



Honorary Award from the Komol Keemthong Foundation

Thailand, 12 July 2004

By Albina du Boisrouvray, Founder and President

To receive this award from the Komol Keemthong Foundation here in Thailand as we celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud, FXB we call it, has deeper meaning and significance than you can imagine.

Your foundation was established in 1973 to promote selfless acts done for the good of society, and our Association was founded in 1989 to commemorate and continue the selfless acts of my son, Francois-Xavier a helicopter rescue pilot, who died in Mali, West Africa, in 1986. The dictionary defines rescue as 'to free from danger and evil' and it was in Thailand that that FXB carried out some of our first and most important acts of rescue.

Here in 1990, I opened shelters for young sex workers who had escaped from brothels, and later the next year, I worked with Dr. Saisuree Chutikul to free large numbers of sex workers from brothels and to lay the framework for Thai legislation to control these infamous practices. In Chiang Mai, we opened some of our first FXB Houses for youngsters suffering from HIV/AIDS when the only medication that we had was tender loving care. It was your present President, Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa, founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, who introduced FXB to the Lopuri Temple of Phra Alongkot. We worked with this dedicated and selfless monk to care for those suffering from AIDS until he secured the support he needed to continue his kind acts of rescue.

And so I come full circle returning to Bangkok to attend the 15th International AIDS Conference and to accept this honor, a special jewel in our 15th Anniversary crown. I thank you.

Let me leave you with a few thoughts about our past and future. After the death of my son as I contemplated my future and what I could do to make the selfless love of Francois-Xavier continue to have an effect for good in the world, I read many inspiring and alarming articles by the late Dr. Jonathan Mann who then was leading a pioneering AIDS program at WHO. What frightened me most was his prediction that AIDS would create cohorts of orphans by the year 2000 who would wander into danger and evil without the support of families or friends.

I asked Dr. Mann to work for FXB and he and his team produced the ground-breaking analyses, AIDS in the World I and II, which predicted the extend of the pandemic when governments and world leaders were in denial. Unfortunately, his predictions about the pandemic have come through. But even today, the world does not recognize the deadly potential of the pandemic in Russia, Eastern Europe, China and India.

While FXB has concentrated on developing different models for community and family care for AIDS orphans in distinct cultures, we have expanded our HIV/AIDS education, prevention and treatment efforts in all 35 states and Union Territories of India to prevent more orphans. FXB has also initiated a HIV/AIDS prevention program in Mongolia at the request of the Government.

But our central concern has always been the millions of AIDS orphans and all orphans and vulnerable children. Our first FXB Houses were in developed countries, for example, Washington, D.C. where there were not that many orphans. The Houses were seen as alternatives to orphanages where kids with HIV would be stigmatized and hospitals where they would be abandoned. We really were providing palliative care for these small sick children. Later, we expanded here. In Colombia, the FXB House evolved into a community center where people came for treatment and care of children, education, and other social benefits. A few orphans are housed there, but our programs have expanded from HIV-infected orphans to all orphans affected by AIDS.

In Uganda, where the extended families were strained beyond belief, with incomes of less than \$1 a day, we set up Income Generating Activities, IGAs, in-kind grants of about \$100, to help people start a vegetable garden; buy a cow to produce milk, raise bees, or start another small business to support their children and other orphans and to reach creditworthiness.

In Rwanda, after the genocide, we assisted victims of rape and other women infected with the virus to gain income in similar ways with IGAs and so live longer and be better able to care for their children and orphans whom they took in.

In all our 15 years, our goal was to care for AIDS orphans and all orphans and vulnerable children by creating models and modules directed by the people themselves that could be imitated and scaled up at minimal cost. In the next 15 years we will do the same. But as the pandemic spreads and global will and funding to stop it falters, we will increase our advocacy work for these children.

I ask you to join with me in this effort as we try to tell the world about the 100 million AIDS orphans by the end of this decade. These are the show case – the most poignant example – of the plight of the more than 100 million other orphans and vulnerable children. Will you join me in this effort?

I hope so. I thank you!