

ChildWorld

AUTUMN 2012

Creating
healthy
communities
in Vietnam

An interview
with MAG Laos

Education for the
children of Baruni, PNG

www.childfund.org.au

ChildFund
Australia

Nigel Spence



While ChildFund Australia's main focus is on long-term development to improve conditions for children in poor communities, we continue to play a vital role in emergency relief. The number and frequency of disasters – both natural and man-made – are increasing. War, civil conflicts, droughts, floods and earthquakes are reported on a daily basis. All countries, including Australia, are affected but the lack of resources and protection mean that children in developing countries are the most severely impacted.

While it is impossible to prevent most disasters from occurring, it is possible to support community members to be prepared in advance for such crises and to take steps that limit the damage and safeguard homes and livelihoods. These measures also mean that the hard won progress of ChildFund's development programs don't get swept away when disasters strike.

Disaster preparedness programs are essential and ChildFund has made this area of work a priority in our new five-year Strategic Plan. The communities with whom we work are well aware of the dangers that disasters bring. ChildFund will increasingly work with community members, including children and youth, as well as local and central governments to help build protection for children and communities in the face of predicted disasters. For example, in Zambia (see page 3), the disaster risk reduction program over the long-term is expected to reduce the

number of deaths that occur each year from flooding and cholera outbreaks.

However, disaster preparedness will not avoid the need for emergency relief. ChildFund will continue to provide immediate support to children and their families in time of emergency. Thanks to our donors and Project Humanity supporters, ChildFund has been able to send immediate aid to those who were devastated by the Japanese earthquake, Horn of Africa food crisis, the Mt Merapi volcanic eruption in 2011 and communities in the Philippines who were recently hit by Typhoon Washi. Your support is invaluable, thank you!

Nigel Spence
CEO
ChildFund Australia

ChildFund Australia

Working in partnership with children and their communities to create lasting and meaningful change by supporting long-term community development and promoting children's rights

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Facing the floods

Many of Lusaka's shanty towns are based in the most flood-prone area of Zambia's capital city. These communities are over-populated and have very little access to basic services such as clean water, sewerage systems and waste disposal. Families are also poor, and unable to afford the cost of buying safe water and cleaning products.

Cholera outbreaks are a significant problem. During the last seven years, over 30,000 people have been hospitalised for cholera and other waterborne diseases, and around 200 people die annually.

Low levels of disaster preparedness knowledge and risk reducing behaviour has led ChildFund to implement a new program to reduce the risks for local residents. To date, ChildFund has trained 40 disaster wardens – these are mostly young people, and following training they are now able to educate other members of their community on how to prepare homes to avoid flooding and disease outbreak.

ChildFund has provided chlorine, soap and plastic drums to enable the community members to create and



A young Zambia woman shows members of her community how to de-contaminate water using chlorine

store their own safe water supply, and training has been provided on how to de-contaminate water.

Basic radios have been provided so the wardens can listen to early warning weather news with a view to sharing this information in times of danger.

Local youth have developed a weekly youth radio forum on a community station to raise concerns on the floods and how to effectively deal with them. This also focuses on how to avoid contracting cholera and other waterborne diseases.

Life after the earthquake

Japan's devastating earthquake and resulting tsunami in March last year left thousands of families homeless, and hundreds of children orphaned.

Following this disaster, ChildFund Japan, with the support of ChildFund Australia's Project Humanity partners, was able to quickly create an emergency and reconstruction plan to help the hard-hit community of Ofunato, located in the Iwate Prefecture.

The response included the delivery of emergency goods, psychological care and grief workshops, and community development projects. ChildFund Japan also implemented a grief counselling program for teachers and caregivers to support children who were in class on the day the tsunami hit.

"The disaster occurred during school hours, so children saw the tsunami coming and had the experience of running away from it," recalls Fumiko Hirai, chairperson of Iwate Council – Girl Scouts of Japan, who attended a grief workshop. "Because we saw no expression of sadness on the children's faces, I had come to believe the children of Iwate are strong.

"But I learned at the workshop that children take their experience in their own way – for example 'my mother died because I did not do my homework' – it led me to believe we all must gain a common understanding and overcome together."

Today, an after-school day-care centre provides these children with a safe environment where they can once again laugh and play. One child summed it up by saying: "Since we became victims, the after-school child centre changed and became a bit quiet. But my friends are more cheerful now and that's good."

Local government officials also asked ChildFund Japan for help in building a sense of community in the temporary housing units where many displaced families were living. The goal was to create a space where residents could gather, have tea and socialise.

Volunteers from the university joined carpenters and community members to build colourful benches and tables to serve as a meeting place. One year after the tsunami, residents can find enjoyment in socialising with their neighbours and reconnecting with their community.

The children of Nam Phong celebrated World Environment Day by planting trees in their community.



Creating a cleaner community

In many developing countries, sanitation is a luxury. For the community of Nam Phong in northern Vietnam, and home to over 3,500 people, this was certainly true until recently.

In an initiative to improve the health and hygiene of children and their families, ChildFund worked in partnership with local communities to identify their concerns and priorities. With all residents compiling their own lists, the final theme emerged: "Clean roads, clean house and clean public places."

In the past, the local streams were often contaminated as they were used for a variety of purposes – cleaning, washing and a water supply source for livestock. Without latrine facilities, families used the local mountains. However during heavy rains, the runoff from the mountains contaminated the stream water.

As such, the first stage of the project involved the construction of new latrines and water supply systems. ChildFund also established a training program, and each

village now has a sanitation promotion team, made up of the village head, a health volunteer and additional adult who are responsible for mobilising the community in monitoring and maintaining the new facilities.

Health education has also been a prominent feature in this program. Bui, a village leader, says: "In the past, we were all infected with scabies and ringworm, and people often had diarrhoea." Education on the importance of hand-washing and other health and hygiene sessions have been organised by ChildFund.

Garbage disposal was also an issue, with no local services available to collect it on a regular basis. Now a blend of collective effort and healthy competition among children keeps the road clear of trash and animal waste, compels people to maintain hygienic practices and even inspires them to plant trees.

Tran Thi Kieu Hanh, water and sanitation program manager for ChildFund Vietnam says: "Such an effort from a small community will lead to big effects for the planet."

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Baruni Dump Appeal

Last year, ChildFund Australia supporters contributed over \$260,000 to our Baruni Dump Appeal, an initiative to raise much-needed funds for children living in the wastelands around Papua New Guinea's capital of Port Moresby.

Working in partnership with Brisbane-based company Pro-Ma Systems, ChildFund is supporting the St Peters Literacy School, which provides free education, uniforms, books and meals to children from Baruni, Six Mile and other informal settlement areas.

Currently, basic and limited overnight accommodation is available for children whose home is too distant to make daily travel to school a safe option. ChildFund is improving the lodgings for children and is also establishing long-term, sustainable activities to improve the health and nutrition of children enrolled at the school.

Since the launch of the project 12 months ago, there have been significant achievements. Most importantly, children have been involved in the design of the program from the outset, contributing their own ideas, views and opinions to the design and planning process.



Armed with pens and paper, the students were actively encouraged to provide input into development plans for the school.



Construction on the school piggery, which the children helped design. When it is ready for livestock, ChildFund will provide the animals and teach pupils and teachers how to care for them.



ChildFund assisted parents in registering the birth of their children, and themselves in some instances. This will ensure they have formal recognition by government, and greater access to services and support.



Students mark out the new gardens at school, which will provide fruit and vegetables to supplement their diet. When it is time for planting, ChildFund will supply seeds and agricultural training for teachers and students.

Mud, adventure and a new preschool

In October last year, 18 amazing ChildFund supporters, who between them raised \$74,000, landed in Vietnam ready to begin the adventure of a lifetime



Gill in Vietnam

I've just arrived back from 12 days of fun, food and adventure in Vietnam. Altogether, 18 of us have been fundraising, training and getting to know each other over the past few months and after feeling like the trip would never come, it was suddenly time to get on the plane!

Accompanied by our four local guides (who were a great help while trekking in the mud and rain!) we had the opportunity to visit Go Thau village and meet some of the gorgeous kiddies who will benefit from the new preschool that has been the focus of our fundraising efforts.

The current school (which is an old buffalo shed) has low walls, thin straw mats on concrete floors for the kids to sit

on and all they have to play with is play-doh – that is, until we arrived with toys!

We met, played and sung with the kids.

We saw them dance, chased them in Cat & Mouse games, hoisted them on our shoulders, talked with their parents and saw them cry in pure elation at what our group, supporters and donors back home were doing for them. What did we gain in return? The knowledge that we were ensuring that every child's right to an education was being fulfilled in their village.

We also discovered that ChildFund Australia is not just constructing the preschool building, but is also providing a kitchen, running water, toilets and ongoing training for existing and new teachers. And it's not just the kids who benefit. The children learn and then go home and



The trekkers with children from Go Thau stand outside the ramshackle preschool, which is to be replaced with a new building they helped fund

educate their parents – it has such a positive impact on communities.

While we raised a massive \$74,000, we want to keep going and many of us 'trekkers' are keen to keep fundraising. We have already started reaching out to our friends and colleagues to help us sell donuts or chocolates. It sounds small but you wouldn't believe how much you can raise if everyone you know sells a box each!

We plan on going back to Vietnam next year after construction of the preschool has been completed. We feel extremely proud of ourselves and everyone who has helped support our fundraising efforts. Between us, we have helped complete strangers and ensured the children of this village, now and in the future, will receive quality education. *By Gill Elliott, ChildFund trekker*



One of the more relaxing days of the trip - sailing down the Mekong

"We scrambled up rock faces, we slipped and slid down the damp rocks of a river run-off, we crossed rivers, we burrowed through overgrown ferns and bushes, and we did it all in support of ChildFund."

Kyle, Inspired Adventures

Interested in our next adventure? The Laos Water Cycle departs in November 2012. A small group of 20 supporters will cycle from Laos to Cambodia and raise money for water tanks and toilets. Register now www.childfund.org.au/cycle or call 1800 023 600 for details.



On day one, everyone is full of beans and still in clean clothes!



Local H'mong women (with umbrellas) help the ChildFund trekkers cross a flooding creek



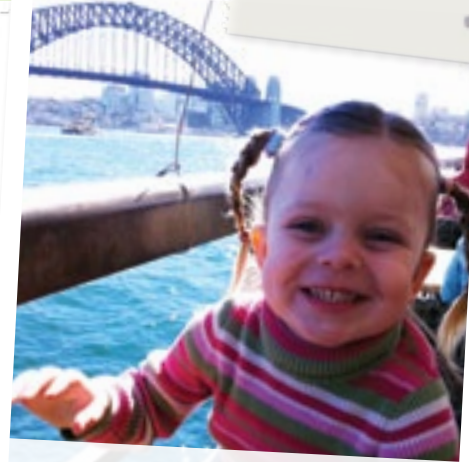
The children challenge Kyle and Gary to a race!

Growing up in different worlds



Gabi

How do the childhoods of two four year-old girls from Papua New Guinea and Australia compare?



Roisin

Home

Gabi: lives in a village in Central Province, about 2.5hrs from Port Moresby. Her home is built from local materials and is on poles; the village is surrounded by grassland. Gabi lives with her parents, brothers and grandfather, as well as two dogs. Gabi's parents are subsistence farmers.

Roisin: lives in a suburb of Sydney with her parents and brothers. She lives in a house made of brick, and her neighbourhood is surrounded by bushland. Roisin's dad is a carpenter and her mum works in an office part-time.

Health and well-being

Gabi: usually has two meals a day – three when it is possible. Her diet includes banana, yam and cabbage, and sometimes her family eat rice, flour and meat bought from the store, or wild meat which they hunt for. Her favourite food is rice. Gabi weighs 10kg and has been immunised against BCG (for tuberculosis), tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, polio, hepatitis B, Hib, Pigbel (Enteritis necroticans; a major cause of death among children in the Highlands).

Roisin: has three meals a day, as well as snacks. She eats rice, pasta, vegetables, fruit, meat and dairy products. Her favourite foods are cake and ice cream. Roisin weighs 18kg and has been immunised against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib, hepatitis B, pneumococcal, rotavirus, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal C and chicken pox.

Daily life

Gabi: stays at home with her mum, and will start school when she is eight years-old. She helps her mother collect the water, wash the dirty dishes, and prepare food for cooking. Gabi wakes at sunrise, goes outside to use the toilet and wash her hands, then comes inside to have breakfast. After breakfast she plays with her friends, and then does chores in the afternoon. After dinner, Gabi goes to bed early.

Roisin: goes to preschool for three days every week, and stays at home with her mother and younger brother on the other days. When she is five, she will start going to primary school. Roisin goes to ballet and swimming classes once a week, and loves to play outside in her garden or at the local parks. She helps her mum by setting the table for dinner and making her bed each morning.

Favourite things

Gabi: Her elder sister recently gave her a very big talking doll, which she is very excited about, as it is the first doll she has owned. She also had a teddy bear which she loves to play with.

Roisin: has a special cat which she takes to bed at night. Both Gabi and Roisin love to sing, and want to be famous singers when they grow up!

The MAG team based in Nonghet.
Inset: Sinh at a clearance site.

My story



Dangerous work saves lives

In 2011, ChildFund Laos worked in partnership with the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) to clear land of unexploded ordnance in order to build a new primary school. Sinh Sisourath, field specialist for MAG in Nonghet District, tells us about his work

MAG began working in Laos in 1994. We work in four districts of the country. My work is very satisfying because by clearing the land of unexploded ordnance (UXOs) we reduce the risks of the community, and make life comfortable for them.

Before beginning work with MAG, everyone must have special training – this includes learning how to check for bombs, learning how to destroy them, field communications and first aid. On a normal day, we work for seven hours – everyone involved in clearing works for 50 minutes, and then rests for 10 minutes, before starting work again. Clearing land is very time-consuming and intensive work, and it is important to rest so that our clearance staff can do the job properly.

Xieng Khouang province has the most UXOs in Laos, because it is close to the border of Vietnam, and the strategic military road used during the war is situated here. So fighting took place both on the ground and in the air. This is why there are so many remaining bombs – more than 700 different kinds.

When we arrive at a location, we survey the area, to determine if it is forest or jungle. Then we pay local

villagers to cut the vegetation. We train them to gradually cut from high to low, and to do this many times, so that no bombs are disturbed in the process. Once the vegetation is low enough, the MAG field workers begin checking for UXOs using bomb detector machinery.

The machines can detect bombs to a depth of 25cm. If part of a bomb is found, it is put in a pail. If we find a whole bomb, we cover it, and embed four red poles in the ground around the site of the bomb to warn people. In the last hour of work each day we destroy the bombs. It is too dangerous to leave them, in case children find them and want to play with them.

This is dangerous work, as bombs can explode. MAG employs and trains people from the local community, and some of our team have disabilities as a result of explosions which occurred before they began working here. No member of the MAG Nonghet team has ever been hurt during clearance.

MAG helps poor families. Why are they poor? They have land available for farming, but because of the bomb contamination they cannot use it. So they cannot produce crops for sale or consumption. Also, it is dangerous for children, as they might find a bomb and play with it.

If we do not do this work, it is very difficult for people to earn a living and live a good life. So we do this job for the community.



ChildFund Australia is a member of the Cluster Munition Coalition of Australia. Find out more at www.stopclustermunitions.org

Isuru gives Chris a garland, as his parents look on



Blessings of the Triple Gem

Chris and Elizabeth Whitelaw have been sponsoring Isuru in Sri Lanka for over five years, and finally set off on an adventure to meet him in person

Many times in our correspondence, Isuru has greeted us with "Blessings of the Triple Gem". In the Buddhist Sinhalese culture, this is an expression of goodwill and an invocation of good fortune through the Buddha's blessings. It is a token of our friendship that we hold in great esteem and which inspired a hope to one day meet Isuru and his family.

That day arrived when my wife, Elizabeth, and I travelled to meet 17 year-old Isuru over the Buddhist New Year. As he stepped forward, we discovered he was nearly as tall as us and we shook hands warmly. Next, we met his parents - Jayaprema, a man about our age with a firm, calloused grip, and Swarnalatha, a lady who smiled seldom but sincerely.

Over refreshments, folders were produced containing Isuru's school records and certificates for his many sporting achievements. Of particular significance was the fact that Isuru was the first member of his family to pass his O levels (Year 10 Certificate equivalent), assisted by extra tuition provided by ChildFund programs within the community.

With a sense of déjà vu, we were as pleased and proud as we had been with our own children's accomplishments at that age.

After lunch, we were conveyed to the ChildFund office in Tissa. On arrival, we were greeted by scores of villagers led by two young girls clad in white who made ritual offerings according to Sinhalese custom. The warmth and sincerity of their hospitality was overwhelming.

A short tour of the facilities was followed by detailed presentations by leaders of various project committees, including the Children's Club and Youth Club, regarding past achievements and plans for the future. We were very impressed, not only by the diversity and quality of the projects, but also by the aplomb and eloquence of the young presenters.

But eventually the time came to say farewell to Isuru and his family. In keeping with Sinhalese custom, our

formal leave-taking was an exceedingly courteous and somewhat reserved affair, lacking the Australian-style embraces we yearned to bestow upon them.

Nevertheless, the firm, lingering handshakes and loving expressions all round bespoke a bond as strong as any family's, transcending distance and cultural differences between us.

Though all too brief, our sojourn with Isuru and his family was a very special experience for us on many levels, one in which we had witnessed and truly shared the Blessings of the Triple Gem.

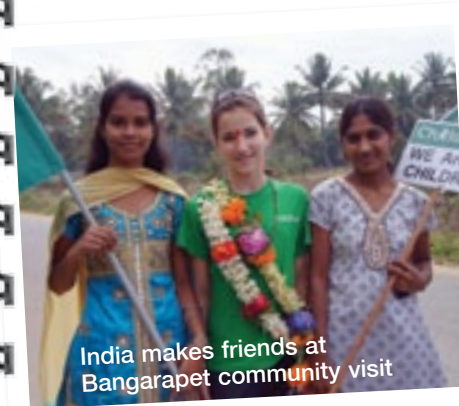


Chris and Elizabeth (centre) with Isuru (on Chris' left) and families from the local community

Every year, around 50 Australian sponsors set off on an adventure to meet their sponsored child. To read their stories, visit www.childfund.org.au/sponsor/stories

My big hairy audacious goal

The incredible Petrucco family from Melbourne have recently completed an epic 800km walk from the west coast to the east coast of India in support of ChildFund, raising over \$55,000 in the process. Back on home soil, thirteen year-old India shares some of the highlights



India makes friends at Bangarapet community visit

The adventure begins

So I'm sitting in Singapore airport waiting for my connecting flight to India and I am thinking, how did I get here? The simple answer is my Dad. He came up with the idea to walk across

India to raise money for disadvantaged children and families living in India. I am also trying to make myself deserving of the wonderful and leisurely life I have been so kindly given.

Another key piece of the puzzle is my amazing mum who gets me back on track when it all becomes too much. She's my rock and Dad's my inspiration. I need one just as much as I need the other.

Best experience 1: Mysore visit:

Today we visited a village where some of our funds are going. We walked into one of the small communities in Mysore to have a welcoming ceremony and afterwards around a hundred kids walked about 8km with us.

Running season begins

As the months begin to cool, our cities play host to some incredible running events. Some focus on marathons while others offer shorter fun runs and even a chance for families to run together.

If you are registering for these events, please consider fundraising for ChildFund Australia at the same time!

If you fancy a challenge this year, you might enjoy registering for one of these events:

All 10 members of the Petrucco family



It was amazing holding hands and talking with all the kids. They only knew how to say 'how are you?' and 'I am fine' and 'my name is' and 'what is your name?' but just having photos with them and looking into their beautiful faces was enough for me to be able to understand the double meaning and true thanks of their words.

Best experience 2: Blessing ceremony

ChildFund India set up a huge hall filled with 500 people and flowers and candles everywhere. There was a long red carpet going to the stage that we had to walk down as a family.

The room filled and the ceremony started. There was a prayer dance and the girls looked extraordinary. There was a handing out of flowers and plays from other kids. Different people talked including the Bishop of Mysore.

The best part was when I got to do an impromptu speech and give out the bicycles I was raising money for. It was excellent seeing the look on the girls' faces as I presented them with their bicycles. The press took photos of every single one and I cried because I was so happy and proud of it all.

Read more excerpts from the Petrucco family adventure on our blog at www.childfund.org.au/news/blog

- Sydney: Sydney Half Marathon (May), City2Surf (Aug), Sydney Running Festival (Sept)
- Melbourne: Run Melbourne (Jul), City2Sea (Nov)
- Brisbane: Gold Coast Airport Marathon (Jul), Bridge to Brisbane (Aug)
- Canberra: Australian Running Festival (Apr)
- Adelaide: City to Bay (Sept)
- Perth: City to Surf (Aug)

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