

## Healthcare Exchange Meeting in Thaton



**Inaugural Meeting of HIV Health Care Workers**

Some four hours drive north from Chiang Mai is the small, picturesque town of Thaton, situated on the Myanmar border. It was here that Gee and Deang, HIV health care worker from Mae Ai, arranged the first "Health Care Worker Exchange" meeting. The ob-

jective of the meeting was to bring together HIV health care workers from various districts of Chiang Mai Province to exchange views and ideas in a convivial and relaxing location. The venue was the Queen Sirikit Project (Huai Muang Ngam) near Thaton.

This beautiful location offered accommodation and cooking facilities for the group of ten; 2 from Sankampeang, (Kasemsri and Noi), 3 from Chiang Dao, (Kanda, Sakaoduan and Chaleaw) 2 from Mae Ai, (Deang and Lek) and the 3 from Rejoice. (Gee, Arm and Wi). The only complaint was the low temperature when they awoke in the morning, 10 degrees centigrade!!



**Preparing for the barbeque**

Topics discussed were prevention of mother to child infection especially amongst the many hill tribe communities and migrants workers, many of who are not documented to work in Thailand. Thai women are obliged to have to tests for various conditions, including HIV, when they become



Lahu New Year Celebrations

pregnant. If they carry the HIV virus they are started on “antiretroviral therapy” (ART) immediately and when the baby is born it is fed formula milk and not breast-fed. This has proved to be very successful in preventing mother to child transmission. However, this is not automatically available

for non-documented hill tribe and migrant workers, usually the baby is born at home, breast-fed and an infected mother passes the virus to the baby. The health care workers, on their home care visits to the remote communities will seek out any woman who is pregnant and persuade her to

be tested.

Also of concern was the increase in infections among the Lahu Hill Tribe teenagers especially at the time of [the Lahu New Year](#) (the photo was taken at the Lahu village, Huaijakan in 2014 by Gee). The celebrations last for 3 days and there is much love making between the youngsters. Because of the stigma of HIV many do not disclose their HIV status with the result that the virus is easily transmitted. The solution to this is difficult, since the status of person is often only known to themselves and the health care workers, who endeavour to persuade the person to use condoms, often without much success.

With the help of the HIV health care workers, Rejoice will spread its network coverage by engaging with HIV workers in other districts, especially the border districts of Wiang Haeng, Fang, Chaiprakan, and Phrao.

## Children living with HIV

On 6th February 2015 a group meeting was held at Chiang Dao Hospital. The meeting was for children in Chiang Dao district infected with HIV. Currently there are 29 children (age range 2 to 18) receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) at Chiang Dao hospital, The majority belonging to various hill tribe groups such as Lisu, Lahu, Chin Haw and Tai Yai.

Ten of these children, together with their guardians, attended the meeting. It was interesting to note that the younger children were from these minority groups (non-Thai) who have become infected from their mother at birth.

Thai mothers receive HIV screening when they become pregnant and start



ART and their babies are not breast fed but receive formula milk instead. This has proved to be most successful in preventing mother-to-child infection.

The meeting focused on the importance of taking their medicine every day at specific times (twice a day). To facilitate this the children drew

clocks depicting the times that they must take their medicine and were shown how to use the weekly pill strip and to return any unused medicine on their 2 or 3 monthly check-up at the hospital.

The children each received a gift and lunch before returning to their various villages.



## Lisu Education and Prevention



Nong Khaem is a remote Lisu hill tribe village. Together with the HIV volunteers from Chiang Dao hospital and local village volunteers an "Education and Prevention" event was held at Nong Kaem school.

Although everyone was welcome to attend, the main target of the meeting was to bring together as many young people as possible to teach on the risks of HIV, modes of transmission, safer sex techniques and reducing the stigma of the disease.

This was achieved, in part, through informal discussion and a simple "bleach, water and litmus paper" experiment of how easily HIV can be transmitted.

The overall objective of the meetings was to reduce unwanted pregnancies and to educate youth, so that they are aware how HIV and other sexually diseases are transmitted and how they can be prevented.



*Lisu Hill Tribe (Wikipedia)*





## Wiang Haeng District



Meeting in Wiang Haeng with HIV care workers.

Wiang Haeng District is the latest district to benefit from visits by Rejoice. Wiang Haeng is a remote district bordering Myanmar. The district is subdivided into three sub-districts (tambon), which are further subdivided into 26 villages (muban).

The three sub-districts are: Mueang Haeng (pop. approx. 8,700); Piang Luang (pop. approx. 17,000); Saen Hai (pop. approx. 3,500). The Rejoice

The Rejoice Team together with Kanda, HIV volunteer from Chiang Dao, made a trip to Wiang Haeng to visit the volunteer health care workers working from Wiang Haeng Hospital.

The hospital is some 30 minutes drive from the village of Piang Luang which hosts an extensive community of refugees who have fled from the civil conflicts in neighbouring Shan state.

Below is a link to a brief account of the recent history of Piang Luang taken from Prachatai, (an independent, non-profit, daily web newspaper).

[Piang Luang: Historical lands and changes \(1\)](#)

Rejoice aims to visit communities in Wiang Haeng district on a regular basis.



Bleak House

## Connie's Singapore Group

Connie Low and family together with a group of like minded mothers in Singapore make regular donations of clothing and school materials for the children affected by HIV. This summer Rejoice distributed the clothing to three districts within Chiang Mai province;

Mae Ai, Sanpathong and Chiang Dao.

Rejoice runs a school scholarship scheme to help children and their guardians, affected by HIV, offset the



Twins Fon and Fa receiving baby clothes from Connie's Group

costs of education. In response to requests from donors, Rejoice now has extended this scheme to cover infants and pre-school children.

Rejoice, in conjunction with volunteer healthcare workers (themselves HIV positive) make regular visits to over 500 patients in remote, hard to reach village communities in Chiang Mai province. Currently there are 75 students benefiting from the Rejoice Scholarship Scheme and 22 infants, born to HIV positive mothers, receiving formula milk.

## SDL Scholars



SDL Language Services have been supporting Rejoice for over 5 years. Without the help and advice of Winston Wong, SDL's Thailand country manager, Rejoice probably would not exist today. SDL's support and encouragement following Steve Hallam's death was instrumental in the revival of Rejoice.

Still continuing today, SDL has renewed sponsorships for 12 needy students who otherwise may not have been able to attend school. Also, SDL continues contributing to the medicine

and formula milk programmes as well as the general running costs of Rejoice.

SDL fully recognises the importance of helping communities and families whose life has been drastically changed by HIV. The children living with HIV become seriously disadvantaged not only psychologically by loss of a parent but also by poverty and stigma which still runs strong amongst isolated ethnic communities.

SDL has continued to help and support not only the Rejoice scholarship Scheme but also baby formula milk

programme and more recently the Education and Prevention Programmes that Rejoice organises together with the HIV volunteer healthcare workers from districts throughout Chiang Mai Province.



SDL Language services are based in Maidenhead, England, a picturesque town on the river Thames west of London. Each year SDL allocates a portion of its profit to needy communities world-wide. To find out more about SDL please visit their website - [www.sdl.com](http://www.sdl.com)

As Rejoice slowly expands into the more remote regions of Northern Thailand, more children in need of educational and emotional support will come to light. If you would like to make a difference to the lives of these children and their families and guardians by means of a small scholarship please visit the "[Ways to Help](#)" page. It describes the Rejoice Scholarship Scheme in more detail

## The Rejoice Education Scholarship Project

Children living within a family affected by HIV are eligible for a scholarship. The child may be an AIDS orphan, living with one parent, living with grandparents or living with relatives. Rejoice provides scholarships which enables the child to attend school, whilst allowing them to grow up within their own ethnic community rather than them being institutionalized in an orphanage. Currently there are 24 HIV+ children receiving scholarships. Also 8 students are attending University or Technical College and next year a similar number is expected to graduate from school to higher education. Without the Scholarship Programme it is very likely that this would not have been possible. A database of all the children is updated continually and database files are linked to PDF files for each child.

71 students benefit from the **School Scholarship Programme**.

Ostensibly, the sponsorship is in the form of an educational scholarship, but in reality it is much more, it will:

- allow the child to attend school
- allow the child to grow-up in his/her community with their extended family
- allow the child to learn to speak the language and follow the religion of their community
- make it easier for the family to accept financial help – the money is received on behalf of the child
- prevent the child becoming institutionalised in an orphanage
- be a significant factor in deciding whether the child continues his/her education to high school, college or university

SDL Foundation is currently sponsoring 12 children in the up-

per primary and secondary level. As can be seen from the table below, these children come from families ravaged by HIV Aids with at least one or both parents being HIV positive. The financial plights of these families are dire with the grandparents being the breadwinners.

Although basic education is free in Thailand, textbooks, writing materials, uniforms, daily commute etc is not covered. Therefore, without SDL, these children would have dropped out of school to earn whatever little they can as unskilled labourers. Therefore, SDL's support is crucial in providing the education foundation for these children to break-out of the poverty trap.

A wonderful way to help such families is to sponsor a child's education for one year. Recently, Rejoice Charity introduced a 3-tiered education sponsorship program (primary, secondary and college/university). This is to better reflect the differences in costs associated with each group of students;

- For infants and Junior School children 5,000 baht,
- Secondary School children (ages usually between 16 and 18) 7,000 baht
- College and University students 10,000 baht.

The higher figure of 10,000 baht reflects the higher cost of transportation and fees etc.

Rejoice keeps a PDF file, with text and pictures, for each student and an XLS database of all the students. Below is an example of a translation of a "Thank you" letter from a student. This is included, together with the original letter in Thai, [in the PDF file](#).

Hello,

My name is Tidarat Yain. I am studying in Grade 12 at Chiang Dao Wittayakom School. I live with my grandparents who are very old and not very healthy but they both love me. We are all a little bit sick because it is cold in mornings and hot in the afternoons.

My grandparents work hard so that they can afford to send me to school. Transport to school costs 500 baht every month and lunch costs 50 baht every day.

When I am at home I help by doing the washing and ironing and also cleaning the house because I want my grandparents to relax and not become tired. At the weekends I help by making bamboo baskets, some days I make 30 baht and other days 50 baht.

I promise to study hard and be good for my grandparents and my sponsors.

Finally, I would like to thank you very much for your support again and I will use the sponsorship money in the best way. Without your support I would be unable to attend school.

I hope that you are happy and healthy and I will always remember you.

Best regards, Tidarat Yain



## ....Education Scholarships



### Sponsor a Child's Education

There are many families affected by HIV/Aids. It could be that grandparents, relatives or one parent have taken on the responsibility of raising children affected by HIV. The child may be also be infected or orphaned by the virus. The hardships and difficulties of bringing up children in such circumstances can be quite substantial. Often without a regular income the household can be in danger of falling into abject poverty.

A wonderful way to help such families is to sponsor a child's education for one year. For either, at least 5,000 baht (for pre-school, primary and secondary school students) or, at least 7,000 baht (for high school) or, at least 10,000 baht for (college/university students). The excess goes towards providing formula milk, medicines, provisions and fuel for Rejoices mobile outreach and home care clinics.

There are many more children who could greatly benefit from your sponsorship. Please link to ["Ways to Help"](#) page on the website.

Please go to the [DONATE](#) page to sponsor a child and to make a donation.

Please also send an email to; [contact@rejoicecharity.com](mailto:contact@rejoicecharity.com) so that we can thank you.



## Please Support Rejoice....

- **By direct bank transfer;**

Donations can be made either direct to the local (Thai baht) account in Chiang Mai, Thailand or, alternatively to London, UK (GB pounds). or Maastricht, Netherlands (Euro). Account details are shown in the tables below.

Account	Alan Wheeler (Rejoice Charity)
Bank name:	Bangkok Bank PLC
Address:	Thapae Road
	Chiang Mai 50100
	Thailand
Account No.	251-4-767678
Swift Code:	BKKBTHBK

Account:	Rejoice Foundation UK
Bank Name:	HSBC Ltd
Address:	Canary Wharf, London E14
Account No:	41466879
Sort Code:	40-02-44
Swift Code:	MIDLGB22
IBAN	GB89MIDL40024441466879

Account:	Alan Wheeler
Bank Name:	ABN AMRO Bank
Address:	Maastricht,
	Netherlands
Account No:	Acct no: 41.28.64.495
BIC code:	ABNANL2A
IBAN:	NL85ABNA0412864495

- **By Credit Card via PayPal**

If you want to make a donation via PayPal, [go to Rejoice website and click on the "Donate Today"](#) button in the top right corner.

- **Create a Standing Order**

If you would like to make a regular contribution /donation, of whatever size, please print out and complete this standing order form with your bank details and amount pledged, then return it to Rejoice Foundation UK (not your bank) at the address below;

*Nigel Haunch, Chair, Rejoice Foundation UK, 119 Dundee Wharf, Three Colt Street, London E14 8AY*

- **Gift Aid**

If you are a UK taxpayer, Rejoice can reclaim tax on your donation from the Inland Revenue at no extra cost or inconvenience to you. This currently makes your donation (at basic rate) worth an extra 25p for each £1 given.

If you pay tax at the higher rate, you can claim further tax relief in your Self Assessment return.

**For us to benefit in this way when you donate, you can download and print this [PDF form](#), sign it and send to the address below OR, alternatively, you could email your home address to [contact@rejoicecharity.com](mailto:contact@rejoicecharity.com) and we will post the Gift Aid form to you to sign and return to;**

*Nigel Haunch, Chair, Rejoice Foundation UK, 119 Dundee Wharf, Three Colt Street, London E14 8AY*

- **Send a Cheque**

If the banks are still accepting cheques and you wish to make a one-off or intermittent donation to Rejoice, please make your cheques payable to 'Rejoice Foundation UK' and send them to;

*Nigel Haunch, Chair, Rejoice Foundation UK, 119 Dundee Wharf, Three Colt Street, London E14 8AY*



## Testimonials

I was stunned by the remarkable progress the Charity had made over that period. By linking in with volunteer HIV health workers from Chiang Dao Hospital, Mae Ai and San Kamphaeng clinics, Rejoice has effectively increased their outreach workforce from one to seven health care workers, with minimal staff costs. This has expanded the catchment area significantly and Rejoice is now visiting villages as close to the Burmese border as it is possible to travel by road and reaching communities, whom have no access to health care locally.



**Dr. Martin Huddart (Trustee  
Rejoice Foundation)**

However, the most impactful part was being able to use my time to give back in a meaningful way to those in need. It's clear the patients require the check in, medical support, and supplies the outreach team provides, but I think just as crucial is the emotional support – knowing they can count on an experienced team who cares being there for them on a consistent basis. At every clinic and home we visited, the patients faces lit up when they saw the truck and the guys coming to spend time with them. Knowing the Rejoice team does this week on week, year on year, my efforts were really just a small drop in the bucket compared to the work they do. I have so much respect and admiration for Alan, Gee, Wi, and Arm, and I'm so grateful to them for facilitating this experience for me.



**Russ Taufa (SDL Vietnam)**

Coming in for just a week, or two or three won't make it far even if you knew the language. Even if you would possess skills and education that are directly linked to the charity's field of work. You need months to get to know the culture, the system and most important of all the people and gain their trust. Money is easy to give. PayPal, credit cards, money transfer, you name it. Problem is finding a charity that puts the money to good use. For the benefit of the people. A good indicator for a charity like this can be found from what Rejoice does. A real grassroots charity run by locals, that employs locals, empowerment is done by locals and thus they gain the trust of the people they work so hard (and with so little!) for.



**Viljami Hätönen  
(research student, and  
paramedic, Finland)**

## Notes for Donors

Please let us know about your donation by sending a short email to; [contact@rejoicecharity.com](mailto:contact@rejoicecharity.com). So that we may contact you and thank you directly.

If you would like part of your donation to go towards sponsoring a child's education (5,000 baht) please let us know whether we should select a child on your behalf or you would prefer to select a child yourself, in which case we will send the Excel file 'Children Seeking Sponsorship' to help you decide.

**Thank you all for your generous support.**

Please visit our website; [www.rejoicecharity.com](http://www.rejoicecharity.com) and let your friends and relatives hear about us by forwarding this newsletter or better still printing it and use it as a discussion topic.

Your help and constructive criticism will be gratefully received so please send all your comments to;

[contact@rejoicecharity.com](mailto:contact@rejoicecharity.com)

### Rejoice Foundation UK Trustees

The international fundraising arm of Rejoice based in the UK was started by Nigel Haunch who, after living and working in Asia for some years, returned to London to run his own media consultancy business. Having learned about the work of Rejoice on the internet, Nigel made a visit and was moved by the scale of the HIV/AIDS crisis in northern Thailand. At the same time, he was impressed by the extraordinary achievements of Rejoice in helping those infected and affected by the epidemic, particularly in outlying rural communities.

The Trustees of Rejoice Foundation UK are as follows;

Chairperson Nigel Haunch

Vice Chair Dr Darrall Higson—a Consultant in Pharmaceutical Medicine and formerly a medical director of GlaxoSmithKline  
RFUK honorary Secretary Prof Philip Evans, Director of Research for the University of Westminster,

Dr Martin Huddart is a General Practitioner in East London and also a tutor at the UK's Royal Free and University College Medical Schools

Alan Wheeler, a retired petroleum petrophysical engineer who now lives in Chiang Mai



Alan Wheeler  
July 2015

