



NEWS / PROFESSION

Kiro for Kids: To Thailand With Love

THANKS TO AN INNOVATIVE HUMANITARIAN PROJECT CALLED KIRO FOR KIDS, SUFFERING CHILDREN IN NORTHERN THAILAND ARE RECEIVING THE GIFT OF CHIROPRACTIC CARE.

The Akha, Lahu and Karen children of northern Thailand are some of the most at-risk people in the world, and yet they also are among the most neglected and marginalized. A combination of logging in the hill country, military unrest in nearby Myanmar (Burma) and persistent stealing of children for human trafficking is devastating to these tribal people. They are subsistence farmers for whom exposure to a rapidly changing world over the past few decades has been impossible for them to adapt to. It is commonplace to have their children, both boys and girls, stolen from them at gunpoint, never to see them again. Those who do make it back to their tribal villages have AIDS and die a short time later.



There are many humanitarian groups providing care at various levels for these people, especially the children. One of these groups is the New Life Foundation, an organization directed by Karen Smith, an American Christian psychologist, whose team rescues girls from the sex slave trade. The girls at New Life are loved back to health and self-esteem, given an education, vocational training and preparation for a useful life in the wider community. Another key organization is the Children of the Golden Triangle (CGT) Akha Training Centre. This group, directed by David and Asa Stevenson, provides food, accommodation, education, vocational training and a safe haven for more than 500 children from surrounding Akha villages.



Dr. Davies (green shirt) and six other DCs from the U.S., Australia and South Africa comprise the current "To Thailand With Love" chiropractic team providing care to the indigent population.

Without assistance, these children would be forced to go without even the most basic health care. Into this spectrum, Kiro Kids from Australia has created a program called Kiro for Kids. As director, I have been travelling several times a year to various sites in northern Thailand to examine and provide chiropractic care for the children. Several other chiropractors have now embraced the vision and have volunteered to accompany me on my trips. In 2006, this team has provided chiropractic care for more than 1,200 children throughout the region. Since 2004, when I undertook my first trip to Chiang Mai, six other chiropractors from the United Kingdom, Australia and South Africa have joined the team and volunteer one or two weeks each in an operation I have coined, "To Thailand With Love." The following summarizes what has been achieved in the past two and half years:

- Regular visits to clinics at the Children of the Golden Triangle Akha Training Centre (CGT): www.childrengoldentriangle.org.

- Coordination of efforts to raise funds for clothing, shoes and school-related costs for Akha tribal children. To date, over \$35,000 AUD has been received and passed on, in full, to various organizations supporting and providing for the Akha children, or used to pay expenses for chiropractors to travel to Thailand and assist us to provide chiropractic care.
- Sponsorship and logistical support/coordination for the directors of CGT to conduct a seven-week tour of southeastern Australia, to raise awareness of the plight of the Akha people. More than 120 sponsorships were received during this trip.
- Coordination of arrangements for one CGT leader to live in Australia for a period of several months to undertake an English as a second language (ESL) course, with a view of going back to CGT to teach English language studies to the tribal people of the area and attend University.
- Regular visiting clinics to Lahu tribal children situated along the highly volatile Burmese/Thai border.
- Introduction of chiropractic for autistic children to a Thai national children's hospital specializing in neurological disorders.
- Provision of chiropractic services to the girls of the New Life Foundation in Chiang Mai.
- Provision of chiropractic care to an orphanage in northern Thailand sheltering 200 children suffering from tuberculosis.
- Development and implementation of a training program for Akha teenagers in basic health evaluation and surveillance techniques and protocols.
- Development of a school and community health centre in three Akha villages located deep in the mountains near the Burmese border.



U.K. chiropractor Dr. Phillip Parry volunteers with the Kiro for Kids' Thailand relief team; he is shown here providing an adjustment to a local resident.

All of this has been a great achievement, particularly because it has been accomplished in such a short time. Perhaps the most pleasing achievement of 2006 has been the recruitment of Dr. Kirstin Shearar from Durban, South Africa, who has been travelling to Chiang Mai to deliver chiropractic care for the first time to the girls of the New Life Foundation (www.newlifecenterthailand.org), some as young as 8 years old, who have been rescued from hideous sexual exploitation in Thai brothels. I have been working with the director, Ms. Karen Smith, preparing for such a service and I am very excited that the road has been paved for Dr Shearar to provide chiropractic care to these deeply shattered and abused Akha tribal girls. It has long been my desire to provide treatment for these severely damaged girls, but have not been in a position to do so because they obviously need a female chiropractor.

The needs of the Akha and Lahu people are manifold and urgent. Kiro for Kids can only reach out to meet that need within the bounds of our resources. Up to this point, this project has been funded solely by the project's income from membership dues and some very generous donations, but the needs now far outweigh the ability of the project to meet them. We are overwhelmed by the need and help is urgently sought. You can become involved in one of three ways:

- Make a one-time donation to Kiro for Kids to help us implement our programs.
- Sponsor a child at either CGT or the New Life Center.
- Make the plight of the Akha and Lahu children known to people in your network of friends, associates and business acquaintances who may be willing to provide financial support.
- Become a member of Kiro for Kids and make a real difference in an ongoing, sustainable way.

If you feel you can help in some way, in any way, please contact me (neil.davies@kirokids.com.au) and together, we will make a difference to suffering children through the gift of chiropractic.

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