I remember from my banking days 20 years ago, the countless discussions about whether to align the organisation according to sectors or geographical location. The result was often a complex and sometimes confusing matrix structure. Child’s Dream actually had the same dilemma until recently.
In September 2009 we introduced our focus groups: Basic Education, Higher Education, and Health. Colleagues in our offices in Chiang Mai, Siem Reap and later Yangon were assigned to one of these focus groups and reported to their functional supervisors in the Chiang Mai office. As our teams in Siem Reap and Yangon needed local supervision, we later appointed a country director for Myanmar and Cambodia. This structure was ideal during the build-up and high growth phase of Child’s Dream because it allowed for a lot of hands-on capacity building and knowledge transfer from our more experienced colleagues based in Chiang Mai to our staff in these two locations. However, as our offices in Cambodia and Myanmar grew, this matrix structure became increasingly complex and led to confusion among the employees.

In December 2019, Marc and I started to work with the management team to discuss a new structure with the objectives of empowering our local offices, reducing complexity in reporting lines, increasing synergies among teams in each location, developing more customised country-specific strategies and better utilising the organisation’s vast knowledge, experience and competencies. We had planned for a multi-day workshop with our management team facilitated by an external expert. Unfortunately, since covid-19 and the resulting travel restrictions made a physical meeting impossible, we organised a series of online video meetings until the most suitable structure was defined.

As of 17 August 2020, Child’s Dream is structured according to three geographical areas with a respective country director in each: Myanmar with our office in Yangon under the leadership of Dr. Tint Maw; Cambodia with our office in Siem Reap under the leadership of Mr. Yem Khlok; and Thailand and Laos with our office in Chiang Mai under the leadership of Ms. Charuwan Phaisantham (Tai). These three offices and staff are responsible for the implementation of our strategies in their respective countries. If needed, they are supported by staff with functional and technical expertise based in our regional HQ in Chiang Mai.

Some initial normal worries and uncertainties among staff has given way to a new excitement and to an enhanced team spirit and we already see many benefits from the new structure. Marc and I are sure that this structure will serve us well during the next phase of more matured growth. Time has definitely left its mark both on the organisation and its founders, which can be observed among other things from Marc’s graying hair and my receding hairline. However, we do not focus too much on the physical marks like our hair challenges, but a lot more on the realisation of the impact on our beneficiaries that we have already accomplished. We are as motivated as ever and something tells me that we are just getting started.
As of 22 August, our four countries combined had only 4,126 covid-19 reported cases and 64 covid-19 reported deaths (Thailand 3,390 cases with 58 deaths; Myanmar 441 cases with 6 deaths; Cambodia 273 cases with 0 deaths; and Laos 22 cases with 0 deaths) since the start of the pandemic.

However, we now know that managing the corona pandemic is a balancing act between people’s health and the economy; our countries made it clear that the people’s health has the higher priority. As a result, the impact on the economies has been devastating. Millions of migrant workers, day labourers and workers from low-income families have lost their jobs, mostly in the construction, tourism and manufacturing industries. Tourist hotspots like Phuket, Koh Samui and Siem Reap have become ghost towns. The World Bank predicts that, in Thailand alone, the number of economically insecure (those living on less than USD 5.5 per day) will double to 9.7 million in Q2 2020. Although the governments have put together some relief packages, they do not cover the most vulnerable people like migrant workers, informal workers, and slum and squatter families that moved into urban areas to seek day labouring jobs.

Although Child’s Dream continues to support our existing health and education projects and programmes during the pandemic, we saw a temporary need and opportunity for us to selectively work with our partners to reach these at risk families. The relief responses consist of the provision of food and protective materials such as soap, face masks and hand sanitizers, combined with awareness campaigns for covid-19 protection. Here are a couple of our relief responses:

1. Distribution of 1,500 relief bags with rice, canned fish, instant noodles and medicines in affected Burmese migrant communities with support from DKHS Thailand and in collaboration with Shan Youth Power and BEAM
2. Distribution of 500 relief bags with rice, onions, oil, canned fish, instant noodles, face masks and soap to affected families in slum areas of Dagon Seikan Township in Yangon in collaboration with Community Care Myanmar
3. Distribution of 669 bottles (500ml) and 228 bottles (4000ml) of hand sanitizers for 22 schools in Xaignabouli Province in Laos with 6,211 students to prepare for their reopening
4. Distribution of 20,000 soap bars and 17,000...
face masks, as well as the provision of rice seeds, to 150 families in three districts in Siem Reap province with support from PG Impact Investment Foundation and in collaboration with Cambodian Community Dream Organisation.

In addition thanks to the generous support of the Leopold Bachmann Stiftung, we were also able to collaborate with our partners, the Migrant Educational Coordination Center (MECC) and Teacher Focus Myanmar, in Mae Sot along the Thai – Myanmar border to transition the schooling of almost 10,000 Burmese migrant children to home-based education as their migrant learning centers were not allowed to open. Without this temporary transition many migrant students would have dropped out and become child labourers.

We will continue to evaluate the situation, especially in vulnerable communities, and to seek partnerships to provide relief such as food, hygiene materials and materials to rebuild their livelihoods.

Thank you to the dedicated donors that supported these relief responses.
Ambassadors Visit CD

Swiss Ambassador, Helene Budliger Artieda, together with a group of lady Ambassadors to Thailand from Turkey, Kazakhstan, Austria, Egypt, Brazil, India and Columbia, visited our Child’s Dream Headquarters in Chiang Mai during their familiarisation tour. Thank you so much for visiting us! It means a lot to us to have this opportunity to talk about our work.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Gee (ten years) and Por (five years) on reaching a service milestone with Child’s Dream! Thank you both for your contributions and for being valuable members of the team!

Waste Segregation, Recycling and Composting Training

We at Child’s Dream strive to cut back on throw away plastic products as much as possible. On 26 August, we held a training session on waste segregation and management to raise awareness among CD staff members. Aside from 4Rs (refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle), we also discussed different corrective activities and practices in daily life that promote sustainable living.