

karenaid news

serving displaced people on the Thai-Burmese border through healthcare, educational and welfare projects

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter. It was our great privilege earlier this year to visit Thailand and many of the people and projects that Karenaid supports. It was brought home to us what few resources many people have there and how much we can take for granted in our own country. We were also impressed and humbled by the dedication of the people who work there. This newsletter focuses on our visit. We thank you for all your support of this work through your prayers and donations. Max & Fiona Derrick



Eye Work We visited the new Eye Clinic at Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) built 5 km outside Mae Sot and offering improved buildings and facilities, and is closer to the border. This is where the Karenaid eye work is based. We met Dr. Frank Green and the Eye Border Team as they screened and triaged the patients. The eye clinic sees about 10,000 patients annually. Of these approximately 3,000 are referred to Frank and around 2,000 receive surgery. The rest receive treatment from the other eye clinic staff.

In the last 3 months, Frank has performed over 600 eye operations, with 80% of these patients coming from Burma where there is little access to good affordable eye treatment. In addition to cataract operations, he now treats a growing number of patients with glaucoma and fungal ulcers. A typical cataract operation costs in the region of £30.

We saw the new operating theatre with two "beds", each with their own microscope, and a YAG laser and other equipment for biometric testing and treatment and delivered a new ultrasonic probe. We gained useful information from the staff regarding the provision and funding of consumables. We toured the other departments as well and held talks with clinic directors in order to gain insight into the overall work and funding of MTC.

Later in the week, we were also taken to a small clinic in Burma where Karenaid funds a medic. Eye surgery is performed there twice a year and we are sure that this work will grow.

N.B. Frank and the team also make regular trips to more remote border areas to perform further eye work.

At Mae Tao Clinic we also met with Kanchana Thornton, director of BCMF (www.burmachildren.com.) One aspect of her work is to develop new clinics within remote areas of Burma where they would be able to take health care and screening to people who currently have little access to it. They recently completed a 3 day eye screening and wheelchair fitting mission to the Karen State in Burma. The Trustees appreciate the support of BCMF in supporting the eye programme for this coming year.



Prayer points

- Pray for good health and safety for the eye team as they travel along the border and for future work in Burma.
- Pray for Ruth Green's students as they study, so that they will be well equipped for returning to Burma.
- Pray for Scott and Nok Murray as they settle in Chang Mai and thank God for their dedicated service.
- Thank God for the Safe House bakery and land and pray for Joe as he develops it and for the SH residents.
- Pray for new medics to be recruited to work in Tewado.



Education

While in Mae Sot we were delighted to have the opportunity to visit some of the schools to see Karen teachers who are being trained by Ruth Green and others. This training will enable them to go back to their villages in Burma to teach the children there. The students have 6 months training and followed by 6 month placements in local schools. Not only do they teach but they also supervise the children in the dormitories, help cook and look after the children, truly a 24/7 responsibility...and they're still smiling! Ruth and her son Philip have also been tutoring students to get their international qualification.

Primary Care Karenaid also helps support two doctors who work out in the community around Mae Sot.



As we accompanied one of the doctors we saw the challenges of living in remote villages when you are very poor, have intermittent work, no legal rights and little access to healthcare. The houses were very basic and situated in remote villages, requiring a 4x4 vehicle/motorbike and walking to access them. But thanks to these doctors some receive good primary care. The patients we visited had a range of conditions including asthma, diabetes, hypertension, HIV, leprosy and foot ulcers. We also visited a couple of handicapped children, one with poorly controlled epilepsy, and one with cerebral



palsy. We also went with her on the weekly visit to a school to administer iron and vitamins to all the children there.

From Mae Sot to Sangkhlaburi.

Kwai River Christian Hospital (KRCH), Safe House, Bakery, & Candlelight. We met Scott and Nok Murray who have now sadly just left KRCH. We thank them for all they have done whilst as KRCH. There have been a lot of changes in the area so our visit came at an opportune time. Scott reported that Candlelight has sufficient funds for the next few years so that some disabled children can continue to go to school in Kanchanaburi, and to support income generation projects with families. Therefore Candlelight does not need financial support from Karenaid at the moment.

The Safe House however, still relies on Karenaid. We were unable to visit the Safe House ourselves in March but have just received this very positive report from Phillip Ambler who visited in late April. "The Safe House is much appreciated by the local community, as people who would otherwise be on the streets are kept safe there. We met the new doctors at KRCH, Dr Jen from Singapore and his wife, and Dr Jennifer and her husband, Joe, who is running the new bakery. They bake a variety of celebration cakes, pastries, breads and pizzas and they are optimistic that this work will grow with time. Two residents from the Safe House help him in the bakery. To the rear is a rectangular plot of land growing spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, papaya, eggplant, beans, tomatoes, berries. All the produce is bought by a neighbour who sells it in the markets around, which means there is no wastage and provides a regular income. Joe has worked very hard and now has two men from the Safe House who help. He has plans for fruit trees and other crops, and this will help enormously."

Tewado Village, Burma

While in Sangkhlaburi we met the team from Border Health Initiative who visit Tewado every month to bring in provisions for the school and run a health clinic. Andy Lillicrap from One Sky (www.oneskyfoundation.org) is our link person. We were impressed with the work being done there to support vulnerable children and their families. Karenaid is now supporting all 6 teachers in Tewado village while new medics are being recruited and trained (1 year).



We would like to say a big THANK YOU to Margaret Stamp for all her hard work and dedication as she steps down after 18 years as a Karenaid Trustee and Secretary.