

GLOBAL DAY
OF PRAYER FOR
BURMA
— 2019 —





Clockwise from top left: a collection of landmines originally placed by the Burma Army in Kachin State; Nay Hser, a Karen eye surgeon, and his medical team examine a strabismus patient at a clinic; Saw O Moo with his family before he was murdered by the Burma Army in March 2018 (photo from web); John, a Wa pastor and evangelist with his mother; A woman fled Burma in September 2017 and now lives in a one-room bamboo hut with one of her sons and his family, in the middle of Kutapalong, the largest refugee camp in the world.

On the cover: Naw Moo Day Wah, sixteen years after being shot by the Burma Army (see page 20).

IN THIS ISSUE

4 From the Founder A letter from Dave Eubank

5 Burma Map A visual look at where this year's stories come from

6 Beyond Borders A former Iraqi soldier describes his mission in Burma

9 A Broken Peace Process Ashley South examines Burma's political climate

11 Understanding the Conflict Updates on some of Burma's ethnic areas

14 Keeping the Faith The persecution of Christians in Wa State

15 A Fading Refuge The current state of nine refugee camps along the Thai/
Burma border

16 Beyond Devastation Suffering and perseverance among the Rohingya

19 Freedom! A Partners Relief and Development team member reflects on
freedom and the Rohingya

20 Do You Remember Me? 16 years later, a reunion, then on the run again

23 Beyond Vision Giving more than eye care in Karen State

26 Praying as Parents Two new parents reflect on how they now pray
differently for Burma's oppressed people

28 A Faith Beyond Religion A Karen medic shares about finding God and his
decision to be baptized

The Global Day of Prayer for Burma happens every year on the second Sunday of
March. Please join us in praying for Burma.

For more information, email info@prayforburma.org.

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*From left to right: David Eubank,
Naw Moo Day Wah and Naw Ler Per*



*David Eubank prays with Naw Paw
Tha, the widow of Saw O Moo*

FROM THE FOUNDER

On the cover of this magazine is Naw Moo Day Wah, whom we first met after she was shot by the Burma Army in 2001. She was eight years old then and when we met her again in January 2018 she was married and had a new baby. “Will the Burma Army attack again, will I have to run again?” she asked. Two months later the Burma Army did attack and she did run again.

A few months later, we met Naw Paw Tha, whose husband, an NGO worker, was gunned down by the Burma Army in March 2018. She is in hiding now with her seven children and no justice has been done. Instead, the Burma Army continues to build up its forces near where she and over 2,500 displaced Karen live in northern Karen State. We prayed with her in the jungle after her husband was killed and are helping her and her children. When we gave her a medal in honor of her husband she started to cry. This broke my heart and I asked God to help us.

Over 25 years of working in Burma and still murders, shootings, and displacements like this go on. The Burma Army attacks its own people with impunity and there is no change in this.

This is tragic and would seem hopeless except we know God cares and that the prayers of people change things. So as you read this year’s magazine, please pray and ask God how to pray. Please pray for love over hate, justice over revenge, freedom over slavery, reconciliation over unforgiveness. Jesus gives us the power to do this when we ask Him. In the midst of evil and suffering we do see God’s love shine through people as they choose to help each other in the face of great odds.

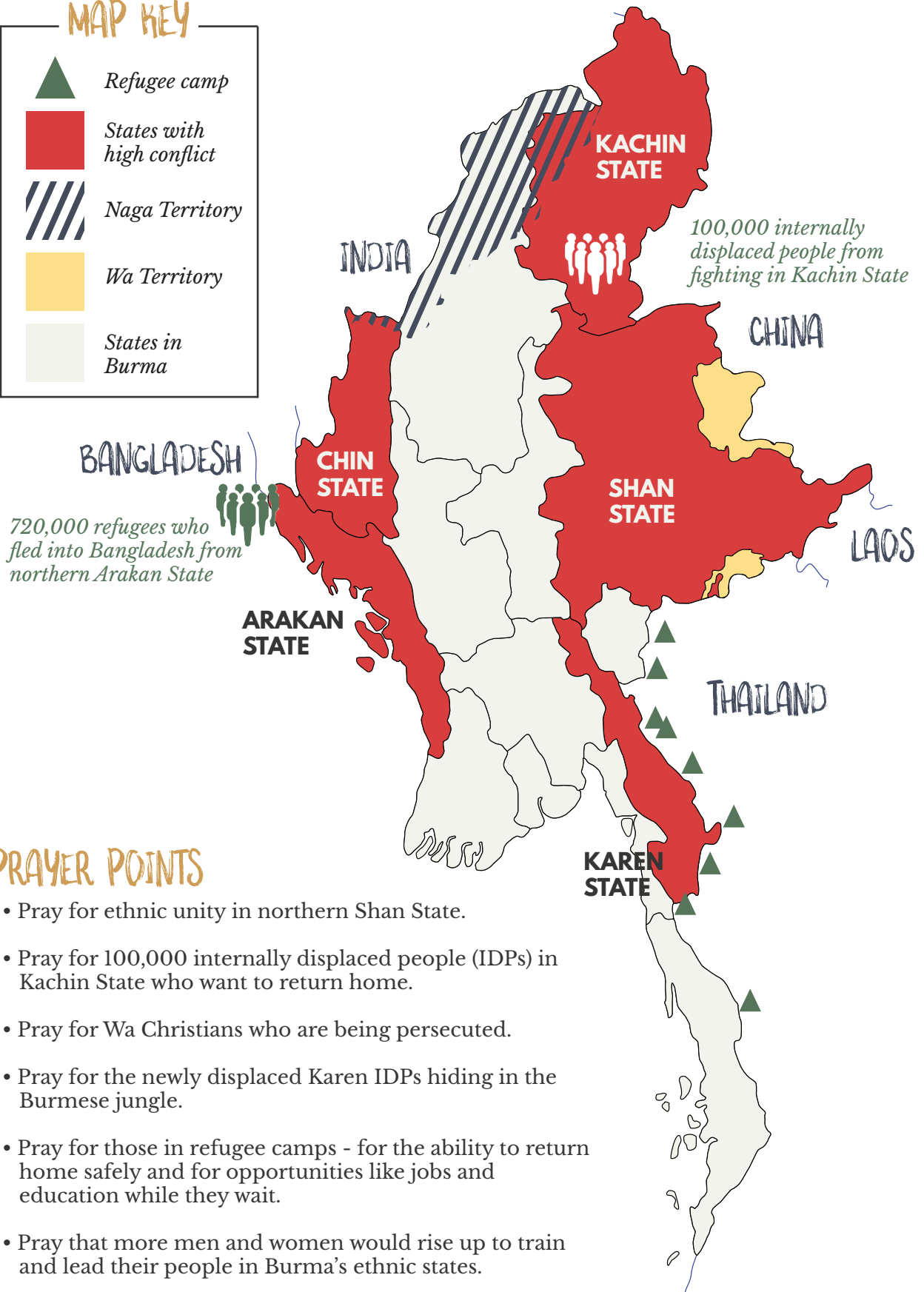
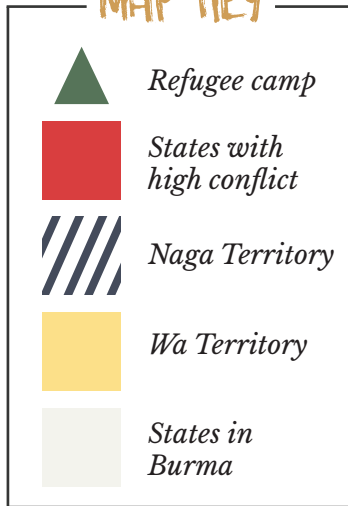
God only has us do what He helps us to do. We do not have to and cannot help everyone, but we each can help those that God puts in front of us to help. It is the power of Jesus that enables us to help others and brings new life and hope for all of us.

Thank you for caring, praying, and helping.

God bless you,

David Eubank, family and all of CCB

MAP KEY



PRAYER POINTS

- Pray for ethnic unity in northern Shan State.
- Pray for 100,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Kachin State who want to return home.
- Pray for Wa Christians who are being persecuted.
- Pray for the newly displaced Karen IDPs hiding in the Burmese jungle.
- Pray for those in refugee camps - for the ability to return home safely and for opportunities like jobs and education while they wait.
- Pray that more men and women would rise up to train and lead their people in Burma's ethnic states.

BEYOND BORDERS

LOVE AND HELP FROM BURMA TO IRAQ

My name is Mohammed. I am a former Iraqi soldier who worked with the FBR team on the front lines in the operation of liberating and ridding Mosul of the extreme terrorists called ISIS. During the Mosul campaign, I was shot six times. After I recovered, I left work with the Iraqi Army and I started working with the Free Burma Rangers in Iraq.

Then I was invited to Burma. I did not know anything about Burma and what is going on there. On April 18, 2018, I traveled out of Iraq for the first time.

In Burma, we walked on foot in the forests and up very high and beautiful mountains. I never tried this kind of work, walking long distances, up high mountains and through dense forests. It is very difficult for ordinary people to do; as a soldier I have some fitness and I was trained by Mr. David Eubank. Still, it was very difficult for me and I imagined that I felt death from the intensity of the fatigue.

There, you will not find drinking water easily and food is very little. The people like rice. We ate rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I saw poor people who do not have the basic requirements of life, such as drinking water, electricity and

communications. I cannot believe what I saw there in 2018.

Even though the people do not have anything, they do not ask for anything. Even if they need something I have, they do not ask for it. My God, I never saw people with that kind of dignity in my life. Even though they are needy and have nothing they gave us gifts that they made with their hands, such as woven bags and other handiwork. And they all wanted to invite us to eat with them.

I have not seen people like this before: good and patient and brave and faithful. If you leave your things – money, anything – they do not touch them. I was very surprised that they are so good; it is hard for me to describe with words.

These people really need help and have been crushed. When I saw them I asked myself about the people from Burma who were coming to Iraq. Many of the rangers are being harassed by the Burmese army. They need help, and they come to my country, Iraq, which is plagued by fierce war. They treat wounded Iraqi Army. They also help wounded civilians, and they stand together with us. This is not normal. I



Top: Mohammed and Peter Eubank help distribute tarps to new Karen IDPs in Karen State, Burma.
 Bottom: Eido, a Yezidi commander, encourages recently displaced Karen IDPs.

LOVE AND HELP DOES NOT STOP AT YOUR COUNTRY.
IT IS LOVE AND HELP FOR ALL HUMANITY, ALL OVER THE WORLD.

wonder if I can understand all these helping hands.

This kindness helped my country, not because it is my country but for humanity. Love and help does not stop at your country. It is love and help for all humanity, all over the world. I learned from these people many things, like patience, simplicity, love, faith and courage.

I learned also from this blessed family, as if I was a young child. I still learn from them, ever since I met Mr. Dave in 2017, in the front line on the west side of Mosul. There I saw the beautiful young children, this woman and this old man, in this hell with the dead and wounded everywhere and attacks by suicide bombers and mortars and rockets everywhere, and snipers and all the tools of killing and death. I asked them, "What are you doing here?"

He said to me, "We are here to help you, and your colleagues from the army and the wounded civilians."

I marveled, and I told him, "You are crazy, you leave your country, America, beautiful and safe, like paradise, and come here to this place, almost like hell. Take me to America. I'm so tired of this situation. Are you crazy?"

He started to smile and said to me, "The Lord sent me." Then he thought more and said, "My God is still good; in this world good still exists, even though I only see evil in front of my eyes."

I never saw courage and strength like this before. It is not normal. He ran ahead of us in the battlefields. He and his family and his team gave everyone inspiration in the fighting. They did programs for children and put smiles on their faces – and not only the children, also the adults, the soldiers of the army and the civilians. At that time I told him, "I want to work with you."

He said, "I have no strength and no money and I am very small and weak."

Since that time I loved that man and his family. They left their beautiful country and came for me. I will work with this family and I will die for them, and will spread the love of the Lord with them. In my life I saw in this man strength and courage and the love of God and others. They are not normal.

In my country of Iraq, we have had to fight for liberation and rid ourselves of terrorism, and we have needed prayer. I never thought about another place, like Burma, and never thought I could go there. I was surprised when I saw the lives of the people there; I told myself, these people really need help and I could come to help. I told them, "I am a fighter, a soldier, and I can help you. I am grateful to meet you and I now pray a new prayer for you from my heart: I love you so much and pray for your nation, for a free and dignified life for you."



A BROKEN PEACE PROCESS

From late 2011 through 2012, U Thein Sein's transitional government agreed (or in some cases reconfirmed) ceasefires with ten of the eleven largest Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), and in 2013 committed to holding multi-lateral political dialogue including discussion of constitutional reform. The new round of ceasefires focused on southern Shan, Karenni, Karen, and Mon states and the Tanintharyi Region. Elsewhere in the country, the path toward peace was less clear, with heavy fighting over the last seven years particularly in Kachin and northern Shan states. In 2011 the Tatmadaw launched offensives against the Shan State Progress Party, and then the Kachin Independence Organisation, breaking 21- and 17-year ceasefires respectively, and displacing more than 100,000 civilians.

Previous military governments had negotiated ceasefires in the north, while launching military offensives in the southeast. Since 2011, the situation has been reversed.

On 15 October 2015 eight EAOs, mostly based in southeast Burma, signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), together with the President, senior government leaders, and the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief. The NCA committed all parties, including the Tatmadaw, to a political dialogue aimed explicitly at forming a democratic and federal system of government. For the EAO signatories, the NCA was seen as the best deal they could achieve in the last months of

Burma Army soldiers on the move in Ler Mu Plaw, Karen State. Photo from a recon mission, 2018.

AT THE END OF 2018, THE PEACE PROCESS THEREFORE LOOKS TO BE IN WORSE SHAPE THAN ANY TIME IN THE LAST SEVEN YEARS.

the U Thein Sein regime, as a means to then push for significant constitutional reform. This milestone in the peace process was diminished by the fact that a dozen other EAOs were either barred from or refused to sign the NCA. On 13 February 2018 two more EAOs, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Lahu Democratic Union, signed the NCA.

Following the NCA, the government/Tatmadaw and EAO signatories established Joint Monitoring Committees at the Union level, and in Shan, Karen/Kayin, and Mon states and Tanintharyi and Bago regions. A process of political dialogue was also initiated, with the first Union-level meeting held at Naypyidaw in January 2016. The new NLD-led government initiated follow-up Union Peace Conferences (UPC) in late August 2016, May 2017 and June 2018 (the so-called “21st Century Panglong Conferences”, which were actually held in Naypyidaw). The NCA mandated ethnic nationality-based political dialogues for those communities associated with EAOs that had signed the agreement. The Karen, Chin and Pa-Oh dialogues in early 2017 were fairly successful, with a wide range of stakeholders meeting for the first time in the country’s history to agree to common positions on a range of issues. Following its ascension to the NCA, the NMSP also held a successful Mon National Political Dialogue in Ye Town,

in May 2018. However, since 2017 the Tatmadaw has blocked consultations in government-controlled areas, and prevented dialogues in Shan and Rakhine states. Furthermore, it remains unclear if and how concerns and aspirations raised during sub-national political dialogues can be included in the Union-level peace talks; for example, many issues discussed in the Karen political dialogue were omitted from the agenda of the subsequent second UPC.

The May 2017 UPC endorsed the first 37 principles of a proposed Union Peace Accord. However, these mostly followed existing constitutional provisions, and did little to address ethnic nationality leaders’ demands for greater autonomy for their states, civilian oversight of the military or more inclusive union-level institutions. The UPC held in July 2018 saw the agreement of 14 more points, but these explicitly excluded issues related to politics and economics and signified no progress towards constitutional change. This lack of political progress has been compounded by recent Myanmar Army attacks (in early and mid/late 2018) on KNU ceasefire positions in the Papun Hills (KNLA 5 Brigade). At the end of 2018, the peace process therefore looks to be in worse shape than any time in the last seven years.

Dr. Ashley South is an independent writer and consultant, and Research Fellow at Chiang Mai University. For an analysis of the peace process in late 2018, see Myanmar Interim Arrangements Research Project, Between Ceasefires and Federalism: Exploring Interim Arrangements in the Myanmar Peace Process (Covenant Consult November 2018).



Villagers attempt to travel on a road destroyed by flooding.

NAGA HILLS

In the remote Naga Hills of Sagaing Division, villagers reported that though they have seen some improvements in recent years, such as the Burma Army no longer forcing them to provide unpaid porters to carry their supplies, they continue to experience food scarcity and environmental problems.

Additionally, while there is a government polio inoculation scheme in place, healthcare provision is almost non-existent and often difficult to reach. One village leader said: "The villagers are commonly suffering from coughing and diarrhea. In the raining season sometimes we suffer the death of our children from those diseases. We have to send the patients to [other villages] but it is very hard to afford to pay for a motorbike. From our village to Dunghee it is three days on foot, to Lahe six days, and to Namyun ten. For emergency patients, we have to carry the sick."

In June, the area suffered heavy flooding, destroying roads and bridges and causing landslides. A relief team responded to the flooding, giving food and medical assistance to villagers. On June 18, flooding struck Mobilute Town, a town created by the Burmese government when it forced families and some entire villages to relocate there in 2014.

A villager (who asked to not be named) said, "We have no help from government nor any other groups... This is the first time that we are getting help for flood victims, though we are facing such floods every year for the last three years. The government has been neglecting and ignoring our suffering and no humanitarian aid has been provided to us."

SHAN STATE

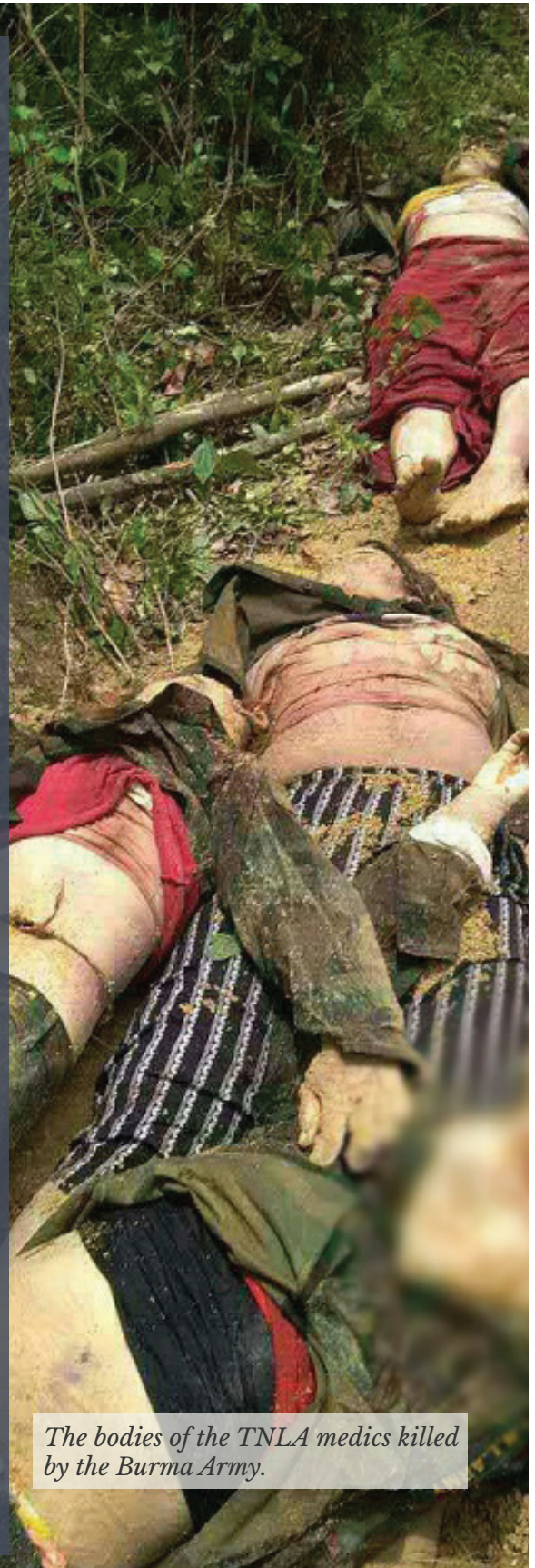
Due to its diverse and mixed population the situation in Shan State continues to be highly complex and riven with conflict.

The ceasefires between the Burma Army and the two largest ethnic forces, the United Wa State Army and the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) have largely held, though there have been sporadic clashes between the military and the SSA-S throughout the year, noticeably three days of heavy fighting in July 2018.

However, the SSA-S has expressed concerns over attempts by the Burma Army to build a road through southern Shan as part of the Chinese “One Belt One Road” initiative and it is possible that this may lead to further clashes and a possible collapse of the ceasefire.

Additionally, the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) has been heavily engaged with the Burma Army throughout the last year, causing more misery, and even launched an attack on a casino in the Burma Army-controlled town of Muse in May that resulted in multiple casualties.

According to a Kachin Independence Army report, on July 11, the Burma Army captured, tortured, and killed six TNLA female medics. The Burma Army had ambushed vehicles carrying the medics and also killed one TNLA soldier in the onset of the attack. Another TNLA soldier and two civilians fled the Burma Army assault against the two trucks that transported the group.



The bodies of the TNLA medics killed by the Burma Army.



CHIN STATE

Chin State in western Burma receives little media attention, but continues to suffer the effects of poor governance and ongoing conflict.

Landmines remain present in the state and a hazard to civilians. In September 2018, a 28-year-old woman died after stepping on a mine while picking vegetables in the jungle with friends. In October, Mr. U Hwe Htan, age 35 and the father of six, stepped on a mine and was severely hurt.

The situation in Chin State is made more problematic by fighting between the Burma Army and Arakan Army, which has caused many villagers to flee. In other areas, Chin villagers report that the Arakan Army has driven them from their land to have unimpeded access between their bases in Rakhine State and Bangladesh, and the front lines.

Additionally, Chin Christians have long faced discrimination and persecution at the hands of the Burma Army and local authorities and inter-religious tensions continue in the area. In August 2018, a Christian funeral party was forbidden from crossing a bridge by local authorities and local Buddhists, forcing the burial party to wade the coffin across the river in Magwe Division. The burial party had sought permission to cross the bridge for the funeral but had been forbidden on the grounds of their religion.

A Chin relief team leader said:

“Pray for these displaced villagers and we hope our Father and Lord will protect them. We request to all hearing of this area’s situation to help and support them.”

Mr. U Hwe Htan, after stepping on a landmine in Chin State.

KEEPING THE FAITH

PERSECUTION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN WA STATE

My great-grandfather first met with the Wa in 1908, when a white pony led them to him in Kengtung, Burma. My uncle often commented on how the Wa were stubborn and hard-headed. In that I saw parallels between the stories of the Jewish people in the Old Testament of the Bible so decided that God must be deeply committed in love to them.

Are you aware that the outbreak of persecution of believers in China is also impacting parts of Myanmar? China has encouraged the Wa government to shut down any kind of traceably foreign religious activity. Though there has been ongoing localized persecution, in Wa State, in September a statewide policy was released that any churches begun in 1993 or after will be shut down and destroyed. Those of you familiar with the region will know this is when the gospel began to be carried more actively back into Wa State.

I have heard the cries of women whose husbands are in jail, of children whose homes are destroyed; I have seen the tears of leaders who have watched years of labor and love be wiped out. The Wa church was not ready for this kind of persecution. They do not know how to go underground, how to structure into cells - but they can learn.

Maybe their Chinese brothers and sisters next door in Yunnan will teach them? We can pray.

I am encouraged. I know that many have signed papers with the Wa government, denying their faith in order to be released from prison. But I also know many who have refused and this indicates that a deep ownership of the gospel is already rooted in some. This is not a time for us to judge people over very difficult choices but to pray and encourage all.

I have a Wa friend, a mother of two, who has a warrant out for her arrest because she is a passionate evangelist and serves children at risk. I remember almost 20 years ago when she met Jesus. She was not in the Wa State when the persecution came. We were so glad for her as she is a strong leader in the church. The other day I received word that her heart was burning so strong for the Wa State that she returned, saying, "I will come home even if I must die or suffer imprisonment; this is the place God has called me." This kind of witness burns like a halogen floodlight in the darkness. This is how we should pray...that the witness of God's people burns bright in Wa State.

Written by Marcus Young of Divine Inheritance.

A FADING REFUGE

In 1984, around 10,000 Karen refugees arrived to Thailand as a result of Burma's civil war, the first of an influx that eventually peaked at 150,000, in 2005.

Political changes in Burma starting in 2010 have led to hope that the refugees will be able to return home; the international community has begun shifting its aid away from the camps to programs inside Burma. However, real change has moved more slowly and, with few signs of good faith on the part of the Burma military or government, not many people are willing to move back. The current official refugee population in Thailand is around 92,000 people in nine camps.*



**BAN MAI
NAI SOI**

9,200
Est. 1989



**BAN MAE
SURIN**

2,201
Est. 1991



**MAE LA
OON**

9,415
Est. 2004



**MAE RA
MA LUANG**

10,473
Est. 1995



MAE LA

35,500
Est. 1984



**UMPIEM
MAI**

11,296
Est. 1999



NU PO

10,455
Est. 1997



**BAN DON
YANG**

2,642
Est. 1997



THAM HIN

6,168
Est. 1997



** Camp information sourced from The Border Consortium.*

“The Thai and Burmese governments do not recognize the education that we receive in the camps. Even if we have a good education in the camp, we cannot get a job in Thailand or Burma. There are no job opportunities in the camps either so we cannot get work when we grow up.”

- A Karenni refugee in Ban Mai Nai Soi

“I want the world to pray for the refugees. I wish that the world could understand the truth of what is happening in Burma - that things are not improving in Burma and that we are still stuck in the refugee camps.”

- A Karen refugee in Mae La Camp

BEYOND DEVASTATION

SUFFERING AND PERSEVERANCE AMONG THE ROHINGYA

The suffering of the Rohingya people in 2017 is beyond superlatives. The brutality in each story is difficult to fathom, but as you hear one after another, they also become sadly repetitious. Masses of humanity have been uprooted from their villages in Burma, heaped into refugee camps in Bangladesh and await an unknown fate. Once again, our ability to comprehend how one person suffers is overwhelmed by the scale on which the suffering is happening.

The oppression of the Rohingya people has been ongoing for years, but on August 25th, 2017, as tens of thousands of fleeing refugees turned into hundreds of thousands, it became an issue the world could no longer ignore. Displacement on this scale, happening so quickly, was an extraordinary event. The Burma Army conducted a near-eradication of Rohingya people from Burma with incredible efficiency as more than 600,000 people fled their homes in just three months. That number would climb to 720,000 as people kept running.

The stories from the refugees paint a clear picture: the Burma Army surrounded villages, shot indiscriminately, killed villagers as they fled and chased them to neighboring Bangladesh. Then the soldiers burned the villages to the ground. Again and again. Satellite

A lone tree stands in one of the camps. Most trees were cut down to make firewood and room for the refugees.





Satellite images show the before and after of Burma Army attacks on Naribill Village in northern Arakan State. On the left, taken in Jan. 2017, a red circle highlights a mosque. On the right, taken in April 2018, only the mosque is visible in the charred remains of the village. Photos from Google Earth.

photos of burned villages corroborate these accounts.

In the aftermath, it's tempting to think it's too late to do anything, to think that, like a cancer that is too far progressed to treat, we can only watch in despair as a slow, painful end comes. Looking at the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, now almost a year old and stretching as far as the eye can see, it's easy to feel a creeping resignation and hopelessness.

Five young Rohingya men are not resigned. They are just getting started. With barely 10 days of relief team training under their belt, they have a few skills and a full determination to never surrender. For their first relief mission, they spent weeks trying to find a way back into Burma.

They wanted to see the scar that the Burma Army had left on their home and tell the world what that scar looks like. They wanted to help those who were still there. Most of all, they wanted to say, "This is our home. You can destroy our houses, kill our people, starve us,

chase us – but you cannot stop us from claiming our home, you cannot stop us from loving and serving our people."

And they did. They snuck across the border in the middle of the night, avoiding patrols. They hiked for hours in the dark in monsoon rains. They hid in the jungle, sneaking out to take photos and find the GPS points of villages that had been destroyed by the Burma Army, even as soldiers continued to occupy and patrol these areas. And they safely returned with this information to show the world.

The world is starting to know what happened. The United Nations has labeled the actions of the Burma Army genocide, recommending the generals in charge of this operation be tried in the International Criminal Court. These are positive steps, but the truth is that we missed our chance to intervene before the fact. And, like using a bandaid on a cancer we did not catch in time, these measures seem too little, too late.

But these young men do not believe



it is too late. They do not want to stand back and do nothing. They are planning to head back in. They feel there is still a lot to do. There are still Rohingya people over there who need help. These young men want to go and provide that help and they know others who want to also. They know they are small - but that is how a movement spreads: small acts of love, little glimpses of hope, a knowledge that they are not forgotten, and that God has a plan for them.

So maybe cancer is not the best analogy; maybe fire is. A wildfire can rage through a forest if not caught early. If ignored at the beginning it will soon grow too large to control. It will leave giant swaths of black – blackened trees, blackened ground, seemingly a lifeless landscape. But that ‘seemingly’ is important – for that is all it is. The seeds of life are buried deep and they often escape the fire and life will return. We see these seeds in these young men.

Their earth has been scorched – literally – but there is still life. Maybe it is buried, but it is enough to not despair.

In 2018, the Bangladesh and Burma governments made several agreements about repatriation of refugees, without input from either refugee organizations or international aid and rights groups. In October, the Burma government sent a list of 2000 people for initial repatriation and a date to begin was set. Those on the list went into hiding, and the planned repatriation has thus far failed to happen.

Most of the Rohingya people want only to return home and live their lives in peace. However, until they are given a pathway to citizenship, a guarantee of security, and the restoration of their destroyed homes, they would rather stay in refugee camps than return to Burma, where the government continues to deny any wrongdoing.

Contributed by the Free Burma Rangers

FREEDOM!

Freedom! I can remember sitting in a movie theatre back in 1995, watching Braveheart and sobbing uncontrollably as I heard William Wallace (played by Mel Gibson) cry out that word just before he died.

Last month I was again brought to tears by an impassioned cry for freedom. This time it wasn't a movie and it wasn't history. It was real and it was the present. It was a cry from a young man (I will call him Jay to protect his identity), who for the last six years has had his basic human rights stripped away from him: no right to citizenship, no opportunity to graduate university despite paying the fees and passing the exams, no access to healthcare, no permanent home.

He is from a Rohingya village just outside of Sittwe City in Rakhine State, Myanmar. I was with a Partners team that was monitoring the distribution of rice to families who, since 2012, have been unable to leave their village to access work, school or health care. When the violence erupted here in 2012 most of the Rohingya who had been living in and around Sittwe for generations had to flee. With their homes and mosques burnt to the ground, they were herded into concentration camps outside of town. They now depend on aid from the UN to survive. Others were not chased from their villages at that time and remain in their original homes. Their situation is almost worse because,

though they're still in their homes, they don't have freedom to move outside of the village – and they do not have access to the aid given to those in the camps.

Jay has fearlessly been working with Partners to distribute rice and other basic food items to his fellow Rohingya people. My heart broke as Jay told us, "We are grateful for your help but we do not want to have to take the rice - all we want is freedom." It seemed so unfair that a most basic human right is denied to so many people just because they are different. These incredibly resilient and hospitable people are extremely grateful for the help that Partners has consistently given over the years. To be given a regular supply of rice, which forms the basis of their diet, means that whatever meager income they can generate can be spent on other essentials. But all they want, all they need, is freedom.

We promised our friends that day that we would continue to tell their story and advocate for their cause with our respective governments. So, although I say a big thank you to those of you who contribute funds so that we can provide rice for some Rohingya communities, this is only a temporary solution. What they really want is freedom. What they need is freedom. I encourage you to do something to advocate for their freedom too – write letters to your politicians, share their stories on social media, and, if you are a person of prayer, pray.

Contributed by Partners Relief and Development (PRAD)

DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

16 YEARS LATER, A REUNION - THEN ON THE RUN AGAIN

“We were working in our fields, cutting rice. Suddenly I heard gunshots and I looked up to see Burma Army soldiers firing at us from the edge of the jungle 30 or 40 yards away. Uncle Ray Bee Wah was hit many times and fell dead; my cousin, Naw Ler Per, was hit in the arm and bleeding; my brother, Saw She Nay Htoo, was hit in the neck, and our friend, Saw Ti Tu, was shot too. I was hit in the stomach and fell down. The firing was intense and then the soldiers started moving towards us. Someone helped me to my feet and we ran for our lives. Bullets flew by and we thought we would die. We kept running as the Burma Army continued shooting. We escaped and that night walked to a hiding place. When we arrived we were taken care of by other villagers and our Karen Army medics. I was eight years old.”

It was January 2018 and Naw Moo Day Wah was recounting a Burma Army attack from October 2002, near Ler Mu Plaw Village in northern Karen State. On that day, troops had burned the villagers' homes, killed her uncle, and wounded four others, including her and two other children.

I first heard of her in November 2002, two weeks after she was shot. I was at home and received a photo from a Karen medic who had treated Naw Moo Day Wah and the others. It was a picture of her lying unconscious on a bamboo mat. The note with the photo said, “Please pray for this girl, she is eight years old and was shot in the stomach by the Burma Army. She is in a coma and we are trying to keep her alive.”

I looked at the little girl in the photo and felt a tightness in my chest and then tears came. I prayed God would save her somehow, but felt hopeless. How could she survive, with no chance in the jungle for the complex surgery needed? I prayed for her and as I prepared for the next mission I felt very sad.

More than one month later, in the middle of a relief mission, our team came to the area where Naw Moo Day Wah had been shot. The collection of bamboo huts that served as a jungle clinic for these displaced people was two weeks' walk from the border. I had not heard anything more about her and assumed she was dead. When



I met the medic who had sent me the photo, I thanked him for all he did and for sending me the photo. I asked him to show me the grave of Naw Moo Day Wah.

“Grave?” he asked. “There is no grave. Naw Moo Day Wah is alive. She came out of the coma after eight days and with God’s help we nursed her to health. The bullet is still in her but she is alive. Do you want to see her?”

“Yes!” I said with wonder. In a few minutes Naw Moo Day Wah and her cousin, Naw Ler Per, who had been shot at the same time, came up. I dropped to my knees and thanked God they were alive. I told them how I had seen her picture and prayed but thought there was no hope. I thanked God and the medics and told Naw Moo Day Wah and Naw Ler Per that we would help. A bullet was still inside Naw Moo Day Wah and Naw Ler Per’s arm needed surgery.



After the relief mission was complete we brought the two girls out of Burma with us. Naw Ler Per’s surgery was successful and she regained use of her arm but x-rays showed that the bullet in Naw Moo Day Wah had gone through her liver and was lodged next to her spine. Any operation to try to remove it was too dangerous. We prayed with her and asked her how she felt. She said, “I am ok, the bullet doesn’t hurt too much, I will try.” We kept her at the hospital for another month and daily she got better. Finally she told us, “I do not feel the bullet very much anymore. Thank you. I am ready to go home.” She went home and we did not see her again.



From top to bottom: Naw Moo Day Wah showing where the Burma Army shot her; the x-ray showing the lodged bullet; Naw Moo Day Wah (left) with her cousin and their babies, 2018.

Sixteen years later, in 2018, we were on a relief mission back at the place where Naw Moo Day Wah was shot. Villagers were finally beginning to return home. The Karen had signed a

The number of IDPs from this particular Burma Army offensive eventually grew to more than 2000. Negotiations finally halted the offensive before the Karen were pushed to all out war. Yet it is clear the villagers' concerns are well-founded: the heart of the Burma Army has not changed. Please pray that the heart of the Burma Army, and its leaders, would change. Until then, shot and fleeing children will continue to grow up to be shot and fleeing parents as the cycle of violence continues.



conditional ceasefire with the Burma Army and fighting was supposed to be over. The returning villagers were still nervous, and had repositioned their new homes behind a mountain out of sight of Burma Army camps on the ridges above. “The Burma Army chased us out many years ago and burned our villages and now we are trying to rebuild. But we are not sure the ceasefire will turn out and there have been two attacks by the Burma Army in the last two months. But this is our land and we will keep trying to rebuild our homes and pray that God keeps the Burma Army from attacking us.”

A woman carrying a child walked up to where we were camped and said, “Do you remember me? I am Naw Moo Day Wah, the little girl you helped. I am now married and this is my baby.” We gathered around her in joy at the miracle of her life and new family. She

told us the bullet was still in her and she had felt it in childbirth but she was otherwise fine. Her brother and cousin had also come. All had healed from their wounds. Naw Moo Day Wah, speaking for all of them, said, “This is our land, with God’s help we will stay. We need help but we want to stay.”

That meeting was on January 8, 2018. On March 5th, less than two months later, the Burma Army again invaded Ler Mu Plaw Village. Naw Moo Day Wah and her family, along with 1700 other villagers from the area, were forced to flee again. This time she had a baby to take with her. On April 5th, as the Burma Army continued its aggression, a Karen human rights worker, Saw O Moo, was shot and killed when Burma Army soldiers ambushed him more than one kilometer off their ceasefire-sanctioned routs of travel in Karen State.

Written by David Eubank



BEYOND VISION

GIVING MORE THAN EYE CARE IN KAREN STATE

It's late in the afternoon under a burning sun in Karen State. A Karen medic named Nay Hser stretches his back after finishing his last surgery of the day. This last surgery makes 16 cataract surgeries completed today.

Outside the operating room are another 50 or so patients and family members. They've come from all over Karen State's Doo Pla Ya District after hearing that the Karen and foreign doctors will be back at the clinic for a week. Whether they've walked for hours on foot, ridden motorbikes over rough roads, or come in a group on a tractor/trailer combo known as an iron buffalo, they've all come for the same reason - to receive free vision care.

During any given clinic session, Nay Hser and his team can see upwards of 300 patients and complete over 100 surgeries. He travels with one to two assistants and will spend the year conducting clinics in all seven districts of Karen State. By the end of the year, they anticipate treating 1,000 surgical patients, not including patients who do not need surgery.

In between exams and surgeries, younger medics will take care of clinic needs like sterilizing equipment, conducting vision exams, and caring for patients, laughing,



Above: Nay Hser gives post-op care instructions to 16 patients who underwent cataract surgery the previous day. On previous page: After the bandages come off, surgical patients receive a new pair of sunglasses to help with their healing process. They'll spend another day or two in the clinic before returning home.

joking, answering questions, and easing worries about their conditions.

The needs range from basic eye exams for reading glasses to more complex cases like eye removals or strabismus surgery to correct crossed eyes. In Burma, medical care is often only found in central Burma, where it is expensive and in Burmese rather than ethnic languages. For the Karen, then, medical care is hard to obtain. Some do seek treatment in central Burma, only to have more complications happen.

For one patient, a 20-year-old woman named Naw Wah Gay, this wasn't her first time seeking medical treatment for her eyes. Five years before seeing Nay Hser and his team, she had sought care from a Burmese doctor in Yangon for her crossed eye. That doctor had done surgery but her eye grew worse from complications.

During her initial exam with a visiting American doctor and the Karen staff, Naw

Wah Gay started crying. "I was scared to come here, scared I would go blind and worried that this doctor wouldn't be able to fix it," she shared later. Her concern showed in the seriousness of her face before and immediately after her strabismus surgery. But her expression changed into a smile when she saw her results the next day. "I feel beautiful," she replied when asked how she felt afterward.

Another patient, 18-year-old Dah Ler, had waited his whole life for this kind of opportunity and came when his father, a cataract patient the year before, encouraged him to do so. A chicken had pecked out Dah Ler's eye as a one-year-old and he went for treatment in Mae Sot, Thailand, the following year. The prosthetic placed in his eye socket fell out and so Dah Ler spent the next 16 years without an eye or anything in its place. He arrived at the clinic with long hair covering his missing eye. During the week, Nay Hser and his team would clean and prep the eye socket and then fit it with an

artificial eye cap before Dah Ler returned home.

Five months later, Dah Ler came back to the clinic for a follow-up appointment. This time, he walked in with a haircut and a big smile, no longer needing to hide his eye. “I like my new eye. I have a better life now,” he said.

Other patients, like 40-year-old Naw Pu, have been here before. She first came in 2017 for cataract surgery and had now returned for surgery on her other eye. Like most of the patients who come, Naw Pu heard about the clinic through word of mouth: Eliya had told them. Eliya is a Karen medic who has established several clinics along the border and does frequent missions into the jungle to treat patients there.

“Everyone knows Eliya,” she says. “We believe him and love him. I am happy and grateful for Eliya’s clinic and the doctors.”

He and Nay Hser are just two examples of Karen people who have committed to helping their own people however they can.

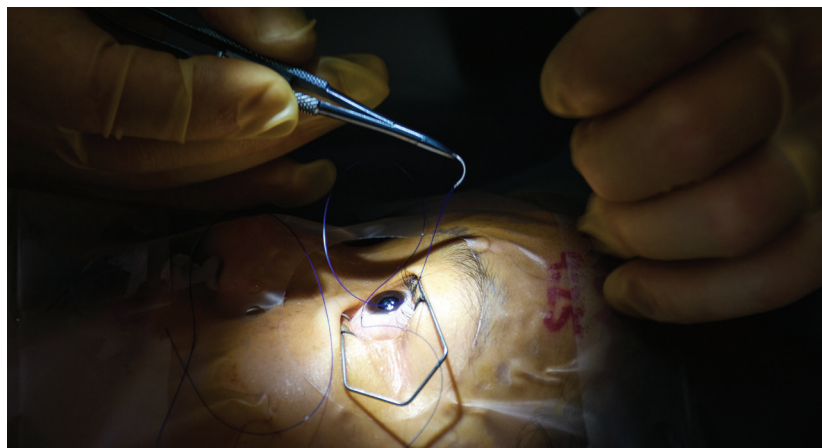
As the conflict in Burma continues, stalling out development and much-needed aid, medics like these become even more instrumental in helping people in Karen State. Beyond medical care, they offer hope for growth and opportunity in Karen State.

Please pray for medics like Nay Hser and Eliya as they work in Karen State. Pray that more clinics and infrastructure can be built. Pray, too, that more medics and health workers will be trained to serve.

Contributed by Burma Vision



Dr. Robert Arnold, a visiting ophthalmologist from Alaska, shows Naw Wah Gay her post-op photo, the first look at the results of her successful strabismus surgery to fix a crossed eye. He founded Burma Vision which provides vision and hearing care throughout Karen State.



In remote areas and with limited staff, Karen patients receive a nerve block for surgery but are otherwise alert and awake, laying perfectly still during procedures. Here, a patient receives sutures to help pull the eyeball to the side during a strabismus surgery.

PRAYING AS PARENTS

A FATHER'S VIEW

I have been going to Kachin State since 2011, shortly after the 17-year ceasefire broke down. But during a mission last year, I saw the internally displaced people (IDPs) and situation through a different lens – as a new parent.

In 2017, my wife gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, and protective and fatherly feelings I never knew I possessed surfaced as I looked at my newborn son.

In February 2018, we traveled as a family up to Kachin State to conduct a relief mission. We visited several IDP camps where the FBR teams led the children in Good Life Club programs and our medics treated hundreds of patients. I realized, while looking at the first and second-grade children, that they had been the same age as my son when they first fled the Burma Army.

As a parent, seeing these little kids in the camp struck me in a new way. I began to understand the fear parents must have, knowing the Burma Army in their mountaintop forts could shell them at any time; knowing if their child gets sick, this same army is an obstacle to accessing health care.

The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) has been helping to provide safe housing and food, but IDPs still endure more hardship and danger than before Burma Army attacks started.

I acutely felt the vulnerability of our

little baby – and I felt a new anger towards the Burma Army for the way they attack families all over Burma. This same army has attacked the Karen people for almost 70 years. This same army has attacked the Kachin for the last seven years with fighter jets, mortars, machine guns, rape, torture, and the use of civilians as mine sweepers. And this same army is paid for by the Burmese central government. It is all the same army.

I feel angry that in the 20 years FBR has worked in Burma, the army has not changed. The 'democratically-elected' government has not spoken out against the army attacking its own citizens.

I feel frustrated when western governments pander to Burma's government while ignoring the human rights abuses perpetrated by Burma's armed forces. I feel angry the National Ceasefire Agreement includes disarmament, meaning ethnic civilians would have no defense against the army.

In Sha It Yang IDP camp, as the temperature hovers just above freezing, we try to keep our 5-month-old son warm as we sleep on the ground in an IDP shelter. These parents must do the same for their kids every night, hoping their children don't get sick and that they don't have to run again.

My prayers are for the Burma Army to stop their attacks, for the IDPs to be safe, warm and well-fed and for all of us to have love and forgiveness in our hearts – even toward our enemies.

*Written by Jesse Cusic
of the Free Burma Rangers*



A Kachin mother and children eating in Kachin State.

A MOTHER'S VIEW

As a new mother I have suddenly been dropped into a world of new thoughts and feelings. As I spend time with families in conflict areas, I have a new set of eyes.

My husband and I help to train relief teams in Burma and since the birth of our daughter a year ago, we have always prayed about where to bring her as we continue our work. In the past, if there wasn't food to eat or a mosquito net to sleep under, we'd be okay. But with a baby we feel a new level of vulnerability.

I now have a new level of respect for mothers who have to flee the Burma Army, afraid for their lives and their futures, but also with the same immediate fears for their children as I

have. They are strong and courageous, carrying their children and what they can of their homes on their backs as they flee to safety. I see with fresh eyes the fear they must carry also, trying to care for their children in an unstable and unfamiliar environment. What a burden to carry in addition to the every-day job of simply keeping a baby alive.

Mothers: I want to encourage you specifically to stop now and pray. You understand what these women are going through. You understand how hard the journey can be to raise children even in the best of circumstances. Please pray for comfort from fear, safety in the midst of chaos, and provision where there is need.

*Written by Aimee W.
of the Free Burma Rangers*

A FAITH BEYOND RELIGION



At the end of the Free Burma Rangers' (FBR) annual training camp, 12 rangers asked to be baptized. One of the rangers, Saw Joseph, was born into a Christian family but never was baptized because, he says, "I doubted God." Here's more of his experience in finding truth, finding God, and deciding to be baptized:

"I feel more satisfied in my life to be a Christian. In Karen State we have 'religion' Christians. Your village is Christian, or your parents, so you are a Christian automatically. Before, I was a religion Christian but I was still looking for God. People thought that I was a Christian and would ask me why I wasn't baptized yet. I was still looking for truth.

There are so many problems in the world and we often ask God for help but don't receive it. I wondered why Christians suffer more than others (if they follow God). I realized that God created the world, but evil and Satan are working in the world. If you love God, then Satan is your enemy and will try to trick you. Sometimes God wants us to know we need him and tests our faith.

Little by little I felt the difference between a religious Christian and a real Christian. I finally believed that God was true and that Jesus is God. I didn't want to be a "religion" Christian. My faith is my own. Now everything I do and my body belongs to God. Now every time I do something, God already knows. I feel more confident and can do things better.

Please pray that I can listen to God and follow him well. Pray for those being baptized that they truly find God and aren't being baptized for 'religion' purposes. Many times people will get baptized as a coming of age or if they want to marry a Christian spouse. Pray that they aren't doing it for religious reasons but for heart reasons. If people are baptized it should be in their hearts and not a decision made from pressure."