



# Child's Dream

A charity organization supporting children in need

[www.childsdream.org](http://www.childsdream.org)



## Our objectives

- To stop migration of 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

December 2004

Sir Winston Churchill once said:

**'We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.'**

We chose this quote to start our Christmas Newsletter because it truly reflects on our passing year with Child's Dream.

A bit more than a year ago, we established Child's Dream - dreaming of a better world for the many children in need. Abandoning our safety nets and comfort zones in order to follow our dreams was a risk worth taking. To be able to rediscover ourselves, meet very interesting people, most of whom deserve the Nobel Peace Prize, and not to forget the hearty smiles from the children made up more than enough for the uncertainty and anxiety.



It is time to say 'thank you' to all of you, who believed in us and our idea and actively supported us in our quest. It is not just the financial support we value, but also the moral support and the trust you put into us. Together we developed Child's Dream into a reputable and effective organization, which is able to efficiently create a positive impact on many lives.

Since its establishment on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2003, Child's Dream completed three schools, two shelters, one water treatment system, one shower house and the equipping of a vocational training center. We are currently working on the realization of three other projects, while an additional five are in the

planning stage. In this newsletter, we would like to highlight one particular project, which we are currently realizing and which touched our hearts immensely.

### Clothing for children in two refugee camps

When we talk to friends, colleagues and donors about the nine refugee camps along the Thai - Burmese border, their first reaction normally is 'What!? Refugee camps in Thailand!?!'. Well, of course they appear neither in vacation brochures nor on the website of the Tourist Authority of Thailand.

The nine refugee camps provide shelter to approximately 150,000 refugees originating from the Karen, Karenni, Tenasserim and Mon States within Burma. The refugees all have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in Thailand. Apart from these official refugees, Thailand houses at least another one million illegal refugees also called migrant people. Life in these refugee camps is both physically difficult and emotionally challenging. About two months ago, we were approached by WEAVE, an organization empowering indigenous women and children and supporting their basic needs. WEAVE was desperately looking for additional supporters for two refugee camps in the Mae Hong Son province. The unexpected discontinuation of monetary support from a big international NGO has caused a real state of emergency. WEAVE was aware that it would require many NGOs and an excellent cooperation in order to make up for this unexpected shortfall.



Since refugees in these camps are generally not allowed to work, they are completely dependent on external support from NGOs and foreign government agencies. With the lack of funding, the health and sanitation situation has deteriorated dramatically causing



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a threat especially to young children. Another reason for the children's worsening health situation is the lack of proper clothing. With the approaching cold season, when temperatures can drop to around 5-10 degrees in the mountains of Mae Hong Son, it is also crucial to supply them with warmer clothing such as jumpers, jackets, shoes and long trousers.

In October, we visited together with Marc's parents the bigger of the two refugee camps in Mae Hong Son to get a personal impression of the situation there. After obtaining the required permission from the Ministry of Interior, for which we had to apply well in advance, we drove by 4WD pick-up truck through various checkpoints and incredibly rough terrain to reach the camp's main gate.



Marc's mother described the way leading to the camp as 'the road to hell'. Our first impression of the camp's inside was a long human queue at a place called 'go-down', which is a large, dusty dirt field. It is here, where the camp's 19,000 inhabitants obtain their ration of rice (0.5kg per day per person), beans, salt, water and charcoal from the Burmese Border Consortium (BBC). It was a picture we have had previously only seen in newspapers. Following a narrow path packed with small bamboo huts on both sides, we reached one of the 23 nursery schools in this camp, where we were greeted by 300 curious eyeballs belonging to the youngest refugees. Overwhelmed by our feelings, the five of us stood there with teary eyes on a moldy bamboo floor surrounded by kids. Without saying a word, all of us instantly knew; we have to help!

Stretching our concept, Child's Dream has decided to take up some of these responsibilities. We are therefore providing basic clothing to approx. 2,700 children aged



between 2.8 and 5 years living in two refugee camps called Ban Kwai/Nai Soi and Ban Mae Surin. We estimate the cost to be approx. BHT 300 (or USD 7.5) per child.

We will oversee the distribution of the first patch of cloths in early December. A very special 'thank-you' to our friends in Australia.

### A different vacation

Besides making a monetary contribution, we also look for less-conventional ways to help us in our quest.

It is our goal not only to help the underprivileged children in the Mekong Sub-Region, but also to encourage people from the developed world to take a more active role, which helps them to put the world into a different perspective.

This is exactly what five friends and ex-colleagues from Switzerland had in mind when they came to visit us last October. We didn't have to think too hard to come up with an ideal task, because every time we visited the Childlife (or Baan Nana) site in Mae Sai, the grey and sad appearance of the new shower house struck us.

On a perfect sunny 1st October, armed with brushes in all sizes and shapes, huge buckets of paint, a couple of water melons, soft drinks and lots of motivation, we made our way through the rice fields to the Baan Nana site. As usual, the children greeted us with their hearty smiles and were ready to help us carrying the buckets and the food.

At first, the painting techniques applied couldn't have been more different. The kids simply used their hands, arms, feet or any other body part that might help them to complete their task. Not getting anywhere with our brushes, we quickly adopted the kids' technique. After about 3 hours and getting completely covered in color, we admired the pieces of art. In the afternoon, everybody was ready for a thorough cleansing at a waterfall close-by.



Refreshed, we started the next task: cooking 'green curry chicken' for 80 really hungry kids. The 8kg chicken, 2kg fresh chilli, 8kg Thai eggplants and other veggies, 12l coconut milk and 2kg curry paste were quickly transformed into a delicious curry. Some kids queued four times. With our stomachs full, we were ready for the dancing, playing games and singing that followed until deep into the night.

We encourage you to visit us and to spend some time with us. A few days on a project will certainly be a unique experience, which could change one's perspective and serve as a reminder of true human values.

**'If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.'**

*The Dalai Lama*

We wish you and your family all the best, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May all your dreams and wishes come true.

**The Child's Dream Team**