

Visit of the School for Life



From the 10.03.2020 to the 16.03.2020 we visited the School for Life as the representatives of the Robinsohn-Foundation Germany. Our purpose was to get an impression and basic information about the actual work of the school, the performance of students and teachers and the needs for investments and support to the school.

Our small delegation consisted of Dr. Gerd Harms, Chairman of the Board of the Robinsohn Foundation and Peter Wolters, former director of the School for Life – Institut. We both had experiences staying at the school from previous visits, which gave us an impression of the development in the recent years.

During our stay we investigated the situation on the campus, we participated in lessons, had discussions with the management team on educational, financial and organizational subjects. We also interviewed students and teachers and participated in common meals and events. From the flag ceremony in the morning to the evening dinner we were part of the daily life in the School for Life. We are very grateful for this week of intense impressions. The warm-hearted and cordial atmosphere which the school-director Khun Siripon, the ground and communication manager Mr. Jo and all the teachers and students showed to us a well-founded, an encouraging basis for our future cooperation.



The campus

In the last years the campus has developed remarkably. We saw the new Kindergarten-building, as well as a new building for a boys' family group, which is currently under construction, both financed by our foundation with money from our donors. We see this as well invested money for the wellbeing of the children in the school. Together with the management team we defined the needs for further investments, like roof repair after storm damages, enhancing the internet connection, taking care for a sufficient clean water supply by two new wells and in the midterm future the construction of a new building to replace a building which in the rainy season is very wet.



The teacher team

We got the impression of a vivid school system supported by active and creative teachers, who like to work in this school. This very encouraging impression shows the difference to the situation some years before. Today most of the teachers are more than 4 years in the school and express their happiness with this situation. The teachers showed a high level of self-confidence. They work not only in the academics lessons, but also as family parents and project leaders, they really live together with the students in the family groups. This gives them a deeper understanding of the individual situation and development of each student and allows the teachers to better support each single student personally. We found this especially important in the light of the background of these children, coming mainly from different tribes of the Thai border regions.



The students

We met students with a strong orientation towards learning. Concentrated acting and discussing children and youngsters, proud of their abilities and being highly identified with the School for Life. By observations and in our interviews with the students we found out that all of them like to live and learn in this school. Staying on the campus you see that there is very little aggression between students, no violence but in the opposite a peaceful situation with many examples of helping each other, especially between older and younger children. The combination of classes fulfilling the National Curriculum and the “Centers of Excellence”, where the project take place is understood by the students and they are all integrated in these different centers.



The management team

We were impressed by the director *Khun Siripon* and her leading and management team. She is guiding the school in a very sensitive and supporting way. Students and teachers are respecting her role as the heart of this institution. To any of our questions

and remarks we got a competent and confident answer. We enjoyed to discuss with Khun Siripon, Mr. Jo and others about the past and the future development of the School for Life.

Teachers and management team had a very hard time after the sudden death of the founder “Papa” Prof. Jürgen Zimmer. This was a great challenge to all those who work in the school and they overcame this challenge in a striking manner. The school is on a good way to follow its ideas and laying the ground for many successful years to come.



The heritage of Prof. Zimmer

Jürgen Zimmer was the brain behind the School for Life. He inspired the ideas of living and learning for life in this school. He always stressed the necessity of providing the “best for the poorest”. We wondered before this trip to Thailand what would happen to this concept. We experienced a school which is dedicated to the idea of living and learning for life. The work of Prof Zimmer will go on in this school, driven by the director *Khun Siripon* and her entire team. Teacher’s education is implemented, the concept of the school is going to be translated in Thai language, new projects to enhance the work with the students are going to be developed.



Vocational training

In Chiang Mai we visited the Pizza Zapp & Café for Life restaurant, where *Siripon* and her sister *Joy Thaneen* have founded a place to vocationally educate and give chance for an employment to those students, who leave the school after the 9th grade. Here they are supported to develop service orientated qualifications and competences to create the basis for a future professional activity. We liked meals and service as well as this training of young professionals and could talk to youngsters we knew from former visits.



Thank you for this week

During this week we again learned a lot about the School for Life. We have to thank Khun Siripon as well as Mr. Jo and Khun JJ and the whole team of the School for Life. It was not only interesting but also encouraging to see how positively the school has developed. We thank also the students of the School for Life for showing us a lot of their daily life. Also many thanks to Khun Julie, our interpreter, who enables us to speak directly to students and teachers, who don't speak the English language sufficiently. In Pizza Zapp we could personally meet Khun Joy and got her ideas about the development of children and youngsters support.



We are very grateful for this experience and we are convinced that the support for this school is well invested efforts and financial support.



Gerd Harms Peter Wolters



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School for Life is an internationally sponsored project in Northern Thailand that provides home and care for children who live in difficult situations. These include not only who lost their relatives, whose parents died of disease or are missing, but also children who escaped from situations of brutality and abuse. We give them a new home, provide for their basic needs as well as offer psychosocial and medical care. On top of that, we ensure the children to have proper basic education.

School for Life was founded by Prof. em. Dr. Jürgen Zimmer and Thaneen Worrawittayakun ("Joy") in 2003.