

Bill Gates and Warren Buffett Hear About a New BIRD

During its annual conference in Seattle on June 7th, almost 1,000 staff of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, together with Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett, Bill Gates Sr, and Jeff Raikes (former President of Microsoft), were introduced to the new idea of School-Based Integrated Rural Development (School-BIRD) by Mechai Viravaidya from Thailand. This model endeavors to turn schools from merely being an institution for students into a lifelong learning center for everyone in the community as well as a hub for economic and social advancement including a micro-credit fund.



Right-Left (Bill Gates, Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett, Mechai Viravaidya)



Bill Gates Sr. Standing Barefoot and Wearing Thai Condom Cap

Bill Gates Sr., who visited Thailand last November, introduced Mechai Viravaidya as a friend and stood barefoot, explaining that he was doing this to promote the Barefoot MBA and Philanthropy Academy named after him in Thailand's northeastern province of Buriram at the Mechai Bamboo School.

Mechai Viravaidya proposed to the Gates Foundation that out of the hundreds of thousands of schools in the world, many can incorporate measures to raise the quality of life such as income generation, gender equality, environmental awareness, preventive healthcare for the youth and elderly, and democracy promotion. This out-of-the-box concept could be supported by many governments and donor organizations throughout the world. This new model of education is already being carried out in Thailand at the Mechai Bamboo School. It is now being piloted at nearby rural government schools. This model moves away from the traditional, single-purpose school, like Starbucks, to a multi-purpose entity, like 7-11, where the community is served in more ways than one.