You’ve probably seen Burma in the news recently as Aung San Suu Kyi’s party won a landslide victory in the 2015 Elections. But still, the fighting continues in Burma. The Burma Army continues to commit horrific atrocities against civilians. We visited our partners and friends working in Thailand and Burma to find out more…

During the elections there were aerial bombardments on civilian areas, which forced 10,000 people to flee their homes. In May, the Burma Army carried out further airstrikes on parts of Shan and Kachin states. The international community was silent. Charm Tong, a Shan human rights activist and friend, explained, “This has been a bad year for Shan State, the violence is getting worse.”

The bombings, rapes, beheadings and other human rights abuses continue despite the current so-called peace process. In October last year, half of the ethnic national groups signed a ‘Nationwide’ Ceasefire Agreement with the Burmese Government. But, the representatives with whom we met said, “Peace must be talked about in a political context, not just in terms of ceasefire. During the ceasefire the military troops expand. They must pull back their troops and stop attacking. There is no genuine agreement, it is all coerced and it is not inclusive of all groups.”

It is deeply concerning that foreign investment in projects like hydroelectric dams and mines is continuing in areas of active conflict. The ethnic national states are rich in natural resources and the anticipated democratic transition has caused an international rush to invest. Worryingly, many of these projects are going ahead without consulting the local people. They are most affected are not getting to have a say in projects that will potentially force them off their land and destroy their livelihoods.

The people we met said, “All of these projects should cease until the ethnic national people have proper political representation, which is only possible with federalism.” Aung San Suu Kyi has said that her government will seek “a real federal democratic union” which would bring genuine hope for the ethnic national peoples.

HART works to see a political solution to the conflict through federal reform which would enable the voices of the ethnic national people to be heard in decisions affecting their lives.

THANKS TO YOU
MU GOT TREATMENT AND COULD RETURN HOME!

This is Mu. She has chronic a blood disorder (Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura). Last year, we met her at our partner SWAN’s safe house for women in Chiang Mai. She was in a bad way and urgently needed medical help. This year, we met Mu again and it was a great joy to see her looking so healthy! Because of you she was able to get the treatment she urgently required and return to her family back in Burma. Without your help this would have never been possible. Thank you!
FROM HART TO HEART

A message from Corinna Loges, Chief Executive.

You probably noticed our newsletter has a new name and format. This is to bring you the stories that are newsworthy, praiseworthy or urgent and help you keep abreast on progress.

I have known HART for a while since I was a director at Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and always thought the way HART worked, bringing together humanitarian aid and political lobbying to advocate for change, was rather effective.

What I have come to love about HART is that we really care about people. Caroline Cox and I have recently come back from the Thai Burma border where we and the HART team met with Nang Hearn, our local partner. She works for the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN). Nang Hearn and her colleagues look after people who had to flee from Shan State in Burma because of the ongoing conflict. While we met many refugees and migrants struggling with life, the case of two single mothers stood out; they were each looking after their severely ill child. Both mothers did not have enough money for medicine or food supplements needed to make their children gain weight again. The boys were just skin and bones so we arranged for funding for medical care and food.

The situation in Burma needs to change so people can prosper in their own country. Since we have come back HART has worked hard to raise new awareness on the still ongoing conflict in Shan State with the UK Government.

HART is great at working with local partners to deliver aid and build community strength where there is little or no other help.

It is a privilege to be involved.

All the very best,

Corinna

P.S. Let us know what you think about the new newsletter. Email office@hart-uk.org

UGANDA

We recently met with our partner PAORINHER in Patongo, northern Uganda. The brutal war with the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) may have ended but the battle with poverty rages on. It was an extremely encouraging but also difficult visit. Here is what happened...

You may remember that the LRA lead a brutal rebellion in northern Uganda killing 500,000 people and displacing 1.6 million until 2008. They used sexual violence as a weapon of terror, leading to a very high rate of HIV infection among the population. In the Agago district, where we visited, 190,000 children are estimated to be infected with HIV/AIDS. Only 20% of them have access to antiretroviral drugs.

According to the United Nations, this problem persists because the Ugandan government cannot meet its obligations to provide even basic healthcare.

Because no one else was helping, we started to work with the Patongo Orphan Infants Health Rehabilitation Centre (PAORINHER) back in 2007 providing support for HIV-positive children and orphans.

Girls in their bedroom at the Centre

Mayor of Patongo visiting the Centre
Today, despite a recent shortage in funding, PAORINHER is still doing well, providing medical treatments and nutritious food, education, clothing, love and care. The Centre also runs an outreach programme touching the lives of 100 families in the region. A school runs alongside the centre where HIV-affected and unaffected children are taught, fed and play together – an anti-discrimination initiative showing the community how integration can be done.

We spent a week with PAORINHER staff including Vincent who runs the Centre, and Pius who runs the outreach programme. They are people with great dedication and a vision to double their activity by end of 2018 – subject to sufficient funding. They are also planning an agricultural project to cultivate a large number of acres of land they have recently been given; it is to provide food and income for the Centre. But, much of the land has still to be cleared and machinery is expensive.

Visiting families on the outreach programme with Pius reminded us how crucial food is and what practical help can look like. One story in particular stood out: we planned to visit a single mum with two boys late one afternoon but she had gone out all day to search for food and left the children behind.

We found them in their hut, one was unconscious, the other was shaking from weakness. Somehow we managed to find bananas and fed the boys.

We went back the next day with a week’s supply of maize and beans to make sure there was food in the house. If a child does not have anything to eat, everything comes to a grinding halt. They get weak and can no longer take their antiretroviral drugs because those cause problems on empty stomachs. This is a serious problem and just too common.

As an immediate response, we will start funding food parcels to the 100 families on the outreach programme providing enough oil, beans and maize for each family each month. We were able to do the first shopping and distribution with Vincent and Pius while we were there. And this is just one example of the support we can provide. PAORINHER is such a light in their community and a source of hope. Let’s see how we can help Vincent and Pius expand their work because we see the good they do and there is no one else to help.
For 5 years, families in Blue Nile and South Kordofan States have been living in fear, seeking shelter in snake-infested caves and struggling to provide a future for their children. Antonov bomber planes circle constantly. But, the Sudanese Government faces no punishment for its actions which break international humanitarian law.

The bombers that drop barrel and cluster bombs, are illegal for use in civilian areas because they cause mass destruction. In April alone, 13,000 households were forced to move because of the attacks which targeted schools, markets and farms. Food shortages are severe. Our local partner, Benjamin, said “One life lost is too many and we are counting the bodies every day.”

Thanks to your overwhelming response to our Sudan appeal, we are able to provide much-needed food and medicine for people’s survival. We have also been speaking up in Parliament about the situation and been campaigning for the bombing to end. Thank you for joining us at the recent protest event taking a public stand for the devastation to end.

Benjamin says, “Your support to a great extent keeps our hopes alive. You stand with us through prayers and material support.”

Our partner Benjamin

An abandoned Sudan Armed Forces armoured vehicle stands in front of a church they bombed in South Kordofan.
**WHO CAN HELP PEACH?**

We recently met a talented young lady from Shan State in Burma called Peach. Peach has big dreams of studying Psychology at University and helping others in crisis situations. But, she can’t do it on her own. She needs our help.

Peach has had a tough life. Her parents divorced when she was just 2 years old. She lost contact with her mother and her father passed away soon after. Because of severe heart problems, Peach required expensive open heart surgery at costs her adoptive family did not want to bear. They left her abandoned in hospital.

This was when Peach was referred to our partners, the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN). They provided her with a home at the Women’s Crisis Centre and help with some medical bills. After university, Peach dreams of working with them and help with trauma counselling.

We see a great opportunity in supporting Peach to reach her dreams so she can help many others like her. Supporting her means paying for university fees, living costs and medical bills. Peach can only afford to eat instant noodles at present so we need to help with nutrition too.

Those of you who would like to help Peach, please get in touch urgently by using the enclosed response form or email office@hart-uk.org

“I really want to go to university so that I can help other people.”  

Peach

---

**WHAT’S BEEN Happening IN PARLIAMENT**

As HART’s President and Founder, Baroness Cox has had a busy few months raising the issues faced by our partners in Parliament.

**3rd February - Immigration Bill Committee Stage**

Caroline supported an amendment to the Immigration Bill that provided for the victims of genocide. Her speech drew attention to the Armenian genocide and the current situation in the Middle East.

**4th February – Supplementary Question: International action on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Caroline asked what more the government could be doing to ensure that their programmes reach the grassroots in Sudan, where 1 in 3 girls undergoing FGM will die due to a lack of antibiotics.

**29th February – Oral Question on Blue Nile and South Kordofan in Sudan**

Following our January visit to the Nuba Mountains in Sudan, Caroline raised a question in Parliament, raising the issues of food shortages and ongoing aerial bombardment against civilians.

**23rd May – Debate on the Queen’s Speech**

In this speech, Caroline drew attention to the flaws of governmental funding which make it very difficult for local community groups in situations of desperate need to gain support.

**6th June – Oral Question on the plight of the ethnic nationals in Burma**

Caroline raised the findings of our May visit and asked what can be done to end the impunity with which the Burma Army are acting.

Caroline also submitted Written Question to Her Majesty’s Government on the current situations in Sudan, South Sudan and Nigeria.
PUTTING THE FUN IN FUNDRAISING!

RAISE MONEY FOR HART BY TAKING PART IN A SPONSORED CHALLENGE THIS SUMMER!

We challenge you to raise money for HART this summer by taking part in an adventure of a lifetime. Check out www.discoveradventure.com/challenges to sign up for a London to Paris bike ride or trek abroad this summer, nominating HART as your chosen charity. These are open to all ages and fitness levels.

Sign up today and start training now!

Upcoming dates:
- 31st August – London to Paris Cycle Ride
- 9th September – Jurassic Coast weekend trek
- 4th November – Rajasthan Cycle
- 12th November – Burma Hilltribe Trek

GET INVOLVED AND RAISE MONEY FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

You can even raise money for HART without leaving the sofa! By doing your internet shopping through ‘Give as you Live’, a percentage of your online spending will go to HART (with no extra cost to you). Online shops include Amazon, John Lewis and ASOS. Help us today by visiting www.giveasyoulive.com/join/hartuk

WHAT OUR VOLUNTEERS HAVE BEEN UP TO:

Thanks to our volunteers who have come up with all sorts of creative ways to raise much-needed funds for HART, including Valentine’s Day lollipop sales, ‘Jailbreak’ challenges at university and Hamish Baverstock who ran the Greater Manchester Marathon in April, raising over £600 for HART!

Get in touch with Satya on satya.tan@hart-uk.org if you would like to receive news about volunteering opportunities. For example, you could help with fundraising, campaigning and running events. We will soon be looking for volunteers to help at our Carol Concert.

LEAVE A LEGACY

After providing for your loved ones, you may wish to leave some of what is left to HART. Your legacy will help support our life changing work for years to come.

Leaving a gift in your Will ensures that you can continue to transform the lives of people around the world facing persecution, human rights abuses and violence.

For further information please go to www.hart-uk.org/donate/gifts-in-wills or request a copy of our guidance leaflet by emailing office@hart-uk.org

THANK YOU TO ALL ENTRANTS OF THIS YEAR’S HART PRIZE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS!

‘A long walk to Democracy’ by Mona Yapova

With many high quality entries including poetry, artwork, documentaries and essays, particular congratulations go to Opefoluwa Sarah Adegbite, Charlotte Evans, Pankhuri Agarwal and Daniel Cullen, the winners of each category. Check out their work on the HART website!