

## Circus Play Project – Phang-Nga & Mae Sot Nov 2023 – Jan 2024



[circusplay.org](http://circusplay.org)

[www.facebook.com/socialcircusmyanmar](https://www.facebook.com/socialcircusmyanmar)

### Project Report

Dear Donors and Supporters,

Firstly thank you for your donations and support!

The Project delivered from Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 2023 to Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> 2023 in Phang-Nga, around Khao Lak, and from Jan 6<sup>th</sup> to Jan 21<sup>st</sup> in Mae Sot, Thailand.

In Phang-Nga we delivered 39 sessions with an average class size of 40 students, over a seven week period.

In Mae Sot we delivered 28 sessions with average class size of 25, over two weeks.

Thanks to your donations, from 40 individuals, we raised £1,183.

The Project total costs were: £4,811.

Please see the financial report below for details.

(All the good photos are by Alex Durrant ;)



## Circus Play in Khao Lak (with [Foundation for Education & Development](#), a.k.a. FED)

This Circus Play project was delivered by Project Manager and circus tutor Jules Howarth and circus tutor Alex Durrant (in Phang-Nga phase only).



Alex and Jules with transport | Alex making Juggling balls



Alex Durrant, is a UK based juggler (and professional physiotherapist). Alex did great work! Leading workshops, taking great photos, teaching origami, making friends and living in the Myanmar community. She stayed in a small hut at the teacher's living compound near the Unified Learning Centre (ULC) for 7 weeks (provided by FED). Jules rented, in the nearby town, a small tourist bungalow. We both hired scooters (from a Myanmar friend) to get around, as Khao Lak is a bit spread out.

Jules and Alex arrived in Khao Lak November 3rd and met with [FED \(Foundation for Education & Development\)](#) which runs the 700-student Unified Learning Centre (ULC). The staff at the school knew we were coming, but, we discovered on arrival, had only the barest details of what we do.

We did our best to plan the project over some months, but due to the FED work-load and their very understandable focus on delivering their core schooling, health-education projects and other core-programs it was a challenge, at times, for Circus Play to get regular scheduling in the school timetable. (We always promise to be transparent and open, even if it means explaining the problems/challenges).

However, the teachers, managers, staff and facilitators were very friendly, kind and supportive and the students, as usual, enjoyed the activities. We would like to thank, in particular, the FED

Volunteer-program co-ordinators Pi Malee and Khu Abel Tabu Htoo for their help, support, translations and friendliness and their efforts to make the project work.

Thanks and respect to FED Director - U Htoo Chit, Headmistress- Jaree Dongmanee, and U Aung Thu, Khine Mar Htet, Saw Yan Naing, Poe Ei Mon, amongst others, and the international volunteer teachers from France, and Bob (in charge of the Health program). They all made us welcome and supported us. Thank you everyone at the ULC in Khao Lak for allowing us to participate in your School programme.



Workshop session details.

We delivered 39 workshop sessions:

28 sessions at ULC with classes for Grade 4, 5 and 6 students (about 30 – 35 students per class).



11 sessions elsewhere: we twice visited a smaller FED school 70kms north in Kuriburi and had 2 sessions with 35 student each. We made one-off visits to Thanun Migrant Learning Centre (classes of 45 and 65) and Tampalu Migrant Learning Center (69 young students), Tambon Children's Centre (50 children – aged 3 to 5 years).



We also made short shows and presentation and a workshop at 3 Thai schools: Wat Commaneeyaket school (60 students), Bang Niang Thai School (60 students), Pakweep Thai School (60 students).



Reviewing the numbers, it's about 550 individuals, with 200 doing more than 2 sessions. (Actual dates and class sizes data available on request).



At ULC we built stilts and rola-bolas and made juggling balls and poi. We left behind a good workshop kit, hoping that students will be able to continue to train and play. We sent the remainder of our props up to Mae Sot.

(Props left at ULC. 22 sets tri-its, 20 plates and sticks, 7 diabolos and handsticks, 6 flowersticks 18 handsticks, 3 sets plastic salt ball. 5 hula hoops and pipe and connectors for 10+ hoops. 5 sets of stilts and the parts for 5 more sets. 2 rola-bolas.)



Our target-plan for sessions was 70 workshop session (2 sessions a day, 5 days a week over 8 weeks). In the end we delivered only 39 sessions. The FED school has a busy schedule and Circus Play was a happy add-on activity. We thought before we arrived that this would be tester edition and to see how it goes. So, let's hope we can build on this edition's engagement in next season's edition.

The last workshop sessions was 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec. I offered sessions over the holiday period, but the ULC had other priorities and I couldn't persuade them, so our delivery had an enforced break in delivery before I moved to Mae Sot.



### **Circus Play in Mae Sot (with Help Without Frontiers and Joy House)**

This was our second season in Mae Sot, again facilitated by Help Without Frontiers (HWF) and again working at Joy House Community & Arts centre.

Jules arrived in Mae Sot 5<sup>th</sup> Jan and first sessions were at Joy House 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. He started at HWF supported schools on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan. The project ran for two weeks, with Joy House on weekends and 11 schools a week.

We had visited the schools last season so they knew what to expect and although many of the students were new to classes the delivery was straight forward and productive. Almost all the Teachers were the same as last season, so it was a real pleasure to see them again and get straight back into routine.

We delivered to about 350 individuals each week.

Again we were helped by the local Myanmar migrant community who loaned me a car to deliver the sessions.

Here is the feedback from the schools, gathered by Help Without Frontiers.

#### Circus Play Feedback 2024

##### **KM 42**

First of all, a massive thank you for conducting the circus program for us. This program has had a lot of positive impacts on our school and students.

We saw that our students participated actively throughout the sessions because of your sense of humour, challenging activities, and approach to bringing out our students' interests. The students enjoyed being challenged to learn new things and overcome the difficulties, which also made them feel more confident.

We noticed that you paid attention to each of the participants' needs, and encouraged them to exceed their expectations. With your positive attitude and guidance, our students were able to improve their creativity and communication. Above all, we saw that they were having fun while performing the things that they learned.

We would like to have more programs like this in the coming academic years!

- KM 42 Teacher



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### **Rose Field**

These activities have helped children to concentrate, focus, and be happy. The students really enjoyed themselves when they participated in the circus activities, including with juggling balls, hula hoops, and other things. The students' parents also enjoyed seeing the activities and hearing about the experience from their children.

The students hope that Circus Play will come again next year. Please also come with some new activities so the children can try something new and develop their skills more.

- Rose Field Teacher



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### Sauch Kha Hong Sar

The circus has arrived to inspire and teach our students! This fantastic opportunity helped to ignite their creativity, teamwork, and showmanship. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the organizers for bringing this enriching experience to our school community.

We extend our sincerest gratitude to you for sharing your expertise and teaching circus skills to the students at our school. Your dedication and passion have enriched their lives and sparked their creativity in ways that will live long in their minds and hearts. Thank you for being such an exceptional mentor and role model. Thank you for turning ordinary days into extraordinary adventures!

- Sauch Kha Hong Sar Teacher



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### Irrawaddy Flower Garden

I am a Grade 5 student. My school's name is Irrawaddy Flower Garden. I enjoyed playing in the circus activities. I am so glad I had a chance to play with the spinning plates and learn how to do it. I have never played with these things before but I want to play very much. Even with the diabolo - you have to throw it up very high, and you are very afraid of it falling on your head, but I still wanted to try it!

The faster the games are played, the better they look. The hula hoop game with the spinning rings are fun to play with, and also great for your health. It is good exercise for the body. The

circus activities were very fun, and I am grateful to the teacher who came to teach me and my friends. Thank you.

- Irrawaddy Student



My school's name is Irrawaddy Flower Garden. I am a Grade 6 student. I learned many kinds of games, including spinning the plate, rolling hand ball, hula hoop, diabolo, and the ribbon game. All the students enjoyed playing in the circus. The teacher also enjoyed it and was very excited. I played in the circus activities for a long time and learned all the ways to play. I think the circus games made everyone happy. I want to master the circus skills and show it to people, all the different ways of performing. It is one of the things that can bring me happiness. If you can do it, you can show it to other friends and give them happiness too.

I want other friends to learn too. The circus made me happy. Everyone needs to be happy.

- Irrawaddy Student



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### **Hope**

In this 2023-2024 academic year, Grade 3 to Grade 6 students - about 50 in total - were visited by the circus group and were taught activities every Thursday. All the children actively participated and learned with interest. The parents of the students were also very proud of their children, and were happy to come and watch. The teachers and parents



appreciate it very much. Thank you very much to the circus team and HWF organization. The activities were great for the children's skills improvement and health development.

- Hope Teacher



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New Day Learning Centre



New Society Learning Centre



Ah Yone Oo learning centre



Chicken School



## Parami Learning Centre



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## Financial Report

A book-keeping workbook in excel format is available with itemised details, please request. All our finances are open to inspection.

SUMMARY	
Flights	£918.09
Transport UK	£81.50
Accomm in Thailand	£297.69
Food UK	£12.48
Props	£278.00
Comms (website domain)	£15.00
Alex expenses	£350.00
Visa (failed)	£60.00
Visa travel	102.34
Jules insurance	172.89

GBP costs	£2,287.99
Cash in Thailand	in GBP@43.5THB:£
Transport	£473.61
Accomm in Thailand	£787.45
Food	£653.90
Materials	£134.44
Props	£401.89
Comms (phone)	£72.02
THB costs	£2,523.30
Total £GBP	£2,287.99
Total THB	£2,523.30
TOTAL expenses	£4,811.29
Donations income	£1,183.61
Bank fees (Wise, PayPal)	£19.72
Donations after fees	£1,163.89
difference	£3,647.40

Payments from Donation (after fees) = £1163.89

Alex Durrant (for transport costs, food, and contribution to her flight costs) was allocated £350

Jules receives the remaining £813.89

As of April 14<sup>th</sup> 2024 Remaining funds in PayPal and Wise accounts = £805.91

[Due to changes in foreign exchange rates: a decision to use <THB 43.5:£ 1> as the average rate in bookkeeping makes an error in donations of £7.98 (0.7% on £1183)]

Jules Howarth has fronted £3,647.40 to cover costs.

Jules (and Alex) didn't go to Thailand for holidays, but for work. So days when it wasn't possible to deliver workshops (despite best attempts to work 5 or 6 days a week) should be considered. Though on most of these days props were made, materials bought, contact with makers or resources made, photos and videos processed, etc.

Remember: No fees are paid for the work, only delivery/basic living costs are included and there are no costs for personal spending or personal social activities.

Donations are gathered by [Social Circus International](#). They review the project and agree to the release of funds if they see that the funds were used well in line with the project proposal and delivery.

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## Conclusions

Circus Play can't continue without funding from a funding body of some kind. This year we applied to Alta Mane, Lush Charity Pot and British Council "Connections through Culture" but were unsuccessful.

Donations from individuals are declining. But still gratefully appreciated.

Project work in Phang-Nga area was seen as a test visit and although delivering good quality engagements, we know its limits and better understand its potential.

Project work in Mae Sot is stable and has room for growth and expansion.

Mae Sot addresses more dynamic issues with migrant Myanmar populations and is developing a wider network of support.

[The Border issues around Mae Sot are changing](#) – with anti-Junta armies gaining control of the Myanmar border town Myawaddy- across the river and border at Mae Sot in April 2024. However the situation remains fluid and changes weekly.

[Spark Circus!](#) has begun a program of work in Mae Sot in Feb 2024 and is continuing to develop that, with a regular training space now functioning since March 2024. They have free use of the circus props we left at Joy House in Mae Sot.

Focusing on Mae Sot in 2024-25 seems like the better option.

Thank you for your time reading this report. And thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully,

Jules Howarth

Project Manager and Lead Circus Tutor

April, 2024.

End.

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