



# 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

## Contact

Daniel Marco Siegfried  
[daniel@childsdream.org](mailto:daniel@childsdream.org)

Marc Thomas Jenni  
[marc@childsdream.org](mailto:marc@childsdream.org)

Tel. +66 (0)53 201 811  
 Fax. +66 (0)53 201 812

[www.childsdream.org](http://www.childsdream.org)  
[info@childsdream.org](mailto:info@childsdream.org)

## Address

Child's Dream Foundation  
 238/3 Wualai Road  
 T. Haiya, A. Muang  
 Chiang Mai 50100  
 Thailand

## Christmas Newsletter 2009

There was absolutely nothing that reminded me of Christmas except for my hand-written reminder in my ever accompanying notebook, which read 'Write intro for Christmas Newsletter'. The circumstances were quite surreal but could not have been more stimulating to think about the next newsletter. I had just finished an exciting and uplifting survey trip to three districts in Xaignabouli province in the North of Laos, where we would like to become more active. I was now sitting jam-packed with dozens of tourists



on a slow boat down the Mekong from Pakbeng to Luang Prabang. I was not sure whether I should feel amused or annoyed about bragging tourists' stories of gigantic spiders and enormous snakes encounters and of the absolute ghastly food experiences. But nothing could dampen my high spirits and cheerful thoughts of the countless honest conversations with local villagers, teachers and students. I was in the perfect mood to think about the message I would like to convey to the readers of our Christmas Newsletter.

Of course Child's Dream is dependent on generous support because we are determined to save as many children's lives as possible with our health intervention programmes. Or we provide underprivileged children with opportunities to grow up and become responsible, respected and productive members of their communities thanks to our educational programmes. However, there are so many worthy causes just at our door steps that do not require any money at all. While simply going about our daily lives we have myriad opportunities to do 'good' which often pass us unnoticed. Something as small as giving somebody a smile or simply spending more time with people we care about can make us, and the beneficiary of our acts, feel happier. Yes, I know this might sound patronizing. Please forgive me but I might still be intoxicated by the honest hospitality and kindness of the Laotian people, who seem to cherish the spirit of Christmas all year around without having ever heard of Christmas.

These people have so little but yet have so much to give. It reminds me of a quote from Sir Winston Churchill: **'We make a living from what we get, we make a life from what we give.'**

In the spirit of this quote and the unconditional generosity of the Laotian people I just met, I wish you and your families a joyful festive season and lots of health and happiness for the coming year.

*By Daniel Siegfried*

## Highlight: Swimming for Charity

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009 MAN Investments organised a charity swimming event with their staff on the shores of Lake Zurich in Pfaeffikon, Switzerland. This event is part of their "Child's Dream – MAN Charity of the Year" programme to which they have already very generously contributed with US\$ 50,000 at the beginning of this year. Together with the support of some staff of Credit Suisse the amazing amount of CHF 180,000 was raised in total at this swimming event of which 80% were allocated to Child's Dream (CHF 144,000). The MAN team was supported by five Child's Dream volunteers on site. The result was outstanding news that totally overwhelmed us. A great "thank you" to everyone who swam for us and who supported us!



From left to right: Andrea Kleinert, Susanne Lerch, Klara Vyzrzel, Ursula Bisig and Ben Boesch

## Recent activities

### Roka School, Cambodia

Roka is a relatively small village in the Lvea Commune in Pouk district. The geographical features of this area can be easily described: It's flat and dry. Since Roka was founded around 60 years ago, it is one of the older villages in the area. Nowadays about 150 families or a total of around 800 people live here.



During their regime, the Khmer Rouge forced most villagers to leave Roka and to live and work somewhere else. In 1979, when the Khmer Rouge was no longer the ruling party in Cambodia, many villagers returned to their home, to Roka. Even though the Siem Reap province is a popular tourist destination, it is ranked as the second poorest province of Cambodia and as the province with the sixth highest illiteracy rate. This is mainly due to the fact that the primary occupation is farming. Roka's main product is rice and this village is especially famous for its shredded rice grain. The per-family income of Roka is estimated to be around USD 750 per year.

When people came back to Roka in 1979, a temporary school was built. It was a small school, with only one classroom. Three years later, the school was in a desolate state, mainly because of the destructive work of termites. In 1982, the villagers re-built the school and were able to use it for six years. In 1988 a new school opened its doors, this time supported by the Social Foundation, a central government body. This school, with its two classrooms, was made of wood and had a zinc roof. The government also provided new furniture.

In early 2008, the wood of the school building was once again destroyed by termites and other insects. On 12<sup>th</sup> July 2009, during a heavy rain storm, the school finally collapsed. Fortunately all the students and teachers were able to evacuate in time and nobody was injured. Child's Dream supported the construction of a new school building. The school has four classrooms. We also provided new school furniture, a flag pole, a water well and a water system. Another NGO, the 'Jesuit Service' built the toilets. The villagers provided soil used for the foundation and built a fence around the school. A school construction committee was formed

and they monitored the building activities and regularly reported to our office in Siem Reap.

The final opening of the school will take place on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2009 and will be attended by Marc.

A big thank you goes to ImmoVida Treuhand AG for supporting this project.

### Paktung Primary School, Laos

Paktung Village is a 140 year old settlement and is home to 127 families, mostly farmers. In 1975, the community built a school for their children who had gone to school in the local temple before that. Since 1975, the villagers have renovated the school many times, but the two existing buildings are now in very bad condition and unsafe for the children. All the students and the five teachers are from Paktung village. The school is fully recognised by the Laotian government and the responsible government body is the Education Department of Paklay district. The government supports the school to some extent, but school uniforms and stationery must be paid for by the parents.



We will build five classrooms and two toilets to provide a safe and sustainable environment for the school children. The villagers will contribute wood, sand, stones and will help with the leveling of the land, with transportation and manual labor. All the construction material has to be transported from Paklay district located about 200 km away. Since there is no road, everything needs to be transported by boat on the Mekong. This is more expensive than usual means of transportation and also depends on weather conditions.

The construction work is scheduled to take place from October 2009 to March 2010.

Many thanks go to MAN Investments for supporting this project.

### Maedaet Noi Boarding House, Thailand

Maedaed Noi School is a Thai school located in Maechaem district, Chiang Mai province. It was established in 1977 by the villagers of Baan Maedaed Noi. A few years later the community handed over the school and the responsibility to the Thai ministry of education. Since then the school has been supported by the government. Currently, there are nine teachers, one care taker and 134 students from kindergarten to secondary level.



Many of the children are from remote villages, mostly Karen and Hmong hill-tribes, who come to study in Maedaed Noi. The school has been providing accommodation for children who stay far away from the school. However, boarding facility, kitchen and latrine are in very bad shape and it's hard to provide security and a hygienic environment for the boarders. Moreover, there is not enough space to accommodate the 60 children (42 girls and 18 boys) and the number increases every academic year.

The Thai authorities do not provide financial assistance to build boarding houses. Therefore, the community of Maedaed Noi asked Child's Dream to support the construction of a boarding house, a kitchen and a toilet house.

Since the school is often affected by water shortage and/or dirty water due to lack of water filters we also decided to build a water tank system, which we will install together with the Asia Water Foundation.

The construction will take place from October 2009 to February 2010 and we are very happy that this project was fully funded by the Julius Baer Foundation. Thank you very much.

### Higher Education Initiative for Burmese Youth

Our last newsletter featured the university scholarship programme (SSP) and the Minmahaw Higher Education Programme (MHEP) which are both part of our higher education initiative, notably the top of the pyramid. This time, we want to feature the other components of higher education in order to complete the picture and to allow you to

understand how a student gets into MHEP and then into the university scholarship programme.

While basic education is the essential foundation upon which higher education rests, it is usually under-resourced in terms of school buildings, school equipment, curriculum development, and qualified teachers, especially in a place like Burma. It is therefore no surprise that, when Burmese students finish their basic education, they are not yet prepared to improve the situation in their communities.

As a result, we support several initiatives past basic education. Our rationale in supporting higher education is that even those Burmese students who complete high school do not have the skills required to find meaningful employment to contribute positively to their communities. Furthermore, for the few students who are academically superior, there are often many insurmountable hurdles in attaining further education at university making a university degree little more than a dream.

So far, we have focused our higher education initiatives on Burmese students due to their overwhelming needs. There are three main groups of Burmese students in terms of educational barriers that they face: refugees, migrants and students inside Burma. Refugees are largely confined to the refugee camps where they live, severely limiting the opportunities available to them. Migrants have a greater freedom of movement, but are often illegally living in Thailand and are susceptible to unsafe factory or domestic work. Students inside Burma may be living in such places as war zones, remote rural areas, or impoverished areas; even students fortunate enough to be living in stable communities face many restrictions on access to education including bribery, corruption, high school fees, universities closed by the government, and a paranoid atmosphere of security.



For Burmese refugee students in Thailand, we support three post-high school colleges in two refugee camps: Pu Taw Memorial Junior College (PTMJC), Kaw Law Junior College (KLJC), and Leadership and Management Training College (LMTC). These schools play two main roles in the camp educational system by serving as a college giving specialised education, and as a possible pathway for official university attendance outside the camp. All schools currently have adopted a four-year curriculum, each with different specialisations.

For Burmese migrant students in Thailand, we support a vocational programme called Youth Connect (YC). Youth Connect aims to equip its students with skills necessary to attain safe and meaningful employment offering better conditions than jobs available to students without skills. This is achieved by a series of skills trainings in six migrant high schools during the final year of high school, followed by an intensive skills training for the top students at the YC office and training centre, then finally by placing these top students into carefully selected and supervised internships in local Thai businesses. Upon internship completion, YC operates a job centre where students will be assisted in applying for jobs.

Going forward, we plan to expand our higher education initiatives to also include Laotian, Cambodian, and Thai students. While we are currently assessing the needs and our abilities to successfully implement programmes, we expect that there will be a continued focus on expanding vocational opportunities, as well as improving access to university and scholarships.



## Project updates

### Children Medical Fund, Thailand

During the first ten months of 2009 we supported life-saving operations for 234 Burmese children up to the age of 12 years. 80% of the children were in need of cardiac surgery. The total cost for the first ten months was approx. US\$ 240,000 and the demand for surgery constantly outnumbers our financial resources.

### Prasath Bei School, Cambodia

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, the school was formally opened and handed over to the community. The Governor and Vice Governor of Oddar Meanchey Province attended the celebration.

### AGGT Boarding House, Thailand

The boarding house was just completed in time. The opening celebration is scheduled to take place only in the first quarter of 2010.

Additional updates about all our projects and programmes are continuously posted on our website.

## A changing Team

Since our last newsletter was sent out in August of this year, some new people have joined us and some have left. Phenwilai Chaiyaporn (nickname "Um"), Yem Khlok and Yutthapong Seubsakwong (nickname



"Yut"), all newly joined us. Um and Yut both work in our Chiang Mai office, Um supports Tuu with mentoring our scholarship students and Yut in the Northern Thailand team. Yem is a programme coordinator of Child's Dream Cambodia in Siem Reap.

Sallo Polak has taken up a new position in Chiang Mai working with an organisation for people with physical and/or mental disabilities. Prasert Maithong ("Gau") went back to Bangkok to support his family and to finish his studies, Chea Phalla of Child's Dream Cambodia took up a new position in another organisation in Siem Reap. Our Australian volunteers' assignments – Heather Grieve's and Kate Mellor's – came to an end. Finally, Anne left us and followed her dreams to continue studying in the USA. A very big 'thank you' to all of them for their support and dedication!

## We are very proud!

Pong Pong, one of our scholarship students who graduated this year from Chiang Mai University with a Master Degree in Economics, has been selected for an internship programme with the government of New Zealand. Here she is posing with the Prime Minister of New Zealand, John Key. This was a very special moment for her, and it certainly is also for us. Pong Pong, we are all very proud of you!



## Social Networks

We are following the trend when it comes to social networks and we invite you all to join our groups on Facebook and Ammodo. Facebook is a more "fun" tool for us to update our friends and donors about events and activities which cannot always be taken too seriously. Our Ammodo profile is regularly updated with project news and photos and we hope to be able to access a powerful non-profit community by doing so.

### Tax agreement in the Netherlands

A while ago we established a legal entity in the Netherlands to give Dutch donors an incentive to receive tax relief on their donations to us. The donation volume over the last many months was significantly below our expectations and, therefore, the expenses for running such an entity were no longer justified. Today we are happy to announce the conclusion of a partnership agreement with the **Oranje Fonds**. Thanks to this agreement, donors in the Netherlands will still be able to deduct their contributions to Child's Dream from their taxes. Please visit our website for more information.

### Child's Dream Akphiwat Khmer (CDAK)



Most of you know the work of our Cambodian subsidiary under the name of KAKO (Khmer Akphiwat Khmer Organisation). After having successfully integrated KAKO into our Child's Dream family, it was just logical to also rename our newest family member. The board of KAKO therefore decided in summer 2009 to call the organisation 'Child's

Dream Akphiwat Khmer' (CDAK) and also adopt our well know Child's Dream logo. Akphiwat means 'support' whereas 'Khmer' stands for Cambodia as a country as well as for its people.

### In Laos with Swiss TV

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of November, Marc accompanied Swiss TV 'SFDRS' to Laos. A short feature story about our Laos work was shot and will be broadcast on December 31<sup>st</sup> in the highly popular '10 vor 10' prime time news programme. A correspondent of Swiss radio DRS 1 accompanied the crew and interviewed Marc. The interview will be aired on 31<sup>st</sup> of December as well.

### Going the extra mile

You are all very well aware that it is one of our main goals to reach even the most remote and isolated communities in our area of coverage. We thereby provide support and services to children and communities who are clearly neglected. Being poor is one issue but living in remote areas acuminates the problem further. Going exactly this extra mile requires a number of cars at our disposals so a new Toyota pickup truck was bought in November 2009. If you are interested in helping us to finance this new car, please get in touch with us.

### Thank you very much

Another very exciting year comes to its end. It was also by far the most challenging we experienced so far. Initiating the process of handing over the day to day operations of Child's Dream into local hands and simultaneously facing a much tougher economic environment, all added to the usual daily challenges we face. We are confident that we will be able to achieve a similar result in 2009 in terms of donation volume as in 2008. We also see that the process of handing over increased responsibilities to our staff is on very good track and well received.

Finally and most importantly, many new projects were started and successfully completed in 2009 for the benefit of thousands of children. The beaming smiles we receive from all our children make us forget past and future challenges.

We want to extend our very best wishes to all of you for the upcoming festive season and we also want to take this opportunity to say thank you very much for your support and your trust. This means the world to us since our work would not be possible without you!

### Your Child's Dream Team

