



our vision

FOR THE

Future

SEPTEMBER ISSUE 2014

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FIRST WORD

WE HAVE A VISION FOR THE FUTURE THAT ENABLES THE CHILDREN CAUGHT IN CONFLICT TO REALIZE FREEDOM AND FULLNESS. We don't think it's right that children are: marginalized, impoverished, trafficked into slavery or the sex industry, tortured and deliberately killed just because they were born in Rangoon instead of California. We think all of the children of the world deserve to be treated with as much love and support as ours are. The place a child is born should not determine whether or not they have access to food, education, or security. In the words of Bono: "Where you are born should not determine whether you live or die."

As you know, the Partners vision has been: "Free, full lives for the children of Burma." This year we included our staff, board members, and leaders in a participatory process to prayerfully ask the question: is now the time to adjust our vision to include countries other than Burma in our outreach and focus?

Our team's response was overwhelmingly in favor of taking Burma out of our vision statement, yet keeping a clear focus on children in conflict. Even our staff members from Burma were supportive of this.

Making this change in our vision does of course NOT mean that we will do any LESS than we are currently doing in Burma. No, it is quite the opposite. We have big dreams for Burma. Our intention is to keep doing what we are doing and much more in the years to come.

But we don't want to be limited to one country only. If you look on a map of the world with glasses that focus on poverty, injustice, and oppression, then you will find many places which are in dire need. Partners want to look for ways to get involved in some of these countries. We hope you will stand with us as we pursue this.

During the twenty years we have been working in the conflict zones of Burma we have learned this: a child thrives when their communities and families are intact, when they and their families have access to health care and education, when there are churches and civic institutions to attend, and when they can live in the absence of fear.

We want to use this knowledge to bring fullness and freedom to the children in other countries in the world. Do you?

Your friends,

STEVE & ODDNY GUMAER
Founders, Partners Relief & Development

OUR VISION

FREE, FULL LIVES

× × FOR × ×

CHILDREN

AFFECTED BY CONFLICT +

OPPRESSION

OUR MISSION

**THROUGH HOLISTIC ACTION,
WE DEMONSTRATE GOD'S LOVE TO CHILDREN
AND COMMUNITIES MADE VULNERABLE
BY CONFLICT AND OPPRESSION.**

OUR METHODS



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**



**STRENGTHENING
FAMILIES**



**EMERGENCY
RELIEF**



“THE BURMA ARMY WAS ATTACKING OUR VILLAGE, SO MY PARENTS AND THE OTHER VILLAGERS HAD TO RUN AWAY. I was born in the jungle during their escape. One week later, my mother passed away. So my father took my grandmother, my older sister, and me to Sala refugee camp. We stayed at Sala camp for seven years. My grandmother took care of my sister and me. When Sala camp closed, some people moved to other camps, but my family chose to come back to Karen State.” – Saw Tha Doh Wah, 16-year-old grade nine boy living at Jungle Home in Karen State, Burma.

Jungle Home is our most remote of the 16 community-based children’s homes that Partners support. It takes five days of trekking through the jungle to get there, but it’s worth it. In April, three of our team went on this long trek to visit the 30 teenagers and their caregivers who live at Jungle Home as well as run medical training in the surrounding area. We saw the school where the children attend, encouraged the teachers, and listened to some of the students’ stories.

Like many of the children at Jungle Home, Saw Tha Doh Wah has experienced loss and displacement as a result of the longstanding conflict in Burma. Since then he has had to move two more times for the sake of his schooling. Often villages either don’t have a school or have a school that only goes up to grade four, while other villages have schools which require fees that families cannot afford.

Saw Tha Doh Wah’s grandmother sent him to live at Jungle Home to finish high school. This was his opportunity to continue an education where otherwise it would be impossible.

The home is made up of a cluster of buildings set against a backdrop of beautiful mountains, trees, and jungle. Surrounding the dormitories are fruit trees, vegetable



Jungle HOME

by Kerrine Olson & Gay Pho Yim



STRENGTHENING
FAMILIES and
restoring communities
to stop the trafficking,
oppression, and
exploitation of children.

gardens, and flowers that the children and caregivers have planted. Everything is clean, organized, and well put together.

We spent a wonderful time with the children and one of the caregivers. The children all sang a song about how God is always with us and how He is our strength in everything. They sing this song every morning to remind themselves of God's love. These children have suffered so much, yet they were clearly experiencing the truth of the words in their song. Jungle Home is for them a place of healing where they are being equipped to live healthy, God-glorifying lives. Saw Tha Doh Wah also shared with us his dream for the future:

"When I finish high school I will try to find a way to attend Bible School because I want to be a pastor and help my Karen people to rebuild our community. I want to encourage the other younger sisters and brothers in Jungle Home to try hard and study well so we can do more for our people."

That evening, we met with everyone once more. We sang and prayed and shared these words from Psalm 139:5 [NIV]: "You hem me in – behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me." We reminded them that God knows all that has happened before and all that will happen in the future. And He truly is with them in everything.

The teenagers at Jungle Home are just some of the more than 900 children that live in community-based homes supported by Partners. Most are 'education refugees' separated from their families in order to go to school so they can have a better future for themselves and their families. By providing a safe and nurturing environment for these children to learn, Partners hope is that these children will be protected from traffickers, educated to make wise decisions for their future and have free, full lives.



STEPPING
Forward

by Claire Russell & Doug Gibbons

GUI PONG, AN 18-YEAR-OLD GIRL WITH CEREBRAL PALSY, WAS LIVING IN A TIN SHACK IN A SHAN MIGRANT COMMUNITY NEAR THE PARTNERS CHIANG MAI OFFICE IN 2012. In these communities transient migrants from Burma live in rudimentary tin shacks alongside the fancy apartments and extravagant homes that they are hired to build. Most are paid less than half the minimum wage as they have limited or no identity papers. Cheap labor, cheap lives.

Gui Pong's aging mother cared for her every day as Gui Pong would lie on the floor, able to sit only for short periods of time. Independent movement beyond that small room was impossible because of her contracted legs. Frustratingly, she was aware of conversations around her but unable to express herself.

Her mother was worried that she wouldn't be able to care for Gui Pong forever and asked Partners for help. We weren't sure of what help we could access as Gui Pong is one of the many Shan migrants without identity papers but decided that we must try.

Little-by-little, step-by-step, our team learned of resources and services in the community that we could try to access. We were put in contact with another non-profit who gave her a wheelchair – free of charge! It was awesome to see her be able to get outside. Her nephew would wheel her around each day – the first step on her journey to a fuller life.

Later we organized a visiting doctor to examine Gui Pong as we felt she was very pale and possibly anemic. After a few weeks of multi-vitamins and iron her mother told us she was eating more and wasn't sleeping so much, the color of her skin improved, and she gained much-needed weight. Her mother joked with us that if she continued to eat that way, she wouldn't be able to lift her!

From there we connected Gui Pong with the regional special education center. Gui Pong loved it and started attending the live-in facility with her mother on weekdays.

When our team went to visit her at the center, they were curious to see what progress she was making as they had heard that she had started smiling. Nothing prepared them for how happy she looked. A permanent smile was on her mother's face, too, as the burden of Gui Pong's full-time care had been lifted and shared.

On another visit we walked into the room and there were four people standing around the door to Gui Pong's room. They were unlocking the door and we thought Gui Pong must be in the room. Much to our surprise, one of the people outside was Gui Pong standing and walking using her wheelchair for support! We were speechless. We had not expected such progress in such a short time – just 6 months.

Gui Pong and her family are just a few of the more than three million migrant workers in Thailand, many undocumented and mostly from Burma. They have come to seek a better life and flee conflict and oppression in Burma. Migrant workers sew bras, peel shrimps, build apartment buildings, and haul fishing nets. In return, migrant workers in Thailand are paid poorly, if at all, and face exploitation and abuse at the hands of employers and the security forces. Through our Migrant Support Program in Mae Sot and Seed Migrant Center in Chiang Mai, we are able to identify and support many others in a similar situation to Gui Pong. We have trained community workers



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES and restoring communities to stop the trafficking, oppression, and exploitation of children.



working with children and families to make sure that people like Gui Pong don't fall between the cracks and are able to access the support that they need. Through this work we are "strengthening families and restoring communities to stop trafficking, oppression, and exploitation of children".

At Partners, part of our mission is: "Free, full lives for children affected by conflict and oppression", based on John 10:10 where Jesus says he came to bring life in all its fullness. We believe we have been part of this extraordinary bringing of fullness in the life of Gui Pong and her mother. This abundance is something we can bring about here and now as we live out the call of the gospel to love, to welcome each other, and to enter their worlds – just as Jesus "moved into our neighborhood" to show us God – a God who gets involved.



#RICE4LIFE

Rice for a family in times of crisis or conflict



#QUACKQUACK

Farming ducks for sustainable agriculture

#AGIFTOFLOVE



AS THE END OF THE YEAR APPROACHES, HELP US BRING SOME JOY TO CHILDREN IN BURMA.

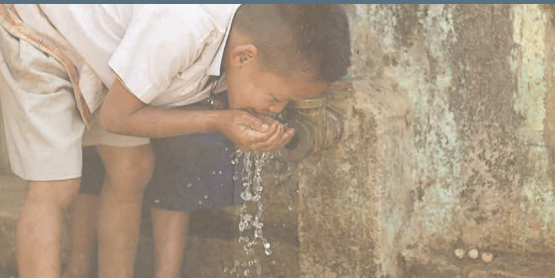
ONE

You want to make a difference and you've got family & friends who want to help too!

TWO

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#LOVEYOURNEIGHBOR

Community care for the most vulnerable



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★ ★ ★

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DUCK
FOR DINNER!
BUY ONE
FOR BURMA.



#QUACKQUACK



THE FENCE

AT THE TOP OF THE

trafficking

CLIFF



by Stuart Corlett

IN 2012 BRAD HAZLETT AND I SPENT MORE THAN A WEEK IN SHAN STATE VISITING SOME AREAS THAT ARE HARDLY EVER VISITED BY WESTERNERS. At the end of one day we visited Nam Wan's family. She is a beautiful 14-year-old girl. In a poor village, 10km from a major city, Nam Wan was dressed in a short black miniskirt and hot pink tights. At six pm, she was heading off to work. Her parents said that she was working in the rice fields. The reality was.... well, you can read between the lines.

This visit has to have been one of the most profoundly disturbing experiences of my life, and I know it was for Brad too. I watched the tears well up in his eyes as the realization of the truth hit us.

Due to ongoing conflict and oppression in Burma, Nam Wan is only one of thousands of children in similar situations in that area.

In 2010 Partners embarked on a journey to try to deal with this problem, right at its roots. The exploitation of the poor, and especially young women and girls, can be linked back to poverty and lack of education. In an informal survey of a troubled area in Shan State, local leaders reported to us that around 4% of children under 16 years of age were attending school. The rest were working in some capacity. Some were in the fields, some tending buffaloes; many were sent away to neighboring Thailand to "work".

On further investigation we found that the core issue was funding: "We have no money to pay for teachers, or build classrooms, or pay for equipment", communities repeatedly told us. As we surveyed further, we found that communities were more than willing to work to enable their kids to go to school, but usually there was no seed capital available. Working with various donors from UK, Canada, USA, NZ, Australia, and Norway, we raised "seed capital" for these communities. >> PAGE 12



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

for community wellbeing and a nurturing environment for children.

“THE GOVERNMENT STOLE OUR LAND,” I heard this more times than I can remember when I was in Shan state last April. “We used to be able to provide for ourselves, but without our land we can’t feed our family.” The result of the government’s land confiscation is devastating. Fathers have to go to Thailand for work and will be gone for months, if not years. Children get taken out of school to help work for food. Girls end up in prostitution, the easiest way to get cash fast. Boys end up as drug addicts. Lives are lost and the future bleak.

“How can we best help?” we asked, feeling overwhelmed with the magnitude of the problems. “Help us build schools and get teachers who speak our language,” was the answer every time we asked.

And this is exactly what we do in Shan state. We build schools. We help villages come up with ways to support their school so they can be sustainable. We train the teachers. We teach the parents the importance of education of their children. We see children gain confidence and joy as they diligently spell one Shan word after the other, or with deep concentration add up the numbers the teacher has written on the simple blackboard on the bamboo wall.

These are the things that make me understand again that Partners is in the right place, doing the right thing. And that what we do now will have a lasting impact on a whole generation, in a whole nation.

by Oddny Gumaer

We then talked with each of 16 communities and asked them what they thought were the best income generating projects for their group to run to support a school. Each chose differently according to their situation.

Pawmyar village was one of the places we started. Uncle Moong is one of the village leaders overseeing their income generation project. Using the seed money provided, the village implementation committee purchased five cows. The community was divided into five groups. Each group took responsibility for raising one cow. After the cattle are fully grown they will be sold for around 50% profit on investment. The money will be used to enable the more than 60 children in their village who are not attending school, to start to learn. The funds from this project will enable them to hire another teacher and to expand their ramshackle school building! Sometime during our visit, after they had purchased the cows, Uncle Moong stated, "Now I am over seventy years old. We have never had any development funds in this area." Another village leader said, "This is the first time I have ever seen anybody give to help us, usually people only come to our village to take from us!"

"THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE EVER SEEN ANYBODY
GIVE TO HELP US, USUALLY PEOPLE ONLY COME TO OUR
VILLAGE TO TAKE FROM US!"

The profits from these income generation projects are used several ways. Firstly, the capital is retained each year to run the project again. Some of the money is used for teacher salaries and school buildings. Some of the money is kept in a savings fund, and most communities plan on saving enough money to start a similar project in a neighboring community in a few years time.

For us here at Partners, this program brings exciting possibilities. Communities are empowered, and kids get to go to school. But perhaps the most exciting thing for me personally is the thought that this program will save a few Naw Wan's from the terror of being trafficked. At its core, this community-empowering program is part of the much bigger picture that stops kids being cast into the brutal whirlwind of the flesh trade. Education is the fence at the top of the trafficking cliff and a powerful tool for bringing free, full lives to children affected by conflict and oppression. ■





EMERGENCY RELIEF during times of acute crisis.



KACHIN STATE

120,000  DISPLACED OVER 3 YEARS

PROVIDED RICE, MEAT, + BASIC VEGETABLES TO 8,000 PEOPLE



TRAINED >150 COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS IN 4 CAMPS TO PROVIDE CARE + COUNSELLING FOR >8,500 PEOPLE

'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ~MARK 12:31 [NIV]

.....



RAKHINE STATE

>150,000  DISPLACED OVER 2 YEARS

FUNDED TEACHERS FOR 12 MONTHS TO EDUCATE 400 CHILDREN



PROVIDED 40,000KGS OF RICE TO FEED 8,000 PEOPLE + SEEDS & FERTILIZER TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY FOR >10,000 PEOPLE

"We are living in jail, our sons and daughters are living like animals"

.....

Bon Voyage

GOODBYE



KELLI & STEPHEN SPURLOCK

Kelli & Stephen have been a part of the team for three and a half years. Firstly as the teams and volunteer coordinators, then moved into roles with photography/video and social & economic development. Everything they touched was infused with excellence and a love for God and the people of Burma. We will miss their joyful personalities, but we are excited for the plans God has ahead for them. We are thrilled that their work with migrants will keep them close as they are staying in Mae Sot to work with the migrants in their neighborhood.



HEIDI FRIESEN

Heidi Friesen joined Partners staff in 2012 and is a huge asset and dearly loved member of our team. She worked with the Karen in Burma, migrant populations in Thailand, and provided emergency healthcare to the Rohingya. She also led creative training projects on peace and reconciliation, among other subjects. On a trip to Lay Tong Ku Clinic, she worked with and fell in love with CJ Watterson, a Partners short-term staff member from NZ. They will marry this October and relocate while CJ studies medicine. We wish them all the best.

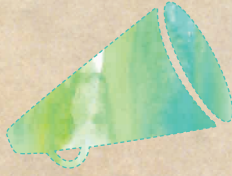


Transformation happens when people
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money and freedom to be a part
of freeing those who are oppressed
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Partners Relief & Development
PO Box 912418
Denver, Colorado 80291-2418

info@partnersworld.org
www.partnersworld.org



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**FREE, FULL LIVES FOR
CHILDREN AFFECTED BY
CONFLICT & OPPRESSION**

CONTRIBUTORS Kerrine Olson, Gay Poh Yim, Stuart Corlett, Claire Russell, Marci Haigh, Doug Gibbons and Oddny & Steve Gumaer.

PHOTOGRAPHY Brad Hazlett, Ryan Roco, Stephen Spurlock, Steve Gumaer, Sacha Olson and Stuart Corlett.

DESIGN Sacha Olson **EDITOR** Claire Gibbons

Partners Relief & Development is a registered charity in the USA, Canada, UK, Australia, Norway, New Zealand and Thailand

NORWAY

Partners Norway
Staffeldtsgate 4
0166 Oslo
Norway
Telephone +4799 301 919
info@partnersnorge.no
www.partnersnorge.no

CANADA

Partners Relief & Development
33130 Springbank Road
Calgary, Alberta T3Z 2L9
Canada
Telephone 403 538 2870
info@partnersworld.ca
www.partnersworld.ca

NEW ZEALAND

Partners Relief & Development NZ
PO Box 40284
Upper Hutt 5140
New Zealand
Telephone 027 587 2865
info@partnersworld.org.nz
www.partnersworld.org.nz

USA

Partners Relief & Development
PO Box 912418
Denver, Colorado 80291-2418
USA
Telephone 909 748 5810
info@partnersworld.org
www.partnersworld.org

AUSTRALIA

Partners Relief & Development
PO Box 4117
Narre Warren Sth VIC 3805
Australia
Telephone +61 3 9013 7676
info@partnersworld.org.au
www.partnersworld.org.au

UK

Partners Relief & Development UK
PO Box 557
Mexborough
S63 3EN
Telephone +44 (0) 1709 578904
info@partnersworld.org.uk
www.partnersworld.org.uk

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