



Newsletter

Our Mission

To empower marginalised communities in the Mekong Sub-Region to shape their own future. We achieve this by working with communities to improve health and education for children and socioeconomic opportunities for families.

Our principles

- Focus on the needs of the beneficiaries
- Promote and protect the rights of the child
- Use resources efficiently and effectively
- Acknowledge and value diversity
- Maintain full transparency and accountability
- Reflect on and continually improve our work

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Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that is valuable must have a dollar price! I came to realise this again very recently while travelling in Laos. What had started like any other field trip to Laos, turned into a quest of endurance, willpower and patience.

The first part of the trip went according to plan. Together with three representatives from Credit Suisse, we opened two of the five schools the bank had funded. It is always a privilege and incredibly rewarding when our donors have a chance to experience our work first hand. They are often surprised under what kind of circumstances we operate and what we can achieve in places where all odds are working against us.

With the departure of the three Credit Suisse colleagues, the weather turned from sunny and hot to rainy and cold. A storm system brought totally unexpected weather to the North of Laos. Temperatures dropped to seven degrees in March in Luang Prabang, where we were awaiting our second group of visitors: Morgan Parker from Wheel2Wheel and a film crew from Hong Kong. Morgan is riding his BMW motorbike from Hong Kong to Australia to raise money for ten charities in ten different countries. We were very happy when we were introduced to Wheel2Wheel by the Andrew Woinarski School Foundation back in 2010. Subsequently Child's Dream was selected as the Laos charity and therefore will be featured in the documentary about Morgan's epic journey. Unfortunately the weather was anything but ideal for a scenic ride on a motorbike through Northern Laos. The beautiful mountain roads had turned into slippery mud rivers and, sure enough, we soon encountered our first problem. It normally takes four hours to get from Luang Prabang to Hong Sa, a district in the northwest corner of Laos bordering Thailand, but this time we inched forward at a snail's pace. Our 4WD off-road car got stuck numerous times. The clay-like earth stuck to our tires leaving no traction whatsoever. Even our attempts to push or pull the car were in vain because it was too slippery even to walk.

Morgan on the motorbike experienced the same problem, but at least he was able to push it when nothing else worked. As the weather turned from bad to worse, we finally came to a steep, narrow and impassable S-curve. After a couple of precarious, but fruitless, trials to conquer the S-curve, we decided to send the last of Morgan's colleagues, who had abandoned his motorbike, to Hong Sa with a local pick-up truck equipped with chains around the tires. Now four of us, Marc, Koy (Laos Field Coordinator), Werner (volunteer) and I, were left in the middle of nowhere with no mobile coverage on a road that sees a maximum of five cars on a busy day. On top of that, it was getting dark fast and thick fog and heavy rain engulfed us, bringing the visibility down to less than two metres. We tried to drive back 30 kilometres to reach the

nearest village, where we could stay and possibly contact our colleagues in Hong Sa, whom we hoped had arrived. Going downhill was much scarier than going uphill. We were sliding uncontrollably without seeing anything and we knew that we were on a narrow mountain road with steep slopes and cliffs. Since it was simply too dangerous to continue, we had no choice but to park and get ready for a cold night in the car. Everybody was covered in dirt and freezing to the bone. We had almost no food or water. Actually we were in a rather desperate situation, in which most people would probably freak out. But here we were having a jolly good time with lots of laughter. But why?



There was something that gave us comfort, calm, peace, humour and, of course, some sarcasm. It was not the food, the water or the few warm clothes which we shared fairly among ourselves, but the people we shared this amazing experience with. There was a lot of trust and confidence amongst the people in the car. Team-work has always been very important to us, but this was going well beyond good collaboration of work colleagues. We experienced the power of true friendship amongst people that sincerely care for each other.

We are often asked by donors and other NGOs how we do this or how this is possible. It is possible because we believe that it is possible and the close friendship among the Child's Dream staff allows us to go the extra mile and to keep pushing ourselves to bring our assistance to the ones that most deserve it. This friendship and the 'let's do it' mindset is the most valuable asset in our organisation and it does not even appear in our financial statements. Similarly Child's Dream receives a lot of goodwill from beneficiaries, parents, teachers, volunteers, partner organisations, donors and even government officials. If we were to put a dollar value behind all this, Child's Dream would surely make it into the Fortune 500! Luckily we don't have to as it most probably would destroy the meaning behind the value.

The fact that I am writing these lines in the comfort of a nice coffee place in Chiang Mai shows that we managed to overcome the S-curve the next morning with sheer force, willpower and, of course, teamwork. In Hong Sa we caught up with Morgan and his colleagues. We had to put together an alternative programme as the schools we had planned to visit were no longer accessible. In the end, everybody was happy with the trip and another lesson was learned: we are powerless against the forces of nature and if the weather changes, everything changes.
by Daniel Siegfried, Co-Founder

Child's Dream News

Welcome & Goodbye



A warm welcome to **Chansotheavy Siv (Sotheavy)**, our new office manager in Siem Reap. Sotheavy started her work last December, but our December 2010 newsletter had unfortunately already been written by the time she switched on her desktop in our Cambodian field office for the first time. Right on time at 08.00 am on our very first working day this year, **Panya Usaphanawan (Au)** knocked at our office mosquito screens.

Au is our new assistant field coordinator who complements our Laos team. One month later, in early February 2011, **Anusorn Noppacharak (Teng)** joined us as our second caretaker. Teng is a great "Jack of all trades" and...he is also Yee's brother! Aem and Pon – our previous caretaker couple - left Child's Dream at the end of January. As some of you might remember, Aem and Pon



had a second baby girl last year and unfortunately, the workload was no longer manageable for them simultaneously having to take care of their two small children. By the time we send out this letter, **Angelin Au Yong (Angie)** will be back working for us in a



paid position in her new role now as 'Communication & Management Support' to Marc and Daniel. Angie had volunteered with us from July 2010 until the end of January 2011. It seems she got so positively intoxicated by our work that she



accepted our job offer! Of course, this is great news for us. Since early January, **Gene Lorca** has been volunteering with us. He is a professional graphic designer and has beautified many of our documents, most prominently our Child's Dream cookbook. Two

volunteers have been working as English teachers in schools we have built in the last few months: Cristina Nunez and Mei Lin Quek. Thank you very much!!!

Project News

Children's Medical Fund

Since our last report on the Children's Medical Fund (CMF) back in December 2009 a lot has happened. We have not rested at all; on the contrary, we have extended our help to include even more children in need of life-saving treatments. As of end of 2009, we had 99 little patients still undergoing treatment and during the course of 2010 we accepted 116 new children into the programme. Approximately 10 new patients joined every month last year. This was only possible thanks to the overwhelming financial support for this project. Thank you very much to our CMF donors.

The majority of children (67%) suffered from cardiac disorders and received heart surgery, with the remaining 33% suffering from various other congenital disorders. Following our guiding principles, there was a nearly perfect gender balance. 70% of all open cases could be successfully closed during 2010. We apologise for using the term 'cases', but keeping a certain distance from the individual child's fate protects one from a deep emotional involvement. This is important since, as in most health related programmes, there are always some children who pass away. Unfortunately eight children could not be saved in 2010 and sadly passed away. With a further 16 children we lost contact after the initial treatment. This is not uncommon when one considers the harsh living conditions people from inside Myanmar suffer on a daily basis. For financial and legal reasons, many caregivers take their children back into Myanmar during the time they have to wait for the follow-up treatment.



During the year 2010, we spent approx. US\$ 320,000 on the Children's Medical Fund and roughly the same budget is allocated to the current year. However, the need for life-saving treatment far outstrips our financial resources.

In order to further stabilise and grow the programme, we are in the process of recruiting an additional assistant coordinator, supporting Ta and Waan. The past growth of the programme is too challenging to handle for only two dedicated Child's Dream staff. One has to consider that each and every case needs to be handled individually. We are sure that Ta and Waan will appreciate the future support very much.

CDC (Children Development Center)

It has been a year since the last update for CDC, our largest ever project! CDC is a learning centre for children of migrant workers from Myanmar who have come to Thailand in search of work. This centre houses students from pre-school through to high school levels and currently has 1,135 students attending classes. There are also 110 staff caring for these children including teachers, volunteers, board members, drivers, and office staff. Child's Dream's role in this school has been to purchase land and build infrastructure for the school which include two main

school buildings, three toilet buildings, and a canteen. We've learned a lot from this project along the way as well and this has helped us when we are considering other projects.

During the past year, the school has been busy improving its curriculum and arranging many activities for the students. Through grade six, the curriculum is already in place, thanks to cooperation from the Royal Thai Government's Ministry of Education, World Education, and the Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee. A standardised curriculum is currently being upgraded for grades 7-10 while grades 11 and 12 use a curriculum based on World Education's Migrant Leadership Training Course. Some of the activities held at the school's facilities include: World Children's Day, Teachers' Day, Team Building exercises, counseling training, Violence Against Women Day, World AIDS Day, Child Trafficking Day, and the Thai Princess' birthday—the school campus is continuously busy with activity!



Sadly, it's not all good news for the campus. During the construction of the school, the land had to be filled and leveled. While this was necessary, it created problems as this new soil has naturally settled. The first problem was solved earlier in the year when a large retaining wall was completed; this wall runs the length of the property and supports the land as it settles. However, the next problem manifested itself in the toilets: as the soil settled, drainage pipes from our toilets became bent and this ultimately began to block our toilets. With more than 1,000 children, this quickly became a big issue! Currently, one of the three toilet buildings has been restored to full capacity, while the other two are being finished during the school break so as to minimise disruption to the school's activities. The school is expected to be back to normal for the start of the school year in June 2011.

Also due to the popularity of our playground, the structures have been heavily used. We're happy that children enjoy our play-grounds, but the time has already come to restore and upgrade these play areas. Therefore, we have already started assessing the structures and will begin organising the upgrade which will take place during August. We will be using more durable materials, given the popularity of the playground, and this will make a safer environment for the children and reduce maintenance for the school.

Finally, we are happy to see that a partnership between another Child's Dream funded programme, called **Youth Connect**, and CDC is going well. Youth Connect focuses on preparing youth for meaningful employment

by providing vocational training in migrant learning centres (including CDC), arranging apprenticeships with local businesses, and by operating a career centre for these students. Out of this partnership, CDC students are able to become better prepared for the real-life situations they will face when seeking employment after their education finishes. We look forward to another exciting year preparing students for their futures!

CDCO organic school gardens

When visiting and working with our target schools in rural Cambodia, we regularly come across rather sparse food plates, in amount and variety, and most obviously, without sufficient vitamin supply. The importance of a balanced diet is hardly known and even if so, strained family budgets don't allow for additional vegetables, let alone (comparably expensive!) fruit, from the markets. Rice monocultures largely dominate the landscapes and (banned) chemicals are widely used. Apart from the obvious drawbacks of using such chemicals, they are often stored carelessly in the household and ultimately take a toll on family finances.

Determined to tackle these issues at their roots, Assistant Field Coordinator Sinoeuy My, who was raised in a farming family himself, rolled up his sleeves and joined an organic farming training course early this year, eager to get valuable insights on topics such as ground water, tropical soil, compost mulching, plant nurturing and companion planting. The agenda included a lot of "hands-on" sessions and featured teaching methods for children, youth and communities. Not long after that, training agendas were drafted, teachers got involved and the first training sessions in four pilot schools were held.

Apart from facilitating the training itself, we supply the schools with basic gardening tools, fruit tree seedlings and selected seeds, whereas the students themselves contribute other, readily available seeds, straw or dung from their homes. The response so far has been entirely positive. Agricultural knowledge comes paired with the experience of school group work, and the acquired skills spread out into the community. We were overwhelmed to see a group of mothers joining a recent lesson (and shortly after seeing them taking off in various directions in search of a specific leaf to kill vermin)! The harvested vegetables (e.g. morning glory, eggplant, pumpkin), then either present a healthy addition to the school breakfasts (currently supported by WFP), or, are distributed amongst the students, depending on the school. One of the major challenges, however, is the scarce water supply in many villages towards the end of the dry season (this time of the year).



This initiative forms part of our 'Supporting activities', and goes hand in hand with its other programmes, such as school health or libraries. It is full of opportunities and ultimately ties in with our aim to support our target communities in their sustainable development.

We are currently expanding the program (our office backyard resembles a nursery!), and are not only looking forward to some rain, but also to planting many more seeds – in the truest sense of the word.

Karenni Community College (KnCC)

We are pleased to announce support for a fourth post-high school college for refugees from Myanmar. Karenni Community College (KnCC) is located in the Karenni Refugee Camp (site 1), in the north of Thailand in Mae Hong Son Province, which is a mountainous region along the border of Myanmar. This camp is the largest camp for Karenni people fleeing fighting in their homeland across the border and has been home to up to 21,000 people, but currently stands at 15,000 due to a mass resettlement programme that has permanently placed refugees into third countries due to overcrowding in the camp, among other reasons.



The situation of Karenni Refugee Camp is unique when compared to the other camps along the border. It is generally overlooked in terms of support, possibly due to this ethnic group having fewer connections with the outside world when compared to the Karen refugees further south. Each year, high schools produce around 400 students from the camp. These students are not allowed to leave the camp; therefore, their opportunities for further education need to exist within the camp boundaries, which are tightly controlled.

In 1995, the Karenni Post-Ten ('post-ten' referred to the 10th year of schooling, the final year) was founded. Initially the school took in few students, averaging about 15 per year. Last year, we supported the school's entire running costs due to the previous donor's realignment of funding priorities which saw the school's budget stopped. Our support included salaries, school and office supplies, utilities, training, and basic construction of classrooms. This year, due to the successful first year, we will not only continue, but also expand our support. Additional support is needed this year because the Karenni Post-Ten and the Karenni Leadership and Management Course (a course started by alumni of Karenni Post-Ten) will merge at the Karenni Post-Ten campus and will collectively form the new KnCC.

KnCC will now be the most important post-high school institution, and the only two year programme for students wanting to further their education beyond high school. The school offers a two year course with the following subjects: English language (reading and writing), intro to computers, social studies, science, maths, community management, along with optional Karenni, Thai or Burmese languages. Historically, students with these subjects are the most sought after in the camp by schools needing teachers, or community or international non-governmental organisations. For the upcoming academic year, which

begins in June, the school expects to take in 60-80 first year students. We're very excited to be able to support such an out-standing school and are eager to assist it to develop and produce much needed graduates ready to make an impact in their community.

A scholar's path

Credit Suisse was the very first sponsor of university students in our higher education programme. The inspiring story of one of these four students was published in the December 2010 issue of Credit Suisse's 'bulletin', their customer magazine with global coverage. Let Mehm Hong Da (*name changed*) takes you along on his challenging path to access higher education:

http://childsdream.org/fileadmin/uploads/general/bu_510_en_4041.pdf

Special Features

Panupong Kwuntong, Programmes and Projects, (nickname "Arm")

In 2007 was a big change in my life, since my previous employer closed their companies down. But actually a better change of my life just began. I was introduced to Child's Dream Foundation by somebody and when I read through the website I became really interested. The reason to bring myself to work here is that the concept can be real and can help children's life in the right way. Even though most of my tasks are in the office and not too much on the projects in the field but I'm still proud to be a part of the Child's Dream family which always make children's dreams come true.

Time flies so fast, eight hours a day related to projects administration and IT but it never makes me feel like just doing a job. We are really happy working together, because of the way we work and the way we help each other. And moreover, Marc, Daniel and Manuela always give us freedom to speak and really care about what we say. Where could I find the place like this, the place that makes me smile and feel happy all the time? It's not easily I could tell you!



P.S. from Manuela: Arm has one outstanding characteristic that is extremely beneficial to everyone: he is patient. He takes care of our IT issues and never a day goes by without at least five people calling his name to quickly, quickly fix some awful IT bug or fix mistakes we caused ourselves. They are always fixed quickly, reliably and with a smile.

The Child's Dream Cookbook 2011

An alternative way to get to know our team is to look at our online Child's Dream Cookbook. All the recipes were diligently compiled by our former volunteer Nikoleta Nikisianli and Gene Lorca, our volunteer graphic designer made them look just as "yummie" as the dishes taste. You can leaf through the book online by clicking here http://issuu.com/childsdream1/docs/childs_dream_recipe_book or you can download it as a pdf from our website.

Alternative ways of helping us

The Chairman's Trust / CLSA Asia Pacific

We have been in touch with the Chairman's Trust of CLSA Asia Pacific for some time and have already met with representatives of this excellent and unique charity.

Worthwhile projects are supported in many needy areas of the world. Since the Chairman's Trust only accepts applications from charities which have an internal CLSA staff sponsor, we are looking for an employee of CLSA Asia Pacific who would be interested in supporting one of our projects. Please do get in touch with us if you are interested and if you want to make a difference for many children in need.

Child's Dream in the press

Now and then the press picks up Child's Dream and writes about our work. This is certainly good news since it gives us free publicity to a previously untapped audience. As you all know, we don't have a budget for marketing since we strongly believe that money raised should be allocated to our children.

Under the title 'Making a Child's Dream come true', the Singapore Straits Times recently published an article about our work. Please use the following link: http://childsdream.org/fileadmin/uploads/general/CD-SST30Jan2011_onepage.pdf

Annual Reports



The first quarter of each year is not our administration team's favorite season. Accounting systems have to be closed, many kilos of paper prepared and handed over to the various auditors and then all the annual reports written for various stakeholders. Anyway, thanks to joined forces, we were able to complete this process in record time and all our annual reports were finished and published at the end of March. You can view them easily here <http://childsdream.org/about-us/finances-annual-reports/>

Thank you very much

A big thank you goes again to all our donors, small and big. We are aware that the current problems all over the world are difficult for everybody, hence we are very happy to see so many of our friends and supporters living up to their commitments and continuing to supporting us. Thank you very much.

Your Child's Dream Team

