

## CHRISTMAS 2015

Very dear foster parents and friends,

Kanjani and Ananya were born about nine kilometres from our first centre, in the Akha village of Ban Neunsadouak, where Le Sourire had opened a nursery for children from two to five years of age.



In 2001 their mother died and their father was in prison. The two little girls were entrusted to their grandmother, an opium addict. At the ages of four and two, they were left on their own in extreme poverty, totally deprived of hygiene and health care, without enough to eat.

It was the village chief who informed us of this tragic situation. Given the extreme urgency, we put an end to the unbearable suffering of the little ones by taking them into our nursery.

In January 2002, Kanjani and Ananya came into our centre, where they were pampered by the other children who were all older ! The father was released from prison in 2003. He came to see his daughters several times. However, having no money and unable to care for them, he expressed no intention of reclaiming them. In 2004, we learned that he had died. From that moment on, Kanjani and Ananya were orphans. They were totally taken into the care of our centre. They are the first children of Le Sourire !

However, the struggle for their custody was only beginning. As if by chance, the family suddenly got much bigger; uncles and cousins appeared out of nowhere and showed interest in the little girls ! Men with sombre, ominous faces repeatedly came in groups to assert their supposed right to custody over the two little girls. With their grandmother ruled out and the two children filled with fear and anxiety, we had no choice: fight to protect Kanjani and Ananya !

In Thailand, child trafficking is everywhere. It was therefore urgent to have their papers in order with the authorities. Luckily, we possessed their original birth certificates and that of their father's death. This enabled us to obtain the official documents proving they belonged to the family of Le Sourire. The administrative procedure for obtaining the Thai nationality for the two children is currently underway.

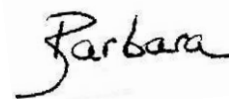
Today, the two young women are continuing their studies. Kanjani, 18, is preparing for her university entrance exams in 2016. She wishes to become a lawyer. Following her convincing performance at a competition of speeches for the defence in court cases, a judge from the city of Thoeng has taken her under his wing and is encouraging her to persevere in the direction she has chosen. Ananya, 16, is in her 4<sup>th</sup> year of secondary school and is keenly interested in the humanitarian field. At the present time, she believes she will go into social work.

Like all adolescents, the two girls have had their ups and downs. They have had to assert themselves among youngsters coming from different ethnic, sometimes conflicting, backgrounds, many with tragic pasts. Kanjani quickly developed a passion for reading. Ananya was attracted by child education and has become a little mother for the very young. Today both are flourishing, happy and responsible young women. Each has a good sense of humour and a pleasant personality. They are at peace with themselves.

As persons in charge of Le Sourire, we are particularly happy with the evolution of these two young women. It is not easy to have a successful professional career in Thailand if you come from a minority ethnic background, and even less if you are a woman. The Akhas, of Chinese origin, are still considered as second-class citizens and live in the northern hills in difficult conditions. So for Kanjani and Ananya to obtain Thai nationality and be able to practise a profession is a great achievement !

Yet again, we wish to express our gratitude to you, our foster parents, who are helping us so faithfully and generously to bring these young people out of desperate situations. You are helping us to give them a future of dignity and the possibility to pass on to others what they have received. We also thank all of our kind donors who are enabling us to continue reaching out to the schools and villages around us.

We wish you a joyous Christmas and deep happiness for the New Year 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a thin black rectangular border. The signature reads "Prapapone" in a cursive, slightly stylized font.A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a thin black rectangular border. The signature reads "Barbara" in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

P.S. – LES ENFANTS DU TRIANGLE D'OR, the most recent and beautiful film by Claude Schauli, can be seen on [www.lesourire.ch](http://www.lesourire.ch). If you wish to offer it as a Christmas present, you can buy the DVD. Information is on the home page of our website.