

## Art as Therapy for Children and Youth with Mental and Physical Disabilities

Thailand



Alicia Baum

**Organization type:**

nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Project Stage:


Established

**Budget:**

\$1,000 - \$10,000

Website:

<http://artrelief.net/>

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### Project Summary

#### Elevator Pitch

**Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.**

ARI uses the healing benefits of art to create a fun and therapeutic atmosphere that helps people cope with the difficulties of their everyday lives.

#### About Project

**Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?**

In Thailand, there is a stigma against people living with disabilities, both mental and physical. These groups are often discriminated against in the community, and overall, there is a lack of resources available to them. Many people living with disabilities are able to access health care, but therapy is often disregarded. Therapy through art provides those without a voice a way to express themselves, and is crucial to their overall recovery and wellbeing.

**Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!**

Art Relief International aims to utilize the arts as a means of healing and self-exploration for various groups, including physically and mentally disabled children, youth and adults. It is our goal to work with stigmatized groups to assist in raising their levels of education and artistic literacy, and overall, provide a means to bridge differences in all forms. We operate in cooperation with care facilities, and provide efficient and innovative therapy. When participants create art, and reflect on the creative process, they are increasingly aware of the self and others. Art therapy also helps them cope with stress, symptoms, and strengthens cognitive abilities.

### Impact: How does it Work

**Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.**

We work closely with Hope Home, a residential home for children with physical disabilities that are referred by local orphanages. We visit at least once a week, and carry out workshops that incorporate music, movement and art. Currently, there are three residents at Hope Home, with disabilities including cerebral palsy and Down Syndrome. Through these weekly workshops, our volunteers and the caregivers at Hope Home have seen immense improvements. The children have improved their fine motor skills, being increasingly able to grasp a paintbrush and other objects. Art therapy has also improved the general well being of these children; they are able to make choices, such as paint and brush choice. This has given them a sense of control in their lives when most choices are made for them.

### Sustainability

**Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?**

Chiang Mai welcomes plenty of non-governmental organizations, however we are the sole organization offering art therapy workshops to the community. Our organization has been created to fill a void in the various types of assistance delivered to the Chiang Mai community. We have

succeeded in creating partnerships with several organizations, and we work in conjunction with them to deliver our workshops, but our viability is dependent on theirs.

Team

## Founding Story

It started with Sara, Zoe and Wad, who were the past directors of an NGO named Cultural Canvas Thailand for two years. They had an excellent view of the various services provided by other NGOs in Chiang Mai. After a night of intense discussion about the creation of a new program, their minds wandered elsewhere. All artists, they started discussing some of the works of art surrounding them in their office. They each grew excited about the prospect of a new program using art as therapy, and soon after, the program was introduced. One of the most promising aspects of the program was its ability to be implemented across cultures, and its potential in other locations.

About You

### Organization:

Art Relief International

About You

#### First Name

Alicia

#### Last Name

Baum

#### Twitter URL

<http://www.twitter.com/CulturalCanvas>

#### Facebook URL

<http://www.facebook.com/CCT.ARI>

About Your Organization

#### Organization Name

Art Relief International

#### Organization Country

, 37

#### Country where this project is creating social impact

, 37

#### How long has your organization been operating?

1 5 years

Innovation

#### How long have you been in operation?

Operating for 1 5 years

#### Which of the following best describes the barrier(s) your innovation addresses? Choose up to two

Cost.

Social Impact

#### Please describe the goal of your initiative; outline what you are trying to achieve

Art Relief International is an artistic outreach program that works with a wide-range of social and humanitarian organizations within the Chiang Mai community. We believe in providing a voice for individuals by exploring various creative means, including visual, performance, and experimental arts. Our mission is to promote expression and cultivate the creativity that lives inside each individual. We use art to create an atmosphere of inclusion and belonging where often there is none.

#### What has been the impact of your solution to date?

We have managed to improve the communication abilities in some of the groups we work with, and with more frequent workshops, we see more results. Results are both physical and mental; children with physical abilities are finding new ways to paint. Volunteers are constantly greeted with laughs and smiles when they arrive to workshops. We have seen the general improvement in the well being for many of the people we work with. ARI has started to spread awareness throughout the community about how successful and effective art therapy is, and we have seen more involvement with local artists and organizations.

#### What is your projected impact over the next five years?

We are planning on expanding our project to other countries and we will begin to do full time projects with some of our organizations. For example, we would like to replace our weekly workshops with single mothers with a full time program where art therapy will be used in a broader comprehensive strategy. Overall, in the next five years we expect to achieve a greater impact by broadening the amount of the people we help in

Chiang Mai, in Thailand and abroad by increasing the scope of our programs.

**What barriers might hinder the success of your project? How do you plan to overcome them?**

Our main barrier thus far has been purely financial. However, our organization is currently improving its skills in grant writing, and we plan on procuring more funds for this project. We are also hoping that your foundation will help us continue our success.

**Winning entries present a strong plan for how they will achieve and track growth. Identify your six-month milestone for growing your impact**

Create more partnerships in Chiang Mai, and increase the impact of art therapy

Identify three major tasks you will have to complete to reach your six-month milestone

**Task 1**

Procure more funding

**Task 2**

Initiate new programs and projects

**Task 3**

Give ownership of these projects to our local partners

**Now think bigger! Identify your 12-month impact milestone**

Spread awareness of art therapy outside of Thailand to increase its impact

Identify three major tasks you will have to complete to reach your 12-month milestone

**Task 1**

Increase the number of partnerships beyond Chiang Mai and Thailand

**Task 2**

Work in cooperation with them to create new programs

**Task 3**

Transmission of ownership

Sustainability

**Tell us about your partnerships**

Currently, we partner with a variety of social and humanitarian organizations in Chiang Mai that specialize in a minority populations. They include the mentally and physically disabled, orphans, and single mothers with children. Our main partners include The Healing Family Foundation, Freedom House School, The Migrant Learning Center, Wildflower Home, Wat Pa Pao, Hope Home and Mitmuandek.

**Are you currently targeting other specific populations, locations, or markets for your innovation? If so, where and why?**

ARI works with various minority groups in Chiang Mai, including Burmese migrant workers/refugees, people living with HIV/AIDS, and single mothers. Again, we are looking to expand our reach with these groups as well as with homes and schools that coordinate activities for those with disabilities. We recently partnered with Sri Sangwan School, which provides education and boarding to children and youth with disabilities. We will provide the school with volunteer occupational/physical therapists, as well as art therapists, in order to achieve best results for the students studying there.

**What type of operating environment and internal organizational factors make your innovation successful?**

Our innovative approach to therapy has been successful thanks to open-minded partner organizations in Chiang Mai who have given us a chance to show them the significant impact art therapy can have on the people they assist. In general, the Chiang Mai community is very active in the arts, and it is this environment that has helped us succeed.

**Please elaborate on any needs or offers you have mentioned above and/or suggest categories of support that aren't specified within the list**

Source URL: <https://www.changemakers.com/innovations4health/entries/art-therapy-children-and-youth-mental-and-physical-disa-0#comment-0>