Children at New Life Project, Kanchanaburi

hands across the water
2013 Report

Chanthaburi
Chiang Mai
Chumphon
Kanchanaburi
Khao Lak
Yasothon
About Us

Vision

Hands Across the Water’s vision is to enrich lives through meaningful experiences and enduring connections. Hands also aims to provide a safe environment, education and improvement opportunities to Thai children and their communities.

Underpinning all of Hands' strategies and projects are the best interests of the inspiring children we support.

History

In 2004, countless Thai children were left alone and homeless by the Boxing Day tsunami. Former Australian police forensic specialist Peter Baines, working with the tsunami disaster victim identification team, was deeply touched by the number of children left without families by the natural disaster. He was inspired to establish an organisation that could make a difference.

In late 2005, a team of committed individuals, with the desire to help others, formed Hands Across the Water, an Australian charity that gives at-risk Thai children and their communities a helping hand.

Since its inception Hands has taken on many projects that are tailored to meet local communities’ needs – for the long term. The work we do is focused on improving the lives of the children and their communities today and in to the future.

Why we are different

- Hands facilitates unique, personal and meaningful experiences.
- Our care comes without conditions.
- We don’t seek to impose a religion or belief system upon those we support.
- We give children the chance to grow according to their own beliefs and traditions.
- Every cent of donors’ money goes to the children and their communities.
- No donors’ money goes to administration, marketing or fundraising operations in Australia.

Hands Across the Water Australia

ABN 40124112983
Hands has Gift Deductible Recipient status with the Australian Taxation Office

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Message from the Founder & Chair

The past year provided many opportunities for meaningful experiences for those within the Hands family, and this for me is the foundation upon which Hands Across the Water is built.

The year started with our bike rides in Thailand and we had our largest riding contingent to date. Each of the rider’s enthusiasm for the cause and commitment to raising a significant sum of money, allowed us to undertake new projects as well as continue with the support that we currently offer those in our care.

We commenced planning and indeed the building of a number of new centres at both Surin and Mae Rim. The Surin home, expected to be completed first quarter of 2014, will provide alternate and additional accommodation for the children with HIV from Home Hug. Our building project at Mae Rim, just outside of Chiang Mai, will provide a safe and caring home for over 100 new girls who are currently part of the sex trafficking industry.

Whilst we have committed a number of resources to our new building projects we remain committed to supporting our children who have been in our care since we commenced operations. We now have nine children who have graduated from Baan Tharn Namchai and are all studying at university - opportunities which wouldn’t exist but for the generous support of so many of our loyal and committed donors.

The year ahead provides many opportunities for Hands and I am extremely confident that, with the committed group of supporters and the Directors on the Board, we are in a strong position to meet those challenges and increase our level of care to those we currently support and those we may support in the future.

Peter Baines, OAM
Founder & Chair
Where We Work

- COSA
  - Baan Yuu Suk & Baan Yuu Suk II, Chiang Mai
- Home Hug, Yasothon
- New Home Hug, Surin (opening 2014)
- New Life Project, Kanchanaburi
- PAMA House, Chanthaburi (opening 2014)
- New Life Project, Chumphon
- Baan Tharn Nantchai & Baan Nam Khem Community and Tsunami Refuge Centre, Khao Lak
Where We Work

Baan Tharn Namchhai
Khao Lak
Originally built for the children left by the tsunami, BTN is now home to 84 children ranging from toddlers to those graduating from university.

Baan Nam Khem Community & Tsunami Refuge Centre
Khao Lak
This centre is the hub of training and learning for the community. Currently, Baan Nam Khem provides a nursery and childcare for 66 kids, as well as a range of educational programs to preschool children, young mothers and visiting teachers.

The centre has a roof at a height of 17 metres above sea level, which, in the event of a tsunami, can hold 1,000 people at any one time.

Baan Yuu Suk
Chiang Mai
Baan Yuu Suk houses girls from the hill tribe areas that were sold into slavery or at high risk for trafficking.

The building of Baan Yuu Suk II commenced in 2013 and the total project is expected to take 18 months. When completed, it will provide a safe home to 120 girls.

The New Life Project
Chumphon
This project gives boys who are at risk from drugs, exploitation, abuse and crime a place to call home. Boys spend three years at the project, undertaking vocational training, agricultural work and conventional schooling.
Where We Work

The New Life Project
Kanchanaburi
Girls at Kanchanaburi have come from difficult situations - sexual abuse, substance addictions, exploitation or they have no family to care for them. At Kanchanaburi, girls have a safe environment where they can heal.

Home Hug
Yasothon
With most children at Home Hug affected by HIV, this home supports children who have experienced challenges and isolation from their local community. Previously children were dying weekly but since Hands became involved and provided funds for the children’s living expenses and medical support, not one child has been lost and in fact the majority of the kids no longer have AIDS due to an increase in their CD4 counts.

Home Hug will also be expanded to include a new facility which is being opened in 2014 at Surin.

PAMA House
Chanthaburi
An updated facility in northern Thailand, PAMA House, once completed, will house girls ranging in age from 10 to 15 who have been used for child labour or forced into prostitution due to financial hardship. Thanks to Hands they will have the opportunity to gain an education and enjoy a brighter future.
Our Impact

267 Children currently cared for by a Hands’ home

292,365 Meals provided for children across Thailand this year

66 Children in day care at Baan Nam Khem Community Centre

9 Hands’ children who are at university

$1.98 million Raised for Hands’ projects in 2013

3 Renovation & development projects this year
Highlights

It has been an extremely busy year for Hands, breaking a number of records in terms of funds raised for the homes we support, number of children cared for and participation of supporters in Hands’ activities. We are very happy to share with you a few highlights.

January

An exceptional response to our call for riders in the January 2013 Thai rides saw 27 riders joining the northern Thai ride from Nong Kai to Yasothon and into Home Hug. Not only did we have 27 riders, but 79% of those riders were in fact return riders who have previously ridden with Hands, which is testament to the experience they have previously enjoyed.

Following a short break, 46 riders commenced the southern ride from Bangkok to Khao Lak riding into Baan Tharn Namchai. We welcomed seven riders from New Zealand this year who were a great addition to the riding team.

Collectively the rides raised over $800,000 for Hands’ projects and extraordinarily seven of the riders completed both rides and a total of 1,600 kilometres – an amazing effort!

March

Ten riders embarked on the challenging six day Kwik Kopy Hands Classic ride through the Snowy Mountains in March raising $32,000. A ride that builds upon the partnership model that Hands enjoys with a number of other corporate entities.

May

A Night of Celebration was held in Sydney with 316 people in attendance and raising over $50,000 for Hands. As part of the “Wildest Dreams” program, children from COSA Chiang Mai, along with Nick from Baan Tharn Namchai, joined in the celebrations and enjoyed seeing some of the sights of Australia accompanied by dedicated Hands volunteers who made sure the trips were special for the children. The funding for this trip did not occur using donors funds, but through corporate support for this specific opportunity.

August

Hands Across the Water New Zealand was formed in May and gained official recognition as a Charitable Trust in August.
Highlights

September

Hands partnered with Family Business Australia, a non-profit member based organisation for families in business, to offer the Bangkok to Khao Lak bike ride to its members. Twelve riders participated in the inaugural ride and raised over $163,000 - an exceptional result from the family business community.

The Hands-FBA ride was the first in a joint venture between Hands and an organisation who took the model of our Thailand bike rides and made it their own. Riding the 800kms over eight days, they returned as a stronger and united group and laid the foundation for an experience that will be repeated with a number of corporate groups in 2014.

"I loved the challenge presented by the bike ride, rather than just cutting a cheque as a donation. The training commitment and excitement expressed by all the riders and our supporters was a bonus. I will never forget riding into the orphanage and being welcomed by the wonderful kids and other family members that travelled to Thailand in support (including my mum, wife and son). It was a great relief to finish and it’s satisfying to look back on our achievement.

The underlying sense of actually making a difference to the children of Thailand was on display as we were shown around the Hands facilities. We were all very proud to be part of the FBA team that has helped to raise over $165,000 for Hands.

I would encourage others to do it; do it for the kids in need, do it for the personal challenge and do it with another family member to strengthen relationships that can, at times, be taken for granted."

FBA member, Stuart Ford of Ford Civil Contracting took part in the ride with his daughter, sister and niece.

Courtney & Jackie Smith, Stuart & Ashlee Ford

October

The first Melbourne Night of Celebration was held at the Park Hyatt. A sell-out, the night attracted 350 supporters and raised over $50,000 for Hands. Children from Home Hug joined in the fun and shared their culture and spirit with a very appreciative Australian community of supporters. Following the dinner, the children enjoyed an action packed few days seeing some of the highlights of Melbourne.

Similarly our first Night of Celebration for New Zealand was held in Auckland with 240 people attending. The night raised $53,000.

In Brisbane, we held the "Future of Teamwork" corporate training day which featured seven speakers and attracted 180 people. The day generated $15,000 profit for Hands and was generously supported by Suncorp Bank.
November

Kwik Kopy, supported by Nilla Reception Lounge, held its inaugural fundraising dinner for Hands to support riders of the Kwik Kopy ride. Attended by 180 people, the dinner raised $17,000 for the riders embarking on the Snowy Mountains ride in 2014.

December

At the conclusion of the school year, Methodist Ladies College (MLC) in Melbourne took a group of 12 senior students to Baan Tharn Namchai to spend a week with the children. This inspiring experience allowed the girls the opportunity to connect with our beautiful children, input into their daily activities and gave the children the opportunity to learn from, and form bonds with, the MLC girls. This is a ten year commitment by the school to support Hands and part of the journey of the girls is to fundraise to help support the sustainability enterprises of Baan Tharn Namchai, such as the sewing room.
Making A Difference

University graduates

For three of the teenagers from Baan Tharn Namchai, the end of the January bike ride celebration dinner and party was also a time to acknowledge their achievements as they graduated from life at BTN and travelled away from home to take up places at university.

This year Hands is proud to have supported the study and living costs for nine children who attend university.

Renovation taskforce

A special group of Hands’ supporters left for Thailand in November to undertake renovations at the Chiang Mai home. Spending over a week working on the renovations, the group made substantial improvements to the property including erection of fencing, excavation and formwork for concreting, installing walls, roof and doors and laying a footpath. All of the developments improve the environment and quality of life for our children and we thank them for spending their time and resources to make such a worthwhile trip.

Child sponsorship

Over 70 loyal supporters now sponsor a child at one of Hands’ homes. The contribution made by child sponsors makes a significant difference to the quality of food, education, shelter and special activities available for the children. It also offers sponsors the opportunity to connect with a child and form a bond of care and support.
Making A Difference

Wildest Dreams

Our Wildest Dreams program gives Hands’ children the chance to take part in activities they’d never imagined possible.

This year children from Baan Yuu Suk, Baan Tharn Namchai and Home Hug had the opportunity to visit Auckland, Sydney and Melbourne.

On the trip to New Zealand, the children enjoyed the Sky Tower, the penguins at the aquarium, some Maori cultural experiences and the Mt Eden crater. Thai children love their food and fresh fruit was a hit, especially the new season apples, strawberries, grapes and of course the famous kiwi fruit!

Home Hug development

A major project undertaken by Hands this year was the building of a new home for the children of Home Hug at Surin. Home to 65 children affected by the HIV virus, the building will be opened in 2014. The funding for this building has been made possible by the Business Blueprint Group who, in early 2014, will celebrate their fundraising with a five day ride from Nong Khai to Yasothon covering 500km in five days.
Making A Difference

Nick’s story
Read by Nick from Baan Tharn Namchai at the Sydney Night of Celebration.

“This night is called A Night of Opportunity. I never thought I would have the opportunity to speak to an audience in Sydney Australia. When I was two months old, my father had an accident and died. My mother left me with an aunt and uncle and went away.

There wasn’t a lot of opportunity in my childhood and it got worse when I was 14. Uncle and Aunt told me that I must leave school and work. If I didn’t do that I must go to the government orphanage. All I really wanted was the opportunity to study. Usually I am a very happy person, but when I had the news that I could no longer go to school I was so sad, I cried and cried and didn’t want to talk to anyone. My dreams were gone. One of my very good teachers came to talk to me. She explained about the home called Baan Tharn Namchai. She told me that they would help me to stay at school. That I would have many friends and somewhere to live and that there was many staff who would love and help me.

This was more than my dreams. This was a real opportunity. I moved into Baan Tharn Namchai in February 2008. My life changed so much. In very small ways, I could eat breakfast every day before school and in very, very big ways, I am here today. Living at Baan Tharn Namchai gave me the support and the opportunity to study. I finished my high school and went onto Vocational College. I have just finished my diploma in Hotel and Tourism Management. I never imagined this when my heart was broken at 14, have almost finished 6 months training at Hamilton Island Resort. I never imagined this.

I am going back to Thailand and I am going to get a Visa to come back and study English and then I am going to university. Who would ever imagine a poor boy having these opportunities. I can’t tell you every person who has helped me. So many people from Baan Tharn Namchai and so many people from Hands Across the Water. I have been given many, many opportunities and I have learned one very important thing: when you are given the opportunity you have to work hard to make yourself worthy of that chance and to make the people around you proud.

I am going to continue to work hard so that one day I can go to Baan Tharn Namchai and give an opportunity to a poor child like me.”

Joining Nick at the Night of Celebration were six girls from COSA, who we support in Chiang Mai. Their delight at seeing a beach, trying to surf, visiting the Sydney Opera House and dressing up to attend this event was clear for everyone to see, as was their new found confidence and sense of adventure. Having been rescued from the prospect of a life of prostitution, this trip and the opportunities they now have is something, like Nick, they previously would never have dreamed possible. As with the Home Hug visitors in May, this trip was funded outside our normal operations by a corporate group.

Volunteer program
Hands facilitates volunteers from Australia, New Zealand and around the world to spend time at the homes and provide support to the children and staff. This year, 21 groups of volunteers worked at Hands’ homes across Thailand, spending time helping care for the children, facilitating special activities and assisting the children with learning English. This program is open to select volunteers who meet our skills criteria and are able to commit at least one month to a home.
Sustainability

Sustainability has been a focus of Hands for some years. As we continually plan for the long term needs of the children we support, we look at not only making the organisation sustainable but also working with the homes to encourage local projects which teach the children about sustainability.

The Hands Across the Water Sustainability Committee is responsible for assessing, developing and overseeing the implementation of projects that create sustainable sources of income for the operations of Hands in Thailand.

A separate commercial entity Hands Across the Water Pty Ltd was established to identify, develop, resource and implement commercial projects to raise income for the charity, with 100% of profits going to the charity.

Hands Across the Water also established itself as a Foundation in Thailand which was a significant step in the long term security of the assets and properties that Hands funds.

Sewing room and craft shop

Hands has proudly supported the development of a sewing room and craft shop based near Baan Tharn Namchai. Local women from the neighbouring community, as well as some of the older children and staff have been filling orders from companies like Smeg, Beko and Miele to generate further revenue to support the sustainability of Baan Tharn Namchai. The growth of this venture has resulted in substantial income for the home and has also given the older children hands-on experience of running a business. People visiting the craft shop at Baan Tharn Namchai will often be strongly encouraged to purchase from some very entrepreneurial children!

Rubber plantation

Hands’ purchase of a rubber plantation twenty kilometres from Baan Tharn Namchai has been a source of employment for the local community as well as some of the children. This opportunity for children to experience employment is a valuable part of their growth and development.

Local projects – fish and mushroom farms

Children have the opportunity to contribute to the sustainability of their home through participating in the fish and mushroom farms provided by Hands. The children sell excess mushrooms in the community from the backs of their bikes and there is often stiff competition amongst the children to sell the most mushrooms!
Our Thai Partners

Hands could not accomplish the work it does without our amazing partners. We would like to acknowledge the following organisations for their dedication to our cause.

Baan Tharn Namchai Foundation
Baan Tharn Namchai Foundation was set up in 2004 to care for 20 children orphaned by the Boxing Day Tsunami.

Children's Organization of Southeast Asia (COSA)
Led by Mickey Choothesa, COSA is dedicated to the prevention of human trafficking and exploitation. The Baan Yuu Suk Hands-COSA home in Chiang Mai provides shelter to girls from the Hill Tribes of Northern Thailand who have been sold into slavery or were at high risk for exploitation.

Duang Prateep Foundation
Founded by Prateep Ungsongtham Hata, the Duang Prateep Foundation (DPF) operates over twenty projects in the fields of education, child abuse, HIV/AIDS, drug dependence, and welfare of the elderly and slum youths. DPF partners with Hands at the New Life Projects in Kanchanaburi and Chumphon.

Suthasinee Noiin Foundation
Hands partners with Suthasinee Noiin Foundation to operate Home Hug which is a home for children affected by HIV.

Our Australian Partners

We would like to thank the following Australian organisations for their ongoing support of Hands. Our work is only possible because of the dedicated support of our supporters.

- NARTA
  www.narta.com.au
- Peter Baines Consulting
  www.peterbaines.com.au
- Media Merchants
  www.mediamerchants.com.au
- Word Storm
  www.wordstorm.com.au
- Sashi Veale & Associates
  www.svaccountants.com.au
- Jellis Craig Foundation
  www.jelliscraig.com.au
Our People

Without the support of our wonderful Thai carers, board of directors and volunteers, Hands would not be able to achieve the level of care that it does for the children of Thailand. We pay tribute to our inspirational team, particularly the countless volunteers who give their time to assist with the administration, special projects, rides and events. We also thank all of the supporters who have participated in Hands’ activities over the year – the contribution of every person makes a difference to our children’s lives.

Home directors

Baan Tharn Namchai and Baan Nam Khem – Khun Rotjana Pharsrithong
Baan Yuu Suk at Chiang Mai – Khun Mickey Choothesa
Baan Home Hug at Yasothon – Mae Thiew
New Life Project at Kanchanaburi – Khun Mingporn Ungsongtham
New Life Project at Chumphon – Khun Mingporn Ungsongtham

Hands’ Board of Directors

Peter Baines, OAM (Chair & founding Board Member)
Peter is the Founder of Hands Across the Water. In addition to leading Hands, Peter is the principal of Peter Baines Consulting. Peter helps businesses build effective sustainable leadership programs through a unique mix of leadership and corporate social responsibility initiatives. His corporate social responsibility platforms create goodwill, staff engagement and sustainable change.

Scott Evans
Scott has had a long and successful career in banking, international commodity trading and currently as the Owner and Managing Director of the southern hemisphere’s largest multi-species game bird producer, Game Farm Pty Ltd. Scott has an Associate Diploma in Business Management.

Willie Moulden
Willie is retired after a successful career in the insurance industry in Australia, the Asia Pacific and the UK. A Certified Practising Accountant, Willie manages Hands’ accounts and administration requirements and brings a broad range of business skills to the charity.

Kay Spencer
Kay is the Executive Chair of buying group, NARTA, the National Association of Retail Traders of Australia. Under Kay’s leadership the organisation’s annual turnover has grown from $350 million to more than $3.4 billion. Today NARTA is the largest buying group of independent retailers in Australia and New Zealand.

Scott Stein (founding Board Member)
As an author and Thought Leader, Scott works with business leaders to improve efficiency and performance across Asia Pacific and the US. He has a Master of Arts in Communication and is a Director of multiple businesses including a Registered Training Organisation and a Property Trust.