



LE SOURIRE DE CHIANG KHONG

CHRISTMAS 2019

Dearest sponsors and friends of Le Sourire,

Loy Kratong - Thai festival of Lights - Christmas - Light celebration - two events that make us want to share some news from our home and more so to express our gratitude for your on-going support for our work

Thanks to the continuing quality of our activity and the high level of our requirements, we are now fully recognized by the Thai government, as well as by the inhabitants of the villages of the region. However, the ministerial rules are becoming more and more strict for the foreign NGOs. A large number of associations have been closed in recent times due to functional and administrative complications. To avoid this situation, we therefore respect the official recommendations to the letter. Our excellent educational results are numerous, and our social action in the northern district is very much appreciated. Regardless of the children we welcome at our home, all our staff come from the neighbouring villages and have a perfect knowledge of the customs and traditions of the country. We are, therefore, also taking into account the high unemployment rate of the region.

The episode we wish to share with you today is just one facets of our responsibilities. A Hmong couple asked us, in April 2018 to welcome their two children, Natacha* 12 years old and Sonchai* 11 years old. What struck us right away, was that the children could speak Thai perfectly, which is quite rare. Generally, the children of the tribes that come from the villages to us, speak only their own language. In the meantime, we learnt that the family had arrived from the south and that the biological father of the children was Thai. Unfortunately, we also understood that the mother of the children had a fairly complicated past! She already had three children by one or more men! Natacha and Sonchai have therefore three big brothers and sisters that they do not know! Following another relationship breakdown, the children were the victims of this woman's instability and "our" two youngsters were dragged from village to village and from school to school! On returning to the north, the children's mother became the "second wife" of a married Hmong who already has HIS own family!

On arrival at the Sourire, the two children integrated well and finally found a modicum of serenity. One day however, the Child Welfare Service department contacted us asking if at home we had children by the names of Natacha and Sonchai. On confirming that we did indeed have children of these names, we were informed that their mother was in prison for drug trafficking and that her sentence was long! We were then contacted by the woman begging us to never let the children go to her new Hmong husband. Child trafficking is still an on-going issue and to make matters worse, she confided that she was pregnant again.

Indeed, the step-father arrived shortly after this demanding to claim the children. However, his papers being neither up to date nor clear and without the consent of the mother, he had no chance of leaving with the little ones. The children have therefore become "our children". In the meantime, the little baby was born in prison. Accompanied by Pii Aie "protector of them both",

Natacha and Sonchai regularly go and visit their mother and the baby. Usually, social services separate children from their mothers and place them in an institution as soon as the mother no longer breastfeeds. Pii Aie is very touched by the two teenagers who at each visit comfort, console and encourage their mother so that she does not lose hope and that one day everything will work out for them!

Without news or knowing the whereabouts of their “real” father, they have found a family at the Sourire! Natacha and Sonchai are not really orphans but yet they are, orphans of their circumstances. “Modern orphans”, abandoned by irresponsible parents. So, we do our utmost to provide them with a home, an education and lots of love.

With a few exceptions, all our young people come from a broken home where they have experienced quarrels, disputes, violence, drugs, prostitution, settling of scores and sometimes even murder. We therefore seek to make them understand that nothing is ever lost and that through education and training they will be able to emerge from a world of shadows to a world of light!

To all of you, sponsors, friends and benefactor of the Sourire, we say again a huge thank you for the trust you have shown in us, for your sense of sharing and your generosity.

Merry Christmas - happy new year and thank you for hoping with us!



and all those that we protect

*Fictitious names