



*free, full lives*  
**FOR THE  
CHILD  
REN**  
*of Burma*

THIRD QUARTER 2009

# NEW VISION

by Steve Gumaer  
Founder & CEO of Partners Relief & Development



**Free, full lives for the children of Burma and reconciled communities living in peace. That's what we are working for. This is our vision. But there are a few obstacles in front of us.**

The Burma Army is the 12th largest army on earth. Their intense military power is employed to systematically exploit the country of its resources and to keep an iron grip on the infrastructure needed to maintain their stolen wealth. The destruction and abuse this has wrought on the largely agrarian people in the hills is a modern day crime against humanity.

In January I visited many communities of internally displaced people. My experience confirmed what we have been reporting on and sending support for since 1994.

I saw thousands of families fragmented due to the roads that were constructed, patrolled and landmined to divide villagers for their loved ones. These same roads keep rice farmers from their farms and stop entire populations from travelling, trading and sustaining their way of life. I walked through valleys of abandoned terraced rice fields that once fed hundreds of people through the rhythm of seasons and life.

I walked through formerly thriving communities, seeing only the charred remains of homes where babies were born, raised, and brought up to take over the farms of their fathers, their ancestors. Not only had the Burma Army destroyed their homes, farms, and way of life, they also buried landmines in obvious approach and exit paths so that when the villagers return to find their belongings, they would be marred for life by this destructive legacy.

The youngest victims of this war carry on in their hide sites. They are resilient. Yet they suffer for lack of clean water, nourishing food, shelter, and the breakdown in community that happens when hope for the future is lost.

The children of Burma do not enjoy the freedom or the fullness my own daughters' experience. Their schools are burned to the ground along with their homes; their churches and civic centers are destroyed; the clinics that would normally serve their needs in time of illness are set on fire, the medics often killed and the medicines stolen by this illegitimate regime. I grieve for the pain these people endure.

Partners has grown. *This year we managed to touch the lives of half a million people in our pursuit of our newly sharpened vision to bring free, full lives to the children of Burma. Our hope is to be a part of bringing reconciled communities to live in peace.* On every page of this issue you will see signposts leading towards the accomplishment of our vision.

This goal is worthy of our effort and struggle. To be the ones who deliver God's grace, his fullness and freedom to the children of Burma is something we at Partners joyfully give our utmost to achieve. Our community effort on their behalf is sustained in part by you. Thank you for your prayers and support. Thank you on behalf of the thousands of families that your support has helped.

For the children of Burma,

*Steve Gumaer*

Partners Magazine Second Quarter 2009

**Publisher:** Partners Relief & Development

**Our vision:** Free full lives for the children of Burma.  
**Our hope:** Reconciled communities living in peace.

**Founder and Directors:** Steve and Oddny Gumaer

**Nonprofit Status Notice:**

Partners Relief and Development (PRAD) is a nonprofit organization with a 501(c) 3 federal tax exempt status. Any contributions given to PRAD are tax deductible for U.S. taxpayers.

PRAD is a registered charity in the USA, Canada, UK, Australia, Norway, New Zealand and Thailand

**PRAD's Field Offices:**

Chiang Mai and Mae Sot, Thailand

**Subscriptions:** For a free subscription to Partners Magazine and for information on how you can help PRAD in their mission, please contact us:

**USA**

E-mail: [info@partnersworld.org](mailto:info@partnersworld.org)

Web: [www.partnersworld.org](http://www.partnersworld.org)

**Mail:** Partners Relief & Development PO Box 2066  
Redlands, CA 92373, USA  
Phone: 909 748-5810

**CANADA**

E-mail: [info@partnersworld.ca](mailto:info@partnersworld.ca)

Web: [www.partnersworld.ca](http://www.partnersworld.ca)

**Mail:** Partners Canada  
33130 Springbank Road  
Calgary, Alberta  
T3Z 2L9  
Canada  
Tel: 403-242-7903

**AUSTRALIA**

E-mail: [info@partnersworld.org.au](mailto:info@partnersworld.org.au)

Web: [www.partnersworld.org.au](http://www.partnersworld.org.au)

**Mail:** Partners Australia  
PO Box 13  
Alstonville NSW 2477  
Australia  
Tel: +61-266-285-387

**UK**

E-mail: [info@uk.partnersworld.org](mailto:info@uk.partnersworld.org)

Web: [www.partnersworld.org.uk](http://www.partnersworld.org.uk)

**Mail:** Partners UK  
15 Kingsthorpe Close, Forest Town  
Mansfield, Notts NG 19 0PD  
UK  
Tel: +44-7970-188-079

**NEW ZEALAND**

E-mail: [info@partnersworld.org.nz](mailto:info@partnersworld.org.nz)

Web: [www.partnersworld.org.nz](http://www.partnersworld.org.nz)

**Mail:** Partners NZ  
PO Box 40 284  
Upper Hutt  
New Zealand  
Tel: 09 974 2850

**Reprints:** Bulk reprints can be obtained directly from PRAD as availability permits.

**Contributors:** Craig Garrison, Claire Gibbons, Chris Dolan, Sarah Armitage, Steve & Oddny Gumaer.

**Photos:** Steve Gumaer: pg. 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12-14, 16, 23, 24.  
K'Chay: pg 6. Stu Corlett: pg 16 (three bottom). All other photos: private

**Front cover:** A Karen child in Eh Thuu Tha Refugee Camp.  
Photo by Steve Gumaer. Typography by Sacha Olson.

**Layout and design:** Oddny Gumaer

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible: New International Version. NIV. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984. Zondervan Publishing House.

Permission to reproduce any of the material found in Partners Magazine can be obtained at: [info@partnersworld.org](mailto:info@partnersworld.org)

Printed in Thailand

© Partners Relief & Development 2009.

## THESE ARE SOME OF THE FACTS OF **BURMA**

Children are often forced into the sex industry. The trafficking of children has become increasingly prevalent throughout the country, especially in border areas.

**Less than 1%** of GNP is spent on education.

**221 of every 1000 die** before the age of 5.

80% of the children who die, do so from malaria, respiratory illnesses and diarrhea, sicknesses that could easily have been prevented.

**LESS THAN 0.3% OF GNP SPENT ON HEALTHCARE.**

**70,000** children are SOLDIERS.

---

## Less than **half** of all school-aged children get to go to school.

Children living in ethnic minority areas continue to be subjected to physical injury, torture, rape, murder, forced labor, and forced relocation.

**1/3** of all children under 5 are malnourished.

### **THIS IS WHAT THE BURMA MILITARY GOVERNMENT SAYS ABOUT BURMA:**

***'Myanmar today is striving its utmost to create best opportunities for the children.'*** According to the regime, children are the 'jewels' of Burma, and are cared for and respected by every member of society. The SPDC notes that children in Burma are very well protected, physically and psychologically.

(Source: Paragraph 83 and 253. Myanmar's 2nd Periodic Report to United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 11 June 2002).



Photo: Partners

# GOD'S CHILDREN



*text by Craig Garrison  
photos: Partners*



**When I read through these kinds of stories about the terror that two, three, four and five-year olds are growing up under, I have to ask myself, "Is this what God wants for these children?", "Is this the kind of kingdom Jesus was talking about when he talked about children?" The answer is a resounding NO!**

**T**he word "child" or "children" appears more than **550 times in the Bible**. 550. Regardless of how important you feel that fact might be, one thing can be said: God seems to care a lot about children. In the Bible we are admonished to "become like children" (Matt. 18:3) in order to encounter the Kingdom of God. We are also told that when we "welcome a little child" (Matt. 18:5), it is the same as welcoming Jesus. I could go on and mention that Jesus says that "the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these (i.e. children)" (Matt. 19:14), that "From the lips of children and infants you (God) have ordained praise..." (Psalm 8:2) and so on. Over and over, we read about children and how important they are, how much we can learn from them and how they even hold some of the secrets of living the kind of life we should live. It appears that, at least from God's perspective, all children are Children of God.

There's a place where millions of children are not taken care of, protected, loved or cherished. In this place they are routinely abused, ignored, attacked, and trafficked. The place is Burma. For the last 15 years, we've been doing what we can to try and bring some sanity back into the world of the children of Burma. In fact, Partners itself started with a \$30 gift to help one child in a refugee camp with her basic needs to live and thrive for a year. Sadly, things today are much worse than they were back then.

The UN has identified four basic human rights for children: food security, physical security, health care, and education. On all four of these basic human rights the government of Burma and their proxies have fallen woefully short. In the recently released report "No More Denial: Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Myanmar (Burma)," the authors delineate in detail the ways in which the Burma Army and others violate, rape, attack, and starve children in conflict zones in Burma.

Children as young as nine have experienced "forced or coerced recruitment by security forces and civilians, even in public places such as bus or train stations and markets. The recruitment and use of children has turned into a profitable business for soldiers, civilian brokers and the police, who receive money or food from recruiters for each new recruit."\*

In the active conflict areas where Partners primarily works, basic health care is extremely limited and in many places, non-existent. Children are rarely, if ever, immunized and one in five children in Eastern Burma conflict zones die before the age of five, usually of treatable diseases.

Rape is a common tool of the Burma Army and their proxies and they commit this heinous act with impunity against ethnic women and girls. Additionally, they commit countless acts of violence against entire communities including the burning of villages, schools and churches as well as the laying of land mines around razed schools and villages in order to terrorize, kill or maim those who dare return.

When I read through these kinds of stories about the terror that two, three, four and five-year olds are growing up under, I have to ask myself, "Is this what God wants for these children?", "Is this the kind of kingdom Jesus was talking about when he talked about children?" The answer is a resounding NO! And, it will take people like you and I and many others to say "NO" to this for them. Let's work together so that one day we will all be able to say along with Jesus, "The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." Children of God. 🙏

*\*Material cited in quotes in this article comes from the four-page summary report "No More Denial: Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Myanmar (Burma)" and published by WatchList on Children and Armed Conflict: [www.watchlist.org](http://www.watchlist.org).*

*Craig Garrison has been working for Partners for more than three years. He has a passion for children and families in Burma. He is married to Kara and is the father of four children. The Garrisons are currently on home leave in the US.*



Running again. The images on this page are photos of some of the 4000 people who had to flee the attacks in June 09. They received emergency supplies from Partners and Free Burma Rangers. These critical supplies were purchased using gifts received for our 5 Alive campaign. Photos: Partners



# SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES

by K'Chay

I was sitting on a boat full of emergency supplies going down the Moei river, the river that serves as the border between Thailand and Burma. We had brought mats, mosquito nets, blankets, pots, pans, bowls, plates, spoons, clothes and others supplies to give to the internally displaced people in the area.

When the boat stopped and we got out and met Saw Kyaw Pi who was the headman of his village. He threw one of the sacks over his shoulder and looked at me. "Do you recognize me?" he asked. I answered that I did. "Do you remember my village?" he then asked, and before I could answer he told me the name—Htee Per. As we were walking up to the camp he continued his story:

"Some years ago you and your friends carried your backpacks into my village. You showed us the Jesus film, did medical treatments and gave us medical supplies. My daughter was very sick at that time, but after you prayed for her and gave her medicine she got well.

Now we have had to flee from our village. We couldn't bring anything with us. Some of our cows and cattle stepped on landmines. We don't dare go back to our village. Thank you so much for bringing these supplies to us."

The SPDC (the name of the military junta, State Peace and Development Council) is planning to ensure that they will have full control over the population before the elections in 2010. One way they hope to do this is by causing instability and insecurity in the ethnic areas. They are trying to force the key ethnic ceasefire groups to surrender control of their forces. The main proxy force among the Karen, is the DKBA (The Karen Democratic Buddhist Army). For more than 15 years they have worked closely with the SPDC, but have had control of their own arms and territories. Now the SPDC is planning to use the DKBA as their border police before the elections.

On May 13-17, 2009 the DKBA had a meeting in Pa-An district. There Col Chi Thu explained to the people attending that the SPDC's plan is for the DKBA and the village headmen to recruit 326 soldiers for each border battalion. 4 SPDC soldiers will lead the battalion, and 24 other SPDC soldiers to do office work.

The DKBA currently has more than 9000 soldiers in their different battalions. In May, a DKBA commander General Pah Nwee told all the village headmen from Takren and Lupler townships to attend a meeting at the headquarters at Meh Thay.

Saw Kyaw Pi told me that the commander had told the village headmen that they would have to recruit 605 people from their two townships. They had to present these people to the DKBA no later than June 15th 2009. "You (the villagers) have to obey this order. If not we (the DKBA) will go to every house and pick the people up by ourselves. Families who cannot give people to us must pay 1 million kyat (about 1000 USD)".

"I am a simple farmer," Saw Kyaw Pi told me. "I have a small farm and three cows. Two of them stepped on landmines the DKBA had placed on the ground so they are dead now. Only the calf is left, but I think it will die soon too. I think that the DKBA is worse than the Burma Army. They want five people from our small village to be their soldiers, but we don't want to be their soldiers. So this is why we had to flee from our village and come to Ler Ber Her. Many more people are planning to come to Ler Ber Her because it is impossible for us to live in our villages now."

Since October of 2008 many villagers have fled from their villages to Ler Ber Her to avoid the harsh rule of the DKBA. I regularly take supplies from Partners to Ler Ber Her. The people always tell me how pleased they are with the assistance they get from Partners and how Partners almost always gets the help to the people before other organizations do. ☹

**On June 6th the DKBA and the Burma Army attacked Ler Ber Her camp. More than 4000 people (including Saw Kyaw Pi and his family) were forced to flee again. They are now in hiding on the Thai side of the border. They have found shelter in temples, schools, churches, and in the homes of relatives and friends. Partners and Free Burma Rangers were the first organizations to bring emergency supplies to these destitute brothers and sisters. They do not know how long they will be allowed to stay in Thailand, how they are going to get fed or if they can ever return to their land.**

*K'Chay is a Karen who has worked for Partners for several years. He is brave, strong, talented and funny. He has taken some of our best photos and is often out helping his people survive. He is married and has two young children.*

### EMERGENCY RELIEF

Partners provide temporary relief in times of crisis when lives are at risk due to oppression, war or natural disaster. This includes the provision of basic essentials such as food, clothing, water, medicine, emergency medical assistance and shelter. These are short-term solutions to an immediate crisis.

Relief is about doing for others as we would have others do for us. Just imagine if the Burma story was your story and you were unable to provide food for your children. What would you hope for? How would you feel about getting practical assistance combined with a determination to minister love and life into the crisis that is upon you?

In 2008 Partners spent 78% of our program budget on emergency relief. Cyclone Nargis was a large percentage of this effort and it took roughly half of our relief funds to help the thousands of families our teams were able to save and assist in the Delta. Additionally, Partners fully funded 9 emergency medical clinics, pre-positioned food for communities that were later attacked and destroyed. These stores met the critical need for nutrition for thousands of vulnerable people.

By helping train and equip Free Burma Rangers relief teams, Partners affected the lives of 170,000 people who were in hiding or otherwise marginalized by Burma Army forces during the same period. These courageous teams saved the lives of many people and in each case, brought life assisting relief into a very dark ordeal.



Photo: Partners

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Partners helps provide long-term sustainable solutions to poverty through nutrition and healthcare training, education and spiritual development initiatives, agricultural and animal husbandry training projects.

When relief is no longer needed, development is crucial. Many of the people we have assisted get stuck in a vicious cycle of malnutrition and poverty due to the destruction of their homes, farms, and social networks. In order to give them a future to live for and to help them provide for themselves, Partners invests in small-scale sustainable development projects.

In the past year we have helped establish fish ponds, pig farms, goat projects, and small farms to produce grains and legumes for the clinics and schools to have a sustainable food supply.

Because of the generosity of the STEPS Foundation and another generous supporter, we have purchased 8 acres of land to use as a training center and demonstration farm outside of Chiang Mai. This farm is already being used to train community leaders in simple development theory and practice.

One other highlight is that after ten years our sewing and weaving program is making a profit and supporting other development ventures. That means that the costs for this program are now fully covered by the sale of goods made by the hundreds of women who sew, weave, and produce products for sale.

**We seek justice.**

**We assist the poor and those affected by the war in Burma.**

**We are committed to empower individuals and communities and co-create sustainable solutions to their poverty.**

**We are a voice for the displaced and oppressed.**

**We seek system change.**





Photo: Tim Mehrten

## CARE FOR CHILDREN OF CONFLICT

Partners cares for the material and spiritual needs of internally displaced, refugee and orphaned children in and from Burma, including the provision of food, medicine, education opportunity, and emotional care.

In 1994 Steve and Oddny Gumaer committed to support the needs of one three-year old orphaned child. That was the seed that started Partners. After 15 years working along the border there are now nearly 1,500 children living in 17 homes in 8 refugee camps. This program exists to help children who are vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, and the devastating effects of being alone and impoverished in a war torn country.

The care we provide and the ways we demonstrate God's love to these orphans and marginalized children are direct and visible ways we pursue our vision to see free, full lives for the children of Burma. Many of the children from our homes have gone on to be leaders, relief team members, medical staff, and pastors.

**"If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday." *Isaiah 58:10***

## ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Partners is committed to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Across the globe, we speak, publish, and develop partnerships. We are passionate about telling the world what is happening in Burma. We are dedicated to empowering individuals and communities to do the same.

We are serious about bringing free, full lives to the children of Burma - serious enough to take it to the United Nations, to the United States Senate and Congress, to Ottawa, London, Canberra, Wellington, Oslo and more.

Be encouraged too! The voice of the children of Burma is already starting to be heard and we have already obtained several influential advocates for our next major advocacy project (including Laura Bush, former US first lady and Ken Starr, former US Solicitor General and Pepperdine University School of Law Professor). In the months ahead we will give you opportunities to make your voice heard too. Please read about this important project on page 17.

Together with our partners, we will continue to speak for the voiceless children in Burma. Their stories must be told and the injustice must end.



Photo: Tim Mehrten

# broken bodies

## The Silent Battleground of Ethnic Women in Burma.

By Sarah Armitage

**“It has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in an armed conflict”**

(Maj. Gen Patrick Cammaert - a former peacekeeper in Darfur)

Rape. It may be a small word, but it has a meaning that carries the power to destroy individuals, families and entire communities. All around the world, rape is used against women as a show of power and control. In Burma, it is also used as a weapon of war.

In early June the Burma Army, the military force of the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council), began a new offensive along the border in Karen State. Almost 4000 civilians fled for their lives across the Moei River into Thailand creating an extensive emergency crisis. In the days leading up to the attacks, the Burma Army entered villages in the area forcibly recruiting soldiers and porters.

On 12th June, Naw Pay and Naw Wah Lah chose to stay in their homes rather than try to outrun the Burma Army soldiers heading towards their village, which was a few hours walk from the border. Naw Pay - aged 18, was eight months pregnant and Naw Wah Lah - aged 17, had a six month old baby to care for. It was a decision with dire consequences. When found by the soldiers they were taken out of their homes and gang raped. Afterwards, both young women and the unborn child were brutally murdered.

Tragically, this is not an isolated case. Over the past few years, a number of women's groups based in Burma have produced reports documenting the systematic use of rape and sexual violence by the Burma Army against ethnic women and girls. The number of known rape victims, some going back as far as 1995, is just under 1,900. However, this is only a fraction of the true number as so many women are afraid or unable to speak out about what has happened to them. Sometimes rape is carried out with such extreme brutality that for the victim, death can be the only possible outcome.

The SPDC, although they would deny it, encourage their military to use rape as part of a deliberate strategy to attain and strengthen control within ethnic areas. The horrific sexual assault and deaths of Naw Pay and Naw Wah Lah proves that ethnic women and girls in Burma live under the constant threat of rape during the course of their everyday lives. It could happen at any time – in their homes, whilst working on the farms, going to the market, travelling to school or collecting firewood.

Targeting women- those who are seen as the main carers - can destabilize a community. Rape humiliates and instils fear, which in turn causes distrust and disunity.

In 2008 the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution that rape and sexual violence used in armed conflict should be classed as a weapon of war and those who perpetrate it can be tried in an international criminal court for crimes against humanity.

However, words and resolutions mean very little to a regime intent on power at any cost and unless there is real and lasting intervention from the UNSC and the wider international community the SPDC will continue to deny their actions and neglect any obligations to any international conventions they have ratified.

We at Partners know we cannot give the families of Naw Paw and Naw Wah Lah back their daughters, wives, sisters, mothers or grandchild, but we can commit to not allow their deaths to be in vain. 🙏

*Sarah Armitage is the national director for Partners UK. She loves the Karen and Partners staff most of all. She is a person who is highly productive and we all wonder how she does everything she does. It may be because she never sleeps or that she has a secret assistant.*



Help us keep



**5 ALIVE**

# 50 dollars is enough to keep 5 ALIVE

It costs 50 dollars to buy the basic essentials to keep 5 alive for one month.

For the 1.5 million internally displaced people living in hiding from the Burma Army right now every day is a struggle for survival. They lack everything.

*The 5 most essential items they need to survive are:*

- A plastic tarp (for cover in the rain)
- A machete (to cut down bamboo and build shelter)
- A cooking pot (for making food and boiling water)
- A lighter (to make fire)
- Rice and salt (main staple food)

Do you want to help us provide this for 5 people?

Use the attached envelope and send your check today. Or donate online: [www.partnersworld.org](http://www.partnersworld.org)



5 items to keep her alive



We want to help them get free full lives. Do you too?





It's saddening that we even need to write documents to describe that children should have enough food to eat so they won't starve, that children should be able to feel safe so they have a place to call home, that children should have access to education and health care so they can learn and be healthy.

# WHAT IS FREEDOM?

by Claire Gibbons

**Freedom. It's an ideal that is often quoted and enshrined as part of the national identity of many countries. It's held in high esteem throughout our world and its meaning changes depending on world view, culture, upbringing and even religion.**

But what does it mean for us? How do you unpack freedom, put legs on it, make it something tangible, real and achievable for the children of Burma? What does a free life actually look like? What do you need for a free life when you're a child of Burma?

When armed with this volley of questions, how do we even begin to define freedom? We can start by examining international standards. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child is one of the most comprehensive international standards on children and what they need to have a free life. It spells out the basic standards that must be provided to children. They include:

**The right to survival.**

**The right to develop to the fullest.**

**The right to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation.**

**The right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.**

In practical terms these can be demonstrated through food security; physical security; education; and health care. These are things we know we take for granted in developed nations. (Ironically, the Burma Army agreed to meet these standards for the children of Burma all the way back in 1991 and since then should have been accountable to the International Community for meeting it.)

It's saddening that we even need to write documents to describe that children should have enough food to eat so they won't starve, that children should be able to feel safe so they have a place to call home, that children should have access to education and health care so they can learn and be healthy. This is the basic infrastructure and rights children need simply to survive. Children should be able to take these rights for granted.

Underpinning these freedoms is the family. As the basic foundational building block for society, families provide shelter, love and security to children. Value should be placed on children and families, protecting families and building them up. A free life is where families are strong, protected, and together.

But it's even more than this. It's more than family, more than having enough food to eat, a place to rest your head, access to medical care and school to attend. Free lives for the children of Burma must include spiritual freedom. Free from persecution and fear, free to love God, free to dream big dreams and make changes that impact the world.

**At Partners this is the kind of freedom we desire for the children of Burma.** Freedom that transcends the physical, emotional and spiritual. Where families and communities are strengthened. Where they experience Christ-like love through our actions and our words. Where we love them excessively, generously and in action and in truth. Where the children of Burma have all they need to realise their dreams. 🌱

*Claire Gibbons has recently joined Partners along with her husband Doug. They come from New Zealand and have added to the Kiwi influence at our office. Claire is the Partners Thailand National Operations Manager, she likes her computer, her pens and her husband very much.*

*Photos to the left: Children and a mother in Karen State, Burma. January 09.  
Photo: Partners*





# Advocating for the Children of Burma

by Claire Gibbons

**At Partners our dreams are big - we desire free, full lives for the children of Burma. We know that this is not a small task and more importantly, that we can't do it on our own.**

Salman Rushdie once said "If you want to tell the untold stories, if you want to give voice to the voiceless, you've got to find a language. Which goes for film as well as prose, for documentary as well as autobiography. Use the wrong language, and you're dumb and blind."

Partners Relief & Development is committed to being a voice for the children of Burma. A voice that will be heard around the world and a voice that people will want to listen to. At Partners our dreams are big - we desire free, full lives for the children of Burma. We know that this is not a small task and more importantly, that we can't do it on our own.

Part of getting this change to occur will require governments and international agencies to take notice of the unspeakable abuses that are occurring and make decisive steps to intervene on behalf of Burma's children. In order for them to listen we must speak for the children of Burma using their language, the language of the international community.

*So how are we doing this?*

Partners Relief & Development and the Free Burma Rangers have initiated a program to document, report on, and promote a report on children human rights among internally displaced and refugee children in Burma. The program will analyze and promote the preservation of child human rights and give special emphasis to the military junta's policy and action (or lack thereof) in the conflict zones in the east of Burma.

In 1991, the military junta acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child. This convention spells out a set of non-negotiable, universal standards that identify the basic human rights of every child. At Partners Relief & Development, we challenge the assertion that these basic rights are upheld under the current system of government. Throughout our work with Burma's internally displaced children, we have obtained substantial evidence, including video, photographs, firsthand reports, and eyewitness accounts, that contradict the very legal principles the military junta claims to be upholding.

We have retained independent, legal counsel that specializes in investigating and reporting on human rights in Burma. This legal team is producing a current, well-documented report on the treatment of internally displaced children inside Burma with special consideration to the principles outlined in the Convention on the Rights of a Child.

**The objectives of the project are:**

- for an independent, investigative legal team to produce a human rights report on Burma's internally displaced children;**
- to found a coalition of organizations that will review, substantiate and release the findings of the investigative team;**
- to present the report findings to US and international lawmakers and leaders, to press them to aid Burma's internally displaced populations;**
- to generate international awareness, aid and action regarding the current plight of Burma's internally displaced children.**

We are serious about bringing free, full lives to the children of Burma - serious enough to take it to the United Nations, to the United States Senate and Congress, to Ottawa, London, Canberra, Wellington, Oslo and more.

Be encouraged too! The voice of the children of Burma is already starting to be heard and we have already obtained several influential advocates for this project (including Laura Bush, former US first lady and Ken Starr, former US Solicitor General and Pepperdine University School of Law Professor).

Together with Free Burma Rangers, we will continue to speak for the voiceless children in Burma. Their stories must be told and the injustice must end. 📢



**A PERSON'S A PERSON, NO  
MATTER HOW SMALL.** Dr Seuss

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Jesus

There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace. Kofi Annan

The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Bible insists that the best test of a nation's righteousness is how it treats the poorest and most vulnerable in its midst. Jim Wallis

# FULFILLING THE VISION

## One Patient at a Time

by Chris Dolan

**It got me thinking about why we do what we do, and I realized a little bit more what that vision of free, full lives means. It's about helping to bring about healing, fostering growth that is truly organic, and helping people realize their full potential. It's about pouring love into communities and people.**

Partners mission and vision statement evoke a picture of a time and place that hasn't existed in Burma for decades. It's an entire country that for the past sixty years has known nothing but misery and abject poverty. It's a country where soldiers rape, pillage and pretty much do as they please.

It's also a country of wonderfully intelligent and welcoming people who have the misfortune of being born under one of the most oppressive governments in the world. These are the people we are here to help.

I was recently asked to assist a dentist friend of mine to remove an infected tooth from a teenage girl. She has severe disabilities due to an infection she contracted as an infant. She lives in a refugee camp, an illegal person who was solely dependant for her entire life on those around her. She had been in pain for weeks, was helpless and scared. She probably didn't understand why these two big scary people were poking around and pulling out her teeth. It was heartbreaking. It shouldn't be that way.

In the days after, it got me thinking about why we do what we do, and I realized a little bit more what that vision of free, full lives means. It's about helping to bring about healing, fostering growth that is truly organic, and helping people realize their full potential. It's about pouring love into communities and people. This little girl will never be able to run and play with her friends. She won't go to school, she won't get married or have children of her own. But the quality and fullness of her life is worth just as much as anyone else's, and I feel truly honored we were able to help, even in a small way.

This is just one of the ways we work for free, full lives for the children of Burma. We also do it through vaccination programs, medical checks in our children's homes, and training caregivers and medics who will be the ones

who will go into the field and save the lives of their own people. These are the people who will change lives and who will change a country. Prevention is better than a cure, and we proactively take steps to combat as many problems as we can through education and preventative medicines like de-worming tablets and vitamins. It is amazing how much of a difference just teaching the kids about washing their hands can make. We love the fact that we can directly impact someone's life for the better. If we can help change the life of one person, that person will hopefully change the lives of others. The life you change today could make all the difference tomorrow.

Partners vision stirs a picture of a wonderful place. It's a place we want to live, a community we are proud to be a part of. A place we are dedicated to bringing about. Burma today may be the epitome of desperation and poverty, but it doesn't have to be forever. Lets change something. True, it's a big, grandiose vision. We like it that way. It's a challenge. Partners Medical Programs help thousands of neglected people live a healthier, fuller life. There is no magic pill for all the things we see out here, there is no easy solution. It's long-term. It's hard. That's why we are here. 🍷

*Chris Dolan is a medic and wanna-be dentist who loves to live on the edge and is happier the more uncomfortable he is. His main focus is Partners Medical Programs, but he manages to get himself involved in a lot of other things too, such as slaughtering pigs and taking journalists on trips to the jungle.*

Helping us reach

# OUR VISION

around the world

**Around the world hundreds of people are faithfully supporting Partners every month. Without all these individuals sending us their support we could not even dream of fulfilling our vision of free, full lives for the children of Burma. On these two pages are a few examples of the fun and innovative things our friends have done to raise support for Partners**

---

## CANADA

---



Canadians are some of Partners most faithful supporters. National director Greg Toews lists some of the creative ways people have raised funds to support us:

- BBQ for Burma. Volunteers in Lloydminster, AB, braved the rain and sold burgers, pop and even flowers to raise money for Partners.
- Sale of homemade Christmas cards and wreaths with all profits going to Partners.
- T-shirts for Thailand! Used t-shirts from the students at Menno Simons Christian School to go to the Karen refugees and internally displaced kids.

*He finds that people not only stop to peruse the books but also have a conversation about what Partners are doing and give him books for future sales.*



---

## NEW ZEALAND

---



In April 2009, in the chilly later New Zealand autumn, a group of brave ladies from the Hutt Valley swam 3.3 kilometers in the ocean to raise awareness of Partners as well as to support our newest members of staff Claire and Doug Gibbons.



---

## UNITED KINGDOM

---

Neil Gibbons who works as a Principal learning Adviser for Flintshire County Council, North Wales noticed that there was a trading area available within County Hall which could be booked by approved charities. He now holds a regular book sale of quality "secondhand" books to raise money for Partners and gives out Partners literature. He finds that people not only stop to peruse the books but also have a conversation about what Partners is doing and give him books for future sales. Within the department Partners has become a charity of choice. His colleagues have been shocked to learn about the situation in Burma and are now supportive of the work of Partners. During one sale alone, lasting about 90 minutes, about £200 was raised. – Neil has found this to be an amazing experience.

---

## AUSTRALIA

---



Logan City residents Rob and Lindsay Nantes took the concept of Partners fundraiser 'Run For Relief' one step further. The idea? Pedaling some 600km from Bundaberg to Brisbane to help raise the profile of the humanitarian disaster in Burma in many of the Queensland coastal communities along the way. The first Ride for Relief was born!

Rob and Lindsay were able to share the story of the people of Burma with many people along the way, including the local media, and the generous response to their efforts was amazing. They raised \$1400 for Partners 5 Alive campaign. That makes every kilometer pedaled worth it!



A winter swim group named the Sea Cows hosted a 'Swim for Burma'. The format for the day was a 12-hour relay. In all, 50 swimmers took part and successfully swam through the afternoon to swim a combined total of 65km.

This simple idea, breathed into life through the local community, saw over \$4300 raised for Partners '5 Alive' campaign, while some 2000 beach goers on this beautiful day were touched in some way by the story of the people of Burma.



*"How cool are Partners supporters!"*  
*Dave Ellem, Partners Australia*

---

## NORWAY

---



Partners Norway had a fun version of 'Run for Relief' this spring. Karen refugees who have resettled in Norway played a big part in the event. All of the visitors were offered a free jungle-ambulance ride through the forest. A popular activity for many, and a good workout for the "ambulance porters." The ride was free, and all the participants also got a free Partners t-shirt.

When visiting schools in Norway, Partners staff do similar activities with the children. They invite local refugees to take part in the presentations, and they try to make it practical and true to real life. The children really like this.

Nambour, Australia, resident Denise Corbin decided to do a fashion parade to help the victims of conflict and oppression in Burma.

A local shop allowed Denise total access to their warehouse to choose the clothes for the models, while Partners soap and coffee products were also displayed and sold on the day. Not only was \$1000 raised from the event, but the many people who attended the event had a really fun day.

# comings and goings at PARTNERS

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF

We have had several new staff join us from Burma since the last magazine. Unfortunately, because of security reasons, we cannot print a picture of them.

### Taw Nay Soe

Taw Nay Soe grew up in a refugee camp. He is now working with Partners doing mainly video and editing. He likes to work with Partners because he gets to help his people and serve God.

### Jor Say Htoo

Jor Say Htoo comes from Karen State, Burma. He has worked with Partners since September. His main responsibilities are in the area of mapping and relief. He likes working with Partners because he can serve his people.

### Plor Htoo

Plor Htoo was born in Karen State, but lived in a refugee camp for the last six years. He is working in the area of mapping strategic areas around Karen State. He enjoys soccer very much.



### Tun Zar

Tun Zar is from Shan State, Burma. He is the co-ordinator of Partners Community Health Worker program. He gave up a well-paid job to come and work with Partners in order to better serve his people and is one of the most generous people we know.



### Kerrine

Kerrine comes from Montana, USA. She came as a volunteer to help with the children's work for two months in Oct 08, and then got pleasantly stuck! She is currently overseeing our Karen Children's Projects.



### Seng Hkawng

Seng Hkawng is from Shan State, Burma. She is Partners only ethnic Kachin staff member. She started working for Partners in March 09 doing needlecraft and sewing. She recently married Saw Nyut Way and is a very happy lady.



### Doug and Claire

Claire and Doug recently joined Partners. They come from New Zealand. Claire is the Partners Thailand National Operations Manager and Doug is the Teams and Volunteers Co-ordinator.



### Zing

Zing is from the people group Pa-Oo in Burma. He just joined Partners staff to work on our development farm. He is married and has a baby son.



### Derek

Derek joined our staff as the Communications Officer in April 09. He comes from California, speaks Thai better than most of us and manages to make meeting minutes interesting.

*And goodbye for now:*

### The Garrisons



The Garrisons joined the Partners family more than three years ago. Craig has been the Chief Operating Officer for Partners Thailand, making us a much better organization than what we were before. They will be in the US for a year before returning to Thailand where they will continue to work for the people of Burma.

### The Willis Family



The Willis family have spent the last 3 1/2 years working with Partners in Thailand and are now returning to live in Australia. Nathan will be continuing his Law studies fulltime and Sandie will study Australian Migration Law. We wish them all the best with their new ventures and thank them for the time they spent with us here.

# B A B Y B O O M

at Partners

Abigail



Joshua



Kathryn



One way that the Partners family grows is by getting new babies! Since last time the magazine was issued, we have three new Partners:

**Joshua** was born in November 2008. He is the son of Hay Blu and K'chay Wah and the little brother of 5-year old Bebe.

**Kathryn Grace (Katie)** was born April 4th 2009. Her parents are Matt and Liz Fetters, and her big sisters are Savannah and Cassie.

**Abigail Rebekah** was born April 28th 2009. Her parents are Sonya Claase and Tah Doh Moo.

*Welcome to the new members of our family.*

## THE PARTNERS ANNUAL STAFF RETREAT MARCH 2009



# PRAY

We pray for the children of Burma. That they will experience what free, full lives means. The freedom to play, to dream and to live in peace. We pray that they can live their lives to the fullest without fear, without hunger, without war.

We pray for reconciled communities living in peace. We pray that the war that has been going on for too long will not produce hatred, but the ability to forgive. We pray for unity among the different ethnic groups.

We pray for the victims of the recent attacks in Karen State. Comfort and strengthen the thousands who had to flee and whose future is more uncertain than ever. Pray for supplies to be abundant for the new refugees. Enough food. Enough medicine. Enough plastic tarps. God please provide for them.

We pray for the development farms that Partners run. May they provide long-term sustainable solutions to poverty through nutrition, healthcare, agricultural and animal husbandry training projects so that communities can thrive.

We pray for the Partners team who tirelessly work for a change in Burma. We pray for the staff working in the offices making sure the finances are straight, who are raising funds and awareness, who are keeping the wheels turning. We pray for the workers on the field who are running the children's homes, teaching, delivering supplies and doing medical care.

We pray for Aung San Suu Kyi. Comfort her in her pain and loneliness. Give her hope and continuous courage.

We pray for peace in Burma. Please end the war. Reveal yourself to the leaders who are stuck in wickedness and greed. Be the God of justice and righteousness. Reveal yourself as the Father of the fatherless.



Partners Relief & Development  
PO Box 2066  
Redlands, CA 92373  
USA

info@partnersworld.org  
[www.partnersworld.org](http://www.partnersworld.org)

**Change Service Requested**



*Karen children singing "Head, shoulders, knees and toes," at a gathering in Karen State, Burma. Photo: Partners*

**"True evangelical faith cannot lie sleeping. It clothes the naked, it comforts the sorrowful, it feeds the hungry, it shelters the destitute, it cares for the sick, it becomes all things to all people."**

*Menno Simons*