

# Bangkok + 66

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*Photographie prise par Adriana Youssef*

Un journal créé par des élèves, pour des élèves.  
S'informer avec Bangkok+66 : actualité, culture,  
politique et santé, la vie au Lycée.

Photographies prises par  
Adriana YOUSSEF



# The impact of covid 19 on Thailand's economy.

**What impact has covid 19 on the Thai economy?**

**How did the Thai government react to that crisis?**

Though Thailand's hospitals have not been overwhelmed by coronavirus patients, the country's tourism-dependent economy was heavily hit. In April, Thailand banned almost all incoming flights, amid the tightening lockdown. Holidaymakers stopped coming to Bangkok, that was once the world's most visited city.

While Thailand is among the countries least affected by the virus, from a health point of view, from an economic point of view it is a different matter.

Despite coups, floods and mass protests, visitors have flocked to Thailand in recent decades. Last year alone, almost 40 M tourists visited Thailand. But as the globe shut down due to the coronavirus pandemic, foreign holidaymakers were unlikely to be seen in Thailand this year. Travel and tourism were worth about 20% of the country's GDP.

Though Thailand's hospitals have not been overwhelmed by coronavirus patients, the country's tourism-dependent economy was heavily hit. In April, Thailand banned almost all incoming flights, amid the tightening lockdown. Holidaymakers stopped coming to Bangkok, that was once the world's most visited city. The Thai tourism and sports ministry estimates that 60 percent of hospitality businesses could close by the end of the year.

**However the Thai economy seemed sickly even before the new coronavirus emerged.**

Its growth rate grew by just 2.4% last year, the slowest pace since 2014. This year it seems sure to shrink. Growth has been disappointing for more than a decade. From 2009 to 2019, Thailand's growth rate (3.6% on average) lagged behind poorer neighbours like Vietnam (6.5%) and the Philippines (6.3%), and even richer ones such as Malaysia (5.3%). It's important to understand that an economy's growth rate is derived as the annual rate of change at which a country's GDP increases or decreases. Additionally a small number of huge firms, family-owned businesses and state-owned enterprises dominate the economy, they consequently face little pressure from competitors to innovate.

In addition to that about a tenth of the population lives on less than \$2.85 a day and about a third of the labour force still works in agriculture, a sector plagued by inefficiency. For instance this year Thailand's most severe drought in decades massively hindered the country's sugar, rice and rubber production.

On top of that over a quarter of Thai people will be older than 65 by the middle of the century. The UN estimates Thailand will see its population aged 65 or above to rise from 7% to 21 % in just 35 years. The elderly lack retirement saving, as suggested by national surveys. Indeed, eight in ten retirees rely on income from their children.

Then during years, Thailand's low labour costs once persuaded carmakers, steel producers and others that it was a good place to build factories. But competitiveness had been slipping. Against the dollar the Thai baht was one of the best-performing currencies in Asia last year. The coronavirus has reversed those gains, but Thai workers' wages still seem expensive when compared with those in places like Vietnam.

The country's large population of migrant workers, mainly from neighboring Myanmar and Cambodia, is also hurting. While some people managed to make it home before the borders closed, others are stuck in Thailand with no wages from their jobs as hotel cleaners, kitchen hands and food stall operators.

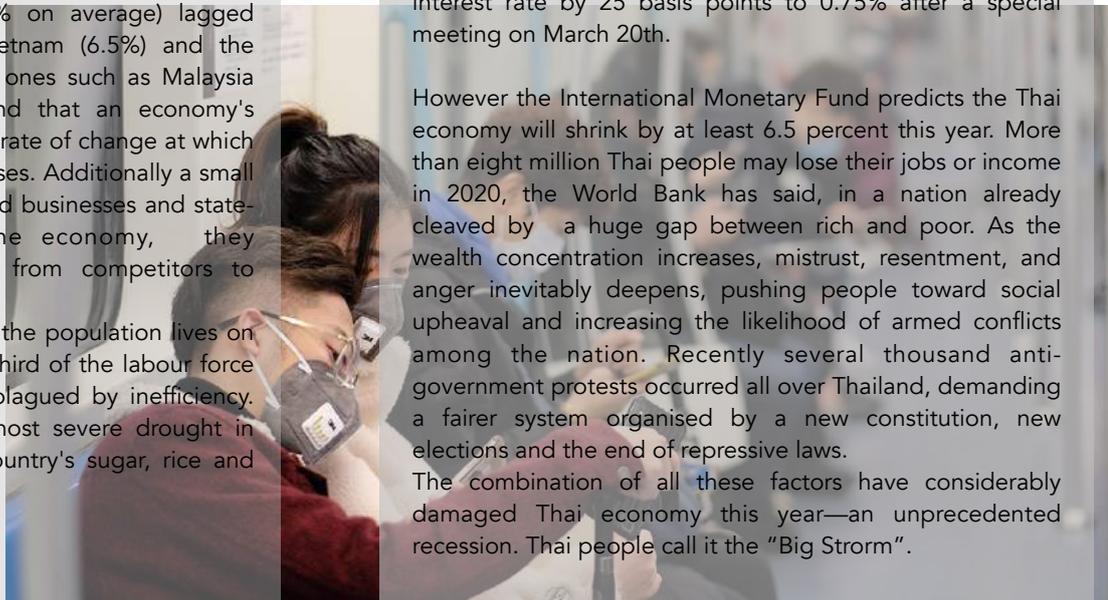
**The economic response to covid-19 has been more robust.**

On March 10th the government unveiled a stimulus package worth \$12.7bn, about 2.5% of gdp, which includes tax deductions for businesses and a 20bn baht fund for workers affected by the pandemic. On March 24th the government promised another 45bn baht in cash handouts. The Bank of Thailand, the country's central bank, cut its key interest rate by 25 basis points to 0.75% after a special meeting on March 20th.

However the International Monetary Fund predicts the Thai economy will shrink by at least 6.5 percent this year. More than eight million Thai people may lose their jobs or income in 2020, the World Bank has said, in a nation already cleaved by a huge gap between rich and poor. As the wealth concentration increases, mistrust, resentment, and anger inevitably deepens, pushing people toward social upheaval and increasing the likelihood of armed conflicts among the nation. Recently several thousand anti-government protests occurred all over Thailand, demanding a fairer system organised by a new constitution, new elections and the end of repressive laws.

The combination of all these factors have considerably damaged Thai economy this year—an unprecedented recession. Thai people call it the "Big Storm".

**Find out more interviews on Bangkok+66's  
instagram : @bangkok\_66**



# Thai Panacea, Sustainable Living in Thailand

*“Man is like a car running on the wrong fuel”*

## An introduction to San

To kick off this new year of writing, I had the pleasure of interviewing Suangsarn Chotithamaporn, or San, owner and founder of Thai Panacea. Her project is a small-scale, sustainable, organic farm with an ultimate goal of what she calls “Universal healing”, meaning healing not only of the physical body but the individual and their surroundings, the environment. More on that later, but first, a little backstory.

Once upon a time, San had a lucrative profession selling designer bags, clothes and accessories for the likes of Louis Vuitton here in Asia. Unfortunately, a health crisis some 12 years ago completely changed her outlook on life, and moved her to start anew. An awakening, she called it: “Life is not all about big success”, and that fateful day that she began her journey of health. After trying modern medicine and treatments, she found that they didn’t help her and she decided to find her own way, thus she underwent a six month detox and a diet change: going vegan, not only for health related reasons but to reduce animal cruelty and environmental degradation. To add to that, she enrolled in a permaculture course, permaculture being a set of design-based principles that aim to farm sustainably while utilizing natural interrelationships of ecosystems (such as parasitism, mutualism etc, that are a natural part of our ecosystems). An example of this can be found in her garden: corn is planted next to beans, so that the beans may grow along the corn stock, and pumpkins are planted at the feet of the corn to prevent any weeds from growing. Through her extensive studies she learned that our diet, environment and health are not separate entities, but much more linked than the majority of us tend to believe. Her project is today the budding fruit of her knowledge, labour and vision. Proud mother, vegan, activist and owner of such a project, today San hopes to spread her message about ecology and nutrition. With a deeper look into her project and ideals, we’ll be doing just that in the following paragraphs.



Suangsarn Chotithamaporn, owner and founder of Thai Panacea.

## The project

According to our interviewee, the reason behind the farm was that a small scale farm is a solution to global warming, as one is producing for themselves, recycling and living sustainably, thereby eliminating any potential middle man and reducing emissions. This has an added benefit of being conscious of what one eats, having grown it themselves without the help of insecticides, pesticides or other harmful chemicals.

In fact, because of man’s pursuit of perfection, food in our local grocery stores are all appealing to the eyes before hitting the shelves. Their shape, color and size must be ideal. Unfortunately, an estimated 20% of produce is thrown away because of such aesthetic reasons. According to San though, shape and appearance shouldn’t matter at all: it’s all about nutritional value. From that perspective, organic food is in fact more tasty and flavorful; it has a higher nutritional value. This comes from the lack of additives or chemicals, and the fact that organic food has no intention of being pretty. The complete opposite of its counterpart, mass produced food, where quantity is vastly more important than quality.



**O**n this topic, San directed my attention to the past. Our ancestors did not eat the same additives laden food that we do today, and did not have access to the variety that we do. However, many lived to see old age. Why is that? Well interestingly enough, San claims that our food today is completely different from a nutritional point of view. The absence of mass production meant higher quality, more nutritious food.

To compensate for the lack thereof, today we have a booming supplement industry supplying consumers with everything their diet isn't. This lack of nutrition also stems from mass production. As a result, we're lacking many minerals in our diet today, supplementing them instead with pills. For example, on a small scale farm like San's, a compost is made to recycle food scraps and turn it into natural fertilizer, adding nutrients to the ground. This is not the case for mass produced crops, as they are grown on the same soil, over and over, stripping it of all nutritional value that it may bring to the produce.

The farm itself is more than just a garden of course. San houses multiple animals, including 2 goats, a pig, 3 cats and 2 dogs. As previously mentioned, she went vegan partly to take a stand against animal cruelty, as they too, "have feelings and emotions", she stated. Therefore, all animals on her farm are sourced from breeders or slaughter houses. Thus her goats went from underfed to roaming freely on the grounds, and her cats and dogs, saved from the streets, are thriving today.



**H**owever, I believe the most heartwarming rescue story lies with the pig, believe it or not. While driving behind a truck of pigs destined to be slaughtered, San happened to see one fall, and stopped to pick him up. Having received no answer after calling out to the truck driver, she put him in her car and brought him to the grounds, where today, after a bit of nursing, he lives happily, friendly to the touch. We could go as far as to qualify San as a "Renaissance woman", or someone who is good at multiple things; as on top of managing this project, she is a mother of two young children currently enrolled in our beloved school. This means weekly trips to and from the farm, juggling passion, management and family with what I can only describe as a rock solid vision for her future.

And it doesn't stop there. No, the project is sustainable down to the very bricks it was built with. The house itself was built using mud bricks, eco-friendly although labour intensive. The bricks are shaped then dried and finally stacked to build the walls. San states that such a practice originates from the past, and that the constant use of concrete today is a large contributor to global warming. In fact, concrete has a high carbon footprint, as it is made from Cement, which is responsible for 8% of our CO2 emissions, according to Chatham House. Despite this, one cannot make a perfectly insulated house from just mud, so the use of concrete is used on the farm, but only when absolutely necessary, and when they know it will last a long time (the ceiling for example, is reinforced).

**Let's have a closer look at the permaculture principal shall we?** According to San, the principle follows nature's way of living, basing itself off of nature as a way of life (agriculture, housing...). People living by this principle typically live off grid, in similar housing. Thus, plastic and concrete is only used when it will last, and never as single use. In the garden, different plants thrive off of each other, and as San may tell you, many crops have a greater purpose than consumption. This is a clear reproduction of nature's way: in a square meter of soil, multiple species live in harmony, benefiting off of each other in any given situation. Plants, insects and organisms all aid in the maintenance of even the smallest ecosystem. This is explicitly reflected in the way of life found at the farm, as nothing is consistent in nature, just like at Thai Panacea.



## Future plans and goals

San mentioned that she had always wanted a house, and that when the perfect plot of land next to a river came along, it was a no-brainer. It was even larger than she felt necessary, but after a loan and some negotiating, she found her happy place. Her original plan was simply to build a house, to have an escape from the city. Building on that idea, she decided that she'd build a learning centre. Thus, today half of the land is dedicated to commercial purposes such as teaching or agriculture, while the other half is residential. Along with her house, she plans to add a couple others so that like-minded people can live together with her in the future. That idea basically embodies her retirement plan, as she wants to continue working, but doing something she loves, surrounded by like-minded people.

As for her goals, San needs to spread her message about nutrition, about ecology. She believes many people think that they don't have a choice about nutrition, but she aims to change that. She wants to educate people, so that they may better themselves and their environment. Furthermore, through the organic farm she wants to eliminate middle men and have produce go from farm to consumer directly, lowering cost and reducing our carbon footprint. This process will be accompanied by a message: "eating local is the best way". Any non seasonal produce is stuffed with hormones to make it grow and be available year round, so San is a true advocate for consuming seasonally, and locally.

Finally, she wishes to debunk certain myths about veganism. As a proud vegan, she says the two most common questions are "Where do you get your protein and your calcium from?". In fact, milk, believed by many to be a good source of calcium, actually makes your body more acidic as man isn't built to digest it. Therefore, calcium is taken from your bones to compensate: this means that drinking milk actually weakens your bones.



# Guerre de 2020 au Haut-Karabakh

## Chronologie des événements clés (1805-2004):

- 1805** ♦ Le khanat du Karabakh est intégré à l'Empire russe.
- 1905** ♦ Combats entre Azéris et Arméniens dans plusieurs villes (dont Bakou et Choucha). Ils font plusieurs milliers de morts.
- 1915** ♦ Début du génocide des Arméniens dans l'Empire Ottoman (1,2 - 1,5 million de morts).
- 1918** ♦ Azerbaïdjan et Arménie proclament leur indépendance.
- 1920** ♦ Soviétisation de l'Azerbaïdjan, de l'Arménie (et du Karabakh).
- 1921** ♦ Rattachement du Karabakh à l'Azerbaïdjan décidé par le parti bolchévique.
- 1923** ♦ Création de la région autonome du Haut-Karabakh.
- 1988** ♦ Les soviétiques rejettent la demande des Arméniens de rattacher Artsakh à l'Arménie. Cela mène à des manifestations à Erevan.
- 1991** ♦ Indépendances de l'Azerbaïdjan et de l'Arménie.  
10 décembre: 82 % des inscrits votent pour l'indépendance du Haut-Karabakh.
- 1993** ♦ L'ONU demande le retrait des forces arméniennes des territoires azerbaïdjanais occupés.
- 1994** ♦ Signature d'un cessez-le-feu à Moscou
- 2010** ♦ Echec de l'accord de paix  
Les présidents Arméniens (Robert Kocharyan) et Azeri (Heydar Aliyev) parviennent à une ébauche d'accord en Floride. Mais leurs peuples ne sont pas convaincus.
- 2004** ♦ L'affaire Safarov: Un officier Azéri, Ramil Safarov, décapite un militaire arménien à coups de hache. Il est considéré comme un héros dans son pays.  
Les tensions augmentent entre Bakou et Erevan.



**Le 27 septembre 2020,** après plusieurs mois de tensions, des combats éclatent dans le Haut-Karabakh (ou Artsakh) opposant l'Arménie et l'Azerbaïdjan. Stepanakert, capitale de Artsakh, est bombardée par l'armée azérie. Les deux États entrés en guerre pour le Haut-Karabakh en 1988-94, déclarent finalement un cessez-le-feu. Cependant, ils ne sont jamais parvenus à un règlement sur le conflit.

Le Haut-Karabakh est géré par des Arméniens, alors qu'il est reconnu internationalement comme un territoire de l'Azerbaïdjan.

Les combats actuels sont les pires depuis le cessez-le-feu et les deux anciennes républiques soviétiques s'accusent mutuellement. Depuis que les affrontements ont commencé, la moitié de la population du Haut-Karabakh a été déplacée (soit 75 000 personnes), d'après le médiateur pour les droits du Karabakh, Artak Beglaryan, à l'agence de presse AFP. À la date du 11 octobre, il y a eu au moins 400 morts.

## La nouvelle guerre d'Erdogan? "Deux États, une nation"

La Turquie, alliée de l'Azerbaïdjan, condamne "l'attaque arménienne" et envoie des mercenaires de l'Armée Nationale Syrienne, déploiement démenti par ces deux pays. Plus tard, leur présence est attestée par les annonces de décès sur les journaux dont Le Monde, et sur les réseaux sociaux.

Le président turque Recep Tayyip Erdoğan profite de la guerre entre l'Azerbaïdjan et l'Arménie pour assurer son pouvoir, signe de nationalisme et d'expansionnisme. À Ankara, les tours jumelles de l'Union des chambres et des Bourses de commerce se sont illuminées de couleurs turques et azerbaïdjanaises, en signe de solidarité.

## Autres puissances étrangères :

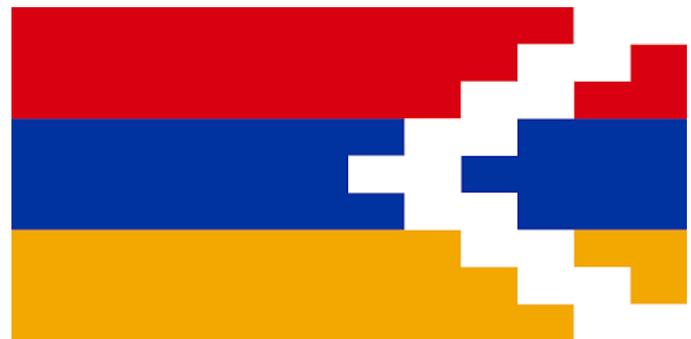
**LA RUSSIE**, alliée de l'Arménie, vend également des armes à l'Azerbaïdjan, ce qui lui permet de se positionner en tant qu'arbitre régionale.

Le vendredi 9 octobre après-midi, le ministre russe des affaires étrangères, Sergei Lavrov, a reçu les chefs des diplomaties arménienne et azerbaïdjanaise à Moscou: Après 10 heures de négociation, ils ont convenu d'un cessez-le-feu à partir du 10 octobre. Cette proposition faite par Poutine vise à échanger les prisonniers et récupérer les corps des soldats morts.

**LA FRANCE** a accusé la Turquie d'implication militaire (d'envoyer des "djihadistes") en faveur de l'Azerbaïdjan dans son conflit avec l'Arménie. Le président Emmanuel Macron demande des explications immédiates à la Turquie.

**ISRAËL** : Selon l'Institut international de recherche sur la paix de Stockholm, entre 2006 et 2019, Israël a fourni à Bakou environ **825 millions de dollars en armes** (des drones, des munitions flottantes, des missiles antichars et un système de missiles sol-air). La porte-parole du ministère arménien des affaires étrangères, Anna Naghdalyan, a déclaré que "le style de travail d'Israël est inacceptable". Le 1er octobre, l'Arménie rappelle son ambassadeur en Israël.

**IRAN** : "Nous devons être attentifs à ce que la guerre entre l'Arménie et l'Azerbaïdjan ne devienne pas une guerre régionale. La paix est la base de notre travail et nous espérons rétablir la stabilité dans la région de manière pacifique," dit le Président Hassan Rouhani.



Drapeau de la République d'Artsakh (ou République du Haut-Karabakh)

## Comment le cessez-le-feu est-il intervenu ?

Le ministre russe des affaires étrangères, Sergueï Lavrov, a déclaré que les deux pays allaient maintenant entamer des discussions substantielles, et décider des termes exacts du cessez-le-feu.

Dans un discours au parlement turc, le président Tayyip Erdogan a annoncé qu'il s'opposait à l'implication des coprésidents du groupe de Minsk (Etats-Unis, France et Russie).

Il a expliqué qu'un cessez-le-feu durable ne pouvait être obtenu que s'il répondait aux demandes légitimes de l'Azerbaïdjan, et si "les occupants arméniens" se retiraient du Haut-Karabakh.

L'Azerbaïdjan accuse les efforts internationaux de ne pas avoir abouti à un règlement sur le conflit. Ainsi, selon le président azerbaïdjanais, la seule manière de mettre fin à la guerre, serait qu'il puisse récupérer ses terres "perdus" (ce qu'ils ont essayé de faire par la force ces dernières semaines).

Cependant, le ministre arménien des affaires étrangères, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan a déclaré que l'Arménie voulait que le Haut-Karabakh soit reconnu internationalement comme un État indépendant.



Le ministre russe des affaires étrangères Sergei Lavrov accueille ses homologues azerbaïdjanaïses et arméniennes à Moscou

# THE KAREN ETHNICITY IN THAILAND



## THE HISTORY

The Karen are an ethnic group from Myanmar, many of whom fled Myanmar due to religious and ethnic persecution by the government. Today almost 130,000 Karen are living in refugee camps in Thailand, some for as many as 20 years. But why are they forced to flee their country of origin? Who are they? In which conditions do they live today? What type of atrocities are we spectators of?

As in many actual conflicts all date back to the time of the colonial empires. Myanmar was colonized by the British from 1824 to 1948. With the arrival of the British colonists to Burma, the Karen people hoped to escape oppressive rule under the Burmese. Tensions between the two groups reached a high point during World War II when the Karen sided with the British allies and the Burmese fought with the Japanese.

Myanmar achieved independence from the British in 1948. Right after a conflict, largely ethnic-based, broke out, and in 1962 military rule began, with constant fighting between the military government and various factions. This conflict is also the world's longest ongoing civil war, having spanned more than seven decades. Thus, the Karen people were not granted rights to their own land, and the Burmese once again became the dominant ethnic group. During the 1960s, the Burmese army began a campaign against the Karen called "Four Cuts." Entire Karen communities were forced to relocate and cut off from all resources; the Karen guerrilla movement was destroyed.

The military regime established in 1962 continues to oppress the Karen and other ethnic groups in Myanmar today. Burmese soldiers terrorize Karen villages every dry season by burning their villages, killing or torturing civilians, and raping women and girls.



## Cultural Facts

**G**eographically and linguistically Karen can be divided into three broad groups: Southern, Central, and Northern. These groups can be further divided into many sub-groups. Although these groups share many cultural traits and traditions, their languages are for the most part mutually unintelligible. In fact, Karen speaks several different dialects of Karen.

**70%** of Karen are Buddhist, Buddhist-animist, or animist. About 20% to 30% are Christian. Moreover the Karen tribe was the first to convert to Christianity. Its people are often sent to other tribes as Christian missionaries.

The nuclear family is the central family unit of the Karen. Men and women are generally free to choose their own marriage partners; after marriage strict monogamy is expected. Men assist with the raising of children.

**I**mportant values include respect for elders, duty to parents, modesty and humility. Often when answering a question that demands an affirmative answer, Karen will say "no" instead of "yes." This is a sign of modesty and politeness. Often the Karen are polite to a fault, and it can be hard to assess their needs.

**I**ndirect eye contact is considered polite when conversing with someone, and it will take some time for Karen to adjust to the American style of looking someone in the eye while speaking.

# Life in Refugee Camps

Source : Bangkok Post



**D**ue to the annual threats to their lives and villages, not all of Karen people but many must flee across the border to refugee camps in neighboring Thailand. Life in the refugee camps is difficult and uncertain. The Thai government can reduce funding for or simply shut down refugee camps at its will, leaving the refugees with very few options.

Despite decades of experience with hosting millions of refugees, Thailand's refugee policies remain fragmented, unpredictable, inadequate and ad hoc, leaving refugees unnecessarily vulnerable to arbitrary and abusive treatment. Thailand is not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Refugee Convention) or its 1967 Protocol. It has no refugee law or formalized asylum procedures. The lack of a legal framework leaves refugees and asylum seekers in a precarious state, making their stay in Thailand uncertain and their status unclear.

While these camps offer their residents relatively more protection than for Burmese living outside the camps, the Thai government imposes harsh restrictions on refugees' freedom of movement, prohibiting residents from leaving the camps, earning income, or their children from obtaining a good quality education. With few sources of income, refugees become dependent on aid agencies, subject over the past several years to the increasingly acute fatigue of the international donors who have been supporting Burmese refugees since the mid-1980s.

Regardless of nationality and whether or not UNHCR accords them refugee status, refugees are not allowed to work in Thailand. They can only work if they do not present themselves as refugees to the authorities, but rather as migrant workers. And whether migrant workers in Thailand have work permits seems to depend almost entirely on their ability and willingness to pay bribes for the opportunity. A 28-year-old Burmese woman in Mae Sot said simply, "I'd like to get legal status here, but I could not spend the money for that. So I have to play hide and seek with the police".

Most of the camps are in remote mountain locations, often distant from hospitals and towns, accessible only by dirt roads, and some are beyond reach of mobile phone network reception. Several of the camps are very overcrowded, and refugees in all of the camps have been enduring cuts in basic assistance, such as food and shelter.

**T**he signing of preliminary ceasefire agreements has caused some key donors to shift aid away from humanitarian assistance for camp refugees toward promoting development of livelihoods. While such a shift would make sense both to prepare refugees for eventual repatriation and reintegration in Myanmar and to promote their greater self-sufficiency in Thailand, conditions in Myanmar are clearly not yet ready for a safe return and the Thai policy of closed encampment means that donors' efforts to promote livelihoods are ineffective and do not benefit most refugees.

Fear, uncertainty, and a feeling of powerlessness contribute to a fatalistic attitude among camp refugees about whether justice is available to them. "We are on Thai land so we have to be submissive," said one. "We cannot speak out and we have to be patient and passive. If we speak out too much, the chains around us will be tightened."

# L'EQUIPE

## EMILE WATANABE (TERM B)

L'année dernière, ma professeur d'anglais m'avait dit qu'elle me voyait devenir écrivain, et donc me voici. Classe de Terminale, Canadien, passionné par la faune, la flore, la musique, le sport et bien sûr, l'écriture.



## MICOL GALANTE (TERM B)



Italienne, française d'adoption. Attirée par les problématiques sociales et politiques, j'aime diffuser des cas concrets pour sensibiliser la conscience de chacun.

## MORGANE INTHAVONG (TERM C)



Passionnée par l'art et le dessin. Photographe amateur. J'aime m'exprimer à travers mes créations.

## ADRIANA YOUSSEF (TERM B)



En tant que Libanaise à l'autre bout du monde, je me sens en charge de partager l'histoire de mon pays et du Moyen-Orient. A travers mes photographies, j'éprouve aussi mon amour pour les cultures asiatiques.

## LES FONDATEURS

**B**angkok +66, fondé par Leonid Plantaz, Salomé Lambert, Morgane Inthavong, Micol Galante, Jade Fromento et Emile Watanabe en octobre 2018, dans un but ambitieux: créer un journal mensuel propre au LFIB, regroupant plusieurs thèmes qu'ils tenaient à cœur. Depuis, Bangkok +66 a sans doute évolué pour le mieux, poussé par une équipe assidue et impliquée — mais l'idée reste la même : tenir un journal créé par les élèves et pour les élèves.



Photographies prises par Adriana YOUSSEF et Kael NICOU

# Journal du Lycée Français International de Bangkok

