



CHRISTMAS 2011

Very dear sponsors and friends,

As the celebrations of the end of the year approach, while the Foyer of the Sourire was spared the floods, we want to share with you our moved thoughts and our sympathy to the numerous victims of these events that have plunged Thailand into grief. Some families have been ruined and are tempting courageously to survive. The thai population is demonstrating lots of willpower and tenacity to rebuild what has been destroyed. The word solidarity takes here its full meaning.

Our previous letters talked about the life at the Foyer. This time, we want to explain our action for the schooling of the children in the Northern villages.

Thanks to the sustained and frequent contacts we maintain with the local authorities and the school establishments, we are often informed of urgent or problematic situations and regularly receive requests to provide help to a child. We then estimate, together with the teachers, the family and the child the possibilities that exist to take him/her in charge. The rules and conditions are clearly explained and accepted before any decision is taken.

With our serious work and the validity of our requirements, we have gained the trust of the inhabitants of the villages and can multiply our commitment in favor of the schooling of the children in their own village.

In Ban Rain (Ban means village), twenty five children are sponsored by the Sourire. The primary school of the village welcomes 149 children, out of whom 85% of Hmongs and 15% of Thais. The teachings cover buddhist and moral principles, the thai language, mathematics, artistic matters, money management, internet, sports and recycling. For this last discipline, a pavilion has been installed in the perimeter of the school and it is strictly forbidden to dump anything. Everything is deposited, sorted out and sold; the benefit goes to purchasing material and cleaning products.

The quota of students imposed by the government forces the schools to function with overloaded classes. This is the case in Ban Rai. In order to find a solution to this problem, the Sourire contributes, since this year, to the salary of an additional teacher. The Sourire participates also to the financing of the lunches for all the children of the school.

The results of the students in the secondary school of Ban Rai are excellent and six adolescents have been admitted to the University, a first for the village and for the Sourire ! A good encouragement for the teachers and a renewed trust of the parents towards our work.

The nursery and primary classes of the small school of Ban Thungsang have many children who have been marked by dramatic life stories. The Sourire sponsors among others Phiranat, 9 years old. His parents are separated, his mother, a victim of the prostitution in Bangkok, has left the boy in the village with an uncle, whose wife is in prison for drug dealing, to take care of him !

Living in a total misery, the uncle has accepted the idea to put his nephew in school, but fiercely refuses to let him leave the village. School has become a place of refuge for Phiranat. There he finds a stimulating and warm environment, thanks also to the charismatic goodness of the director of the school, a former bonze.

Several sponsored boys follow the teaching of the bonzes within a temple. As uniform, these youngsters wear the safran coat. It is not about child monks, but youngsters educated by the monks. In Thailand, each Buddhist goes, once in his life, for several months to a monastery.

In the villages, The Sourire takes part in the reunions with the parents or with the grand-parents when the parents have been decimated by aids or drugs. The get together is organized by the chief of the village or by a family. Despite the destitution and the poverty, a clean mat and the traditional glass of water invite the participants to discuss the problems and elaborate solutions.

During our last visit, we were informed of the death of one of our protégés, sick with aids. It is a hard and extremely difficult reality with which we are often confronted. This afflicts us, we grieve and at the same time it reinforces our conviction and our commitment for the children of Thailand.

Thank you, each one of you, for your trust and your support that fill us with energy and motivation.

With all the children of the Sourire, with their parents and their families, with their teachers and the helps in the foyer, we wish you a Merry Christmas and lots of happiness for 2012.

Barbara

Prépare