

REBUILDING
NATIONAL
ON

SEPTEMBER ISSUE 2012



Partners Magazine September Issue 2012

PUBLISHER Partners Relief & Development
OUR VISION Free, full lives for the children of Burma
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Printed in Thailand
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FRONT COVER

"The building blocks needed to rebuild Burma are many."
PHOTOGRAPHERS Tim Kelly & Nadine McGrath



"JUST BECAUSE OUR COUNTRY IS GETTING MORE DEMOCRACY DOESN'T MEAN WE AREN'T STILL POOR. PLEASE DON'T STOP HELPING US!" —An Ethnic Leader

Recently I was in Rangoon.

The fact that I was actually there, with a fresh visa in my passport, speaking unhindered to pro-democracy leaders, proved that something had changed in Burma. On the sidewalks were posters of Aung San Suu Kyi and front pages of local newspapers covered her whereabouts with photos and fat headlines. I downloaded regime-critical websites on the Internet, expecting many of them to be blocked by the regime they criticized, but none were. I was positively surprised.

For days I met with people who all confirmed what Western media has reported: There are positive changes happening in Burma.

Then they all added: But there is still a long way to go before we have democracy. As one of the pro-democracy leaders put it: 'You know, we all talk about democracy, but none of us really knows what it means. For 60 years dictators have ruled our country; none of us know how to get a true democracy. We need help to understand. Some believe that to have democracy means to get everything you want. We need to educate them to understand that it is not necessarily so.'

Over the past months, our staff has frequently been asked: Are things well in Burma now? Is Partners' job done? Is there anything left for you to do? The answer to these three questions is: No, no and yes. In many ways,

our challenges have never been greater; the same is true with our opportunities. With the regime slowly opening its doors and allowing groups such as Partners to work legally in the most needy areas of the country, that aspect of our job will perhaps be easier. We can get access to the people we are helping without breaking the law! A whole nation wants to move forward, and Partners is right there, with the capacity and courage to help.

This magazine will give you a small glimpse into some of what Partners is doing to rebuild a nation. We will also share with you some of our challenges and frustrations. Our hope and prayer is that as you read, take in the beautiful images, and let the content sink into your hearts, you will feel both encouraged and challenged.

Like one of the ethnic leaders I spoke to said: 'Just because our country is getting more democracy doesn't mean we aren't still poor. Please don't stop helping us!'

Please help us rebuild the nation of Burma!

Oddny Gumaer

Oddny Gumaer
CO-FOUNDER & INTERNATIONAL VICE
PRESIDENT OF ADVOCACY



1942 JAPAN INVADES BURMA

1945 BURMA LIBERATED

1948 GAIN INDEPENDENCE / CIVIL WAR BEGINS

1962 MILITARY DICTATORSHIP BEGINS

08.08.88 MASS UPRISING NATIONWIDE

1990 FREE ELECTIONS

NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY (NLD) WON

MILITARY JUNTA REFUSED TO RELEASE POWER

2007 SAFFRON REVOLUTION

10 MAY 2008 NEW CONSTITUTION SIGNED

7 NOV 2010 GENERAL ELECTIONS HELD

UNION SOLIDARITY & DEVELOPMENT WON

13 NOV 2010 AUNG SAN SUU KYI RELEASED

AFTER 15 YEARS OF HOUSE ARREST

9 JUNE 2011 KACHIN STATE CEASEFIRE BROKEN

FIGHTING BROKE OUT / 75,000 INTERNALLY DISPLACED

2 DEC 2011 SHAN STATE SIGN CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

13 JAN 2012 KAREN NATIONAL UNION SIGN CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

8 MAR 2012 KARENNI STATE SIGN CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

1 APRIL 2012 BI-ELECTIONS HELD

NLD WON 43 OF 45 SEATS AVAILABLE



IN A LAND WITH HOPE... THERE'S A LONG WAY YET TO GO

LINDA BUSKLEIN

Partners started in 1994 when a young couple sat face-to-face with an orphan girl — the immediate consequence of a brutal war in Burma. Over the years, we have expanded our work to meet both immediate and long-term needs of people affected by the world's longest civil war. Many reforms have been reported in Burma this year, and this gives us hope to accomplish our goal — "reconciled communities living in peace." At the same time, many challenges remain and new complexities have also surfaced.

The election is completed, the Nobel prize is awarded, and Aung San Suu Kyi will make her way to the United States to receive another award. A couple of weeks ago I stood at a stand for Partners and fielded questions from people who wondered if everything is OK in Burma now. I wish I could say it is...but today in Burma, there is just as much work to do as ever; and it is crucial that we continue our work of building infrastructure for healthcare, education and agricultural development so that the people themselves can sustain their lives moving forward.

Over the last few years, I have visited both sides of the Thai-Burma border. It is a life-changing experience to see thousands of displaced people clinging to hillsides in daily struggle, and to meet generations of refugees who have been born behind barbed wire fences. They remain displaced; their villages are still burned; their families still separated, and their hope remains just that — a glimmer. Circumstances do not automatically change simply by awarding a Nobel prize, yet I also have hope. In her first speech to parliament, Aung San Suu Kyi called for laws to protect the rights of ethnic minorities. I hope Partners' ongoing work with the ethnic groups, fighting for true reconciliation and communities living in peace, will soon be achieved. While we passionately work towards real and lasting change, new challenges are also arising. A few examples include:

—In the last year, 200,000 additional people have been displaced in Arakan and Kachin States. Burmese helicopters have fired on Rohingya refugees fleeing violence in Arakan State, and hostilities continue in Kachin State. Refugees from both areas are being denied refugee status by Bangladesh and China and have been turned back into the violence.

—Despite a ceasefire in Karen State, the government continues to confiscate land. It is reported that in one village alone, 800 acres have been seized and that villagers are being forced to work the land for the army. Even the graveyard has been confiscated.

—In spite of a ceasefire signed in Shan State in January 2012, fresh attacks and threats against civilians continue.

—New displacement is occurring in order to pave the way for Asia's largest new development project, the Dawei deep sea port. Construction work on supporting infrastructure and roads have begun before compensation to the local residents has even been discussed.

Clearly, Burma continues to need both emergency relief and long-term development that benefits the people. When one sits face-to-face with the victims, it is easy to see that the scars will not heal overnight. The military effectively remains in charge and quick acceptance of the reforms made, and a rush to invest, creates new problems which we hope do not go unnoticed or ignored by the international community.

~Linda Busklein is chairperson of the board of Partners Norway. She enjoys quiet time in nature and sincere chats. Her faith is strengthened as she gets to know and love the people of Burma.

THE ROAD TO RESTORATION

SONYA CLAUSE



I wish you could be here with me as I sit talking to an old friend of mine from Karen State. His name is P'doh K'ney. He heads up the Fishery Department and is a leader of Partners' new Eden project.* We were talking about what life is like now for the villagers since the Karen signed the ceasefire agreement. He tells me that the people feel a greater sense of freedom, and are less afraid of the Burma Army, but of course they are still suspicious and cannot completely trust the situation. Ultimately what they really want is peace. During the ceasefire talks he and 50 other people from the district went into the Burma Army camp — which was truly extraordinary — and I personally wanted to know how it felt. So I asked him.

P'doh K'ney, have you had to run from the Burma Army? (He started laughing and all the Karen around me started laughing.)

Yes, countless times.

How many times? (Feeling slightly uncomfortable. He laughed again.)

I really cannot remember - over 40 times.

(I know he has six daughters, the oldest is 16 years old.) Okay if you cannot remember how many times you've had to run, how about your 16-year-old daughter? How many times has she had to run from the Burma Army? (Oh, and he started counting)

About 30 times.

So you and your children have had to run all your lives from your enemy but then you went into the enemies' camp. How did you feel?

Of course I hate the Burma Army because it was hard to run my whole life, but the armed struggle and fighting each other cannot solve the country's problem. We understand that ceasefire and political dialogue can provide a solution rather than to continue the armed struggle. There were two things that gave us strength before we went into their army camp. Firstly we all prayed together, and then we all agreed and were confident that this is the appropriate way as the ceasefire delegation had paved the way. By now we have met with the Burma Army many times and in many places throughout Kler Lwee Htoo district. Together, the Burma Army and Karen villagers have de-mined the car roads in Muthe Kyaukkyi.

That is amazing! But can I ask you something - if your wife and children were alone in the rice field and someone from the Burma Army walked by, would they be afraid?

No, they would not be afraid.

(I thought I misheard, so I asked my husband to translate into English.) Did he say that they would not be afraid?

Yes, they would not be afraid!

What else is different for the villagers?

Well they are freer to go and visit their families in villages that are controlled by the Burmese Government without fear of their family getting arrested. Some families are reuniting after 20 years. Families from Yam Myo Aung relocation site are able to return to their original villages and re-claim their farms, land and orchards. According to their district and township leaders, however hesitant, they all believe in the ceasefire process and have taken the initiative to do it. They reflected with each other that whenever they meet the Burma Army, they too express the same feelings - that peace is really needed for our country. That is why they are able to talk very openly together with local army officers, but these officers are afraid to express these sentiments towards their officers in charge. Many local businessmen who want to invest in the gold mines have come to the area but the Karen have rejected them.



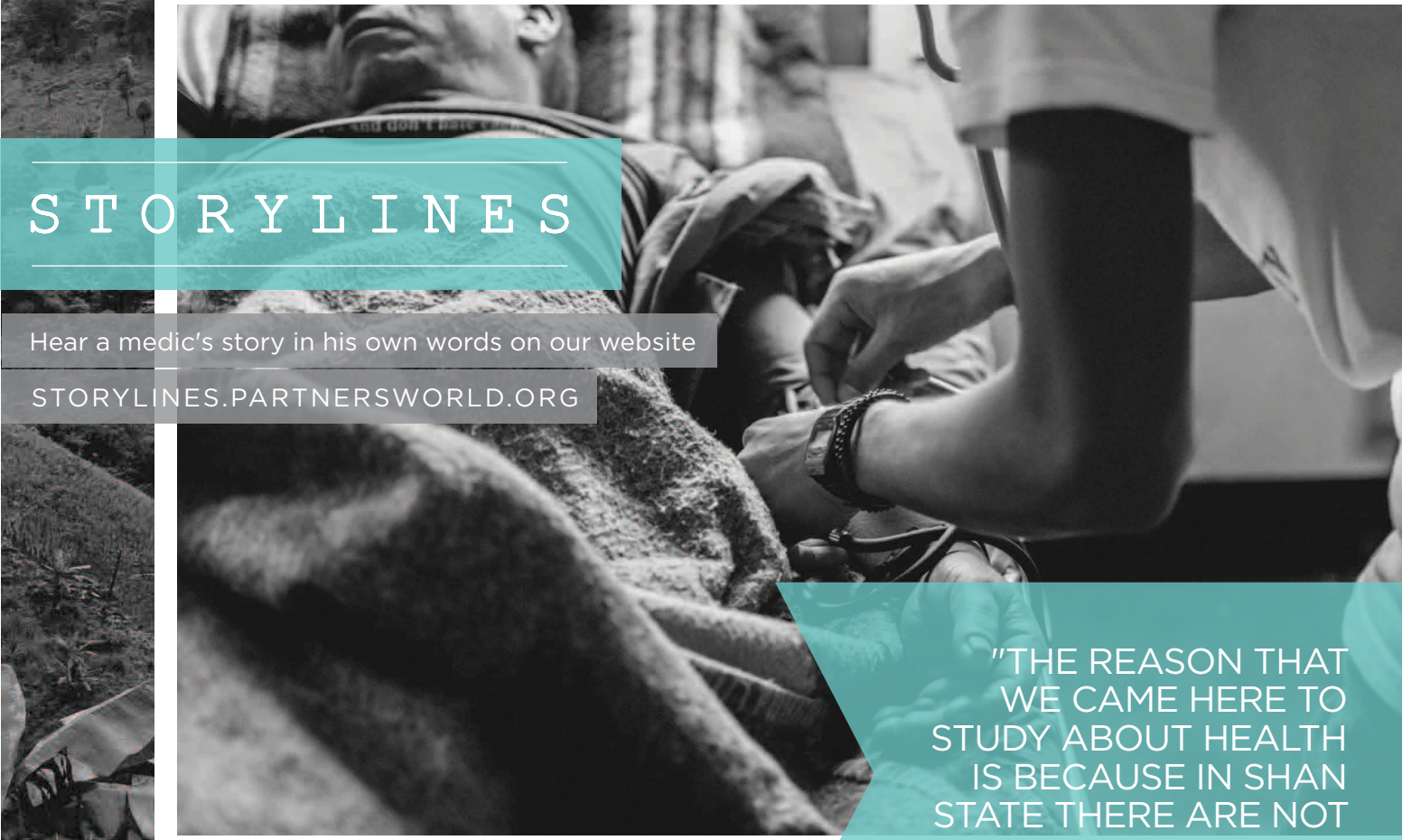
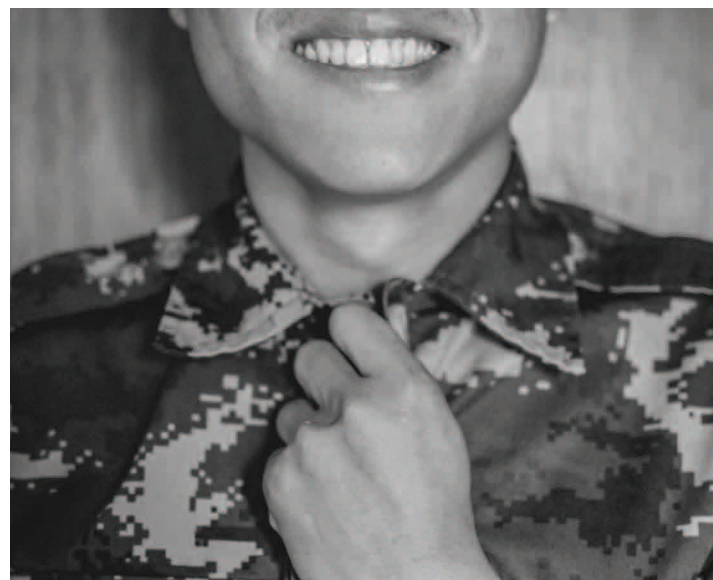
Apart from feeling freer and less afraid - nothing else has changed for local ethnic people - there is still no healthcare, education; and villages are still extremely poor and without food.

For Partners, this is the first time that no new emergency medicine, food and essential supplies have been sent inside for displaced people fleeing from attacks. However, the biggest need is food security - as years of displacement, hill tribe farming and pests have caused severe food shortages. Partners' new project, The Eden farms, is having a huge impact in the area, as villagers are thinking more about their livelihoods and not just displacement. Local villagers want to set up their own organic farms and animal husbandry projects to support their families.

Our Partners Village Health Workers, Education initiatives and Mobile Health Clinics continue to provide basic vital necessities to these villagers. Still, their number one need is personal security, even as more understanding has been built with the local Burma Army. The camps are still there and they wish them to move away. Secondly they need food. Years of displacement and burning of food supplies by the Burma Army have left severe food shortages in the areas.

~Sonya Claase, Partners Karen Projects Director, who passionately and tirelessly works on behalf of the Karen people inside Burma and along the Thai-Burma border.

* For more information about 'The Eden Project' refer to page nine.



STORYLINES

Hear a medic's story in his own words on our website
STORYLINES.PARTNERSWORLD.ORG



"THE REASON THAT WE CAME HERE TO STUDY ABOUT HEALTH IS BECAUSE IN SHAN STATE THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH DOCTORS OR HEALTH WORKERS."

FIXING EDUCATION | SHAN STATE
We train teachers and are helping to build education infrastructure – in many areas only 4% of kids are going to school. We are committed to changing those stats.

**WELL PROJECT
KAREN STATE**
It's simple. We will continue to build wells and help communities have clean, usable water for living.

**RESILIENCE TRAINING
KACHIN STATE**
We provide Resilience Building Training to help the over 50,000 Kachin IDPs in camps, to cope with the harsh living conditions.

EDEN PROJECT | KAREN STATE
This new development project will help improve the nutrition and food supply of one of the poorer areas of northern Karen State. Using well-established relationships, and by utilizing the existing and extensive knowledge already possessed by villagers, Partners aims to support these marginalized communities with practical training and supplies to start long-term fish farming and animal husbandry; as well as use modern sustainable agriculture as a replacement to the traditional slash-and-burn type of agriculture prevalent throughout Karen State. WE STARTED WITH FIVE FARMS & BY OCTOBER WE WILL HAVE BROUGHT THIS TRAINING TO 100 VILLAGES.





MULTIPLY YOUR IMPACT TODAY!

30.PARTNERSWORLD.ORG

GIVE A SIMPLE GIFT

A generous donor has given Partners a tremendous gift! Every person that signs up to the 30 Campaign to give **\$30 A MONTH** will have their first donation quadrupled. That means your \$30 gift will instantly become \$120 and have four times the impact. (please use the enclosed envelope)

PRAY THIS SEPTEMBER

Join Partners for **30 DAYS OF PRAYER** during the month of September. You'll receive a daily devotion and/or specific prayer request via email. Visit our website to sign up today!



HELP ENTER THE CONTEST

"IF YOU'RE FEELING HELPLESS, HELP SOMEONE." *Aung San Suu Kyi*
Do a fundraiser and you could win a trip to Thailand or an iPad. Share your epic idea with us online. 30.PARTNERSWORLD.ORG

DIRECTOR'S DESK



There have been many types of people who have governed over their nations; some were good and just, and others exploited the people for their own gain. Burma too is at a tremendous crossroads in their history as they struggle to come out from military to civilian rule. As you have read in this issue, there have been some good changes in areas and some huge setbacks in Kachin and Rakhine States.

The Bible is full of wisdom on how to govern properly, and has warnings to those who do not. The prophet Jeremiah had these words for the kings of Judah, "Be fair-minded and just. Do what is right! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors. Quit your evil deeds! Do not mistreat foreigners, orphans and widows. Stop murdering the innocent!" (Jeremiah 22:3 NLT) How easily these words apply to the situation in Burma. Will the new government be able to stem the endemic corruption or the ongoing abuse of the police and military? Will lands that have been confiscated from the villagers be returned? How will they deal with the Rohingya whom they view as foreigners despite having lived in Burma for hundreds of years? Will the brutal attacks on civilians end?

Clearly from these questions we can see that a cessation of hostilities is not enough if justice does not follow in the path of peace. North Korea has 'peace' but no justice,

and Burma will never be a fully functioning democracy without it either. Our goal of bringing free, full lives to the children of Burma includes justice, religious freedoms, food security, education, access to health care, employment opportunities for adults, and so many other things beyond having a democratically elected government.

The vital work that Partners does, which is lacking in the Burma government, would not be possible without your valued support. Our efforts empower communities to become healthy and strong enough to provide for themselves, even if the government doesn't fulfill its responsibilities to care for all the people of Burma.

If you would like to know more about why Burma is in the situation that it is, please go to our website and watch the documentary Displaced Childhoods to understand their history and how Partners is making an impact.

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8 ESV

Greg Toews

9th ANNUAL DESSERT EVENING AND SILENT AUCTION FUNDRAISER



Please join us for the...

9TH ANNUAL DESSERT EVENING & SILENT AUCTION FUNDRAISER

7pm, October 13th, 2012
at Menno Simons Christian School
7000 Elkton Dr. SW, Calgary.

Reserve your tickets by emailing
info@partnersworld.ca today!

For other PARTNERS SPEAKING EVENTS happening mid-October in Abbotsford, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Hamilton and London; please check our events page on our website for dates, locations and times.

If you would like to have someone from Partners come and share with your friends, home group or church about the work that we do to help the people of Burma, please email your request to info@partnersworld.ca



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