

Sompop's Words

September 2006



Welcome to the September issue of our newsletter. There has been a lot happening in the past few months, we were delighted to have the opening ceremony of DEPDC's new computer room which now holds new computers which we were able to purchase thanks to the support of Global Giving, Heidrick & Struggles and Anesvad. It is a joy to see the children and local community using these new computers and developing their I.T skills.

Another piece of good news is that the girls at Tantawan have moved into a new house in Chiang Rai town. These girls are daughters who are finishing secondary education and embarking on either higher education or vocational training.

In my recent trips to Lao I have started to see great results in our work to prevent cross-border trafficking in the Mekong sub-region. One way to combat human trafficking across countries is to build an anti-trafficking network by building relationships with NGOs. I think it is a good time right now to coordinate with NGOs in this area and we have built strong ties with, NCA (Norwegian Church Aid), SCA (Save the Children Australia (Lao)) and local government authorities. This is also the principle behind the MYN program, once the girls graduate from MYN they will return to their home countries and work at a community level to form part of this anti-trafficking network. On my recent follow ups of previous MYN graduates I have been impressed and delighted to see the work they are doing to combat trafficking. We sadly said goodbye to two foreign volunteers; Nikaela and Lorna and thank them for their efforts and hard work here, I hope they will come back to DEPDC one day and we also welcome a new volunteer – Carole Ketnourath from America.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Opening Ceremony of Computer Room

August 17th saw the opening ceremony of the new computer room. DEPDC staff, children, volunteers and people from the local community came to share in this joyous event. We were lucky to have a fine and pleasant weather in the midst of rainy season. The special guest of the ceremony was the Sheriff of Mae Sai district who gave a speech and performed the opening by cutting the ribbon. The entrance of the room looked beautiful adorned with flowers and decorations. Other special guests were the Director of non-formal education in Mae Sai, the Head of Phatak village (where DEPDC is situated) and staff from 3 local schools in the area. Afterwards everyone enjoyed fruit and Thai snacks made by the children. This computer room is now in use by children of the HDS and also by CLC (Community Learning Center) which teaches basic computer skills to adults in the evenings.



New Donor - World Childhood Foundation Sweden

DEPDC is honoured to welcome a new funding organization - World Childhood Foundation, Sweden that will be supporting the programme DEP - Mae Sai & Chiang Khong Centres, which provides a free education, a safe-shelter and full-time accommodation on behalf of vulnerable and marginalized groups of children and teens that have been identified as being at risk victims of sex child trafficking, or forced child labour due to their socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, Chiang Khong is operating as a protection centre for rescued cross-bordered women and children. World Childhood Foundation was founded in 1999 By H.M Queen Silva of Sweden, who felt a compelling need to address the social, emotional and material poverty of children around the world.

Highlight on Donor

Global Giving



Global Giving is the first organisation of its kind, a novel concept which puts donors from around the world in touch with social entrepreneurs and grass roots development projects. It takes the form of an online website, where donors can choose what projects they want to contribute to according to a project's theme or geographic location. They can also check the progress of projects. Global Giving is a wonderful tool, as project owners can reach out across the world for funding, and in turn donors can direct their funds efficiently and effectively.

The first project that DEPDC put on the Global Giving website was to raise funds to provide a computer classroom for the children of DEPDC. So far this has been successful as we have been able to open a new computer room, however we still need to purchase other equipment for the room such as headphones and other audio visual equipment. If you would like to contribute towards this project please visit <http://www.globalgiving.com/pr/1100/proj1056a.html>

Now we have a second project on the Global Giving website which aims to raise money to install a new water system to replace the current one which is old and broken. A new water system will mean safe drinking water and hygienic conditions for all 310 children on site and staff members. Currently children and staff have to carry buckets of water from an old tin tank which is unsanitary. If you would like to contribute toward this please visit <http://www.globalgiving.com/pr/1500/proj1481a.html>

VISITORS

World Challenge Group & Erin Kramer Yoga Group

This summer, DEPDC was lucky to host two sets of week long volunteers. The World Challenge team from Queensbury, England came to us in early August. In late August, Erin Kramer and Kelly Wood came with three of their students to teach yoga at all five of our centers. Both groups had the same generous gifts to offer: time, energy, and a desire to contribute to a foreign organisation and make connections with children in need.



Erin Kramer is a yoga instructor and studied the Thai language when she was a student in university. This came in useful when she came to the DEPDC centres with colleagues and students to conduct her workshops. This group graced all five of our centers with instruction in yoga, music accompanied by harp, and group painting activities. Their stay was successful and brought so much positive energy to each of our centers that Erin is now considering coming back to DEPDC for a longer period of time next summer. She has



written a proposal to work with the children in music composition. Erin, we look forward to it!

The World Challenge Team consisted of motivated, ambitious and engaged high school students. In order to

garden with flowers they purchased. They sat in on English class and offered tutoring to those who struggled with the language. They played football, volleyball and basketball with the children.

When the bus came to pick them up at the end of their stay, it was a tearful goodbye as the children were sad that their new friends had to leave so soon. To this day, the children spend evenings in the activity room struggling to write letters to their friends across the globe. The genuine connection made between the youth at DEPDC and the WCT was not something that happens regularly here in Mae Sai. It was rare and priceless.



THE FACES OF DEPDC

Interview with a Staff Member

Pii Somboon teaches Thai to grades 4, 5 and 6, English to the CLC (Community Learning Centre) classes in the evenings and Thai Dessert to the Half Day School in the afternoons. The latter obviously makes Pii Somboon very popular with the children! His skills in the kitchen combined with his mild mannered charisma, are echoes of his years of training as a monk, which make for a powerful role model and counsel.



Pii Somboon came to Thailand from Laos with his parents when he was 5 years old. He laughs easily when asked if he can still speak Laos, “a little but I’m pretty rusty”.

He went to primary school just outside of Mae Sai before becoming a novice monk at the age of sixteen. This was the beginning of more than a decade of service as a monk culminating in his graduating from the Buddhist University in Chiang Rai having majored in English. “I felt English was important to my future” he recalls. Today he feels the same about his student’s future, “It’s an international language, especially in the technology sector”.

After graduating he went to work for a credit card company in Bangkok. He stayed for two years but eventually left because Bangkok was so expensive and he wanted to be closer to family here in Mae Sai. He moved home having been away for just over ten years.

After working on a year long government project for rural aid a friend told him about DEPDC. “I’d never heard of them before. I was really just looking for a job.” But now, four years on, Pii Somboon feels fortunate to have found DEPDC. “I love working with the children. It’s not the same as working in a company; the children are not so serious!”

When he is not teaching or cooking dessert Pii Somboon can be found playing football, his passion. “I would love to travel to England and see a ‘real’ football game” he reflects wistfully. If he could change just one thing about DEPDC it would be to increase the amount of time that children can stay at the centre. “Sixteen is still too young to leave”.

He believes they are still very much at risk when they return home to their families. Ideally the children would go on to further education or more vocational training. He thinks many will go onto experience the harsh reality of Bangkok and be sadly disappointed.



The Portrait of A Student



Meeia Yusoh, known to her friends as ‘Lek’ has been at DEPDC for 5 years now. A vibrant teenager now 17 years old is Akha and comes from a small Akha village near DEPDC where homes are simple bamboo huts and there is no electricity.

She is from a single parent family, her father is deceased. Her mother has problems with alcohol and drugs and has no income to support Lek. With such a family background, Lek was identified as being at risk of being trafficked and taken into the care of DEPDC.

Despite her family background, Lek is a vibrant teenager who is not shy. When around younger children she often takes the lead and likes this responsibility. She is often seen around DEPDC playing the guitar, and enjoys learning how to play Thai pop songs. She wants to continue studying hard, so that in the future she can find a good job and earn money to help support her family.



The Tantawan "Sunflower" Program

DEPDC has been offering free education to its sons and daughters for the last 18 years. This year, however, is the first year that this free education has been extended past secondary school. Thanks to Jane McBride and Patty Zinkowski, founders of the *Friends of Thai Daughters* organization based in the United States, 14 of our recently graduated daughters are now enrolled in higher education in Chiang Rai.

Six of these girls come from our center in Mae Sai. They are continuing their academic studies and they are developing skills in Home Economics and Accounting, which they can apply in their future careers. The Accounting students are learning Chinese and English to increase their opportunities to work in business and trade in the future.

In addition to providing higher education for six of our graduates, DEPDC has brought eight of our children from the Doi Luang Centre to begin secondary education and vocational training in Chiang Rai. This program is part of DEPDC's expansion over the Chiang Rai region as well as a stepping stone to give our children opportunities to study abroad in a foreign country.



How to Give to DEPDC

There are two ways to donate to DEPDC:

(1) Directly to DEPDC in Thailand by transferring money directly to their Thai bank account.

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR DAUGHTERS AND COMMUNITIES
PO Box 10
Mae Sai, Chiang Rai
57130, Thailand

BANK: Bank of Ayudhya Public Company, Mae Sai, Thailand
NAME OF ACCOUNT: Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities
ACCOUNT NR: 331- 1- 05358-6

The Bank of Ayudhya does not provide depositors' contact information, but we will gladly verify your donation and send an official thank-you letter if you choose to e-mail us with your information.

(2) Indirectly to DEPDC through the U.S.-based "Friends of Thai Daughters" (FTD). FTD was set up by American supporters to raise awareness of child trafficking and exploitation, as well as DEPDC's role as a pro-active, educational safe shelter for young girls and boys. For more info please have a look at: www.FriendsofThaiDaughters.org

Send your tax deductible cheque to
Friends of Thai Daughters inc,
PO Box 442
Trevett, ME 04571
USA

Alternatively please visit their website for details of how you can donate through PayPal.

Acknowledgment of each tax-deductible donation will be sent and donations are forwarded almost weekly to DEPDC.

Donor Thank You

Ms. Dana Messick - USA, Mr. Ramesh Kakkad - Taiwan, Scott Selkess - Australia, Ken Shizudkha - Japan, Christina Armold - USA, Co-operaid - Switzerland, Sarah Symons - USA, The Emancipation Network - USA, Friends of Thai Daughters - USA, Gerard