

# AN ADVENTURE OF A LIFE TIME VOLUNTEERING AND VISITING WITH A TEAM



**MERCY**  
INTERNATIONAL





How can people  
call for help if  
they don't know  
whom to trust?

And how can  
they know who  
to trust if they  
haven't heard of

The One who  
can be trusted?

And how can  
they hear if  
nobody tells  
them? And how  
is anyone going  
to tell them,  
unless someone  
is sent to do it?

That's why  
scripture  
exclaims:  
*"A sight to  
take your  
breath away,  
grand  
processions of  
people telling  
all the good  
things of God"*

*Romans 10:14-15  
from The Message*



AN ADVENTURE OF A LIFE TIME VOLUNTEERING AND VISITING WITH A TEAM





Mercy International exists to give underprivileged and disadvantaged children, including orphans, Life, a Future and a Hope!

The purpose of this information manual is to help you prepare for your time as a long or short term, self-funded volunteer and team who come for a short period with Mercy International Thailand.

This manual attempts to ensure that all your pre-departure preparations are smooth and to help you maximise the opportunities of your time in Thailand.

It is not exhaustive as we have tried to limit its size to ensure its effectiveness for your experience. We recommend that you work closely with the Mercy International Volunteers / Team Coordinator to ensure you are well prepared before departure. The Volunteers / Team Coordinator can be contacted at [volunteers/ team@mercy-international.com](mailto:volunteers/team@mercy-international.com)

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### Introduction

#### A Word from the Founder



Volunteering to help the poor and disadvantaged of this world has become an important part of western society. People of all walks of life are giving of their time and finances to help alleviate world suffering.

Mercy International Thailand welcomes self-funded volunteers, teams and visitors whether it is for three months, 12 months, or even a life time commitment as a volunteer or a few weeks on a team. Take time to read this information manual, view the website and prepare for a life changing experience.

Working as a volunteer cross-culturally enlarges one's world view. It opens the door to life changing opportunities and new friendships which would never be experienced staying at home.

Some volunteers and team members have specialist skills and come for specific projects such as construction or teaching English. Other volunteers / teams come to help care and pray for the children; to surround them with the love and security needed for their well-being and development. Many come with a 'we will do anything' attitude and have been surprised and encouraged by the effectiveness of their contribution.

Mercy International is a Christian organisation which welcomes volunteers / teams from differing walks of life, who will respect the organisation's Christian principles. In Thailand, Mercy International is a respected welfare body in Thailand.

Volunteers / Teams are expected to honour the Foundation's Thai leadership and staff. To be a successful Volunteer with Mercy International you will need:

- A genuine love and concern for children;
- A servant spirit;
- A team spirit;
- A warm sense of humour;
- The flexibility to survive and thrive in another culture for a period of time;
- To be of good character.

This manual is designed to help you plan for a successful volunteer / Team experience. It contains a range of useful, practical information about travel, living arrangements and health requirements. We also trust that the manual will help you to prepare for some of the less tangible, but equally important aspects of your trip.

We believe that there is nothing more important in this world than caring for disadvantaged children and sharing with them the good news of God's love. We trust you decide to team with us in enriching the lives of these children. We look forward to welcoming you to Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation's Thai operations.

God bless you.

**JEAN DUNK**



### The Beginnings

#### Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation in Thailand



Mercy International was commenced in 1985 by Rob and Jean Dunk with the support of their church in the city of Brisbane, Australia.

Mercy International's first project was in the mid-1980s. A trip to Australia was arranged for a badly maimed Bangkok slum boy named Santee. He had been hit by a car while selling items on Bangkok's traffic clogged streets. He lost one leg, and the other needed a series of operations to straighten the numerous breaks which had been set incorrectly. After five months in Australia, Santee returned to Thailand with an artificial limb, a strong, straight leg, and the prospect of a new life.

In 1986 Mercy International commenced their first home with 12 children in an outer suburb of Bangkok. From these small beginnings Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation has been able to steadily expand its borders to four Provinces; giving poor children hope and a future.

Mercy International established the House of Mercy Foundation to fulfil the legal requirements in Thailand. Whilst they are two separate legal identities, they are united in their efforts to see increasing number of poor and disadvantaged children in Thailand reach their highest potential in life.

The Founding Director of Mercy International (Australia) is also the Vice Chairperson of House of Mercy Foundation (Thailand)

House of Mercy Foundation was established in 2000 (The name Mercy International was not available in Thailand).

The Chairperson of House of Mercy Foundation is Pawinee Angnoi.

Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation focuses on underprivileged children, especially those orphaned by AIDS and those suffering with HIV/AIDS. Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation also provides an excellent education for hundreds of poor children.

Financial support for Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation's operations comes from individuals, clubs, businesses and churches in Australia and other countries through child sponsorship, donations and gifts.

Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation are Christian Organisations whose values and code of conduct reflect these beliefs. We believe in providing a holistic caring environment which takes account of people's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs. We require that all volunteers respect the organisation's Christian views.



### Profiles of Directors



#### JEAN DUNK

Jean is the founding Director of Mercy International. Both Jean and her husband Rob have devoted their lives to helping people over the many years of their ministry together.

Jean and her husband Rob met in Bible College in 1955. Together they have pastored a number of churches with the Australian Christian Churches network (formally the Assembly of God) and in 1989 Mercy International established their first children's village in Phetchabun

situated in the North East of Thailand. In 1997 a small home with twelve children was established in Bangkok prior to commencing the first children's village in Phetchabun.

In 1997 Jean and Rob resigned their church in Brisbane and moved to Thailand. This decision has seen Mercy International expand in Thailand and is testament to their vision, dedication, hard work and their philosophy of investing in children to see them reach their full potential.

They have 4 adult children who were always encouraged to strive for excellence and to honour God in their lives and Jean greatly enjoys her delightful grandchildren who are also loved and encouraged to reach their full potential.

Rob Dunk passed away in 2017 and his vision and legacy to change and improve the lives of disadvantaged children continues on through Mercy International.

Jean has no thoughts of retirement and still enjoys the ministry that her and Rob founded. They have both said that this work is the most fulfilling thing they have done in their lives. Jean has a big faith in God and carries a spirit of excellence as she continues to work in this ever-expanding organisation, dividing her time between Thailand and Australia.



#### SHARON DUNK

Sharon is the Director of Mercy International and the Via Chairperson of House of Mercy Foundation. She lives in the north of Thailand with her husband John. Sharon has a vast range of experience working cross culturally and is fluent in the Thai language which has greatly assisted her in communication in Thailand.

Sharon started out as a legal Secretary and left that position in 1992 to work with a Missions Organisation in Asia. In 2002 Sharon felt it was time to join Mercy International in Thailand and work alongside Jean and Rob. Over a number of years, Rob and Jean mentored and trained Sharon to develop her leadership qualities and Sharon now works successfully in all areas across Mercy International.

John, Sharon's husband is a builder and he has been successful in supervising the Thai building team on several school buildings plus homes for children.



### **Robert Henry Dunk (1938 – 2017)**

Rob Dunk accompanied with his wife Jean travelled to Thailand as Rob felt God wanted him to find land and commence a program supporting disadvantaged children to break the poverty cycle. He especially wanted to help young children from being sold into prostitution and enable them to have a Life, a Future and Hope.

In March 1989 – Rob and Jean Dunk stood with Terry and Marie Barton on land 450 kilometres from Bangkok in the North/East of Thailand which was an absolute dust bowl. The area was dead and lifeless – no animal or bird life existed because of the dryness and nobody lived in the area. There was no water or electricity and the closest school was three kilometres away. This North/Eastern part of Thailand hadn't seen rain for three years. The whole area was dry, barren and the people were poverty stricken.

Rob and Jean both strongly felt that this was the land God designed for them to buy and establish a children's village and school for poor children. An amazing journey began with Rob's faith in God and believing that with God all things are possible Rob saw many miracles.

This dust bowl has become a beautiful and well established haven for disadvantaged children. The children are protected and well cared for and educated in an atmosphere of love, acceptance and belonging. Rob has left an amazing legacy and the baton has been passed on to carry on the work Rob started.

### Responsible Behaviour



Mercy International Thailand operates all facilities on a Christian basis. We do not discriminate between faiths and we trust that the Christian ethics we live by will be respected by all visitors and long-term volunteers.

The consumption of alcohol, smoking of cigarettes or any use of drugs is strictly prohibited within the grounds of all Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation sites. Should you choose to consume alcohol in your own time, please refrain from doing so in the company or view of any of the children or Thai staff.

It is also expected that general behaviour and vocabulary will be of a responsible and appropriate manner, once again respecting the Christian principles in which we live by.

Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation does not encourage the development of romantic/emotional relationships with the Thais.

#### Facebook and Photos

Facebook is a great tool which must be used wisely.

All Volunteers, Teams and visitors, be careful what you post on Facebook about your visit at all Mercy International's centres and schools.

Mercy International request that no photos of men with our boys or girls. There are to be no photos of our children and teenagers in their bedrooms or how many children and teenagers live in each home.

#### Further Requirements

Children and teenagers are not to go into your bedrooms if staying in the guest homes at any House of Mercy centres.

Team members, volunteers and visitors who desire to take any of Mercy International's children and teenagers out for dinner or shopping, a Thai staff member must go with you.

#### Photos

Team members, Volunteers and visitors are free to take photos of our children and teenagers but none with just men, especially of children sitting on men's lap.

No photos of children and teenagers in their bedrooms.

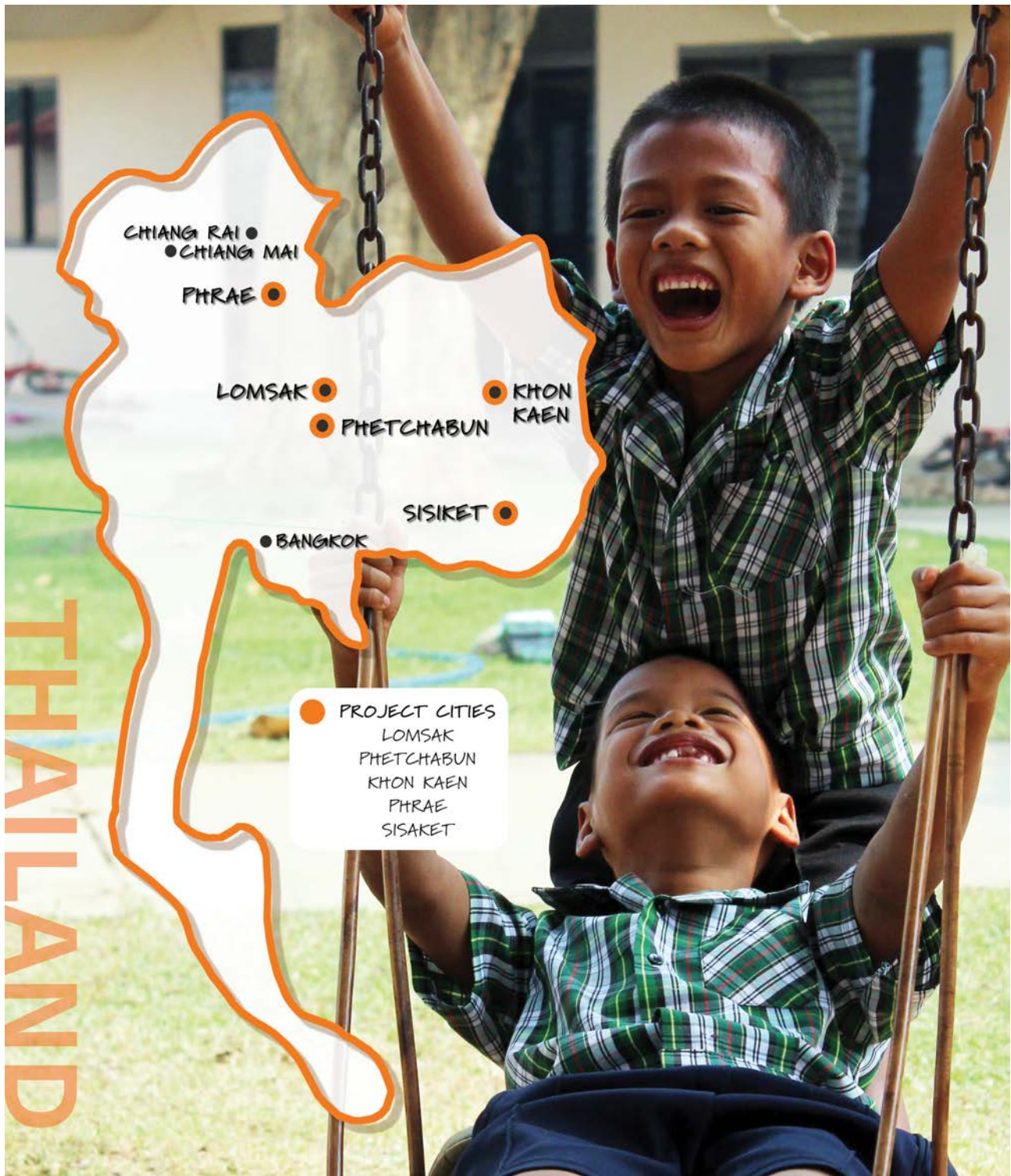
The requirements mentioned are common sense; and as would be expected, the Thai and Australian governments take a very dim view of the perceived exploitation of children.

Mercy International do honour and respect all Volunteers, team members and visitors and the leadership, staff, children and teenagers love to have you come and be part of our lives.



## Map of Thailand

Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation Projects



### Projects Overview

#### Current Projects in Thailand



#### Mercy International's Children's Village, Lomsak, Phetchabun

Mercy International's Children's Village is situated on six acres of land surrounded by small villages and farms, midway between Bangkok to the south and Chiang Mai to the north. The Children's Village with its beautiful rural setting, gardens, trees and dams, is home to children and teenagers who reside in family-orientated homes, each with its own carer.

Meals are taken together in a large communal dining room. This community of children, whose ages vary from young children to teenagers, has an atmosphere of love, family, fun, friendship, joy, happiness, enthusiasm, singing and laughter.

Life was not always been joy and delight for these children. Many have been orphaned by AIDS which they are now free of and others have been rejected by step-parents. Some were living in appalling conditions. Most have unbelievable background stories of hurt, hopelessness and rejection. Coming to live at Mercy International's Children's Village has changed all that. They now know they are accepted and special and are loved and have hope for the future.

Mercy International takes full responsibility for these special Children from childhood to adulthood, through our generous sponsors from around the world.



#### Meata Chanupatham School, Phetchabun

Meata Chanupatham School, adjacent to the Mercy International Children's Village commenced in May 2002 with 90 kindergarten children. The school has grown far beyond its beginnings and now caters for children from kindergarten through to high school. The name Meata Chanupatham means 'The Mercy School under the Patronage of the Highest King'.

Its motto is **Diligently Teaching Children to Aim for Excellence.**

This outstanding Christian school with its modern buildings is an educational centre highly regarded by the Thai government. The school caters for children from our Mercy International Children's village in Phetchabun as well as poor children living in the surrounding 19 villages. Although the school is privately run by Mercy International, the children pay no school fees.

The students, most from disadvantaged families, receive free transportation to and from school, one free uniform, a free hot lunch with milk plus other benefits including an education in an atmosphere of God's love and mercy.

We have witnessed many families moving into the area since we have established the children's village and school. Families are buying land, building homes and establishing small farms as it has become a progressive area and the school is a great attraction for their children to obtain a good education. Because of this, the government have named Ban Meata (meaning House of Mercy) a registered village and it is also established on the maps of Thailand.

We are now in the process of extending Meata Chanupatham School to include vocational training with programs under consideration including Agriculture, Building/Carpentry, Sewing/Tailoring, Information Technology, Hospitality and Administration.



### **Agricultural and Community Development, Phetchabun**

The purpose of setting up the agricultural farm is to develop self-sufficiency to ensure the children in the care of Mercy International Thailand have healthy and nutritional food. These include ongoing supplies of healthy vegetables and fruit for the children at all the centres and schools.

The forty acres of land for farming is close to the Children's Village Phetchabun. The land was cleared, landscaped and developed which included numerous large dams and sectioned off for:

- **Fish Farm**  
A fish farm was established in 2007 to provide the children at all the centres and schools with a well- balanced diet. Fish farming is a simple, economical way to provide an ongoing high protein diet which helps to alleviate malnutrition. Under a controlled environment free from industrial contaminations thousands of fish can be produced in a short period of time.
- **Fruit Tree Farm**  
Several acres of the farm is being used to grow fruit trees The fruit trees which have been planted, include favourites such as mango, banana, paw-paw, lime and Asian guava and coconuts. Many are already producing health-giving fruit for the children.
- **Cattle Farm**  
The cattle project was commenced in a small way in 2005 with four cows and it increased slowly to 40 which have provided beef for the children's homes and schools. The cow project has also provided finance with selling old cows as the younger cows produce calves.
- **Duck Farm**  
The duck farm was commenced in 2012 close to one of the dams with 55 ducklings. This has proved another excellent project in Mercy International's aim towards sustainability.
- **PIG Farm**  
The setting up of a piggery has been a huge success with providing good quality pork for all the children's homes and school. There are plans to increase the number of sows from three to produce more meat to feed the children. One sow can produce 13 babies at one time twice a year.



### Micro Enterprising

Micro Enterprising is a great way to help underprivileged families break out of the poverty cycle.

- **Fish farm**  
By teaching families in underprivileged areas to be self-sufficient, a small, easily maintained fish tank can make a huge difference to the nutritional requirements of a family.
- **Pig Farm**  
Helping a poor family to set up a piggery is a great way to help them out of their poverty stricken lives.

### Future Plans

- To provide a teaching program for teenagers living in a Mercy International's children's homes plus teenagers who live in the surrounding villages who are interested in Agriculture.
- To keep increasing the number of cows
- To increase the amount of vegetables and fruit grown



### Mercy International's Children's Village, Khon Kaen

In 2000 Mercy International established another Children's Home in Khon Kaen City, North/East of Thailand to specifically care for children living with HIV+. Most of these children had been orphaned due to their parents dying from AIDS related illness, and their surviving relatives either did not have the physical capability to care for these children or the social stigmas associated with the virus left the children marginalised and rejected. Mercy International is the only Children's Home in this region that would provide a loving home and support to

children who are living with or at risk of HIV+.

Many of these children arrived at a young age, quite unwell, and in need of urgent medical support. The children were also provided good nutrition and lots of love and encouragement. Despite medical advisors suggesting their lives would be short, they are now teenagers and young adults and many of these children we cared for now live independently.

In 2014, a new home was built on land located on the outskirts of Khon Kaen so we could continue to provide a loving family environment for those we were caring for. Re-locating to the new home has been a blessing for all the children. We are able to provide a loving and compassionate family environment in a home that is conducive to all age groups. There is space to run around, play football, basketball, ride a bike and sit and chat with friends.

Due to significant medical process changes in Thailand, the risk of contracting HIV+ through birth is now very small although if the parents living with the virus do not take care of themselves the risk of them dying and leaving their child orphaned is still a high risk situation.

At the end of 2014 we began accepting children into the centre who are free of HIV. This decision commenced with a five week old baby whose mother kept the birth a secret from family and friends and asked Mercy International to help her. The circumstances that lead to children being accepted into the

Mercy International program are varied; some situations are life-threatening, some due to abandonment, some due to death of their primary carer. Whatever the reason, the children are loved, accepted and cared for in a family focused environment.

The young adults that we have cared for from a young age in this centre are now doing various tertiary and vocational studies or working. We are extremely proud of them as they have recognised the opportunities available to them, and their own potential. We are seeing a new generation of upcoming accountants, teachers, civil engineers, fashion designers and Hotel workers contributing to the nation of Thailand.

The need is still significant and we anticipate that the next generation of young children being abandoned, unwanted or orphaned and coming into our care will increase. A teenage pregnancy are over represented in Thailand and in a society where unplanned pregnancies create an unsupportive environment in families, in schools and in the community, the outcomes for these children is not favourable. Please continue to support this program so we can meet the needs of these children and continue to give them a life, a future and a hope!



### **Mercy International's Children's Village, Phrae**

Phrae is a beautiful progressive city in the North of Thailand; three hours' drive south-east from Chiang Mai. It is a fertile area, producing two crops of rice per year. Mercy International's Children's Village is on 15 acres of land 17 Kilometres from Phrae's city centre.

The children's village in Phrae has well-furnished children's homes, a large dining/kitchen area, laundry facilities, first aid centre, volunteer accommodation, four units for teams and visitors and a beautiful well-equipped swimming pool. This beautiful well-equipped children's village opened mid-2008 for HIV/AIDS orphans who are free of the virus and babies who cannot be cared for by the parents due to having AIDS and for babies born to single mums who are not able to care for them.

These children are growing up in an atmosphere of love and acceptance in a community of lots of fun, laughter, family and happiness plus peace and security under the blessing of God. The majority of the children living at this children's village are bi-lingual and progressing beyond the usual level of children of a similar age in Thailand.



### **House of Mercy Phrae Learning Centre**

A pre-school and kindergarten program was established in 2011 for the children in in the Phrae children's village with the help of a paid Thai teacher and volunteers.

The learning Centre has grown and it now has its own building which is stage one of future development. The school runs classes from Pre-School through to grade six.

The class rooms are beautifully decorated and well equipped with resources.

Majority of the children attending the learning centre are bi-lingual and progressing beyond the usual level of other children their age in Thailand.

Apart from the normal curriculum, the children also learn about agricultural and they have hands on with growing vegetables.



### Community Development Program, Phrae

Community Development in the local communities is an essential part of Mercy International to help break the cycle of poverty in disadvantaged families.

Many of the poor and needy are women, elderly and children.

Mercy International provides:

- Food and Care packages
- Visits to see the doctor and the Hospital
- Help in improving their homes (Shanties), which included New Roofs, Flooring, Bathrooms and Toilets.
- Someone to talk to and bring encouragement.
- Education for children, plus help with Uniforms and Books.

Mercy International also goes into local schools to assist children in English Language, improving personal health and Life skills development. Programs are also developed to teach the Christmas and Easter message in an atmosphere of God's love and creative fun-filled ways.



### Mercy Language School Sisaket

Sisaket is a small rural city in the north east of Thailand, close to the Cambodian border. Mercy International accepted responsibility for an English Language School in Sisaket after its founders returned to the USA.

The school is highly successful, catering for school students as well as professionals and government workers. The school is well established and comfortably furnished with each classroom air-conditioned. It is located in the business heart of the city. An excellent curriculum for teaching English is used. Lessons run from 4.15pm to 8.30pm four days per week plus Saturday morning for women who can't come during the week. Profits from the school are invested into other Mercy International projects.

Teachers working at the school receive a living allowance and free accommodation with air-condition bedrooms and living room. Teachers who stay longer than a year receive help with airfares.

For further information about the school and conditions of service, log onto the blog-site:

<http://teachenglishsisaket.blogspot.com>



### Volunteer Opportunities



This section summarises the various volunteering opportunities available through Mercy International in Thailand. Consider each one carefully and this will help when completing the Volunteer Application form.

**Note:** A volunteer cannot displace a paid Thai worker. Volunteers always compliment paid Thai workers or handle a task Mercy International would not be able to pay a Thai worker to do.

#### General Volunteer Opportunities

Mercy International's current expansion, like any other growing organisation, requires ever increasing range of support and management skills. Some of the key areas in which Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation requires additional assistance include:

- Video and Graphic Expertise and Multimedia;
- IT Development for office and schools;
- Management;
- Business and Administration;
- Music and Drama;
- Youth activities and leadership development;
- Hair Dressing.

#### Mercy International's Children's Villages – Phetchabun, Khon Kaen, Phrae

**Building and Construction:** all trade skills are valuable - block-laying, carpentry, tiling, welding, painting, electrical and plumbing.

**Urgently Required:** long term retired builders to act as project managers at various centres

**Maintenance:** Mr 'Fix It' Handy-Men willing to over-see and assist the Thai staff with maintenance.

**Domestic help:** volunteers to assist the Thai staff with cleaning and laundry and to organise craft and games activities on weekends for the children.

**Teaching English:** to Staff and Children.

#### Meata Chanupathum School, Phetchabun

**English Teachers:** Qualified teachers, English language teachers or Individuals who have done TESOL training plus another degree are required to:

- assist the Thai English language teachers in developing the children's language skills;
- Develop the Thai teachers English.

**Building and Construction:** all trade skills are valuable - building, block-laying, carpentry, tiling, welding, painting, electrical and plumbing.

### **Mercy International's Children's Village Phrae**

**School Teachers:** Pre-School, Kindergarten and Early Primary.

### **Mercy Language School – Sisaket**

English Teachers - Qualified English language teachers or Individuals who have done TESOL training plus another degree

Teachers working at the language school in Sisaket receive a living allowance plus free accommodation. Teachers who stay longer than a year receive help with airfares.

### **Important Note**

#### **Thai Government requirements:**

- All personal coming to teach in Thailand must have a police check;
- No one can teach in any school or work with children in Thailand without a police check.

### Volunteer Requirements

Mercy International was established by dedicated self-funded volunteers. It continues to have an effective and expanding impact through the involvement of self-funded volunteers.



#### Required:

- All foreign volunteers coming to serve in Thailand must supply a copy of a police check which includes a 'Working with Children' check.
- Volunteers coming to teach English must supply copies of a police check, a 'Working with Children' check, passport and teaching qualification transcripts.
- All volunteers must apply for a work permit once settled in. The Thai leaders will assist you with this process.
- Different requirements may apply to those volunteering at the Mercy Language School in Sisaket. To avoid complications on arrival in Thailand, communicate with the Volunteers Coordinator about these requirements.

#### Volunteers Coordinator

The Volunteers Coordinator assists and answers all the questions volunteer may have in the process of becoming a volunteer with Mercy International. The Volunteers Coordinator is there to help in any way possible to make the volunteer experience successful and rewarding.

The Volunteers Coordinator provides important information such as:

- Visa application process;
- Filling in Application Forms;
- Arrival in Thailand;
- Hotel accommodation if overnighing or staying a few days in Bangkok;
- Domestic travel within Thailand;
- Living costs and accommodation while volunteering with Mercy International;
- Assists with a Work permit
- Any other questions people may have.

#### Orientation Process

There is an orientation period for all volunteers who stay for more than three months. The orientation takes place at the Children's Village in Phetchabun.

During the orientation program Jean Dunk (Founding Director of Mercy International), Sharon Dunk (CEO Mercy International) and Pawinee Angnoi (Mercy International's Thai Leader) explain their vision, ongoing progress and processes of the various centres and schools.

The orientation period gives volunteers time to adjust to Thailand's food and hot, steamy weather. Discussions are also held about living and serving as a volunteer cross-culturally with explanations of the dos and don'ts of the Thai culture.



The orientation process helps volunteers gain an understanding of the skills required to work within the Mercy International's services and projects and there are many opportunities to ask questions about the organisation and its operations. It also gives Jean and Sharon Dunk and Pawinee Angnoi the chance to assess and discuss with each volunteer where they think they are best suited to work within the organisation. It is also a good time to discuss the process of purchasing a vehicle and renting a place to live if accommodation within the organisation is not suitable.

There are also regular, quarterly gatherings for all volunteers serving with Mercy International. It is a time to relax and enjoy companionship, good food and report about volunteering experience. During this time Jean, Sharon and Pawinee and the Volunteers Coordinator are available for one-to-one discussions.

**A probationary period** of three months will apply to all long-term volunteers. This period allows volunteers time to assess whether Mercy International is the right setting to serve in. It also allows the leaders to assess whether the volunteer is coping and being fulfilled in serving in the organisation.

### Self-Funded

Mercy International is non-profit organisations that rely on donations to provide support for children in their care and appreciate the contribution of self-funded volunteers.

It is important for all volunteers to raise support to cover their expenses for plane fares, insurance, vaccinations, health care, housing and living costs, including utilities, food, eating out, travel, shopping, Language Studies, Internet access and International phone calls.

We recommend a minimum allowance of AU\$1,000 per month for your general living requirements.

**In addition, volunteers must apply for a three month multi-entry visas before coming to Thailand During that first three months; the Thai leaders will assist you in obtaining your work permit.**

**Note:** Volunteers who have debts that need regular payments must have the finance in place to cover the regular payments before commencing their volunteer service. Alternatively, pay any debts off before commencing your volunteering service.

### Length of Stay

Some people volunteer for short periods, dedicating several weeks to serve. Such volunteers are much appreciated. True volunteering entails a longer period. A minimum of three months is suggested for a volunteer to get the most out of the experience. A six to twelve month period is more desirable. There are several things a volunteer needs to take into account when deciding on length of stay.

- Ability to adapt to a new culture;
- Ability to enjoy different kinds of food;
- Not easily fazed by the language barrier;
- Willing to learn new routines and responsibilities;
- Able to work well in a team and maintain good working relationships.

The above will be no problem to people who have a good work ethic and maintain good interpersonal relationships.

### Purpose of Teams



Being part of a team opens doors of opportunities for individuals to enrich the lives of those less fortunate than themselves. Mercy International is host to many teams and visitors who come to give hands-on assistance and/or loving child-care.

To live among the children in Mercy International's care for a few weeks, to spend time with them, and to get to know them will enrich and bless your life. To hear their sad stories and to see the impact that this work has made in their lives will make you realize what a big and mighty God we serve. Teams visit from around the world every year and hardly a person leaves without tears.

It's important for teams to come and serve and to be a blessing. God will bless those who bless the poor.  
**Psalms 41:1-3**

### Benefits for Teams

Teams visiting the Mercy International projects get a real view of the country and its people, unlike tourists who stay in the glamorous tourist resorts.

The cross culture experience is not to be missed – tasting different food, viewing the people's life style and their homes, visiting the local food markets and trying to break through the language barrier is an exciting and challenging experience.

Teams see first-hand the impact Mercy International is having on Thailand in rescuing underprivileged children and giving them hope for their future.

Shopping in Thailand can be a load of fun especially in the markets. Bartering for the best price for gifts to take back home to loved ones and friends can be an amazing experience – always make it fun.

### Getting the Best Experience

#### Preparation

Preparation is vital to the success of your team and trip to Thailand. This is where the purpose behind the whole venture is communicated to the team members.

We recommend that teams meet together on a regular basis to plan and discuss their expectations of the trip and their reasons for wanting to be part of a team. Ideally, your preparation should also address the following topics.

#### Becoming a Team

- Getting to know one another and learning to appreciate the variety of personalities and abilities each team member will contribute;
- Clarifying skills and abilities.

### Planning your Trip Together

- Dates, travel arrangements, vaccinations, passports and all the practical arrangements;
- Planning your itinerary and activities;
- Fundraising.

### Preparing Activities for Children

- Crafts, games, dramas, musical items, outings for the children;
- Practical English lessons for children and staff.

### Learning

- Learn what Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation is all about;
- Read about Thailand and its culture;

### Ideas for Team Involvement

Here are a variety of interesting activities that may help your team plan something special for the children, young people and staff. **Teams:** use this list as a guide line only – it is not exhaustive and new creative activities are always welcomed.

It is important for your team to spend some time clarifying what skills, gifts and talents each individual on the team possess. It is also important for the team leader to communicate with the Teams Coordinator prior to departure what activities they have planned.

**Note:** Activities planned for children will need to be after dinner in the evening or at the weekends as most of the children attend school.

### Creative Ideas

**Crafts:** Children of all ages, teenager and staff love all kinds of crafts activities. Craft sessions with teams have always been a huge success. Any craft activities that are planned – please bring with you all the necessary supplies needed.

**Sports and Games:** The children, teenagers and staff love organized and informal physical activity games. If your planning sporting activities remember you will need to cater for a range of ages and may need to bring any equipment that is required.

**Excursions and Outings:** Take the children and teenagers on organized outings together. For example this could include shopping at a local supermarket, an open-air restaurant meal, or a day's picnic or swimming afternoon.

**Cooking Lessons:** Teenage girls and staff members will appreciate learning the art of making cakes. Team members may enjoy learning how to cook a tasty Thai dish.

**Special Morning Teas:** Treat the Thai staff to a special morning tea and have fun breaking down the language barrier.

**Volunteers:** Self-funded volunteers are special and give of themselves tirelessly to Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation. Treat them to a special dress up dinner.

**Cleaning and Maintenance:** While the children are at school, teams can help out in general cleaning, laundry, even helping clean up around a building site. For men – there are always small maintenance jobs



that need attention – examples: fixing bikes, leaking tapes, broken fixtures and furniture. Please advise if you have special trades. It is wise to bring some old work clothes for this purpose and leave them behind.

**Note:** If there are particular activities you would like to perform, you may need to bring materials or equipment with you. If you have any questions regarding this, feel free to liaise with the Teams Coordinator.

### Specialist Teams

**Building and Construction:** There is always a need for more class rooms and homes for children. Teams of tradesmen are always welcomed; bricklayers, painters, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, tillers and good maintenance men.

Work closely with the Teams Coordinator to ensure appropriate timing with the building program.

**Multi Media:** Teams who are skilled in filming and putting together excellent DVDs of the children and the different projects are welcomed.

### Supplies and Gifts

Many teams raise finances for a specific project, which is greatly appreciated. In addition, there is always an on-going need for supplies such as:

- underwear and socks for both boys and girls of all ages;
- bath-towels, hand-towels, tea-towels;
- pillowslips;
- surgical gloves;
- chocolates;
- Vegemite and peanut paste are welcomed items;
- Books and magazines, greatly appreciated by volunteers.



The Teams Coordinator will be able to give you an up-to-date list of supplies which are needed at the different project sites.

**Note:** Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation are Christian Organisations whose values and code of conduct reflect these beliefs. We believe in providing a holistic caring environment which takes account of people's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs. We require that all team members/visitors respect the organisation's Christian views.

### Travel Logistics

Arranging an overseas trip for a group of people can be a big task for the team leader. Be a team right from the start and delegate. Give each team member an assignment to fulfil in making sure all arrangements are covered.



#### Important Assignments

- Passports;
- Airline tickets;
- Application forms;
- Insurance;
- Immunisations/health checks;
- Fund raising/Program and Activities;
- Daily devotional and/or evaluation times.

#### Passport and Visa

To travel into Thailand you will require a passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Thailand.

If you plan to stay in Thailand for longer than 30 days, you will require a visa. Travelling from Australia, the website address to download the visa application form is [www.thaiconsulate.org.au](http://www.thaiconsulate.org.au).

#### Please be aware of the following when completing your application:

Submit your visa application as close to leaving as possible to enable maximum time within Thailand. The visa becomes valid at the time of issue rather than entry into Thailand. (30-day visa are issued when you enter the country).

**Type of Visa:** Multi-entry Non-Immigrant 'O-type' visa for the period you require e.g., 2 months, 6 months.

**Note:** If staying longer than one month, please obtain a three month visa in your home country and when you have settled into Mercy International Thailand, the Thai Leaders will help you obtain a work permit which the Thai government requires for all foreigners.

**Purpose of visiting Thailand:** Invest time with House of Mercy Foundation projects.

**Place to stay in Thailand:** Ban Meata, Ban Klang, Lomsak 67110. This is the central address for Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation in Thailand.

**Note:** Complete this same address for the arrival form into Thailand.

Mercy International will provide a letter to support and submit with your visa application. The Teams Coordinator will forward this letter to you. (Applies to 'longer than 30-day Visas')

### **Travelling from another country other than Australia:**

Please contact your local Thai Consulate for the appropriate Visa information.

### **Application Process**

No doubt the teams sending organisation (whether it be a church, school, club etc.) will have a process to endorse each team member's participation in a trip to Thailand, as you are being sent under their auspices and are their ambassadors. We therefore rely on Pastors of churches, Principals of schools and Presidents of clubs must ensure all team members are suitable for participation on a trip, and to provide suitable pre-departure training.

We do however require a general application from each team member which calls for information on the individual, their skills and training as well as authorization from Pastors, Principals or club presidents and an Emergency Contact Number plus a Release from Liability Form to be completed by all team participants.

**Note:** All school students must supply a letter of consent from parents/guardians.

Completed application forms are to be given to Team Leaders who will ensure they are forwarded as a team pack to the Australian office:

**Mercy International  
PO Box 586  
Kallangur Qld 4503  
Australia**

The Australian office must receive completed application forms well in advance of team arriving in Thailand.

Application Forms can be downloaded from Mercy International web-site: [www.mercy-international.com](http://www.mercy-international.com)



### Qualities Required in Volunteers, Team members and Visitors

The following attributes are important characteristics for long-term self-funded volunteers.



#### **A Teachable-Spirit**

A key to the success of your experience is to be a learner, able to learn from the Thai people, the leadership and other long term volunteers. Listen and learn; ask questions; be observant.

#### **A Servant's Heart**

Come to serve the children, Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation leaders, Thai staff and fellow volunteers.

#### **A Team Worker**

The willingness to work with and honour others is paramount.

#### **A Worker**

Do not come for a holiday – yes there will be free time, and the leadership will want you to have the opportunity to see and enjoy Thailand and its people. But a Volunteer comes primarily to work.

#### **A Positive Outlook**

Negative, critical and gossiping people will not be considered.

#### **Individuality**

Each volunteer contributes uniquely towards the work of Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation and the lives of the children in their care. This may be with music, arts, crafts, children's entertainment, cooking, teaching, photography, maintenance and gardening. If there are particular activities you would like to perform, you may need to bring materials or equipment with you. If you have any questions regarding this, please feel free to liaise with the Volunteers Coordinator.

## Application and Preparation

### Application Process

A detailed application process has been developed to ensure you comprehend the significance of the role you are going to undertake and to determine that your skills, abilities and attitude are suitable for serving the children in Mercy International's care. In turn, it should also reveal if volunteering with Mercy International is genuinely suited to your desires.

<b>STEP 1</b> <b>Complete The Volunteer Team Application Form</b>	<p>Each prospective volunteer/ team to complete an application form to work or visit in Thailand with Mercy International. Applicants to ensure their responses to the questions on the application form are honest and sincere.</p> <p>Applicants to submit the names and contact details of three people who will act as referees to their application – Professional, Pastoral and Personal. Referees are to be willing to provide a written report in respect to the applicant when requested by Mercy International.</p> <p>Where possible an interview with volunteers will be arranged with a Mercy International representative to assist in the application assessment process.</p>
<b>STEP 2</b> <b>Application Assessment</b>	<p>Applications will be assessed by the Volunteers / Team Coordinator and the Founders of Mercy International. Further clarification and advice may be requested from the referees nominated.</p>
<b>STEP 3</b> <b>Approval Advice</b>	<p>The Volunteers Coordinator will advise of acceptance as applicable and where the prospective location will be.</p>
<b>STEP 4</b> <b>Assistance With Preparation</b>	<p>Prior to arrival in Thailand the Volunteers /Team Coordinator will communicate with the volunteer and teams to discuss the prospective duties and responsibilities and assist with all preparation requirements. In some cases these decisions will be made after arrival in Thailand.</p> <p>This will be an important stage in your preparation and it is critical to thoroughly consider all issues raised by Mercy International Thailand staff and representatives.</p>

**Note:** The Thai government requires all volunteers staying more than one month at a Mercy International Thailand site to submit a completed police check. It should be from your home state and needs to be received with your application before beginning your time as a volunteer.

**Note:** All volunteer staying for more than one month are required to have a Work Permit. Once settled into Mercy International Thailand, the Thai leaders will assist you with obtaining a work permit.

**Personal Photo:** Each applicant must submit a personal photo with their application form.

**Placement:** While best efforts are made to place volunteers at the site most suited to their skills and abilities, it may prove best to transfer volunteers between Centres. Mercy International in Thailand also reserves the right to terminate a volunteer's term if it is recognized that they are having difficulties adapting cross-culturally or personally.

### Approval

Once an application has been approved, it is important that the volunteer and Team leader correspond with the Volunteers Coordinator to prepare for volunteering with Mercy International in Thailand.

**Application Forms, Requirements and Guidelines:** These can be downloaded from the Mercy International website at [www.mercy-international.com/](http://www.mercy-international.com/)

Please notify the Volunteers/ Team Coordinator a month in advance of your arrival in Thailand and your length of stay.

**Travel and Logistics:** The proposed location of a volunteer and team's term will determine domestic travel and logistics once in Thailand. The Volunteers / Team Coordinator will assist wherever possible to ensure arrival, domestic travel and settling in works well.

**Accommodation:** The Volunteers Coordinator will also advise regarding accommodation and the orientation period for all new volunteers serving for 3 months or more.

### Passport and Visa

To travel into Thailand a passport is required valid for at least six months beyond the volunteer and team's planned departure from Thailand.

If the volunteer plans to stay in Thailand for longer than 30 days, a Visa is required. Travelling from Australia, the website address to download the visa application form is [www.thaiconsulate.org.au](http://www.thaiconsulate.org.au).

#### **Be aware of the following when completing your application:**

Submit a Visa application as close to leaving as possible to enable maximum time within Thailand. The Visa becomes valid at the time of issue rather than upon entry into Thailand.

- **Type of Visa: Multi-entry Non-Immigrant 'O-type' Visa** for the period you require e.g., 6 months, 12 months.
- **Note:** Once settled into Mercy International Thailand, the Thai leadership will assist you in obtaining a work permit.
- **Purpose of visiting Thailand:** Invest time with Mercy International Thailand's projects.
- **Place to stay in Thailand:** House of Mercy Foundation Ban Meata, Ban Klang, Lomsak 67110. This is the central address for Mercy International in Thailand.
- **Note:** complete this same address for the arrival form into Thailand.

Mercy International will provide a letter of support and submit with your visa application. The Volunteers Coordinator will forward this letter to you or to the Consulate – as per arranged.

**Travelling from another country other than Australia** - please contact your local Thai Consulate for appropriate Visa information.

**Note:** Please maintain regular communication with the Volunteers Coordinator on all these vital issues. If your proposed volunteer role is at the Mercy Language School in Sisaket your Visa requirements may differ. To avoid complications on arrival in Thailand please ensure you discuss this with the Volunteers Coordinator.

### Insurance

Travel and medical insurance is **essential** for all volunteers, visitors and team members with Mercy International and must be in place for the **entire duration** of your volunteer term.

Mercy International advises that the insurance policy should cover:



1. Overseas emergency medical;
2. Hospital expenses;
3. Emergency medical assistance, including evacuation and personal liability;
4. Travel.

For further help and information communicate with the Volunteers and Team Coordinator.

Mercy International accepts no liability for accidents and ill-health gained during a volunteering term. Furthermore, no liability will be accepted for any loss or damage to personal items as this should all be covered by insurance.



### Health and Immunisations

Consult your doctor regarding the following issues before committing to your travel:



- Pre-existing medical conditions;
- Immunizations – Tetanus and Hepatitis A and B – essential;
- Laxatives and anti-diarrhoea medications;
- Your medical history;
- Tuberculosis TB examination – essential;
- Dental check-up is also advisable

**Dogs and monkeys in Thailand carry rabies** – keep away from them. It is extremely important to get medical treatment immediately if you are bitten. Please advise the Leaders where you are volunteering of any ill-health immediately.

**Important Note:** Due to Thailand's strict codes regarding the possession of drugs you are advised to obtain a letter from your Doctor for any medications you propose to bring into Thailand with you.

### Learning the Thai Language

All long-term volunteers are encouraged to learn the Thai language. Learning basic phrases prior to arriving in Thailand can be helpful. However, if you are coming for a longer term it would be wise to commence regular lessons once settled and adjusted to the new environment in Thailand. The additional cost of language studies will need to be added to your budget.

### Luggage - What to Pack



Luggage needs to be sturdy, durable and clearly labelled with your name and address on the handle. Label the inside as well.

**Lock your luggage securely.** Carry all valuable items such as cameras, computer and jewellery on board with you.

**Excess baggage allowance:** Many airlines will allow 10 kilos excess baggage for a worthy cause. Mercy International's office in Brisbane will supply a letter for the Airline verifying your travel intentions. Make sure you receive the authorization in writing from the airline prior to your departure day.

### Clothing

- Cool, comfortable and modest clothing are important as Thailand is hot and humid most of the time.
- Pack a light weight jacket and sweater for cooler mornings and evenings in December through to February.
- Ladies - Pack several smart outfits for special events.
- Men – Pack several long sleeve shirts, trousers and a light weight coat/jacket for special events
- Slip-on shoes are convenient in Thailand, but bring a pair of sneakers/joggers or walking shoes for country areas and the wet season.
- Suitable work clothes, work boots or sneakers/joggers for construction and maintenance work:

### Linen and Towels

- **Volunteers coming for 6 months onwards:** Bring a small quantity of bed linen and towels if thinking of renting outside the organisations centres as such items in Thailand are expensive.

### Toiletries and Cosmetics

- Most popular brands are available in Thailand and reasonably priced.

### Reading Matter

- Pack a small quantity of books. Encourage family and friends to send your favourite magazines on a regular basis. (Some of the centres have a supply of good books).
- There are a number of good book stores in Bangkok and Chiang Mai with a huge variety of English books.
- English newspapers (The Bangkok Post and the Nation) are sold in all the cities across Thailand.

### Useful Information

**Finances:** ATMs are everywhere in Thailand. Debit and/or credit cards with a pin number for cash withdrawals at ATMs are encouraged. Foreign currency is easy to exchange. Traveller's cheques attract a fee and often require long waits at the bank to cash in.

**Note:** Inform your bank before leaving re using debit and/or credit cards overseas.

**Cash: Do not exchange money in Australia** – it will cost you. Do carry some notes as well as your cards. On arrival at the Bangkok airport there are ATMs and places to exchange notes to cover your taxi fares and/or hotel expenses etc. **Do not exchange money at Thai hotels** – again it will cost you.

**Passports:** Passports will be needed for identification - checking into hotels, buying airline tickets and cashing traveller's cheques. Keep your passport separate from other forms of identification. Before leaving, ensure you have two photocopies of your itinerary, contact telephone numbers, passport, credit cards and travellers cheque numbers. Leave one copy with someone at home and take the other with you.

**Mobile Phone:** A necessary item for a volunteer - Purchasing a Thai sim card and phone number for your mobile phone is not expensive. Sim cards with numbers are available all over Thailand, as are recharge cards.

**Mail:** It can take up to 10 days for letters to travel to and from Thailand.

**Email:** The best way to keep in touch with family and friends is via email - All our centres have access to internet but volunteers are requested to help with the costs.

**Electric Appliances:** Electricity in Thailand is 220 volts AC, 50 cycles. The Thailand electrical plug has two vertical, parallel prongs. Adaptor plugs can be purchase before or after entering Thailand.

**Food:** There is enough variety in Thai food for everyone to find something to their liking. Most restaurants have a variety of western foods. Dunkin Donuts, KFC or MacDonalds are in the cities. If Vegemite is a favourite, pack a small bottle in your luggage.

**Water:** Most people use the readily available bottled drinking water in Thailand; however much of the tap water is now as pure as the bottled water. Still, most visitors feel that it is better to be sure than sorry.

**Gifts:** Volunteers, visitors and team members wishing to bring gifts or useful supplies for Mercy International or for the children – contact the Volunteers /Team Coordinator [volunteers@mercy-international.com](mailto:volunteers@mercy-international.com) or [teams@mercy-international.com](mailto:teams@mercy-international.com) for suggestions.

### Financial Donations

Some volunteers have found that families, workmates and friends want to make donations towards the work of Mercy International in Thailand. Such donations are tax-deductible if sent through the Brisbane office. In Thailand the volunteer, team member or visitor can negotiate with the Founder, Advisors or project managers where best to apply the donation/s.

## Preparation Checklist for Volunteers



Please use the following list to help you complete all essential preparation arrangements and communicate as necessary with the Volunteers Coordinator.

Preparation Checklist	Done	Advised Volunteers Coordinator
✓ Police Check Document	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Application Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ \$100.00 Administration Fee Paid To Brisbane Office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Travel Dates Confirmed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Air Travel To Bangkok	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Accommodation In Bangkok Arranged (If Applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Travel To Mercy International Thailand Facility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Long-Term Accommodation Arranged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Passport Current (At Least Six Months Validity After Proposed Return Date)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Passport Copied x 3 including Visa Page (Home, Spare, Vols Coord)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Visa Obtained	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Comprehensive Travel and Medical Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Insurance Policy Copied x 3 including Visa Page (Home, Spare, Vols Coord)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Immunisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Tuberculosis Check and Certificate Of Results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Sufficient Supply Of Medication (if required)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Letter From Doctor For Any Medications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Letter For Excess Baggage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Advise Bank For International Use Of ATM/Credit/Debit Card	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



### Recommended Itinerary for Teams



Mercy International recommends teams plan no less than a 12 day itinerary to enable them to visit three of the projects. This will give teams a good understanding of the amazing work of Mercy International. A minimum of twelve days will also enable teams to do shopping and sight-seeing.

The order of this recommended itinerary may vary depending on the number of teams visiting Mercy International projects at a given time. Specialized teams who come for a specific purpose (a team of tradesmen or multi media) will need to work closely with the Teams Coordinator regarding their itinerary.

### Sample Itinerary

- Day 1: Arrive in Bangkok – meet with Teams Coordinator or representative (if necessary).
- Day 2: Depart Bangkok for Khon Kaen – Mercy International's children's village
- Day 4: Depart Khon Kaen for Phetchabun – Mercy International's Children's Village, and the Agricultural Farm Plus Meata Chanupatham School
- Day 8: Depart Phetchabun for Phrae – Mercy International's Children's Village and Community Outreach Program.
- Day 11: Depart Phrae for Bangkok/Chiang Mai\*.
- Day 12: Depart Bangkok/Chiang Mai for home.

\*Chiang Mai is a great place, some say it is better than Bangkok for shopping, R and R and sight-seeing before going home. It is only a two to three hour drive from Phrae. A team can fly direct from Chiang Mai to Bangkok as Chiang Mai is an international airport. Teams can also travel from Chiang Mai to Bangkok by overnight train (sleeper/sit up).

There is an excellent and inexpensive elephant farm between Phrae and Chiang Mai where teams can watch the elephant show, ride an elephant or sit in a nice café, have an iced coffee and wait for those who are riding elephants in the bush. In the same area there is an international standard pottery factory to shop for beautiful inexpensive crockery and pottery.

**Note:** Mercy International cannot arrange accommodation or transport on behalf of teams wanting to visit other organizations prior to, during or after being with Mercy International.

### Accommodation, Travel and Expense

The Teams Coordinator will work closely with the team leaders in relation to setting up an itinerary, working out costs and expenses, hotel accommodation, accommodation at the children's villages in Phetchabun, Khon Kaen and Phrae, meals and travel arrangements to the various Mercy International centres and projects.

### Flights

Do not be hasty in buying air tickets for teams – do not settle for the first quote. It is amazing what good deals some airlines offer, but you must shop around to find them.

### Airport Taxes

**From Australia:** Airport taxes will be included in your ticket price.

### Shopping

Bartering is a way of life and unless you are in a fixed price store, the merchant will expect you to barter. Always barter with a smile and take your time – make it fun, for both the buyer and seller. Bartering is fun, but you will need to put away the presumption that the seller is out to cheat you. Yes, he wants the best deal he can get – but so do you, so be sweet. It is important to remember that once you and the merchant have agreed upon a price, you must buy. If you do not want to buy, back away before you agree on a price. You can create a lot of embarrassment and resentment if you do not buy when you have agreed on a price. Ignore sellers whose products you do not wish to buy – eye contact is usually interpreted as interest.

### Tipping

Average wages are lower than many western countries and tipping makes all the difference for many Thai workers and their families. As with most countries, tipping occurs after you have received a good personal service – this could be in a restaurant, hotels (do not forget the people you cannot see, such as the room attendant that cleans up after you and the bell boy who carries your heavy suitcase, plus the taxi drivers who transport you from A to B without any problems). Some places add an involuntary service tax to the bill, normally in large restaurants or hotels but it still is a good idea to tip the waiter as they work long hours and most give good service. Just remember each time you tip you are blessing somebody and God is aware of this. Jesus said “Give and it shall be given to you”. Never give less than 20 baht but in most cases be generous and think bigger. God always blesses a generous spirit.

## Preparation Checklist for Teams



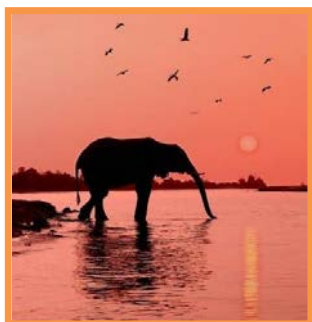
Use the following list to help you complete all essential preparation arrangements and communicate as necessary with the Teams Coordinator

Preparation Checklist	Done	Advised Teams Coordinator
✓ Application filled in and sent to Teams Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Travel dates confirmed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Itinerary confirmed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Passport current (at least six months validity after proposed return date)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Tickets purchased	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Passport copied x 2 – (home, spare)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Comprehensive travel and medical insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Insurance policy copied x 2 (home, spare)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Immunisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Tuberculosis check and certificate of results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Sufficient supply of medication (if required)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Letter from doctor for any medications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Letter for excess baggage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Advise bank for international use of ATM/Credit/Debit Card	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Visa obtained if necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Arriving and Living Cross Culturally

#### Culture Shock

Culture shock is a big part of a volunteer, visitor and team member's experience. Some of the symptoms of culture shock include:



- Unwarranted criticism of the culture/people;
- Constant complaints about the climate and continuous concern about the purity of water and food;
- Fear of touching local people and a pressing desire to talk with people who 'really make sense';
- Preoccupation with being robbed or cheated and with returning home.

Make every effort to have a positive attitude towards Thai people and all aspects of life in Thailand.

- Accept that most visitors experience culture shock – you are not alone;
- Remember visitors and team members. you are only here for a limited time;
- Remember it is their country – adapt to the Thais. 'When in Rome do as the Romans do';
- Focus on what you can control. People in culture shock often feel out of control;
- Do not invest major energy in minor problems;
- Write it down - record your thoughts and frustrations in a journal. This will give you a healthy outlet for expressing your feelings. Why not pray and ask the Lord how to deal with them;
- Ask for help from volunteers and the Volunteers / team Coordinator.

The following attributes will ensure that your time spent as a volunteer, visitor and team member in Thailand is successful:

- **Keep Perspective:** It is wise to remember at all times why you have come to Thailand – to help make a difference in the lives of children in the care of Mercy International.
- **Respect** the Thais and Their Culture: Do not laugh at or belittle the culture in front of Thais
- **Be Flexible:** Learn to be flexible as things will not always go as planned. Learn to adapt to the Thai way of life.
- **Appreciate Thai People:** Spend time sharing a meal, visiting with them in their homes and going shopping with them. Learn to appreciate their way of life.
- **The Children:** Thai children are delightful. Spending time with them will help to overcome any problems with cross culture.
- **Journaling:** Record special and humorous adventures as well as the emotional highs and lows of living cross culturally.



### Respect Cultural Standards

We have outlined some basic standards which we ask all volunteers and visitors to adhere to while working with Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation.

- When in Thailand, people from western nations always stand out. Please ensure you stand out as an individual serving in a quiet, humble, modest and positive manner.
- Ensure you always try to respect Thai customs and living environments - keep your remarks about what you see, hear, smell, etc., to yourselves. If the food looks unappetizing, try and nibble away at it slowly. Do not refuse it, as it most likely is the best they have to offer, and may be more delicious than you imagined.
- Be appreciative and sensitive to your hosts in each of the centres and community sites you visit. It is the responsibility of each individual to present a courteous and thankful spirit.
- Although you will get used to 'Thai time', punctuality is expected from volunteers. Be cheerful, prompt and reliable in carrying out assignments and responsibilities. Be cooperative in all work undertaken.
- Live honourably and be dedicated to serving, rather than being served - honouring others rather than seeking honour for yourself.
- Be law-abiding in all activities and abide by the Christian principles which Mercy International operates under.

### Personal Safety

Thailand is reasonably safe. Be wise and observe all usual precautions on personal safety. Stay alert, avoid walking alone in deserted areas and beware of unauthorised people who offer to serve as your guide.

### Traffic and Transport

- **Safety:** Be extremely careful in the traffic. Wherever possible use overpasses and stay alert. Pedestrian crossings mean nothing in Thailand – usually they do not represent a place for pedestrians to safely cross.
- **Taxis:** On arriving at Bangkok's International Airport if you do not have pre-arranged transport, travel by a Metered Taxi. Pay the metered fare plus a 50 Baht surcharge to the driver. There will also be additional charges for the expressway tolls. **If you must use a non-metered taxi, be sure to negotiate the fare before you commit to the journey.**
- **Driving:** A current International Driver's License is extremely helpful as a volunteer – especially if you are located in any of the children's homes.
- **Buses:** Bus travel is possibly the major form of travel in Thailand. In the past safety has not been closely linked with bus travel, but thankfully there has been a major improvement in recent years. Roads are excellent.
- If you plan to use buses ask the Volunteers Coordinator for advice re the route you plan.
- **Own vehicle:** Volunteers coming for an extended long period need to consider the possibilities of purchasing their own vehicle or motor cycle. Such purchases should only be made after advice is received from Mercy International personnel.

### Some Wise Advice

#### Make-Up and Appearance

Sadly, some volunteers (like too many tourists) tend to 'dress-down' when in Thailand. This is not a good example to our Thai leaders, staff and children. Mercy International volunteers are special people – please look special.

Thailand is hot and steamy and we advise ladies to be wise in the way they wear makeup. Eye make-up and lipstick is fine. It is advisable to have a very good cleansing cream, moisturiser, toner and sunscreen lotion.

#### Toilets

In country areas public toilets are generally Thai designed –'squat-style'. In some areas, septic systems are not designed to handle toilet paper. If there is a waste receptacle next to the toilet, toilet paper is meant to be thrown away, not flushed. It is recommended to always carry pocket tissues, as it is not normal for toilet paper to be provided. In some areas it is common to pay a small fee when using public toilets.

#### Food

The Staff at Mercy International's Children's Homes present a variety of good Thai food - normally including rice, meat and vegetables. The cooks thoughtfully tone down the usually hot Thai dishes for the benefit of the visitors. A western breakfast option is available at all the Children's Villages including cereal, toast and fruit.

There are many affordable eating options within the towns near each Mercy International site. If you are not confident or sure about selecting food, ask another experienced volunteer or Thai staff member to help you.

#### Water

Chilled, filtered water is available at all Mercy International projects and readily available in shops, hotels and restaurants.

#### Shopping

Bartering is a way of life and unless you are in a fixed price store, the merchant will expect you to barter. Always barter with a smile and take your time - make it fun, for both the buyer and seller. To enjoy bartering you need to put away the presumption that the seller is out to cheat you. Yes, he wants the best deal he can get – but so do you, so keep sweet. It is important to remember that once you and the merchant have agreed upon a price, you must buy. If you do not want to buy, back away before you agree on a price. You can create a lot of embarrassment and resentment if you do not buy when you have agreed on a price.

Ignore sellers whose products you do not wish to buy – eye contact is usually interpreted as interest.

### Tipping

Average wages are lower than many Western countries and tipping makes all the difference for many Thai workers and their families. As with most countries, tipping occurs after you have received good personal service – this could be in a restaurant, hotel (do not forget the people you cannot see such as the room attendant that cleans up after you), taxi drivers, etc. Some places add an involuntary service tax to the bill, normally in large restaurants or hotels but it still is a good idea to tip the waiter as they work long hours and most give good service. Just remember each time you tip you are blessing somebody and God is aware of this. Jesus said “Give and it shall be given to you.” Never give less than 20 baht but do not limit it to 20 baht. **God always blesses a generous spirit.**

### Volunteers Note: Taking Time Off

During your volunteer term you may need to take leave from your duties. There are many spectacular destinations within Thailand or a surrounding South East Asian country. Any travel, or leisure time, away from your normal base must be arranged with the Project Manager and/or Mercy International Founding Director. In arranging same always remember that once you have committed to assist as a volunteer, you are programmed into the rosters and routine of the centre you have been assigned to. Any ill-timed absence can make things difficult for other staff and volunteers.

**Note:** Long-term volunteers staying for an indefinite time in Thailand are encouraged to return to their home country for at least six weeks of each year to visit family and friends and even to do some promotional visits with clubs, churches and school to promote Mercy International.

### Regular Correspondence with Your Support Network

Maintaining regular correspondence with family, friends, church and those supporting you financially is very important. Make every effort to provide regular emails, updates, newsletters and photos to share your experiences.

### Returning Home



When the time comes to return home you will want to share everything you have seen and done, however, you may need to prepare for a possible let down. It will help to be aware in advance that returning home may bring up a whole range of feelings, some positive, some negative.

During your time in Thailand unknowingly you have undergone many personal changes, especially if you have been out of your 'normal life' for several weeks or even 3 months or more. Unfortunately, not all family and friends may appreciate your experiences.

It is important to understand what is happening here. Life at home went on without you. Your family and friends have had new experiences also. Ask them what happened while you were away and determine not to be the centre of attention. For many people arriving home is harder to deal with than arriving in a new culture. Experiencing a new culture can be challenging and even stressful; but so can returning home – particularly if you feel significantly changed by your experience. It is important to remain calm and patient with family and friends and settled back into family life and work. You will get the opportunity to share about your experience while visiting Thailand. It is also a good idea to be in regular contact with all the new friends you made during your time in Thailand.

### Sharing Your Experience

#### Evaluation with Mercy International

Evaluating your experience will be a great way to identify the highs (and maybe the lows) and also provides Mercy International with an understanding of your time, which may or may not be consistent with others. To maintain a reliable volunteer / team base it is vital we are aware of any necessary areas for improvement, development and change. The Volunteers / team Coordinator will endeavour to meet personally with you and discuss your evaluation.

#### Some questions to consider include:

- What have you seen in the lives of others that you would like to incorporate into your own life?
- What have you learnt from the children and staff at Mercy International Thai facilities?
- How has the experience in its totality made a difference in your life (if at all)?
- Are there any fresh undertakings or commitments which you want to make to God as a consequence?
- How will you follow through on these? What steps can you take?
- What have you received from God during this time?

### Sharing With Family and Friends

Ideas to help include others in your experience:

- **Photo and Video Party:** Invite all those who are interested and especially those who contributed to your support.
- **Share in a Service:** Church, school or club may make provision for you to share in one of their meetings.

### Complaints Management System Policy

- Mercy International works towards an idea of 'mutual cooperation' in which volunteers\* have an equitable relationship with each other, leaders and management, and that all volunteers feel their rights and responsibilities are respected.
- It is intended by having this policy that volunteers feel secure in their right to query and challenge things they feel are unacceptable or about which they are unsure.
- **\*N.B.** The term 'volunteer' applies to all individual volunteers, short or long term, individual members of visiting teams and any other individuals visiting Mercy International sites.

#### Definition

- **Grievance/complaint:** A dispute that one person has against another person or group of people.
- **Conflict resolution:** The resolution of any dispute between parties undertaken in the spirit of conciliation.

#### Policy

- This policy applies to all members, volunteers, visitors and interest groups of Mercy International.

#### Principles to be Followed When Grievances or Complaints Arise

- All complaints need to be handled promptly and with transparency. The following principles will be adhered to:
- **1. Respect for another's point of view.** Each party should show respect for the other's right to disagree.
- **2. A commitment to resolving the issue and willingness to compromise.** The parties involved should be willing to resolve the problem by being open to all proposals and suggestions and should be prepared to compromise.
- **3. Confidentiality:** Other members of the organisation should not have access to information on the conflict unless they are directly involved or are handling the grievance.
- **4. Impartiality:** All parties must be given the opportunity to present information directly related to the grievance, and no decisions or judgments will be made until all information has been carefully and impartially considered by those responsible for resolving the grievance.
- **5. Compassion and respect:** All people handling the grievance must be sensitive to the needs of those directly involved.
- **6. Prompt action:** All grievances must be dealt with promptly as outlined in the procedures of the constitution.

#### Informal Procedure

- The volunteer or visitor should first discuss their grievance with the person involved where possible or with the management.
- If this does not resolve the matter, volunteer are advised to progress to the formal stage.



### Mediation

- Sometimes it may not be possible to resolve concerns between those directly involved and a different perspective may be helpful. In these circumstances, either at the informal or formal stages mediation should be considered.
- Where mediation is considered appropriate, the formal procedure may be temporarily halted.

### Formal Procedure

#### Stage One

- If the matter has not been resolved through informal discussions, the volunteer should set out their concerns to their supervisor or manager
- The appropriate supervisor will then arrange and hold a meeting where the volunteer may be accompanied by a support person
- The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing to the volunteer.
- If the volunteer is unsatisfied with the decision, they have the right of appeal.

#### Stage Two

##### Appeal

- If the matter remains unresolved following the outcome of stage one, the volunteer can appeal to the Board of Directors
- An appeal meeting will be arranged and the volunteer will have the right to be accompanied by a support person
- The decision will be confirmed in writing to the volunteer and there will be no further right of appeal.
- The board of Directors should ensure that there is no unreasonable delay in the implementation of this procedure.

### About Thailand



#### Overview of Thailand

The following information on Thailand has been taken from the World Bank's statistical research and the Tourism Thailand website [www.tourismthailand.org](http://www.tourismthailand.org)

#### Full Name

Kingdom of Thailand, meaning 'Land of the Free'.

#### Head of State

King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX).

#### Capital

Bangkok (pop 10 - 20 million)

Krungthep meaning 'City of Angels'

#### System of Government

Democratic constitutional monarchy

#### Estimated 2011 Population

70 - 80 million

#### Area

513,115sq klm

#### Location and Geography

The kingdom of Thailand lies in the heart of Southeast Asia, making it a natural gateway to Indochina, Myanmar (Burma) and Southern China. Its shape and geography divide into four natural regions : the mountains and forests of the North; the vast rice fields of the Central Plains; the semi-arid farm lands of the Northeast plateau; and the tropical islands and long coastline of the peninsula South.

The country comprises 76 provinces that are further divided into districts, sub-districts and villages. Bangkok is the capital city and centre of political, commercial, industrial and cultural activities. It is also the seat of Thailand's revered Royal Family, with His Majesty the King recognised as Head of State, Head of the Armed Forces, Upholder of the Buddhist religion and Upholder of all religions.

#### Neighbouring Countries

- Myanmar - west and north;
- Lao P.D.R. - north and northeast;
- Cambodia – southeast;
- Malaysia – south.

### Thailand is divided into four natural regions:

- The mountainous North, with its profusion of multi-coloured orchids, fascinating native handicrafts and winter temperatures are sufficiently cool to permit cultivation of temperate fruits such as strawberries and peaches;
- The high Northeast Plateau, which still jealously guards its many archaeological and anthropological mysteries;
- The Central Plain, one of the world's most fertile rice and fruit-growing areas with colourful traditional culture and way of life as well as the sandy beaches of the East Coast and vibrant cosmopolitan Bangkok;
- The peninsular South where the unspoiled beaches and idyllic islands complement economically vital tin mining, rubber cultivation and fishing.

### Major Cities

Bangkok, Chiang-Mai, Nakhon Ratchasima, Phitsanalok Nonthaburi, Phitsanalok, Khon Kaen

### Climate

Thailand enjoys a tropical climate with three distinct seasons-hot and dry from February to May (average temperature 34 degrees Celsius and 75% humidity); rainy with plenty of sunshine from June to October (average day temperature 29 degrees Celsius and 87% humidity); and cool from November to January (temperatures range from 32 degrees Celsius to below 20 degrees Celsius with a drop in humidity). Much lower temperatures are experienced in the North and Northeast during night-time. The South has a tropical rainforest climate with temperatures averaging 28 degrees Celsius almost all year round.

### People

Thai (80%), Chinese (10%), Malay (3%), and the rest are minorities (Mons, Khmers, hill tribes) Ethnic Thais form the majority, though the area has historically been a migratory crossroads, and has thus produced a degree of ethnic diversity. Integration is such, however, that culturally and socially there is enormous unity.

### Religions

Buddhism (95%), Muslim (4%), others including Christianity (1.74%)

### Languages

The official language is Thai. English is also widely understood and used for commercial purposes.

### Currency

The official currency is the Baht (B) divided into 100 Satangs.

### National Flag

The red, white and blue bands symbolize the Nation, Buddhism and the Monarch respectively.

### **Economic Stability**

Thailand enjoyed the world's highest growth rate from 1985 to 1995 averaging almost 9% annually. However, increased speculative pressure on Thailand's currency in 1997 led to a crisis that uncovered financial sector weaknesses and forced the government to float the baht. Thailand entered a recovery stage in 1999 with growth of 4.2% and 4.4% in 2000. However recent world events have created global economic uncertainty and Thailand is no exception.

### **Major Agricultural**

Rice, tapioca, rubber, coconuts, sugar, maize, fruit, cotton and palm oil

### **Industries**

Tourism, textiles and garments, cement, electronics, cars, tobacco, gems and jewellery

### **The Thai People**

Thailand is a proud and beautiful country. Thailand was never colonized and the Thai people call their country 'Prathet Thai' which can be translated as 'The Land of the Free'. Nothing was imposed on the country from outside or left behind as a legacy of foreign occupation. Thus, the Thais' attitude to westerners is not one of subservience, nor is it governed by an inferiority complex. They approach foreign visitors with respect and at the same time, with a relaxed, self-critical dignity, expecting a similar response in return. Thais have a rich and unique culture including their own distinctive language and script.

Thai identity is fundamentally tied to Theravada Buddhism and to the Monarchy. Thais have absorbed the concepts of the ancient Buddhist tradition, where life is transient and each individual is responsible for their own personal fortune. This explains the Thais' relaxed approach to life; an attitude epitomized by the phrase 'Mai pen rai' or 'never mind'.

Thais have demonstrated an ability to integrate the conveniences of modern living with their rich cultural traditions. They have enjoyed the leadership of a number of modernising kings, notably King Chulalongkorn (Rama V 1868-1910) who introduced major reforms and established a modern bureaucratic state.

Thais are an enterprising people and Thailand enjoyed rapid economic growth during the 1980s and 1990s, ending with the financial crash of 1997. Tourism is the single largest foreign exchange earner with more than six million people a year visiting Thailand in recent years. Rice and agricultural crops are the mainstay of the Thai economy historically and around half of the workforce still is engaged in agricultural production. Thailand has a high literacy rate (93.8%) and life expectancy is currently around 70 years of age.

Despite a period of rapid urbanization, only 23% of the population lives in urban areas. Family continues to be very important to Thais and in particular, the love of a good mother is highly valued.

### **The Monarchy**

Thai monarchs have directed the development of Thailand since Sukhothai the first of the Thai kingdoms was founded in the mid-13th century. Once known as 'Lords of Life', the Thai monarch formerly held absolute power and during the Ayutthaya period (mid 14th to late 18th centuries) were influenced by the Khmer concept of god-king, assuming a semi-divine aura, becoming in effect both the symbol and embodiment of the nation. The revolution of 1932 ended absolute monarchy and curtailed the political

powers of the kings, but in no way reduced the people's respect for them nor was their role downgraded to that of a mere figurehead. The monarchy is now as much a focus for the unity of the Thai people as it ever was.

It is not easy for visitors to Thailand to understand the full extent of the people's respect for the royal family since there is no real parallel elsewhere in the world. There are, of course, other constitutional monarchies but none function in quite the same way as in Thailand, where the king is still a shaper of national welfare and continues to exercise a strong guiding influence over his government in real and positive terms.

### **His Majesty, the King of Thailand**

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the world's longest reigning monarch, was born in Cambridge Massachusetts, USA in 1927. He is a direct grandson of King Rama V and the third child (second son) of HRH Prince Mahidol of Songkla and Mom Sangwalya Mahidol (HRH the Princess Mother). His given name was Prince Bhumipho Adulyadej, meaning 'Strength of the Land'. His Majesty took his secondary education in Switzerland and later received his Bachelor of Letters degree from the Gymnasa Clasique Cantonal of Luasanne. He planned to continue his education in science and engineering at Luasanne University. But the tragic death of his older brother HM King Rama VIII and his own succession to the throne at the aged of 18 years altered his plans. He shifted to Political Science and Law.

HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej ascended to the throne in 1946. On April 28th, 1950 he married Mom Rajawongse Sirikit Kittiyakra (Her Majesty Queen Sirikit). Their Majesties have four children and several grandchildren who are now playing active roles in assisting their Majesties in various royal projects. Early in his reign, the King and Queen toured the country and saw for themselves the poverty and deprivation of the people – lack of water, schools and medical facilities, etc. Since then, numerous royal projects were launched to improve their lot. These included land development, preservation of water resources, and medical intervention program. At the centre of these projects is the Royal Chitrlada Palace where the King does research and experiments. Around the palace are rice fields, rice mills, a dairy farm, fresh and dry milk processing plants, juice and vegetable canning plants among other technological facilities. Results of such researches are shared with the people to help them improve their livelihoods.

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej died on the 13 October 2016 and now his son Prince Bhumipho Adulyadej is the King of Thailand.

### **Buddhism in Thailand**

More than 94% of Thais are Theravada Buddhists. Tourists are often enthralled by the site of saffron clothed monks roaming the streets in the early mornings, receiving food alms from the Thai people just as they have for hundreds of years. It is not a form of begging on the part of the monks, rather it is an opportunity for the giver to 'make merit' which is part and parcel of the Buddhist religious practice.

The Theravada faith, to give a simplified history, is the southern school of Buddhism as first preserved in Sri Lanka after the religion disappeared from India. It is contrasted with Mahayana Buddhism, or the northern school, so called because it spread out from India via Nepal, Tibet and China and on to Korea, Vietnam and Japan. The essence of all Buddhist teaching lies in the Four Noble Truths :

1. Dukkha (suffering and its inevitability);
2. Samudaya (the cause of suffering which is desire);
3. Nirodha (the cessation of suffering through the extinction of desire);

4. Magga (the way to the cessation of suffering i.e. the noble eightfold path, namely: right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration).

The ultimate goal of the religion is nirvana, the extinction of suffering, which is reached through gaining merit in a long cycle of death and rebirth, the nature of the latter being dictated by karma or action. In practice most people aim simply for rebirth into a better existence, the state of nirvana being literally incomprehensible. Acts of gaining merit operate on social as well as personal levels and Thai society at its best exemplifies the Golden Rule, “doing unto others as you would have them do unto you”.

The focal point of worship in Theravada Buddhism is the Triratana, the Triple Gem comprising the Buddha, the Dhamma (the universal truth which he proclaimed) and the Sangha (the religious community and more particularly, the monkhood). The Triratana is ever present in Thai life: Buddha images abound in temples and homes, the universal truth (Dhamma) is preached in sermons and taught at schools and monks are seen everywhere. Regarding the last, it is still reasonably common for young Thai men to enter monkhood at least once for a short period, generally the three months of Buddhist Lent. The role of Buddhism in Thai life is also witnessed in the institution of the Temple which historically, besides sustaining a monastic community, has served as village hostelry, village news, employment and information agency, school, hospital, dispensary and community centre.

While the tenets of Theravada Buddhism are faithfully adhered to, the religion is a tolerant one and in its practice in Thailand are incorporated certain elements of animism and Brahmanism. The inclusion of Brahmanic elements stems from the time when the Thais became heirs to the heritage of Angkor, and absorbed the practice of maintaining several Brahman priests at Court. The custom persists and today it is still priests of the tiny Brahman community who conduct the major royal rites and ceremonies. Brahmanism in Thailand has made certain adaptations to become fully compatible with Buddhism, but the national faith is also tolerant of other religions which exist completely separately. There are sizable communities of Christians, Muslims and Hindus and Chinese temples shrines and ancestral altars can be seen in nearly every city and town throughout the country.

### History of Christianity in Thailand

Thailand has always been a Buddhist country. Often described as more a way of life than religion, Buddhism pervades Thai life and influences their conduct in countless subtle ways. Thailand has long been tolerant of other religions, but the numbers involved are quite small: one million Muslims predominate in 4 provinces bordering Malaysia; 250,000 Christians; small groups of Hindus, Sikhs and believers of Confucian Ethics. There is a complete freedom of worship, exemplified by the role of the King as protector of all religions.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in Thailand in 1518 and they were allowed to open a Christian mission. In fact the Thai king gave a large donation to build the first Christian (Roman Catholic) church in the country. English traders who arrived in 1612 were agents for the East India Company and were more interested in building a factory than a church. Under King Narai (1657-88), who was interested in the West, European missionaries and adventurer's exerted considerable influence at court. However, when King Narai died in 1688, members of the government, fearing the missionaries proselytizing efforts, killed or expelled all westerners from Thailand. It remained a closed country to the Europeans for the next 100 years.

In 1780, King Taksin allowed French missionaries to enter Thailand and like a previous Thai king, helped them build a church. In the early part of the 19th century it was estimated that there were 1,000 Thai Christians in Bangkok, descendants of the Portuguese who were widely intermarried with the Thais. Protestant missionaries arrived in 1828 and the continuous residence of American missionaries dates from 1833. After 18 years 22 missionaries had failed to make one convert, but their non-religious impact was



profound. They brought modern scientific knowledge and western medicine to the country. In 1835, American missionaries set up the first printing press using the Thai alphabet.

King Mongkut learned English from his American missionary friends who also introduced him to Christianity. However, he could not accept the doctrines of divine revelation and redemption of sin, only pure human reason. He is quoted as saying, "What you teach them to do is admirable, but what you teach them to believe is foolish". Still, he saw no harm in the Christian faith if it helped other people and both the Catholics and the Protestants benefited from his help in many ways.

Although in the early part of this century, the Presbyterian missionaries saw growth occur in the Thai church, this began to level off after a few years. Then, during the Second World War, numbers declined, but began to rise again after the war ended when an influx of missionaries and new mission agencies established bases in Bangkok and Chang-Mai. However, it was not until the 1970s that any significant trends began to be established in terms of church growth.

Even though to be born Thai means to be born Buddhist, the average Thai person is not much more a Buddhist than many people in the western world consider themselves to be Christian. Some rituals are followed by most people, but only a few follow all the rules of Buddhism.

### Thai Cultural Sensitivities

#### Thai Time

Thais have a different attitude to time than Westerners. However, under no circumstance is it acceptable for foreigners to be late.

#### Sànnùk

The Thai word Sànnùk means 'fun'. In Thailand anything worth doing, even work, should have an element of sànnùk, otherwise it automatically becomes drudgery. This does not mean Thais do not want to work or strive, they just tend to approach tasks with a sense of playfulness. Nothing condemns an activity more than the description mǎi sànnùk 'not fun'.

#### Face

Thais are extremely polite and believe strongly in the concept of saving face i.e. avoiding confrontation and endeavouring not to embarrass oneself or other people (except when it is SÀNNÙK to do so). The ideal face-saver does not bring up negative topics in conversation and when they notice stress in another's life, they usually will not say anything unless that person complains or asks for help. Laughing at minor accidents – like when someone trips and falls down – may seem callous to outsiders but it is really just an attempt to save face on behalf of the person undergoing the mishap.

#### Social Gestures and Attitudes

Social hierarchy permeates Thai life to a far greater extent than in western society. One's social standing is dictated primarily by wealth and family connections, age and gender. Women have a lower social status than men and there is a far greater respect demonstrated towards the elderly than we are used to in contemporary western society.

Traditionally Thais greet one another with a 'wai' – a prayer like palms-together gesture. The wai is always initiated by the social inferior and the height of the wai is determined by the social gap between the two

parties. If someone wais you, you should wai back. Most urban Thais are familiar with the international-style handshake and will offer the same to a foreigner, although a wai is always appreciated.

Thais are often addressed by their first name with the honorific 'khun' or other title preceding it. Other formal terms of address include 'nai' (Mr) and 'naang' (Miss or Mrs). Friends often use nicknames or kinship terms like 'phii' (elder sibling), 'nawng' (younger sibling), 'máe' (mother) or 'lung' (uncle), depending on the age differential.

A smile and 'sáwát-dii khráp/khâ' (the all-purpose Thai greeting) goes a long way toward calming the initial trepidation that locals may feel upon seeing a foreigner, whether in the city or in the countryside.

When handing things to other people you should use both hands, or your right hand only. Never use the left hand, which is reserved for toilet ablutions. Books and other written materials are given a special status over other secular objects. Hence you should not slide books or documents across a table or counter top and never place them on the floor – use a chair if table space is not available.

When encounters take a turn for the worse, try to refrain from getting angry – it will not help matters, since losing your temper means a loss of face for everyone present. Remember that this is Asia, where keeping your cool is the paramount rule. In fact, refrain generally from talking loudly. It is perceived as rude by cultured Thais, whatever the situation.

### **Feet and Head**

The feet are the lowest part of the body (spiritually as well as physically) so do not point your feet at people or point at things with your feet. Do not prop your feet on chairs or tables while sitting. Never touch any part of someone else's body with your feet. In the same context, the head is regarded as the highest part of the body, so do not touch Thais on the head or ruffle their hair either. If you touch someone's head accidentally, offer an immediate apology or you will be perceived as very rude. Do not sit on pillows meant for sleeping as this represents a variant of the taboo against head touching.

Never step over someone, even on a crowded third class train where people are sitting or lying on the floor. Instead squeeze around them or ask them to move. In rural areas and at temple fairs food is often eaten while seated on the floor. Stepping over food is a sure way to embarrass and offend your Thai hosts.

### **Shoes**

Shoes are not worn inside people's homes, or in some guesthouses and shops. If you see a pile of shoes at or near an entrance, you should respect local custom and remove your shoes before entry.

### Mercy International Limited

#### Code of Ethics

The values of Mercy International Limited are described in this Code of Ethics and implemented through Mercy International's internal policies and practices. These values and the institution's commitment to the public interest inform and guide the actions of our board and staff.



#### Personal and Professional Integrity

Act with honesty, integrity and openness in all dealings and promote a working environment that values respect, fairness and the highest professionalism.

#### Mission

Serve the public interest by providing information, advancing policy solutions and supporting civic life.

#### Governance

Responsible for setting the mission and strategic direction as well as oversight of the policies, programs, finances and operations

#### Legal Compliance

Comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

#### Responsible Stewardship

Manage funds responsibly and prudently.

#### Disclosure

Provide detailed information to the public, the media and all stakeholders, and responds in a timely manner to all reasonable requests.

#### Program Evaluation

Commit to evaluating and improving program and organizational effectiveness and develop mechanisms to promote learning from its activities.

#### Non-Discrimination

Forbid discrimination based on race, creed, colour, gender, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other legally protected status.

#### Fundraising

Expend funds consistent with donor intent and disclose important and relevant information to potential donors.

This Code of Ethics is, by necessity, general in outlining broad ethical principles for Mercy International Limited. Mercy International is guided by it as well as by other relevant standards for the charitable sector when responding to specific issues not explicitly mentioned above.

# House of Mercy Foundation

## Values and Code of Conduct

### Preamble

House of Mercy Foundation's vision and activities are based on a set of values which defines the culture of, and within, the organisation.

House of Mercy Foundation is committed to establishing this culture in the minds and practices of its leaders, staff and children by:

- The staff induction process;
- Staff training;
- Leadership training;
- Accountability to the leadership;
- Teaching the children;
- Modelling good behaviour and practices in front of the children.

House of Mercy Foundation therefore states the following as its foundational values:

- Maintain the highest ethical standards and personal integrity;
  1. The basis of our ethics is the 10 Commandments;
  2. Has high moral expectations in relationships between males and females;
  3. Expect highly ethical use of finance, equipment and resources;
  4. Expect a good day's work for a fair day's pay, and to be good stewards of time;
  5. Aim to have a high level of compliance with the Thai government and laws.
- Respect each other and each child's individual needs:
  1. Recognise that all people are different;
  2. Recognise that different ages and different genders have different needs;
  3. Encourage mutual respect, regardless of age, status or gender.
- Help each child reach their highest potential:
  1. Recognise that children have potential in different areas, not just academic;
  2. Recognise that all children learn and develop in different ways;
  3. Expect that all House of Mercy children will live and develop in an atmosphere of encouragement.
- Practise Christian values:
  1. Love one another;
  2. Honour the Bible as God's Word;
  3. Encourage to live by faith;
  4. Encourage to seek God's plan;
  5. Show compassion to all.



## VOLUNTEER AND TEAM INFORMATION

- Build trust by being honest and open:
  1. Conflict to be dealt with quickly, confidentially and in a climate where feelings can be expressed honestly;
  2. Skilled mediators to be used where possible and appropriate;
  3. Encourage the principles of love and forgiveness to be used.
- Provide a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding environment for children, staff and volunteers.
- Show respect to the communities we serve:
  1. Respect and engage with Thai culture;
  2. Prepare our children to be responsible and contributing Thai citizens.

House of Mercy Foundation is a Christian organisation whose values and code of conduct reflects these beliefs. We believe in providing a holistic caring environment which takes account of people's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs.

## Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation

### Child Protection Policy

#### 1. Statement of Commitment

- 1.1. Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation are committed to the welfare and rights of children. All children under the care of HOMF will be treated with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth or other status. This includes all children under the age of 18 years.
- 1.2. Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation are committed to encourage its staff to familiarize themselves with their own child protection policy to protect and provide a safe environment for children and staff. This is also to protect the organization and encourage donors to have confidence in the organization.
- 1.3. Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation are committed to comply with all relevant local legislation on child rights and welfare in order to provide what is in 'best interest of the child' including labour laws that apply to children.
- 1.4. Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation encourages their staff to give respect and dignity to all children in their care. Child carers are encouraged to be good role models, spending time with each child, listening to them, encouraging children when they do something well and giving good explanations on why they should not do something else. They should keep their promises. They should provide discipline firstly through verbal means.



#### 1.5. Different Forms of Child Abuse are Described

- 1.5.1 **Physical Abuse:** Any punishments and physical abuse to children like beating including with a stick or other implement, poisoning, shaking and smothering or forcing the child to work in an unsafe way/environment. These are things that deliberately and negatively affect the physical well-being of children.
- 1.5.2 **Mental Abuse:** Any actions (gestures, words and behaviour) that deliberately affect a child's mental/emotional well-being for example by making them afraid, anxious, annoyed or discouraged.
- 1.5.3 **Neglect:** Any actions that deliberately neglect to provide the four essential rights of children (right to live, right to learn, right to participate and the right to speak).
- 1.5.4 **Sexual Abuse:** Any actions with sexual intent towards children such as touching children's genitals, forcing child to watch or take part in pornography or coercing the child to have sex.

#### 2. Communicating the Issue

- 2.1. Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation are committed to informing children and decision makers that child abuse is wrong. It is also understood that keeping silent is also wrong.
- 2.2 Child protection policies provide a safe and positive environment for children and are foundational in the education, research and advocacy initiatives that the Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation is involved in.
- 2.3 Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation are committed to educating its staff about the importance of child protection so that children are protected from abuse by staff and others. This is also a preventive measure to protect staff and the organization's integrity.
- 2.4 Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation encourages and supports the development of child protection policies and active implementation of these policies to all Non-Government organisations, groups and networks in Thailand through any meetings it may have with them.



2.5 Where possible children are also included as key stakeholders because Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation believes that children have the right to speak and be heard. Involving them in the process also enables them to know their right to protection. Children are encouraged to have active cooperation, share information and be involved in advocacy initiatives.

2.6 All staff agree to this policy, which is reviewed every two years.

### 3 Behavioural Protocols

3.1 All staff, volunteers, interns, consultants, visitors, donors or sponsors of Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation are expected to treat all children and other staff with respect and dignity. Inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative or demeaning language or behaviour towards children will not be tolerated.

3.2 Each individual must sign a statement to say that they have read the policy, will respect it and understand that action will be taken in cases of inappropriate behavior.

3.3 There will be careful regulations about what forms of discipline can be used, encouraging primarily verbal and withdrawing privileges. Staff are strongly encouraged to inform their director when discipline is appropriate. Discipline must be non-violent and non-humiliating.

3.4 Whenever possible, it should be ensured that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children. Sleeping close to unsupervised children will not be allowed unless absolutely necessary.

3.5 That a child will not be engaged in any form of sexual activities or acts. Adults will always be responsible for their behavior and cannot blame the child even if the child 'provokes' or acts in a 'seductive' way.

3.6 That computers, mobile phones, video and digital cameras will be used appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography through any medium.

3.7 If protocols are broken the person involved will be disciplined and may lose their job.

3.8 Communities and children with whom Mercy International/House of mercy Foundation staff work will be informed of the protocols and will be assured that project support will not be discontinued if they report suspicious behavior. Also staff will not be asked to leave for reporting suspicious behavior.

3.9 Where children are placed in communities, there will be careful screening and training of foster parents to ensure safe and adequate care will be given.

### 4 Recruitment and Screening

4.1 Refrain from hiring children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.

4.2 Screening is equally important for volunteers/interns, Board Members and consultants.

4.3 Information on child protection policies must be given before and on acceptance of employment. A form must be signed agreeing to the Child Protection Policy and stating that they have not had any previous convictions for abuses against children or violent behavior. Their future employers will be informed if dismissed for abuse.

4.4 References should be checked preferably by telephone to give previous employers an opportunity to express concerns verbally.

### 5 Responses to Allegations

5.1 Immediately report concerns or allegation of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures.

5.2 Procedures must be set out by the organizations to ensure that all staff knows what to do if an allegation is made, either by a child, parents, staff member or visitor.

5.3 Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation encourages all staff to adhere to the country's Labor Code if available.

5.4 All members of the team will encourage their staff to be open in discussing the potential of abuse in their organization.

5.5 Where an allegation has been made that a staff member/visitor to the organization has abused a child then the Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation will investigate and take the appropriate action to deal with the situation.

5.5.1 Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation will have a designated person whose responsibility is to be responsible for dealing with child protection issues in the organization.

5.5.2 Relationships with other organizations are encouraged for accountability and support in times such as these.

5.5.3 Both victim (and perpetrator) will be treated with respect from the start of the process to the end.

5.5.4 Children rarely lie in situations like this so their story must be heard and believed unless proven otherwise. They may also require extra protection if the perpetrator has not been arrested.

5.5.5 Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation will have a reporting procedure where the Director is informed and then others as the need arise.

5.5.6 Records should be made of all facts related to the investigation and these should be carefully and confidentially filed.

5.5.7 The relevant Embassy should be informed if a foreigner is involved.

5.5.8 There should be a person designated to deal with the media and the police. Where possible consideration will be made beforehand by the organization's leadership about how the police and media will be informed or involved.

5.5.9 If the organization is inexperienced, asking for help from other organizations with child protection policies is encouraged.

## **6 Use of Children's Images and Personal Information for Promotion, Fundraising and Development Education:**

6.1 Before photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, Mercy International/House of Mercy Foundation must:

6.1.1 Assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images;

6.1.2 Obtain consent from the child or a parent or guardian of the child. This must be explained to the child how the photograph or film will be used;

6.1.3 Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;

6.1.4 Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts;

6.1.5 Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically