

Education

Education - the source of all the controversy - Today, we would simply like to talk about “the Sourire Education”.

Through our various NLs over the last few years, you will have understood that our foundation takes in children from various tribes in the mountain regions of northern Thailand. Each child's story is intertwined with that of his or her family - stories of varying degrees of drama (drugs, alcohol, violence, abuse, prison, suicide, etc.). “Leaving the tribes to their own devices” - agreed. However, for us there is a BUT. If schooling can restore a young person's dignity, we think that separation from the family makes sense.

School is expensive and inaccessible for these forgotten ethnic groups - excluded from inclusion! The children are introduced to us by the village chiefs, who know what life is like for their underlings. Choosing between the various options often causes us problems of conscience - we'd like to take them ALL.

Talking to the families, we quickly realized that today's teenagers want nothing more than to leave for a big city and experience the “false happiness” that absurd TV programs offer them - without any formal education. The roads of modern slavery await them! So, we place ourselves between the credulity and naivety of these young people and the ordeal that awaits them, daring to hope that a stint

at “Le Sourire” will offer them an opportunity to live a life worthy of the name.

When they arrive at our home, the children generally adapt quickly to the “family life” of “Le Sourire” and seem to forget their torments. However, adolescence often brings back their anxieties and fears. Some manage to acquire strength and vigor, while others remain anxious and fearful, despite hours and hours of dialogue.

In addition to education, we must strive to live as one, proud of our respective cultures. Develop their confidence and their physical and intellectual capacities, encourage them to respect their parents, their mother tongue, the country they live in and civilizations different from their own. To teach them the values of social life. That those who educate do not seek to cling to the old world, without, however, sacrificing the human values that have existed for as long as man has existed. If, at the beginning of our adventure, enthusiasm led us to believe that we could “save” a child in a few years, experience has taught us that our work will be the work of a lifetime, if not more.

Conclusion - the educator and his counterpart meet in the middle, and one benefits from the other.

“ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE”



Government inspection of the home



Every year our home is inspected by the Thai government, one of the conditions for continuing our activities. The very strict regulations leave nothing to chance. EVERYTHING is scrutinized. The safety of the children, the safety of the buildings, the fire alarms, the fire extinguishers, the cameras, the entire electrical system, hygiene in the bathrooms and toilets, the cleanliness of the various rooms, the infirmary with the medicine cabinet, etc. A file on each child present is also requested. Before the visit, everyone pitches in to ensure that the home is up to standard!



Le Sourire's vets



We are privileged to have regular visits from vets to look after our animals. This is also a privilege for our young people who take part in animal care. Sterilizations, vaccinations and general care are carried out on site. The vets, who are always on hand to advise our youngsters, explain the correct dosage of medication, how to treat a sick or injured animal and how to handle animals that could prove dangerous. To make sure that all our dogs receive the necessary vaccinations or to work on the farm animals - cows/buffaloes/pigs - the carers must travel long distances, which also involves physical effort! Our young people are impressed and motivated. They appreciate the example of a profession that they are getting to know.



The pigsty is back in use

After several years of empty stalls, following the swine fever that devastated part of Thailand and our home, we have been able to start a new farm with around fifty pigs and piglets - what a relief!



Children's sheets



When we moved into the current home in 2004, it became essential to replace the children's sheets. The sheets we made ourselves have always been repaired by our young daughters. They mended and repaired them with a needle as best they could - sometimes even with their own artistic way of patching! Unrepairable sheets end up in our rag collection.



The 2024 floods



Several provinces in the north of Thailand have suffered severe flooding, affecting large sections of the population. Scientists claim that global warming has caused a sharp increase in the intensity of rainfall during the rainy season, making flooding more frequent and even destructive. In addition, in 2024, a typhoon caused widespread flooding in the north, especially in Chiang Rai province, which was particularly hard hit by flooding and landslides, seriously impacting the agricultural sector. The government has mobilized all its resources to help and has asked the private sector to contribute.

This did not “fall on deaf ears”. A mutual aid project was set up with our young people. Sacks of our rice were taken to the village to be husked. Back at home, the rice was placed in our living room together with a large quantity of food purchased for the disaster victims. What a joy to see the whole team preparing small individual parcels for those who needed help. Collaboration with the leaders of the various communities ensured that the distribution was carried out efficiently, and always with our young people, in the best possible conditions.

Through this unusual mobilization, our teenagers, who set an example for the youngest, demonstrated their generosity, cordiality and fraternal openness towards their neighbors.

Dengue at our home

A viral infection caused by the dengue virus is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected mosquitoes. Most sufferers recover within one to two weeks. The severe or serious form requires hospitalization and can be fatal. In 2023, Thailand recorded a record number of cases of dengue fever, the result of a mutation caused by climate change.

At our home, we have not been spared. Two members of our staff were infected and hospitalized but fortunately returned home. Fortunately, none of our children were infected. The government listed the areas affected by the infestation. The village chief and a professional team came to check all the water points, which were sprayed with chemicals to prevent the mosquitoes from spreading. The public were urged to keep the environment clean and eliminate places where mosquitoes proliferate. With our young people, we weeded, pruned and cut back trees - a colossal task, not only to reduce the number of mosquitoes, but also to increase light penetration and air circulation. Aesthetics have taken a beating, but health comes first!



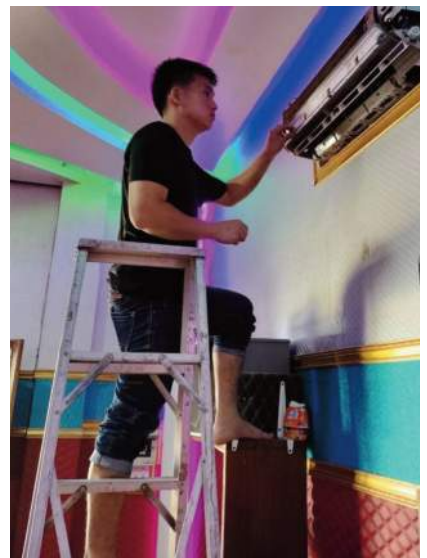
A sympathetic return



The transition from adolescence to independent adulthood is a gradual one for every young person living at “Le Sourire”. Every year, young people leave school to enter the world of work. They find a job, start a family, go about their business. Some we keep in close touch with, others need more time to get back in touch, and still others we hear nothing from - for the time being! It's mainly thanks to social networks that various contacts are maintained.

This is how we know that Suwine married Randa and lives with their three children in Chiang Khong. Their parents went to school at “Le Sourire”. Having passed his exams as an electrician with flying colors, Suwine set up a small family electrical business. He quickly made a name for himself for the reliability of his work in the region as far afield as Laos. He also offers other construction and plumbing services and is inundated with requests. And he speaks proudly of Le Sourire.

Sai and Graison are directors of an oil company south of Bangkok. Both have families with children. Athé, meanwhile, works in the construction industry in Chiang Mai, also married with children. Along with many others, they meet regularly and maintain close and friendly relations. All these families bring up their children independently, without needing any outside help. In this way, the aim of our family education is achieved.





Khop khun kha
Thank you

LE SOURIRE DE  CHIANG KHONG

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