



# Child's Dream

A charity organization supporting children in need

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



## Our objectives

- To stop migration of children from their origin
- To prevent child labor, trafficking and sexual exploitation
- To cultivate a better attitude towards life and society
- To help children to take pride in themselves and strengthen their self-esteem
- To improve living conditions
- To encourage the children to love and respect their own customs and culture
- To raise awareness among families and communities of child trafficking

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## Newsletter

December 2005

Nothing reminded me of Christmas until I boarded a Bangkok Airways flight from Siem Reap to Bangkok. While settling in to my window seat and watching the shimmering heat on the runway, I could faintly hear 'Driving home for Christmas' by Chris Rea over the disgruntled chattering of a herd of unhappy German package tourists. Ignoring the endless suggestions from the same herd on how to improve efficiency at the airport, the cleanliness at the hotel and the German-speaking skills of their local guide, I realized that yet another very exciting year is about to come to an end. For a moment, I let my thoughts wander and indulged in the many happy moments of 2005.



An unexpected tipping of a sausage-like finger on my shoulder brought me back to seat 24A on flight PG931. The finger wanted to know if he had to fill out the arrival card for Bangkok, even though Siem Reap is in Thailand, too. Not knowing whether I should laugh or cry, I calmly explained to the finger that Siem Reap is in fact in Cambodia and that he would have to complete the form for immigration.

Our expansion plans brought me to Siem Reap, where sensitive tourism is as non-existent as public infrastructure such as clean water and electricity beyond the sightseeing tracks. It is shocking to see the ignorance and arrogance that some vacationers travel the globe with. It doesn't take a lot to peep behind the tourist façade to develop an understanding of the surroundings. Just take a road less traveled, talk and listen to local people with respect, consciously keep eyes open and humbly show interest in their lives. Your vacation will be a lot more interesting and colorful, and you will improve the image of western tourists in their countries.

*By Daniel Siegfried*

## Organizational News

A seven month process finally came to an end on November 3rd, 2005 marking a milestone in Child's Dream's history. We are approved as a **charitable foundation** by the Royal Thai Government! This status will not only ensure a sustainable and long-lasting operation in Thailand, but will give us considerably more freedom and security.

Our latest member is really low maintenance, easy to handle, works well under pressure and is very efficient. With the number plate 'HW 1941' and in traditional Child's Dream red, our **new Mitsubishi pickup truck** helps us to improve our effectiveness. It is faster, has more cargo capacity and everybody can drive it, even Marc!



The search is finally over! Really just by coincidence, we chanced upon our **new office / home** to be. This traditional Thai house will not only help us to separate our work from our private lives; but will also provide enough resources and space to meet the growth prospects of Child's Dream without jeopardizing its lean cost structure. It is cheaper, bigger and more centrally located. After doing some upgrading work in January,



the house will be ready to welcome our team and anybody who wants to pay us a visit.

After six months it is time to say 'good-bye' to **Heidi**, who not only has been a great help in the day-to-day management, but also helped us build up a network of Western friends in Chiang Mai. Thank you Heidi and all the best for your future endeavors.



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### Cambodia

Unless you miss the correct highway exit and almost end up in Pattaya, you can reach Thailand's most notorious border crossing just by driving three hours from Bangkok. At this border crossing one is greeted by hundreds, maybe thousands, of children begging, scavenging and pulling carts from Poipet, Cambodia, across the border to a market in Aranyaprathet, Thailand. We immediately knew why we had come here; to search for projects that are fighting the exploitation of these children. We spent one night in Poipet, where wealthy Thais would gamble in 5-star casinos while poor Khmer families try to make a living with often less than a dollar a day. After conducting our due diligence on an organization called Goutte d'Eau (see below), Tai joined the early morning stream of child laborers to Thailand in order to search for projects in the Eastern area of Thailand while I continued my journey to Siem Reap by shared taxi.



As if the bumpy road between Poipet and Siem Reap wouldn't have been bad enough, I got to share the taxi with an overly anxious Canadian couple and a middle-aged Swedish woman, who spilt her Coke all over me. The first sign of Siem Reap was a concrete road lined with dozens of huge, tasteless package tour hotels. Shortly after, I was glad to reach KAKO's (local NGO) office and be able to step off the tourist trail. I spent the next couple of days in Siem Reap and in rural areas to get a feeling of the local situation, to conduct some research and to establish a network with local NGOs.

As Cambodia tries to recover from the devastating effects of a prolonged civil war (1979 – 1998), very limited financial support for development is provided by the government.



Typical Khmer house in rural area with no water and no electricity

Even the most basic public infrastructure such as electricity, clean water and concrete roads only reaches as far as tourists go. The limited infrastructure available in rural areas was predominantly built by foreign development agencies (mostly from Japan). However, the most disturbing fact that is after the war local people don't trust each other anymore. Everybody is fighting for

his/her own survival, which makes it difficult to develop rural areas based on community efforts.

We are planning to visit Cambodia again in February 2006 for a longer period to draft a strategic plan on how best to support the children in this deprived country.

*By Daniel Siegfried*

### Vietnam

Our progress in Vietnam has been brisk. Within days of arriving in Hanoi, I started on field trips around the country, and by the sixth week, we had submitted papers to the government for registration as a charity.



From discussions with NGOs and government bodies, and through field trips, we identified the provinces along the Lao-Chinese borders as regions we wanted to focus on.

Whilst being the poorest, these regions also found the lowest level of support from international NGOs, due to the fact that many are extremely remote and tough to assess. Many communes I visited necessitated traveling more than a day on all manner of transport – plane, bus, scooter, four wheeler, military truck, foot, across demanding terrain – highways, dirt roads, mountain paths, and rivers. In several cases, rough traveling conditions have resulted in casualties – fellow travelers going green with nausea and countless retching episodes. Additionally, in line with our policy to meticulously evaluate all potential projects, I have found myself navigating mud holes, impossible makeshift bridges and treacherously slippery paths to assess for myself if the state of facilities were as described by my hosts.



Vietnam is in an awkward phase of development. While its cities are booming, the government is struggling to support basic education and infrastructure. Certain segments, such as hostels and nursery schools in rural communities, are



A dormitory at a public school



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inadequately covered by the government's five-year plans. As such, I have seen many wretched makeshift structures that have been hastily put together, forming breeding grounds for disease and fire hazards. We look to fill this gap as much as we can.

By Pamela Phua

### Damnok Toek (Goutte d'Eau)

The Poipet living environment is a hotbed of social ills at all levels; drug-abuse, prostitution, alcoholism, domestic violence, commercial and sexual exploitation of children, gambling, HIV-AIDS, crime, land-grabbing and encroaching, drug- and human trafficking and corruption at all levels are part of daily life in Poipet. In the midst of this hotbed is a safe haven called Damnok Toek / Goutte d'Eau (meaning 'Water drop'), which is looking after the most vulnerable group of society bearing the brunt of these problems; children.



Laughing thanks to Damnok Toek

Goutte d'Eau is a Swiss charitable organization and started to work in Cambodia in January 1997. Following a request from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Goutte d'Eau started with the implementation of their project in Poipet in January 1999. Four years later they officially registered Damnok Toek (meaning 'Water drop' in Khmer) as a local Cambodian NGO to continue the work of Goutte d'Eau.

Currently, Damnok Toek offers a wide range of programs addressing the needs of vulnerable children in Poipet. They operate a 24-hour drop-in center for street kids and child laborers, a rehabilitation center for substance abusing children, a reception center for trafficked children deported from Thailand, a residential center for children who cannot be reintegrated into their families and a day care center



Discussion in front of the old rehab shelter

offering non-formal education to neglected community children. These centers allow any child in distress to get the best possible support. The assessment of a possible reintegration into the family is conducted in all centers as it is not the goal to simply accumulate children in the project.

In 1999, the founders of Damnok Toek signed an agreement with the Pagoda Committee of the Wat Thmey temple to lease part of their land for seven years at no cost. Since this lease is about to expire and cannot be extended, they have to move some of their centers to a new location a bit outside of Poipet. Child's Dream committed to build the following infrastructure:

- ✓ two new reception houses accommodating 20 children each
- ✓ one new common room for the reception center
- ✓ one new common room for the rehabilitation center
- ✓ two new class rooms for the day care accommodating 75 students each

The estimated budget for these six buildings is USD 23,137 and the construction should be completed in February 2006.

### EMFS Andy Hinkle Nursery School

International Human Rights Day was commemorated around the world on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005. However, in Mae Hong Son there was an additional reason to be cheerful. We were delighted to officially open the EMFS Andy Hinkle Nursery School together with about 100 children and their parents. Community leaders, government officials, NGOs as well as four monks joined the festivities.



### Project Round-up

**Hsa Thoo Lei Migrant School** – The construction is progressing faster than expected and the school should be completed by January 2006.

### Thank you

On behalf of thousands of children, on whose lives we were able to make a positive impact, we want to extend a big thank-you to you from the bottom of our hearts. It is not just the financial support we value, but also the moral support and the trust you put in us.

*'You must be the change you want to see in the world.'*

With this quote from Mahatma Gandhi, we wish you and your family all the best, Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and many wonderful moments in 2006.

**The Child's Dream Team**

