



LE SOURIRE DE CHIANG KHONG

HOPE wins!



Since the beginning of our history, many children have passed through the Smile. There are those who have completed their schooling in our home and have gone on to more or less important professional careers, have started a family and live an independent life. There are others, less ambitious or less educated, who have returned to their villages. There are families who move to another region and want to take their children with them, or parents who call their sons/daughters back for their own reasons. But we also have to deal with "rebellious" young people who find it difficult to accept the rules and conditions that are indispensable for community life.

We are well aware that EACH of our residents had a life "before Smile" that left a deep mark on them - torn families, psychological and physical violence, drugs

or sexual abuse. Sooner or later, this distressing and tragic damage resurfaces, especially during adolescence. Each child is unique and needs to be taken seriously, which requires active listening and a lot of patience. There are some who manage to "make sense" of their situation, and despite deep inner suffering manage to "climb the ladder of confidence" using their wounds to achieve amazing strength. Others stagnate in insurmountable anger and leave us. Disappointing result? In the short term, perhaps - but we dare to hope with all our hearts that each of these victims of the lack of love will find inner peace through a word, a book or an encounter that is meant for them, through any life circumstance that helps them to rebuild. And it is this hope that pushes us to continue our work and to move forward!

In memory of a missing person



The solidarity between the inhabitants of the villages extends from birth to death. For example, people are obliged to participate in the funeral of a deceased person on pain of a fine. The funeral can last up to seven days, depending on the date set for the cremation. The body lies outside the house in an air-conditioned coffin, surrounded by flowers and wreaths. Morning and evening monks pass by to recite prayers and receive offerings. Mourners also pass by and the villagers show their concern by blowing incense to the sky. Every evening, firecrackers chase away the evil spirits. The women take care of the meals that are served at noon and evening. During the night, the men watch over the deceased while drinking alcohol and playing cards, a game

that is normally illegal but tolerated at funerals. Sadness and joy are intertwined - this is how the Thais wish to accompany their deceased to the next world.

Cremation takes place at the temple and the ashes are kept either in a chedi (stupa) or in an urn at home. The chedi is a religious building commemorating the death (parinirvana) of Buddha.

For 100 days the family mourns and closes the period with a celebration honouring the successful passage of the loved one into the new life ahead. The tradition of building small pavilions in memory of a deceased person is widespread in Thailand, allowing the soul to rest - some in a secluded place because the person liked peace and quiet, near a school because he or she liked children, next to water, on a hill, in short, adapted to the person's character.

In memory of their parents, two former members of our staff built a small wooden shelter, "Lanna" style, on our territory 15 years ago! Lanna ethnic groups dating back to the 13th century or more have greatly influenced the architectural style in the north of the country, a style very different from the rest of Thailand.

The Animal Hospital

Among our domestic animals, we have a herd of cows as well as a herd of buffaloes that share an open-air area. At night, the animals are sheltered under a four-sided open canopy, a concrete surface covered with rice straw. Straw for food and bedding is stored in a separate shed. Dried stalks are brought in from the rice crops in the surrounding fields.

Our agriculture programme has several 'cowboys' who accompany and care for the animals. Every evening the shelter is cleaned and covered with fresh straw. Unfortunately, we have lost baby calves born



during the night on several occasions, injured or crushed by the other cows. In addition, once they were out in the open, the dogs would often attack the newborns. So we had to find a solution.

Close to the cow shed, we built a closed structure with boxes to protect a cow, a full term buffalo, from any danger. We leave them there until the young ones reach their independence before putting them back with the rest of the animals. The same place allows us to separate the sick animals. The young people in charge are particularly proud to be able to demonstrate their skills "in THEIR clinic"!



Visit of our very first boarders



In the spring of 1999, the story of Le Sourire began with 24 children in a rented house, a wooden building on stilts, typically Thai. Last year, four of them surprised us with a visit to the present home and offered lunch to all our boarders. They took turns introducing themselves to our young people and telling stories about their experiences in the home. They also took the opportunity to give some valuable life advice. It was a great reunion, an unforgettable, warm and funny sharing.

Ger, a very promising child, is full of life. After the sixth grade she returned to live with her parents in her Hmong village for a few years before getting married. Together with her husband, she left the family

nest for the Tak region, on the border with Burma. With two daughters and a son, they now form a beautiful family. Ger and her husband are very hardworking and sell pork in different markets in the region. The success of their business allows them to easily support their family - they are happy and we are proud of Ger.

Oua, Ger's younger sister. Very strong character, but disturbed and very fragile. Not at all scholastic, she returned to the village before she had even finished the sixth grade. Her life since then has been very similar to her childhood. She tries to earn a living by doing odd jobs in various places. She dates boys but never manages to make a relationship last. Unfortunately, her desire to remain free closes the door to any outside help.



Supaporn, discreet, shy and helpful. Not very academic, she has nevertheless finished her six years of primary school. She was reunited with her mother in the Hmong village while her father was in prison for drug trafficking. Still very young, she married a man from Laos who already had a wife and gave birth to two daughters. Her brutal, often alcoholic husband beat her regularly and threatened to take the girls back to Laos. We tried to help her, but her husband was against it. We are following the case from afar to help her if necessary.

Soonthorn, twin brother of Supaporn. A funny boy, always ready for the best jokes, happy. Not academic either, but studious which allowed him to finish the six primary years like his sister. After a few years in Bangkok, he returned to the village, got married and was the proud father of a daughter. While talking to our young people about his life, he explained that his boss at Bangkok was surprised by his politeness and consideration for his colleagues, a legacy of his stay at Le Sourire according to him. A nice testimony for our current protégés.





The little Akha children



A few months ago, we were contacted by Akha parents, several of whose children are in our household. They offered us to visit their villages, which are located near the Burmese border. What struck us was the large number of children not attending school. These are children from marginalized ethnic regions in Burma who have been entrusted to relatives in Thailand to safeguard their existence. Without any school structure, in these lost villages, we accepted to welcome 6 small children at home. This was a drastic change for these little beings who knew neither the language nor a community life. It is nevertheless impressive to see our young people take them under their protection and help them to integrate. Le Sourire lives up to its name.



Covid 19



As soon as the epidemic began, Thailand imposed very strict restrictions throughout the Kingdom and thus managed to keep infections at a very low level during the year 2020. The health situation deteriorated sharply from April 2021 onwards, with Thailand gradually becoming one of the most infected countries in Asia. A state of emergency was declared. Borders were closed, night curfews were imposed, quarantines were imposed, etc. A "massive" vaccination campaign was launched rather late, but a good part of the population has now received its 2nd or 3rd vaccine.



Several vaccines have been offered to Thailand, including the Pfizer vaccine from the United States. Following a government decision, this vaccine was given to all students in the country. All the young people in the home received both vaccines. Our staff was able to take advantage of the vaccination programme for the neighbouring villages.

Last February, one of the schools attended by our young people was closed due to positive cases among the students. Shortly afterwards the village chief came to the home with a brigade of nurses in impressive, if not "astronautical", protective clothing to test all our children and staff. All were NEGATIVE! On this day, the Smile was wonderfully protected which filled us with great gratitude.

Recycling by our young people

Students attending vocational colleges enjoy putting their school skills into practice "at home". By giving free rein to their creativity, their innovations know no limits! In addition, they are an excellent example of edification for the younger students who admire them and are happy to collaborate whenever possible. Success makes them proud and increases their confidence.

■ **Pergola** with old luggage racks, covered with flowers depending on the season



■ **Bricks and concrete benches around trees**



■ **Transforming** of old sewing machines into beautiful wooden tables



■ **Transforming old school truck** benches into original garden benches, covered with concrete and old tiles



■ **Invention** of a pulling and pushing machine that sucks up all the scrap metal (nails, screws, various metals, etc.)



Offered by a Priest Seminary from the area.

New QR payment slip in Switzerland

The new QR payment slip makes it easier to pay for sponsorships and donations in Switzerland. Scan the QR code with your smartphone and avoid having to copy addresses and account numbers.

It is also possible to manually enter the data visible on the payment slip (IBAN and address).

Patronage

Donation



Monnaie Montant
CHF
Compte / Payable à
CH53 0027 9279 2021 9729 V
Le Sourire de Chiang Khong
1211 Genève 6



Monnaie Montant
CHF
Compte / Payable à
CH48 0027 9279 2021 9727 U
Le Sourire de Chiang Khong
1211 Genève 6

"The sweetest happiness is
the one we share"

Thank you dear friends of Le Sourire for your faithful support since Le Sourire was founded. Your sponsorships and donations allow many young people to be educated in a healthy and natural environment, enabling them to find a dignified and suitable life path. What touches us particularly and pushes us to persevere in our efforts, are your generous gestures which prove your confidence in us. May the gratitude of our young people light up your hearts!

Barbara Prapapone



LE SOURIRE DE CHIANG KHONG

Warm thanks to the printing house Gessler SA, Sion and to the graphic artist Jeanclaude Warmbrodt