

ANGELS FOR- GIVE GOOD, GET GOOD

The Lao saying "Het bun, dai bun" means doing good, receiving good. This perfectly sums up the vision of Ingrid Engel. From her own life experiences, she wanted to give back something good. In 2003, she established the foundation 'Engel fuer Kinder' (Angels for Children), together with her husband Paul and their two sons Christian and Lars.

Following several journeys to Southeast Asia – and especially Laos, where her sister in law Gerlinde Engel started working in

1995 as a factory manager in the garment industry – she saw the poor education opportunities children had and what that means to their future prospects in life. Although she fled with her family in World War II to Bavaria and had to leave her former life behind, Ingrid had the opportunity to get good schooling and education in Germany after the war – all opportunities were open for her. During her journeys to Asia, she felt the desire to give something back to others, especially those who don't have the same opportunities.

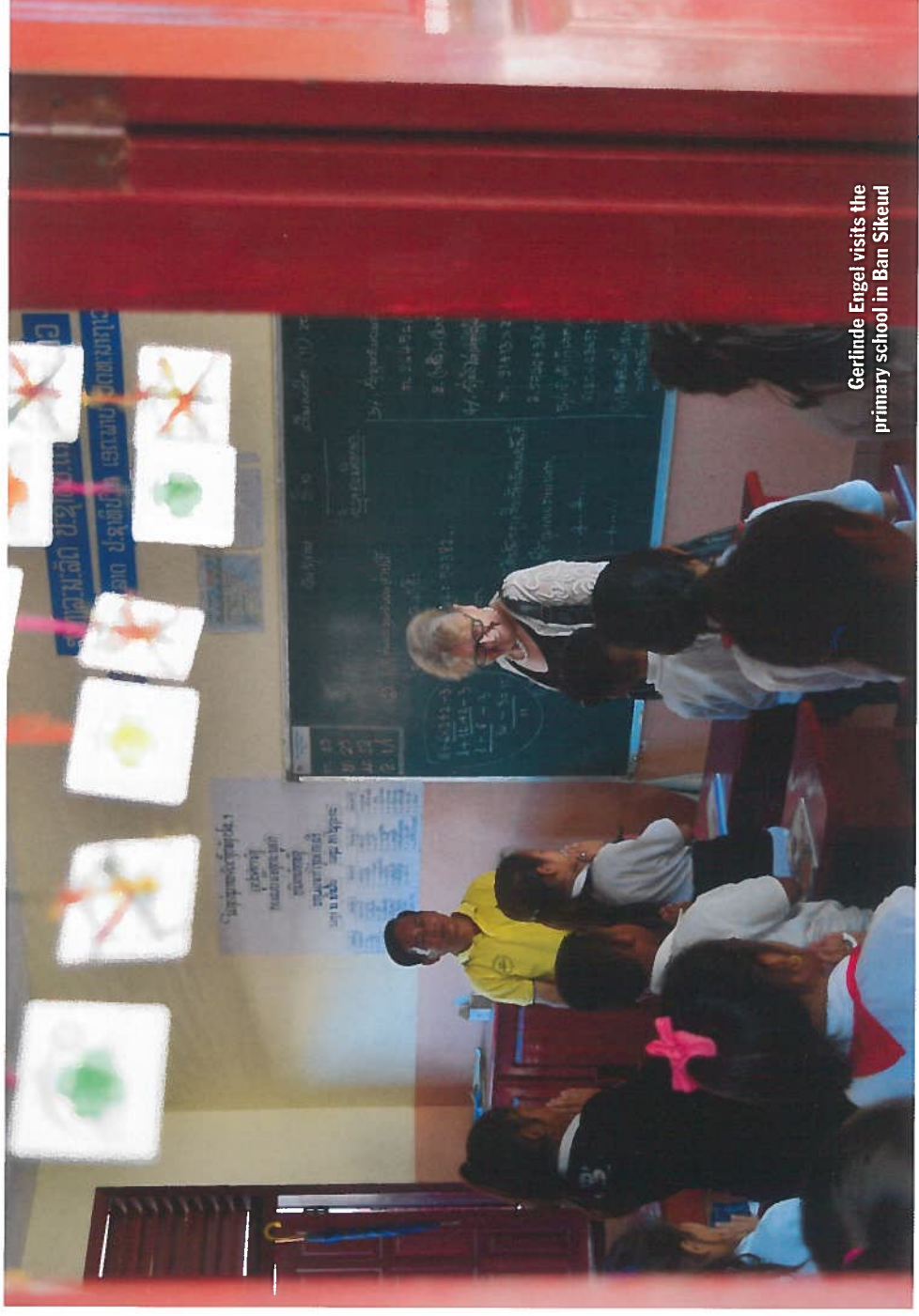
STUDENTS SUBSCRIPTIONS HAVE RISEN AND THE PARENTS ARE NOW CONVINCED OF THE GOOD EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES THEIR CHILDREN CAN GET IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BAN SIKEUD.

Ingrid and Gerlinde started to support a governmental primary school in Ban Sikeud, a village on the outskirts of the Lao capital, Vientiane. Gerlinde worked in the nearby garment factory, so she already knew the school – many of her employees had children at the school. Support began with the most basic needs – building new classrooms, providing tables and benches to all classes, providing sanitary devices, providing books to all students, an area for a physical education and basic teaching materials. But the support of the school did not end there.

Still working in the garment factory until 2005, Gerlinde supervised the activities carried out by 'Angels for Children'. During her many visits, Ingrid (who worked as a vocational teacher for accounting) supported her by organising the fundraising in Germany and co-ordinated material support to Laos. After her retirement from the garment factory, Gerlinde stayed in Laos, to continue the foundation's activities – since then, she now also spends between 6-8 months a year during the schoolyear in Ban Sikeud. All donations are only spent on the project activities of 'Angels

for Children' and directly benefit the students' education. Due to the emotional and engaged work of both women, the school is blooming. Students subscriptions have risen and the parents are now convinced of their good education opportunities their children can get in the primary school in Ban Sikeud. Although supported by a private foundation, the school is still a governmental school and therefore open to all children of the village free of charge.

Several national awards have been issued by Lao educational institutions to the primary school in Ban



Gerlinde Engel visits the primary school in Ban Sikeud

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Sikeud, proving the good learning environment resulting from the efforts of the foundation. But that success also made the two of them wonder, what perspectives the students have in secondary education. After finishing five years of primary schooling, the students attended the nearby lower secondary school in the neighboring village Ban Phang Heng for four years. But this school had the same issues as the primary school in Ban Sikeud – school buildings in dire need of renovation, lack of teaching equipment, tables, benches and books and bad sanitary facilities. Due to the experiences with the primary school in Ban Sikeud, the foundation decided in 2010 to also support this secondary school. The school buildings were torn down completely and a new main building with two floors was built, next to a

hall for physical education (such as Karate, table tennis and traditional Lao dance). Teaching equipment was purchased for all students, additional teachers hired, new furniture bought for the classrooms and the school yard was paved – particularly important during the rainy season. After the construction works were finished, the school was opened in a big ceremony with many Lao and international guests – but most importantly with the students of the school. For their great contributions to education in that district, both women received the highest Lao order, which is awarded by the Lao Government to foreigners.

Sadly in 2011, Ingrid died. But her vision lived on when her son Christian took over her position on the foundation, together with his Aunt Gerlinde. Together with the

foundation's council, (consisting of Gerlinde's son Markus Engel and Ingrid's other son, Lars Engel), the family foundation members kept her vision and continued her mission. In 2014, a second primary school in Ban Phang Heng was renovated and the same scope of support began. In 2015, the renovation works were finished and the school was inaugurated in a ceremony with the students.

Currently, 440 students attend each primary school and around 670 attend the lower secondary school, taught by more than 70 teachers in all three schools. As a result, nearly 1,500 students receive the possibility for better education. As the schools are all still governmental schools, the parents do not have to pay for their schooling – the foundation addresses its support in

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Laos directly to those in dire need, fulfilling the original vision of Ingrid Engel.

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The foundation's website can be found here:

www.engel-fuer-kinder.de/en/

The foundation's facebook

page is www.facebook.com/stiftungengeelfuerkinder

