



FOCUS ON MERCY

Jan - Mar 2008

Inside:

**Tragedy
and Hope**

**A life
changing
story**

RescueNet

**and much
more**

PLANS FOR RTC CAMBODIA'S NEW FACTORY

By Marion Fromm

Since purchasing 1.7 hectares of land for RTC's new factory in August 2007, the 420 mango trees have been watered and fertilized in preparation for the new season's crop in April. Ginger has also been planted and rotating ginger crops planted for harvesting every month after the initial period of 5 months wait for the first crop to be ready.

A toilet block, comprising of a bathroom and additional toilet, was erected at a cost of US\$1000. This provides facilities for the security/farmer and his family, as there were no amenities on the farm at the time of purchase. Before work can commence on the new factory building, a fence needs to be erected right round the property, to provide security for the building site and equipment. It is estimated that this fence will cost in the vicinity of US\$4000.



Marion and some of the staff of RTC

Since purchasing the land, the main road has been bituminized and electricity connections have been installed to a distance of 30 km from Phnom Penh. Our land is 15 km from the city office, so we are very pleased to see that progress. The small access road from the main road to the farm gate is still impassible except for 4WD vehicles in the wet season, but the locals are discussing having it graded before the new wet season. The main road to the land crosses the Bassac River on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, and this bridge has been a traffic bottleneck in peak periods for some years. A new span is being built alongside the old bridge to make it into a two way bridge, which will be a wonderful improvement, possibly completed by the end of this year.

Because of the above road improvements, the value of the land we purchased has escalated phenomenally, with land along the main road now selling at US\$80 per square meter. We bought our land at \$6 and it is now worth more than \$25 per sq. m. What a blessing it is to have been able to buy the land before the prices rose right out of reach! The timing for the purchase was perfect.

The new factory will enable us to give permanent employment to at least 100 land mine survivors and enable them to support, feed, clothe and educate their families.

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Tragedy and Hope - Life inside Burma

By Robin Wales

It was a great joy, on my last trip to Thailand, to be able to deliver a good quality microscope to our good friend Ler Bwey at an IDP clinic in Burma.



Del, Robin, Em, and Napoleon

IDP is an abbreviation for Internally Displaced People. The illegal Burmese military regime has been ruthless in their ongoing policy of eliminating all ethnic groups opposed to their rule. There are gross human rights violations, villages destroyed, villagers killed, raped, tortured, used as forced labourers and porters, some shot if they can't keep up this work. Burned villages are looted by the enemy who take their food and animals, land mines are laid to prevent escaping villagers returning. During military campaigns they have been used as human minesweepers. There are over a million of these dear people forced to live in the jungle and in cave hideouts with no access to medical or other necessities. Many have been killed or have limbs amputated as a result of landmine disasters, there are many orphans and two out of ten children die under the age of five, 42% of deaths of IDPs in Karen State, which borders on to Thailand, are caused by Malaria.

There are also more than half a million of these persecuted ethnic peoples from Burma living in Thailand as refugees in Hill-tribe and other villages and refugee camps. In Mae La camp, where ARMS have an orphanage and preschool, about 50,000 refugees live within barbed wire and controlled by Thai border police and military. It is no longer possible for IDPs to be accepted as refugees in Thailand and many IDPs would rather suffer in Burma than leave their own country. In the last two years some refugees have been

accepted as immigrants in Australia and other countries, but, as David Skeat explained in the last Focus on Mercy, they can be faced with great financial burdens. We must do all we can to help these new arrivals become established. The heartfelt desire of these people, the refugees, and the IDPs is to live at peace in their home land.

ARMS has been helping the Karen for many years, my first encounter with them was in 2000 when David told me about a health clinic ARMS had built in a Hilltribe Village. Em, the Karen nurse in charge of the clinic was concerned about the malaria problem there. I am a Med Lab scientist and was able to take a microscope and teach her how to make and stain blood films and use it for Malaria diagnosis. This was a great time with warm hearted, peace loving people. Em and her husband Napoleon are my good friends as is Jonathan, one of the Karen who has moved to Melbourne with his family. He was single then and cooked and cared for me very well at the village church where I stayed while I was teaching Em.

The following year SMRU, the Malaria research unit in Mae Sot and Mae La camp began malaria testing at a location near Em's village and she gave her microscope to her sister Ler Bwey, a nurse at the health centre of Ler Ber Her, an IDP village in Burma across the Moei river from her home. SMRU provide a wonderful service in the control, diagnosis and treatment of Malaria for Karen refugees in Thailand, but are only able to give limited help for IDPs, they have been most helpful to me practically and during my IDP teaching.

Em had taught Ler Bwey some basic microscopy and she was a student at my first training visit for IDP clinic microscopists from Burma, held in a Baptist church in Mae La camp, in 2002. I lived with Pastor Arthur and his wife Clasper and their family in the camp, and this was another blessed time of developing friendships with them and the stu-

dents. Following this we were able to arrange for Ler Bwey to do three months microscopy training at the SMRU laboratory at Mae La, and as her clinic was within easy reach for supplies and quality control, SMRU were able to provide a microscope for use at the Ler Ber Her Clinic even though it is in Burma. My annual teaching for Karen IDP clinic workers since then have been held at the the Karen Dept of Health and Welfare near Mae Sot. We have a very close relationship with KDHW and have provided and maintained microscopes for Malaria diagnosis in several IDP clinics in Burma.

Partners Relief and Development have a dedicated ministry helping IDPs and refugees from Burma and do wonderful work. ARMS work in close cooperation with Partners, their main office is in Chiang Mai. They are good friends and are my contact point in working with KDHW and KNU, the Karen National Union, to arrange access to Mae La camp and IDP clinics in Burma. For whatever I can do to help ARMS in the IDP Malaria battle I work through the Partners Mae Sot base. We hope to be able to distribute many treated Mosquito nets for IDP use for Malaria prevention through them, KDHW, and Free Burma Rangers who have many relief teams helping IDPs of all persecuted Ethnic groups inside Burma. We have already been able to provide Partners and FBR with a few nets for trial and Malaria test kits and medicines.



Ler Bwey testing for Malaria

The KNLA had a Hospital/Clinic near the border that provides clinical healthcare for IDPs living in the forests. We had arranged to take some of our Primary Health Care students there for practical experience during a school there last

April but a few days before we were to go there it came under enemy attack, Mae La camp was also threatened and the village of one of our students near the border was destroyed, village evacuees escaped across the border to Thailand but were only allowed to stay for a few days as Thailand will no longer accept IDPs as refugees. The 101 hospital is no longer in existence and the location is now controlled by the Burmese military.

At the end of the school in April I went further up the border to take a Microscope for Ler Bwey to use for Malaria testing in an IDP clinic in a different location Burma. She had been transferred there by the KNU to do Malaria testing for Karen soldiers, SMRU cannot provide a microscope as they had for Ler Ber Her.

I had hoped to get to this clinic in Burma personally but this was not possible because of enemy activity so I gave the microscope to Em to look after for her until the situation improved, this was a nice time of sharing with Em, Napoleon and their family. Ler Bwey managed to get to a phone and called to thank me. She is very dedicated to helping battle the malaria war and really appreciates our help and support. They had to abandon the clinic and surrounding villagers were in hiding, the medic in charge was keen to reopen it as soon as it became safe for them to return.

Em wrote to me in June to say that the clinic had been reopened but the microscope was unusable, probably due to damage when it had to be carried back to Thailand at times of enemy activity. This was a big disappointment for us all as the wet season had set in and many people were sick and some died of Malaria. David took Malaria test kits and some malaria medicines to Thailand for them to use in the meantime and these were taken to the Mae Sot Partners office for Em to take for the clinic. The only way I could contact Em was by mail but unfortunately she didn't receive my letter. I was able to obtain a good \$600 microscope in a box for easy carrying, to take to the clinic for Ler Bwey. My good friends John and Dellas Norris took this from Australia to Chiang Mai for me and I joined them there at the end of October following the ARMS Primary Health Care Seminar at the Balut YWAM base in the Philippines.

This was the second mission trip John and Dellas had come with me to help with ARMS and Partners projects on The Thai/Burma border, they are deeply moved by the needs of refugees and IDPs and are committed ARMs support-

ers. Their financial contribution has been a major factor in enabling us to provide microscopes and medicine, a monthly allowance for Ler Bwey, a motorbike for her to travel between her village home on the Thai side to where she can cross the river to Burma (she is unpaid, has no Thai ID and is at risk of apprehension by border police), her brother Nicholas used to walk with her for protection but he was killed by a land mine while hunting for food in Burma. John and Dellas now support his eldest daughter for secondary education. Their ongoing support helps other ARMs projects and John has organised two auction sales which have raised funds for these and also enabled Partners/FBR to provide IDPs, who have little clothing, with 'Good Life Club' T shirts by their relief teams.

During our time in Mae Sot in November John and Dellas helped Partners while I did some restoration work on microscopes at the Karen health department, but the main object of the trip was to deliver the replacement microscope for Ler Bwey and Malaria and Haemoglobin test kits and Malaria medication to the Karen Army clinic where she works. We also took medicines for Em who has a ministry for needy women in the refugee camp and Thai and IDP villages through Mothers Union of the Anglican church, many families have medical problems.

John, Dellas and I took the microscope, and other supplies by public transport to a Thai border village where we met Em and Napoleon and went a little bit further up the border to a village from where we could cross the river. John and I went with Em and Napoleon to Ler Bwey's clinic, she and the Medic were very happy to have us there, and most grateful for the microscope and other things we took, their work was a real eye opener. It is a busy Clinic/Hospital for soldiers, but they also treat a lot of people from surrounding villages in

Burma and also some people from the Thai side. SMRU can still provide Ler with Malaria stains and microscope slides and she sends her malaria slides for quality control to the SMRU Lab in Mae La by KNU transport (they don't know the clinic location, only that the slides are from Ler Bwey).

I took a few of the Olyset treated mosquito nets for them and for Em and found that a family size net will cover two hospital beds. These nets will be a great lifesaver and also reduce testing and treatment costs.

On our return to Mae Sot we bought IV solutions with giving sets and



Young girl with FP Malaria.

This type of Malaria kills nearly 2 million people a year!

different medicines for Em to take to the clinic.

We cannot disclose the clinic name or location, as it is located close to a Karen National Liberation Army headquarters. It is an orphan clinic in desperate need of medical and other supplies. The Karen Dept of Health and Welfare in Mae Sot could not tell me much about it and Partners have not had any connection with it. I spoke to Steve Gumaer, he knows the 7th brigade but was not aware of the clinic, he is very happy for us to do whatever we can for to support it. I also discussed Em's work and need for medicines etc.

Can you help?

Support for this clinic is urgently needed and this can be given through our Burmese IDP and Buzz Off projects. Your donation for these is tax deductible and will help save many lives.

A LIFE CHANGING STORY

By Marion Winn

When I first visited Cambodia in 1997, I was shocked by the awful poverty I saw. It was distressing to see so many undernourished people, dirty children with nothing but sticks, stones or empty containers to play with and infrastructure in disarray. The beggars in the markets and on the streets overwhelmed me. So I was ready in 2000, when Marion Fromm had the vision to provide help for land mine disabled people, to join with her in the project of Reverse the Curse of Landmines in Cambodia. I now run the office and finances in Adelaide for the project.

I have visited Phnom Penh each year since then and seen great improvements in the general state of Cambodia and its people. In May 2005 I saw the small factory with 12 staff, in operation for the first time. I want to focus on 2 of these workers – Tepy and Kimsan who both have prosthetic legs. Both were discriminated against because of their disability. Tepy trod on a landmine at 16 and hid at home depressed and hopeless for years. At 36 she began working with RTC Cambodia. Kimsan was also disabled at 16 and felt he would never be any good for anything. At 26 he too got a job with RTC. Tepy was a good worker but I noticed that if anyone was slacking on the job it was Kimsan.

When I returned in 2006 I saw a big difference in Kimsan. He now cooked jams in the factory. With the extra responsibility he has started to 'grow up'. He and Tepy now had a special friendship and Tepy, in true Cambodian fashion, fussed over Kimsan.

Before they married in May 2007, Kimsan felt that after he and Tepy were married they were to move to Siem Reap to open the office there that Marion Fromm was planning. He did not want to as it meant starting again in a place where they knew no one. But in the end, they moved to Siem Reap in September 2007 where I met them again in November.

They were so happy. With the responsibility of the work in Siem Reap and marriage, Kimsan had matured. They were dealing with customers and managing the money well. The sales have increased greatly since they opened the office. They had been welcomed into a local church. The wonderful news came in December that they would have a baby this year. God has made them a normal family in a society that discriminates against the disabled.

Another I would like to mention is Souen. In July 2006 Marion with Tepy and Kimsan employed 36 year old Souen as a security guard with RTC Cambodia. He had been disabled at 20 after being married 2 months. He was fitted with a prosthetic leg but although he tried to continue working the small farm, he was looked down on and unable to earn enough to provide properly for his family which grew to include 3 children. In the photos Marion first sent, Souen looked so sad and stressed. One day when I was there last November, Marion and I returned from shopping to be greeted by a radiant Soeun. He had been home for the weekend and through an interpreter told us, "My children are now fat!" (Probably not 'fat' by Australian standards, but their ribs were well covered.) It must be so hard for a father to be unable to properly take care of his family.

These are 2 examples that have touched my heart of how RTC has changed the lives of land mine disabled people in Cambodia. It has not only changed them but their families too. They truly have been given a hope and a future.



Marion with Kimsan and Tepy

... and hope restored is one of life's greatest gifts!



Changes at the ARMS National Office

The ARMS National Office is undergoing changes that will see it taken to the next level.

In February 2008 Nik Matthews will be taking over as the ARMS National Operations Manager. Nik will have responsibility for running the National Office in Melbourne.

Nik and his wife Sarah are a real blessing to ARMS. Nik has a background in Business Administration and has worked in the aid and development sector for more than 10 years.

David and Marie will be leaving Melbourne and moving to Tasmania at least for 2008. David's role will change slightly with Nik taking over most of the administrative and project related duties whilst David spends more time travelling, and speaking.

Marie will remain the office manager and will be able to do most of her job via the internet.

David and Marie are still contactable on their mobiles and email addresses. Their mailing address will be:

**PO Box 55
Sorell 7172**

If you would like David to come and speak at your church contact the National Office info@arms.org.au



GOOD NEWS FROM BUZZ OFF

The Buzz Off website has been launched at www.buzzoff.org and people are signing up to the Campaign.

Our good friends at Swinburne University have agreed to design the second part of the website which will be the Buzz Off online store.

ARMS has launched an appeal to raise \$50,000 by July to buy and distribute Mosquito nets and testing kits in Malaria endemic areas during the wet season when the threat from Malaria is at its highest.

From page 1

This is such a joy to each worker, as the stress and strain and burden of providing for their children is lifted and they can enjoy a level of prosperity never before imagined. Our staff are much healthier and not subject to the many gastric and respiratory illnesses they suffered from continuously in the past.

It is a joy to see lives being changed and hope restored. RTC will also be a great benefit to the local fruit farmers. Pineapples are currently being supplied by a co-operative of land mine disabled farmers, who are so pleased to be able to supply the RTC factory. Mango and pawpaw orchards are all around the area where our land is located.

In November 2007, the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce sent Marion Winn and I to the ASEAN/Japan Food & Beverage Exhibition in Tokyo, Japan, to promote the export of Cambodian food products. This gave RTC a wonderful chance to assess the export potential to Japanese customers and some orders are already being processed. At the conclusion of the Trade Fair, we were taken on a trip to view a noodle factory. This was an extremely modern and high tech factory and we were able to view the latest methods of producing food in one of the most modern and hygienic factories in Japan. This was a very timely exposure to the latest technology that can be used in our own factory.

At the beginning of January, George Newson, a retired builder, visited us in Cambodia and we spent time showing him the land and discussing building plans with him. During a month home in Adelaide on holidays in January, I received three offers of very strategic assistance with building the factory.

First, an architect from Geraldton in Western Australia called to see me while he was in Adelaide for a family wedding. He has offered to draw our building plans at no charge, so we discussed our requirements for a factory suitable for people with disabilities and he has returned home to do the drawings.

Secondly, we needed engineering advice for the installation of air-conditioning, insect and dust control and conveyor belt systems. A friend I met at a conference in Adelaide introduced me to his friends, one of whom is an engineer and robotics expert, who is also willing to help us design the systems we need. Technology for this is currently unavailable in Cambodia.

Thirdly, his other friend is a builder of factories in Australia and other developing world countries and this man is willing to look at our architectural drawings and visit Cambodia in March, to look at how we can use the local building industry to build our specially designed factory.

RTC is very blessed to have access to all the technology we need at just the right time. We will be able to supply accurate cost estimates for the new factory, which will enable us to raise the necessary funding to complete the factory. A general estimate for the building itself and the stainless steel equipment for it, is in the vicinity of US\$500,000.

As space in our current premises is now used to the maximum, so the need for the new factory is acute. Our current staff of 24 is running to keep up with the orders for our products and expansion into bigger premises is urgent. If you can partner with us to complete this new stage of RTC Cambodia's development, you will be blessed with the knowledge that you are making a difference to countless disadvantaged and damaged lives and the future prosperity of the nation of Cambodia.

Tax deductible donations towards the building of the factory and to the work of RTC can be made through the ARMS National Office.



The RescueNet Page

From The National Director's Desk



RescueNet is one the most original and effective ministries that ARMS has developed in the past 10 years. Its ability to reach into disaster situations and to save lives has been well documented.

Over the past 18 months the RescueNet Board have been grappling with structural issues that will affect RescueNet's ability to respond to disasters. One of these has been the area of training. In the past 18 months RescueNet has established 3 training courses. One in Sydney, Australia; one in the United States, based out of Las Vegas; and one in Europe based out of Holland. These courses are increasing the pool of people that RescueNet can draw on in the event of a disaster. This is very good news!

At a recent Board meeting it was decided that our communication as a ministry needed to be enhanced especially between members who are literally all over the globe. In the coming months RescueNet will be developing a secure communication website for members that will make it possible for members to communicate to each other and have access to the latest training materials etc. We are hoping that this site will be operational by midyear.

Finally, RescueNet needs your prayerful financial support. In the coming months we will be communicating about the ARMS Disaster Trust that provides funds for disaster relief. RescueNet is a direct beneficiary of this trust. The trust is tax deductible and you can find out more about it on the ARMS website www.arms.org.au. Your donation to this trust will help the work of RescueNet for years to come.



EVEN A GRANDMOTHER CAN DO IT By Kay Brien

My nursing career started in Sydney where I did my general training. I went to England to do midwifery and operating theatre courses and then came back and worked for several years between an emergency dept and intensive care ward of an Australian hospital before doing a stint in the highland jungles of PNG where I was in charge of the medical and training of the local tribe's people. Nursing for me, has been a very exciting vocation. Now the years have rolled on by and I am married and have my own children and grand children.

Recently I was on a committee to organize a conference and we invited a lady who was involved in putting conferences together to come and advise us. While we were talking she talked about RescueNet and told me that David Skeat (who I knew from our YWAM days) was involved in it and that he had taken an emergency team into Aceh after the tsunami to do emergency medical relief work. My friend told me that David had told her that the first people on the ground in Aceh were pedophiles, and then came the second wave of which his team was a part. The fact that this situation could exist horrified me and I thought that as an experienced registered nurse I could help.



I knew nothing of RescueNet and so I enquired and found that they have courses that they run to make you eligible to go out with them to disasters in developing countries where the nation is unable to cope. Sydney was to be my course destination.

My husband, Greg and I prayed about me doing the course, I wanted to walk on the kind of ground and go to the kinds of places that I could imagine Jesus wanting to go to. It has always been my passion to live the Gospel.

When I see photos of children who have been caught up in disasters I am always reminded of my grandchildren. My heart goes out to them because I would do anything for my grandchildren and so why not for others in awful situations.

Our RescueNet course was great. Life threatening when crawling under buildings and doing some of the scenarios that the team thought up and rubbing shoulders with the younger students was encouraging.

We received training in fire suppression, search and rescue, pre-hospital medical care and evacuation, corpse recovery, trauma counseling, and much much more.

We also did a lot of practical scenarios and team building games and incidents. There was lots of laughing and some fear as some of the makeup was very real. In the end, all of us survived and look forward now to working together out in the field.

As a grandmother I am thrilled that I can be involved in something like RescueNet and am looking forward to my first deployment. I am also looking forward to meeting other women who are caught up in the face of disaster and as a woman being able to meet them on what could possibly be the worst day of their life.

Save a life

Child sponsorships save lives and give children more opportunities, and a better chance at life.

ARMS offers a range of child sponsorships that help children in poverty to receive a better education.

You could help to change a child's life by sponsoring them through ARMS - want to know more?

Then email us at sponsorships@arms.org.au

sponsor a child



www.lifepoint.com.au

Support the work of ARMS through the Lifepoint Project. Profits made through the sale of goods and services sold on the Lifepoint web site will directly benefit ARMS.

Lifepoint offer a range of competitive deals on everyday products and services such as insurance, telephone and mortgage refinancing. Profits made from these products will help ARMS to serve the poor and the needy.

Focus On Mercy

is the newsletter of the National Office of Australian Relief & Mercy Services Ltd. (ARMS)
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A Ministry Of Youth With
A Mission Australia

Quotable Quote

"Not only do these abominable weapons lie buried in silence and in their millions waiting to kill or maim innocent women and children; but the presence or even the fear of the presence of a single landmine can prevent the cultivation of an entire field, rob a whole village of its livelihood, place yet another obstacle on a country's road to reconstruction and development"

Kofi Annan

ARMS Tax Deductible International Projects

1. Burmese IDP Project
2. Hekan Building Project
3. Home Of The Open Heart
4. Karen Preschool Project
5. Reverse The Curse Of Landmines.
6. ARMS Disaster Trust.
7. Buzz Off

Response Form



I would like to become a supporter of ARMS and will regularly pray for its ministry and /or give a monthly gift of \$ per month.
I enclose a gift of \$ towards:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> National Office Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Reverse the Curse | <input type="checkbox"/> RescueNet |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Australian Mercy Fund | <input type="checkbox"/> Other..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Where Most Needed |

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