Temperatures are dropping and at the nearby grocery store Christmas music is playing to get shoppers in a festive mood. Yes, another year is coming to an end and it is time to look back, reflect and realise that most New Year’s resolutions are still only just that. And when I look into the mirror and see a few new wrinkles, I ask myself whether they are from worrying or laughing...or a little bit of both.

Although 2018 was another very successful and rewarding year for Child’s Dream, it was not entirely without challenges and worries.

At the end of every year I feel proud and satisfied with what we have achieved as a team, but at the end of this year I feel even more proud than usual because I know that quite a few of our colleagues had a rather tough year due to health, relationships or family matters. And despite all these personal challenges we were able to pull together as a team, help each other out and continue to implement many projects and serve more and more beneficiaries. Hence, this strong team spirit was celebrated during our 15 year anniversary retreat in November, which was definitely the highlight of the year. The whole team went for four days to relax and enjoy the South of Thailand.

Our Basic Education team constructed an amazing 46 schools, six boarding houses, 21 playgrounds and five water systems. In addition, we expanded our programmes to improve the quality and relevance of education such as our teacher training on both school management and teaching methodology. Our high school scholarship programme selected 331 new students, bringing the total number of currently enrolled scholarship students to 768 in the region.
Our Higher Education team was equally busy. They successfully launched a new undergraduate scholarship programme in Myanmar. Our university scholarship programmes currently support 201 motivated young adults poised to be the future leaders of their communities. They also engaged in four new partnerships. In Myanmar we are now supporting teacher training for ethnic education providers through ‘Rural Indigenous Sustainable Education’ (RISE) and we added an additional academy under our Myanmar Community Academies Programme (MCAP), based in Taunggyi. In Cambodia we are now working with Feeding Dreams to provide hospitality training to marginalised youth. In Laos we launched a new initiative together with ‘Education Zone for Youth’ to build life skills and leadership capacity for our scholarship students.

Our Health team continued to strengthen and expand our school health programmes, now serving about 4,500 students in Myanmar. Our Children’s Medical Fund not only accepted well over 150 new patients to provide life-saving operations, but also upgraded our patients’ safe house in Chiang Mai.

All of this would not have been possible without our amazing administration team that oils the whole Child’s Dream engine and ensures that it runs like a Swiss clock and, of course, our loyal donors who provide the fuel to run the engine.

Despite all the challenges that we have faced this year, I realise that my wrinkles are still mostly from laughter and happiness that Child’s Dream, our colleagues and our donors bring me every day! Thank you very much for all your support and for giving me happy wrinkles!

From The Field

A Small but Growing Space –
Our Social Entrepreneurship Grant (SEG) Programme

We started our social entrepreneurship grant (SEG) programme more than 10 years ago. So far, the programme has successfully supported six new social enterprises including sustainable agriculture training farms, a coffee cooperative and an agriculture app for farmers in Myanmar. We believe that this programme is an impactful tool for community development because it focuses on sustainability, local empowerment, innovation and impact. Last year Marc and Daniel decided to manage this programme themselves in order to explore its potential further. Since 2017 we have received and reviewed 10 applications, of which two were approved and six are pending.

In 2017 we supported the establishment of a sustainable agriculture model farm in Rakhine State, which unfortunately had to be moved due to local unrest. Now the farm is fully functional about 30 minutes outside of Sittwe, a much safer area. Although it remains difficult to convince older farmers to adopt more sustainable farming techniques, the model farms have received a lot of interest from younger farmers and university students, who want to learn more about organic and sustainable methods.

In 2018 Child’s Dream agreed to support two Toyota Commuter vans for the first gap year programme in Thailand called the ‘College of Nature and Love’. The two founders, Pop and Fon, put together an interesting and inspiring one year programme. The participants are exposed to various community based and civil society organisations to learn more about environmental and social issues.
The Basic Education Computer Learning Center (BECLC) has been operating since November 2014 in Xaignabouli Province, Laos. At first, we provided five computer labs to rural high schools. We also provided them with computer training to improve teachers’ computer skills with our computer curriculum once a year. In 2017, we opened three more computer labs in Xaignabouli Province. To help schools run computer labs by themselves, the implementation also included financial management, computer lab maintenance and teaching methodology training. We provided teachers with the opportunity to exchange lessons learned and to identify BECLC management strategies together at a one day workshop after the training.

In conclusion, currently we have eight schools with direct beneficiaries of around 2,500 students and 30 teachers. Furthermore, our teachers are representatives for the Xaignabouli ICT Center, which organises computer curriculum training in other schools to benefit staff, students and communities.
The Laotian university education system does not focus on active and reflective learning. Soft skills, including critical thinking, are not taught sufficiently so students have little chance to further improve these skills.

In May 2018 we met with Bey Kham, the former Head of the Huam Jai Assamak, a youth programme which provides opportunities for young minority students from rural areas to volunteer with local communities in Laos. Together we worked with her to create a small pilot programme called Education Zone for Youth (EzoneY).

EzoneY, started in August 2018, aims to empower youth through training in soft skills, combined with additional volunteer activities. We expect this pilot batch of youth to gain more leadership skills and practical experience so that they can transfer their knowledge and motivation to other youth, including those at the different universities in Laos. This first year pilot programme for EzoneY is training 12 youth to become trainers: eight EzoneY students are Child’s Dream University Scholarship Programme alumni, while an additional four are from Bey Kham’s network of similarly eager youth. We expect to incorporate six of these youth into EzoneY as salaried trainers, who will then train additional groups of youth annually, including our University Scholarship Programme students studying for Laos bachelor degrees.
Key Achievements

CHF 7.1 million were spent on our direct project work (CHF 6.4 million in 2016)

- 300,000 individuals reached by our interventions (250,000 in 2016)
- 46 school buildings built
- 131 patients under the age of 12 were supported in the Children’s Medical Fund
- 659 high school and vocational scholarships in the region (423 in 2016)
- 5.7% administration ratio (5.9% in 2016)
- 201 university scholarships in the region (171 in 2016)
- We built 6 boarding houses, 21 playgrounds, and 5 water systems
- We have dramatically increased our Higher Education initiatives, mainly in Myanmar, and the first annual Alumni Association Programme (AAP) conference was held in Laos.

CHF 7.8 million funds raised in 2017. An increase of 11%! (CHF 7 million in 2016)
Our Impact

**Health**
- Community members received drug prevention and awareness education: 4,845
- Children learned about health and hygiene: 5,953
- Children have received life-saving operations and medical interventions: 1,538

1,538 life-saving operations provided so far  
Target support by year 2020

**Basic Education**
- School buildings built: 247
- High school and vocational scholarships in the region: 659
- Students and teachers in Myanmar receive stationery: 138,599

247 school buildings built so far  
350 target support by year 2020

**Higher Education**
- Trained to become future leaders: 2,849
- Students received vocational training for employment: 6,394
- University scholarships awarded: 427

427 university scholarships awarded so far  
500 target support by year 2020
Despite coming from a very poor family in rural Cambodia, 18 year-old Kong Samphos graduated from high school with admirable marks in the high-stakes Grade 12 National Examinations, which took place in August 2018. Her Grade A scores placed her at the top of her school and among only about 400 students nationwide who were able to achieve outstanding results.

The fifth child among six siblings, Samphos comes from an impoverished family with aging parents earning their livelihood through subsistence farming and barely making ends meet, so her family was unable to afford the expense of further schooling. Under our High School Scholarship Programme, which targets academically strong students from underprivileged backgrounds, Samphos was deservedly awarded one of our full scholarships to support her in finishing the last three grades of upper secondary school. Her remarkable perseverance and drive to learn and overcome barriers was inspirational to her peers and teachers.

Samphos urges young people to take full advantage of learning while they are in school and aim to achieve their best. Never stop seizing opportunities to learn as a lot of knowledge is also obtained outside the classroom. She also emphasises the importance of balancing one’s schedule of working hard and relaxing properly, so that one does not become too stressed or burnt out.

Lastly, she says that the devoted support and motivation she received from family, teachers, charitable NGOs such as Child’s Dream, and friends encouraged her not to let them down. All this helped build her hope and purpose of becoming a great human resource for the country in the future. She believes that one should always be thankful to everyone who has helped someone on their journey.

We hope that her determination and success will serve as a role model for students who follow, especially marginalised children who have to overcome so much more to achieve their goals in life.

Increase Your Impact – Get Your Donation Matched by Microsoft.

Are you working for Microsoft? Then you should know that your employer rewards your donations to Child’s Dream. If you make a donation to us, let Microsoft know and they will match your donation dollars. It’s as easy as it sounds as it all works with Benevity. Our profile is already set up for you.

And do not forget about the following corporations who also offer matching gift programmes to their employees: CA Technologies, Goldman Sachs, Macquarie Group, Thomson Reuters and UBS Asia.
I remember quite vividly the moment, back in 2005, that Manuela was sitting on the floor of our very first office in Chiang Mai. Her main task was trying to make sense and order of our small HR section. We knew Manuela from our time as bankers back in Hong Kong. She had a wealth of experience in Human Resources, including dealing with university students while at HSG in St. Gallen. She also had some time on her hands, so she came to volunteer for us and apparently enjoyed it. Daniel and I realised that growing Child’s Dream into something more powerful needed some skills we both did not have, but Manuela did, so an ideal match led to the enlargement of our management team to three as Manuela started with us officially at the beginning of 2007 in the role of Chief Operating Officer. Now 12 years later, and all of us with a few more grey hairs, an era in Child’s Dream comes to an end with the early retirement of our colleague. During her time with us, she has not only contributed greatly to the success and growth of the organisation, but also, being the oldest in the team, added tremendous value and stability to Child’s Dream. I can’t count how many younger staff she has coached, how many university students she has mentored and how many young careers she has guided. For Daniel and me, Manuela has been a pillar of support, helping us to manage difficult situations successfully.

Manuela, Child’s Dream would not be the organisation it is today without your unconditional and indispensable support and for this, Daniel and I and the entire regional team want to express our deepest gratitude. We will definitely miss your triple sneezing and your heartfelt laughter. Your leaving is not good-bye, but merely a ‘see you later, alligator’. We all wish you an exciting and healthy new chapter in life. We are going to miss you! See you around, my friend.

Marc T. Jenni
Co-Founder & Head Operations

Child’s Dream Gives Three Million Dollar Boost to Education in Laos

On 17 September 2018, we committed yet another USD three million towards developing the education sector in Laos through a three-year project operation until 31 July 2021 – Broadening Access of Sustainable Education. This is already the fourth such three-year cycle which was agreed upon by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education and Sports. Our aim to also going forward to improve educational standards in 41 marginalised districts across four provinces. The focus will continue on developing educational infrastructure to increase access and decrease out-of-school children. This is strengthened by supplementary programmes to enhance the quality and environment of schools. Further learning opportunities are also supported by offering high school and university scholarships to highly capable and motivated youth so as to achieve a complete cycle of education.

As the work of Child’s Dream continues, we approach the end of 2018 with more wonderful stories and five-star reviews contributed by our donors, partners, volunteers and friends....recognising us once again, through GreatNonprofits, as a leading NGO in fulfilling our mission. This reinforces the steadfast support we see and feel towards our commitment to creating ripples of positive changes in the lives and well-being of the most vulnerable. The recognition and appreciation foster in us the hope that equality and sustainability are achievable. We thank you for sharing your experiences with us. Read more inspiring stories about us and share your own story here: https://greatnonprofits.org/org/childs-dream-foundation