

# CHILDWORLD

WINTER 2011

Safe and sound  
Freedom to learn & play in Laos



The essential support of community volunteers  
A new start for young people in Sri Lanka  
Two tales: growing up in Vietnam & Australia

[www.childfund.org.au](http://www.childfund.org.au)

**ChildFund**  
Australia



# FROM THE CEO

Nigel Spence

Dear ChildFund supporters,

I recently participated in the handover of two ChildFund constructed schools in Laos. The extraordinary enthusiasm of the children, parents and community was a strong reminder of the vital importance of education in breaking the cycle of poverty.

In recent years, much progress has been made towards achieving primary education for every child. Almost 90% of children worldwide are now enrolled in primary school. The construction of schools, abolition of fees in many countries, and teacher training have all led to increased participation.

However, there are big challenges to overcome if the remaining 10% of children are to gain access to school. These 'hard to reach' groups include children in remote communities, ethnic minorities, street children and children with disabilities. More girls are now attending school but are still outnumbered by their male peers, and many drop out early to help at home.

A further challenge is to ensure a decent quality of education. School buildings are of little value if there are no teachers or those present are unable to teach, or if the education given has no relevance. In Nonghet district, Laos, these challenges are being overcome. The children, who are primarily from the minority Hmong ethnic group, have overcome extreme poverty, distance and the threat of unexploded mines to enjoy their places of learning.

These opportunities have been made possible due to the wonderful generosity of our supporters. As our financial year draws to a close, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation for your continued commitment to children in developing communities.



ChildFund's sponsor relations manager Ha (left) presenting volunteers with their awards

## Vietnam's most precious resource A community of volunteers

The ChildFund staff team in Vietnam consists of around 45 employees, working from the head office in Hanoi, as well as three regional offices close to ChildFund partner communities in Hoa Binh, Bac Kan and Cao Bang.

However, our work also relies heavily on the incredible work done by community volunteers - in Vietnam alone, there are over 650 volunteers involved in all aspects of our development programs. Without their dedication and commitment, ChildFund's programs would not function as effectively or prove so successful.

ChildFund Vietnam recently held two workshops for our sponsor relations volunteers. These individuals help ChildFund staff to enrol children in the sponsorship program, collect stories from children, coordinate child activities at local festivals and events, and even take responsibility for ensuring that the letters of Australian sponsors arrive safely in the hands of the children they sponsor.

Country director Deborah Leaver says: "Many of the volunteers have to walk or cycle long distances to get to the remote communities and they really are a core part of our success."

Over 200 people from isolated villages attended the workshop in Hanoi, some of whom have been volunteering with ChildFund in the community for more than 10 years. During the workshop, volunteers were given the opportunity to share their experiences, learn new skills, and also had their hard work recognised during a ChildFund awards ceremony.

One volunteer said: "We dream of a life where farmers are provided new techniques on cultivation, where all children have new schools and good health, where all villages have common leisure playgrounds for kids and there is irrigation in the fields. We are so proud to be ChildFund's community volunteers."

# Bombs cleared to make way for education in Laos

## Communities take ownership of their new schools

In official ceremonies, ChildFund has given the keys of two new primary schools to the communities living in Pakkhae and Korthong villages, in Laos' northern district of Nonghet.

The construction of the schools by ChildFund is remarkable for two important reasons. First, before building works could even begin, ChildFund had to partner with the Mines Advisory Group to clear the sites of unexploded ordnance (known locally as 'bombies'). Second, many children living here will attend primary school for the first time.

Laos has the unwanted distinction of being the most heavily bombed country, per capita, in the world. More than 300 accidents still occur every year, and around half of the victims are children.

Chris Mastaglio, country manager of ChildFund Laos, says: "This legacy of the war continues, not only to put children and their communities at risk of injury or death, it also affects the availability of safe play spaces for children and the amount of land available to grow food and to make a living."

The five-classroom school in Pakkhae village, built with support from the Australian Government, will allow more children to attend primary school. Previously, any child wishing to study past grade two needed to walk 45 minutes to the nearest school. As a result, primary attendance rates in the area were extremely low, as many parents were concerned about the safety of their children on such a long journey.

Chris says: "During the construction phase, the site had to be levelled and prepared. This preparation took three months of painstaking work to clear the area of bombs. The whole process turned up 189 pieces of ordnance, most of them cluster munitions."

ChildFund has also constructed a three-classroom primary school in Korthong village. Chris says: "Here, young children were often missing out on pre-school to grade two education because of the steep walk to the nearest school, especially during the winter months."

Each of these schools has been provided with water and latrine facilities, and ChildFund has also implemented



In Pakkhae village, local children greet visitors attending the opening of their new school



The whole community from Korthong village attended the handover ceremony

education training programs for teachers and village education committees in partnership with Xieng Khouang Provincial Education Services.

ChildFund is working closely with local communities and the government to roll-out the Laos Government's Schools of Quality policy, which aims to provide quality basic education services across the country. Progress is essential if Laos is to meet the Millennium Development Goal commitment of achieving universal primary education by 2015.

Throughout the school construction program, ChildFund has made sure that all children have been actively involved in the planning and decision-making process. For example, children made plans to improve the environment of schools, by planning gardens, and also identified road safety as one of their key concerns.

# ChildFund around the globe



## Sri Lanka

Twenty-two year-old Dinojini (above right) is one of Sri Lanka's survivors. After being forced to live in a displaced persons camp, she has finally returned home. However, the civil war has left a lasting impact – Dinojini has missed out on an education, and now lives with her parents and three younger brothers while her husband remains in a rehabilitation camp.

Dinojini says: "After the resettlement I was inside the house with lots of frustration and sadness. I thought my life was over; at that moment ChildFund came to my village and had a meeting with all the youth."

ChildFund has been working with young people in the Jaffna district by giving them access to vocational training. Dinojini decided to train in Palmyra handicraft. After her training, ChildFund provided Dinojini with tools, as well as some start-up capital, to allow her to establish her own business. Since then, ChildFund has linked her to the Palmyra Design Centre, for further design training.

"Now I have started earning from my products and have found good markets to sell my products. From my earning I am supporting my brothers for their education and I have the confidence that I could make them educated and confident to face the society successfully."



## Cambodia

It can be difficult for many rural communities in Cambodia to access safe, clean water. As part of ChildFund Cambodia's ongoing health programs in Svay Rieng province, many families have benefited from new wells.

Ms Phalla (pictured above) lives with her husband and five children. Until recently, her family shared a well with another five households, but the quantity available wasn't sufficient to meet everyone's needs, and the quality of the water was poor, resulting in waterborne disease.

Chief of the village, Mr Thong San, says: "Around 80% of villagers are aware of good hygiene and sanitation but they could not afford to have their own well and latrine by themselves."

In addition to building new wells, ChildFund ran a number of workshops on water, sanitation and good hygiene. As a result, Ms Phalla on a daily basis now transfers the well water into a purifying water jar for the families drinking needs.

Ms Phalla says: "Over a year, my family never goes to health centre but in the past I usually took my children every week." She also uses water from the well for her vegetable garden, and plans to buy a water pump for rice planting in order to generate more income for the family.



## Kenya

Dickson (above) was born in a small village in Kenya, living with his mother, siblings and grandparents. His mother worked as a day labourer, and his grandparents worked the land that they lived on as squatters.

With the support of ChildFund Kenya, the family was just able to get by. Dickson says: "We would get uniforms and also a Christmas gift, which was wheat flour and cooking fat. This was one of the most memorable days because we could not afford to get such goodies."

Having a sponsor meant that Dickson was able to further his education. "I believe were it not for ChildFund, I would have not have gone to high school and I would have not reached this far in terms of education," says Dickson.

With a government loan to pay his university fees, Dickson was able to fulfil his dream of studying veterinary science. His next objective? To obtain a pilot's licence so he can take his veterinary practice to the skies.

"My dream was to become a pilot one day," he says. "I also was so much in love with pets and all the small animals my granddad had. I can still see the dream come true because I will become one of the flying doctors who saves animals in emergency situations."

The ChildFund Alliance works where aid is able to flow, implementing community development programs in 55 countries. ChildFund Australia thanks its supporters and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).



## Honduras

Dominga (above with her family, 4th from left) is almost 60 years old. She became a midwife 20 years ago so she could deliver her children's children — distance and bad roads made it nearly impossible to get any medical help for women giving birth in her community.

Soon, other women in her village began to ask her to attend their births. "The good part of being a midwife is that families love me," she says. "They ask for my help in their births, and I think they trust me, because many people in neighbouring communities ask for my services."

The not-so-good part is that sometimes families come calling for her in the middle of the night — particularly when it is raining, and she has a long distance to walk on foot.

Last year, Dominga had her first formal midwife training through ChildFund Honduras' Child Survival Project. She is now better equipped for obstetrical emergencies and more knowledgeable about the danger signs that indicate situations where she should refer a mother to the health centre in Lepaterique.

She adds: "I am very happy with what I have learned. Every weekend, I ask my grandson to read the handbook for me to remember what I learned and to always keep it in mind."



## Timor Leste

In Timor-Leste, infant and maternal mortality is high. One of the biggest problems is a lack of health education in rural communities, particularly when it comes to preventative medicine.

The Balibo Community Healthcare Centre is busy — open five days a week, the centre has just one doctor and treats around 100 people a day.

ChildFund is providing extra health resources to the local community in two ways: providing training in maternal and child health, and linking communities to the centres through community volunteers. After working with local communities to identify health volunteers, ChildFund provides those selected with training, support and encouragement. These volunteers are then able to provide much needed support at the understaffed health centres.

Volunteers also distribute information brochures and bednets, and through their training can answer questions on health issues. They recognise symptoms of child ailments requiring treatment, and refer children and parents to the health centre.

Director of the Balibo Health Centre Justino Da Costa says: "The volunteers' work in providing information to the communities frees up the nurses to concentrate on treating patients."



## Zambia

In the village of Kasaka, most families rely on farming, growing maize, vegetables and peanuts. For a long time, there was no hammer mill nearby, used to grind maize into meali-meal, a staple in Zambian households.

Instead, women and girls had to carry the maize to the nearest mill and back, about 15 kilometres each way. On their return, they would carry the meali-meal in heavy bags on their heads. The journey itself was long, unsafe, and many girls were forced to miss school to make the trip.

ChildFund's Kafue Child Development Agency, through the Kasaka Community Association, has funded the purchase of a new hammer mill for the community. Seventeen year-old Mercy says: "I often worried about my safety, especially with so many recent cases of violence. Now the mill is only a few metres from where I live."

The association generates about \$150 per month from the mill. Some of that income is used to give small loans to women in the community, to help them start small-scale businesses. The hammer mill also supports local youth — by funding training and providing livelihood start-up packages. Some of those who have benefited now run businesses in carpentry and tailoring.

# TWO TALES

## Growing up in different worlds

How do the childhoods of two 7 year-old girls from Australia and Vietnam compare?

### Home town

**Yen:** was born in Hoa Binh, a remote province in the north of Vietnam. Yen's village is five kilometres from the nearest National Road. Of the 56 households in her community, the majority of the people are from the Muong ethnic group.

**Zarah:** was born in South Africa, spent her first five years in Namibia, and moved to Sydney, Australia two years ago. She lives in an inner-city suburb of Sydney, where there are lots of buildings and parks with fountains. Zarah's home is very close to the City of Sydney.

### Family residence

**Yen:** lives with her grandparents, parents and younger sister in a stilt house of about 50 square metres. Yen's grandmother

looks after her the most, as her parents are farmers and work long hours. Yen also has two cats.

**Zarah:** lives with her mum in a unit with one bedroom, a kitchen and balcony. Her mum is her main carer.

### Education

**Yen:** began school at age four, and she is in grade one. Because there is a shortage of teachers and learning equipment, Yen's class includes students from grade two.

**Zarah:** began school when she turned five, and is now in grade two.

### Health and wellbeing

**Yen:** is 17kg and has two meals a day – this is usually rice, vegetables and sometimes meat or fish. Her favourite is fried fish. She has been immunised against common childhood illnesses. Yen must travel 6km to see a doctor.

**Zarah:** is 22kg, and has three meals a day; typically porridge for breakfast, a sandwich, fruit, cheese and juice for lunch, and tuna mornay for dinner. Her favourite treat is hot chips. Zarah is fully immunised, and can visit the doctor's surgery just one block away.

### Daily life

**Yen:** wakes up at 6am then goes to school until 11am, when she stops for lunch. In the afternoon she looks after her sister. In the evening, Yen plays with friends and does her homework. In addition to taking care of her little sister, Yen's chores include cleaning the house and other jobs at home to help her parents.

**Zarah:** wakes up in the morning, gets dressed, eats breakfast, brushes her teeth, and then goes to school to play and learn. At home, Zarah has to set the table, make the bed, polish her school shoes and tidy her toys.

### Favourite sayings

**Yen:** Oh gourd, you should love the pumpkin. Though of different species, you share the same trellis.

**Zarah:** BFF (best friends for ever).

### Hobbies and dreams

Both Yen and Zarah would like to be teachers when they grow up – in particular, Zarah would love to teach children in year one at primary school.

Seven year-old Yen loves fried fish!



Yen with her mother, sister and grandmother at their farm



Zarah loves dressing up and face-painting



# SPONSOR VISITS

## Judy tells Childworld about her amazing visit to meet Tharshika in Sri Lanka

My journey with Tharshika first started while shopping, when I came across a ChildFund information desk. My husband Daryl and I had talked about sponsoring a child one day, so I thought this was as good a time as any.

ChildFund gave me a lot of information about the work they do. Daryl and I then decided that this was our next goal - to give a child in need a chance to have a normal life. That's when we began to sponsor Tharshika, who was three at the time. We've had so much fun writing to each other and for her fourth birthday we planned a big surprise - to visit her in Sri Lanka.

After travelling for five hours from Colombo, we finally arrived at our destination. On the way we stopped at the area office to meet the friendly staff, and also see some of the great work that ChildFund is doing in the area.

After a windy drive through the mountains and villages, we finally arrived at Tharshika's village. When we pulled up we saw that Tharshika's whole family, including grandmas, granddads, aunts, uncles and all of their cousins, as well as some of the ChildFund staff, had gathered to greet us.

After a very emotional meeting and traditional welcome, we were invited to formally meet each member of the family. The firecrackers they set off startled me a bit and Daryl was almost

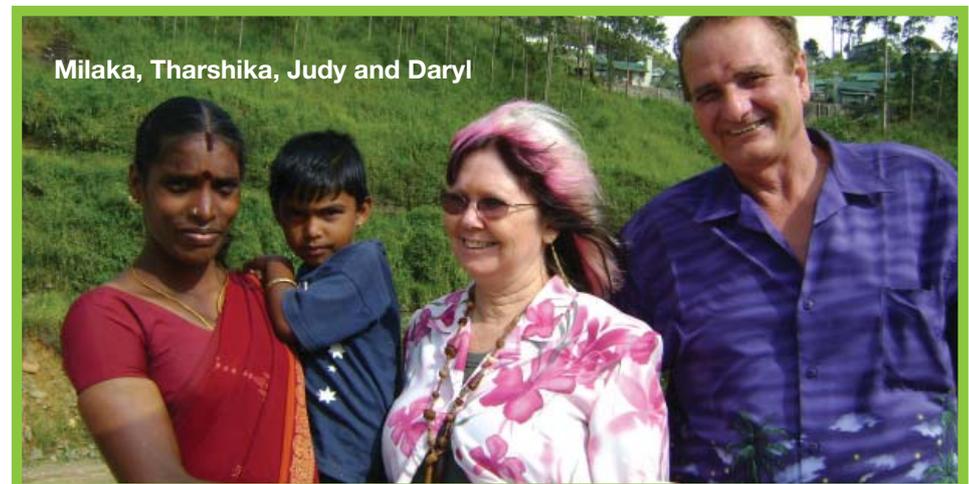
ready to duck for cover, until it was explained that setting off firecrackers was part of their welcome ceremony.

We then sat down and proceeded to exchange gifts. Tharshika's family had made some traditional food for us to sit down and share with them, only eaten on special occasions. Daryl was running around trying to catch every moment on film!

Tharshika's mum and dad presented us with a special gift that they had made themselves, then we heard a bell ringing outside; it was one of the locals selling icecream. Then Daryl did something that surprised everyone. He bought an icecream for everyone in the community, much to the delight of the children!

It was very hard saying goodbye to the rest of the family, but we still had the afternoon to spend with Tharshika and her mum. Eventually, we drove to what locals call the parting bridge to say goodbye. That was the saddest part of the day; having to say goodbye to such wonderful people. Tharshika's mum Milaka was very upset that we were leaving, but I promised her that we would meet again.

This experience is one that we will never forget. The memories will be with us forever. I urge anyone that is sponsoring a child to make the journey and visit your child once in your lifetime; believe me you'll never regret it.



Milaka, Tharshika, Judy and Daryl

# NEWS IN BRIEF



## Run Paris or Dublin

ChildFund Australia is searching for 10 passionate marathon runners who are willing to travel to Europe, run a marathon and fundraise to support children. We have five tickets for the Paris Marathon in April 2012. While running you'll take in many of Paris' iconic places. These tickets are great for romantic runners, shopaholics and art enthusiasts.

If Paris isn't your scene, then how about taking one of our five tickets for the Dublin Marathon in October 2012? Nicknamed the 'friendliest marathon in the world' this event is great for first-time marathon runners as the course is relatively flat.

For more information visit [www.childfund.org.au/act/marathon](http://www.childfund.org.au/act/marathon) or register by calling Nadia from Inspired Adventures on 1300 905 188 or email [nadia@inspiredadventures.com.au](mailto:nadia@inspiredadventures.com.au)

## Views from the village

ChildFund Australia has just launched a brand-new blog! Called Views from the Village, it's an opportunity for you to get an insider's view on the work we do.

Each week, we'll be posting updates from our staff, supporters, the children and communities we work with, and the occasional guest blogger – so you can go behind the scenes, meet some amazing people and learn more about the world of international development through their insights and experiences. Check it out at [www.childfund.org.au/news/blog](http://www.childfund.org.au/news/blog)

We'd love you to join the conversation by posting questions or comments - and if you'd like to share your own story via the blog, perhaps about your sponsored child or a visit to a developing country, please email us at [info@childfund.org.au](mailto:info@childfund.org.au) or send us a message via Twitter or Facebook.

## Workplace donations

How does your workplace choose which charities they support? Many Australian businesses now support their employees' chosen charities. Talk to your manager or HR department to find out if your employer will consider matching the donations that you made to ChildFund Australia last financial year.

A matched gift from your company could help us provide children with access to water, healthcare or education today. It's certainly worth asking!

## Ready, set, go!

Running season is upon us once more. There are a number of running and walking challenges taking place across the country. Why not join one near you and support vulnerable children at the same time.

Register for your local event and then ask your friends to sponsor you by creating a fundraising webpage. Visit [www.everydayhero.com.au/event/Challenge](http://www.everydayhero.com.au/event/Challenge) to get started. It takes only minutes to create your online page. Then all you need to do is send the link to everyone you know and watch the donations come rolling in.

## Guarantee a bright future

You can brighten the future for many vulnerable and deprived children by leaving a bequest to ChildFund Australia in your will. We depend on bequests from our passionate supporters in order to continue assisting some of the world's poorest children.

Please consider leaving a bequest to ChildFund Australia – it would be the gift of a lifetime for the children we support. For more information, call 1800 023 600 to request your wills guide or visit [www.childfund.org.au/act/bequest](http://www.childfund.org.au/act/bequest).

## 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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