

CCF: A helping hand that remains in place

While supporters of the CCF Foundation provide regular financial support by means of donations, the moral support provided through the program can help underprivileged young people to feel better about themselves, according to Maneeya Dhammataree.

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"I'm a 'new me' since being sponsored by a supporter via the CCF Foundation," says seven-year old 'Mint'.

While the financial support and supply of donated items through the CCF Foundation's sponsorship program in Thailand is certainly essential, the most important factor for Mint, and other children like her, is the boost in self-esteem provided by the donors.

Once lacking in confidence and social skills, Mint has developed a greater sense of self-respect through participation in a program that provides a great sense of family and belonging. This has undoubtedly helped the child from a psychological point of view, according to those who know her.

'Hand in hand'

The CCF Foundation first began helping children in 1957 through Christian Children's Fund office. The foundation was legally registered as a Thai charity in 1975 with the same objective, while it was officially accepted under the Royal patronage of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn in 1994.

Mint is one of 41,481 disadvantaged children in the kingdom (as of 2008) to receive direct educational, emotional, financial, physical and social support through the foundation's sponsorship program.

Kanchada Piriyaarangsana, CCF Foundation's national director, explains that the program provides recipients with the sense of a 'family' within society.

"Our program is more than just a scholarship," she says.

While CCF Foundation manages donations by means of a pool system, each child has a one-to-one relationship with the supporter. This demonstrates that each supporter has a long-term commitment to staying in touch with the child by sharing stories and providing encouragement through writing letters.

“At this point, the children start to realize that they are not walking alone through such hardships. Society can provide them with a sense of family,” according to Kanchada.

Ways and means

On a practical level, each supporter is expected to donate 17 baht (US\$0.50) a day, which is 500 baht a month. The foundation collects the contributions, and disperses the funds through the provision of educational materials, consumer goods, or towards activities required in terms of an individual's specific requirements.

Infants and toddlers receive assistance through parental education initiatives or by means of assistance with the provision of day care, as well as books and toys. During school years, CCF Foundation focuses on providing educational materials, develops mobile libraries, or provides support for school dormitories. CCF Foundation occasionally organizes huge camps, during which the children get to develop their emotional quotient (EQ) and life skills.

One among CCF Foundation's most impressive projects are its income generating programs.

The foundation invests in school gardening initiatives, organic agriculture and community livestock development in a bid to promote greater self-sufficiency.

“Some of our projects don't only help the children on our program, but also indirectly help other children living within the same community,” Kanchada says.

The organization plays a role in the country's development by means of its poverty mapping activities. This can help to determine which regions, provinces, or even communities and groups are in the greatest need. Once this can be established, children can be enrolled to receive a proper education and then develop the necessary skills to earn a decent living. These children represent 'the hopes of their hometowns'.

A message for life

Kanchada says that many disadvantaged children who receive help from the program go on to become supporters.

Forty-year-old Malee Suriya, vice director for Seubnateedhamma School's Academic Division, illustrates this point perfectly.

Having received the support of CCF Foundation's program as a student at the school, she is now in a great position to give on a very practical level.

"On gaining a bachelor's degree from university, I was able to fulfill my dream by becoming a teacher [at the school]. Now I want to use my knowledge and potential to develop the place that made me who I am today. I want the children to have the same opportunities that I had," she says.

A practical approach

Kanchada says her team arranges as many activities as possible for the children based on the budget available in the hope that a creative environment will keep them away from negative influences in the community, such as drug or alcohol abuse.

"The children aren't geniuses or anything, but they are enthusiastic about the things they have become good at, in the right way. They are virtuous and are healthy both mentally and physically," Kanchada says. In this sense, the CCF Foundation is playing a role in fighting crime within society, she says.

An 'investment in kids'

For over half a century, the foundation has been forging links between disadvantaged children and society, through the 'invest in children' concept. Kanchada says the foundation doesn't specifically target abused children, children with disabilities, or other challenging conditions, such as HIV-Aids, since there are already several groups aiming to assist persons living with these challenges. Fewer organizations specifically target the very poorest sectors of society, she says.

"We aim at providing a virtuous environment and protecting our [the country's] future from harm in the hope that societal woes will one day be cured."

Gain through giving

If you're interested in promoting opportunities for young minds, call CCF Foundation on Tel: +66 (0)2 747 2600 to learn how to become an official 'giver'.