



Child's Dream

A charity organization supporting children in need

www.childsdream.org



Our objectives

- To stop migration of Burmese 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

June 2004

Child's Dream is gearing up!

Immediately after the return from our global fundraising and 'family praising' trip, it hit us at once! We need more helping hands! Not only because the trip was so successful and offered many new interesting perspectives, but also because the increasing office tasks and the numerous current projects buried us with work. The result: We have been living in Thailand for almost a year now and have never been to the beach, unbelievable for two addicted divers! The solution: Replacing our daily Thai lesson by hiring a local Thai office assistant. This will not only ease our workload, but also give us the chance to practise and improve our Thai language skills.

Welcome Tai

Through revealing our intention to some projects we support, it took only a matter of days until we found a suitable, almost perfect, candidate. Her name is Charuwan Phaisantham, simply nick-named Tai - which has to be pronounced in a falling tone in order to become the nickname's correct meaning 'Rabbit'. If pronounced in a low tone, the meaning changes to 'to die', and this we definitely don't want to happen. After her being with Child's Dream only three weeks, we now ask ourselves, how we ever managed without her. She just turned 25 and, despite her age, possesses valuable skills and an extensive NGO-network built up during her former work with 'Childlife' in Mae Sai. And just the other day, while buying a generator and calculating how many watts and volts are needed, her studies in Physics came in quite handy too. Her role in Child's Dream is very similar to ours, except for the fundraising part.



Did you know that...

Thai parents often only pay for the higher studies of the first-born child, who in return has to support the studies of his/her younger siblings?!

Fundraising News

Besides hiring Tai, we are also very pleased to have received funding in the amount of USD 13,000 from the Swiss Embassy in Bangkok for the OPC project. Markus Kohler from the Swiss Embassy embarked on a two-day journey with us to conduct a due diligence on our work in order to make a recommendation to the Swiss government in Berne. At the same time, he could check on the well-being of the only farang (foreigner in Thai) prisoner in Mae Hong Son, who happens to be Swiss. Many thanks in particular to Mr. Christian Fotsch, Minister Counselor, and his team for supporting us in our quest to help Burmese migrant and refugee children.

Did you know that...

last year 60 Swiss nationals died in Thailand?! Major cause of death is motorbike accidents followed by heart attacks (typically in and around Thailand's entertainment areas).



Marc after his motorbike accident. Picture taken in public toilets in Mae Hong Song airport.

As reported in our previous newsletter, we are proud beneficiaries of the UBS DAYE (Donate As You Earn) Scheme in Singapore, with which UBS takes on responsibilities towards the community. We were overwhelmed by the amount raised during the scheme's launching period. The scheme will last until the end of the year, when UBS will double the collected amount.

The goal of our fundraising trip to Europe and Singapore was not only to raise money, but also to make people aware of and treasure their privileged lives. We had the chance to meet many interesting people from various service clubs (Rotary and Lions), who share our passion. A charity dinner held at the Swiss Club Singapore was very well received, followed by a 'Power Lunch Talk' to UBS Singapore's staff members.



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To further spread the word, we were thrilled to be invited to publish an article about our motivations for establishing Child's Dream in Marc Faber's monthly 'The Gloom, Boom & Doom Report'. The article titled 'How do we reach happiness?' has caught a lot of attention, especially in the States. The article can be downloaded from our website under 'Library'.

Making other people's dream come true

In Thailand, behind the seven mountains we did not find Snow White but Benjamin, a Burmese from a long-neck Karen tribe. He also prefers a hearty, home-made cigar rather than a poisonous apple. There in the misty mountains high above Mae Hong Son, Child's Dream is building a small school for Benjamin to teach English. Already about 40 children from various ethnic minorities have registered to participate.



Unfinished school in Tomato village

Before the construction could begin, we first had to build a small drive-way to his hut in order to deliver and store the material needed for the building. Given the steep, curvy road, no construction shop dares to send their old Hino trucks to deliver stones, bricks, etc. Therefore, the school is built mostly from local wood and is about half-finished. We expect the school to be ready within the next 4-6 weeks. As the construction proceeds well, Benjamin keeps telling us with shiny eyes that his dream finally comes true. The objective is to enable Benjamin to pass on his good English skills to many children, which in turn will increase their chances to finding a job and making a living in Thailand. In addition, it will improve their social status and acceptance among Thai nationals.

Did you know that...

the Burmese army condones systematic rape of young women as a "weapon of war"?!

School and Shelter for OPC



Kitchen of the new OPC school

Opportunities for Poor Children (OPC) provides support for unrecognised refugee children, mostly Shans, in Mae Hong Son. Currently, OPC operates a very basic unfinished shelter and offers education and protec-

tion for about 20 children. The majority of these children are girls, as OPC realises that girls are more vulnerable to exploitation, especially child prostitution, than boys. Since our first visit in December 2003, we have visited OPC at least 10 times to supervise the construction of the two 112m² buildings. Even though the flight to Mae Hong Son takes only about 30 minutes, it sometimes feels like hours, especially when the tiny propeller plane is at the mercy of the notoriously strong winds over the mountains between Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son. Quite frequently, tourists have to hastily look for the airsickness bag in the seat pocket in front of them. But each time we see the progress made at the two buildings, the troubling moments in the air are quickly forgotten. The lemon-yellow buildings with their bright blue roofs are quite an eye catcher. Both buildings are complete except for the electric & water installations. We decided to buy most of the interior equipment in Chiang

Mai and send it to OPC in Mae Hong Son. Not only is the quality better in Chiang Mai, but the cost including transportation will also be lower. During one of our recent visits, we were accompanied by two representatives from 'Hope for



New OPC school is almost finished

Life', who have informally agreed to cover the OPC's running costs. It is expected that Kham Chuen, the leader of OPC, will move to the new location within the next month and take on more children in need.

Did you know that...

in Burma you buy iron wire in kilo and not in meters?!

School in Yabauyaya village

Towering above the village, the view from the new school is spectacular with the countless hills of the Shan state, Burma's biggest state, on the horizon. Thanks to Pi Ngaow's, the leader of Childlife, tireless efforts to bringing the two local govern-



This basic school will accommodate 40 kids

ments of Mae Sai (Thailand) and Tachilek (Burma) together to fight human trafficking and child exploitation, Child's Dream was able to receive an almost historical approval to build this school. After talking to Worldvision's team in Tachilek, who will run the school within Burma, we realized how unique this school is. Worldvision has been operative



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in Burma for many years and remains one of the few, which are tolerated by the Burmese military government. The school is now finished and over the last two weeks, a German carpenter volunteer instructed the local villagers how to assemble the desks and chairs. Worldvision has recently asked for the permission to stage an official opening ceremony from the Tachilek government. It is planned to invite representatives from both governments as well as numerous NGOs. Worldvision will decide on the exact date as they are in the position to evaluate the security angle. Many families from villages far away heard about this school for minorities and have traveled great distances in order to enrol their children. Our main objective is to stop children from crossing the border to beg for money. Once over the border, organized drug and prostitution rings await them.

Did you know that...

in Burma, the Singapore dollar is the preferred currency?! No wonder, as Singapore is still the single largest investor in Burma despite American and European sanctions!

Shelter for Yabauyaya village

Since the first school term in the Yabauyaya village will start soon, we are starting to work on the next project in the very same village. Some of the children, who will attend school, do not have a home in the village it-



The Yabauyaya team with representatives from Childlife, Worldvision, Hope for Life and Child's Dream

self. Some are orphans, others street children whose parents vanished. For these children, we intend to build a little shelter in the coming months in order to give them a home. But before we start building the shelter, we want to make sure that the new school is running smoothly and effectively. So please allow us some time to present you with a result here. We will keep you posted.

Vocational training center in Chiang Rai province

Our previous projects in and around Mae Sai in the Chiang Rai province have been focusing on education and health care for younger street children. Many times we have been asked what will happen to these kids when they finish their basic education. It seems that our friends from 'Hope for Life' did ask themselves the same question and over the last couple of months they have put together a plan to build a vocational training centre somewhere between Chiang Rai and Mae Sai. The goal is to provide older street children and less-privileged teenagers, who have completed

their school education, a real chance for integration into the community by allowing them to join a practical experience-oriented education. After this education, teenagers should be in the position to make a living and to further develop their professional perspectives. This vocational training centre will offer three apprenticeship programmes in cooperation with SES-Bonn (Senior Expert Service):

- 1) Baker apprenticeship
- 2) Mechanic apprenticeship
- 3) Carpenter apprenticeship

In addition, the vocational training will provide basic medical education to project staff and volunteers. Child's Dream is interested in supporting 'Hope for Life' and its vocational training centre by providing the infrastructure / tools needed for the three training centres. This project is mainly sponsored by 'Landesstiftung Baden-Wuerttemberg' (German State Baden-Wuerttemberg).

Water treatment system for Childlife

This project was completed a couple of months ago. Ever since, the 70 street children have enjoyed clean and safe drinking water for the first time in their lives. The newly opened shower rooms turn out to be very popular, not only for taking a shower, but also to stage water battles. According to calculations from Chiang Mai University, the daily water consumption should be about 4'000 liters, but the children use much more water, indicating that this installation is a success. The hygiene standard has dramatically risen and the rashes have started to disappear.

Did you know that...

Bangkok will host the 15th International HIV/AIDS Conference next month?! Unfortunately, many HIV-positive guests were asked to stay in separate rooms and eat their meals apart from other hotel guests.

This newsletter is just a snapshot of our work, but we hope it was informative and a somewhat entertaining read. However, in order to better understand what is going on in our lives, we encourage you to visit us in Chiang Mai. We are most happy to bring our world a bit closer to you.

Cheers,

Marc Tai Daniel

