



TOGETHER  
PARTNERSHIP  
COLLECTION  
RELATIONSHIP

MARCH ISSUE 2014



## FIRST WORD

Have you ever wondered what our logo symbolizes? A friend of mine thought it was two forks dueling. Another said it reminded him of a cow's udders. While yet another person mused "What's the E about, Steve?" I assure you, we didn't have udders or forks in mind when we designed the logo.

In the logo you see two hands embraced in a circle; representing our partnership with the poor, the marginalized and the displaced who continue to live in conflict and oppression. The clasping hands symbolize a vision of participatory and reciprocal relationship. A relationship where we are bound together as one body (1Cor 12:12-31) striving together for the sake of the gospel (Phil 1:27).

The poor are not less talented, intelligent, or capable, but often due to systemic and violent oppression they are beaten down so low they find it very hard to stand back up alone. We are here to do more than give a hand up, or even a hand out; we are here as their friends – their Partners. The people we work with are as quick to learn new methods of rice farming (see page 10) as they are to teach us creative ways to deal with environmental challenges. In Shan State they teach us to survive on food from the jungle, while we equip them with essential medical training (check out pages 5-6).

You who support and pray, the volunteers and service providers who give, all our board members and every person inspired to work towards fulfilling the vision of freedom and fullness for children of war: You are Partners. Together, we are Partners. In this magazine we are sending you a brief report on some of our partnerships and the fruit borne from them. We do this because your place on our team is as crucial to our outreach as any staff member, strategic alliance or project leader. Thank you for being Partners.

*But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. (1Cor 12:18-20)*

If you want to know why our logo is crooked (on purpose) and what the corner brackets are about, drop me a line at [steve@partnersworld.org](mailto:steve@partnersworld.org).

In partnership with you,

*Steve Gumaer*

STEVE GUMAER  
CEO, Partners Relief & Development



Karen State  
Health & Welfare



Karen State  
Education Assistance

You



Shan Youth  
Power



Many more  
organizations that  
can't be named



WPN

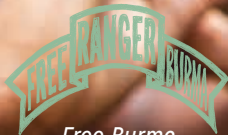
Bridge



just some  
of our many  
partners

& LET US  
CONSIDER HOW  
TO STIR UP ONE  
ANOTHER TO  
LOVE +  
GOOD WORKS  
...ENCOURAGING  
ONE ANOTHER...

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)



Free Burma  
Rangers



Earth Mission

a long  
term view

# HOW WE CAMP

BY CLAIRE RUSSELL

NOVEMBER 16, 2013 IS A DAY CLEARLY ETCHED IN MY MIND.

The partnership began with a simple question we asked of the clinic director at a large displaced persons camp along the border: "How can we help you?" It is the tone of this question which has shaped the partnership since that day. It was a question of open participation, asking the Shan what they needed instead of coming with our own agenda. And it was this stance – of seeking to empower and walk alongside – that we all bore witness to on that day in November last year.

We sat on a clear blue sky day in the raw beauty of the hills of Shan State, Burma and watched seventy students dressed in their finest traditional costumes proceed past us to receive their certificates. The venue was a border camp where leaders from Shan State work to establish sustainable solutions for the functioning of civil life, following nearly 50 years of oppression under Burma's military regime.

Since 2008, Partners has joined with the Shan in the area of health to help them achieve a self-sustaining health system by training community health workers, medics and advanced medics. Our impetus for this partnership was the way Jesus engaged with those who were considered 'the other' - not 'one of them'. Jesus said as we care for the poor by feeding them or tending the sick we do so to Him. That's a huge imperative!

The graduates of 2013 represent just 24% of the total graduates Partners has helped train as part of this program – a total of 295 health workers where previously none existed. Many of these have also gone on to train others. You see, November 16 wasn't just about the year-end celebrations but also about the celebration of a five-year partnership with the Shan people.

## HOPE FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR THEIR CHILDREN

The tone of that initial question and the consequent answer set in motion a training program that now has people from all over Shan State lining up to participate. In many ways the answer to that question was as significant as the question. The clinic director was able to clearly see what it was their people needed and was ready to welcome outside input: "We need to train Community Health Workers," was her simple reply.

Since that day, high up on the ridges straddling Thailand and Burma, there have been ups and downs in the partnership. The intent has remained: to come alongside the Shan as they work through what they need in terms of building capacity for a fledgling health care system. Sometimes this has meant continuing on when we did not see eye to eye about next steps, but we stayed true to our commitment of participation and worked through any differences.

All of our teachers are self-funded and give of their time because they have caught the vision of partnering with the Shan, instead of 'doing for' them. They participate in our commitment to walk alongside a people to empower their vision: *Training health workers to go back into impoverished areas of rural Shan State to bring hope. Hope for a healthier future for their children. >>>*

# BURMA: WORLD'S 2<sup>ND</sup> WORST HEALTH SYSTEM BUT... A 5<sup>YEAR</sup> PARTNERSHIP 1000+ HOURS OF TRAINING 295 GRADUATED HEALTH WORKERS = A HEALTHCARE REVOLUTION IN SHAN STATE



The first year saw 62 young people turn up with varying levels of literacy but so keen to learn. There were no written materials to give them. There were nights when the teachers were designing a lesson plan the night before they had to teach it, which Shaune Vincent (former Partners staff member) recalls, "caused a little bit of stress." Then we found a manual written in Burmese and had it translated into Shan. Then the challenge came in trying to teach without an English translation! We worked from translated chapter headings and supported our Shan co-trainers instead of teaching by ourselves.

As the program developed from that grass roots stage, other volunteers have joined the partnership. Their expertise has meant we now have the Shan taking charge of their own Community Health Worker training. We have a robust curriculum for Basic Medic level complete with competency requirements; and over the last two years have developed an Advanced Medic level. From nothing to three levels of training in five short years. The Shan have also developed an audit system for their clinics so we can identify weaknesses and strengths together.

Upon reflection, I see that this partnership has also been about being open to learn. We've learned that a lot can be achieved when you ask questions with a real intent to listen to the answer. This means laying aside our own expectations, to be ready to participate with people and to assist them to arrive at their own answers. Building relationships of trust and respect have undergirded all the achievements of this partnership. The depth of our relational partnership with the Shan was made more apparent than we perhaps even realized when the head teacher (with whom we have worked with since 2009) gave his speech on that cool, clear day in November last year. He said: "...OUR FOOD IS YOUR FOOD, YOU ARE NO LONGER FOREIGNERS, YOU ARE FAMILY AND YOU ARE IN OUR HEART." It was a sacred moment... these were special, heartfelt words, words that will sustain us as we continue our partnership into 2014. ■

## POUNG -21 YRS

"WHEN I CAME TO THAILAND I DIDN'T GO TO SCHOOL. I HELPED MY PARENTS ON THE FARM."

Poung and Jing Boon are two of the Community Support Workers at SEED migrant center, a collaboration between Shan Youth Power (SYP) and Partners. At SEED they aim to build healthy communities through

daily partnership



"BECAUSE OF SEED I HAVE KNOWLEDGE THAT CAN HELP OTHERS. I THINK SEED WILL PROVIDE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER MIGRANT YOUTH, LIKE SYP DID FOR ME".

training and practical support for migrant workers and their families. When Partners was looking to help migrant workers in the Chiang Mai area, SYP was the obvious partner. They're young enthusiastic rock stars.

"AFTER I FINISHED MY STUDIES, I WAS ENCOURAGED TO WORK AT SEED BECAUSE I WANTED TO HELP MIGRANT CHILDREN."

Recognizing that migrant children face unique hardships in Thailand, SYP were already going into migrant communities and teaching mathematics and languages. They aim to get youth involved in social and democratic development and their

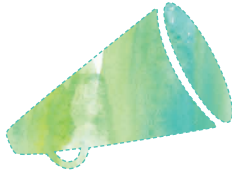


## JING BOON-20 YRS

"MY NEPHEW STUDIED AT SEED. IT TAUGHT HIM CONFIDENCE AND HE NOW TEACHES HIS FAMILY."

dedication is truly putting a dent in the cycle of poverty.

Together, SYP and Partners hope to reach out to even more youth and families – helping vulnerable individuals gain the skills to strengthen their own communities.



# PARTNERS ADVOCATE

it can't  
be done  
without you!

*Become an advocate and be a voice  
for the children of Burma.*

We are a small non-profit, so Partners Advocates have an important role in helping spread awareness and generating opportunities for advocacy and fundraising beyond the reach of our current in-house resources.

SIGN UP TODAY!

[advocate.partnersworld.org](http://advocate.partnersworld.org)

*Other  
ways you  
can partner  
with us:*

DONATE YOUR  
BIRTHDAY  
GARAGE  
SALE  
RUN FOR  
RELIEF  
VOLUNTEER  
DAY OF  
PRAYER FOR  
BURMA





# PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

*Your monthly support gives the children of Burma a chance for change.*

Partners started with a \$30 commitment and, almost 20 years on, we now support thousands of displaced people in refugee camps and across Burma. We need your help to change the lives of even more.

Become one of our Partners for Change today by committing at least \$30 A MONTH and join a team of people who are creating change in Burma.

[change.partnersworld.org](http://change.partnersworld.org)

DONATE  
YOUR DOLLARS



# LESS SEEDS MORE RICE

RICE. AS WESTERNERS, WE WILL NEVER FULLY COMPREHEND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE ASIAN WORLD. It is more than food. It creates a sense of completeness and security even in an environment of poverty. Nearly any loss that occurs is measured immediately in terms of the threat to obtaining rice for the family. Any gain is translated into rice that will be consumed. When it is consumed, it is not a side dish, but the main course.

In light of this fact, imagine Partners excitement when our development staff learned of a system to significantly increase the yield of rice. Klaus Prinz, a friend at McKean Rehabilitation Center sparked an interest in the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) within the Partners development team.

It took a full crop cycle to observe the fantastic results, but by 2012 we were ready to teach others and several Community Based Organizations (CBOs) from Burma wanted to learn this method too. They sent delegates from their communities to attend the hands-on training at our farms. It began as a two-part training, firstly teaching the SRI methods at the Chiang Mai farm, then supplemented with natural fertilization and pest repellent technique training at the Mae Sot farm.

When the delegates returned to Burma, where communication is limited, it was difficult to get feedback regarding successes and hindrances. However, if Saw Taw Lu's experience is any indication of what has transpired when using SRI, there is much to celebrate.

Saw Taw Lu wrote that at the beginning of the rice season he was ridiculed by the village headman and all the villagers. "You will be hungry soon!" they taunted.

# CHILDREN FED HEALTHIER FAMILIES



training the  
trainers

Half way through the season the villagers agreed that his new method would work, but probably not very well. By the end of the season, however, there was such a marked difference in his crop yield that the villagers were begging to learn all the details of his farming method. Now he trains others in his community how to grow more rice using the SRI method.

At Partners, we recognize that knowing the right techniques must be coupled with disseminating the information to motivated risk-takers. Networking is arguably Partners greatest strength. Through our varied connections, four development farms have now been set up inside of Burma. The most recent is dedicated solely to SRI training. Additionally, CBOs are seeking out Partners to attend training from as far south as Mon State to as north as Kachin State. In addition to Partners network and training, the visual testimony of the crops themselves begs mentioning, as well as the farmers who have gained new knowledge and experience being qualified trainers.

The implications seem greatest for the poorest farmers. The pressure to buy more and to increase rice production is removed. The return on investment is improved. The risk on a loan is reduced. The potential of sending your child to school has increased. **THE RESULTS OF COMBINING PARTNERS SRI KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WITH PARTNERS NETWORK OF PARTNERS IS SYNERGISTIC.** We are excited. Our mental gears are churning out new possibilities of raising the standard of living for an entire village. Most importantly to our friends in Burma, is the mound of rice that is now heaped a little higher on their plates.

BY KARA GARRISON

every child  
matters

Gracie  
GIVEE

GWEE GWEE'S FATHER GU THAN DTUNG WORKS IN CONSTRUCTION, taking day labor as jobs are available, while her mother works in a factory. Gwee Gwee lives with her parents, three siblings and grandmother in a small bamboo hut outside the city of Mae Sot, where they moved from Burma eight years ago in search of work and a better life. While they have successfully found jobs and built a life in Mae Sot, their legal status is complicated and there is always a fear that this will be compromised.

Recently, their family has faced many challenges. Four months ago Gwee Gwee's mother had a fourth child. Her ten-year-old brother has been diagnosed with heart problems. Her grandmother's health has continued to decline, leaving her more forgetful each day. Her mother quit her work at the factory to care for the family which left Gu Than Dtung struggling to provide for a family of seven on one migrant worker salary, around \$5 per day.

Gwee Gwee is eight. She loves church and goes to Sunday School every week. She is quite clever, and memorizes the songs quickly; sings loudly and dances boldly. She loves to help and is often found washing plates after community meals.

Partners Community Support Worker Pi Pranee has been part of the Partners team for seven years and knows Gwee Gwee well. Pi Pranee's husband is the pastor of this church, and they both spend time each week among the local community. They know Gwee Gwee's singing and dancing and they also know her family from the neighborhood. They stop by often to say hello, encourage the family, and see if there are any ways they can help.

While visiting Gwee Gwee's family one afternoon, they shared with Pi Pranee that the money coming in just wasn't enough for their needs. They had been borrowing from a local shop for food, but they were getting into debt that they weren't able to pay back. They didn't have enough money to send all their children to school with one family member working. Gwee Gwee would be staying home from school at just eight years old.

Pi Pranee realized that there was something Partners could do to help and Gwee Gwee is now supported with school fees and a ride on the school truck each day. She has a school uniform, a shirt for sports day, and a pair of school shoes. For just \$58, she now has the opportunity to study. She knows that she is loved and not forgotten.

We know this family well, how hard they are working to get by and how thankful they are for the opportunity to send Gwee Gwee to school. This care and partnership has radical implications for Gwee Gwee. She is now less likely to be trafficked into prostitution or be exploited, and more likely to contribute to a new Burma. All because she has been educated. We are thankful to have the opportunity to invest in education — not only in extensive programs that provide school supplies to entire regions of Burma or create sustainable schools, but also in the life of one little girl and her family.

BY KELLI SPURLOCK

*Goodbye*

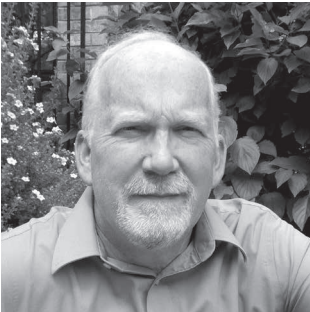
# ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE; TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH

HELEN KELLER



## SONYA CLAASE

Sonya has left an indelible mark on Partners and truly helped bring tangible change to the children of Burma over the past 9 years. She is a passionate advocate for the Karen people and was instrumental in starting many projects. Most notable was her role in helping start the Karen State Education Assistance Group that provides education supplies to more than 120,000 children in Karen State! We will miss her and her family but are thrilled that we will still see them all frequently as they continue to work in Mae Sot.



## ANDY PASMA

Andy joined our staff in 2012. As the National Director of Partners USA he did a great job at getting us organized, reaching out to many around the USA, sharing with them about Partners and Burma. He worked tirelessly to share Partners message, and was not afraid to try new things. We all enjoyed his company and especially his dry sense of humor. We are thankful for the job Andy did for us and wish him all the best in his new adventures.



## SUNNIVA VIKAN

Sunniva worked for Partners Norway for two years, and really made it shine. Sunniva amazed all of us with her can-do attitude and creative ways of reaching people. We are all going to miss her input and slight impatience with us when we don't process things as fast as she does. Sunniva has moved to Norway's biggest missions agency, Normisjon. Although we hate to see her go, we are happy for Normisjon who will now have a great staff member.

# DIRECTOR'S DESK



Dear Friends,

While I am writing this, our nation is in the grip of Olympic Fever (mildly contagious, not dangerous). People are cheering on our athletes as we have one of our best starts to a winter games ever and as per usual, experiencing a four year surge in national pride. It's true that we are blessed to belong to this great nation but what if our country looked more like Burma?

What if only people from Ontario and Quebec were given full access to all educational options? What if the entire population of Nova Scotia had their Canadian citizenship revoked like the Rohingya people of Burma did back in 1982? What if the Canadian Armed Forces invaded Alberta and took our land and resources by force like they are doing in Kachin State, Burma's most resource-rich area? What if they started confiscating large portions of farm land and selling it to international investors and corporations with little or no compensation given to the farmers? This is what Burma looks like today. I doubt we'd have any national pride if you were from the groups who continue to suffer under such oppression.

That's why I am so grateful for the continued generosity of Canadians who know that this is not right and are prepared to do something about it. Because of you: children attend school and build a brighter future, infant and maternal mortality rates are dropping in the areas of Eastern Burma where we work. Because of you: farmers are able to provide for their families and are leaving the clutches of poverty, and God's love is shown to those in the most dire of circumstances.

Thank you,

GREG TOEWS  
Canadian Director



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...ONE STANDING ALONE  
CAN BE ATTACKED AND  
DEFEATED, BUT TWO CAN  
STAND BACK-TO-BACK  
AND CONQUER; THREE  
IS EVEN BETTER, FOR A  
TRIPLE-BRAIDED CORD IS  
NOT EASILY BROKEN.

ECCLESIASTES 4 (NLT)

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**OUR VISION** Free, full lives for the children of Burma  
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