub-groups discussed a number of different opportunities for projects between the two regions of the world. Recognizing that a major strength of the Jesuits in the Kohima region is developing a deep understanding of and appreciation for the cultural norms and the needs of each particular village prior to building Jesuit schools in areas without access to formal education, Dr. Ishii-Jordan proposed a study-abroad trip for Education majors to enable them to visit a very unique area of the world, learn about the people and the cultures, contribute to discussions and demonstrations of teaching methods and strategies that could be used with students learning English as a second language, visit and assist in village schools, and enrich their own perspectives of the world from an experiential basis. Other projects were discussed, and plans were made to convert the ideas to actions when the immersion participants returned home.