



July 2013

Hope for a new era

The last two years have seen unprecedented changes in Burma:

- ◆ Aung San Suu Kyi released from house arrest after years and years of confinement and now a member of Parliament
- ◆ Many political prisoners released from jail and relaxation of strict censorship laws
- ◆ Ceasefire agreements with the ethnic resistance armies
- ◆ Curtailment of diplomatic and economic sanctions and boycotts



The situation in Burma has been such a dismal stalemate for so many years that it is hard to visualize how it could ever change. The military junta, firmly in control of an overpowering centralized government, has been arbitrary, despotic and self-serving.

The generals seemed immune to worldwide criticism. Resistance to the military was met with brutal repression, as witnessed in the Monks Saffron Rebellion of 2010 and the long standing conflicts in eastern Burma.



What does Metta Calana mean?

Metta is a Buddhist term meaning loving-kindness for all living creatures. Calana is an acronym of California Analytica, a non-profit organization that addresses transnational public health issues through research and education. Together, Metta Calana connotes technical capabilities infused with humanitarian benevolence; scientific understanding focused through the spirit of Metta.

Hope for a new era (con't)

For more than 20 years this low intensity conflict has been marked by gross human rights abuses, unrelenting poverty and forced large scale population displacements with many people taking refuge in neighboring Thailand.

Nevertheless change has come -- and rapidly. In November 2010, six days after a widely criticized general election, Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest after more than 15 years. Within two years she became a Member of Parliament. During this same period, the new president, Thein Sein, announced a ceasefire with the ethnic states, released many political prisoners, and in effect hung out a sign saying Myanmar was open for business. Very quickly foreign governments suspended sanctions and businesses from around the world descended on the country to undertake hasty negotiations for opportunities in the nascent economy.



This 10 year-old boy is one of many landmine victims in Burma who come to Mae Tao Clinic for recovery and a prosthetic limb.

It hasn't all gone smoothly. The military retains a firm grip on the country and ceasefire agreements have not yet translated into peace agreements. The conflicts in Kachin and Shan states continue to displace tens of thousands of people and have cost many lives. The situation of the Rohingyas remains perilous. Corruption threatens to undermine progress and benefit only a few at the cost of irreparable environmental destruction. In short, democracy is a hope, not a reality. But it is a more palpable hope than has been felt in the last 50 years. These events certainly give rise to expectations for an end to the Burmese nightmare and give energy to efforts that will create a free and contemporary Burma.

Make a difference

Mae Sot Thailand

Mae Tao Clinic has served vulnerable populations from Burma for over 20 years by filling the gap in healthcare services for the displaced and undocumented on both sides of the border. Reproductive Health services are especially in demand with more than 3,000 babies delivered at the clinic each year.

Women travel great distances to deliver at Mae Tao Clinic. The skilled birth attendants speak and understand their language and traditions.



"Health is a Human Right" is the motto at Mae Tao Clinic.



Babies born prematurely or who are brought to the clinic with problems after a home birth are treated in the Sick Baby Unit.

A newborn baby is checked for anemia and jaundice.



Social Action for Women (SAW) is another local community organization in Mae Sot. Working collaboratively with Mae Tao Clinic, SAW helps many women and children who are without families and may be physically or mentally disabled by disease (HIV) or traumatic experiences. With support many lead productive lives. For children, they can go to school and live in a safe and loving environment. Support for them now will lead later to educated, self-sufficient members of an emerging society.



The children in SAW's Safe House for Orphaned and Abandoned Children are all smiles.



A young girl living with AIDS receives anti-retroviral medicines in the SAW Health Care House

In Burma today

With the political changes taking place, there is now real opportunity to improve the lives of people living in Burma. As the ceasefire gradually takes effect and the fighting winds down, systematic efforts to address the root causes of maternal and infant mortality can take hold. Trained healthworkers from Mae Tao Clinic want to help the villages where their families still live. Some will return to work in local health centers while others will train new community health workers and midwives. Support for their efforts will be crucial to their success.



In the village of Ma Ka Nel, Metta Calana brought prenatal vitamins, medicine and contraceptives, enough to serve 100 women for one year.

Note from Dr. Terry:

Over the past 11 years I have been working at the Mae Tao Clinic on the Thai-Burma border. During this time many people have given their support and donations to help these efforts be successful. It's been my privilege to pass on those donations to the Mae Tao Clinic and directly to individuals so they could have food, clothing, medicines and transportation. We've contributed to buying equipment for the clinic, support for women and children impacted by HIV or domestic violence and to emergency relief for the children's food program and to relief efforts after the 2008 Cyclone Nargis devastated a wide area inside Burma.

So why start Metta Calana now? For two reasons: first, as the number of people and amount of donations increases each year, it has become necessary to give structure to these efforts by establishing a non-profit organization with transparency and public accountability. Secondly, now is an especially critical time of change for Burma with access into areas of conflict possible for the first time.

With that opening, comes the opportunity to play a key role in fostering health initiatives that will lower the unacceptably high child and maternal mortality rates in these areas.

METTA CALANA Objectives:

- ◆ Support community-based organizations that provide shelter, education and healthcare to displaced women and children in the Thai-Burma border area.
- ◆ Provide direct assistance to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable of these people to enable them to live independently.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance and training in the areas of public health and healthcare delivery.

For more information visit:
www.mettacalana.org



Children suffering from anemia, malnutrition and malaria are treated at Mae Tao Clinic.

Metta Calana will support not only those marginalized refugees and displaced persons from Burma who will live on in Thailand but also foster efforts to improve life in areas of Burma torn by conflict for generations.

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