

Help for displaced teens

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The Nation

PRACHUAB KHIRI KHAN

Karen teens and small children gather to receive donations from MFC Asset management executives at the Mae Fa Luang Centre in Pa La-u district recently.

"This is the start of one of MFC's corporate social responsibility programmes under its estimated Bt2-million budget to assist underprivileged people in the Kingdom.

"This is a modest start," says MFC managing director Dr Supakorn Soontornkit, a seven-year veteran at one of Thailand's biggest wealth management companies.

"It is important to come here to survey what the villagers really need to maximise our contribution."

MFC president Dr Pichit Akrathit, who presided over a ceremony to hand out gifts to villagers, agreed that the donations were just a starting point to a "long term development plan".

"CSR is a critical part of the company's efforts to instil ethics and moral conduct among our staff.



MFC PRESIDENT Dr Pichit hands out presents.

"We also want our social work to inspire the public to join in assisting people who are much less fortunate."

"Moral behaviour is a key foundation on which all lasting wealth is created," he says.

"The reputation of a company determines the future of its fortunes. Only from a moral base can business truly succeed."

Mae Fa Luang was founded by

the late, much beloved, Princess Mother.

She set up the centre for displaced Karens who sought refuge here from persecution three decades ago.

Seeing that they lived in dire conditions, the Princess Mother began assisting the minority group with basic structures such as a school and community centre.

But today, much still has to be done, says Pichit. As the villagers are non-citizens, their children cannot attend public schools for higher learning.

Currently there are two Thai teachers teaching the Karen children up to the secondary level.

MFC is looking at establishing a facility that would allow the teens to acquire professional skills as well.

"We cannot ignore their plight. They live among us and their problems will eventually become ours as well," said a volunteer.

"Such minorities could be a potentially bigger problem later on if little is done to address social issues," she says.

A stable, thriving minority village will be good to rebalance disparity, which is often the root of most conflicts.



A TEEN CHOIR sings to guests at Mae Fa Luang Village in Prachuab Khiri Khan.