Child’s Dream 3.0

“MDM - Reinvented”! With the start of 2015, we gradually make room for a team of our senior staff to run the operation of Child’s Dream. Many people have assumed that “MDM” stood for Management Director’s Meeting or, as our dear Australian friend, Sue, pointed out somewhat accurately, for Mad Director’s Meeting. As flattered as we were by her lovely and probably wise remark, we are pragmatic and much more simple-minded than that: MDM simply stands for Marc, Daniel, Manuela, the three people who have taken almost all operational decisions in Child’s Dream.

MDM has been useful in building up the organisation and in growing trust among our donors, but now we have reached a level of complexity which requires a wider consensus in decision-making. At the same time, we want to achieve an even higher identification of our senior colleagues with the organisation and further reduce operational dependency on Marc and Daniel.

Therefore, at the start of the year, Child’s Dream introduced a new organisational structure: operational decisions on processes, policies, guidelines, etc. are now taken by a Management Committee. Okay, the “MC” as we, too, have a knack for organisational acronyms. This new Management Committee unites our experienced Focus Group Heads from the project side with three senior team members from the administration side who support the implementation of our work. If you are interested in seeing our new organisational structure, please click here.

By now, Child’s Dream is well into its 12th year of existence. Our new Management Committee has combined Child’s Dream work experience of an astonishing 36 years. Who would have thought? Tai, Head Basic Education, has been with us the longest, a total of 11 years. Then we have U, Finance and Thai Legal, 9 years with Child’s Dream. The remaining three MC members are Thomas, Head Higher Education, 7 years with Child’s Dream; Christin, Controlling and Donor Relations, 1 year with Child’s Dream, and myself, Human Resources and Fundraising, 8 years of employment with Child’s Dream.

Daniel and Marc, our two founders, are of course still fully engaged and committed to Child’s Dream, acting as Directors and continuing to foster and develop Child’s Dream. Besides overseeing their teams and nurturing and growing talent, they keep the challenge of guiding Child’s Dream strategically. A substantial part of their work still relates to donor communication and fundraising. I have finally rid myself of my former title as “Chief Operating Officer”, which was chosen purely out of necessity some years ago. I am now happily back to my professional roots, still heading Human Resources and doing fundraising, two tasks of increasing operational importance.
Welcome and Goodbye

Sometimes, two or three years grow into five years faster than you might think! A great, great THANK YOU to Ursula Bisig, our expert in Controlling and Donation Management, who returned to Switzerland at the end of January to support her mother and to find new professional adventures. Now a Child’s Dream Ambassador, she continues to share her vast knowledge and experience with us as a part-time volunteer abroad. Mong, Head of our Health Focus Group, left us at the end of February. She has turned entrepreneur: together with her husband, she is starting a bicycle shop in the heart of Chiang Mai. Larissa Huber, our Austrian office volunteer, ended her six month assignment with us in February. Many thanks to you, Larissa, as well! She is succeeded by Maxime von der Muehll, a fresh International Development Studies graduate from McGill University in Montreal. We also warmly welcome two new Child’s Dream employees: Somsak Kamdang, Assistant Field Coordinator Laos and Khin Cho Thein, our new In-Country Director in Myanmar.

Special Feature: Chirasak Phetchompoo (Gee)

My life in Laos was very difficult from the time that my father died when I was five. I worked in the rice field with my grandfather until I graduated from primary school. Then my grandmother asked me if I wanted to become a novice monk so I said “yes”. I crossed to Thailand with my grandmother’s friend who was a monk and lived in Bochaneng Temple, Amnat Charoen Province, where I learned how to read and write Thai language.

Novices in Buddhism have to study Dhamma (Buddhist Theology), which has three levels; Pali language, which has nine levels; and more than that, they need to study secondary and high school like other people too. I graduated from Bochaneng Withaya School in 2001 and decided to study at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya (Buddhist) University in Bangkok. I graduated in 2006 and then went back to Bochaneng Temple to teach English. I later decided to quit my job there and move to Chiang Mai. I started to volunteer with Child’s Dream in the spring of 2009 and learned that there are many ways to support education. I became an Assistant Field Coordinator for Laos in 2010 and have enjoyed the tremendous experience of working with Child’s Dream. I feel so grateful for what Child’s Dream provides for Mekong Sub-Region countries. I have found my way to support education for children in Laos. We only hope for a better future for this poor country and the way that will lead people to a better future is education.

Health: DARE to talk about a taboo

In the refugee camps 90% of minor crimes are attributed to the use of drugs and alcohol. The Karen Women’s Organisation links the use of drugs and alcohol to the majority of cases of child abuse and domestic violence. This is certainly not a new phenomenon, but the situation has dramatically deteriorated over the last few years. Although the cease-fire between the Myanmar army and most ethnic armed forces brought more stability and less fighting, it also allowed drugs to flow more freely into rural areas. Addiction is particularly tough on children and youth. Whether they or their parents are addicted, children suffer from increasing neglect, abuse, poor nutrition, damaged self-esteem and health problems.

In February 2015 Child’s Dream decided to partner with DARE Network (Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education) to bring a range of treatment, education and prevention activities to these negative impacts on children and youth. DARE Network is a grassroots organisation and was founded in 2000 by a Canadian addiction recovery specialist and local ethnic leaders. The organisation has extensive experience in providing holistic services in the refugee camps and consistently delivers a success rate of 60% or higher, which is substantially better than the average rehabilitation success rate. Thanks to the support of Child’s Dream, DARE Network will expand its activities to 20 affected villages with an estimated population of 10,000 in Kayin State in Eastern Myanmar. In 2015 DARE Network will select 20 villages and intensively train two local representatives from each village for six months. We are still looking for donors to help us fund this very important programme.
Basic Education:  
Improving primary education through bilingual mother-tongue-education

Thailand’s education system is ranked 87th in the world in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015 - behind most other countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, including less economically developed neighbours such as Laos, which is ranked 60th.

The problems in the Thai education system are very complex and to list them would go beyond the scope of this newsletter. However, a consequence of this failing education system is that many students of ethnic and indigenous origins (unfortunately often called “hilltribes”) cannot read or write the Thai language, even in 5th or 6th grade!

But no matter how complex the problem, there is always a solution if one thinks outside the box. We have found such an innovative solution with the Foundation of Applied Linguistics (FAL). We have selected two primary schools to pilot bilingual mother-tongue-based education. Besides recruiting and training bilingual teachers to assist Thai government teachers, FAL also works closely with the local communities to develop a new curriculum based on the local culture: ways of life, tales, myths and legends. A range of audio books, songs, games and picture books will be developed. At the same time, new textbooks in Thai language will be developed to boost the students’ Thai language skills. FAL has tested this approach before and the results are amazing. The students not only dramatically improve their Thai language skills, but also become proficient in their ethnic language and proud of their indigenous background. This will change these students’ lives forever. Child’s Dream is still looking for funding for this programme.

Higher Education:  
Zwekabin Myay - Hpa An Education Programme

Zwekabin Myay is a not-for-profit organisation that runs Hpa An Education project; an intensive, residential education and training programme for young adults in Kayin State and nearby regions including Mon State, Bago Division, and along the Thai-Myanmar border. Its goal is to bridge a gap in the Myanmar higher education system by offering free of charge a specifically designed programme targeted at school leavers and university graduates from across the state, regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

Over the past two decades, the Asia-Pacific region has continued to maintain a high economic growth rate and Myanmar as well has made dramatic improvements in the past two years. Despite all the positive changes in Myanmar’s capital and in some major cities, state education such as in Kayin State remains largely the same; significantly underfunded, often ineffective and without practical life skills for the students and, therefore, the need for a programme such as Zwekabin Myay deepens. Graduates from both, state school and university, lack applicable and practical skills to take on meaningful roles in any area, including community based work.

With the Zwekabin Myay programme we support an 8-month intensive residential course followed by a ten-month internships in the local area. It provides effective training to young people in and around Kayin State, education for young adults, and ensures development in health and social aspects. With this we encourage them for an active engagement, to take responsibility to the wider community and enable students to address a range of social issues in and around Kayin State.

World Relief Australia (WRA)

Child’s Dream has a new partnership agreement with World Relief Australia (WRA). To make a tax-deductible donation to our project, use the following link https://wra.org.au/1443cdfeducator, choose from one of the three donation options
1. credit card
2. cheque
3. eft (electronic fund transfer)
and simply follow the prompts. Donations of $2 or more are tax-deductible. All tax deductible donations will be recorded through the issue of an annual statement at the end of the financial year.
Legacy Brochure
After careful consideration, we have decided to publish a new four-page brochure on the topic of legacies (available in English and German). If this topic is of interest to you, please find the brochures here.

New Partnership with SilkAir
We are proud and honored to announce that SilkAir, the regional wing of Singapore Airlines, has adopted us as their charity for the coming three years (2015-2018). We are looking forward to fruitful cooperation for the benefit of even more children in the Mekong Sub-Region. Thank you, SilkAir, for your support and trust in our work.

Children’s Day 2015
Our team left with many trucks and lots of supplies for the children in Padangluang School (Chiang Rai Province) to celebrate the 2015 Children’s Day. Thailand marks National Children’s Day on the second Saturday of January every year. Various celebration activities are organised for children by government, commercial sectors and NGOs to promote the welfare of the children. Children small and tall enjoyed playing games together, despite the highly unusual cold and rainy weather.

Drawing Contest
Young artists from countries around the globe have rendered their dreams through Child’s Dream’s ‘My Dream’ Drawing Contest. This contest encouraged primary school children to express their dreams through artwork. The contest was launched in four categories: International, Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar. The contest has already been judged and the winners have been announced in each category on our Facebook page. In the International category, the first prize was awarded to Ms. Patcharaporn Kumdang (Thailand, age 11); in Thailand: Mr. Pichai Kaema (age 12); in Myanmar: Mr. Ice Saung (age 12); in Cambodia: Ms. Sreynak Ren (age 11). We were so delighted with all of the submissions and everyone’s creativity. Congratulations for a job well done!

Our new spring outfit
Since our former volunteer, Rafael Freuler, designed our current website, an incredible 7-8 years have gone by. But times, styles and preferences change. Websites nowadays look very different from the way they looked in 2007. Rafael, together with our own gifted graphic designer-cum-communications man, Gene, have given Child’s Dream a new look. Watch out, here we come fresh off the catwalk in a new outfit: www.childsdream.org

Renewal of our MoU in Laos
What started as a needs assessment back in 2006 turned into well over 100 educational facilities built in Laos by 2015. However, one cannot simply work in a country without being regulated and licensed by the government. Hence, we have just renewed our three-year Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education and Sport until end of January 2018. We have been newly granted permission by the government to also cover the northern province of Luang Prabang. This brings our help to four provinces in this landlocked country.
Amazing advertisement for our cause

Herbert, our dear friend and donor from Australia, is a fanatic motorbike rider. But beyond this he gives us huge public exposure when racing for us. A million thanks Herbert!!!

Annual Reports 2014

.. and, oh, by the way: all our 2014 Annual Reports are now available on our website!

Just Giving

Child’s Dream is now live on the global online platform JustGiving, a webpage offering services to collect charitable donations. It’s a very simple and fast way for fundraisers to organise fundraising events, for teams to race for charity funds, or for individuals to publish their fundraising activities on behalf of our Children’s Medical Fund (CMF) or the Karen State Education Assistance Group (KSEAG). The website also offers a fantastic browsing experience on smaller mobile devices, easy sharing and liking on Facebook, publishing on Twitter and secure credit-/debit-card donations in just a few clicks.

Child’s Dream 2014 Yearbook

Enjoy looking back at our year 2014, leafing through our Yearbook 2014 online in English and German! Many, many thanks to fantastic Dominique Ghilardi who designed our yearbook and to Andrea Kleinert for the German translations!

Connect with us!