



# build peace

Partners Relief & Development  
2024 - Vol. 1

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**Building peace through trauma care.**

Graduation day, made possible with our partner, Inhalation of Hope  
Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 2023





When thinking of peace, it is easy to think of it as freedom from conflict. Our friends in the ethnic states of Myanmar have suffered from conflict for more than 75 years. They would surely describe peace as living in a land without war. But is there more to peace than the absence of fighting?

Recently I was in Afghanistan. It was my first trip there, and much of what I experienced was not as expected. On more than one occasion we were told by people we met how they appreciate finally living in peace. For me, this came as a surprise until I thought of how many years, even decades, their country was at war. As we heard stories of ongoing restrictions, I realized that peace is more than just the absence of conflict, it can only come when oppression is also eliminated.

In Partners, we work to overcome the effects of conflict and oppression. Only when both are achieved can people truly live in peace. **The stories in this magazine give current and tangible evidence of how Partners is working toward peace in areas where we serve. Thank you for going there with us.**

For peace,

Brad Hazlett  
CEO

# southeast asia

## Myanmar update

**Our treasured colleague, Polly, shares about the harsh reality families in Myanmar are facing daily. Polly is based in our Mae Sot office in Thailand and oversees Partners Karen Education.**

On February 1, 2021, the Myanmar Military carried out a coup, executing stifling and violent control of the country. Three years of continuous turmoil have now passed under military rule. From economic hardships to disruptions in education and the absence of dynamic humanitarian aid, the daily lives of Myanmar's people have been intensely affected. The relentless conflict has forced the people of Myanmar to stand up against the military coup's violations of human rights.

As the internal conflict continues, the Myanmar Military is imposing further hardships by endangering civilians, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives and the displacement of millions

who are known as Internally Displaced People (IDP). The Myanmar Military is not only targeting the people fighting against them, they are targeting everyone. They don't care. The people we are helping have had to suffer like this for many years. I am Karen. My grandparents also had to flee. I am fifty-three years old already, so there have been many, many years of this. I am blessed that I do not have to flee like them.

Families live in constant fear due to indiscriminate airstrikes on civilian areas. Homes, places of worship, schools, and essential infrastructure have been destroyed. This leaves many civilians to cope with the devastating consequences. These violations extend beyond airstrikes, with the military burning down homes and sometimes entire villages, which causes fear that engulfs the daily lives of civilians in Myanmar. Due to ongoing conflict, children, women, and the elderly are forced to live in constant worry.



**Despite the efforts of armed groups aligned with civilians, safety remains an indescribable dream for many civilians in Myanmar.**

Economic hardship is one of the biggest challenges as many civilians struggle to find work. The ongoing conflict is causing widespread displacement as people seek safety, leaving behind their jobs and their properties. The lack of economic growth in Myanmar has become one of the most difficult challenges, with the current effects felt nationwide.

Education, too, has suffered greatly. Students are forced to flee their homes. Many schools have been destroyed and burned down by the Myanmar Military, leaving children living lives of worry due to relentless attacks.

**The civilian population  
has become victims  
because the Myanmar  
Military commits crimes  
against humanity.**

Internationally and nationally, efforts are underway to address the conflict in Myanmar. However, the struggle for justice in Myanmar is ongoing. For three years, the military coup in Myanmar has resulted in ongoing conflict, and people are stuck in what feels like a never-ending cycle of chaos and uncertainty.

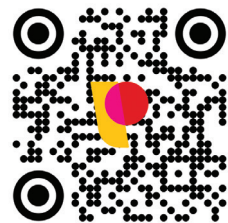


Photo: Polly, Partners staff in Mae Sot, Thailand.

**watch an  
update on  
Myanmar here**

# do something. three ways.

**\$20**

provides an infant nutrition pack for a baby, to fill tummies, and turns malnutrition armband readings from red to green, where they belong.

1



**\$30**

delivers rice to a family of 5 for a month. With mouths fed, families can focus on other things, like safety, shelter, and education.

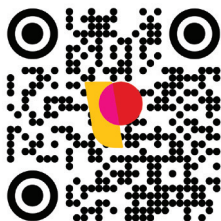
2



**\$65**

trains a farmer in safe and sustainable agriculture that improves crops; so families in conflict zones have stronger food security.

3



donate

***“...I hope that stability will prevail in my country, that the region becomes safe, and everyone receives his or her rights to live a decent life.”***

**team**  
partners

### **meet Shervan**

Living with his wife and three kids in Northeast Syria, Shervan, who oversees Partners projects in the region, **knows firsthand** what it means to raise a family in the middle of a conflict zone.

He is a bright light to all who meet him; with his warm spirit, quick laugh, and a passion to see kids have access to education - no matter the obstacles.



**listen to his  
story here**





# middle east

## Sustainable Peace Foundation

**Mosul, Iraq** has historically been a city rich in diversity on all fronts - a hub of languages, ethnicities, religions, and culture. **Today, this once vibrant landscape of multiculturalism has been torn apart by extremist groups and conflict.**

Partners team members saw this firsthand and were providing help during ISIS' assault on the region where

they declared Mosul as the capital of their so-called caliphate. West Mosul was one of the last strongholds in the war and experienced widespread destruction. There is a deep need to rebuild trust and relationships to return the city to what it once was - a place brimming with culture, art, and community.

**Partners joined hands with a local partner, the Sustainable Peace Foundation (SPF),** in their quest to nurture peacebuilding and healing through art therapy in Mosul and the surrounding area. The SPF centers are vital spaces for Iraqi youth to grow their skills, heal, and become active participants in peacebuilding in their communities.



Participants attend six months of music classes and contribute to community dialogue sessions about child marriage, violence against women, and peacebuilding. The Mosul center has become a community gathering place, weaving together the social fabric that is in desperate need of repair.

This community gathering place is where Noura Bashar found a new love. **“I benefited greatly from this program.** First, I acquired the skill of playing. Secondly, this skill is very rare in our society and country, so, if I applied for any job, just knowing that I love or learned to play music, they will want to hire me more.”

For the participants, music is a vehicle of peace. One musician, Frances, shared, **“Now is the time to send musical notes to people as messages of security, peace, and reassurance, and to show the world that music is the language of treatment for the victims.”**

***“Hope dies the last.”***

Hand in hand with SPF, your love in action is bringing the hope of peace.

Nineb, the director of SPF, shared, “There is a Greek saying which I quite like, **‘Hope dies the last.’** And I think Iraqi people, especially the ethno-religious communities of Nineveh, are a living example of that. The destruction, the death, everything that befell upon these communities, but there is still hope. They are all hope. They actually manifest hope. **So as long as there is hope, there is a life, there is a future, and yet a better future.”**



**Listen to Nineb  
share about  
Arts For Peace**



Clearly, if peace will  
ever be, it will take  
thoughtful education  
and a heap of sacrifice.



Mae La Refugee Camp  
February 2024



# CARE project builds peace

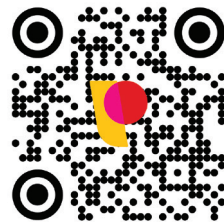
**We believe in building peace**, because children should be allowed to stay close to their parents; and when home is running from bullets, and bombs, and fear, sometimes you have to send your children to safety - without you.

A mother's sacrifice placed Naw Eh Dah Nay Htoo in Mae La Refugee Camp, miles and miles from where the family lives in Yangon.



Mae La is where, for years, this community has supported the CARE project. With a safe place to lay her head, and nutritious food every day, Naw Eh Dah Nay Htoo can pursue her education in peace. **She attends classes and learns about Karen history, language, and culture.** It is an important part of how her community will hold on to its rich heritage and teach the next generation. Education equips youth and their families with knowledge and choices.

**Peace doesn't just happen,  
it has to be taught - and built.**



**watch Naw Eh  
Dah Nay Htoo's  
story here**



***“We reject the impulse to avoid or add to conflict. Instead, we fight back through acts of love, rebuilding hope from rubble.”***

**- Chris Scott**

# a better way

**In a world filled with seemingly endless and increasing conflict, how do we respond?**

Over the years I've seen people respond to the conflict of our world in **two common ways.**

Sometimes we're **moved to anger** over the suffering and pain. We jump on social media, and share justifiable outrage. Unfortunately, the conversation often feels gridlocked, divided, and fleeting. The dead-end culture wars rage on while children suffer in real war zones, guilty only of being born in the wrong place and time.

Other times we **throw up our hands in defeat**, raising the white flag of powerlessness. The forces behind war, conflict, and genocide seem beyond our capacity to change or impact. We choose avoidance and ambivalence, we keep scrolling and turn our gaze from the images of devastated communities, and the rubble of war. We long for peace but we don't know how to get there.

## **I believe there is a better way.**

The path of love, healing, and peace is not through avoidance or misguided anger. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. said that “Peace is not the absence of violence, it is the presence of justice.” His words echo the sentiment of the prophet Micah, who implores us to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly. Both of these invitations imply action and intentionality, not passivity. Peace-making more than peace-keeping.

**So, we respond to the violence and suffering of the world by building peace. This is our weapon. This is our power.** We reject the impulse to avoid or add to conflict. Instead, we fight back through acts of love, rebuilding hope from rubble.

This is why I love the work of Partners. Whether it’s a clinic in Myanmar, a safe space for kids in Northeast Syria, or a school in Bangladesh, we’re pushing back against violence through peace. **The peace we’re building is a signal to all that there is a better way.** This is our mandate and our hope.

**Is there another way? I’d love to hear what you think - send me an email to continue this conversation.**

**[chris.scott@partners.ngo](mailto:chris.scott@partners.ngo)**



**Hanin**  
**Middle East Director**  
*“How do we do the work that we do? We respect cultures. We respect, we love, and we care.”*



**Noom**  
**Southeast Asia Director**  
*“The name of Partners is known within the communities we work in. People whom we have built relationships with know that we respond quickly to requests for assistance, regardless of the background of the people.”*



# **I believe that love acts.**

**I want to know that every day  
I'm waging peace.**

I'm ready to give some of what I have  
to children and families in warzones.

**Start a subscription and you become a partner.**

Just like a workout partner - you show up - and we show up  
- and love gets strong because we can count on each other.

Practically-speaking, it means that once a month, you  
sacrifice a bit and have that money automatically fuel  
projects and put love into action.

**Every day of every month, your love will be active, your  
steady gifts will - make better plans, make better projects,  
make for freer, fuller lives for kids in warzones!**

# **build peace every month.**

**take action**

give a one-time  
or monthly gift.



Children in Mae La Refugee Camp  
February 2024





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Children attending school in Mae La Refugee Camp, Feb 2024