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Mia's Story



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



THAILAND

Mia is an ethnic Shan girl, and a survivor of labor trafficking and sexual assault. She was abandoned by her family and grew up with a distant relative on the Thai/Burma border. Forced to work in an orange tree orchard throughout her childhood, Mia never attended school. She was sick very often due to breathing in the pesticides she sprayed on the trees, and her minimal monthly 'salary' (about \$25 USD) was given to her caretaker. When Mia was 11, she was sexually assaulted by an older male relative.

According to the website of the U.S. Department of State, Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons...the US government

"considers... trafficking in persons to include all of the **criminal conduct involved in forced labor**... essentially the conduct involved in reducing or holding someone in compelled service. Despite a term that seems to connote movement, **at the heart of the phenomenon of trafficking in persons are the many forms of enslavement**, not the activities involved in international transportation." (*Website of the US Department of State, Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons: What is Modern Slavery?*)

When Mia first arrived at the NLCF at the age of 13 she demonstrated significant mental delays due to this neglect, exploitation and abuse. The New Life Center Foundation staff arranged for Mia to study in the NLCF's residential non-formal adult education program, but after several months, Mia showed little progress. She had virtually no attention span. Prior to arriving at the NLCF, Mia had never held a pencil before, and after two months of being in school, still struggled with this task.

According to the RTG guidelines for non-formal education curriculum, teenage or adult students should complete an accelerated elementary school program through the 6th grade within two years. Mia was not able to do this and had to repeat the curriculum. Nevertheless, Mia and the NLCF teacher refused to give up. They continued to work together with the hope that Mia would become literate one day. After three years of full time study, Mia passed the 6th grade literacy exam.

Mia is now studying at the 7th grade level. She can read, write, and express her thoughts both verbally and in writing. She is able to pay attention for longer periods of time, talk about what happened to her, and exudes confidence.

In addition to growing through her highly specialized academic program, Mia showed great progress through participating in the NLCF's therapeutic art program. This professional, comprehensive program assisted Mia to develop her cognitive, verbal, and motor skills. Individual counseling helped Mia process her assault and years of neglect. During one of the residential Bible studies last year, Mia was able to tell her story in front of her NLCF housemates. She stood up straight, made eye contact, and had the courage to share her story. Mia continues to express joy now that she is literate. She said "I can actually take the bus now, because I can read the signs to know where the bus is going!" Mia continues to grow, develop, and has hope regarding her future.

Thank you for your part in transforming the lives of girls like Mia, one at a time. And thank you for giving to the **World Mission Offering this fall!**

May you also stretch forward into the future with faith, strength, and joy.

gratefully,

Karen