

Communicating Project **Outcomes**

 terre des hommes
Help for Children in Need

terre des hommes Germany
Help For Children In Need

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Table of contents

4	PREFACE	Why this publication by Alberto Cacayan
6	FOREWORD	Impact by Albert Recknagel
8	OVERVIEW	terre des hommes Germany turning golden by Alberto Cacayan
20		Our Rivers, Our Life Project: Empowering children and communities to keep the rivers alive
36	VIETNAM	A Wealth of Water: Joint community-based projects benefit Vietnamese children and youth
43	THAILAND	Stateless Children Protection Project: Asserting the big difference of a name and a nationality
54		Young leader: Mueda Nawanat
57	PHILIPPINES	PETA-ARTS Zone
70	CAMBODIA	Integrated Community Development in Veal Veng Key Results
86	BURMA/ MYANMAR	The Metta Development Foundation
88		The Kung Lone Black Pepper Cultivation Project: Planting a Village's Destiny
92		Raising Cattle and Quality of Life in Mann Saung Lar
		Outcome Monitoring and Results-Based Monitoring
98		Results-based Monitoring
106		Results Chain
107		Outcome Monitoring
118		tdh Germany Offices

Preface

Why this publication on outcomes?

BY ALBERTO CACAYAN
REGIONAL COORDINATOR, TERRE DES HOMMES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
9 SEPTEMBER 2015

Communicating project outcomes is a continuing challenge. Oftentimes, it is not easy to tell in a way that people can fully understand what outcomes have taken place of projects which are implemented in areas outside their day-to-day experience. Contexts are different. Cultures are diverse. Ways of communicating are different. Most of the people in the project areas would rather prefer to talk, and not write, about their experiences and the changes taking place in their life situations. Most of them prefer that we come and see the changes for ourselves. But visiting project areas and meeting people in their life-contexts is also something that few people can do.

So we publish this book, “Communicating Project Outcomes” for two main reasons: Accountability and Expansion of benefits.

Accountability is a fundamental principle in development work. We need to render account for the results and the processes of the work we do for and with children to the communities and organisations who partner with us, to donors who support these projects, and to all other stakeholders, including the children and young people who are the intended beneficiaries and who have every right to know what is going on with the projects. Terre des hommes Germany has been doing this for many years and in all regions, and this publication follows this tradition.

Expansion of benefits is the other reason for this publication. Sharing positive experiences and lessons learnt is a benefit that is worth doing and expanding. We want project partners and staff to know a cluster of selected projects in Southeast Asia and understand



better their outcomes and the lessons they offer. In this way, we know the different ways of communicating project outcomes. Moreover, we also raise our level of understanding on what is meant by outcome-oriented project management, and not just activity-centered nor output-oriented project management, and thus improve the effectiveness and efficacy of our projects.

We published in 2011 the book “Spaces to be children in Southeast Asia” which features several projects terre des hommes supported in Southeast Asia. This book on “Communicating Project Outcomes” in 2015 is a sequel and marker for terre des hommes’ golden celebration as it turns fifty in a matter of months.

We dedicate this book to all partners and colleagues who have made contributions, big and small, to terre des hommes since it was established. We plan to write their stories, on what terre des hommes meant/means to them, and what their dreams are for terre des hommes in the coming years.

That is our next project. 

Regional Team of tdh in Southeast Asia with some staff of the Women's Union of Langson during the Annual Staff Meeting held at the partner's office in Langson province, Vietnam in September 2013. (Photo taken by Itsaraporn Daoram)

Foreword

Impact

BY ALBERT RECKNAGEL

Almost inevitably every essay about impacts in development cooperation begins with mentioning the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and its rational appeal for making the results of our work measurable and the need to be more accountable. The declaration also calls for an alignment of development projects and programmes to national politics, a greater harmonization and coordination of the work of donors, and stronger local ownership.

After the declaration was published in 2005, development workers and innumerable consultants reacted quickly and predictably: By establishing new planning and monitoring formats and concepts. The impact chains became the new paradigm of cooperation and substituted the old Logical Framework Matrix (Log frame), which had focused more on conducting activities and producing output than on really impacting and changing the lives of people for the better.

The focus on introducing new formal instruments sometimes overshadowed the core of the debate. As fast as the impact chains were spread, critical questions were pronounced: Is this just another bureaucratic trend that will vanish in a few years? Is impact monitoring just another control mechanism established by donors and threatening real partnerships?



Orientation towards outcomes and impacts at terre des hommes

Representatives of our partner organizations, professional staff and volunteers jointly define the strategic goals of terre des hommes in the Delegates Conference. Therefore, it was also a joint decision when the conference announced the following strategic goal for the period of 2006-2009: "terre des hommes will make the impact of its work measurable or in another way understandable and transparent."

This decision of the Delegates Conference was the start of a fruitful process of discussion making outcome orientation an important element of the programme work of terre des hommes. In 2008 a new impact monitoring system was introduced and since 2014/15 the whole project application and reporting system is aligned with the use of outputs and outcomes. This book stands in this context.

For us, the orientation towards outcomes and impacts is really about learning from our successes and failures in our aim to bring about change for the benefit of marginalized children and communities. In this joint mission, we and our project

partners want to improve steadily. It is about sometimes stopping in our often hectic day to day work and asking ourselves: What have we effectively changed in the lives of children and youth? What worked and what can we do better from now on?

We want to be critical with ourselves and we want to encourage others to be critical with us – because this is what accountability is really all about. Therefore, we need to be able to measure and document the results of our work in a way that we can discuss with others. It is in this critical exchange that we learn the most.


For us, “orientation towards outcomes and impacts” is not about new forms, it is not a trend, and even less, a control mechanism. It means being transparent about our results, learning from them, and doing what we promised to do as effectively as possible: Helping children in need.

In this book we do not want to talk much about theory, but tell the stories of five of our projects that effectively improved the lives of children and youths, because this is what impact is all about:

- Rivers are the livelihood of many families in Southeast Asia, a livelihood that is often threatened by reckless pollution. The Regional campaign “Our Rivers, Our Lives” brought together young people from seven countries to fight the pollution of their rivers. In this book you will hear the fascinating stories about the results of their work: How, for instance, villagers established conservation zones and successfully protected their fishing areas from exploitation by others or how they stopped hotels from discharging chlorinated water into their river.
- The Stateless Children Protection Project (SCPP) in Northern Thailand successfully advocates for children’s rights. Together, this network of civil

society organizations has become a recognized expert in defending the rights of stateless and nationless children. SCPP has assisted 5,237 children in obtaining legal status and promoted many young leaders, such as Mueda Nawanat, whom you will get to know in a special story.

- In Cambodia, our partner organization Cambodian Organisation for Children and Development (COCD) implemented the project “Integrated Community Development in the District of Veal Veng”. The project consolidated self-help groups, improved food security by establishing a cow and buffalo bank, helped to reduce preventable diseases by improving sanitation and hygiene, and preserved the local culture of the Chong ethnic group.
- In partnership with the Women’s Union of Lang Son Province in Vietnam, tdh in October 2014 started another integrated drinking water project, the third of similar projects within the same province. The project not only improved the health of villagers but also the performance of children in school. These kids have more time for study and rest now that they no longer have to fetch heavy buckets of water from the wells up in the mountains before going to school.
- The ARTS Zone Project in the Philippines used creative methods to take action against corporal punishment and violence in families. It brought together 91 local networks of schools, local civil society organizations and government. In joint cultural activities, such as theatre groups, it has become possible for children and adults to share thoughts and views on their complementary roles in the growth of their families and communities.

In case of comments, concerns or questions, please don’t hesitate to come back to us. We hope you enjoy the stories! 

terre des hommes Germany Turning Golden

BY ALBERTO CACAYAN
REGIONAL COORDINATOR, TERRE DES HOMMES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In 2015, terre des hommes Germany celebrates its 50th year of active engagement in Southeast Asia (SEA). Technically, as its history bears out, turning golden happened even a few years earlier. Let's take a look!



By way of history

The serious conditions of the war-wounded children during the American War in Vietnam moved about 40 women and men in Germany to organise relief flights and provide medical treatment for these victims of war. They called their project "terre des hommes" – earth of humanity – inspired by the book, "Wind, Sand and Stars" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. On 8 January 1967, terre des hommes Germany registered as a charity.

In 1971 terre des hommes opened the German centre for the rehabilitation of child victims of the war in Vietnam. In the early 70s, heated debates ensued about liberation struggles in the Third World and the supposed opposition between "political struggle" and "direct assistance". terre des hommes declared a pragmatic inclusive policy of "both-and", instead of the ideologically-divisive "either-or".

In September 1973, Walter Skrobanek was appointed head of the Social Medical Centre based in Saigon. In December 1975, Walter moved to Thailand and started the Regional Office for Southeast Asia in Bangkok.

In 1976, terre des hommes reached an agreement with the government of Vietnam to continue the work of the Social Medical Centre but using the name "CROM" which stands for "Centre for the

Rehabilitation of Malnourished Orphaned Children". CROM continues to serve malnourished and orphaned children until today. The country coordination Office of terre des hommes monitors tdh-supported projects in Vietnam and is currently based in the premises of CROM.



After the early projects in Vietnam, terre des hommes began supporting projects in Thailand in 1976, in the Philippines in 1979 at the height of Martial Law, along the Thai-Burma border in 1990, in Indonesia in 1992, Cambodia in 1993, Laos in 1994 and from 1996, terre des hommes supported projects of organisations based inside Burma/ Myanmar. Terre des hommes does not directly implement projects in these countries, and instead partners with competent and committed local organisations.

Vision of terre des hommes

Terre des hommes works for the creation of a just and peaceful world for all children, those alive today and the

generations to come. Its endeavors are based on the principles of human rights, tolerance and equal rights for all people regardless of their origin, gender or religion. Terre des hommes works for a world in which survival is guaranteed for all children: where no child is exploited anymore; where all children have educational and development opportunities; where economic and social justice and peace prevail; and where conflicts are resolved without recourse to violence.

Terre des hommes is a children's aid agency, prioritizing children in need, and is concerned with advocating for development policies which promote and protect child rights. It also defines itself as a citizens' action group in Germany and seeks to connect with people in the South and in the North, who are ready to work in partnership to realize this vision.

It was in the 4th Regional Partners' Meeting that the campaign on "Our Rivers, Our Life" was proposed and endorsed by partners.



Understanding of Partnership

As terre des hommes prefers to work with partners in the regions, partnership is a fundamental working principle. During the first SEA Regional Partners' Meeting (RPM) held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 1997, terre des hommes and partners defined partnership as "a relationship between and among equals who share a common purpose, but who respect each one's identity, uniqueness and freedom. The basis of the working relationship is a result of a negotiated and mutually acceptable agreement, and not an imposition, in whatever form, of one upon another. It is anchored on mutual trust, which has to be nurtured and strengthened by open communication,

honest dialogue, reciprocity, transparency and mutual accountability. Partnership implies co-decision and participation."

This basic understanding on partnership was affirmed and elaborated by the participants of the Delegates' Conference (DC) in Germany in 2009. The DC added that "partnership is expressed, in particular, in the development of common positions, common goals, values and shared responsibilities. terre des hommes' financial support is only one possible aspect of a commonly shared commitment. Both partners likewise benefit from the synergies of this cooperation and its success." Both partners are open towards a pro-active and sincere dialogue on experiences and new challenges.

The Regional Policy Paper for SEA was formulated and the Regional Working Group on Peace Building was formed during the 5th Regional Partners' Meeting.





The tdh Southeast Asia Youth Network (SYN) first sent two youth representatives to the Regional Partners' Meeting in 2012.

Partner dialogue

Partner dialogue is an essential element of partnership, and is an ongoing, dynamic process. It takes place via various platforms and using diverse methods. One prominent form of partner dialogue is the periodic partners' meetings on the regional and national levels, where realities of a given context are discussed and analysed, issues are prioritized, experiences and ideas on how best to respond to the challenges are strategized, and common plans of action adopted.

Within terre des hommes, these national and regional meetings lead to the global Delegates' Conference which is held every three years. This conference is considered a high point in the partner dialogue, as delegates elected from project partners from seven regions, volunteers, staff, management and Board come together to decide on policies, strategic goals and focal themes of the international programme of terre des hommes.

Regional Partners' Meetings of tdh SEA

(INCLUDING GLOBAL PARTNERS' MEETINGS OF TDH GERMANY)

YEAR	EVENT/THEME	VENUE & DATES	RESULTS/OUTCOMES
1996	Country Policy Framework Planning Seminars First International Partner Conference (Policy Framework Planning Seminars)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vung Tau, Vietnam, 15-16 July • Davao, Philippines 29-30 July • Yogyakarta, Indonesia 5-6 Aug • Bonn, Germany 14-15 Aug 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partners of tdh in 7 SEA countries identified common issues and challenges ▪ Papers on Child Labour, Income Generating Activities for Women, and Partner Dialogue
1997	First SEA Policy Framework Planning Seminar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yogyakarta, Indonesia 26-27 Aug 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consensus Documents: 1) Towards a tdh Policy Framework in SEA; 2) Partnership: its Meaning and Challenges
1999	Second SEA Regional Partners' Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siem Reap, Cambodia 26-28 Apr 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Angkor Document: Towards a tdh Policy Framework in SEA ▪ Initial Formation of four Regional Working Groups, namely: 1) CRC Monitoring, 2) Gender, 3) Violence against Women and Children, and 4) Biodiversity
1999	Second International Partners' Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonn, Germany 16-19 Sept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adoption of the tdh Projects Criteria ▪ Decision to Launch a Global Campaign against Child Trafficking for a three-year period
2001	Third SEA Regional Partners' Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mae Sot, Thailand 11-14 Nov 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adoption of tdh Policies, Strategies and Project Criteria. ▪ Discussion on human rights, IDPs, violence against women, and trafficking issues. ▪ Common Plan of Action
2003	Fourth SEA Regional Partners' Meeting <i>Children, Peace and Biodiversity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chiang Saen, Thailand 1-5 Dec 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Golden Triangle Document ▪ Different inputs on the theme were presented and discussed. ▪ Campaign on "Our Rivers, Our Life" proposed and endorsed by partners.

2003	Delegates' Conference 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad Honnef, Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development Policy Positions of tdh ■ Strategic Goals of tdh for 2004-2006 ■ terre des hommes implements the participation of partner organisations in essential decisions.
2005	Fifth SEA Regional Partners' Meeting <i>Peace Building in the Context of Globalisation and Disasters</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sihanoukville, Cambodia 21-24 Nov 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regional Policy Paper for SEA ■ Formation of the RWG on Peace Building ■ Regional Emergency Response to 2004 Tsunami
2006	Delegates' Conference 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad Honnef, Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategic Goals for 2007-2009 ■ Communication Strategy ■ Cooperation with Companies
2007	Sixth SEA Regional Partners' Meeting <i>Globalisation, Diversity and Peace In the Eyes of the Child</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yogyakarta, Indonesia 6-9 Nov 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Partner Dialogue Paper ■ Child Protection Policy Paper ■ Child Participation Paper ■ Statement on the Burma Uprising
2009	Delegates' Conference 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad Honnef, Germany 19-21 June 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review and continuation of Focal Themes decided in DC06 ■ Partner Dialogue Policy Position ■ Motions on CRC Audit, Partner Dialogue, Climate Change, Migration, Alternative Paradigms, Co-decision
2009	Seventh SEA Regional Partners' Meeting <i>A Different World for Children: Child Rights beyond Borders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mae Sot, Thailand 22-27 Nov 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regional Issues: 1) Water and food security; 2) Child protection 3) Child trafficking; 4) Stateless and birth registration; and 5) Governance and corruption
2012	Eighth SEA Regional Partners' Meeting <i>Child Rights Beyond Borders/ASEAN</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tagaytay, Philippines 17-20 Apr 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regional Issues: Water/Food Security, Child Protection, Stateless Children, Trafficking, Governance and Corruption ■ Motions and Preparations for DC13
2013	Delegates' Conference 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad Honnef, Germany 4-6 Oct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategic Goals: 1) Child Participation; 2) Child Protection – Spaces free from violence and exploitation; 3) Ecological child rights; and 4) Child rights in international policies ■ Focal Themes: 1) Right to Play and 2) Alternative Development Models
2014	Ninth SEA Regional Partners' Meeting <i>Working with children for child rights</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yangon, Burma/ Myanmar 26-30 Oct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SEA Partners' contributions to the implementation of the DC 13 Strategic Goals and Focal Themes. ■ Regional Issues: 1) Access to quality education, 2) Peace, 3) Social and environmental impacts of mega-development projects

Regional programme in Southeast Asia (SEA)

Most of the SEA countries, where terre des hommes operates, remain seriously challenged by inequality, inequity and poverty, natural disasters and armed conflicts, extractive industries and hydropower dams which destroy

the environment and communities, climate change, and forced migration, all of which impact on the lives of the people, particularly vulnerable children. Basic rights to education, protection, development, participation and even survival remain largely unfulfilled for the majority of children, especially those living in impoverished rural areas.

Project partners, including representatives of SEA Youth Network identified contributions to the implementation of the DC 13 Strategic Goals and Focal Themes during the 9th RPM in Yangon, Burma/Myanmar in 2014.



Programme development

Based on a Five-Year Plan which starts in 2015, the SEA Programme is in a transitional phase of an adaption process which will enable the regional programme to respond to the challenges, even as it supports the implementation of the Global Strategic Goals which were decided by the Delegates Conference in 2013. From a primarily country-based project



work, the shift is gradually but firmly made towards a more programmatic, “trans-border” approach in line with the tdh Strategic Goals.

Child participation cuts across many project themes but is now given greater emphasis with the strengthening of the SEA Youth Network in the seven countries, the pursuit of the Child Rights Audit, the formation of the Child Rights Country Teams in four countries, the consolidation of the Mekong Youth Assembly and the involvement of youth leaders in regional bodies like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Youth Forum and the ASEAN People’s Forum. A position paper on Child Participation, which has been adopted by the partners in a regional platform is being used as a guide in concretizing this strategic goal. A publication on child participation ideas and experiences in SEA is in the works and is expected to be released in 2015.

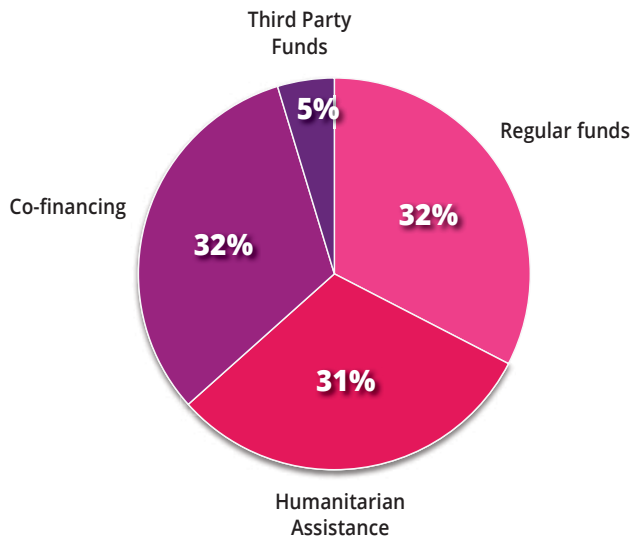
Child protection is the thematic concern of 42 percent of the total number of projects supported in all seven countries in 2014, and this strategic goal gets a boost with high profile projects, such as the Stateless Children Protection Project (SCPP) in Thailand and the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) project against corporal punishment and all forms of violence on children in eight cities in the Philippines. The plan to raise awareness on the regional Campaign against Corporal Punishment and for Positive Discipline is being considered by partners in two countries. As the region is beset with wars, frequent disasters and forced migration, child protection issues are often acute and compelling.

Ecological Child Rights is bannered by an ongoing regional campaign, “Our Rivers, Our Life” (OROL), which is conducted in all seven countries in SEA, each with different highlights, but all focused on protecting rivers and

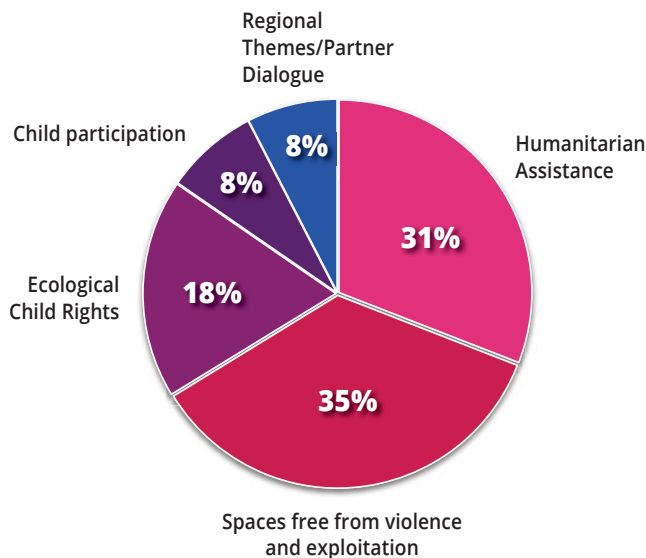




Type of Funds (2014)



Thematic distribution of funds (2014)



biodiversity. An external evaluation conducted in 2014 concluded the success and gains of this campaign which will continue for another three years. Children and youth groups, both in schools and communities, are actively participating in this campaign through awareness-raising, community radio programmes, the formation of River Watch Groups, and dialogue-lobbying with decision-makers to promulgate policies towards better protection of rivers and the environment in general.

Mainstreaming of child rights in international policies is being earnestly carried out through the efforts of the Mekong Youth Assembly, who are represented in the ASEAN Youth Movement leadership, as well as through coalition efforts with the Child Rights Coalition-Asia, the Asia Forum for Development, and other human rights groups/networks in the region. Moreover, SEA youth network members are active in their own countries in raising child rights issues to various regional and international groups operating in their respective countries. The youth-initiated activities for the Global Action Month in November 2014 were successfully implemented and photo documentations of the events were posted in social media. Linkages between SEA Youth network and the International Youth Network are fostered and sustained by the young people themselves, and these networks can hopefully and more effectively raise relevant advocacy issues.

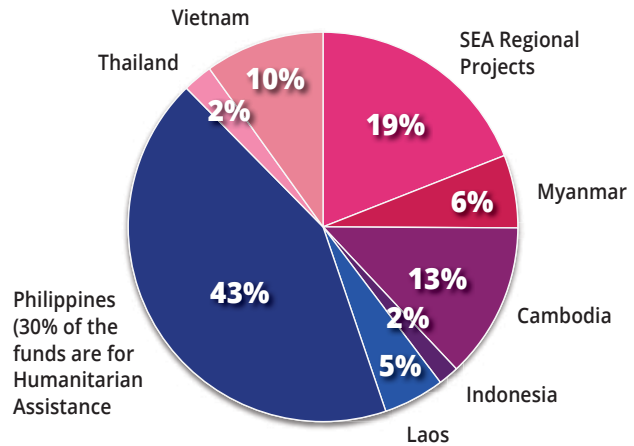
General project development

In 2014, tdh Germany in SEA accompanied a total of 78 projects, 44 of which were sanctioned in 2014, while the remaining 34 – approved in previous years – are still being implemented. Out of the 78 projects, 52 are regular projects, 5 are co-financed (by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)), 15 are emergency-related humanitarian assistance, and six are supported by third party funding sources. All the 52 regular projects take an integrated approach to address interconnected children issues, and majority of the 15 humanitarian assistance projects include not only emergency relief but also development-oriented components to ensure that interventions have a longer-term impact and thus better chances of sustainability.

Advocacy and networking

Regional Coordination Office in SEA participates in the campaign of the International Federation of terre des hommes (IFTDH) on Destination Unknown (DU). tdh Germany is contributing to the DU campaign a research-study on the shrimp industry in Thailand, research on migration in northern Thailand and neighbouring countries, and a capacity-building programme for youth leaders. Cooperation with other member organisations in Burma/Myanmar continues and works towards shaping a country-based common strategy, although given the changing landscape in Burma/Myanmar, the plan is proving quite difficult to concretise.

Country distribution of funds (2014)



Terre des hommes remains a member of the Steering Committee of the Child Rights Coalition-Asia (CRC-Asia), networks with Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia), and made collaborative efforts in developing a publication on Child Participation in the ASEAN. It also joins Roundtable Discussions organised by the Focus on Global South on issues related to Alternative Development Models and links with existing groups like the Pun Pun Center for Self Reliance in northern Thailand, a community pursuing alternative, healthy, environmentally-friendly and self-sufficient ways of living through organic farming, seed saving practices, natural building and low-technology approaches.

Its limited resources notwithstanding, terre des hommes continues to vigorously promote child rights in the region through its project work, advocacy, networking, and resource mobilisation, and innovative ways of approaching development work. 🌍

Our Rivers, Our Life Project: Empowering Children and Communities to Keep the Rivers Alive

BY JASON LUBANSKI

Fast Facts

PROJECT TITLE:	Conservation and Protection of Our Rivers to Promote Life
PROJECT PARTNER:	Regional Working Group Biodiversity in SEA
BURMA/MYANMAR:	Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)
CAMBODIA:	Santi Sena
INDONESIA:	The Indonesian Institute for Forest and Environment (RMI)
LAOS:	Our Village Association for Community Development (OVC)
PHILIPPINES:	Gitib Inc
THAILAND:	Association for Community Ecology Development (ACED)
VIETNAM:	Forestry Association (FA) of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
PROJECT AREA/COUNTRY:	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Burma/Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam
TARGET GROUPS:	3,600 children and youth, 66 local communities, and 66 decision-makers
PROJECT COSTS:	744.484,00 Euro
PROJECT DURATION:	01 March 2012 to 28 February 2015



The Our Rivers Our Life (OROL) campaign's impressive work and strategic interventions have strengthened Southeast Asian riparian communities to be able to withstand on-going threats to their rivers and livelihoods. OROL partner organisations have equipped children and their families with skills and resources to be better prepared for current and future challenges. OROL's commitment to children and youth throughout all project activities provides real opportunities for new and much-needed solutions to emerge, as new problems arise and situations change more quickly than ever.

Despite limited financial resources and staff, the OROL project was able to overcome the obstacles that have emerged during the last three years. These threats to local communities have included political upheavals, increasing food prices, natural disasters – especially devastating flooding, typhoons, earthquakes, and mudslides – and an increase in the number of environmentally destructive 'development' projects throughout Southeast Asia such as dams, mines,

agro-industrial plantations, oil pipelines, and industrial estates.

Due to their hard work and dedication, OROL partner staff members continue to be held in very high regard by project beneficiaries, community members, partner Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government officials, and donors. These staff members are extremely knowledgeable and have a great amount of experience working on issues of environmental conservation, youth development, and community development. Their dedication is



exemplified in their long hours of work and their excitement over bringing the evaluation team to meet project beneficiaries.

OROL partner organizations have a strong field-based focus and their strengths lie in their relationships with local communities. They have employed a holistic approach, by simultaneously addressing multiple factors and causes for river degradation, while utilizing multiple strategies and methods to alleviate negative impacts. During the last phase of the OROL project, partner organizations were able to implement a wide range of activities that have benefited a large number of people and communities, but three intervention strategies have stood out for being

most effective: the set-up of youth river watch groups, community-strengthening support, and advocacy efforts.

Youth river watch groups

The youth river watch group component has been a highlight of the OROL project. The aims and purposes of these groups are similar in each country, but the names, membership, and activities of these groups vary from place to place. Group size varies from seven to fifty members, and they go by a number of names – River Watch Groups, Environment Clubs, Youth Groups, Conservation Clubs, Tree-Planting Groups, Youth For Climate Change, or Nature Lover Clubs. Most river watch

groups are school based – ranging from primary school to university levels – and are voluntary. Many of these groups have high levels of female participation.

Activities conducted by these groups include field trips to rivers and communities, producing art from recycled materials, youth camps, parades, environmental games and contests, picture drawing and story writing contests, water bio-diversity testing, short film productions, clean ups of rivers and school grounds, lectures on recycling, and a wide variety of others. These activities have empowered the local youth, through the provision of knowledge and new experiences. After receiving trainings and participating in various public events, youth have markedly improved on their confidence and leadership skills, and now act as peer educators and role models for others in their schools and communities.

In **Indonesia**, the Lindalang River Watch Group consists of 13 junior high school-level girls who are very active in monitoring the ecological health of the Cisadane River. “Lindalang” translates as “Environment for Recycling”. This group collects water samples each month, and



Lindalang
River Watch
Group
Indonesia

uses a “Bio-monitoring Kit” developed by **Rimbawan Muda Indonesia – The Indonesian Institute for Forest and Environment (RMI)** to identify organisms. Their monthly recordings are then compiled in a logbook, which allows them to compare and observe changes in the bio-diversity levels of the Cisadane River over a long period of time. These girls take their river watch and







environmental activities very seriously, as they expressed their concern over the declining state of the forests and waters that surround them. Besides their river watch work, this active group also conducts an impressive amount of other activities, including: collecting garbage in nearby hamlets on Sundays; collecting, separating, and recycling garbage at school; producing handicrafts from recycled materials which help generate funds for other activities. They manage a 'mini-library' that encourages youth to borrow books and discuss issues from their readings. They also facilitate sewing skills trainings.

In quickly developing **Vietnam**, there is a growing gap and disconnect between modern urban centers and traditional rural communities, causing increasing misunderstanding over the causes of and solutions for problems facing the rivers. The **Forestry Association (FA)** builds understanding between the rural and urban youth by facilitating exchange trips, fora, and camps that bring school-based river watch groups together to share information, views, and experiences. Recently, the Saigon River Watch Group traveled to the La Nga community (located along the Dong Nai River, two hours north of Ho Chi Minh

Student exchange in Vietnam



City) to meet the La Nga High School River Watch Group. When they met, students shared stories about meeting Dong Nai River fisherfolk, taking photographs to document the practices that pollute the Dong Nai River, and conducting fora with students and community members about current issues affecting the Dong Nai River. Among the many interesting exchanges between the two river watch groups were some great examples of how the youth are really changing the world:

"In Saigon, we have seen one of the dirty canals get cleaner in the last few years, but it cost a lot of money and took a lot of hard work to improve the water quality. It still needs a lot of work, and we are afraid it will get dirty again, if people don't maintain it."

– A student from the Saigon River Watch Group

"Last year, we came together and made new friends from other communities along the Dong Nai River. We have stayed in touch with them since then and are looking forward to meeting them once again in a few months when we have another youth camp activity."

– A La Nga High School student

In **Laos**, the Salavan Secondary School Volunteer Group meets about once per month depending on the school schedule and other activities. Recently, this group planned activities for the upcoming Boat Racing Festival on the Sedone River. The students led this discussion and recorded their plans. During their meetings, the **Association for Community Development (ACD)** staff and the teacher advisor encourage the students to decide things for themselves. After some lively discussion and debate, the students settled on a wide range of activities designed to encourage interest and participation from local youth, including a parade, a public forum, and a number of games and contests to teach about environmental issues.



Laos Student Volunteer Group

ACD puts a premium on child-initiated activities, particularly in Laos where most children are limited in their ability to think or analyze independently due to highly centralized educational and political policies and practices that conform with authority figures. ACD thus finds ways toward more ‘child-centered participation’. In the case of the Boat Racing Festival, ACD encouraged the students to directly coordinate their planned activities with local authorities, thus allowing them to learn how to work effectively within the Laos bureaucratic system. During their interactions and negotiations with the local authorities, the students discovered that it was more effective to present their activities together as a larger group instead of only delegating group leaders to ask permission from local authorities.

In the *Philippines*, the *Youth for Climate Justice (Y4CJ)* group was established after a former University of Southeastern Philippines

(USeP) student who was an intern at the *GITIB* (a local NGO supporting indigenous people’s initiatives) OROL office gave a presentation at their alma mater. This sparked an interest among some of the USeP Community Development students. Following a few meetings to brainstorm ideas, they decided to start the Y4CJ Group. An initial awareness-raising event was held and 150 students applied for membership. Candidates were then screened and interviewed by the core group. The Y4CJ Group soon designed a logo and printed t-shirts for group members. It conducted activities such as the “Forum on Climate Change and

Philippines Y4CJ Group







Climate Justice” and photo exhibits on “Climate Change and the State of our Rivers” in Mindanao. Future plans include fundraising events (concerts and t-shirt sales), river trekking, and research on “River Ecological Health and Biodiversity”.

Community strengthening

OROL partners are dedicated to strengthening local communities located alongside rivers and waterways so that they can more effectively protect the environment. In many cases, these efforts also involve local government administrators, in order to build



Kaew Wua Dahm FC Zone in Thailand

relationships between the rights holders and duty bearers and increase the likelihood that interventions will continue to benefit communities after OROL partners are no longer directly supporting them.

In **Thailand**, the Kaew Wua Dahm community recently became greatly concerned about the visible decline in the number of fish in their river – the Mae Kok, which flows down from the Shan Hills in Burma to the Mekhong in Chiang Rai. In order to protect the few remaining fish species, the villagers first declared the exclusive use of traditional fishing methods by neighboring villages along the river. Community fora and

PASAKK and local community members meeting government in the Philippines

discussion were conducted to build understanding about the importance and benefits of establishing a 500 meter long Fish Conservation (FC) protected zone. After a few years of the first regulation, all fishing was officially banned in the FC zone. Youth from the community helped patrol and enforce the regulations, especially at night, when some people tried to sneak out and catch fish unnoticed. The young ‘watchdogs’ enjoy staying up late in groups of three or four and monitoring the activities on the dark river. The villagers have seen a noticeable gain in the number of fish in the FC zone and have observed that, in the dry season, one now finds large amounts of eggs on the sandbars in the river. Future plans include testing water quality and biodiversity in the FC zone and conducting research about fish species.

PASAKK (which means “land” in the local dialect) is an indigenous people’s organization based in Agusan del Sur province, the **Philippines**. The staff are all members of the Manobo tribe, and **GITIB** and **PASAKK** have had a close working relationship for many years. There are 10 community-based river watch groups in the **PASAKK** target area. Activities include planting indigenous trees and bamboo along river banks to stop erosion and reduce the effects of flooding; establishing and monitoring regulations to stop illegal fishing practices, including using electricity to kill fish; monitoring illegal small scale mining and logging activities; and water sampling to measure



river health and biodiversity levels. Indigenous representatives from PASAKK and the Bunawan Municipal River Watch Group regularly hold information sharing exchanges with government officers at the Bunawan Commune Office. Views and opinions are openly shared between the government officials and members of the RWG, which has paved the way for local communities to more actively participate in the government's development plans and environmental safeguarding activities. Even when there are clear disagreements, both sides allow each other to express their opinions.

for everyone, not just for our family, so we need to protect this area so there is enough for EVERYONE, not just for us."

Advocacy

For the OROL Campaign, most of the national level policy advocacy work is done through networks, which is a more effective approach, than negotiations done by individual persons or organizations. For local advocacy, the most successful strategies are the involvement of local government officials in fora and trainings, and provision of



Kday Romdul
BCA in
Cambodia

In **Cambodia**, the Kday Romdul Biodiversity Conservation Area (BCA) was established with the support of **Santi Sena** in order to protect the plants and animals in the Waiko River that flows past the Kday Romdul community. The BCA is administered by local community members and it coordinates with religious and government authorities in order to accomplish its mission. Since the BCA was established and river patrols have been conducted, the yield of fish from the Waiko River has increased. The BCA committee members believe that this project has been successful because the community members have been able to easily observe the results of their efforts, and they now catch more fish for food and for selling. One committee member said that he teaches his children about the value of the BCA in this way: "It is

technical support for local government initiatives that support environmental and child rights. These methods have been especially successful in the following cases which highlight a few of many successful local advocacy efforts that OROL Partners have achieved.

Burma/Myanmar has recently very gradually begun to 'open up' and allow public political debates, discussions, and more open media coverage. **Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)** has been taking advantage of these new spaces and has increased network connections and stepped up advocacy campaigns both within and outside of Burma. During the International Day of Action for Rivers and Against Dams (March 14), hundreds of participants from Arakan, Shan, Karenni,





KESAN
Salween
River Action
in Burma/
Myanmar



Mon, and Karen States along with local residents gathered on an island in the Salween River delta near Mawlamyine in Mon State to take action to protect the rivers.

During the event, the Burma Rivers Network (BRN) presented the results of their signature campaign against the six Salween Dams, conducted by their members in collaboration with other civil society groups inside Burma. Over 33,500 people in Shan, Karenni, Karen and Mon States and from Yangon, Sagaing and Magwe Divisions signed the petition, while over 130 civil society organizations and political parties representing thousands more formally endorsed the signature campaign. The petition calls for an immediate halt to the plans to dam the Salween River. As part of the Salween campaign, the petition letter will be sent to the Burmese, Chinese and Thai governments, and the companies listed as the dam developers.

In **Indonesia**, **RMI** has supported a group of thirty interested youth to write, direct and produce a short film titled "Suara Hulu Cisadane". With technical assistance and advice provided by a media arts

group based in Jakarta, the project took nearly a year to finish. This film provides youth with an opportunity to tell their version of how local environments are changing in their communities. Issues presented over the course of the film include the effects of sand mining, the challenges children face in school, the debt that most farmers accrue after payments to middlemen for fertilizers and land rent, and the negative effects of bathing in the polluted river. This film was screened at a film festival and the youth who were involved with this production plan to make another film. They will involve new youth with the upcoming production and will act as mentors so a new generation can learn video production skills.

In rural **Cambodia**, radio broadcasts are proving to be a highly effective way to reach community members in Svay Rieng District where **Santi Sena** is based. It was reported that 80% of the households listen to radio broadcasts. Since January 2013, Santi Sena has supported local monks and children to broadcast a community radio programme from a sound room at the local temple. This programme provides information and updates about child ecological rights, environment and natural resources issues that affect local communities.

Originally, this programme was only broadcast for one hour per week on one radio station. Soon after it began to be broadcast, though, community members asked for longer and more

Still from
"Suara Hulu
Cisadane"
Short Film
production
in Indonesia



regular broadcasts. The programme then expanded to two hours per day on Monday-Saturday with three additional hours added on Sundays. It also began to be broadcast on a second radio channel in Svay Rieng (there are only a total of four radio channels available in Svay Rieng Province). Local people make donations in order to support the increased running costs. Students from the primary school often call in to ask questions and the community radio also organizes talk shows and round table discussions.



Cambodia Community Radio

A successful advocacy campaign recently launched in **Thailand** concerns the Dusit Thani and Rim Kok Hotels along the Kok River in Chiang Rai. These hotels had been discharging chlorinated water from their pools into the Kok River, which was killing fish and insects in the river. **Association for Community Ecology and Development (ACED)** joined with other local NGOs to raise awareness about this issue, and then coordinated with the government authorities to issue warnings about this discharge to the hotels. After receiving these warnings, the hotels have ceased the discharge of the harmful chemicals into the river.

Of course, many more positive outcomes and impacts were achieved outside of the ones listed above. In some cases, positive outcomes exceeded original expectations.

In **Cambodia**, **Santi Sena** was asked to support two community radio stations, instead of just one. Meanwhile in the

Philippines, due to community networking and information sharing **GITIB** was asked to coordinate the establishment of 50 river watch groups, even though they originally planned to establish only four. In **Laos**, local government offices requested the **ACD** to supply communities with River Conservation Regulations guides and trainings which were not in the original target plans.

Future Concerns

As the OROL Campaign looks forward, there are a number of concerns. The effects of climate change are being felt by riparian communities across Southeast Asia in the form of extreme weather events. Extensive flooding, droughts, and even typhoons have occurred in unexpected areas, which are all troubling omens. In some countries there are ongoing and newly armed low-intensity conflicts that create danger and instability for small scale farmers. There is also an increased demand for natural resource extraction to fund the struggles. Meanwhile, peace talks and negotiations are underway in Burma and the Philippines, which should be viewed as a positive development, but is feared as a mere strategy to open these undeveloped lands to investors looking to exploit their rich natural resource bases. The OROL campaign's approach of empowering communities to push for long-term change and building their resilience to both man-made and natural disasters is needed now more than ever. 🔴



Jason Lubanski has worked on human rights issues (migrant labour, refugees, HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, stateless persons, hill-tribe ethnic groups) in Thailand and Burma since arriving in 1993 as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer. He has experienced working for many different types of development organizations ranging from international NGOs to local grassroots CBOs. Most recently, he has been focusing on land rights issues in Northern Thailand through his involvement with the Northern Development Foundation (NDF), the Northern Peasants' Federation (NPF) and the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN).