



Thailand | Look Me (6)

Look Me is the second youngest of four children. Her elder brother and sister work in Bangkok. Her mother and her younger brother also live in the capital. Look Me was left behind in Wangka, together with her father and her grandparents.

Look Me (right) is one of the children who can benefit from your project sponsorship.

Sponsorship Laos / Thailand: Children and teachers speak the same language

Look Me means «little bell». Her laughter is just as clear as the sound of a bell. Look Me goes to kindergarten in Wangka, a village northwest of Bangkok near the Burmese border. She belongs to the Mon people, one of Thailand's underprivileged ethnic minorities.

In kindergarten, Look Me is learning how to read, write and count in a playful way. Classes are held in both languages, Mon and Thai. She also learns the basics about health, child rights, equal rights for men and women, and practical skills that are adapted to local needs. During break, Look Me pinches the teacher's high-heeled shoes and parades about wearing them. It is the same all over the world: little girls cannot wait to be grown-up women.

In Thailand, the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation assists ethnic minorities in regions with poor educational opportunities. We support child-friendly local language teaching in kindergartens, thus preparing children for their entry into primary school. Our kindergarten teachers speak the local languages, hence are able to understand, and answer, the children's questions.

PCF helps train teachers to prepare child-friendly teaching aids using readily available local materials such as wood, bamboo and pebbles. Teachers also learn how to develop locally adapted school books and illustrate

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them with sketches and scenes of rural life. Incorporating local knowledge in the curriculum offers children a higher degree of identification and teaches them skills for daily survival. Children and youth are made aware of their rights and encouraged to see that they are implemented locally.

What can my sponsorship of a project in Laos / Thailand achieve?

Your sponsorship enables ethnic minority children to complete school, thus improving their chances of leading independent lives. Teachers receive training in intercultural education which also provides indirect benefits to parents, siblings and the village community as a whole.

- 90 francs a year buy teaching materials for an entire class.
 - 180 francs a year finance the development of child-friendly teaching materials in a local language.
 - 360 francs a year pay for training and further training of one local teacher.
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Background Guatemala

Guatemala
→ Inhabitants: 13 million
→ Capital: Guatemala City
→ Surface area: 109,021 km²

Guatemala

1996 brought an end to 36 years of Central America's bloodiest civil war. When compared internationally, the fighting was particularly violent. The worst affected population group were the traditionally underprivileged Maya living in the highlands.

15 years of peace failed to bring radical change to the country, and Guatemalan society is basically still the same. With commercial centres and residential areas mushrooming, and luxury cars circulating in the city centre, parts of the capital sport a new look, but in the

sprawling suburbs and in the countryside, poverty and destitution are omnipresent.

The land distribution is as unequal as ever: 2.5 per cent of the population own approximately 65 per cent of the land. Large land owners tend to possess fertile arable land whilst small-holding farmers struggle on inferior plots that are unsuitable for efficient long-term agricultural use. Over 50 per cent of Guatemalans live in poverty.

Neither climate nor soil condition are the reasons for this. In Guatemala, hunger has structural roots. The country has resources, and it is able to produce sufficient amounts of food, but its people are too poor to purchase it. The most fertile farms are used to grow cut flowers and strawberries for export, or African oil palms for biofuel.

Poverty increases violence and every day people become victims of vicious crime. Guatemala has one of the highest crime rates in Latin America.

Most Guatemalans are of indigenous origin. Despite their majority status they are excluded from mainstream society, experiencing repres-

sion. There are 21 different Maya cultures, each having developed a typical independent language and culture. The discrimination of Guatemala's indigenous population is clearly visible in the area of education. The Ministry of Education estimates that at least 50 per cent of ethnic minority children do not attend school, and that most of those who do have to work before and after school hours. Approximately 40 per cent of Guatemala's overall population is unable to read and write.

Decades of armed conflict and civil war have stifled the development of a performing education system. The official teaching language, Spanish, represents an educational barrier, in particular for the various indigenous population groups. Only few government schools offer bilingual classes, and most of them lack funds to ensure good quality teaching. Furthermore, the official curriculum of government schools does not consider the typical cultural situation of rural Maya populations.

