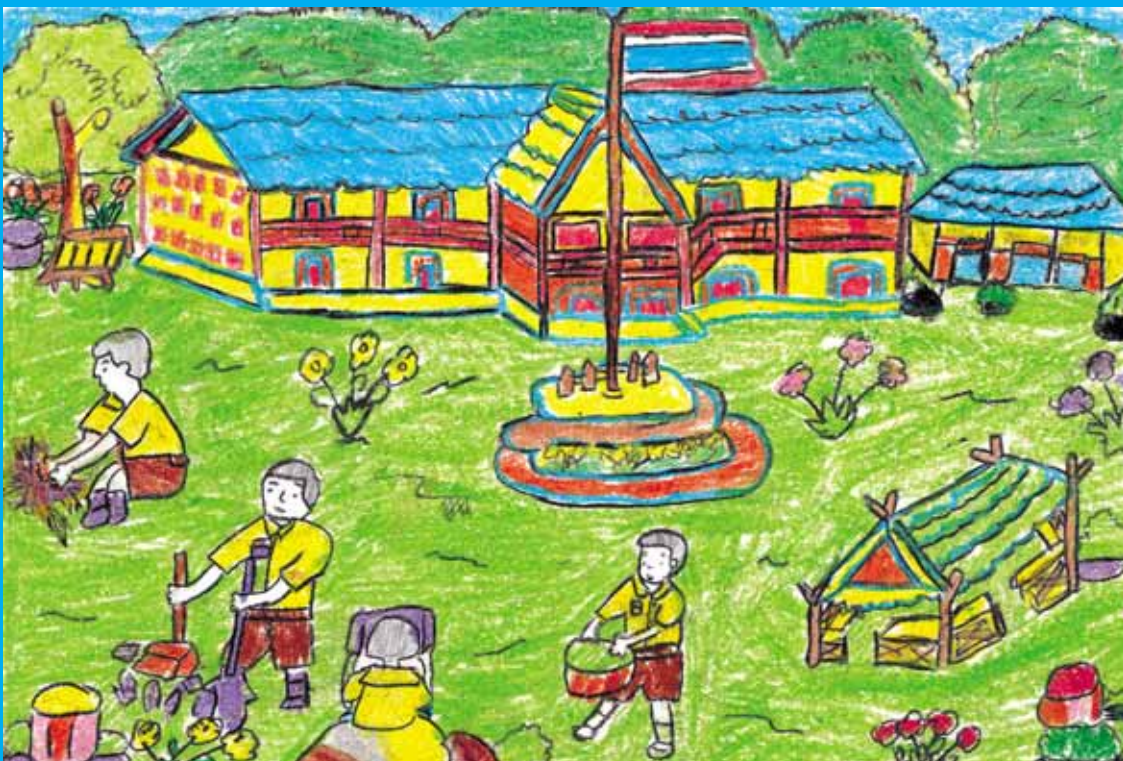


CHILDREN'S REPORT ON CHILD RIGHTS AND CHILDREN'S ISSUES



Presented to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
By the Working Team for Child Rights and Children's Issues

For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY

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**Presented to the United Nations Committee
on the Rights of the Child**

By the Working Team for Child Rights and Children's Issues

Front cover illustration by **Nhuriya Khumpor**

Back cover illustration by **Kranokwan Harnsobha**

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PREFACE

In recent years it has become increasingly apparent to the relevant agencies working with children, both government and non-government, that child participation in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is of particular importance. With UNICEF's support, regional forums for children were organized in five regions of Thailand: North, Northeast, South, Central and East. In addition, a national forum was held in Bangkok. The participating children decided to write their own report on child rights and selected from amongst themselves a working team to be responsible for the project.

The working team was comprised of child representatives from the five different regions of Thailand, who were from both inside and outside the education system, and included needy and vulnerable youth, such as the homeless and disabled. Under the subcontract on child rights, these 29 selected representatives of the working team participated in the national forum for children. The report they worked to prepare will be submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The information, data, suggestions and opinions of young people on child rights and young people's problems were collected from 1999-2000, with assistance from both government and non-government organizations, as well as children and youth throughout the country.

We would like to thank all those involved, including Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn, Chairperson of the Subcommittee on Child Rights; Mrs. Sienoi Kashemsanta Na Ayudhya, Secretary-General to the National Youth Bureau; and Dr. Kitiya Phornsadja, UNICEF Office for Thailand. We would also like to acknowledge the Holt Sahathai Foundation, the Foundation for Women, the Young People's Development Centre and the Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University, for their generous cooperation in organizing the conference for children project, which was the starting point of this report, and in facilitating the formulation of this report and providing guidance for its successful completion.

On behalf of the Working Team for 'Child Rights and Children's Issues', we hope this report reflects our young people's opinions and can contribute to the development of Thailand's children from childhood to adulthood.

Mr. Pongchayon Aksornsawas
Chairman of the Working Team for
Child Rights and Children's Issues

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BACKGROUND

Thailand became a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. Since then, various organizations in the country have undertaken several activities to promote and publicize the issue of child rights. Nevertheless, today certain rights are still not upheld or are done so inadequately. In order to address this, in 1999, several regional and national forums for children were organized, exposing the public to the problems of today's young people in each region. Most children across the five regions mentioned the following problems:

1. Education—Children in all regions identified similar educational problems such as poor teaching and inadequate study materials, insufficient schoolteachers, inappropriate school regulations, and unclean and unsafe school environments.

2. Narcotics—Children in all regions face similar problems regarding narcotics, which they see as worsening their quality of living.

3. Difficulties were recognised in each region surrounding the issues of homelessness, disabled children, hilltribe children and children in the sex industry.

The national forum for children in 1999 inspired the young participants to propose compiling a performance report under the subcontract on Child Rights and Children's Issues in order to present the views of young people today. As a result, a conference was held to prepare the report on Child Rights and Children's Issues. Initially, 270 children took part in a sensitizing programme on child rights. These children then nominated child representatives from each region to form a working team to formulate the report.

The working team consisted of 29 young people, who collected data utilizing questionnaires from 637 secondary school students, and pictures drawn by 490 primary school students. The working team was divided into several data collection teams from different regions and provinces, including Si Sa Ket, Ubon Ratchathani, Angthong, Uthai Thani, Khonkaen, Bangkok, Yala, Chonburi, Chiang Rai, and Amnatcharoen. Then the data from all regions was collated and analyzed in order to identify some of the major issues facing children and young people in Thailand today. The working team sincerely hopes that senior government and NGO authorities will glimpse an ordinarily hidden side of children in this report, and will try to address their problems accordingly.

Finally, the working team would like to thank and acknowledge the senior authorities that gave children the chance to think and to prepare this report on their own.

The Working Team for Child Rights
and Children's Issues

HIS MAJESTY THE KING AND CHILD RIGHTS

Thailand is a democratic constitutional monarchy. His Majesty the King reigns with Dasapidhrajadhamma (the tenfold conduct of the king). His Majesty the King, Her Majesty the Queen and Royal Family members have devoted themselves to improving the quality of life of all their subjects.

Children are considered the nation's future and power of development. Without them, the country's development could not continue. His Majesty the King has shown great concern for children and has initiated various projects to encourage child and youth development.

The Rajaprajanukroh Foundation under Royal Patronage was initiated by His Majesty the King for children who lack educational opportunities; this group includes orphans, children whose parents cannot afford tuition fees, and disabled children who need special programmes. At present, there are more than 30 schools in Thailand under this project.

Rajaprajanukroh School, Suksasongkroh School and Sotasuksa School are under the Royal Ministry of Education. They operate long-distance learning systems via satellite, a project started by His Majesty the King. These schools also provide co-educational, boarding facilities. Students are provided everything they need free of charge – study materials, uniforms, food and accommodation. Moreover, the schools promote the idea of democracy, teaching the students how to exercise their rights through conducting elections for student councils. Students are also encouraged to set up and operate their own businesses at school in order to earn money.

It is obvious that His Majesty the King had recognized the great importance of the right to education long before Thailand became a member of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As Thais, we feel profoundly grateful for His Majesty the King's great vision. We would like to honor His Majesty as the Father of Child Rights in Thailand and would like to pledge our loyalty to His Majesty's work. Long Live the King.

Voice from the Hearts of Children
The Working Team for Child Rights
and Children's Issues



EDUCATION

Education is a very important matter for Thailand as it is a major factor in the nation's future development. The working team therefore designed a survey to investigate the opinions and perceived educational needs of young people in Thailand. The team surveyed 637 young people (not over 18 years of age) from all regions of the nation. The youth were very eager to answer the questionnaires, which focused on eight aspects of education:

1. School study equipment
2. Educational institute personnel
3. Educational inequality
4. Obstacles in commuting to school
5. Participation in setting up school regulations
6. Educational institution penalties
7. Strictness of educational institute regulations
8. Child-centred teaching system

Table One: Opinions, needs and suggestions of 637 youth regarding their education.

NO.	SUBJECTS	OPINIONS/NEEDS/SUGGESTIONS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES
1	<p>School study equipment</p> <p>Sufficient 27.96 %</p> <p>Not sufficient 64.51 %</p> <p>Provide their own 0.94 %</p> <p>No Opinion 6.59 %</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All schools, whether in the city or countryside, should be provided all necessary teaching and study equipment such as computers, sports equipment, musical instruments, desks and chairs. 2. The quality of teaching materials should be improved to the same level as other publications. 3. The price of teaching and study materials should be reduced.

NO.	SUBJECTS	OPINIONS/NEEDS/SUGGESTIONS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES
2	<p>Personnel in educational institutes</p> <p>Sufficient number, and good quality 29.98 %</p> <p>Sufficient number, but lacking quality 37.69 %</p> <p>Insufficient number, but good quality 20.72 %</p> <p>Insufficient number, and lacking quality 10.36 %</p> <p>No opinion 1.25 %</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School teachers and instructors should be given more lectures on morality and ethics. 2. The government should select quality teachers and allocate them throughout the country. 3. Teachers' working quality should be evaluated more often.
3	<p>Educational inequality</p> <p>Yes, there is educational equality 31.72 %</p> <p>No, there is not educational equality 50.70 %</p> <p>No opinion 17.58 %</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The education of children in the city is more developed and better than that of children in the countryside. Equality should be ensured for both. 2. Teacher bias and unfairness should be reduced. They should not take their own relatives' side. 3. The problems of corruption and graft should be eradicated from the education system.
4	<p>Obstacles in commuting to school</p> <p>No 33.59 %</p> <p>Yes 56.04 %</p> <p>No opinion 10.37 %</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City children face the problem of traffic jams, and this problem needs to be solved urgently 2. Outside of Bangkok children have to face the problem of insufficient transportation to commute to school, and the roads are not in good condition.
5	<p>Participation in setting up school regulations</p> <p>Having participation 25.74 %</p> <p>No participation but want to 56.35 %</p> <p>Not interested 5.65 %</p> <p>No opinion 12.26 %</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schools should give students opportunities to express their opinions on rules and regulations, and to take part in considering whether or not school regulations are appropriate. 2. All rules and regulations should be published and made known to students.
6	<p>Punishment in educational institutes</p> <p>Suitable 50.23 %</p> <p>Not suitable 34.37 %</p> <p>No opinion 15.4 %</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present punishments are suitable. However, in some cases, punishments should be less severe, and, in order to prevent negative effects on students' emotional health, teachers should try to find out the causes of rule violations before deciding the punishment.

NO.	SUBJECTS	OPINIONS/NEEDS/SUGGESTIONS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES
7	Strictness in educational institutes Satisfactory 48.82 % Too strict 40.34 % No opinion 10.84 %	1. The strictness in educational institutes is satisfactory. However, rules and regulations should be made known to students.
8	Child-centred teaching method Support 67.66 % Do not support 7.53 % No opinion 24.81 %	1. The child-centred teaching method is beneficial. With this method, student participation and self-access learning are promoted fully.

Conclusion

The children's and young people's responses, needs and opinions expressed in the survey show there are a number of perceived problems that need to be addressed. Consequently, everyone must cooperate in tackling these problems as they occur in order to improve the education of Thai children and youth for the sake of the nation.

DREAM SCHOOL

We are the future of the nation. To grow intellectually and become good people, we need to have a good school. If the school is of low quality, how can we be successful? All of us have our own dream school and wish it would become a reality. We would like to reveal our dreams and ask adults whether they could come true.

- * We wish our school was provided with more and higher technology equipment, as we lack things like computers, science laboratories and sound laboratories.
- * We wish there were no bad influences affecting our school, and that our school was safe from drugs.
- * We wish our school had clean water. Now the water is so dirty that we cannot use it, and have to bring our own drinking water to school.
- * We wish our English teachers were native English speakers and that we could practice agricultural activities in school, such as growing vegetables and raising animals, which we could cook as food or sell to earn money while studying.
- * We wish our education was reformed and improved.
- * We wish we had new, quality buildings and that many trees were planted around our school to create fresh air.
- * We wish we had clean classrooms and restrooms and that our school promoted money-saving activities so students could save for future studies.
- * We wish we had a big library with many books and computers and a well-equipped clinic.
- * We wish we had a good stadium and sports facilities for students and people in the local community to enjoy football, takraw, other sports and swimming.

- * We wish our teachers would not punish us by hitting us hard.
- * We wish there was a school bus service and a cooperative in our school.
- * We wish interscholastic sports were held between schools like the Asian Games.
- * We wish our school was clean and well equipped. We wish a sense of unity among students was built, and that poor students were not charged tuition fees.

The above wishes are only a part of what we hope for. Other groups of students may have different dreams. The important thing now is that we all want our wishes to come true. Adults should not suppress our dreams, as we are entitled to them; they should cooperate to make them come true. We all hope that one day our dreams will become reality.

Thank you,
Little Children
The Working Team for Child Rights
and Children's Issues



Nhuriya Khumpor

Picture 1

All students are healthy as they come to play football every morning at the school's football field. Notice their smiles. There are several buildings for teaching and study available for all students in the school. There are sufficient teachers here for all of us. There is no pollution as all of the teachers come to school together in the same car in the morning. Our village isn't polluted either. There are two school buses to take us to and from school because we live very far away; therefore, this is not a problem for our study. The road is smooth and well maintained. Every morning, we see flocks of birds looking for food while we are playing football. We are very happy in the morning, and we are determined to make our dreams come true.



Phatraporn Pattanaporn

Picture 2

We wish our school had a volleyball court, football field, and takraw and basketball courts. We wish there was no trash scattered around the school, no fights occurring in our school, and that we had foreign teachers to teach us languages. We'd like to have several buildings and also computers for every student. We'd like our teachers to be kind and the school principal not to scold us. We wish we could concentrate on our studies and read whenever we had time, that the school was nice and shady with lots of trees, that there were many trash bins and the school area was clean, that students did not throw trash on the ground but in the bins, and that we were good and disciplined children. However, the buildings are not adequate for all the students. Presently, what we desire cannot be found in our school. When will we have all the good things that others already have? We wait until that day.



Sunrueda Mhunkhetvit

Picture 3

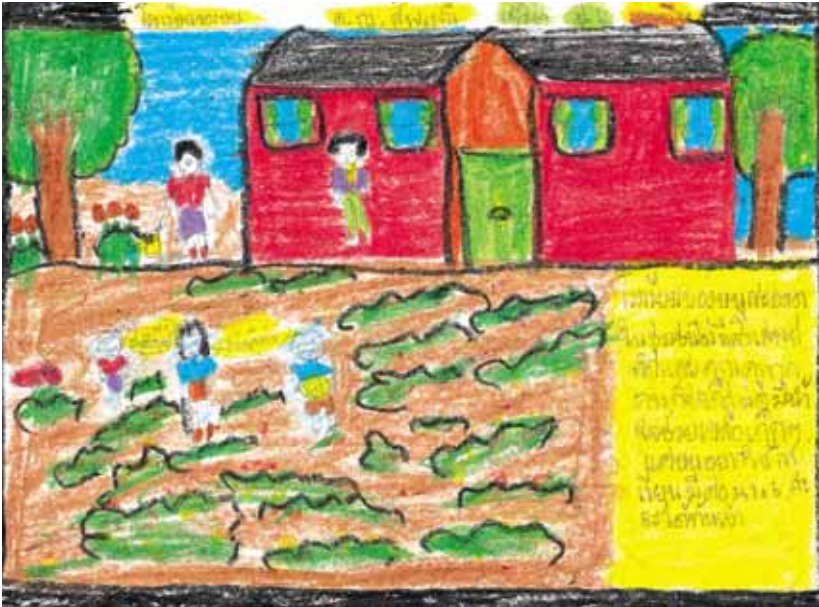
Our school is clean. There are no drugs in our community, and all teachers are kind and helpful to children. However, we wish that our school could provide a high school education so we could further our studies. At our school, the teachers are nice and pay respect to one another when they meet. They are cheerful and joyful, and the school has a good environment. Every morning, the Prathom 6 students, our seniors, come to water the beautiful trees and flowers growing in the garden. We like to rest in the garden with all its flowers and trees. We feel fresh in the morning. Our school is like a second home to us. Our teachers are like our parents, and they love us like their own children. All of us love our school.

OUR SCHOOL

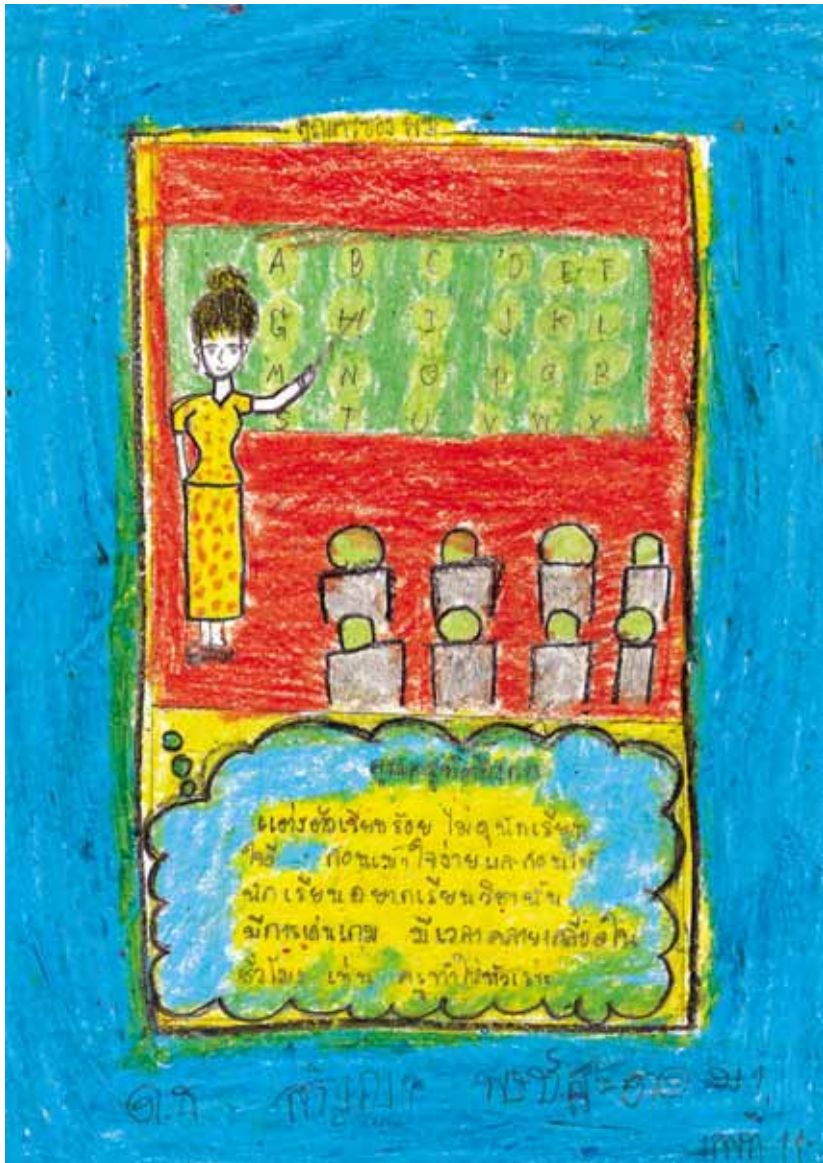
All of us are happy to study in our school, which is like our second home. Our teachers are generous. They love and take good care of us. We feel warmth and love from them, just like our parents. They teach us everything. Our school is clean and should have a motto like 'Knowledge, Discipline, Study, Hard Work.' We feel joy all the time as we have a beautiful flower garden. The students love one another like brothers and sisters, helping each other in all tasks. Still, the teachers sometimes bully us. We feel very sorry when they punish us. When they get angry, they do not take care of us. Our seniors like to use the football field without sharing it with us. We want to grow up quickly so we have the chance to play sports like them and have good health. The road to our school is made of dirt and is in bad condition. Our houses are very far from school although some of our friends live close by. It is usually difficult for us to commute to school.

We have few classroom buildings and our rooms are crowded. We sit close to each other and share a tight space. The boys sometimes argue and fight when they get angry. From time to time, some of our friends don't throw their trash into a bin, making our school dirty. Some of our friends' schools have foreign teachers. We sometimes feel envious and would like foreign teachers like them. Some other schools do not have a lot of trees to give the students fresh air. Their principals do not care much about trees or flowers so they have less than our school. We also don't know anything about new technology like computers because we don't have one in our school. We wish our teachers would buy computers for us to use, and that we had enough classroom space for every student. We need special classrooms, too, like a music room for children who love playing musical instruments, a gymnasium for those who love playing sports and a sound laboratory for those who love studying languages. We would like to have a shady and clean environment where it's good to stay, sleep and play. We want many trees and flowers so our minds are as fresh as flowers. We don't want our friends to sit around and flirt as it is a waste of studying time and we are still young. We want a swimming pool so we can be good at swimming and many garbage bins to keep our school clean. We want everybody to love one another so no fights happen in our school. We need love and care from our teachers who must be dedicated. Our dream will come true some day.

The Working Team for Child Rights
and Children's Issues



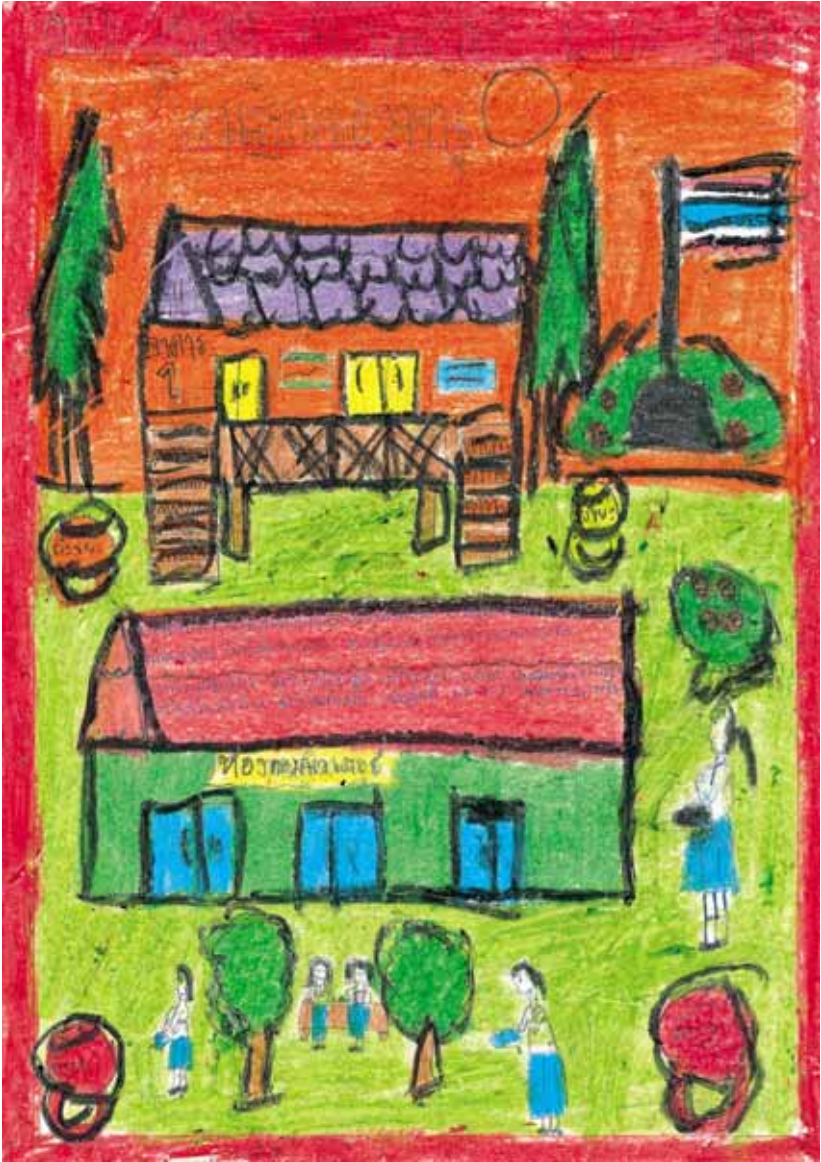
Suphanee Srivicha



Sanya Pongsaard



Anurak Saiban



Roongnapa Lomnhongpoyi

OUR TEACHER

We all have the same dream that our teachers would be good and kind, love us as if we were their children, dress properly, serve as good role models for us, would not scold us and could teach us so that we could understand our lessons easily. Our dream teachers should teach us to love and be eager to study, give us games to play to ease our stress and create good relations between teachers and students. For example, they can make us laugh, entertain us and use new materials to make lessons more fun.

At the same time, we do not want to see teachers scold us without good reason and be bad role models for us by drinking, smoking, being rude and scolding us while teaching. This scares us and makes us think that they are ogres. We become afraid to demonstrate our ability. Our ideal is that teachers should be like beautiful angels all the time.

The Working Team for Child Rights
and Children's Issues



NARCOTICS

Based on the questions about drugs (Items 10-15) answered by children and youth, the following conclusions were made:

No.10 As drugs are a serious social problem at the present time, the working team for Child Rights and Children's Issues conducted a survey on **children's opinions regarding drug addiction**. The results were varied: the majority of young people said drug use was bad and that they were against it. They also thought that child addicts should be treated and rehabilitated physically and mentally. Other respondents thought these young people were bad and horrible and trying to draw attention to themselves. They also felt that drug addiction is a waste of money and damages health. Some respondents said children who are drug addicts should be punished. Other young people held the opinion that consulting centres for drug addicted children should be increased.

No.11 Regarding **motives for drug addiction**, the findings showed the main reason given was family problems (32.65 per cent), followed by peer pressure (21.50 per cent) and desire to try it (20.4 per cent), respectively. Other reasons included environment (7.23 per cent), personal problems (5.69 per cent), wrong values (4.97 per cent), seduction (3.78 per cent), force (2.34 per cent) and lack of education (1.44 per cent).

No.12 With regard to **whether a school environment makes it easy for students to become addicted to drugs**, 67.13 per cent of the questioned children mentioned several factors, that may contribute to drug use. These include a community that is located near a school, hidden places in school, amphetamines sold in school by outside people and/or students, places where people gather to conduct illegal activities and not enough searches in school. However, 32.87 per cent believe that schools do not provide students with any motives for drug addiction.

No.13 In regard to **whether their schools have anti-drug campaigns**, 65.30 per cent of children said there were many anti-drug projects such as The Friend Warning Friend Project, Friend Protecting Volunteer Project, White School Project, School Sports Games Project and exhibitions. However, 34.7 per cent think these projects are unsuccessful.

No.14 When asked about **the advantages of projects mentioned in No.13**, the majority of students answered:

- 14.1 Knowledge and understanding are provided to students so they realize the dangers of drugs and do not want to experiment.
- 14.2 There is more careful examination of students and they are given treatment and therapy.
- 14.3 The school's image is improved.
- 14.4 Children are given a chance to spend time usefully.

No.15 Recommended solutions to solve drug addiction to be implemented by the government are as follows:

- 15.1 Strict measures to punish drug traders should be set.
- 15.2 A realistic media campaign to reach educational institutes should be conducted.
- 15.3 Larger budget for suppression and punishment.
- 15.4 The government should recruit volunteers to take care of drug addicts.

IMPROPER THINGS I WITNESSED

I have grown up and developed physically and intellectually with the help of my parents, teachers, experts and those with different kinds of ability. I have also learned from my friends and through direct experience. Sometimes, I can make use of my experiences and apply these to what I've learned. What is good or bad depends on each person's viewpoint. From my own experience and the pictures drawn by primary school students, I can see various problems and bad things as follows:

- * I saw parents arguing, in particular after work. They were drinking and gambling and arrived home late at night. I heard them scream and curse each other.
- * I saw schoolteachers smoking in school and drinking after school.
- * I saw my friends secretly buying and selling amphetamines or cigarettes in school and sometimes saw my friends, who are only primary school students, secretly smoking and skipping school.
- * I saw teenage boys having a brawl after school and saw teenage girls dressing improperly. My mother told me not to look at them and warned me not to follow their example.
- * I saw older kids bullying my friends.
- * I saw my friends dropping trash on the ground and throwing it into the river.
- * I saw disabled children hated and forgotten. They weren't given the education they deserve.
- * I saw polluted water from industrial factories and smog covering the area.
- * I heard my teacher saying that study materials and scientific equipment were not available so we skipped to another lesson which did not require them.

Can you tell me why I had to see these things?

The Working Team for Child Rights
and Children's Issues



Thiti Huelohah



Aukarin Aussavaratana



Veraphat Mongkolthry

ล้างแม่พิมพ์



พวกผมไม่ต้องการให้อาจารย์เป็นแบบนี้
อยากให้อาจารย์กลับมาเป็นคน เดิม.
และอยากให้อาจารย์มีเหตุผลบ้าง ไม่ใช่เอา
อารมณ์มาบอกเรา แล้วไม่ใช่เหตุผล แล้วมาทำ
โทษนั่นก็เรียนอย่างไม่มีเหตุผล.

Julmanee Yawekudreau



Phatcharaphan Plakrim

D-D-D-DRUGS

At present, a major social issue is drugs. We know this problem occurs in all regions of the country. I am interested in this issue. Therefore, I decided to study the problem at a drug-addict treatment centre in Yala province, by talking with some young people undergoing treatment there. I missed my chance, however, as all the patients who had been treated and rehabilitated were allowed to leave and return home. This treatment centre admits one group at a time, and after treatment is completed, all are sent home. I asked a staff member if I could have addresses so I could interview each individual, but this information is kept private. This indicates that staff here comply with the code of practice and perform their duties well. I wish the staff at all treatment centres could be like this. A new group of youth was admitted for treatment; however, they had not recovered enough to allow me to interview them.

Another experience I would like to share with you is when I went to do some business at a hospital. After finishing my business, I walked past the surgical ward, intending to go home. I saw a boy in pyjamas sitting in front of a room. He acted as if he wanted to catch my attention by waving his hand at me. I was not sure if I knew him. I didn't trust his look, but as I had been on the staff of youth camps many times and an older friend told me that if a child called us, we had to go to them, I approached the boy. He told me how he had been addicted to cough medicine, a kind of drug. He said he had been in hospital for 22 days due to an accident on his way home from a discotheque. He also said he once had many friends, but after the accident, nobody came to visit him. He felt lonely, and needed someone to talk to. Then, I told him to consider me as his adviser, sister and friend. I gave him my office phone number, and he called me almost every day for a few minutes each time. He also told me that he would quit the drugs for me. He trusted me and was able to adapt himself quite well. This may be because I met him when he had nobody and was faced with problems. He needed someone with whom he could consult and who would give him assistance.

From this experience, I think child drug addiction is the result of family problems and friends. Most of the families of child addicts are poor, and the children are often neglected by their families. Furthermore, most are not well educated and keep bad company who lead them astray.

From this event, I would like to call on the Government and those involved to help solve these family problems, especially economic ones. I wish the Government would increase the number of treatment centres and educational scholarships. Then, the number of treatment centres could meet the demands of children who are drug addicts. Moreover, the number of staff in each treatment center should be increased enough to care for all addicts who come to receive treatment. Only those genuinely interested in this work should be selected, not people who do not have any personal code of ethics. This is because the staff are extremely important in encouraging the children undergoing treatment to give up their drug dependency.

Miss Asiyoh Pohitaedaoh
Khanarasbamrung School, Yala Province

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The following analysis was generated from questionnaire item no. 9 and specifically addresses the issue of what students thought about people with disabilities being admitted to study with them in mainstream schools. The results were as follows:

* Would like to have disabled persons study with them	61.72 %
* No opinion	15.01 %
* Not ready to have disabled persons study with them	2.93 %
* No answer	20.34 %

Opinions of the majority of the students from the questionnaires

- * All children have equal rights; physical disabilities should not be an obstacle.
- * It is a good chance to learn about the feelings of children with disabilities, and we do not want them to think that a disability is a weak point.
- * All schools should accept children with disabilities.
- * They can have friends to play with and people to understand them.
- * They can adapt themselves in their daily life.
- * Other schools will develop teaching materials for children with disabilities.
- * There should be facilities and elevators provided for the disabled.
- * The disabled should be given the chance to join various activities.

GOOD THINGS REQUIRED FROM EVERYBODY

I am a boy with a disability studying at Phra Mahatai-Pattaya Vocational School in Chonburi province. My school held a field trip to develop services for the disabled in various districts in the province, cultivating activities for the disabled to take part in. I was one of those who went on this trip. One of the activities was to start a disabled persons register. The disabled can register to receive services from several hospitals without charge and borrow interest-free money from the Provincial Public Welfare Department.

I had the chance to talk with some of the other children with disabilities. It was good in that I could give them encouragement and urge them to fight for a better life. I told them there are many other people with disabilities who were struggling for their future so they should also work to survive using their skills and talents, to earn their own living and devote themselves to society.

I would like to call on others to expand this idea to other provinces in order to develop services for people with disabilities all over Thailand so they could provide benefits both for themselves and the nation.

Mr. Ekkampol Bantao
Phra Mahatai-Pattaya Vocational School
Chonburi Province

MAY I HAVE EQUALITY?

In society, people compete against one another for their own benefit. They are concerned only with themselves and will try to take advantage of others. This damages our society every day. Those with good financial and social status stick together. People are divided into classes; the lower class includes beggars, homeless and disabled people.

In the present society, people with disabilities are exploited. They need many things essential to their life and survival, such as education and participation in activities with normal people. Sometimes, they do not get what they should. This lack now pushes them to call for rights equal to others. Their most important demand is education. A lot of children with disabilities want to study, but they have no chance to do so. This lack of education makes it hard to earn a living in today's society.

Only a few disabled children are accepted to study in a normal school, but they still face many obstacles. For example, classrooms are on several floors but there are only stairs at school. At most schools where disabled children study, there are no ramps or elevators. As a result, it is a problem for disabled students to get to classes upstairs. At present, the Government is demonstrating increased concern for the disabled, and supports schools with disabled students to build ramps and elevators; nevertheless, not all schools have enough resources to construct these. This is a problem for students with disabilities, and they voice their demands for what they need.

Today, society has begun to give the disabled more opportunities, but there are still too few. What they really call for is acceptance to study with normal students.

Miss Phetchlada Kerdsiri
Srisangwan School, Nonthaburi Province

HILLTRIBE CHILDREN: ECHOES FROM THE VALLEYS

We are Bangkok boys who have moved to live in an upcountry province for one year. We have been exposed to many new experiences, one of which is regarding the rights of the highlanders or 'hilltribe people'. They should have the same rights as young people living in the plains areas. We were told about this matter for the first time when taking part in a sensitization programme on child rights in Chiang Mai province. We became friends with several hilltribe children. We learned what they lacked and desired, in particular, citizenship; we now see this is especially important to them so we have become more interested in the issue.

One of the main reasons why they need to be Thai nationals is because without Thai citizenship, they are not eligible for government services such as public health centres and hospitals. However, some hospitals do provide them with services because of the compassion of doctors and staff. Furthermore, they are not issued identification cards and are considered aliens despite the fact that their ancestors and families have lived in Thailand for generations. This has had a direct impact on hilltribe children.

During April-May 1999, there was a forum for the Assembly of Ethnic Groups of Thailand, the Northern Agriculture Networks and the Assembly of the Poor in Chiang Mai to call for changes and modifications for better, more careful examinations for the granting of citizenship. Previously, only government officials performed this duty, but recently local administrations have been handling this work, decreasing corruption at different levels. This shows how the government now is concerned for hilltribe people, and has tried to address the issue of citizenship. However, we would like to point out one thing about the criteria for granting citizenship; that is, the requirement to understand and speak Thai. As each ethnic group has its own language, like Yawi in the south or the Isaan dialect of the northeast, this requirement seems quite unfair. Despite some developments, there are still several problems left unresolved, which are causing obstacles in asking for citizenship.

Another question concerns development projects for hilltribes. According to a member of the Pakakayor ethnic group, some development projects are less than advantageous. In fact, hilltribe people request help only in areas such as citizenship and language. Meanwhile, the influence of urban society on this community has affected the balance of culture, nature and their way of life. They have lived with nature for hundreds of years, striving to maintain a balance between people and nature. Now, the people themselves are divided: there are those who hold on to their traditional culture and those who want new things and technology, which has led to conflict amongst the people. The issue of narcotics was also raised; opium was used only as an herb in the past, but after outside people entered their community, it became used as a narcotic drug. This is an example of how local wisdom and their way of life has been altered. We can't help asking whether development and new technology are really good.

The citizenship problem doesn't just involve hilltribe people, but also another group, which is rarely mentioned: children living along the borders. They are persons of mixed race living in areas not yet clearly defined. Some have been able to get citizenship, but often in ways that may result in adults taking advantage of them, or through corruption. Is it fair to these children who are as Thai as we are? We therefore hope that our article will help persuade authorities involved to see the importance of this matter and to take steps to address this problem soon.

Mr. Pongchayon Aksornsawas
Ramkhamhang University, Bangkok

Miss Wanna Saejao
Thamphin-Vittaya School, Phayau Province

Miss Chaba Saewang
Banbrom School, Nan Province

CHILD PROSTITUTES: WHY DO I FALL VICTIM?

I am one of the students granted an educational scholarship from the Utit Foundation, which helps poor, homeless, underprivileged and sexually abused Thai children. During the previous year, the foundation carried out a project to give assistance to girls faced with various difficulties.

A case I became aware of involved what I believe to be an unfair and violent infringement of child rights. The case involved a girl of around 16 years of age who was sexually abused by her own stepfather when her mother was not at home. This man raped his own stepdaughter, which is a severe crime against a more vulnerable person. As a teenager, this girl was changing physically and mentally as well as adjusting herself to society. This event, however, made her scared of facing society. She was always afraid and suspicious of people, even her relatives and close friends. Her behaviour changed a lot; she did not feel brave enough to explain her opinions to groups of friends when there were activities held in school. I once asked her for some information, but she would not tell me for fear we might make her story known, embarrassing her in the eyes of friends and the public. However, I got a basic account from a staff member at the home for girls taking care of her.

Another case occurred in an educational institute. A girl persuaded her friends and acquaintances to sell sexual services to men aged 20 years or older. This girl would at first try to make friends with other students in school and then persuade them to go together with her. She would lead them to a place where they would meet with men who wanted to buy the sexual services of these girls. The customers requested a certain girl or were offered girls directly. The price was already set between the customers and the girl, who acted as the agent. The victims would be threatened and given some money to prevent them from revealing what had happened. Some of the girls were willing to continue with this work, thinking they could not redeem their past, and that it is job with good and fast money. Also, some girls would not dare to talk to their teachers and the police for fear that it could put them in danger of reprisals. This problem remains unresolved in schools and will become worse if nothing is done to address it.

Miss Prayorm Chaoun
Utiti Foundation for Thai Children,
Khon Khaen Province

Miss Jirawan Thesjan
Uthai Wittayakhom School,
Uthai Thani Province

HOMELESS CHILDREN: I NEED A HOME

At the present time, Thai youth are completely surrounded by the dramatic effects of economic development. Modern values now play a greater role in Thailand and emotional growth is increasingly being discarded. This leads to some problems not yet realized by all. One example would be poor families who cannot afford what their children want. These children struggle to find some money no matter what the means. They do not think about the problems that may result: the risk of arrest, the increased chance of AIDS infection, drifting into prostitution, becoming homeless, or finally just becoming a social problem. As a consequence, whatever the problem, we (as members of society) need to join hands in solving these, step by step, as the nation's future is in the hands of not only children, but everyone.

Mr. Winai Pathan
Volunteer for Children's Development Group
Chiang Mai Province

KNOWLEDGE ON CHILD RIGHTS

The promotion of child rights is significant in that it serves as a starting point for children to become aware of their rights, and to exercise them for their own benefit without violating the rights of others. With this in mind, the working team conducted a survey of knowledge on child rights. Based on questions 16-18 in the questionnaire, the conclusions were as follows:

No.16 Knowledge on child rights - Most children had some knowledge about children's rights (59.13 per cent), and 17.24 per cent of the children indicated that they had sufficient knowledge about children's rights. A considerable number of respondents said they knew nothing about the matter (13.79 per cent), and 9.84 per cent did not express an opinion.

No.17 The majority of the children surveyed (72.76 per cent) wanted to **have the issue of child rights included in the curriculum**, while only 8.79 per cent did not, with 18.45 per cent having no preference.

No.18 In terms of **training and publications on child rights**, 43.97 per cent of the children indicated that they would like this to be provided in schools, community venues, temples and through various media channels, while 38.44 per cent did not. A significant number did not indicate an opinion on this issue (17.59 per cent).

Therefore, it can be seen that knowledge on child rights in Thailand still needs to be promoted and supported with a great deal of effort, extending to both children and adults all over the country. This cannot be denied from the above answers.

“I DON’T KNOW”

Thailand signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child on February 12, 1992, but I was not aware of this before the conference.

One day, a preceptor teacher called me to see him, and gave me an application form to be a Youth Representative at a conference to report on Thailand’s implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to the application form, I was required to submit an essay, both in Thai and English, titled ‘The Role of Thai Youth in Child Rights.’ Suddenly, “What are children’s rights?” became an all-important question in my head. I went to search for information at the Department of Social Sciences and asked a teacher there who answered, “I have no idea either. You should go to the Central Library, Chulalongkorn University.” There, I found only the declaration on child rights. It was then 1998 – six years after Thailand became a member of the convention. If the teachers were not informed, how could a student know anything about this? Although it is a matter all children should be aware of, how many children have a chance to gain information about this?

After taking part in the activities of the National Youth Bureau conference, I began to see more promotion of child rights. I was able to absorb the meaning of child rights, problems and needs of children. However, most children are not given such a chance or are not interested in this issue. For example, children who are provided with everything are not necessarily interested, as their rights are not abused. However, for underprivileged children and children whose rights are violated, how can they protect their rights when they have no knowledge of what their rights are? We can witness this in newspapers.

It takes time to publicize information on child rights thoroughly. This information needs to be spread to children and adults so that the former can protect their own rights and the latter will not abuse them. They need to understand this matter correctly; otherwise, misuse may occur. I would like to call on all adults to accept these changes and the opinions of children.

Finally, I would like to give encouragement to all adults, friends and other youth to join hands in making the matter of child rights better known to the public.

The Nation's Future
Miss Anunya Lohakija
Mahidol University, Bangkok

APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Objective: To gather information for a report on child rights and children's issues.

For Questions 1 to 4, please check ✓ in front of the statements you choose and add opinions.

Sex Male Female Age.....years

1. Does your school have sufficient study materials and equipment?

Sufficient Not sufficient Not at all

Suggestion _____

2. What do you think about your school personnel?

- Sufficient number and good quality
- Sufficient number but lacking quality
- Insufficient number but good quality
- Insufficient number and lacking quality

3. Do you think your school provides equality in education?

- No
- Yes

If yes, give explanation. _____

4. Do you have any problems commuting to school?

- No
- Yes

If yes, give reasons. _____

5. Do you take part in setting or changing school regulations?

- Yes No, but want to Not interested

6. Do you think the means of punishment in your school are appropriate?

- Yes
- No

If no, give examples. _____

7. Do you think the regulations at your school are too strict?

- No
- Yes

If yes, give reasons. _____

8. Do you agree with the child-centred teaching system?
 Yes No
9. What would you think if disabled children were to study with you?
 Pleased Indifferent Not ready to study with them
Suggestion _____
10. What do you think about children who are addicted to drugs?

11. In your opinion, what might be the motives of children who become addicted to drugs?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
12. Are there any factors at school which encourage students to use drugs?
How?

13. Does your school have any anti-drug campaign projects? What are they?

14. With relation to No. 13, if so, what are the advantages of the projects?

15. How would you like the government to help solve the drug problem?

16. Do you have any knowledge about child rights?
 Yes Little Not at all
17. Do you want the matter of child rights included in the school curriculum?
 Yes No
18. Do you want training or publications on child rights in your community or school?
 No
 Yes
If yes, identify the place. _____

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1. Uthai Wittayakhom School, Muang District, Uthai Thani Province (questionnaires)
2. Muang Kindergarten, Muang District, Uthai Thani Province (pictures)
3. Thongprasartwate School, Nongchang District, Uthai Thani Province (pictures)
4. Ban Khoke Sawas School, Muang District, Amnatcharoen Province, (pictures)
5. Amnatcharoen School, Muang District, Amnatcharoen Province (questionnaires)
6. Rajaprachanugroh 29 School, Si Sa Ket Province (questionnaires and pictures)
7. Ban Nong Nai School, Si Sa Ket Province (questionnaires and pictures)
8. Ban Ngor-Nong Laeng School, Si Sa Ket Province (questionnaires and pictures)
9. Bodhisamphan Pittayakarn School, Chonburi Province (questionnaires)
10. Phra Mahatai-Pattaya Vocational School, Chonburi Province (questionnaires)
11. Ban Purong School, Yala Province (pictures)
12. Ban Gortortura School, Yala Province (pictures)
13. Khanarasbamrung School, Yala Province (questionnaires)
14. Pattanawittaya School, Yala Province (questionnaires)
15. Rajasathitwittayakom School, Ang Thong Province (questionnaires)
16. Ang Thong Pattamarojwittayakom School, Ang Thong Province (questionnaires)
17. Home for Girls, Utits Foundation for Thai Children in Countryside, Khon Kaen Province (questionnaires and pictures)
18. Kalayanawatr School, Khon Kaen Province (questionnaires and pictures)
19. Ban Phor Raswittaya School (questionnaires and pictures)
20. Ban Lao Nok Chum School (questionnaires and pictures)
21. Ban Don Khom School (questionnaires and pictures)
22. Mahatai School for Boys, Chonburi Province (questionnaires and pictures)
23. Rajadamri School, Bangkok (questionnaires)
24. Islam Wittayalai, Bangkok (questionnaires)
25. Saeng Arun School, Bangkok (pictures)



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