THE BUSINESS CASE
FOR SUPPORTING EDUCATION
FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN
IN THAILAND

Working paper
About UNICEF
The United Nations Children’s Fund – UNICEF – works in more than 190 countries and territories to improve the lives of children from early childhood through adolescence. UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, safe water and proper sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and risks of exposure to HIV. As part of its Education programme in Thailand, UNICEF works with the Government, civil society organizations, and the business sector to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal number four so that all girls and boys receive free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. For more information, visit www.unicef.or.th

About SCSM
The Sasin Center for Sustainability Management (SCSM) is Thailand’s first academic-based advisory dedicated exclusively to total responsibility management as a means to organizational resilience and societal sustainability. Formed in collaboration between Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration of Chulalongkorn University and the Corporate Responsibility & Ethics Association for Thai Enterprise (CREATE), SCSM concentrates on curriculum, research, advisory work, and academic research. For regional work, SCSM often partners with CSR Asia, a leading provider of sustainable business practice services. For more information, visit www.sasin.edu

Acknowledgements

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“Every child – regardless of gender, socioeconomic background, ethnicity or location – has a right to an education. Quality education provides children and youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their full potential and to protect themselves from harm and exploitation while at the same time contributing to their communities and to the development of society.” - Thomas Davin, UNICEF Representative for Thailand

This paper presents a selection of education programmes supported by private sector companies which are built around the needs of children. It demonstrates how focusing on children’s rights, their education, and their futures have helped these companies build trust within the community, improve their own risk management, and strengthen their social licenses to operate\(^1\) in Chiang Mai province.

The paper describes a successful inclusive education public-private partnership where companies have been engaged through a business association, together with education authorities, schools, and UNICEF – which provided guidance for businesses on how to support children’s rights based on *Children’s Rights and Business Principles* (CRBP) – to support the education needs of disadvantaged children.

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION** recognises the need to work towards ‘schools for all’ - institutions which include every child, celebrate differences, support learning for all students, and respond to individual needs.

A commitment to this approach is central to UNICEF’s work. Inclusive education should be viewed in terms of including traditionally excluded or marginalized groups with the guiding principle that schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their background or physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other situation.

\(^1\) A social license to operate is the unwritten community consensus that an organization is beneficial to the neighbourhood or district and should therefore be supported by the surrounding residents.
OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION IN THAILAND

Thailand has made considerable progress over the past two decades in increasing access to primary and secondary schooling through high levels of government investment in education\(^2\). The national education policy also mandates 15 years of free education to all children in Thailand, regardless of the child’s nationality or legal status.

### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RATIO

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Male Attendance</th>
<th>Female Attendance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- Relatively high in early childhood and primary education for both males and females.
- Drops in secondary education, especially for males.

However, inequities in the system are evident, both in terms of access to education for disadvantaged groups of children and in terms of quality education and learning outcomes based on geography, language and wealth.

One out of five children of secondary school-age in the **poorest and second poorest** households are not in schools.

Almost one out of four (23.7%) children born to **mothers with no education** are not in secondary school.

One out of three secondary school-age children living in a household headed by a **non-Thai native speaker** are not in school.

According to Multiple Indicator Cluster household survey\(^3\), regional differences are also apparent, with 16.7 per cent of secondary school age children in the Central region are out of secondary school compared with 10.9 per cent in the Northeast. These disparities are more pronounced in secondary school. Access to education for migrant children is also a challenge, with some estimates placing up to 40 per cent of migrant children out of school in some Provinces.

The Sustainable Development Goals have set the target that by 2030 all children will have completed both primary and secondary schooling. Thailand will not meet this goal if it does not tackle the disparities mentioned above with specific strategies and resources.

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\(^2\) Approximately 20% of the Government budget is allocated to Education.

\(^3\) The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 5) was conducted by the National Statistics Office in 2015/2016, with the support of UNICEF.
Companies are responsible for respecting children’s rights both directly, during the course of their day-to-day business operations, and indirectly, throughout their value chains. This obligation is spelled out in the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights* (UNGP) and further elaborated in the *Children’s Rights and Business Principles* (CRBP), which were jointly developed by UNICEF, the Global Compact, and Save the Children. The principles help business and those who want to work with businesses to understand children’s rights and make commitments to respect them. There are three areas where such commitments can be beneficial: the workplace (by improving the well-being of employees’ children); the marketplace (by respecting the consumer rights of children); and the community (by empowering children in their neighbourhoods).

With appropriate thought and effective planning, initiatives that champion children’s rights to education can result in numerous ancillary benefits for business⁴, including the ability to:

- Recruit and retain a MOTIVATED WORKFORCE
- Contribute to a stable and sustainable BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
- Build reputation and help secure company’s LICENCE TO OPERATE
- Improve RISK MANAGEMENT
- Develop the next generation of TALENT
- Contribute to a stable and sustainable BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Establishing equitable access to quality education can help reduce inequalities in society and promote gender equality, reduce crime, and increase social cohesion. With a shrinking youth population, it is imperative that all children in Thailand receive a quality education if the country is to achieve the ambitious goal of becoming a higher income country. Of the estimated three million migrants in Thailand, 13%⁵ are in Chiang Mai, where businesses and other stakeholders have cooperated to ensure that children of migrants and Thais alike receive a quality education in order to be able to contribute their potential to the economic future.

⁴ [https://www.unicef.org/csr/tools.html](https://www.unicef.org/csr/tools.html) See also dedicated session in this document

⁵ Matichon weekend, 7-13 March 2014, volume 31 number 1751 page 34
Develop the next generation of TALENT by supporting apprenticeship programmes and education initiatives that will equip young people with workplace skills such as decision making and leadership. Education is a human right and a powerful tool. International research has shown the social and economic benefits that education provides, proving that one extra year of schooling increases an individual’s earnings by up to 10 per cent. In Chiang Mai, some businesses have had to invest in education in order to bridge the gap between what public education offers and the corporate world’s workforce needs.

Recruit and retain a motivated WORKFORCE. When employees who are parents or caregivers can combine family responsibilities with their work lives, they will become more productive. In Thailand there are an estimated three million migrant workers concentrated in the construction, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors. Support for their children’s education would increase employee commitment as parents, and reduce personnel turnover. A commitment to inclusive education such as promoting youth employment and talent development also helps with recruitment and retention of a motivated workforce. This can be seen from successful examples of collaborative education approaches in several provinces.

Improve RISK MANAGEMENT by ensuring that health, safety, and product responsibilities safeguard children’s interests and address their vulnerabilities. Companies whose products target children need to be perceived as responsible. If they are not, there could be serious repercussions. For example, advocacy groups and charities accused a leading international brand of unethical methods of promoting infant formula over breast milk to unprivileged mothers in developing countries. A campaign and a product boycott followed.

Build reputation and help secure the company’s SOCIAL LICENCE to operate by demonstrating how the positive impacts of products, responsible marketing, and good relationships with ‘local communities meet the needs of parents and children. Most companies are familiar with brand value as distinct from book value. This brand or reputational value is not reflected on the company’s books, but it is heavily weighed by investors – and increasingly, by partners and even customers. Brand value is simply an estimate of the economic value of the goodwill stakeholders feel towards a company, were it to be purchased instead of earned as a result of company action. (Brand value can run to multiples of the book value for leading global lines.) Often this goodwill is reflected in the offer of speaking opportunities and leadership roles in community outreach programs backed by local authorities.

Contribute to a stable and sustainable BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT by improving the lot of children, and by helping to build strong, well-educated communities; robust businesses; and healthy economies. Education, as a public good, has wider benefits to society beyond the individual. Having a well-educated young population can help a country’s competitiveness and labour productivity, thus contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction. Based on peer-reviewed analyses from 82 of the world’s top economists and 44 sector experts, it was concluded that the return on investment of education is roughly 400%. A society that organically focuses attention and resources on children fosters a stronger, more enlightened environment that ultimately will become a stable, inclusive, and robust business setting.

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6 UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, articles 28 and 29
7 https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/alien_th/5fc9bfcfcb7112e33a3df1dd68078b7.pdf
THE CHIANG MAI EXPERIENCE

“In Proud to be part of reforms that will roll out in the entire country.”
Charlemchart Nakarungkul, Honorary President of the Chiang Mai Chamber of Commerce

In Chiang Mai Province, the private sector has taken a proactive role in improving the quality and relevance of education for excluded children and youth while enhancing the system’s overall responsiveness to the labour market.

Excluded children. Over the past two decades, Thailand has become a destination of choice for migrant workers from neighbouring countries. Estimates suggest that migrant workers are approximately 8.5 per cent of the country’s labour force. North Thailand – home to seven major hill tribe groupings: Karen, Lahu, Hmong, Lisu, Akha, Mien, and Padaung – has received many of these migrants. The education system has been challenged to offer quality and tailored education to suite this complex demographic, and as a result some groups have been less well accommodated.

Lack of skilled labour. In the case of Chiang Mai, the education system has struggled to provide a workforce suited to the local market. Companies have stated outright they have systematically suffered from an insufficient supply of fresh labour even though unemployment among youth remains 4.5 per cent higher than other age groups nationwide. Companies point to the education system as one of the primary reasons: Businesses note a recurring weakness in practical and vocational skills among job-seekers.

UNICEF has had a decade-long partnership with the local education authorities in Chiang Mai supporting education for excluded children and building on this initial public-private initiative, UNICEF provided support to the Chiang Mai education authorities to engage with specific employers, several of which are outlined in this document, to develop and strengthen public-private initiatives in support of local schools and children. This was done by convening meetings of public and private stakeholders to discuss practical ways in which nine companies could support the work of schools and by providing guidance on Children’s Rights and Business Principles.

Vision and working groups of the Chiang Mai Alliance
The Alliance believes that by improving education opportunities, the education/occupation choices for students will increase significantly and parents will ultimately see a decline in the societal issues of unemployment, on the one side, and lack of skilled labour, on the other. A four-year strategic plan for education has been developed by the Alliance for the period 2016-2019 to help direct future reform efforts around five objectives, one per working group:

1. fostering pride in being Chiang Mai citizens by creating schools that do not segregate;
2. aiming to develop student skills needed for the 21st century;
3. helping support students in their job searches;
4. involving parents as well as teachers in education; and
5. promoting participation among all stakeholders to complete local educational reforms.

Potential impacts. According to the former head of the Chiang Mai Chamber of Commerce, having fewer skilled workers available in Chiang Mai impacts businesses not only in neighbouring provinces but also countrywide, and will ultimately result in a decrease in productivity. He fears that the manpower shortage could trigger a downward spiral that might inhibit growth and prosperity, with still fewer jobs available for future generations.¹⁰

Public Private Partnership: The Chiang Mai Alliance. Local businesses have offered resources to support schools and the development of local curricula more responsive to area job market needs. In particular, one group has joined forces with education organisations and established a collective platform to suggest policy reforms to develop the skills needed locally. United in the understanding that businesses and schools have a common challenge, a group of organizations – mainly schools and local education authorities, including members of academia, but also private companies, and concerned individuals – began holding regular meetings as the Chiang Mai Alliance for Education Reform, or more simply the Chiang Mai Alliance.

Success factors. According to the vast majority of people interviewed, the Alliance became an instrumental space for people to share ideas and achievements, but also challenges to collectively work on bottom-up solutions that fit the community as a whole.

This experience can be understood in the unique business environment of northern Thailand. But it is reasonable to expect that the private sector in other parts of the country could benefit from similar thinking.

¹⁰ Charlemchart Nakarungkul, Honorary President of the Chiang Mai Chamber of Commerce – interviewed as part of the development of the business case.
BUSINESSES DOs AND DON’Ts

These dos and don’ts have been compiled from extracts of personal interviews conducted in Chiang Mai during the month of February, 2017 and are based on experiences of business support for education.

**DO**

- Understand the relationship between your business and children
- Manage expectations: clearly express what businesses can offer
- Clearly articulate your rationale for engagement and link your support to your core business whenever possible
- Have stringent child protection protocols and requirements in place and a grievance mechanism in place in case of abuse
- Consider that in the workplace, family-friendly policies for employees can impact children’s education
- Measure and track the impact of education activities on your business to be able to demonstrate the return on investment
- Communicate your efforts externally as well as internally to the staff
- Lobby for more child-friendly regulatory frameworks be they based on legislation or policy

**DON’T**

- Think that wanting to do good alone is enough: Results come with coordination
- Underestimate your influence on children: Businesses have considerable leverage when speaking out on child rights issues
- Be satisfied with short-term commitments. Instead, look at the root causes [of exclusion] and try finding solutions to address them
- Open the doors to students and tourists unless you are ready: Be aware that publicity can have a backlash
- Fail to involve the authorities, they ensure harmonisation with government policies and programmes
- Try to measure and track your impact in the community on your own. Get the help of NGOs and the authorities
- Don’t respond to requests for support on your own. Work with others
- Fail to ensure that your programmes respect the labour law, especially involving children and youth, to avoid reputational risk
For over the past decades UNICEF has created a selection of tools for businesses. Among them:

- **UNICEF Background Note**
  - Promote the right to education for migrant children through Implementation of the Children’s Rights and Business Principles (CRBP).

- **Guidance on stakeholder consultations for children**

- **Engaging stakeholders on children’s rights**

- **Checklist for assessing security frameworks**

- **Checklist for assessing child rights impacts**

- **Guidance on developing a policy commitment**

- **Children’s rights in policies and codes of conduct**

- **Company reporting on child rights**

- **Children’s rights in impact assessments**

- **Children’s rights and security checklist**

- **Specific industry guidance and tools for Extractives, Communications Technology ICT: guidelines and Tools, Travel and tourism, Food and beverage, Global Supply Chains, Children’s rights & Internet**

- **Children’s rights in sustainability reporting a guide on how to report on their implementation of CRBP**

All tools can be accessed at [www.unicef.org/csr](http://www.unicef.org/csr)
EXAMPLES OF BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

This section showcases examples of four businesses that played an active role in advancing the rights of children through strategic social investments aimed at strengthening community capabilities in the North of Thailand.
Overview. This resort was built as an integral part of the Royal Project to serve the tourists wanting to visit community outreach project areas. It is now managed by the ONYX Hospitality Group. Unfortunately, the area is also a known drug-producing and trafficking area which means that local children can easily be exposed to drugs. Many hill tribes reside in the vicinity of the hotel, including Chinese Yunnan, Thai Yai, Paloung, Lahu people. Young people from this area often migrate to the city looking to increase their incomes. If they fail to find better conditions elsewhere, they return to their communities to help their parents’ farm. In partnership with local education authorities, the resort acts as a connector between schools, students, and their guests. It has a dedicated area in the lobby as a forum to communicate social impact activities. The hotel raises funds to contribute towards equitable access to education including school fees, lunches, uniforms, other supplies for children who cannot afford the costs.

Programmes. The hotel’s partnership in education supports schools and students to develop practical skills which can be of use in finding local employment. There is a specific focus on ethnic minority children for whom employment opportunities are few. Several schools have contacted the resort to request support in the teaching of life skills. The programmes, though not specifically targeting migrant students, welcome them.

Vocational Training Programme. The hotel offers internships and training opportunities for youth who attend local schools to provide them with practical skills which they can later use when seeking employment. Students come to the resort for six-month internships. So far, the hotel has trained 20 to 30 trainees who came from the immediate area and beyond.

One-day educational tour: First steps. The resort hosts a one-day educational tour through various departments from front desk, rooms, restaurants, and back of the house areas such as the kitchen with some fun hands-on experience for students from a local school.

School-based skills development. The hotel and its workers have skills that they can share with schools. The Resort purposely chooses schools that are in the immediate hotel vicinity and in more remote areas where children have less opportunities. For example, for the past decade the head of HR has volunteered to teach unconventional subjects, including: waste management; drawing; customer relations; table manners; physical exercise; upcycling materials.

Junior tour guide programme. The programme arranges for teams of three minority children to take guests to their home villages and tourist attraction areas during the school holidays, for which they are paid. An adult from the tour company accompanies the children to ensure their protection and safety. Thirty to sixty children join a three-day tourist familiarisation training camp each year. In addition, the hotel has received “ChildSafe” training conducted by the NGO and UNICEF partner, Friends International.

Future Plans. As well as strengthening the tour guide programme, the management also expressed the desire to engage guests in the group-wide Baht for a Better Life programme which aims to support educational opportunities for underprivileged children and youth in Thailand through constructing and renovating local schools, providing essential learning tools and scholarships with opportunities for on-the-job training and employment.

Lisa Thomas, CSR Director

“For our industry, it all comes down the human touch. It is our people, the staff and the community that provides that emotional connection that makes a difference to a guest experience. We want to share our knowledge and expertise to inspire younger generations to dream about their future and build a healthy community.”

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11 Upcycling is the process of transforming by-products, waste materials, useless, or unwanted products into new materials or products of better quality or for better environmental value.
### BUSINESS IMPACTS

**Build reputation.** This is an attractive destination for tourists to contribute to and engage communities to help expand their opportunities. The visiting guests are keen in learning about the local communities and culture and appreciate the resort's social citizenship.

**Maintain workforce.** Unlike some companies, the Resort's goal is not to find more labourers, but rather to keep its current workforce happy and healthy to increase loyalty. These programmes have given the opportunity to the staff to volunteer without leaving the resort.

**Develop talent.** The programmes aim to inspire talented youth to work in the hotel.

**Maintain licence to operate.** The programmes have helped the resort maintaining insights on the local communities, preserving good relationships with the authorities and raising awareness of their brand with local communities.

**Risk management.** Made stronger by living in harmony with the surrounding communities.

**Business environment.** Offers a safe stay and supplies in an area which is economically and socially deprived.

### SOCIAL SUCCESS FACTORS

**Harmonious relationship.** Pre-existing harmonious relationship with the surrounding communities through the Royal Project.

**Relevance.** The programme supports on issues that the community needs and which are also aligned to the education priorities in Chiang Mai.

**Partnerships.** The resort also has a strong commitment to work closely with the local education authorities to contribute to providing education opportunities to disadvantaged children.

**Local leadership.** Local communities have a clear strategy on what they want and what are their plans for the future.

### SOCIAL

**Improved conditions.** These initiatives contributed to improve the quality of life of the children and increased education opportunities.

**Technical skills.** Provided hospitality management skills, which can become a future occupation.

**Life skills.** Instilled self-confidence in children through their experience interacting with tourists, as well as building other skills such as communication.

**Economic environment.** Improved relations between the parents of the children and the resort: parents grow vegetables that they sell to the resort, and communities can thereby gain income.

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### CHALLENGES

**One off engagement.** The resort would like to engage with schools on a more systematic basis, with structured schedule for the activities.

**Unmatched expectations.** At times there has not been a clear description of a school’s needs matched by an understanding of what the Resort could offer.

**Behavioural change.** The hotel has found it difficult to bring about lasting behaviour change among the local communities with which it works in areas such as environmental protection, important for attracting and maintaining tourists. More elaborate communication is needed in this area.
**Overview.** Phungnoi Bakery is a 30-year-old family-owned bakery that produces, sells, and distributes more than 100 products regionally. The company has faced difficulties finding skilled labour since bakery school graduates prefer working in hotels and other types of businesses. The company employs about 30 migrants. Its policy is to treat migrant and local workers equally. Most of the migrant employees are from Myanmar, and have been with the company for five to ten years. They have tended to perform roles that Thais do not always find attractive such as baking and dishwashing.

**Programmes.** The company places great emphasis on education. In consultation with local education authorities and five local schools, the company identified skills development of students and internship opportunities as a gap which they could support. The programme consists of two years’ Associate Training (a Degree/Diploma programme) with one year of theory and another year of on-the-job training. They accept around 50 students/year from five schools with whom they have memorandums of understanding. Trainees first undergo orientation to learn Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) principles and elementary bakery skills. Then each intern is assigned a mentor to instil a quality control mindset and to develop skills on the job.

**Future Plans.** The company would like to improve the programme in order to increase the retention rate after the internship. This will be done firstly by monitoring the current programme and identify bottlenecks. They will also create a clearer career path for trainees, with specific goals and milestones and increase the salary for those interns that will become permanent staff.
Develop talent. The programme has helped the company to develop a training programme which trains students in relevant skills for their business.

Recruit workforce. After the completion of the course, the bakery offered jobs to those trainees whose performance is up to standard and who can keep up with the demanding work.

Build reputation. Governmental organisations have promoted the Bakery as a leading example of leadership and labour practices, and invited them to speaker at high profile events.

Increased education offer. Contributed to develop students with a suitable set of skills to be able to enter a competitive job market.

Inclusion. Interns are often students from ethnic minority groups. They work side-by-side with other minorities and with Thai nationals, increasing the sense of community and mutual respect within the company.

BUSINESS IMPACTS

Clear and shared objectives with education authorities and participating schools. Effective dialogue has ensured a common understanding of objectives before introducing interns to the programme.

Effective communication. The bakery placed efforts in creating an honest dialogue with trainees and with schools. The potential interns learn early that Phungnoi is a factory bakery for mass production, and that the workload is more challenging than that of a hotel or of smaller bakeries.

Solid orientation course. The company realised that those who do not know, can never be wrong. Therefore, they have invested in a comprehensive orientation course and assigned company mentors to all who joined.

Clear policies and rules. The Bakery believed in having clear but flexible rules that serve a definite purpose. Additionally, the company felt it is important to prioritise human needs above all else.

SOCIAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Continuity. When production needs do not coincide with the school calendar, for example during school breaks, it became a challenge for the company to manage production.

Investment risk. The company hoped to hire all the interns following training. However, the company has faced difficulties attracting enough new workers with the correct skills and attitudes into what is a specialized and demanding profession.

Bureaucracy. The company maintained an admin staff devoted solely to dealing with the complex and lengthy process of hiring migrant workers.

CHALLENGES
Overview. Raming Tea Co., Ltd., is a tea producer and the only manufacturer of Thai black tea. The company pioneered the planting of tea in Chiang Mai in 1941. Initially, they employed locals, but they soon began to hire labourers from the neighbouring Shan state in Myanmar. Over the years, the company has come to support about 200 households (some 600 people living in three villages) who have moved to Raming plantations to work. Each family is assigned a section of the 3,000 rai of land to care for. Currently, all the growers are Lahu people. Two-thirds of the settlers have Thai work permits, but one-third remain stateless, lacking ID cards, which has inhibited their access to public services.

Access to upper secondary education is particularly problematic for children who manage to pass through primary and early secondary school. Most teenagers leave to seek employment in Chiang Mai City, but often without the documentation and skill sets to compete in the city, so they return to the plantations. The instances of early/teenage pregnancy and child marriage are relatively high.

The company buys around 80% of the tea produced. In recent years, the company has encouraged workers to sell organic tea to the company in order to preserve the environment. However, organic wild tea grows in an area where there is opium too, exposing local people and their children to the dangers of illegal drugs.

Programmes. Raming Tea’s founder donated land to build a school for the children’s formal education. Now there are three schools with 17 teachers (only one of which speaks Lahu) for 145 students. Only 5% of the students are Thai, the rest are Lahu. One school is located within the plantation area and two are located at Intrakin District, not far from the plantations. These three schools offer classes from pre-school to Secondary grade 9.

The relationship between the education authorities, schools and the company is strong and consists of the company providing land, resources, and skills training. The schools are run by the provincial education authority, which covers teacher salaries (who are all certified by the ministry of education) and which pays for student meals and a milk snack.

To guarantee the sustainability of these programmes, the company teaches students to make the “Aw bon ja” or Cute little tea picker dolls which are sold in the company-owned Tea House in Chiang Mai town. All revenue from the dolls is re-invested in the school and in the community.

Additionally, the company organizes excursions and educational trips for the schoolchildren to introduce them to other parts of the country and, and to new environments. The company also supports medical bills of children who are not covered by the healthcare system.
Secure its licence to operate. The very existence of the business is linked to the families who live in the tea plantations. Providing the children of migrants a good education is a prerequisite to keeping the workforce for the expanding demand for the tea product.

Retain workforce. Workers who are satisfied with the company and its actions have a lower turnover rate, saving the company hiring and training costs.

Cohesion. The company has offered occupation to the hill tribe workers. It has given their children the opportunity to receive an education on site, without having to relocate to the city where some of them have experienced integration challenges.

Soft and technical skills. Raming Tea has promoted growing tea organically to be less impactful on the environment. They attempt to create an environmentally sensitive mindset among their growers and their children.

Symbiosis relationship. The company owner and management identify with the community and understand villagers’ needs. This helps the company bond with the village, the tribe, and the schools... and vice-versa.

Language barrier which results from a lack of mother tongue instruction and a shortage of teachers and learning materials adapted to the needs of students who do not speak Thai as their first language. It is not until grade 3 or 4 that children become proficient and comfortable in the Thai language.

Teacher turnover. There is a high turnover of Thai teachers because few are content to work in this remote area.

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Language barrier which results from a lack of mother tongue instruction and a shortage of teachers and learning materials adapted to the needs of students who do not speak Thai as their first language. It is not until grade 3 or 4 that children become proficient and comfortable in the Thai language.

Teacher turnover. There is a high turnover of Thai teachers because few are content to work in this remote area.
Overview. The Borsang village centre produces handmade traditional umbrellas. It is the only toxicity-free umbrella company in Thailand. Traditionally, Borsang umbrellas were offered to monks and a small domestic market. Then some 40 years ago a Chiang Mai tour guide founded this centre for tourists to experience the process in a single visit. This also improved quality control and provided stable job opportunities to help prevent the loss of the traditional craftsmanship of umbrella making.

The craft of umbrella making cannot be mechanized, and the company is facing an aging labour challenge: most of their workers are 48-50 years old. There are few workers to replace them. A handful of workers have been with the company since day one, and many others have been working for 30 years.

The centre has several educational initiatives including a skills development internship programme. They also work to create awareness of local handicraft skills and to encourage the preservation of local culture.

Children and Youth Programme. This programme was originally created to support employees who did not want to leave children unattended during school breaks and after school. The programme has since expanded and is now open to older students, including migrant children, who are interested in learning the traditional art of umbrella making. The centre has agreements with local schools and accepts ten students each summer break. One specialized worker looks after two students, who each learn how to make a part of the umbrellas. During their time in the Centre, the students are not expected to reach target production, depending on their own abilities. The Centre provides material with less commercial value so that students can make mistakes and learn.

When visiting the Centre, tourists can support the internship programme financially through a contribution box. So far, over 200 students have already been trained.

Future Plans. The centre would like to spread the knowledge, offering certification via long-term courses. In addition, the centre would like to engage children to collect stories featuring employees. This would help preserve the oral tradition of stories about local products. The E-museum will compile stories from staff members and also local villagers, searchable by surname, making them recognizable experts of local wisdom and true sources of historic knowledge. Some of them are fourth generation umbrella makers! 
Maintain workforce. The company registered very little workforce turnover and leave days, for a very high loyalty rating. Parents can be more focused on their jobs as they do not worry about their children, and can feel proud of their jobs.

Recruit workforce. In the long term, the Centre hopes to breed the next generation of craftspeople. So far, one child has taken the programme three times, but none of the trained children have chosen this work as their career path.

Business environment. The Centre can offer to its visitors an understanding of local traditions and culture which enhance tourist experience.

Build reputation. Tourists have valued the social contribution of the company.

Licence to operate. The company has received several awards and has been identified as UNESCO Seal of Excellence for Handicrafts South-East Asia Programme year 2007 and 2008.

Support caregivers. The centre fulfilled the institutional gap and provided care to children during school breaks and afterschool hours.

Life skills. As well as practical skills, the internship programme fostered life skills such as patience and concentration. Young trainees were also exposed to different languages, learning to feel comfortable around foreigners.

Intergenerational communication. The programme has created a meaningful interaction platform between youth and the older workers.

Small income. Children learned the value of money and feel proud of having earned some cash independently (usually around THB 3,000 per month).

Culture preservation. Younger generations gained access to traditional lore that they can no longer find in their villages. Young trainees could feel proud of their own roots and even aspire to become little Thai-culture ambassadors.

Relevance to the business. The learning centre has been part of their core business and has had a positive impact on the surrounding communities.

Engagement. The centre allows broad participation by schools, the surrounding communities, competitors, the local authorities, tourists, and international organizations.

Inclusion. It is generally perceived that only Thais can carry on the Thai heritage but the centre has shown that migrants and ethnic minorities are a valuable resource to keep the heritage alive.

Legal issues. Initially, company auditors questioned children seated alongside workers. Now they have official documentation and agreements with schools so they can prove the learning focus of the programme on skills development. More support can also be provided to ensure the company is fully aligned to the Children’s Rights and Business Principles.
I now work in the coffee shop. I prefer interacting with customers to making umbrellas. The internship did not affect my education, it actually helped me earn a little money and do something useful. I learned to concentrate, and at the very least how to have patience.
- Gig, Sasiya Anoska

It was better to have her daughter here while earning money than staying at home. Now she is pursuing her studies in the city.
- Saipin
OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOLS WORKING WITH BUSINESSES PARTNERS

This section provides an overview of interviews with three schools and the Primary Education Service Area Office (ESAO) Director on their experience of engaging with the private sector.

Overview. Since 2014, schools have regularly taken part in public and private discussions with private sector companies convened by UNICEF in partnership with the provincial education authority and the Chiang Mai Alliance. Local schools, like local businesses, had concerns that the school curriculum and the way in which it is delivered did not devote enough attention to the local context including a child’s local heritage and traditional knowledge as well as practical skills development. They felt that education should be more relevant to students allowing them not only to learn, but also to enjoy the learning experience.

As a result of these dialogues and relationship building, the schools have attempted to develop curricula and activities suited to developing the identified skills needed in Chiang Mai, in partnership with the private sector. Generally, the initiatives arose organically from the perspective of a shared vision and open communication.

Impacts. Some examples of cooperation that created positive impacts through private sector engagement are:

Teaching support. Participating schools have received support from the private sector to teach practical and life skills that they can directly apply to their everyday lives. For example, in hotel management, tour guiding, consumer sales, and English conversation.

Vocational knowledge. Businesses offered to be the venue for field trips, study tours, on-the-job training, and other extracurricular activities. This vocational or practical education approach teaches students traditional Thai handicrafts and dominant industries (for example, tourism and food preparation). With an increased awareness of their own roots, both Thai and migrant students acquired an understanding of themselves and their communities regardless of their future pursuits.

Curriculum development. Businesses have advised schools on how to make the curriculum stronger and prepare students for the jobs available. Promoting vocational training in elementary school may seem a stretch, but principals strongly believe it is important to lay the foundation for children to broaden their views and capacities as they prepare to choose a vocational training path.

Resources. Schools received in-kind support such as transport, uniforms, kitchenware, stationery medical service, and/or monetary donations, to support the enrolment and learning of the most disadvantaged students in the communities.

Influence. Businesses have helped education institutions to lobby for improved national educational policies.

Lessons learned. There were many useful take-aways from the interviews and shared experiences. Among them, that schools should:

• Understand the needs of the community members, including those of the private sector.
• Involve companies in planning strategic partnerships that are sustainable and have clear commitments. Possibly, nominate school ambassadors within the private sector.
• Include skills development in elementary years to enhance the relevance of education and focus for children from an early age and involve private sector partners when promoting practical skills development to obtain their support and input.
• Offer clear structured business volunteering opportunities that companies can support.
Whilst the effort of the Chiang Mai business community in supporting children’s rights through education initiatives is valuable, businesses could have greater impact by first carefully analysing their day-to-day impacts (positive or negative) on migrants and other excluded children before rushing to make charitable contributions.

That is to say, there is a need for companies to advance from interacting with children via corporate philanthropy exclusively. Helping children go to school and financially supporting quality education is a starting point, but companies must go beyond this. The Chiang Mai experience has proven that companies can and should engage in meaningful and mutually beneficial collaboration initiatives.

Companies need guidance to help build understanding of children’s education needs (perhaps by assigning a company representative a position on the school board), while educational institutions and NGOs need to understand the needs of companies and potential leverage points (beyond funds). Local authorities ensure harmonisation with government policies and programmes and they need to be engaged as they are fundamental for the scaling up of successful initiatives.
The key idea here is the acceptance on the part of business of a responsibility to children whether or not the children are relatives of employees. All businesses will have an impact on children in one way or another: It is crucial to determine what that impact is and to make it as positive as possible. This requires a commitment by all of the company’s departments.

For example, human resources must review policies and practices as regards migrant or young student workers, and as regards employees with families. Companies should have stringent requirements governing the interaction of staff or associates with children, along with a grievance mechanism in case of abuse. All relevant departments need to measure and track the impact on these activities to the business to be able to demonstrate a return on investment. Marketing and communications also has a role to play in ensuring the company respects children and portrays them responsibly in communications. They should not miss the opportunity to track impact on brand, on consumer perception, on employee retention, and on motivation and morale.

There remains a gap between current practices and the activities required to fulfil a company’s responsibility to respect and promote education of excluded children. Increasingly, stakeholders expect (and many demand!) companies to be socially aware and to act ethically in the realization that for the business sector to succeed, society itself must thrive. Such a thriving society includes the protection of – and an active role for – marginalised groups such as excluded children.

The role of organisations such as UNICEF is to support the collaboration between local authorities, including education authorities and schools, and the private sector, and to provide guidance and assistance to the development of public-private partnerships which promote children’s rights and which are in the best interests of the child.

Private sector organisations and networks, such as the Chambers of Commerce (both national and provincial) have an important role to play and help communicate the Children’s Rights and Business Principles among their members and encourage strategic business interventions which address the context-specific challenges for children and education, as in the case of Chiang Mai.

It is hoped that this working paper will guide the private sector and education authorities in other parts of Thailand to strengthen their partnerships and to develop sustainable and strategic public private initiatives. UNICEF will support these efforts by providing training to private sector partners on the Children’s Rights and Business Principles as well to local education authorities to be able to respond to the needs of local business for mutually beneficial outcomes for children.