



# LE SOURIRE DE CHIANG KHONG

NEWSLETTER 2015

EDITORIAL

## TOGETHER EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

**Twenty years ago, Barbara left Switzerland for Thailand. She wanted to “give a year of her life” to a humanitarian cause. She is still there! Twenty years ago, Prapapone decided to direct her life toward helping people in need. Out of their meeting, the Sourire de Chiang Khong was born.**



In the south, beaches with their palm trees. Bangkok, the City of Angels, exciting and extreme. In the north, densely wooded hills. Throughout the country, the inhabitants' legendary smiles and hospitality, exquisite cooking, countless golden temples, remnants of another civilization, Siam. All of this is Thailand! But every coin has another side.

“In Pattaya, where I spent my first year,” Barbara tells us, “I met a lot of girls and women who were victims of prostitution, drugs, violence. Getting them out of their dramatic situation turned out to be almost impossible. I was haunted by their hidden suffering and helpless to change their pitiable state.

“Then, by chance, I met Prapapone and we decided to address the root of the problem: we went to the north of Thailand. The attraction to

this country of dreams became transformed into a call, into a duty to make our ideas happen. So we decided to become involved in the education of girls and boys from a region where, even today, they are threatened with being sold into prostitution, used for drug trafficking, forced to marry very young, mistreated, raped. We began by taking in twenty-five children. Since then, several hundred children have stayed in our centre. Today, we are immensely grateful to see the fruits of our labour: these young adults who are now professionally trained, responsible, hard-working and courageous, dealing with the hard realities of life.

“Foster parents from the beginning up to now, without wavering, you have helped us change unbearable destinies into promising futures. Donors from every walk of life, you

have enabled us to develop the necessary facilities to carry out our activities. Friends, whose encouragement and often hidden gestures are so very precious to us, you are ever widening around you our network of support.

**“For twenty years, your trust has nurtured our enthusiasm. On behalf of the children of Le Sourire, with our immense and heartfelt gratitude, THANK YOU.”**

*Prapapone Barbara*

## The Happy Brothers

**Sai, Seng and Satit, three Hmong brothers, are highly motivated and hard-working, with their ups and downs. They have lived in our centre and been successful in their schooling.**



**Sai** is working in the construction industry in Bangkok. He returns regularly to the centre to proudly tell us about his life.



**Seng** is in the metal industry. After obtaining his diploma, he was hired by a maritime company south of Bangkok. With his generous spirit, he brought together other former residents of our centre to build a small house for our staff meetings and meals.

In early January, after four months at sea, Seng came back to treat his young brothers and sisters at the Centre to a delicious meal ! He had also received some money from his colleagues at work, who were touched by his life story at the Le Sourire ! Seng stayed at the Centre for two days before leaving for his village further north. It's there that Sai and Seng have acquired, with their savings, a piece of land to build a house for their parents !



**Satit**, the youngest of the three brothers, is still living in our centre. He has chosen to become an electrician and will complete his professional training in four years.

The three brothers are doing everything they can to build a house for their parents. Their deep gratitude toward their parents is, for Le Sourire, our most wonderful recompense.

## And the others?

We're happy to tell you regularly in our newsletters about our young people who have realized their ambitions. However, it sometimes happens that we've been disappointed. Some children interrupt their stay at le Sourire, because their family moves or decides to put an end to their stay. Sometimes, too, especially at adolescence, a youngster lacks motivation or underestimates the value of schooling. Alas, parents don't always encourage their children to persevere!

**Whenever this happens, we systematically keep in touch with those who leave us prematurely.**

Many pick up their studies at a later date or obtain professional training elsewhere. Take Dai for instance, a young boy of Laotian origin : he came back to tell us that after due reflection, he was continuing his schooling at a Buddhist temple. **Wipop** was another boy who had to go through his adolescent crisis before training to become a teacher. To prove his determination, he regularly gives us a hand at the Centre and skilfully takes charge of our children. Many girls take charge of their lives by finding jobs in the sewing and health sectors. Some marry and become happy mothers who intend, they tell us, to give their children a good education.

In the long run, what we first perceive as a failure often turns out to be a nice surprise where each person discovers their path!

## Champions of Smiles!



Our four youngsters are radiant with joy: they won their secondary school's team marathon race! This enabled them to represent their school at the marathon meeting of schools from northern Thailand, where they placed second! A result they can be proud of!

## About Water and Ideas !

Barbara and Prapapone are constantly involved with environmental issues.

Not surprisingly, they devised an ingenious ecosystem for the girls' new toilets. See for yourselves:



The waste water comes out of the building which is on a hillside and flows through three filtering layers: rock and stones, sand and then coal to eliminate the odours. Part of this water is collected and used to water the plants and flowers. Another part flows through a pipe toward the rice fields. Simple and effective !

# Learning while Farming

**Our farm didn't start yesterday. Over the years extracurricular activities have developed, thus enabling our youngsters to assimilate the natural process of things and to learn self-management.**

This pedagogical agricultural project also brings us invaluable savings. In



the beginning we were obliged to buy all of our food. Today almost 75% of the rice eaten by the residents of

our centre comes from our own rice fields. Our own vegetable gardens provide us with a quarter of our vegetables, while the rest is bought from our trusted vegetable merchant. During the rainy season, we heartily enjoy our own mushrooms.

We also produce our own fruit: mangoes, papayas, pineapples, jackfruit, pink apples, longanes (litchi family), etc. Every year we



harvest more and more coconuts from our own trees. The coconut milk is highly appreciated in our kitchen.

Our fishponds are restocked every two years and give us a lot of fish. Our meat comes from our own cows and pigs fattened on our own corn. Our chickens are bought at the market.

For several years we have been able to sell our surplus of longanes and also a little corn. The profit from the sale of these agricultural products is reinvested in the upkeep of the

plantations. Our youngsters take part actively in the negotiations, thus learning how to manage their money wisely.



## Sensible management

The number of children increases yearly, as must the number of staff members.

Le Sourire de Chiang Khong hires local staff and trains them. In this way, we create jobs in a region where they are lacking, we work with the children in the spirit of their own mentality and increase our Foundation's integration, already well accepted, in the area.

Our current team is young and dynamic; they identify well with our action.



**Le Sourire functions with a judiciously chosen form of management, according to the educational principle of self-management, where each child feels responsible for his tasks in "her"/"his" Centre, where the older children take care of the younger ones.**

To take care of 180 children in the Centre and 200 in the villages, Barbara and Prapapone are assisted by a staff of ten people: school instructors, an administrative assistant, drivers, cooks, cleaners. Additionally, they hire temporary workers at planting and harvesting time.

## A Staff Member tells his story



*Pii Sor has been working at the centre for two years. Here are his impressions :*

"I have accepted the challenge! Working with children is a struggle that begins again every day! A struggle that requires understanding, patience, a sense of observation, an attentive ear and gentle firmness. It's demanding work, often exhausting, but enriching and exciting.

Le Sourire de Chiang Khong radiates peace and joy. It's great coming here; you feel like staying. The enthusiasm is contagious, it catches hold of you and encourages you to take part in the development of this work where wonderful youngsters hope to find meaning to their lives. Barbara and Prapapone not only give us good training, they also accept us as members of the family of Le Sourire! Sharing our experiences with each other every day helps us grow closer and stronger.

There's a lot of work. From Monday to Friday, while the children are at school, the staff is busy organizing the Centre, at the farm and the many animals, cleaning the buildings, running errands outside the centre, etc. On Saturdays we accompany the children in their various activities, encouraging and teaching them. Sundays are free and are devoted to taking care of the children's hygiene, their homework, sports and games. It's also the day when their families come for a visit. A moment of relaxation when

our youngsters can think calmly about the new week ahead of them.

Our motto is mutual respect, the sincere love that restores dignity and self-confidence to each child. Their happiness will be our happiness."

*Pii Sor*

## A Licence for Prapapone

The Thai Ministry of Social Affairs and Security assigned an independent, private organization, the Social Work Professions Council (SWPC), the task of setting the standards in the field of social work. A pedagogical preparation, seminars, conferences and talks lead to a final examination in view of obtaining the SWPC license which guarantees to the government that a NGO or any Thai social body is reliable and serious. The organization commits to protecting its members.

Prapapone obtained this licence in February 2015, for a period of three years, which can be renewed.

She is the 4th person in the region of Chiang Rai to have it; but she is the first person in charge of a NGO. The other three work for the Government. She was sponsored by a teacher of nursing in Chiang Rai, a member of the SWPC, the very person who entrusted the boys Dominik in 2008 and Suphachai in 2014 to Le Sourire.

In the medium term, the conditions imposed by the SWPC will become obligatory for all social institutions such as schools, hospitals, religious communities, NGOs.



# Ethical Charter



The “Sourire de Chiang Khong” is a children’s home. Its mission is to bring educational supervision to children in the North of Thailand whose precarious situation generally destines them to drugs, prostitution and Aids. Its action is based on the following values:

## Sustainable Action

The action of Le Sourire aims at the long-term, preparing the children to become responsible, free and sociable adults.

## Schooling

Schooling is provided by state schools. Le Sourire follows each child from primary school through to the completion of an apprenticeship or higher studies, taking into account the capabilities and future aspirations of each child.

## Education

Le Sourire offers children affective and educational supervision conducive to their personal and professional development. Drug, prostitution and Aids prevention are inherent in this education.

## Respect

Le Sourire is independent. It respects the sociocultural and denominational origins of each child. It cultivates the children’s appreciation for their roots and traditions, for sports and leisure activities, as well as for agriculture and gardening. Planting, harvesting and animal breeding are extracurricular activities, carried out in full respect of the rights of the child.

## Autonomy and Responsibility

Life in the home takes place according to community rules understood by each child. These encourage the natural development of initiative-taking, responsibility and solidarity. The home functions on the principle of self-management: the older children help the younger ones. The children of Le Sourire consider and treat the home as their possession.

## Outreach

Le Sourire also follows the schooling of children who live in nearby villages and participates in the community life of the whole region, thereby enhancing the children’s wellbeing and raising their awareness as future citizens.

## Official Recognition in Thailand

In Thailand, Le Sourire de Chiang Khong has the status of a foundation and is recognized by government authorities, while at the same time preserving its independence. It keeps up to date the training of its staff according to their needs and in respect of official requirements. The home rigorously manages its possessions and the funds received.

## Swiss Association

The Thai Foundation is supported by an association domiciled in Switzerland under Swiss law, which functions on a voluntary basis and transfers almost the entire sum of gifts and sponsorships to Le Sourire’s work with children.

Chiang Rai and Geneva,  
31 January 2015

## A Visit from the IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is interested in the work of Le Sourire. Established in 1951, the IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration. On 29 March, a delegation of two members from its office in Bangkok, the Swiss Ambassador Christine Schraner-Burgener, along with three attachés from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, visited our centre. Their visit to the centre and the presentation of the Foundation’s activities aroused a lot of questions. The delegation was visibly impressed by Barbara and Prapapone’s work and expressed their praise of Le Sourire.



## Meet Barbara and Prapapone

Our founders will soon be in Switzerland. The Association warmly invites you to meet them at the traditional picnic of foster parents and friends

**on Saturday 5 September 2015 starting at 11:00 in the Salle communale of Cartigny (GE)**

**18 chemin de la Bergerie**

You can sign up at [comite@lesourire.ch](mailto:comite@lesourire.ch)

## Initiative in Moutier

### A family tells their story

We really wanted to do something for Thailand, where our youngest son, Anthony-Atiwit, comes from. So we decided to organise a festive, musical evening in our town of Moutier to support an association in favour of Thai children.

We looked around and discovered Le Sourire de Chiang Khong, whose philosophy, values, management and overall concept immediately appealed to us.

We decided to organize a small evening get-together to which we invited guests who we felt would be open to helping Thai children.



With the support of a local newspaper, a few families in Moutier and a small number of sponsors, the evening was a success: music welcomed the guests, the room was decorated in the atmosphere of Le Sourire, children from Thailand started the party with songs and dances, a jazz band gave a lovely concert, we showed the film by Claude Schauli and, finally, we all enjoyed savouring delicious Asiatic specialties.

The attendees were very generous and expressed their admiration for Barbara and Prapapone's excellent work. They felt deeply convinced they had taken part in an evening of support for a trustworthy association that is doing concrete work for the wellbeing of children in northern Thailand.

Two months later, we had the privilege of making a family trip to Le Sourire de Chiang Khong, where we met Barbara and Prapapone.

The success of the evening of 3 May 2014 and our wonderful visit to Thailand make us want to organize another event on behalf of Le Sourire de Chiang Khong.

*Catherine et Thomas Monti  
Moutier*

## DVD of Le Sourire available on subscription

A long-time friend of Le Sourire de Chiang Khong, Claude Schauli is a reporter and film-maker with the RTS. He made two films for "Temps Présent" in 2001 and for "Dieu sait quoi" in 2006 about Le Sourire. He loves the work that Barbara and Prapapone are doing and returned to our Centre in November 2014 to make a new documentary. He was able to meet former children from the Center: Danaï, today a sailor with a Japanese company, and Pi Aïe and Wipop, who are studying at university.

The new film, currently in the editing process, lasts about 60 minutes and promises to be powerful. It tells the story of an educational adventure with human beings that is simply beautiful and unique. There will be a few showings in several movie theatres and then it will be aired on the RTS.

A DVD will be made of the film, which will come out before Christmas. It can already be ordered on subscription for the price of **20 CHF** (instead of 25 CHF) from Claude Schauli: [clschauli@bluewin.ch](mailto:clschauli@bluewin.ch) or from: [comite@lesourire.ch](mailto:comite@lesourire.ch)





## What does the logo mean ?

A peaceful boatman is gliding his small boat from one bank to the other. In a similar manner, Le Sourire de Chiang Khong embarks destitute children towards a brighter future of dignity and hope.



When you pivot the logo, a head-dress appears. This is the sign of success, worn by prominent citizens in ancient Siam.

Prapapone and Barbara are securely at the helm!

*The logo of Le Sourire de Chiang Khong was created by the graphic designer Hubert Schneebeli, a foster parent and friend of Le Sourire de Chiang Khong.*

"CHILDREN ARE SOCIETY'S MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE, OUR GREATEST HOPE FOR THE FUTURE." J.-F. KENNEDY

## Children, light of the world !



Abused, brutalized, raped,

Manipulated, used, forced, killed,

Hungry, thirsty, ill.

They are hurt in their bodies and in their souls.

**A**s far as our resources permit, and with your invaluable support – whatever form it may take – we are trying to prevent a few children from becoming victims of these horrors. We take them into our Centre, we surround them with love, we educate them, give them schooling, encourage them to believe in themselves, help them to grow up and especially we love them.

Thank you for helping us to always do better, to always do more!



## How to help the children of Le Sourire

### ✓ Long term

**A sponsorship costs 50 CHF a month or the equivalent in Euros.**

It enables us to admit a child into the Center, to provide for her/his food, lodging, schooling, health care and leisure time activities.

Whenever the family and school context is appropriate, it is possible for a child to both benefit from a sponsorship and remain in her/his village.

An application form is available online. Or simply contact the Association.

### ✓ Occasional

**By a donation to a specific project**

CCP 17-185665-4 Le Sourire de Chiang Khong

UBS AG 8098 Zurich - CH48 0027 9279 2021 9727 U Le Sourire de Chiang Khong

An up-to-date list of the projects is available upon request.

### The Board

Lisa de Beauregard, president, Geneva ; Babeth Schlegel, vice-president, Sion ; Roland Sprenger, vice-president, Sion ;  
Georges-Alain Zufferey, treasurer, Sion ; Nicole Fivaz, Blonay ; Anita Fumeaux, Sion ; Peter Gautschi, Arbaz ;  
Thekla Gautschi-Michel, Arbaz ; Nathalie Jacquier, Genthod ; Jean-Marc Juillard, Coppet ;  
Mireille Juillard, Coppet ; Willy Schlegel, Sion ;  
as well as the co-founders Barbara Gautschi and Prapapone Khotsanlee, in Thailand.

Post Box 6382 | CH 1211 Geneva 6 | Tel +41 22 756 04 42 | [comite@lesourire.ch](mailto:comite@lesourire.ch)

[www.lesourire.ch](http://www.lesourire.ch)