There are some unmistakable signs that winter is approaching. The nights are getting chilly and the roads of Chiang Mai are clogging up with tourist traffic. Many Bangkokians like to come to Chiang Mai during the cold season to experience a Thai version of winter. They bring their big cars with the distinctively long name of Krungthep (or Bangkok) on the number plates. But this year everybody was waiting for ‘the’ one sign that would eventually bring relief to thousands of Thais: the rain to stop falling. We had the worst rainy season in living memory. It started far too early and lasted until a few weeks ago leaving all the dams in Thailand full to bursting. Water had to be released with the knowledge that everything downstream would be flooded. The authorities however completely under-estimated that all the water from the isolated flooding in the North and North East would eventually end up in Bangkok. Bangkok is prone to flooding due to its low elevation and everybody had expected that the authorities would be able to handle the incoming “tsunami”, not from the ocean, but from the upland. The newly elected government was completely overwhelmed with the tasks at hand.

Luckily, besides some substantial increases in construction material costs (up to 30% increase for sand and iron), none of our projects or programmes was directly affected except for our university scholarship programme. We have over 50 Burmese students studying in Bangkok. Some university campuses had to be closed due to flooding and we had to help evacuate our students. Fortunately, everybody is safe and sound with no loss of personal belongings.

A group of 12 highly dedicated students decided to temporarily move to Chiang Mai in order to volunteer for Child’s Dream. Together with our very experience volunteer English teacher, David, they built a curriculum and activity plan for an English camp. This camp was held at two Thai government schools that have been supported by Child’s Dream. They realized that this is a good opportunity to reach out and give something back to Thailand and its citizens. Historically, there is a lot of mistrust, bitterness and discrimination between Thais and Burmese and with their actions they broke down some of the historical and cultural barriers. We are very proud of them and I am sure that their kindness will not be forgotten.

Our Child’s Dream staff quickly joined in and mobilized a relief volunteer team to work together with the Foundation for Education and Development (FED) to assist stranded Burmese migrant workers in Bangkok. We are grateful to have received support from the Fuk Tak Iam Foundation for these relief efforts. We should be following their lead because with every act of kindness, we create more awareness, understanding and tolerance for people that are different from us. With these thoughts we would like to wish you a peaceful and joyous festive season.

Daniel Siegfried
Co-founder
Welcome & Goodbye

Since August 2011, we have had seven volunteers helping us in our projects as well as in our office. Xinyi Yang, Candice Chia and Ivana Zupa have taught English to school children in some of our schools in the North of Thailand. Peter Patterson and Larry Wan have helped us with administration in our office in Chiang Mai while Mavis Teea and Yip Sand have helped us write our Christmas Cards 2011. A great “Thank you” to all of them for dedicating their time and efforts to Child’s Dream!

Our November Workshop

Each year we hold two capacity building and information exchange workshops in our organisation. One is a 3 days/2 nights workshop where we gather the whole team from Chiang Mai and also from Siem Reap. The topics are general updates and also brainstorming sessions which will help to find out in which direction to steer the organisation. It’s very important to us that all our staff members see themselves as very valuable stakeholders and that each and every one can help to shape the future of Child’s Dream. In November, we normally gather for a one day information exchange day, but this year, on 4th November, we just met for a fun day. It started with the visit of one of our Chiang Mai based programmes called NEED, a sustainable agricultural education facility for Burmese youth, followed by an afternoon of playing cards and board games. The day ended with a 90 minute session of bowling and a delicious dinner at the Mae Ping River. Many thanks to all our staff for the very hard work during the year 2011.

Special Feature

Thae Cho
(Nickname Waan)

About 4 years ago, I met Khun Marc, one of the two Co-Founders, at the old Child’s Dream office. I never saw or met him before although he has indirectly paid my salary for one year already. I was very scared but also excited. When I met him he told me that he is very pleased to finally meet me. The purpose of the meeting was to permanently employ me as a Child’s Dream staff. Since that day I work in my job as an assistant coordinator for our Children’s Medical Fund. In 2009 I had to go back to my home town in Myanmar to process my passport and VISA application. My biggest problems were 1) I only graduated from level 5 and I was not good in reading and writing 2) I had to pay a lot of money to get all these processes done and I did not have any money 3) nobody in my home town ever got a passport before 4) I also never went to the capital Yangon before. I had prepared for this challenging trip for 4 months. During that time I was terrified that Child’s Dream would fire me, so I couldn’t eat and sleep for weeks. I would like to say thank you very much to all my friends at Child’s Dream who help me in that difficult time.

(continued on next page)
Now, 5 years later I’m still with the Children’s Medical Fund and we were able to change a lot of processes, introduce new patient criteria and hire more staff. Now we have 4 team members who are directly involved in the programme. There are so many problems everyday but we look at them as challenges and handle and solved one by one. I feel that I have a good chance in my life here, much better than other people from my home town back in Myanmar. Some of my friends are jealous that I have a good and secure job, because of my salary, social security, health insurance, flexible working hours, nice colleagues and nice boss and many other things. Although I couldn’t read Thai and English I still got the chance for a good job with Child’s Dream. I’m proud of myself that I can support my family and myself, although my job is very hard and exhausting. I feel great that I can help sick children from my own country.

Finally, I would like to thank all our donors who support children in the programme suffering from congenital illnesses. Even my own son, Nyi Nyi was born with an open anus and he was supported by our Children’s Medical Fund and received treatment and an operation in Chiang Mai. Now he is a normal boy and can go to school. Child’s Dream changed my life from hard labor, working on construction sites to being a translator and coordinator in the Children’s Medical Fund, from being a very poor family without a house to become a moderate family with a new house, from hopeless to hopeful. Thank you for all your support and I will do my work as best as I can.

~ Waan

**Still looking for a Christmas gift?**

Go no further but visit our online shop. We have our very own Child’s Dream products as well as products from partner organizations on offer.

[www.childsdream.org/shop](http://www.childsdream.org/shop)

**Project News**

### ‘Picture Book’ – Our own guest house

Youth Connect – a Child’s Dream project - is a vocational programme which aims to connect graduating Burmese migrant high school students to employment. It does this by managing a team of trainers to facilitate skills-based training in high schools. A smaller group of students can apply to be apprentices with local businesses where they learn hands-on skills specific to their industry - all arranged and supervised by Youth Connect. Finally, Youth Connect operates a career centre which assists students in applying for and obtaining quality employment.

In order to support more students and increase its sustainability, Youth Connect in 2012 will begin operating a guesthouse. The ‘Picture Book’ guesthouse will not only be run as a business, but also simultaneously run as a training centre for apprentices seeking to work in the hospitality sector. The guesthouse will have 10 rooms as well as a small reception centre and eating area. Although still under construction, the guesthouse is expected to be finished in January 2012 and begin operations in April 2012. Watch out for more updates in one of our next newsletters and going forward, there will always be a place to stay in Mae Sot in our own social enterprise guesthouse.

[“the Picture Book”~ Building in progress](#)
Alternative ways to help us

We rely more and more on social media and online platforms to bring our name to a wider public. As a cost conscious organisation we are particularly keen on making use of such platforms since they are available to us free of charge so our donations are not spent on fundraising or marketing, but on our most needy beneficiaries. There are ways you can all help us to increase our visibility and we therefore want to encourage you all to access the following sites:

Facebook
Become a ‘friend’ of Child’s Dream on facebook. Simply click on the following link www.facebook.com/pages/Childs-Dream/122022447832245 or simply access facebook via www.facebook.com and search for ‘Child’s Dream’. Click on ‘like’ and you are done. We do publish the more ‘lighter’ stuff on facebook with many little stories from the field, from our staff and also just from fun activities we run.

Great Non Profits
For a couple of months already, we have been listed on greatnonprofits.org. Please visit this page, search for ‘Child’s Dream Foundation’ and write a little review about how you perceive us and what you think about our work. Having as many reviews as possible will ultimately help potential new donors to choose to support us.

Many thanks!

What visiting volunteers sometimes experience ...

Our most frequent volunteer, Bianchina, who is the mother of our COO, Manuela, joins our team every year between November and March. For the last several years, she has supported us greatly by writing all the birthday cards and helping our administration team to sort all the booking templates for the yearly audit in January.

On her last trip to Chiang Mai, she wanted to do us a huge favour and bought delicious Gorgonzola cheese at the airport shop before boarding the plane. When the Gorgonzola cheese passed the x-ray machine it was immediately spotted by a very correct officer. To the big disappointment of Bianchina, it did not pass the security check (it was not even a very mature and smelly one) and was confiscated and destroyed (what a waste!!!). We should not have been surprised. Bianchina is 91 years old and it goes without saying, she looks like a terrorist who is going to blow up a Thai Airbus A340 aircraft in mid-air with her Gorgonzola cheese.

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Many thanks!

Your Child’s Dream Team