

I had been taking steps towards working in the non-profit sector for quite some time and my 6 months with Child's Dream was the perfect way to complement my background. Having worked as a teacher for 5 years and having just completed a master's in Public Advocacy & Activism, Child's Dream offered me an insight into the operations of large-scale projects, and I leave this role with new knowledge, a greater vision, and a fuller heart.

From my first e-mail interaction to my arrival to my training to my final few weeks here, I have nothing but gratitude and admiration for the way Child's Dream treats its staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, and partners. I wanted to be given challenging, complex tasks with the aim of gaining first-hand experience, as well as making a real contribution to the organization.

During my time here, I composed numerous project proposals and final reports. It was fascinating to see how a project transforms from a dream into a reality and the process involved in doing so. When proofreading and editing annual reports, it opened my eyes up to the significance of working with partner organizations and other local stakeholders. The cultivation and maintenance of these relationships are a vital tool in making steady progress when working towards one's goals. These are the kinds of things I didn't expect to learn, but am now slightly wiser for having done so! Neither was I expecting to learn the names of all the provinces in Laos, but it might come in handy in trivia night some time!

I participated in 2 field trips during my time with Child's dream. In January, 8 of us piled into 2 cars and drove 5 hours to Huai Haeng Primary School in northern Mae Hong Son Province. When my stomach relaxed after the windy road to Pai, the drive along the remote dirt track allowed me to witness how challenging it is for the field staff and construction teams to access these areas to build schools. It really highlighted all parties' commitment to the cause. Children's Day itself was lots of fun! We interacted and played games with the primary school students and distributed gifts to them. I visited some of the homes of the students in the village and it was humbling to people living lives that are a stark contrast to what I consider 'normal' living. As is typical in Thailand, I was welcomed with smiles and gifts of fruit! It was truly heartwarming.

My second field trip was to Mae Sot and across the Burmese border to Myawaddy. I travelled with Daniel and two Swiss donors. We visited many of the projects that are operated by either Child's Dream or a partner organization on both sides of the border. Having to walk across the bridge into Myanmar was quite an experience! The economic differences between the two countries became apparent in the space of just 5 minutes.

The trip opened my eyes up to the challenging circumstances faced by Burmese immigrants or stateless persons in that region. While saddened by their situation, it was uplifting to see the impact of the practical, well thought-out projects supported by Child's Dream. It was a reminder to me that the work I do in front of a computer in Chiang Mai has meaning and that I am working on behalf of those who cannot utilize their voice.

Life in the Chiang Mai office was positive, enriching, and fun! The healthy working environment resulted from a staff that is kind, warm, and focused. The onsite coffee machine also contributed to this. And the cats. I was encouraged to take breaks, step outside for 5 minutes, play with the cats (a big highlight!), and simply take small steps to ensure that I enjoyed my work to the fullest. Needless to say, Chiang Mai itself is a haven for good food, art, and nature. It is one of the best cities to live in!

There aren't enough words to describe my interpersonal relationships with the Child's Dream team. I was welcomed with open arms and warm smiles, and I leave feeling better about myself and about life! I laughed, I learned, and I developed some beautiful friendships. I know I will be back.

The impact you've had on me is greater than you probably know.



