

Save children from abuse and provide them with better living conditions in refugee camps in the Tak region, Thailand

About us

Children of the Mekong works with local communities to **improve access and quality of education in Southeast Asia**. It is a registered charity with the UK Charity Commission (No.1116375), and the UK branch of “Enfants du Mekong”, a leading French charity founded in 1958. Children of the Mekong has always supported refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants throughout Southeast Asia, regardless of their origin, religion or ethnicity. We started operations in Thailand in 1977 to support refugees coming from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

The current need:

Over the last four decades, Thailand has made remarkable progress in social and economic development, with sustained growth and impressive poverty reduction. However, Thailand still presents some social and economic issues, in particular with regard to the large number of refugees hosted. At present, approximately 92,000 refugees are living in nine camps on the Thai-Myanmar border¹, without taking into account those who are not registered as refugees in Thailand.

According to the UNHCR, nearly 55,000 of Thailand's registered refugees from Burma are housed in the Tak region².

Most refugees belong to ethnic minorities, mainly Karen and Karenni, who have fled the conflicts between the Burmese Army and armed ethnic minority groups in Myanmar.

Most of the camps are overcrowded, hard to access due to their isolation in the mountains, far away from hospitals and some of them have no phone signal and electricity grid. The living conditions in the camps are extremely poor. Indeed, drinking water is collected from wells and streams, health care and education opportunities are extremely limited, and children suffer from chronic malnutrition and abuse³.

Thailand ensures that the camps are safe, but does not allow refugees to work or leave. Therefore, refugees are heavily dependent on international aid provided by NGOs and community-based organisations for their food, building materials (limited to bamboo and timber), clothing, etc.

Currently, no-one knows how long the current situation is going to last. Furthermore, the extent to which Covid-19 is affecting the challenges of vulnerable communities in the refugees' camps is unknown.



Our response:

This project addresses the urgent need to respond to the high risk of abuse and denial of basic needs among children living in refugees' camps along the Thai-Burma border. Our local partner is COERR, which whom we have been working for the last 15 years. COERR is the branch of Caritas Thailand which looks after refugees and displaced people, particularly in the province of Tak, where they identified 190 cases of child abuse at the start of 2020. COERR is currently doing the most with the resources at their disposal, but there is an urgent need for further funding to respond to the complex situation. This project aims at giving **190 at-risk children** the chance to:

- 1) Find a placement in a foster family within the camp.
- 2) Provide each foster family with an allowance to cover the extra costs such as food.
- 3) Provide each family with training before the beginning of fostering.

The COERR social workers have chosen three families in each camp, in whom they have complete trust, to take in one or more abused children for a period of a few months until solutions tailored to their needs can be found.



¹ UNHCR, *Thailand Border Operation - Information Management Unit, Mae Sot, Aug 31, 2020*

² Ibid.

³ Burmalink, Apr 27, 2015, Retrieved from:

<https://www.burmalink.org/background/thailand-burma-border/displaced-in-thailand/refugee-camps/>

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Beneficiaries



Today, COERR is the only Thai NGO active there, engaging in activities designed to increase respect for human dignity and to help children victims of abuse. Thanks to the role played by COERR and Children of the Mekong, children at risk will be placed in a safer environment to build back themselves and live the childhood they deserve.

Project Budget:

Our current fundraising targets are outlined in the following chart:

Budget (details available upon request)	THB	GBP	%
Training camp staff and foster families	100,320	2,787	9%
Allowance to families (per diem and equipment for the house)	621,000	17,250	54%
Local support (part time social worker and costs)	326,400	9,067	28%
Project management (incl. transport)	112,620	3,128	9%
Contingency 10%	116,034	3,223	
Total net budget in GBP	1,276,374	35,455	
Fundraising costs: 9% of gross budget		3,670	
Overhead costs: 6% of gross budget		2,446	
Total gross budget in GBP		40,773	
	<i>GBP1= THB</i>	<i>36</i>	

Already funded from Trusts & Foundations: £ 7,700

Here are some pictures that show the context of the refugees' camps.



This project contributes to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals



Please feel free to get in touch with us at eugenie@childrenofthemekong.org if you have further questions.

Thank you very much for your consideration.