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### FROM THE FOUNDERS

By Daniel Marco Siegfried  
Managing Director Programmes-  
Co-Founder

## The New Education Landscape in Myanmar

It has been more than a year since the military coup in Myanmar took place, which not only failed, but also left the country and its economy in ruins. According to the most recent Democracy Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Myanmar is second last from the bottom, squeezed between Afghanistan (last) and North Korea (3rd last). Besides the human tragedy of 1,600 extrajudicial killings, 12,000 unlawful arrests and over half a million internal refugees, the country's vital infrastructure is also crumbling. Our colleagues in Yangon face daily

power cuts of up to 12 hours and are struggling to stay online and, more importantly, safe.

But how is our work impacted by all of this? Due to the country-wide civil disobedience movement, most government services are not functioning well or at all. This includes government schools and universities, which are now controlled by the military junta. Although many schools are open, only a few teachers and students loyal to, or forced by, the military are attending. Child's Dream stopped all support of the government education system such as school constructions as well as high school and university scholarships.

On the other hand, our many non-formal higher education programmes have seen a huge increase in demand by youth who cannot continue their formal education elsewhere. Schools run by education departments of ethnic organisations, which have been running parallel education systems to the government for years, are also having substantially higher enrolments. Some high schools under ethnic control have also accepted more boarding students to increase the reach. We work closely with our existing, but also new, education partners to meet this increased demand, whenever possible paying great attention to the security of the teachers and students.

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We are also looking at providing educational support to children and youth who are currently being displaced by the various active conflicts in the country. We hope that, over the course of the next few months, Child's Dream can gradually redirect our support from 'Humanitarian Relief' to 'Education in Emergencies' as more international relief organisations get access to the displaced population and can take over from us.

Due to security concerns and in order to meet the increasing demand, many higher education providers switched to run classes online, but with more frequent power and internet cuts, this option is becoming less feasible. Another big challenge is that non-formal and ethnic education is mostly not officially accredited and internationally recognised. This means that graduates cannot easily continue their education overseas, which is aspired by many and supported by university scholarship programmes like ours. Also here, we have plans to build alternative educational pathways to allow more students to access tertiary education.

But what can education achieve under these adverse circumstances? Myanmar is known for its decade-long ethnic conflicts, but because of the recent coup and its overwhelming rejection, never before has there been so much understanding and unity among the various ethnic groups, including the ethnic Bamar majority. Education is vital, not only to further strengthen this fragile bond, but also for the peaceful and inclusive nation building in the hopefully near future.



## THAILAND

By Nuntaporn (Nam)

# Supporting Out of School Migrant Children in Thailand

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The Ministry of Education and Migrant Working Group estimates that of the 350,000 migrant children currently living in Thailand, over 200,000 are out of school. Over the past two years, the Out of School Children (OOSC) Enrollment Taskforce team has worked to keep at-risk children in school and help enroll out-of-school children into a school that meet their needs. The team has successfully enrolled and retained 170 out-of-school children in 2020 and 2021. For the 2022-2023 academic year, with the support of Child's Dream Foundation and other donors, the OOSC Taskforce team plans to enroll another 130 out-of-school children into 12 Thai Royal Government schools.

The OOSC team has found that the first year of school tends to pose many barriers for out-of-school migrant children. Once they have completed their first year, they are much more likely to stay enrolled in school. The critical first year requires a lot of support to help the children and their parents obtain required

legal documentation and complete all enrollment forms. The OOSC team provides significant follow-up support throughout the year, and have found substantially less support is needed in future years. The team creates contracts with students' parents to co-support educational costs including transportation, uniforms, and school fees. They also collaborate with other partner organisations that support children's backpacks, shoes, uniforms, and transportation costs in order to enroll as many children as possible.

Additionally, the OOSC Taskforce team plans to organise child safeguarding and socio-emotional trainings, produce awareness-raising materials, and create enrollment process banners in multiple languages. The team believes that getting accurate information to migrant communities will have a lasting impact.

Child's Dream is delighted to partner with the OOSC Enrollment Taskforce team. We share the belief that, by providing access to education, we are giving children a future and hope for a self-sufficient life. For migrant out-of-school children, being enrolled in school holistically improves their lives and keeps them away from situations that increase their vulnerability.



## MYANMAR

By Ni Thaw and Ana

# Emergency Support of Alen Bum IDP High School in Myanmar

Access to education is extremely challenging in the current political climate in Myanmar. For example, a young girl named N-yat Nu Pan from Putao (Northern Kachin Land) faced a long journey to continue her schooling at Alen Bum IDP High School. With the help of her family, she had to pass multiple Myanmar military checkpoints to reach the school. The journey took two days, including overnight stops. Due to the deployment of Myanmar military soldiers at checkpoints along the road, she experienced fear and intimidation on her journey to access education.

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After the Myanmar military seized the country's power in February 2021, the closure of government schools and the civil disobedience movement within government mainstream education have led

to a massive influx of students in the schools of areas controlled by ethnic organisations. In the Kachin area, the Alen Bum IDP High School also received an increased number of students from Grade 6 to Grade 11.

Child's Dream and Alen Bum IDP High School signed a partnership agreement supporting Education in Emergency (EiE) needs for the 2021-2022 academic year. The support includes food supplies for over 1,500 students, partial stipends for 42 volunteer teachers, educational materials for teachers and students, and basic medical supplies for the students in the school clinic. This partnership addresses the needs of the internally displaced person (IDP) children from conflict-affected areas in Myanmar. Child's Dream Foundation stands in solidarity with these marginalized children who face multiple challenges to access education in their local area.



## CAMBODIA

By Aidan McAuliffe

# Navigating Rivers, Dirt Roads, and Linguistic Obstacles in North-Eastern Cambodia

## ***Car. Boat. Motorcycle. Foot.***

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Foot.

That's how you reach the Kavet community in the most north-eastern reaches of Cambodia. Located on the edge of Virachey National Park, this indigenous community is often considered the most remote and impoverished community in the country. Not only is it bound by its geographical confines when it comes to accessing the most fundamental services, but its people must also overcome linguistic barriers. Communicating in their mother tongue, Kavet, instead of the national language, Khmer, severely limits their educational and employment opportunities.

For the past 15 years, our partner NTFP (Non-Timber Forest Products) in Ratanakiri Province, has been leading the Kavet Literacy and Non-Formal Education Programme in a bid to provide children and youth from the 3,000-strong community with more functional

Khmer language skills. Upon completion of the three-year programme, implemented by 38 volunteer teachers in six remote villages, the students are able to attend government schools and thus will have more pathways to a brighter future.

While there is a strong focus on gearing the students towards a high level of proficiency in the Khmer language, there is a parallel effort placed on preserving the Kavet language itself. Until about 20 years ago, there was no written form of this language, spoken by about 30,000 people in Cambodia. NTFP has sought to nurture the Kavet language and culture through story-telling activities, publishing books, and creating pieces of art. The initiative has been recognised by UNESCO as a model mother-tongue-based bilingual education programme.

We are proud to support NTFP and the Kavet community as they navigate rivers, dirt roads, and linguistic obstacles on a journey towards inclusion and opportunity.



## LAO PDR

By Shane Rabideau

# Building Trust and Communities in Lao PDR

On 18 February we celebrated the official signing of our latest memorandum of understanding with the Lao PRD Ministry of Education (MoE). It's this very agreement with the Laotian government that allows our work to continue in some of the most underprivileged communities in Southeast Asia.

From our first school building project in 2006 to 164 schools today, our track record has developed trust with not only the MoE, but with many communities as well. This trust continues to play an important role in expanding and developing our projects and programmes.

As of 2021, our completed infrastructure projects total 293 between school buildings, boarding houses, computer labs and water systems throughout the provinces of Champasak, Savannakhet, Xaignanbouli and Luang Prabang. Our scholarship programmes have awarded 878 high school and vocational students with scholarships, as well as 209 university students. Key partnerships with five organisations in the country have extended our reach and have been pivotal in driving sustainable development goals countrywide.

Our interventions are becoming better understood and embraced as schools and

communities become more responsive to our efforts. Behaviours and attitudes towards education and school management are slowly changing along with a sense of ownership and pride and a shift towards sustainable practices.

With the Lao PDR MoE on our side and in full support of our mission, our projects, programmes and partnerships will continue to grow, expand and develop. Our vision of empowered people reshaping their community will become a reality as our beneficiaries move towards a more sustainable future.

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# Swiss Ambassador Visits Ban Na Ma Eun Border School



In celebration of the 90th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Switzerland, Helene Budliger Artieda, Ambassador of Switzerland to Thailand, joined by Mr. Chakri Srichawana, former Ambassador of Thailand to Switzerland, visited the Ban Na Ma Eun Border School in Chiang Mai Province on 22 February 2022. The ambassadors made this trip to observe the Mother Tongue Based – Bi and Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) run by The Foundation for Applied Linguistics (FAL), one of our supported initiatives helping the educational development of ethnic children in Thailand. We look forward to working with them to continue the MTB-MLE education for ethnic Thai children to participate in the mainstream education programme.



*Assistant Professor Wanna Tienmee, FAL Director, explaining the MTB-MLE programme.*



*Vorayan Bunarat, Chiang Mai Vice Governor and the Commander of the Border Patrol Police Division 33 welcome Helene Budliger Artieda, Ambassador of Switzerland to Thailand at the Ban Na Ma Eun Border School ground.*





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## Child's Dream Annual Workshop 2021



“We are a very human organization; we are a family” were the words uttered by our co-founder, Marc Jenni, at the end of our annual workshop. This humanity and kinship could be felt across the digital platforms as we engaged in open, honest and productive discussions and activities for three days across three countries. We celebrated our achievements and acknowledged our challenges, as well as getting to unleash our creativity by producing nine very unique Christmas stories! On day three, each office group let their hair down and spent time together, away from their desks. After another challenging year, it was important to finish the year with smiles and laughter, and a fervent hope that our next workshop will be face-to-face.



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