



## MEMBER CONTRIBUTION

### Water you going to do?

The absence or oversupply of water has a devastating impact, not just on a business but also on our lives. Everyone living and working in Bangkok, Koh Samui and Phuket can agree to, based on occurrences over the past 3 years.

How well is your business adapting to future water risks and how do you mitigate for those water risks?

### About the Author

*Mr. Daniel Koepfel hails from Widnau (SG). He lives in South East Asia since 1992 and describes himself as a full-blood hotelier with a passion for the environment. A passion solidified with a master degree in environmental management and technology from the FHNW in Muttenz (BL).*

*Daniel is the managing founder of Daniel Koepfel Associates Co. Ltd., an environmental sustain-*

*ability specialist for the hospitality and tourism industry. The company's mission is to support hotel owners and managers to change the business paradigm towards one where environmental sustainability is an integrated part and not a separate one. He can be reached via [dk@danielkoepfelassociates.com](mailto:dk@danielkoepfelassociates.com).*

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# CHILDSDREAM

*Marc Jenni and Daniel Siegfried are the two founders of Child's Dream, a not for profit organization dedicated to empowering children, youth and communities in the Mekong Sub-Region, including the countries Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand.*

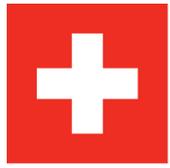
Before setting up and running Child's Dream Marc and Daniel were successful bankers with UBS AG. Marc, now 44, started his financial career with Swiss Bank Corporation back in 1985 and later moved to UBS in 1990 only to see the two banks merge to become UBS. The last six years at UBS, Marc spent in Hong Kong and Singapore, working as a private banker for Hong Kong clients. Though money was

plenty and career advancement nicely, something was missing, recalls Marc: 'It was a very lonely and not particularly fulfilling job with lots of travelling in the region'.

Then in 2003 the time was ripe for a change. Initially thinking of going back to university to do a degree in Asian studies, live soon unfolded totally different. Daniel, an 8 years younger UBS colleague, approached Marc with the idea of starting up a children's charity together. Marc could hardly believe his ears about what Daniel was proposing: 'are you totally out of your mind? We are two bankers, not having the slightest clue about charity work'. Some days later

and after many bottles of wine, Marc was finally convinced that this would work. Marc was initially intrigued by the legal and organizational challenges and found this the most compelling. It was like starting up a company, he remembers. For Daniel the motivation was purely a humanitarian one. After having been posted in Hong Kong, Seoul and Singapore for UBS AG, Daniel simply did not find the motivation anymore to continue working in the financial industry.

A huge amount of work was required to get Child's Dream off the ground. 'The first few years, we worked 14 hours a day, seven days a week', Daniel recalls.



# Swiss Thai



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The two founders also did not draw a salary for the first couple of years in order to keep the administration cost low. Having worked nearly 20 years, 10 for Daniel, in the financial industry, gave the two men enough financial backing to forfeit on a salary for some years. 'Today we both pay ourselves THB 35'000 which is just about right to sustain our lives without constantly drawing from our savings. Some of our more than 30 permanent staff certainly earn more', Daniel adds. Having worked for a Swiss bank helped tremendously during the setup process. 'We were used to deal with money, were totally process oriented, accustomed to complex legal situations and most of all focused on quality', Marc tells. Though, not of much use anymore today, Daniel's CFA accreditation certainly added value at the beginning.

The hard work was worth it: Last year Child's Dream celebrated its 10 year anniversary and the organisation raised more than 6 million USD in 2013 alone, being able to complete a re-

cord number of projects in the region. 'Never in our wildest dreams could we have imagined to become such a big and impactful development organisation', they say. Since its humble beginning Child's Dream has built well over 150 schools and boarding houses thereby enabling tens of thousands of children to complete the full basic education cycle. 'Our goal is to enable every child in our four countries to attend school. Particularly in Laos und Cambodia, however, children continue to be viewed as a source of labor. 'Convincing parents to send their children to school often demands great powers of persuasion', report the two former bankers. The second major focus for the organisation is higher education, which is addressed via a big university scholarship programme with over 100 active students as well as a number of vocational training centers. Child's Dream is also the biggest provider of higher education in the nine refugee camps along the Thai/Myanmar border. Finally 'Health' is the last focus group, aiming at significant-

ly reduce childhood mortality, mainly in Myanmar.

Despite their commitments in the Mekong Sub-Region, both founders have not forgotten their Swiss roots. 'We are proud to be Swiss and we travel back home at least ones a year', Daniel states. Both also continue to contribution to Swiss social security, though there is no intention to return back home. Asia and in particular Thailand became our new adopted home, many years ago already. So much more work is awaiting the two of them, in particular with the opening up of Myanmar. Thailand is not a major fundraising country for Child's Dream yet. This traditionally give to temples but Marc is interested in changing this. There are many local, regional and multinational companies based in Thailand and converting some of them into donors is one of the tasks in the years to come.

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