

Child's Dream

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Introduction

Is it real or is it just for show? Is it lasting? — Myanmar's recent political transformation has raised many questions among people who have known Myanmar only as a country ruled by a ruthless military, which continuously committed atrocities against its people, notably the ethnic minorities, for the last fifty years. The fact is that the current government under the leadership of President Thein Sein is producing headlines almost daily that only one year ago would have been unthinkable. *Myanmar regime pardons political prisoners; Myanmar censorship chief 'calls for press freedom'; Banned websites in Burma accessible again; Myanmar announces human rights commission; Myanmar suspends dam project after rare outcry; Secretary Clinton meets with Aung San Suu Kyi; Myanmar president 'signs protest bill', Myanmar government and Karen rebels sign cease-fire; and more recently, Suu Kyi party 'wins 43 seats' in Myanmar elections.* But the changes were not only notable on paper but also in Yangon. There is 24-hour electricity in Yangon, internet usage is increasing, repairs are being undertaken on roads and walkways, and most astonishingly, pictures of Aung San Suu Kyi can be seen everywhere. Observers were quick in drawing parallels between Myanmar and the Arab world labeling the positive changes as Burmese Spring.

Yet the question remains why an entrenched military regime is doing all this now, and so fast. In comparison with the bloody political upheavals in the Arab world, Myanmar's political revolution has been top-down and largely peaceful with the same people in power but wearing suits instead of army uniforms. There is a lot of speculation about the answer to this question but ultimately it will be decisive whether these positive changes will continue and mark a new era for Myanmar.

One thing is sure. The Burmese Spring has not yet come to most people living in the ethnic states scattered around the periphery. Quite in contrast the Burmese army is attacking Kachin armed groups resulting in thousands of internally displaced persons. The situation on the country's eastern border is also not yet stable despite the ceasefire agreement with the Shan and Karen, which raises another important question. Who is in charge of the army and do the generals listen to the president's orders? It is not surprising that our colleagues and beneficiaries in the refugee camps are not convinced that the Burmese Spring will improve their lives and allow them to return home.

If Myanmar continues on the path of reform and stability, the needs of our beneficiaries will be affected and we have to be ready to meet these needs. We are currently working with our Burmese partners to safeguard the extensive capacity and knowledge of our local partner organizations, to ensure the continuation of our educational and health services and to explore opportunities for long term sustainability under these new circumstances. At the same time we are developing our capabilities and network inside the country. As Myanmar opens its doors to international aid, we can reasonably expect to support more initiatives there. In the past, although need has been high, access was heavily restricted, hampering efforts to support communities. As there have been decades of neglect in health and education infrastructure, we envision being active in helping to rebuild Myanmar and doing our part to sustainably develop this beautiful country.

Daniel Siegfried
Co-founder



Child's Dream News

Welcome & Goodbye

At the end of February, Teng, one of our two caretakers, left Child's Dream. He is going to Tak province supporting his older brother in the construction business. Also at the end of February, Sotheavy, the office manager in our Siem Reap office, left Child's Dream. She has given birth to her third child and has decided to be a stay-at-home mother. We wish Teng and Sotheavy all the very best.

On 12th March, Klo Say Wah joined us. Klo has just graduated from Payap University in Chiang Mai with a master's degree in TESOL. She will be replacing Um, our university scholarship coordinator, who is leaving us mid-May to attend an overseas university, studying International Development at graduate level. We are very sad to see Um leave, but at the same time, we are very proud of her taking this step.



Also, we welcome our newest addition to the "team" – Waan's new baby girl (she does not yet have a name). The baby girl was born on the 26th March and is very healthy. Congratulations to the proud parents!

Daniela Vorderman has volunteered in our office, helping us to clean up our database, while Annamaria Nagy, Denise Weger and her husband, Jeremy Fannin, have taught English in schools with which we cooperate. A great "thank you" to all of them for dedicating their time and effort to Child's Dream!

Busy as Bees – Our Annual Reports 2011

Our team has finished the 2011 Child's Dream Annual Reports! They have been busy as bees and finished them in record time. For more, please click [here](#)



Special Feature

Chalach Mongkolsoemsakul (nickname Jack)

I started working with Child's Dream Foundation in February 2008 as an IT supporter. Having worked in this position for two years, I have long witnessed our project colleagues traveling intensively. I have always been secretly admiring the nature of our project work. I had hope that I would have an opportunity to travel like our project team, while I was well aware that my main responsibility as an IT supporter is office based.



Fortunately, I would like to give my big thanks to our Child's Dream's capacity team building approach in encouraging staff to learn and exchange knowledge in the organisation; I had an opportunity to join our Laos project team to learn about our projects in Laos. I appreciate our Laos project team's initiative in inviting me to the projects; I accepted the invite with no hesitation. It was a memorable trip for me because I had learnt so much.

During the trip, Tai, our Head of Basic Education Focus Group, had asked if I would be interested in joining the team meaning that I was given a chance to take up this new challenge. I was very glad and I thought about it for almost two months because I was all nervous. Eventually I had pleasantly decided to join the team in 2010.

I was assigned to a new responsibility for basic education projects in the Northern Thailand areas as an assistant field coordinator. I have a great opportunity, which I have always long been wishing for, to travel to many places where I get to know new people and to learn new working system. I am very proud to be a part of our Child's Dream family. I have learnt a lot of new challenges and I have great experience in extensive travels. I feel that I must always develop myself and most importantly I must do my best today for a better tomorrow.

- Jack-

PS from Manuela: Children adore 'uncle Jack' and his big smile



Project News

10,000 km from the South to the North – rediscovering three provinces in Lao PDR

A distance that is longer than a direct flight from Switzerland to Chiang Mai: our team clocked this mileage during our evaluation trip to assess all of our basic education projects in Laos. We left Chiang Mai at the end of February and were on the road for 17 days.



Our faithful 4-wheel drive vehicle took us through thick primary forests and over mountain ranges, as we drove from one community to another. We had to paddle across the Mekong River numerous times and, at other times, were constantly stirring up thick clouds of orange dust during our travels.



This trip brought us to a total of 39 schools, of which three are nursery schools, 21 are primary schools and 15 are secondary schools. The schools are spread across twelve different districts in the three provinces where we are mandated to work.

So fast and so furious! – we were covering so much distance every day that our wheels became too hot and one rubber tire forced us to take a break. It burst while we were driving towards Baan Khon Piak Primary School.



Fortunately, it didn't happen during our drive through the jungle trail that led us to Baan Pak Khan Primary School. Besides this incident, the ferry also ran out of fuel, not once but twice, while we were travelling towards Paktung.



Our team agreed that the management of some schools could be improved to enhance the students' learning. Some schools could instill the discipline of caring for their school and environment by organising students into groups to clean and maintain their classrooms and surroundings. Not only will this enhance the cleanliness and hygiene of their school, but it will also develop a greater sense of pride and discipline.



This field trip, which primarily focused on evaluation, has brought about interesting insights into the impact of our work on communities (management of the schools, teachers' motivation, schools' access to learning materials, relationship between the school and local authorities).

It also presented us with the opportunity to support our schools in evaluating themselves and to provide our feedback on their management of the school. Even though we have supported many schools and their communities in developing their educational infrastructure, we also realise that the actual impact of our work is dependent on numerous additional factors.



For us, this trip has reinforced the importance of our due diligence process in identifying projects and communities to support as it directly influences the success rate of our projects. We are now in the midst of analysing the information collected and the findings will be made available later on.

After completing the first cycle of evaluation for our schools in Laos, we also plan to dedicate one field trip for the evaluation of our projects in Thailand and Cambodia.





Emergency Relief: Rebuilding homes that were destroyed in massive fire in Umpiem Mai Refugee Camp – Mae Sot, Thailand

On 23rd February 2012, a massive fire tore through the Umpiem Mai Refugee Camp and engulfed close to one third of the camp in flames. Umpiem Mai Refugee Camp is one of the nine official camps located along



the Thai-Myanmar border for people who sought refuge from Myanmar's oppressive and abusive military regime. As permanent structures are not

allowed to be built in the camps, the refugees have resorted to constructing their homes and community buildings from bamboo, wood and thatched leaves. This makes the buildings particularly susceptible to fire, especially in the dry season. As a result, what had started as a small blaze soon got out of control on that fateful afternoon.

In less than ten minutes, the flames consumed five sections of the camp, including that of the minority Muslim community. The fire destroyed the homes of 566 families and damaged more than 350 others. Allowing nothing to get in its way, the fire also destroyed two nursery schools, two mosques, one security office and a community building for Muslim women.



It is estimated that at least 2,800 refugees lost everything, including the monthly food ration which they had received the day before the fire incident. While approximately 200 families have moved back, the majority of the affected families are still staying in emergency shelters, such as tents, relatives' homes and community buildings. The relocation process is slow and much support is needed to help the affected families to rebuild their houses. In addition, a major site clean-up is necessary to remove the debris and prepare the land for construction.

As part of the humanitarian response for post-crisis situations, we have partnered with the Thailand Burma-Border Consortium (TBBC) to support the refugee community in re-establishing their homes. Our contribution worth THB 2 million (approx. USD 65'000) supports the rebuilding of 113 houses that were destroyed or damaged by the flames.

Did you know ...

Since 2006, we have bought five second-hand cars, all of which are still in good working order. Well, perhaps with the exception of our beloved red Mitsubishi, which is getting a bit old now, so we only use it for city driving to ensure that no-one is left stranded in the rain beside a broken down car on a deserted country road in the middle of the night!



Did you know that:

- all our cars together have a combined mileage of 1,113,653 km?
- these five cars travel about 125,000 km per year, which is about 10,000 per month?
- they get so dirty by the end of most project trips – so covered in sticky, red mud – that many car cleaning centres in Chiang Mai now refuse to clean them at any price?



Your Child's Dream Team

Contact us

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