

Windows of Creativity

CHILDREN LEAD THE WAY
IN A PROGRAMME THAT
AIMS TO HEAL THE RIFTS
IN SOUTHERN THAILAND.

There seems little of good news these days from Thailand's southern provinces, a region riven by religious and ethnic differences. But an innovative programme seeks to help the many children within the conflict by giving them the tools to express themselves and build bridges with other communities.

The InSIGHT Out! was first started by photojournalists who covered the aftermath of the 2004 Asian tsunami disasters. Touched by the spirit of those in Thailand and Indonesia struggling to come to terms with their losses, the journalists conceived of a programme to help the youngest of the victims. This is the guiding principle of InSIGHT Out! – to encourage children to express themselves through photographs and writing, thereby aiding their healing process.

InSIGHT Out! has been successful in its initial incarnation, helping many Thai and Indonesian children to produce a collection of images and text – many on the minutiae of home life (or the lack of one) – that rings with emotional truth.

In 2007, with the support of the Thai non-governmental organisation (NGO) Grassroots Human Rights Education and Development, the programme broadened its mandate in response to a parallel need in Thailand's troubled southern provinces. The urgency is real. Jeanne Hallacy, InSIGHT Out!'s Executive Director, notes that, 'As the violence has escalated, the southern provinces risk increasing isolation and security restraints that impede access to education. Children in these communities urgently need tools to cope with the tragedy affecting their everyday life, and a programme that will allow them to discover new talents in a nurturing environment.'

The photographs on these pages were all produced by children who had participated in InSIGHT Out!'s workshops.



Padoongpol Choosrist



Bukjari Ding



Yin Yin Maw



Panurat Chusinde



MAC Khatlai



Zin Mar Wai



Thet Zin Soe

To achieve this goal, InSIGHT Out! has brought together representatives from local schools and NGOs such as the Duang Prateep Foundation to help develop their management and project design skills. This process creates a network among diverse communities, strengthening their bonds and ensuring the programme's sustainability beyond the initial funding period.

According to Hallacy, InSIGHT Out! seeks to, 'open a window of creativity that children may step through while finding their voice and strengthening their self-respect, cultural identity and celebration of community diversity.' And the response from the children of Phang Nga province (representing the Muslim, Buddhist, Moken and Myanmarese immigrant communities) has been heartening. InSIGHT Out!'s second workshop involved 124 children, including a group of 46 children from the conflict-affected Thai provinces of Pattani, Ya La and Narathiwat. Some of the children had lost their parents to the violence and the workshop represented the first time they had travelled beyond their home provinces. A travelling exhibition of the children's work has also been well-received.

Before embarking on its next major workshop, InSIGHT Out! will work with smaller groups of children from its project office in Khao Lak. The programme needs additional support to continue its workshops, fund the training of its NGO partners and to further expand its travelling exhibition. Their website lists all the ways (big and small) that you can do to help the programme. In a region where children are subjected to conflict as a fact of life, InSIGHT Out! offers a way for them to envision a better future. ■

Resources

Duang Prateep Foundation
www.dpfr.or.th/eng/index.html

Grassroots Human Rights Education and Development
www.ghre.org

InSIGHT Out!
www.insightout-project.org