



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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August 2009

I cannot believe that it has already been six years since Marc and I embarked on a journey that transformed our lives forever. In 2003, we made a conscious decision to change our lifestyles in pursuit of happiness and fulfillment. At the time, we had no idea what we were getting into, but we found exactly what we were looking for in Child's Dream: our own charity organisation with a simple mission and enthusiastic employees who share our passion and motivation, despite their diverse backgrounds and education attainments.

As our uncomplicated, hands-on approach and our 'let's do it' attitude attracted more and more donations, Child's Dream grew bigger and bigger. As our primary goal is to help as many children as possible, we were thrilled about the influx of these funds. However, earlier this year we realised that we had reached our optimal size. It is now time to consolidate our organisational structure and focus on our mission and geographical coverage.



We once again want to put children's health and education at the heart of our work, while seeking greater involvement of the beneficiaries and their communities in our efforts. This will allow us to build stronger relationships with communities and create a stronger sense of responsibility among the children and youth towards their social origin and the society in general. In this way, we hope to give the children the opportunity to become responsible and productive members of their communities. This is our vision of sustainable development.

We plan to spend more time in our target communities; we therefore need to narrow our geographical scope. For this reason, we have decided not to start new projects in southern Laos but focus on the north, which can be

accessed more easily from Chiang Mai. We will, of course, fulfill our commitments to existing and ongoing projects in the south.

In hiring three senior staff members in 2008, we hoped that their expertise and knowledge would complement the strong motivation and drive of our younger staff. However, we underestimated the cultural respect for these three new staff members and we soon realised that the very heart of Child's Dream, the spirit and goodwill of our younger staff, was at risk. We recognised our mistake and asked these three employees to leave the organisation. We now strive again for a flatter organisational structure, whereby the true motivation and dedication of our staff rates higher than experience or technical knowledge.

Our new structure includes three focus groups; health, basic education and higher education. This structure encourages the sharing of responsibilities and greater involvement of our administrative staff in field work, which ultimately leads to a higher job satisfaction and fosters a stronger team spirit. We have already observed that the younger staff have regained their confidence, motivation, drive and 'let's do it' attitude.

By Daniel Siegfried

Highlight: Grant from Credit Suisse

We are thrilled to announce that the Asian Pacific Philanthropy Committee of Credit Suisse has awarded Child's Dream a grant of US\$ 250,000 to build 30 new class rooms in Laos. We want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Credit Suisse for this outstanding support and trust. We congratulate Credit Suisse for recognising that its success not only depends on the skills and resources of its own people, but also on the health and prosperity of the communities in which it operates. More information will follow as soon as we start construction.



Recent activities

CDC school opening, Thailand

On the 26th of May, we celebrated the opening of Children's Development Center (CDC), our largest project ever! The sheer scale of the opening ceremony attracted an audience of nearly 2,000 people composed of students, parents, teachers, government officials, and NGO workers. The diversity and strength of the audience attests to the importance of the project.

CDC is a school for the children of migrant workers, predominantly Burmese, residing in Thailand. Over the years, the old school has steadily grown from only including the children of workers at the nearby Mae Taew Clinic into what is quite possibly the largest migrant learning center in Thailand, with approximately 1,200 children. Before Child's Dream's support, the school was operating across several buildings, including an old wooden two-storey house and a disused factory. The school now has a beautiful and spacious campus, consisting of two 2-storey buildings with a total of 38 rooms for classes and offices, a school canteen/assembly hall, and three separate buildings housing toilets and hand washing stations. The campus also includes a large grassy assembly field and three sports courts for basketball, takraw (caneball, a local favourite), and volleyball as well as three separate playground areas complete with swings, see-saws, climbing towers, and bridges.



The landscape design has ensured that shade-giving trees will quickly grow to provide cool spaces for children to take refuge from the hot sun during their breaks throughout the day. Overall, the campus provides a well-balanced environment for children to further their development, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Two months into the school year, the enthusiasm of the students and teachers continues to be apparent upon entrance through the main gate. The campus is teeming with masses of students and teachers busily moving between classes.

Our sincere gratitude goes again to SK Dream Japan for the generous support in realising this tremendous project.

Baan Tonhan High School, Laos

The village of Tonhan is located at about 40 km from the town of Xeno in Sawannakhet Province in Southern Laos. The village secondary school was built in 1978 by a group of twelve villages. They managed to fund and construct five buildings, with three classrooms each, without the help of the government. The school now offers education to 790 students, but given their limited financial means, the villagers have been unable to maintain the facilities properly, and two of the buildings are now in such a bad repair that it is very unsafe to continue classes. Child's Dream agreed to construct a new building with six classrooms, with the participation of the Tonhan community. The plans include provisions for four new toilets and new school furniture for all classrooms.



The community agreed to help with the preparation of the land and to contribute earth, stones, sand and bricks required for construction. The local education ministry will provide all teaching material and the parents will be responsible for school uniforms and books. Child's Dream will provide supplementary stationery if and when required. All additional construction material will directly be purchased by Child's Dream in a shop in Xeno.

This project is scheduled to be completed by October 2009.

We are also very happy to have received support from Julius Baer Bank and its employees in Hong Kong. Thanks to this joint initiative by the staff and the bank, this project was made possible.

University Scholarship Programme

Since we launched our university scholarship programme in May 2006, it has grown considerably: our first student intake had eight Burmese students, and the programme now has 79 students in total. Most of our students are Burmese nationals, but starting this year, we accepted our first two Laotian scholars. Perhaps the biggest challenge of this programme is not supporting students during their semesters through to graduation, but to get them admitted to the universities in the first

place. This is a situation of “shifting sands” where universities change admission criteria from year to year and according to the nationalities of students, even after officially admitting them. Universities occasionally even invent additional ‘compulsory courses’ in international study programmes for financial gain.

For almost a year now a very committed volunteer – Bryan Clapper – has been working alongside us on this programme. Bryan is a professional IT programmer who designed a fantastic new scholarship database that makes the financial and academic management of our scholars a lot easier. We highly appreciate his outstanding patience with us when we change database requirements as we go along! Perhaps we are his “shifting sands”?



Over the years, only five students have left our scholarship programme. Two students have resettled to the USA under UNHCR resettlement initiatives, one student had a baby and one student disappeared for reasons unknown to us. Only in one case have we discontinued a scholarship because the student did not comply with mutually agreed rules. We feel that our retention rate in the university scholarship programme is high by any standard, despite the very demanding circumstances. We trust this positive trend will continue in the years to come.

Minmahaw Higher Education Programme (MHEP)

One of the many hurdles of getting Burmese students into university is that their education is often non-formal or non-accredited, and they are thus ineligible for university admission. Minmahaw Higher Education Programme (MHEP) is an exam-focused course which aims to fill this gap by legitimising Burmese students' education. Students without accredited high school certificates compete to be admitted to the year-long MHEP course, where they will prepare to sit an internationally recognised and accredited high school exam in order to make them eligible for university education. If students pass the exam, they receive a high school diploma and can therefore advance to university.

In early 2009, we trialed the MHEP by supporting nine students. The trial was very successful, with all nine students passing. Child's Dream has therefore decided to fully fund the course on an annual basis. This course will provide an academic pathway for students we currently support across our schools in refugee camps, as well as those in migrant learning centres. We anticipate the school will accept 20-30 students annually at full capacity.

Cyclone Nargis - EAT Burma (update)

It seems long ago that the devastating power of Cyclone Nargis swept over the Irrawaddy, Rangoon and Puga divisions in Burma, causing death and destructing in a country already suffering under one of the most restrictive and repressive regimes in the world. In fact, this catastrophe occurred just over a year ago. Many of the survivors of this cyclone, one of the deadliest natural disasters ever recorded, continue to suffer, struggling to meet their basic needs and to cope with all that they have lost. Long after the attention of the world steered away from the misery of the aftermath of the catastrophe, that misery remains.

Soon after Nargis hit, the 'Emergency Assistance Team – Burma' (EAT-Burma) was established to provide aid and assistance to the people affected by the cyclone. Coordinated by the Mae Tao Clinic, 'EAT-Burma' is a collaboration of several Burmese community-based organisations working at grassroots level. As we were confident this cooperative model would be effective, we decided to financially support their activities. The first phase of the relief effort focused on emergency aid in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone. Child's Dream and our sister organization *diversethics* Foundation contributed US\$200,000 to this phase. During the second phase emergency aid continued, but the activities expanded to include the rebuilding of infrastructure and restoration of food production and livelihood activities. Our contribution here was an additional US\$ 150,000.



A few examples of what EAT-Burma, with our support, has achieved:

- 106 boats and 112 fishing nets were provided to groups of one to three families to share.

- Seven villages were provided with a large boat with an engine to assist them to fetch clean water five to six hours away. 4,050 gallons of diesel were also provided to run the engines.
- 513 students received support for uniforms, school fees, and stationary.



- 100 children, mainly orphans, in three boarding houses were supported with a stipend of 3,000 THB per child.
- 20 villages received prenatal and child health support in the form of nutrition, medicine and newborn supplies.
- 500 pregnant women were provided with 'maternity kits'.
- Eleven water pumps were provided to ten villages with a total population of 7,600.
- 236 families were given materials to rebuild their houses.
- Support for the construction of four bridges enabled over 15,000 villagers from seven villages to be reconnected to the main road to gain better access to health care, education and supplies.
- 15,200 people were provided with emergency food relief.

Plans are underway to begin a third phase focusing mainly on sustainable development and community participation. We are currently awaiting the final proposal before committing to funding this phase.

Update: Baan Gua Fan, Thailand

Baan Gua Fan ('Dream House') in Chiang Mai, was a boarding house for eleven teenagers, mostly from the Akha hilltribe and all from extremely poor backgrounds. They moved to Baan Gua Fan after the closure of our ChildsArt project in Mae Sai, in February 2007. Their financial hardship, lack of education and absence of a support network put them in a very vulnerable position in an environment where the dangers of drug trafficking, prostitution and crime were an every day reality. Baan Gua Fan gave them the opportunity to attend non-formal education and vocational training and consequently, improve their employability and

life opportunities. Having achieved most of our goals, we decided to close the house in April 2008.

We now have some excellent news about five of our former protégés. All are doing great. One of the former students receives a Child's Dream scholarship for his secondary school studies in Chiang Rai. He is in his final school year, and his results last year were very good. Two other young men and one young lady work in barber shops in Chiang Mai and make decent livings. A fifth former-student, who during his time in Baan Gua Fan showed an interest in motorbikes, now works in a motorbike repair shop not far from Chiang Mai. He told us he is very happy there and continues to learn a lot. He and the three barbers all earn a salary that allows them to even send some money home to support their families.

They told us that although they do not go to school anymore, they still practice their reading and writing skills and are grateful for their time at Baan Gua Fan.

Project updates

Loi Tai Leng, Burma



We visited the project in July. After a lengthy delay in implementing this project due to transportation problems, we were very pleased to see good progress. The school building, as well as the attached office, is complete. The toilets and the canteen will be finished when the rain recedes, and the material can be transported to the village again.

Prasath Bei School, Cambodia

We visited the construction site and everything is going very well. The school looks nice and strong. About 90% of the work is done. The contractor told us that the school will be finished within the next few days.

Volunteers

Since our last newsletter was published, we have hosted several volunteers, each of whom supported us greatly. **Bryan Clapper** has constructed an incredible database for our scholarship programme; **Benjamin Cavalli** helped us in our office in Chiang Mai during April and May; and **Sarah Rajkumar** spent three months with our team in Siem Reap and is now succeeded there by **Kaspar Weilenmann**. **Patrizia Carbone**, **Massimo Marletto** and **Magdalena Frydrych** all taught English in Tomato Village. A very big 'thank you' to all of them!

European Tax domiciles confirmed

As reported in the April newsletter, over the past many months we have been working on offering tax breaks for donors living in a number of European countries. Today we are happy to let you know that tax efficient giving is now possible in Germany, France, Italy and the UK. Please visit the donor section of our webpage for more information.

Thank you very much

A big thank you again to all our donors, small and big. The current economic crisis is difficult for all of us, hence we are even happier to see so many of our friends and supporters living up to their commitments and continuing to support us. We are fully aware that this is difficult for many of you and we therefore appreciate your trust and support more than ever.

Your Child's Dream Team

