



# NEWS FROM DEPDC

Development And Education Program For  
Communities And Daughters

ISSUE 4 :: JULY 2004

DEPDC

P.O. Box 10

Mae Sai

Chiang Rai 57130

Thailand

Tel +66 (0)53 733 186,

+66 (0)53 642 599

Fax +66 (0)53 642 415

www.depdc.org

info@depdc.org



The Mekong Youth Net students started their training in April.

## THE MEKONG YOUTH NET PROJECT- THE ARRIVAL OF THE GIRLS

The Mekong Youth Net Program is one of the most current projects running at DEPDC consisting of a group of youth leaders who are network against human trafficking in the Mekong Region. The aim of the project is to fund internship and training for 12 young women for one year (3 from each of the four Sub-regions) between the age 18-25 in children's rights issues, leadership skills community development, health education HIV/AIDS education, training in the social and political problems of the Mekong-Sub-region, the different ethnic cultures of their region and the problem facing indigenous people (issues relating to poverty, health, nationality etc) and also creating a network for the future.

Upon returning to their home regions, the youth leaders will serve as links between the communities, GO's and NGO's working against human trafficking. They will share the experiences of child victims of trafficking within their own communities and educate villages in the consequences of sending children across borders to work. When the girls return to their home countries they will be qualified to educate their community about the plethora of issues they have learned throughout the year. The overall objective of the Mekong Youth Net is to respond to the need of community structure in villages. The project is funded by the Open Society Institute, USA.

For quite some time, the Mekong Youth Net Project had been preparing for the arrival of the youths from the Mekong Region and finally the day had arrived. On the 30th March the girls from Myanmar, Laos, and

Thailand made their presence at DEPDC. Three girls from Lao arrived named: Sunii, Sengtjan and Sukmanii, three girls from Myanmar called Ankanaa, Anuntje, Darunii, three girls from Thailand called Sang Nuan, Fongtip and Unthip, were all excited about starting their training at DEPDC. A welcoming party was organized for the girls so that they could get familiarized with the other children at DEPDC. After the sun had gone down, hoards of laughter were exchanged when the children played games together and the girls managed to get acquainted with each other.

At the beginning everything seemed different for the girls to get used to the way of life at DEPDC. There were a lot of things to learn every day and the girls felt home sick at times. Once they got to know their way at the centre, things started to run better and the girls felt more and more at home.

Now they have settled in and many have made friends with the girls from DEPDC. At times, it is tough for the girls to learn about the realities about life for example when discussing about the amount of people dying of AIDS or the growing numbers of victims of human trafficking. However, the girls are filled with enthusiasm and willpower and have made good progress in their studies.

On Monday the 17th May 3 girls from China (Yunnan Province) Welinhai, Khankham and Oei, joined the rest of the Mekong Youth Net Project. Now all the girls have come together from the four Sub-regions. The Mekong Youth Net Project is a very effective way to take preventive action against human trafficking and educate youths about leadership skills community development, HIV/AIDS education and training in the social and political problems of the Mekong-Sub-region, which is greatly needed in South-East Asia today. ■

## FAREWELL PARTY

Saturday the 21 of February was a very important day for DEPDC. The day had arrived to celebrate the departure of two volunteers: Emma and Kirsten; Emma volunteering since two years back and Kirsten for three months at DEPDC in Mae Sai. The day was filled with a special atmosphere; laughter and tears, joy and sorrow was seen, heard and felt in every corner of the organisation. At dusk, both the staff and children from Doi Luang and Mae Sai had gathered together at the main area of new school being built at DEPDC in Mae Sai. The party was opened by Sompop's speech, which contained many grateful, beautiful and blessing words to both of the volunteers. The speech was followed by a video clip created by Sompop containing goodbyes, kisses and laughter from the children living at DEPDC. 'We will never forget you' was one of the main messages heard from the kids throughout.

Soon it was time for dance pieces that children from Mae Sai and Doi Luang had prepared for a long time in advance. The girls from both Doi Luang and Mae Sai danced away beautifully with their colorful dresses shimmering in yellow, blue and ivory. Not only did we have the chance to see traditional Northern Thai dance but also a modern piece of disco dance made by three girls from Mae Sai. Also, the younger girls from Mae Sai had prepared a dance dressed as rabbits which charmed the whole audience. A couple of boys from Mae Sai gave a hilarious sketch which made everybody burst into great laughter. Manon, the volunteer taking Emma's place for the future had prepared a song for Emma and all the volunteers from Mae Sai, Mae Salong and Doi Luang participated as well dancing and singing both in Thai and in English. The whole crowd was silenced by a religious ceremony for the two volunteers, giving them blessings and spiritual guidance for the future.

The farewell party was an unforgettable evening for everybody because of the good energy that surrounded the place and most important of all, saying farewell to two very special individuals; Emma and Kirsten. Their good spirit will remain here among us and will never be forgotten. Good luck for both of you. BL ■



Top: Emma  
Bottom: Kirsten

## SOMPOP'S WORD



**SA WAT DEE KLAB**

It is not that long ago that you received the last DEPDC newsletter but I'm proud to tell you that in the meanwhile a lot of positive things have happened. Since the first week of April DEPDC is actually running the Mekong Youth Net Program. In this project we are training twelve young, strong women for being the leaders of a new generation of Anti Trafficking programs. At first we hosted three girls from Laos, Myanmar and Thailand, and we have now also welcomed three young women from the Yunnan Province in South China which completes the Mekong Youth Net group. Currently I am, together with some of my staff members, preparing the girls for studying the actual curriculum which consists of cultural issues as well as

management and language subjects. The Mekong Youth Net is the first project in its kind and, as it is such an important project for DEPDC, you will find more information about the program and about this remarkable group of young women in coverage of this newsletter.

At the same time I can say that we have almost finished the new building at the grounds in Mae Sai. Although we still have to give it the finishing touch the Mekong Youth Net students have already moved into three of the rooms on the top floor. It will not take long now to prepare the building which will be used by the students of our school. DEPDC's core-team, which is introduced to you on next page, has some interesting plans for activities to organize in the new school, such as running a Community Learning Centre. As soon as we find funding for this project we – and the community- can start learning from each other.

Another project that DEPDC would like to go ahead with is the ChildLine Project. This project is based on the successful Indian telephone helpline and will help children in Northern Thailand who have personal problems. Children can make a free phone call to the ChildLine telephone number.

Here they will find qualified counselors, with whom they can communicate in their own language. With such an ethnic diversity up here in Northern Thailand it means that we have to cover at least 9 different languages. The counselors will listen to the problems of the children, and will advise them on what to do. If necessary they will refer them to other organizations and the other cases will be followed up by the CPR, Child Protection and Rights Centre, in Mae Sai and Mae Salong. Although we are still looking for funding for this project the preparations are progressing steadily. The ChildLine is an important service for the children in need in Northern Thailand and I hope that we can start the next phase of this project during the second half of this year. In the next newsletter I will inform you about the progression of the ChildLine Project, and of course of the other DEPDC projects and activities as well. For now I would like to thank you all for your ongoing support and wish you a pleasant summer season.

Kind regards

Sompop Jantraka  
Founder and Director



*Manon and one of the DEPDC Daughters*

### **SHARING SKILLS, CHANGING LIVES...**

Each year DEPDC hosts approximately 15 international volunteers. They come from all over the world and most of these volunteers stay up to about six months and then they return to their home country to continue with their studies or jobs. DEPDC is very happy to also host some long term volunteers as well. These volunteers stay between 1 to 2 years and mostly have the support of a sending organization. There are several sending organizations but up to now DEPDC has worked with the Australian organization AVI (Australian Volunteers International) and with VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas). VSO has bases in five countries: United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Canada, Kenya and The Philippines.

Both organizations send highly educated professionals with enough working experiences

*...learning and sharing information and skills is part of a two way process shared between the volunteers and the local staff...*

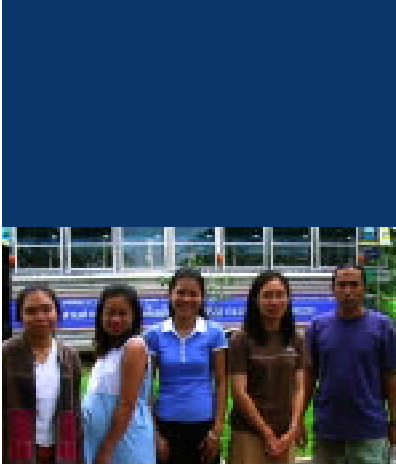
into developing countries to share their skills and experiences with local staff. Over the last two years DEPDC has had the support of Emma Nicholson, the last AVI volunteer at DEPDC. Her job is currently done by Manon Sluijter, the first VSO volunteer. Within a month DEPDC will receive another AVI volunteer, an English teacher and another VSO volunteer, a social worker.

Being a volunteer for a longer term has a lot of advantages. You have more time to get to know a new culture, a new language and a new working place. Staying longer makes it easier to build on relationships with the staff and students. Another positive aspect is that the volunteer can further integrate themselves into their role and of course they also have more time for networking and traveling. However, working abroad on a long term placement also demands a large commitment from the volunteer.

Currently more than 500 AVI-volunteers are working in more than 48 countries. For VSO this is almost 1800 volunteers in around 40 countries, of whom around 25 are based in Thailand. But the number of placements is not the only difference between the two organizations. Where AVI is managing their volunteers from Australia, VSO has an in-country office in Bangkok from where, for example, working permits are arranged for the volunteers. The AVI- and VSO-volunteers both get a monthly salary, based on the local rates. For volunteers who commit to a volunteer job for such a long period the back up from a sending organization is very important.

The volunteers benefit not only from their sending organizations support, but also from having a local network with other international volunteers. VSO's device, for all volunteers all over the world, is 'sharing skills, changing lives', obviously this device works on two sides. And it may be clear that it's applicable for the AVI-volunteers as well, as learning and sharing information and skills is part of a two way process shared between the volunteers, the students and the local staff.

More information about the sending organizations is to be found at the internet [www.australianvolunteers.com](http://www.australianvolunteers.com) and [www.vso.org.uk](http://www.vso.org.uk) ■



Core Team from left to right:  
Pii Num, Pii Ramchai, Pii Pensri, Pii Alinda and Pii Korn.

## THE CORE TEAM AT DEPDC

In September 2003, a change was witnessed in the overall strategy of DEPDC. A new structure was developed consisting of a core team of five people in charge of the overall administrative program at DEPDC. This was made in order for the employees to share together the skills and know-how and also help each other to co-operate as a team. The core team consists of the following people: Pensri (Nui), Pii Ramjai (Ram) Pii Alinda (Peaw), Pii Somporn (Num) and Pii Warakorn (Korn). The overall job description of the core team includes fundraising, staffing new employees and also supporting all the other teams, namely the Administrative team, the Development team, the Education team, and the CPR team. The core team has now worked together for around 8 months and things have worked well so far. They were all excited over the new strategy and were eager to share their experiences with me. I interviewed all the members of the core team asking them what they think of their new position and working at DEPDC in general. I will begin by introducing the members of the core team and continue by describing their views about working as a group at DEPDC.

**Pensri, 28**, mother of a child of 6 years, was one of the first daughters at DEPDC and has worked within the organization since it was established in 1989. Smiling away, Pensri describes how her life at DEPDC had many turns, starting from being a daughter, studying and working at DEPDC simultaneously, being a youth leader in a leadership training program, being a volunteer, being a member of the staff as an administrative employee to being apart of the Core Team. Pensri enjoys working with the Core Team because it is a good way of sharing ideas at DEPDC. Together they get good ideas about the management and how to take care of the work at DEPDC. She thinks team work is good and by working as a core group ideas are exchanged and discussed together. Pensri enjoys organizing activity for the children, and teaching them about DEPDC. She believes that the most important issue among the children is to give them an opportunity to learn. Her dream is to be able to donate enough money for DEPDC so that as many children as possible could be given a chance to live a happy life.

**Pii Ramjai, 28**, is sitting on the chair looking very pregnant. She has only got two more months to go and will soon give birth to a baby girl. Pii Ramjai remembers when she came to DEPDC age 15 years and was also one of the first daughters. Pii Ramjai has also worked with various issues at DEPDC, such as being apart of the leadership training program, working with the production, vocational work, food, sewing, agriculture and administration work.

At the moment Pii Ramjai enjoys working with the core group because it is a very effective way to work. Before the core group was established, the director Khun Somporn was the only one in charge of all decision making whereas now the core group can also make decisions about current issues at DEPDC. 'Work is more efficient now when we can decide for ourselves. Before, when Khun Somporn, the founder of DEPDC, was traveling for a long time we could not do anything without him but now we are able to work together as a team and we are able to decide for ourselves as well', Pii Ramjai describes. On her free time Pii Ramjai enjoys reading books, sports such as running, dancing and listening to music. Ramjai enjoys working for DEPDC because she likes to help the children learn and give support. She thinks DEPDC is open for new ideas and different projects are always welcome. 'One can think for oneself when working at DEPDC; one can create projects and activities for children which is very good', Pii Ramjai thinks. Her dream is that DEPDC could be able to help all the children in need and give everybody an opportunity to learn and live.

**Pii Alinda, 32**, also started to work with Khun Somporn when DEPDC was founded. Pii Alinda likes to work at DEPDC because of its open approach for new ideas. She rather work for DEPDC than a company because it is much more easier for her to see the fruits of her work at DEPDC. 'The bureaucracy in state-owned companies does not always give similar opportunities to develop one's ideas in the same way as DEPDC does', Pii Alinda believes. Pii Alinda enjoys working with children as well as learning from them. She wants to help the children in a best possible way and also help them to solve their problems. She wants to support and be there for the children whenever they are in need. Pii Alinda has not got definite plans for the future. She rather takes one day at a time and enjoys her time among the children.

**Pii Korn, 33** loves to play with the children at DEPDC. His most favorite task at DEPDC is to organize activities for the children and especially for the Akha children to keep their traditions alive. Pii Korn speaks some Akha and has also got an eye for art and has taught the children art and crafts.

'The children like to draw and paint subjects from the nature like trees, mountains and flowers' he describes. Pii Korn has worked at DEPDC for 8 years and is now working with the core group. 'It's ok working for the Core Team, although sometimes it can become too serious and then I feel like just organizing activity and playing with the children. I very much enjoy giving support for the children in need', Pii Korn describes. Pii Korn's dream is to have a big garden and being able to plant trees, fruits and vegetables by himself. On his free time, Pii Korn likes to read books, play the guitar and also paint.

**Pii Num, 34**, is sitting next to me and gives me a warm smile as she starts to tell me about her past at DEPDC. It is now her 10th year that she is working for DEPDC and is eager to share her experiences with me. She started to work for the Daughters Education Programme and continued from there to work with rescue of children and follow up on their conditions in Chiang Khong District. She has also worked with Activity Development, at Child Protection and Rights Centre (CPR) for a number of years and finally working for the Core Team in Mae Sai. Pii Num likes to work for with the Core Team although it can be pretty difficult at times when it takes up so much time and there is not often time left for other activities. Mostly she enjoys playing with the children. She prefers to organize activity and work with the children rather than teaching them. Pii Num's dream is to be able to provide free school for all the children in need. She would like to give everybody a chance to learn and an opportunity to live a good life. 'Sometimes I worry about the future of the children at DEPDC. I have witnessed many changes over the years and now I see a different behavior among the kids because of the media. Before they did not feel the need to have many things but now they feel that they want to have mobile phones, fashionable clothes and many other things. I think this is because of the commercials they see at the TV and hear from the radio', Pii Num describes. On her free time, Pii Num enjoys reading books, listening to music, doing embroidery, and she also practices Yoga every morning which makes her relaxed and happy.

It is interesting to see such a mixture of personalities working for the Core Team at DEPDC and to hear the voice and opinion of each individual. With the help of the Core Team DEPDC is working towards a better way of sharing the work and the responsibility. Also, the Core Team is giving each individual a chance to introduce his/her own new idea and to make changes within the organisation. This keeps the spirit up among the children and the staff, and makes everybody's life at DEPDC exciting and enjoyable. ■



### FROM PATAK-SCHOOL TO HALF-DAY-SCHOOL

In late March the Patak-school closed its doors for the long summer holiday ready to open them again in early May. However, after the summer break things had changed. The Patak school is transformed into a Half-day school. The Half Day School provides free education for the children of Patak village who generally have no nationality or identity papers and are too poor to enrol in the formal education system.

The school is run by DEPDC's Education Department, which among others consists of former DEPDC daughters. The Half Day school has two kindergarten classes and five primary school classes. In contrary of what

the name says, the students still come to school for a full day of activities, starting at 08.30 A.M. every weekday. In the morning the children, who all live in the villages surrounding the DEPDC centre in Mae Sai, will study a theory-based curriculum with subjects like Mathematics, Thai and English language, Science and Biology. The teaching is done by DEPDC's teachers and staff.

After the lunch break, with food provided by DEPDC, there is an interactive and more alternative curriculum based on the local situation and on the individual cases. The children can do all kind of activities, such as sports and handicrafts, and the kindergarten classes will have a nice and quiet nap. In the future the education department will organize fieldtrips as well.

Now that the new building is completed the Half Day School has moved there. The Half Day School students not only come to study at the DEPDC site, they also participate in activities such as camps, cultural celebrations and games organized for DEPDC's live-in students. Currently, XXX children attend the Half Day School, which has been sponsored by Co-operaid (Switzerland) since 1997.



### NEW YEAR HAS BEGUN

Now that New Year (in Thai calendar) is well on its way, summer holidays are over and students have returned to start a new school year after summer break, life at DEPDC is getting busier again.

During the summer break most of the DEPDC students visited their homes and families. Some of them spent their entire summer holiday with their family, while others went for shorter visits. The days of the students who stayed in DEPDC were filled with holiday-activities too; The early birds learned yoga in mornings, and afternoons the swimming club took the students to swim in Chiang Rai. In the Art Camp children experimented with

various painting and drawing techniques and created truly dazzling artwork. Some of paintings were then made into postcards that are now on sale in DEPDC shop.

On April 21 DEPDC held the annual Songkran –ceremony. The Ceremony marks the beginning of the Thai New Year. In northern Thailand families and communities traditionally come together for Songkran Ceremony. The younger members seek symbolic forgiveness from their elders by pouring sacred scented water over their hands. As a symbol of that the past deeds are now forgiven and the new year can start afresh the elders in turn bless the younger by tying holy white cotton strands called sai-sin around their wrists. The ceremony ends with everybody eating together, and splashing sacred water around until everyone is wet.

Labour Day 1st of May was again a day of celebration at DEPDC Mae Sai. MYN students arranged a day full of festivities from morning 'til evening: there was a parade, speeches dance and music performances, and of course lot of eating. ( More about MYN on page 1.)

### INTERNATIONAL FUNDERS

- *Co-Operaid, Switzerland*  
Patak School and Vocational Training
- *Embassy of Japan, Bangkok*  
Buildings and vehicles
- *Embassy of Finland, Bangkok*  
CPR Mae Sai
- *USAID via The Asia Foundation*  
MRICRH (Half Way Home)
- *Embassy of USA, Bangkok*  
MSC Mapping Study
- *Whole Child Initiative, USA*  
MSC Case Study Documentation
- *Open Society Institute, USA:*  
Mekong Youth Net

### INDIVIDUAL DONORS

- A. Fishman, Australia
- Arja Okko, Finland
- Associated Engineers Ltd., Hong Kong
- De Hoenderloo Groep, The Netherlands
- Joyce C. Chen, USA
- Maxine Shapiro, USA
- SOW Jeugdraad 't Harde,  
The Netherlands
- Tim Fletcher, UK
- Tokyo Shibuya APIA, Japan

### MAKE A DONATION

How to make a donation to DEPDC:

- Send a cheque, in any major currency, made out to DEPDC
- Transfer money to Bank of Ayudhaya Public Company Ltd, Mae Sai, Chiang Rai, Thailand; account name DEPDC; account number 331-1-05358-6

Please let us know when you have made a donation via email on [info@depdc.org](mailto:info@depdc.org), so we can make sure your donation has been correctly received and we can issue you with a receipt. For our full contact information, please see the cover page.

### VISIT NEW MRICRH WEBSITE.

Visit new MRICRH website to learn more at [www.depdc.org/halfwayhome/english](http://www.depdc.org/halfwayhome/english)



### SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

*To subscribe:* If you know of someone who would also like to receive news from DEPDC, send an email to [info@depdc.org](mailto:info@depdc.org), entitled 'subscribe' and we will add the email address to our mailing list.

*To unsubscribe:* Send email to [info@depdc.org](mailto:info@depdc.org), entitled 'unsubscribe' and we will remove your email address from our mailing list.

### NEWSLETTER WRITTEN AND EDITED BY

Birgitta Laurent,  
Manon Sluijter,  
Natalia Martamo