



## THE WORLD'S CHILDREN'S PRIZE FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

### *10th Anniversary Award Ceremony*



#### ***The Decade Child Rights Heroes 2010***

*Mr. Nelson Mandela and Ms. Graça Machel received the most votes. Khru Prateep was among the ten Child Rights Heroes honoured at the ceremony.*

The 10th Anniversary of the World's Children Prize for the Rights of the Child was held on September 1, 2010 by the World's Children's Prize Foundation, under the Royal Patronage of Queen Silvia of Sweden.

#### **H.M Queen Silvia**

Starting in 2000, each year the World's Children's Prize Foundation has honoured leading child rights campaigners. Every year adult organisers nominate three finalists with the prize winners to be decided by children. The Global Friend's Award is decided by a worldwide vote of children aged under 18. The recipient of the World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child is chosen from the three finalists by a child jury. The jury come from all over the world and are representative of many of the problems which cause suffering to children.

In 2004 DPF founder Prateep had the honour of winning both of the prizes. The following year the husband and wife team of Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel won the Global Friends Award.



To celebrate 10 years of honouring child rights heroes, the World's Children's Prize Foundation organised a global vote to decide the hero of the decade out of the 13 prize winners from the previous years.

The World's Children's Prize network educates over 24 million children in 53,000 schools in 101 countries about child rights. For the decade award over 7 million children voted. The winners of the vote were Mr. Nelson Mandela and Ms. Graça Machel.



**Mr. Mandela** has fought for freedom from racism all his life and is also a strong supporter of children's rights. Upon being released from prison after 27 years, he became the first fully democratically elected president of South Africa.

Mr. Mandela also helps the children of South Africa and advocates the rights of children. He established a foundation, the "Nelson Mandela Children's Fund", which helps children whose parents have died of HIV/Aids, street children, disabled children and poor children. As president, he donated half of his salary to poor children. When he received the Nobel Prize, he also donated part of the money prize to help street children. Mr. Mandela not only wants every child to feel that they are loved, but he also wants to give them a good future.



**Ms. Graça Machel** joined her husband in receiving the Decade Child Rights Heroes prize because she has bravely fought for children's rights for many years, especially in Mozambique, the country of her birth. She fights for girls to have the same opportunity as boys to go to school, and against the practice in rural areas of forcing girls to work and get married when they are young.



Before the awards ceremony got under-way in Stockholm City Hall, which is also the venue for awarding the Swedish Nobel Prizes, Queen Silvia met privately with all the laureates. The Queen shook hands with each of the laureates, but on recognising Prateep, she remembered Thai culture and gave a Thai syle "wai" as greeting. Khru Prateep and her companions, Ms. Rotjana Phraesrithong and Ms. Piromya Sathathai, reciprocated Her Majesty's "wai" and curtsied. The Queen appeared delighted with the response.

Ms Rotjana has been a Duang Prateep Foundation staff member for many years and is director of the Duang Prateep Foundation's Baan Tharn Namchai home for child victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Ms Piromya has been living at the Duang Prateep Foundation's New Life Project in Kanchanaburi province for 13 years, having been rescued from a life of forced begging with great brutality, at the age of 7.

The ceremony kicked off with a lively music band from South Africa leading the group of laureates into the ceremony hall with Ms. Graça Machel leading the laureates to the large stage in front of 1,000 invited guests. Once the laureates were seated in the front row on stage, one male and one female youth escorted the Queen to the stage where she sat to the side with the 15 child jury members seated not far from her.

Proceedings began with an introduction about the World's Children's Prize Foundation, followed by amazing dances by youth groups from Vietnam, India, South Africa and Brazil

The Master of Ceremonies announced the name of the laureate who received the highest vote. It was in fact the joint nomination of Mr. Nelson Mandela and Ms. Graça Machel that received the most votes, so there were two Decade Child Rights Heroes. Ms. Graça, who was also representing Mr. Nelson, accepted the prize from Her Majesty and read a speech from Mr. Mandela:



*“We are extremely honoured to have been voted as the Decade Child Rights Heroes. There is nothing more precious and pure than being loved and appreciated by children. For both of us this award is very special given the place children occupy in our hearts and lives.”*

(Mr. Nelson Mandela)

The MC then introduced the other 12 laureates and played an audio-visual presentation briefly telling about each laureates' work in fighting for children's rights.

### 1. Iqbal Masih, Pakistan (posthumously)



Iqbal was a debt slave in a carpet factory for 5 years. When he was set free he fought for the rights of debt slave children. Iqbal was threatened by factory owners and was murdered on 16 April 1995. He was the first laureate of the World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child. Even though he has already died, his goodness lives after him.

### 2. Asfaw Yemiru, Ethiopia

Asfaw was a street child at the age of 9. At 14, he opened his first school for street children under an oak tree. Since then he has devoted over 50 years to giving underprivileged children the chance to go to school. Tens of thousands of street children have now benefited from Asfaw's work. Now he is 66 years old and still devotes his life for a good future for poor children.



### 3. Nkosi Johnson, South Africa (posthumously)



This little boy was the voice for children affected by HIV/Aids in South Africa to have the right to attend school the same as normal children. Even though his life in this world was short (he died aged 12), he made the people realise

that the government of South Africa and many adults ignored the plight of, and did not protect, children with HIV/AIDS.

#### **4. Maiti, Nepal**

“My aim is to make Nepal free from the trafficking of poor girls”, Anuradha Koirala, the founder of Maiti Nepal, said. Nepal is a poor country. Many children are compelled to work in carpet factories and agricultural fields. Girls, especially, are coerced into becoming prostitutes or sex slaves in the brothels in India.



#### **5. Maggy Barankitse, Burundi**



In 1993, Maggy saved 28 children from the civil war between the Hutu tribe and the Tutsi tribe in Burundi. After that, she saved over ten thousand orphaned children in war-torn Burundi and gave them a home, love, schooling and a hospital.

#### **6. James Aguer, Sudan**

James has, over 20 years, freed thousands of kidnapped children from slave work in Sudan in which they were forced into hard labor, were compelled to eat and sleep among animals and were beaten. James has been imprisoned 33 times and four of his colleagues have been murdered.



#### **7. Prateep Ungsongtham Hata, Thailand**



Prateep was a child worker in a fireworks factory and also worked at the docks scraping rust off ships. She established a school in the slum for children who were not allowed to attend normal school because they lacked birth certificates and other official documents. She has spent 40 years fighting to give the neediest children the chance to go to school for quality life development.

#### **8. Dunga Mothers, Kenya**

This group was started by a boy named Ferdinand whose mother died of AIDS. Ferdinand had the idea of setting up a working group to help orphaned children who had lost their parents from AIDS. The Dunga Mothers group fights for and devote themselves to helping children in villages to bring about a beneficial change in their lives. Even though, the Dunga Mothers group is poor, they have been able to help 70 orphaned children go to school, have a home, food, love and have their rights respected.



#### **9. Craig Kielburger, Canada**



Craig fights for young people’s right to make their voices heard and to liberate children from poverty and who have had their rights violated. He pushes the authorities to participate in

making the world better for children. Fifteen years ago, at the age of 12, he founded Free The Children.

#### **10. AOCM, Rwanda**

AOCM is the orphanage organization set up by teenagers who lost their parents in the genocide in Rwanda. In 1994, 800,000 people, including 300,000 children were killed in just 100 days. Over 100,000 children became orphans. AOCM has helped 6,000 children to start a new life by providing food, shelter, medical treatment and education.



#### **11. Betty Makoni, Zimbabwe**



Betty Makoni fights for girls subjected to abuse and protects others from assaults, forced marriage and trafficking. Betty started working by establishing the Girl Child Network, which has built 3 safe villages and created 500 girls clubs with 30,000 members.

#### **12. Somaly Mam, Cambodia**

After being a sex slave herself as a child, Somaly has spent the last 13 years liberating girls from sex slavery. She would like these children to live their lives the same as other children. She set up AFESIP and 3 shelters for girls. The girls who have been saved from sex slavery in the brothels, have food, accommodation, healthcare and education. Now there are 3,000 girls who were former sex slaves who have better lives.



After the information about the work of the laureates, all the prize winners present and the children accompanying them stood up on stage to be presented with a bouquet and a prize medal by H.M. Queen Silvia.

Addressing the audience, Her Majesty congratulated the Decade Child Rights Heroes 2010 and all the other laureates. She said the ceremony was very important and valuable for raising awareness about respecting the rights of children. "I would like to say that this prize can be considered a "Nobel Prize of Children". The objectives of the World's Children's Prize Foundation are to encourage people, young and old, to realize the value and importance of children's rights."

After the ceremony, the laureates and invited guests had dinner together in the Gold Room on the second floor of the Stockholm City Hall. Musicians and dancers from the groups who had performed during the ceremony led in waitresses carrying trays of food. The excellent meal was served at intervals during speeches from representatives of the foundation's



committee, sponsors and child jury. Queen Silvia stayed till the end before returning to the palace with her 2 attendants.

The following morning, the laureates and performers split into 8 groups and went to visit schools in different parts of Sweden. Khru Prateep and another 11 people from 5 countries, together with the Vietnamese performers, flew to Gotland Island. There the group visited a primary school and was also able to see the famous ancient “Ring Wall” that encircles Visby, the main town of the island.

The final event before leaving Sweden was a farewell party, at which Piromya Sathathai, the youth from the Duang Prateep Foundation's New Life Project who was invited to attend the celebrations, performed a Thai traditional dance for all the guests.

### Thoughts of Khru Prateep



Meeting fellow laureates and children from around the world was very interesting and inspiring. I was also most impressed with Queen Silvia. Her Majesty arrived simply with two attendants. She stayed for over six hours, looking radiant throughout, and finally departed not long before midnight, with a friendly goodbye wave for everyone.



The school we went to on Gotland Island was a primary school in a rural area with 250 students. The school had a big multi-purpose room and a gym. Around the school were many big trees. When viewed from outside, the school building looked like long one-story warehouses in 3 or 4 rows. When we went inside the classrooms we could see that Sweden invests a lot in children’s education. There were nice chairs and desks and the students can put their books inside their desks. The school freely provides many modern materials as well as educational and sporting equipment.

Students at the primary levels 4 to 6 can speak English. Over 80 students welcomed us and children aged just 11 and 12 explained the school’s activities very well. I asked someone what is the main source of income for Sweden, and the answer was steel and weapons sales. We can say that Sweden can develop smart people and has good national resources, so they can produce quality weapons. In contrast, our country used over ten-thousand million baht to buy weapons for our military from Sweden.

Even though Sweden is only a small country with a population of just 10 million people, it is very famous for its role in awarding most of the Nobel Prizes each year. Moreover, Sweden also campaigns on the issue of Child Rights. The World's Children's Prize Foundation is supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, as well as Swedish charities corporations and individuals, so

that children around the world can learn about the problems of children in other countries and vote for outstanding people who fight for children's rights.

The day after the school visit, it was time for everyone to return to their own countries. Sadly I could not return to Thailand because of an arrest warrant which results from being accused of being part of a gathering of more than five people, an infringement of state of emergency laws, which at the time of writing are still in force in Bangkok. This accusation is because I joined with other Khlong Toei people in rallying during the May crisis. My attempts to tell the government not to kill people, resulted in serious accusations and an arrest warrant against me.

