From The Founders

Myanmar Still Needs Your Support

Daniel Marco Siegfried
Co-founder & Director of Projects

In the August 2016 Newsletter, I wrote about my optimism for Myanmar, using the phrase ‘rise like a phoenix from the ashes’. Two and a half years later, it seems that this phoenix has created a lot of ashes again. With the peace process stalled and more conflicts between the government and ethnic armed groups reported, the country is struggling to build an inclusive, just and fair society.

As INGOs and UN agencies have great difficulties to fund refugee camps in Bangladesh, more heart-breaking reports with horrendous accounts about what happened are made public. Many donors who watch these videos are questioning their support for organisations in Myanmar as they fear that these organisations are directly collaborating and therefore strengthening the government. So should donors stop supporting causes in Myanmar? Child’s Dream has been asked this question countless times and the answer is no. This young democracy needs all the help it can get to keep on track. Despite major setbacks, overall a lot of progress has been made over the last seven years politically, economically and socially and this could be jeopardised if the international community and its donors withdraw from Myanmar.
The Children’s Medical Fund (CMF) delivers medical services to children affected by congenital malformations from Myanmar and Laos. These malformations are often life threatening and can result in long term disabilities that affect the overall life quality of entire families. Especially in low resource countries, children born with birth defects bring dramatic economic burdens to the whole household; indeed the costs of the necessary medical care are often insurmountable to families and communities. Since the start of the programme 12 years ago, the CMF team has managed to serve 1,779 patients affected by congenital heart disorders, neural tube defects and other serious ailments. Recently, we have developed a new framework that enables us to understand the extent of the impacts delivered by the fund. After months of rigorously analysing old patients’ record, we have come to the realisation that over the decade, the programme has provided a second chance of life to as many as 903 children and has improved functional health conditions of another 239. In collaboration with our partners, we have delivered 1,387 surgeries and 5,088 diagnostic procedures and medical visits.

Many larger INGOs or UN agencies work through the government with the aim of strengthening its institutions and build capacity among the ministerial staff. Although this approach is now often questioned, it is still very much necessary. However, donors should use their budgets to set an incentive for dialogue and collaboration between the government and the ethnic groups. Activities that include joint training, sharing of information, coordination meetings and exploration visits in each other’s areas should be supported. Only with better understanding on both sides, can trust slowly be built to overcome the decades of conflict and suspicion.

Most smaller organisations like Child’s Dream address the health and educational needs of disadvantaged communities directly. In fact, Child’s Dream works both in ethnic states and Bamar (Burmese) areas and through our educational programmes promotes inter-ethnic and interfaith dialogue, active citizenship, gender equality and environmental sustainability. Our aim is to strengthen the capacity of a new generation of responsible leaders who can advance the peace process and build an inclusive society by raising awareness and understanding among the ethnic groups and the government.

Despite all the gloom, there is still hope. Next year Myanmar will hold national elections, which will most likely result in a more diverse parliament and government. Both the government and its army, as well as the ethnic armed groups should realise that, in a democracy, differences are resolved through discussion, referenda and elections, and not through conflict creating more ashes again.

From The Field

New Impact Measurement for CMF

The Children’s Medical Fund (CMF) delivers medical services to children affected by congenital malformations from Myanmar and Laos. These malformations are often life threatening and can result in long term disabilities that affect the overall life quality of entire families. Especially in low resource countries, children born with birth defects bring dramatic economic burdens to the whole household; indeed the costs of the necessary medical care are often insurmountable to families and communities. Since the start of the programme 12 years ago, the CMF team has managed to serve 1,779 patients affected by congenital heart disorders, neural tube defects and other serious ailments. Recently, we have developed a new framework that enables us to understand the extent of the impacts delivered by the fund. After months of rigorously analysing old patients’ record, we have come to the realisation that over the decade, the programme has provided a second chance of life to as many as 903 children and has improved functional health conditions of another 239. In collaboration with our partners, we have delivered 1,387 surgeries and 5,088 diagnostic procedures and medical visits.
Throughout 2018, Child’s Dream piloted the Teacher Capacity Building Programme to promote student-centred learning in secondary schools in Luang Prabang and Xaignabouli Province.

At the conclusion of the pilot in February 2019, we conducted workshops in both areas to host sessions for discussions and summaries among teachers and students on lessons learned. The activities were led by Miss Hathairat Suda, our facilitator. The objectives were to exchange experiences, analyse the programme’s success factors, examine obstacles and problem solving. The sessions were also to receive feedback from teachers and students. Overall, there were more than 150 participants, including a number of teachers from the nearby Ngern District who were invited to observe the programme concept and achievements.

With the teachers, we reviewed all activities we had been supporting and asked for their suggestions to improve the programme. We asked students to share their experiences and their thoughts on student–centred learning as well as for suggestions towards their teachers in improving teaching techniques.

The students shared that their lessons had been more interesting because their teachers had featured engaging games and activities for the students to practise. This was very different to their traditional way of learning, where the attention in class had to be on the teacher. Students now ask more questions, practise, and especially, think critically by themselves. The rapport between teachers and students has improved significantly. The students urged the teachers to try include more activities and to be more friendly.

The feedback was good overall. The teacher observers from Ngern District were also interested in the programme and requested that Child’s Dream introduce this support at their schools as well next year.
Child’s Dream has been supporting TeacherFOCUS Myanmar (TFM) for one year now. The programme has been running successfully and we will continue our support this year. TFM aims to promote recognition among ethnic teachers through government-recognised assessment standards and advance teaching quality by using ‘accessible and contextual resources’.

Each year thousands of migrant workers from Myanmar and their families move to border areas of Thailand in search of employment due to lack of decent jobs in Myanmar. There are about 1.5-2 million currently working in Thailand. While their children are theoretically eligible to attend Thai schools, in reality there are many challenges preventing this, including language barriers, lack of documentation, and lack of willingness of schools and educational authority officials to cater to a group of foreign students. This results in a system of ‘learning centres’ established by Myanmar migrant communities. These centres operate in a grey zone, where their existence has been registered with the Royal Thai Ministry of Education, but since they do not meet the standards established in Thailand, they cannot be called ‘schools’ and, therefore, cannot issue recognised certificates. This means the education students receive is not transferable to employers outside the region, and further education is not accessible.

TFM ultimately aims for official certification of this education system. To achieve this, they first aim to document teacher skills and train teachers to higher standards aligned with Myanmar government teacher certification status. While this happens, ongoing networking with both the Thai and Myanmar governments takes place so that these governments may eventually recognise schools based on the certified status of teachers. It is hoped that this will also lead to schools being able to provide students with standard education certificates.
Our Impact

**Health**
- 1,127 children received life-saving and life-improving medical procedures
- 7,126 children covered by school health in 2018
- 18,000 community members received drug prevention and awareness education in 2018

**Basic Education**
- 297 school buildings built
- 73 boarding houses built
- 762 high school and vocational scholarships in the region

**Higher Education**
- 519 university scholarships awarded so far
- 2,500 people trained to become future leaders per year
- 7,009 students receive vocational training for employment

---

**Target Support by Year 2020**
- 2,000 life-saving and life-improving medical procedures provided so far
- 350 school buildings built so far
- 519 university scholarships awarded so far
- 600 target support by year 2020
From the Office

Our Heroes

Here we feature another hero – Mr. Somwang Insupha – a Laotian teacher who is highly admired for going beyond his duties to create transformative learning experiences for his students.

Somwang has been teaching Music and Performing Arts at Pang Hai Secondary School for almost six years. Located in northern Laos, the school has been supported by Child’s Dream since 2013 through various projects including school building, boarding houses and a water system. As a model school, Pang Hai has empowered many marginalised students with well-managed curricula and extracurricular activities. Much of this is down to Somwang who constantly develops opportunities to alleviate the students’ hardships.

In class, he enables students to enjoy learning through well-prepared and interesting materials and student-centred activities. Such practice is rare among the usual traditional teacher-centred methods in Laos. He respects individuality and encourages students’ voices in defining what they are interested in studying.

He also sees importance in student engagement outside class. Living in boarding houses, he saw impoverished students struggle with hygiene and poor management. Together with the students, he drafted plans to ensure a high level of amenity as students volunteered as on-site managers, promoting leadership and ownership. The majority of boarders needed to visit their families weekly for food supplies, despite the distance and danger. He therefore requested permission to plant vegetables and raise livestock on campus, allowing students to ensure sustainable and healthy food supplies.

At the moment, Somwang is teaching students how to weave so as to help improve their capacity in vocational skills. The school now plans to produce bags as souvenirs for visitors, a means to also generate income for the school as a whole.

When asked why he became a teacher, Somwang recalled his kind and caring primary school teacher, his great teaching techniques, and how he was selfless in helping students in need. Coming from an impoverished household, Somwang felt accepted, safe and motivated to study. That defined for him what a wholesome teacher was, and inspired him to become one who can bring hope and create space where students can grow to their potential.
Distance Covered in 2018

The mileage counters of our project cars showed a total covered distance of 154,315 km in Cambodia, Laos and Thailand in 2018. This is nearly 6 return flights from Bangkok to New York and is still excluding project trips in Myanmar as we do not own a car there.

Child’s Dream NGO Advisor Ranking 2019

Awesome news! We are greatly honoured to be ranked #65 on our first participation in NGO Advisor’s Top 500 NGOs in the World 2019. NGO ADVISOR is an independent media organisation based in Geneva, Switzerland that highlights innovation and impact in the nonprofit sector through the Top 500 NGO rankings. We very much look forward to broadening our initiatives in the Mekong Sub-Region and reaching more beneficiaries for years to come. Thank you for all your continuous support!

USPCB Awardees Win Debating Championship

Two of our Cambodian University Scholarship awardees of the 2017 intake – Ms. Sinun Phan and Ms. Sokun Chhorm – won the 2019 University Debating and Public Speaking Championship. The tournament was hosted in Phnom Penh by Norton University, where the scholars are undertaking their bachelor’s degrees in Educational Management and Teaching. The teams were asked to choose between developing world-class education and building institutions to train the masses. The duo, with a third team member, came away with the ultimate title in their first participation. We proudly look forward to more of our scholars’ contribution to these intellectual discussions.

Last Will

‘Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see’


Have you already planned your financial succession? How about the idea of supporting children, living up to the above-mentioned quote and sending a message to a time you will not see?

If you decide to sponsor Child’s Dream and make such a bequest, you will be helping underprivileged, deprived, persecuted and oppressed children and youth in the Mekong Sub-Region. But more than that, you will be providing these children with a future.

Click here for more information.

Follow Our Socials

Facebook  Website  Email  Twitter  YouTube

Child’s Dream Foundation, 238/3 Wualai Road, T. Haiya, A. Muang, Chiang Mai 50100, Thailand
Tel. +66 (0)53 201 811  Fax +66 (0)53 201 812  info@childsdream.org  www.childsdream.org