



DEPDC/GMS

Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities Centre in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

DEPDC/GMS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2013

Inside this issue

Sompop nominated for World Children's Prize!	1
HDS back in action!	2
Countdown to ASEAN Economic Community	3
Welcomes, Farewells and Learning in Chiang Khong!	4-7
School in Bag	8
Volunteers from across the globe!	9
Thank you!	10

Acronym Key

HDS	Half Day School
WCP	World's Children's Prize
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
SIAB	School In A Bag

Sompop Nominated for World's Children's Prize!

The World's Children's Prize (WCP) exists to educate children around the world about their rights and to recognize outstanding individuals who are working to protect child rights. It is the world's largest annual education program for children regarding child rights. This year, DEPDC's very own Sompop Jantraka is one of the nominees for this prestigious award.



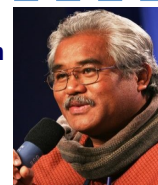
As the founder of DEPDC, Khun Sompop has been working in child rights protection for the past 23 years. Ms. Alinda Suya, our Director of Projects and Ms. Somporn Khempetch, our Director of Administration have also been with DEPDC for the past 20 years. DEPDC is greatly honored to have the hard work of DEPDC recognized.

The World's Children's Prize honors three world leaders annually for their work in promoting and protecting the rights of the child. Each year, individuals are nominated by the WCP's Child Jury for their work in child rights. In addition to Som

A Sompop Greeting!

Welcome to the June edition of the DEPDC/GMS newsletter! In this volume, we highlight some recent events at DEPDC from School in a Bag to renovations at Chiang Khong. Here at DEPDC/GMS, we are continually seeking new partners and donors to help support and expand our diverse programs. I would like to thank our supporters and those who believe in our mission at DEPDC.

Sompop Jantraka, Founder & Chair, DEPDC.



pop, this year's nominees, or "Child Rights Heroes," are James Kofi Annan and Kimmie Weeks.



James Kofi Annan is from Ghana and is fighting to stop child slavery. James was himself a child fishing slave before he was able to escape. His organization 'Challenging Heights' was founded in 2003. The organization liberates, rehabilitates, and provides education to former child slaves. Challenging Heights also runs a school for the local community. James believes poverty causes slavery and education combats poverty.





Kimmie Weeks is from Liberia, and also works to protect children's rights, especially those affected by war. Youth Action International (YAI) helps vulnerable children, providing a home for orphans, rehabilitation of child soldiers, education, and health care. YAI also lobbies governments and parliaments to promote and respect the rights of children.

Children in participating schools are given the months of January to October to study all the contents of the magazine and really learn about children's rights and the laureates before making a decision about who they would like to vote for. They also get to read inspiring stories about how children in different countries live, the issues they face, what they like to do for fun and what they dream of being in the future. The WCP is not considered a competition, and hence it recognizes and rewards all three Heroes. Children vote on how to distribute prize money between them each year.

Through this annual process, millions of children learn about child rights, democracy, environmental issues, girls' and women's rights, and other world issues and have the opportunity to cast a vote and make their voices heard. At this point, 58,091 schools with 27 million students in 108 countries have participated. If you think a child or school that you know would be interested in getting involved with and voting as a part of the WCP, you can refer to the WCP's website for information on registering as a Global Friend School of the WCP. You can also download the whole Globe magazine and the teacher's guide, for schools interested in participating on their website.

Khun Sompop and DEPDC are deeply touched and excited to be part of the World Children's Prize this year. In October Khun Sompop and one of the children featured in the DEPDC's section will be traveling to Stockholm, Sweden for the annual WCP's ceremony. DEPDC hopes that everyone will get a chance to read all the amazing stories in The Globe magazine and that students and schools will be inspired to participate.



HDS Back In Action!



It is with great enthusiasm that we welcome back the students, both old and new, of the Half Day School here at DEPDC Mae Sai. As of the 7th of May, DEPDC is once again alive with the hustle and bustle of the children hard at work, learning subjects such as English, Thai, Science, Maths, Social Studies and Computers. Around 98 students attend the Half Day School every day and it provides free education for up to seven villages around DEPDC. Since its inception in 1996, the Half Day School has been going strong, with the student population increasing all the time.

The Half Day School is aptly named, as the school day is divided into two parts; the first half of the day consists of the students studying their regular school subjects such as English and Math. In the afternoon, the students take a wide variety of vocational skills classes, these include weaving, cooking, sewing, organic agriculture, computer skills, Chinese and Burmese. We hope this term is as much fun as the rest!

Written by Sorchia Kelly





Countdown to ASEAN Economic Community

In less than two years, in 2015, the new ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) partnership will take legal effect. In Thailand, local governments and education establishments are striving to educate and prepare the public for a new era of regional interconnectedness among Southeast Asian nations. The multi-million-Baht campaign for AEC awareness in Thailand has certainly succeeded in getting everyone talking. Not a day goes by without seeing ASEAN in the headlines of newspapers and television. Lectures, round tables, and seminars take place regularly all over the country, attempting to reach not only the urban population but also those in the more isolated rural areas. Yet ASEAN and the AEC remain abstract concepts for many.

The AEC is a big step forward in the process of regional integration first initiated in the 1960's, when five Southeast Asian nations decided to join forces to accelerate socioeconomic development and ensure peace and stability throughout the region. These five "Founding Fathers of ASEAN" were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Today, they are joined by Brunei, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Burma (Myanmar), and Cambodia, for a total of ten ASEAN member states.

ASEAN regional cooperation emphasizes three pillars: security, sociocultural integration, and economic integration. The AEC is the biggest step so far towards economic integration. .

The AEC is the biggest step so far towards economic integration. It is essentially a deadline for all ASEAN member states to adhere to certain rules and agreements that will contribute to the regional bloc's overall goals. Among these agreements are the reduction and elimination of import tariffs among member states and the loosening of border restrictions.

These three pillars of "peace, people, and prosperity" are surely critical to the success and stability of any group. However, criticisms of the AEC have mounted as 2015 draws nearer, with a large segment of the population viewing the regional alliance with suspicion. First, from a cultural standpoint, many regard the free flow of capital and labor as threatening, rather than beneficial. Second, many are distrustful of a coalition that claims to be a "people-oriented community" while, at the same time, condoning authoritative regimes, such as that in Burma.

Civil society organizations have publicly denounced the unwillingness of most ASEAN member states to tackle the problem of human trafficking prevalent across the region. In spite of numerous declarations, conventions, and the like, critics say that a commitment to end human trafficking remains very much absent, calling ASEAN, "big on words and short on action." Some NGOs are concerned about the implications of a borderless ASEAN community, predicting that as border restrictions are loosened in order to encourage greater flow of goods and people among member states, it will facilitate the movement of human trafficking victims across borders.

(Cont. page 4)



At the same time, more openness may also translate into more visibility for a problem that has been veiled in ignorance and denial for too long.

It remains to be seen how loosening border restrictions will impact those groups who do not have legal status in any ASEAN member state – that is, ethnic minorities and other stateless groups. Whether supporting or opposing the AEC, at this stage it is critical for the public to be educated on all perspectives and to be fully engaged participants in the discussion about issues in our region.

Written by Patricia Oliver Martinez



Welcomes, Farewells, and Learning in Chiang Khong!

This year has brought significant changes to DEPDC Chiang Khong. Here at the Mekong Child Rights Protection Centre, we believe that change comes hand in hand with opportunities to learn new things, meet new people, gain life experiences, and, most importantly, to shift our mindset from a limiting one to an empowering one.

If you follow DEPDC on Facebook, you already know that we renovated the toilets and repainted the walls at the Chiang Khong center. Thanks to generous private donations, the girls now enjoy a brand new, clean bathroom area and gave the walls a fresh coat of paint and some beautiful, creative murals! This not only makes the center a wonderful place to live, but encourages the girls to put into practice what they have learned about proper hygiene, self-care, and respecting and taking care of the house and communal living space.



Renovations made possible by generous donations.



The girls continue to enjoy an array of vocational training and life skills development activities. They have been striving to not only try new activities, but to persist in becoming competent at a vocational skill they are interested in. The girls especially enjoy handicrafts activities like embroidery, crochet, bookmaking, and batik painting. They are making notebooks from recycled materials and crocheting bikini tops, which are sold at a travel agency shop in Chiang Khong. The girls also love learning to make popular food cart snacks like fried bananas and Chinese-style steamed buns – they especially enjoy eating their work when finished!



Phit showing off a beautiful batik she made during a skills class.



Naa concentrating hard on her knitting!



DEPDC Chiang Khong has been delighted to welcome Patricia, a volunteer from Spain who has brought with her a refreshing attitude full of new ideas and enthusiasm. Pi Patty, as she is called, has done many wonderful things at the center, including raising money for the renovation project, starting an after school conversational English club and incorporating English into daily activities, and beautifying the center with an edible garden. Pi Patty has also brought in a new emphasis on environmental awareness and sustainability. In January, the girls took a field trip to the local landfill to learn about what happens to Chiang Khong's waste. After that, they started separating the center's trash into recyclables, sellable recyclables, and compost. One of the girls had the bright idea for everyone to make and decorate their own canvas bags in order to reduce the use of plastic bags. Pi Patty also works hard making sure DEPDC's friends all over the world are updated on the developments and activities taking place at the Chiang Khong center. So be sure to look out for her posts on DEPDC's Facebook and blog!

While welcoming new members to the DEPDC Chiang Khong family, this year we have also said goodbye to three of our most beloved staff members: Pa Pen, Khun Ladda, and Lung Khung. This is not really a "goodbye" but a "see you later," as we always strive to maintain good and close contact with our previous colleagues. In this edition of our newsletter, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to all of them for having contributed to DEPDC's mission and wish them all the best in this new period of their lives.



Pa Pen has been with us for over three years as the head of life skills and vocational training, and has guided the girls in their personal development and gaining the skills needed to maximize their potential. Pa Pen is leaving DEPDC to dedicate herself fully to raising her children and looking after the family farm.

Khun Ladda, a leader from DEPDC's Mekong Youth Network, has worked at the Chiang Khong center for two years. Khun Ladda lived at the center and developed close relationships with the girls, acting as a positive role model. We wish this promising young woman all the best in her new life back in her home country, Lao.

Lung Khuang, our "handy man," will certainly be missed at the center, as he could do almost anything you asked him. Be it fixing a broken pipe, cutting the grass in the backyard, or making anything out of bamboo (for which he is well known as the "king of bamboo"), he was always willing to help. At the moment, he is taking some time to look after his vast bamboo fields, but will still be happy to help out at the center part-time as needed.

At the end of the school term in April, we celebrated the graduation of four girls from Grade 9. We have also welcomed a few new girls to the center. Having said some hellos and some "see you later's," we are delighted to look forward to this new academic year ready to work hard with a positive attitude and plenty of new activities in mind.

Written by Patricia Oliver Martinez and Hana Livingston



The girls at Chiang Khong getting creative with paint!



School In A Bag - Providing The Tools For Learning!

Many of us can remember from our childhoods the excitement of getting shiny new school supplies for the start of a new school year. We have been able to make this a reality for some children in northern Thailand, thanks to School in a Bag (SIAB), which is in its second year running here at DEPDC. SIAB is an initiative run by UK-based charity Piers Simon Appeal. In April of this year, SIAB provided funds for DEPDC to purchase 933 backpacks and school supplies. This year, DEPDC acted as a local distribution center, packing and distributing school bags for children at DEPDC as well as at other organizations in the area: Baan Doi, AFECT, and Khom Loy. Staff and volunteers from DEPDC, with help from Baan Doi, joined forces to pack each navy blue bag with notebooks, pencil case, pens, pencils, coloured pencils, math set, compass, eraser, sharpener, rules, lunch box, and water bottle.



Our International Volunteer Coordinator Hana helping out with the backpacks!

Of the 933 bags, DEPDC kept 345 bags to distribute to children at the Half Day School in Mae Sai, Baan Klang Na agriculture project in Mae Chan, and the Mekong Child Rights Protection Centre (girls' home) in Chiang Khong.

These bags not only provide the tools that enable students to learn effectively, but also promote equality among the students. The act of giving students something as simple as school supplies gives these children the encouragement and drive to progress with their education.

Without these school bags, many students would go without essential school supplies and, in turn, their educational development would suffer.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Piers Simon Appeal and the School in a Bag initiative for allowing us the opportunity to receive these bags for the second year in a row.

School in a Bag will continue to support the distribution of bags and school supplies throughout the world to help poor, orphaned, vulnerable, and disaster-affected children. Please visit the website below for more information about the School in a Bag initiative and the wonderful work they do.

<http://www.schoolinabag.org>



Volunteers From Across The Globe!

DEPDC is lucky to have an enthusiastic group of international volunteers ready to help out and contribute their unique skills and ideas! The children love sharing and learning with people from around the world.

Simon and **Laszlo** from Hungary joined us in January and are working hard at the Akha community organic agriculture project (Baan Klang Na) in Mae Chan. They have a wide range of professional experience between them, including working in food security and with the UN.

Patricia is originally from Spain and came in January to live and work at the girls' shelter at DEPDC Chiang Khong. Check out "Welcomes, Farewells, and Learning Chiang Khong," in this newsletter to read more about Patricia's work!

Sarah is a teaching and child care volunteer at the swimming home and agriculture project in Mae Chan. She joined us from Australia in April, after taking six weeks of intensive Thai language courses in Chiang Mai, and brings with her a wealth of experience working with special needs children.

Erica and **Sorcha**, who came in April and May, respectively, wear many hats helping out at the main office in Mae Sai. In addition to teaching English at the Half Day School, Community Learning Centre, and to DEPDC staff, Erica and Sorcha are superstars in a variety of communications and administration projects in the office – including putting together this newsletter!

DEPDC's mission transcends national borders and we are happy to work together with all of these international volunteers toward common goals!

If you're interested in volunteering, check our blog for more information at <http://depdcblog.wordpress.com/> or email us at depdc.gms@gmail.com.





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You!

Since its inception, DEPDC/GMS has helped over 4,000 children, 96% of whom stay out of the sex trade. Please support DEPDC/GMS's work by choosing to either:

1. Make a tax-deductible gift in the US and UK at our [Global Giving Page](#)

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Address: DEPDC 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 Number: 331-1-05358-6

SWIFT Code: AYUDTHBK

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

We would like to make a special mention of all of our donors!

Your continued support and generosity helps build futures and realize dreams!

On behalf of all of the children and staff of DEPDC/GMS:
Thank you very much!



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- Global Giving
- School In A Bag
- All of our private donors.