

Matt & Lori Mann Update

May - October 2022



HOPE Project, Laos

Five New Children in HOPE Homes

Since our last update we have received five children into HOPE Homes: 3 boys and 2 girls. Their ages range from 7 to 13 years old. All are now safe, able to go to school, and know Jesus! Mai is one of the new children in the homes, and this is her story....

"My mom is not here. She went to work in Thailand." Mai's voice was soft, and she avoided eye contact. Although Mai is only twelve years old, her mother left her and her 6-year-old, boy cousin to live by themselves in a small, rented room near the market. They did not have any food left and were trying to survive on packages of ramen noodles. Mai's father died two years earlier, and one year ago Mai and her mother traveled to Vientiane hoping to find work.

Before her father died, Mai attended school in her village, but Now she was no longer able to attend school. She said that this time, her mother had been gone more than two months already. We found out that her mother planned to eventually return for Mai and take her to work in Thailand with her. Unfortunately, this sort of arrangement usually ends up in child exploitation and Mai was now at high risk of sexual exploitation.

Mai now lives in HOPE Girls' Home, and her cousin is at HOPE Boys' Home. While the little boy adapted quickly to his new home, Mai was withdrawn and sad. She kept to herself, cried a lot, and talked to herself. Over the next few weeks, HOPE staff together with the other girls in the Home loved, encouraged, and accepted Mai. For the first two weeks, Mai would not participate in games or activities. "I can't play that," she would say. Then one girl began to share that they used to feel that way too. "I used to think like that too, but I just had to try it out. Now I can play this game well!" Another shared, "We shouldn't say, 'I can't,' because then we won't try. We have to try in order to learn."

We praise God that after three weeks, we noticed a tremendous change in Mai: she was smiling and participating in activities. And after four weeks she was singing and memorizing Bible verses in Sunday school. Mai now loves reading, playing badminton and other games, and has made a lot of friends. She still misses her mom sometimes, and continues to receive grief counseling, but has begun to heal from her trauma. Unfortunately, child abandonment is common in Laos; Mai is one of many abandoned children we can protect and provide for because of your generosity.



Mai loves to color.



Mai (blue shirt) finally laughs with her new friends.



Although Kham only has one leg, he is learning to do chores the same as the other children in the Homes.

Lori has been spending a lot of time with the Laos staff teaching them ways to teach Kham, a boy with autism who loves to sort colors. We are very blessed to have a retired autism behavior specialist meet with Lori via Zoom and the staff every week to offer advice on how to address Kham's destructive behaviors of ripping up clothes and tearing his skin.

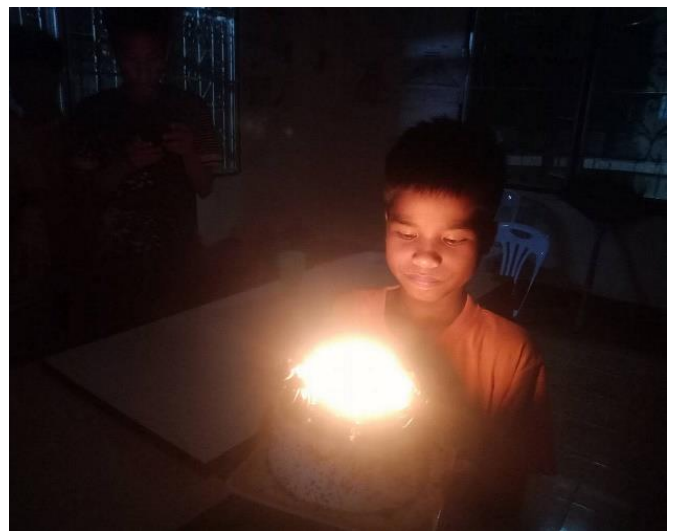


This year Laos had an outbreak of dengue fever. Some of the children in HOPE Homes got dengue, as well as one of the project staff. Dengue fever is caused by daytime mosquitoes, and Lori knew that dragonflies eat mosquitoes. Thus, Lori prayed and asked God to send dragonflies. Within a couple of days, we saw a dragonfly on our clothesline. A few days later we saw more in other places. Thank you, God, for hearing Lori's prayer!

Shortly afterwards, a church in the US informed us that they were hosting a VBS, and the offering was to go to HOPE Project. The VBS offering was enough to install mosquito screens in all three of the HOPE Homes! All three Homes now have mosquito screens on the windows and doors, and we have not had any more cases of dengue fever!



Girls in HOPE Girls' Home enjoying the new screens.



One of the new boys in HOPE Boys' Home celebrating his birthday for the first time ever.

HOPE Drop-in Center



Sports ministry to alleviate drug abuse among youth and provide opportunity for discipleship.



Art lessons.



Learning to reading and write.



Guitar lessons.

More from the Homes...



Haircuts for children living in slums.



Two girls from HOPE Girls' Home were the top in their classes!



In July, we brought tetherballs for HOPE Center and each of the 3 Homes, making them the first four tetherball courts in Laos! 😊

Scholarships and School Supplies for Vulnerable Children



Educational scholarships for 165 vulnerable children and youth to keep them off the streets and in schools, including 6 in university, colleges, and vocational training.
Above right: Preparing school supplies to take to the village.



The poorest of the children in a village known to be at high risk of child trafficking receiving school supplies.

Raising Awareness About Child Trafficking in Village Schools



HOPE staff taught 104 fourth and fifth graders in a village school how to protect themselves and their friends from child traffickers.

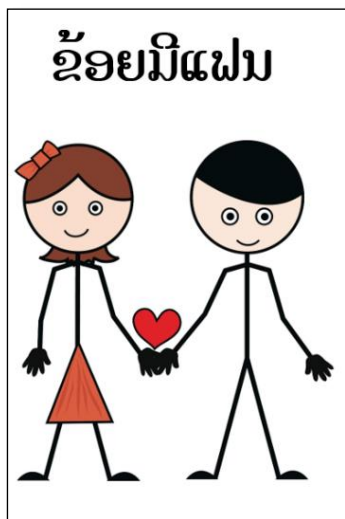
Staff Development



All the HOPE Project Lao staff completed an intensive government teachers' certification course at HOPE Center. The government university and teachers provided the intensive 8-day training at HOPE Center.

Developing Teaching and Training Materials

Lori wrote three lessons on social skills to be taught to the children in HOPE Homes and translated three other books into the Lao language to be used for teaching the children. Matt wrote a Thai Training of Trainers manual on *Creation Care and The Kingdom of God* that will be used in Thailand, Burma, and Laos.



One of Lori's books titled:
"I Have a Boyfriend/Girlfriend"

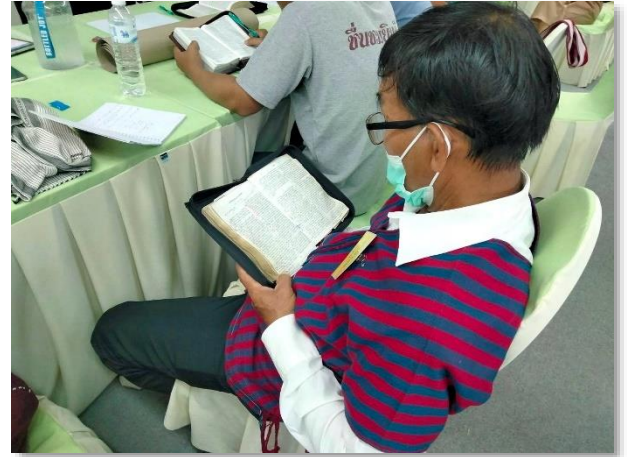
Children in Crisis

In the absence of crisis centers and services in Laos, HOPE Project has become known as an organization that helps children and youth who are in crisis. Hardly a week goes by without someone contacting HOPE staff to see if we can help children who are without safety nets. Keo is one such girl, who had a need which of which there are no organizations offering support. After church, one of our staff went to eat lunch at a local market when a pregnant teen came begging for food. The next day HOPE staff began investigating and making plans to help this 17-year-old girl. Although we didn't know it at the time, Keo was 9 months pregnant and had not been to see a doctor. She went into labor 3 days after the meeting in the market and gave birth to a baby girl whom we named Amy. She was born with water on her brain, and sadly, after five days of fighting, Amy went to be with Jesus. Keo has gone back to her village now, and we pray God will water those seeds of love He planted in her heart through the kindness and care of our staff.



Community-Based Environmental Care Project, Thailand

Creation Care Workshop



The workshop included over 20 mini Bible studies.

One of the highlights of the past few months was a Creation Care Workshop that Matt facilitated. Many days, nights, and months went into developing a training manual and translating it into the local language, but the effort was well worth it. Forty-five people attended the two-day Training of Trainers workshop, including pastors, church leaders, Bible school students, Sunday school teachers, evangelists, and administrators. The workshop was entitled, “Creation Care and the Kingdom of God.” Praise God that the response was beyond what was imagined! Although the workshop was intended for Christians, there was one lady who attended who did not believe in God; she attended because her friends brought her hoping she would be convinced there is a God. On the second day during a review session, she told everyone, “I came not believing in God, and now I believe in God” as tears rolled down her cheeks. She had been running from God for many years. We had a “Welcome to the family of God” ceremony, and Matt explained to her that she now has a family which extends all around the world. She asked, “Can I still call you teacher?” Matt said, “No, call me older brother from now on.” Others who participated said they will continue teaching it in their churches, Sunday schools, and communities, and the material will be given to Bible schools in Burma as well. Students from a Bible school (lower right photo) have already started a garden on campus. One of the best things about the TOT workshop is that Matt did not teach: the participants were the teachers themselves!



Sharing Bible study results.



Creating clay animals along with their food and habitats.



The participants were the teachers.



Community Forestry



Villagers develop land-use policies and land-use maps which are used to protect their forests and watershed areas. The policies and maps are approved by the Thai government.



Villagers restore, protect, and care for their forest areas and natural resources, including seven species of wild animals. One of their new goals is "Greening the mountains."

Sustainable Livelihoods



Village savings groups and cooperative stores help generate and maintain local economies.



Agroforestry involves planting trees along with the crops to reverse the effects of deforestation.



This farmer and his wife grow over 20 kinds of fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices, and medicinal plants; and they raise pigs, chickens, and fish as well. "Now we have enough food to eat during the year," he said, "and it is all organic and healthy." "There is enough fruit for the wildlife as well, because birds and rodents like to eat fruit." 😊

Rainwater Harvesting



One rainwater harvesting and irrigation method that the project has been teaching highland farmers is called "chicken Intestine Irrigation" because the Thai say it looks like a chicken intestine winding down the hill. . .



The system sometimes includes a hand-dug reservoir at the top of a hill to catch and store rainwater that can then be released as needed to flow down the trench to the bottom of the hill while also being absorbed into the soil along the way.



The trench has pockets dug every few meters which catch water as it is flowing through the trench and increases water retention in the soil.



Another common rainwater catchment system is a series of small weir dams (right) which trap rainwater as it flows into shallow creeks. This helps maintain a steady supply of water which will provide villagers with water for longer periods of time when it is not raining.



Watershed Restoration and Protection



Left: Large banana trees are planted to maintain moisture.

Above: Small weir dams help retain water in creeks.

Right: Villagers finish building one of many small weir dams.

Clean Drinking Water in Remote Villages



Once water can be caught in water catchment systems, it can be piped to villages where it can be filtered using simple water filtration systems and the villagers can have clean water to drink.



Prayer Points

1. We praise God that all that He asks us to do, He has provided for through your prayers and giving!
2. Please pray for the five new children in the Homes, for their adjustments and for the house parents who are providing them with counseling. They are having trouble in their schools because they cannot speak Lao very well and are they having to learn to read, write, and speak Lao all at the same time.
3. Please pray for Kham; that he will stop tearing his clothes and skin.
4. Pray for Keo, as she returns to her family, and that God will send more Christians into her life.
5. Please ask God to bless the Christian farmers who are practicing creation care, and that other villagers will notice God blessing their efforts.

God bless you, Matt & Lori