

September - December 2001

## HECAN DO IT - IN EAST TIMOR

ARMS has sent several building teams into East Timor over the past few months. These teams are building new houses for families who are still without adequate housing even two years after the violence of August 1999.

Since early this year, ARMS together with Mobile Mission Maintenance (MMM) has been developing a new housing design that will become the standard house that ARMS teams will construct in East Timor. The new system is known as Hecan. Under this new system each house should take less than 3 days to construct from beginning to end.



*Some families are still living under sheets of tin like this*

Retired builder Don Langley has designed the Hecan system. Don, who is on staff with MMM, has already made two trips to East Timor and has spoken to people on site. He has also measured many buildings in Dili and has noted the style of houses that are preferred by the East Timorese. These factors have all been taken into account in the design of the Hecan system which makes it possible for cost effective housing to be built on existing sites that is safe, secure, and cyclone proof.

Construction of these houses is simple and does not require high technical knowledge or specialised skills. Throughout the design process Don has been consulting with architects and structural engineers who have helped with some aspects of the design. The result is really amazing and will prove to be of great benefit to homeless families in East Timor.

The Hecan system is modular and parts of it can be prefabricated on site. Its modular nature means that the design can be changed to suit a wide variety of different situations. This modular design also means that if several houses are built close to one another then they don't all have to look like they have all come from the same mould.

The sections that make up each house can be prefabricated on site to suit the size of the original foundations. This gives us tremendous opportunities to not only provide housing for a homeless family, but also to employ them to build their own houses. Employment in turn provides finances for the family, as well as experience that might just help them to gain longer-term employment on other building sites. We also hope that it will add to the families "pride of ownership".

Earlier this year we received a grant from Mission Enterprises to construct the prototype of this system. The prototype is currently on the way, and the construction will be photographed at each stage so that a manual can be written to help construction teams on site.

ARMS will still recruit and send construction teams to build in East Timor but the emphasis will now be on giving the East Timorese greater involvement in the building of these houses. We hope that this will give each family a greater sense of ownership of the house that they built, rather than of the house they were given.

At this point we do not know how much it will cost to construct each house, as there are lots of variables we have to take into account, but we are hoping that each unit will cost no more than \$5,000 – (this will include that wages needed to pay East Timor families.)

The cost of each house will depend on the availability of resources. Donations of timber and other building supplies will reduce the cost of each house. Variance in prices of purchases made in East Timor will also effect the cost of each unit.

At this point in time we are seeking partnership in this project. Donations of money, or building supplies will all help us to move this project to the next phase, which will be to build our first Hecan house in East Timor before the end of the year. Please pray for this project; for Don as he continues with the prototype and design aspects, and for the ARMS national office as it commences fund raising. Any financial help that can be rendered towards this project would really be appreciated.



## Steve & Oddny Gumaer To Visit Australia

Steve Gumaer and his wife Oddny will be in Australia for a brief visit commencing September 21 this year.

Steve and Oddny will be teaching at various locations and will also be the main speakers at a special dinner being held at the YWAM base in Surrey Hills Saturday October 6<sup>th</sup>.

Steve and Oddny are based in Chiang Mai Thailand and head up the work of *Partners*, a Christian NGO that ministers to the Karen Refugees on the Thai / Burmese border and to the internally displaced peoples in Burma



This will be Steve & Oddny's first trip to Australia. If you would like to attend the dinner then phone the National Office (03) 9831 2406 for details or email us at [arms@ywam.org.au](mailto:arms@ywam.org.au).

***In light of Steve and Oddny Gumaers's up and coming visit to Australia we are going to reprint an article by from the Partners World Newsletter telling of some of their involvement with a Thai Karen village at Mae Saliit Kee***

### Some History From the Mountains

By Oddny Gumaer

I remember the first time Steve and I went to Mae Saliit Kee. We were much younger than we are now, very idealistic and did not have children. We hiked through the jungle with our backpacks full of old clothes that we intended to give away. In our wallets was the rest of our support for the month. With it we wanted to buy whatever the Karen might need.

#### **Under the Moon**

The first time we went there it was the rainy season. It was evening when we got to the end of the road, so we had to do the jungle-hike in the dark. And did I tell you that in the jungle there are no streetlights? If you are lucky you have the moon and the stars to guide you. But that night we didn't even have that. But the Karen villagers met us, and they knew the way well. For 4 whole days we never saw the sun, it never stopped raining and we were never dry. We did hard manual labour all day and took showers outside with ice-cold water. It was not a glamorous trip, but we both think back on it as one of our greatest times with the Karen people. It was on that trip that God opened our hearts to them and we both knew that we would forever have these precious people with us, in person or in our hearts. That was seven years ago.

#### **Abundant Fruit**

Who knows how many trips we have made there since the first one. Things have changed. Not only do we drive our 4 wheel drive truck all the way into the village now, but the village itself has changed drastically. Where seven years ago we found a village where people were generally malnourished and survived on whatever they found to eat in the jungle, we now find a village abundant with fruit trees and vegetables. Where seven years ago we found a large percentage of the villagers sick with goitres, we now find hardly any have goiters because of the fish they have added to their diet. And where seven years ago only three families out of 55 knew the Lord, now 42 families have become Christians.

But some things have not changed. The sweet smiles of the villagers as we walk past them, the sounds of rice getting ground to flour under the weight of heavy rice mortars, the beauty of the hills and mountains surrounding us and the sound of laughter from all the dirty little children running after us wondering if the white people brought them candy, or if we in fact have a tail.

#### **Universal Language**

Whenever in Mae Saliit Kee our girls act as if we never have lived anywhere else. They join the other children in their play and it only takes minutes for them to be just as dirty. Who cares if the languages are different, they can still laugh at the same things. And laughter is a universal language.



On our trip to the village last December we were enjoying the cool weather outside. Our friends, Em and Napoleon had just bought some cows from Burma so we spent a good amount of time watching those funny-looking creatures. We were served sticky rice cooked inside of freshly cut bamboo, and the girls were busy picking jungle flowers.

Em had told us that she wanted us to attend a ceremony the villagers were going to have. We know that the Karen love these kinds of formalities, so we did not think much of it. We got the girls and hiked up to the village school.

### **Seats of Honor**

We knew that something was up when seven chairs were placed up front, and we were asked to take the seats of honour. The place was decorated with freshly picked flowers. All the village children were there, looking at us curiously. Em got up and told us that this ceremony was in honour of us. The villagers wanted to thank us for all the things we have done for them over the past ten years. (We had to smile when we heard that, because we knew it was not ten years. But up there where time stands still and nobody has a watch it might seem like ten years since the first time we arrived in the village, wet and disoriented)

### **Show of Thanks**

The children started out by singing some of the songs they had been learning. To hear them sing is always like getting a glimpse of heaven. Then Em said that the villagers wanted to say some things to show their appreciation for what we have done for them. One by one they came up to the front and said words of encouragements and thanks. We were thinking that they should have known how much they have done to enrich our lives.

Finally Em said that as a sign of their gratefulness they wanted to give us a special love offering. It was at this point we both wanted to cry. We know that they don't have hardly any money, if any at all. The people in front of us were some of the poorest people in the world, materially. What were they going to give us, and how could we receive it from them?

### **The Nicest Gift**

I will never forget the humbling feeling of sitting in front of these precious people as one by one they came up to us and gave us part of their harvest. Bags of the rice they had just harvested, pumpkins straight from the fields, bananas picked from their trees, a handmade broom, sweet potatoes, a woven sarong made from dyed colours. I knew that they needed what they gave us so much more than we needed it, yet, I don't think we have ever received a nicer gift.



*Some of the Men from the village of Mae Saliit Kee*

### **Tribal Lessons**

The villagers of Mae Saliit Kee taught us something we will never forget that day. They taught us about thankfulness and generosity. They were not giving out of their abundance; they gave even when they did not have much. Their thankfulness was not expressed merely through a smile and a nod, it was a thankfulness expressed through their hearts. I wonder if I ever will be able to express to them that in my eyes they are bigger people than I have ever been. In our eyes they have given us something more valuable than we have given them.

### **Something to Learn**

Next time we go there they will probably still be sitting up on their bamboo houses looking down at us with shy smiles, chewing their beetle-root, smoking their pipes, nursing their babies and carving on some tool. Their lifestyles are so simple, so is their faith. But maybe we complicated people of today have something to learn from simplicity.

## **It's Time To Plan For Christmas Again**

Regular readers of this newsletter will remember that last year we raised funds in order to buy Christmas presents for the children in the Preschools we support in the Mae-La refugee camp.

This year we are doing the same again and would invite supporters to donate to this appeal. For as little as two dollars per child we will be able to give each child a small present and a small contribution towards a special Christmas dinner.

Please send your donations to the National Office in the same way.



# Interesting Snippets

## ARMS Annual Reports

ARMS held its annual general meeting on August 25<sup>th</sup> this year. Copies of the annual reports are available upon request, in either printed format, or on CD ROM. If you would like a copy of these reports then contact the national office. (Please include a small donation to help us cover costs) Alternatively you can download a copy of the reports in PDF format from our web site [www.arms.org.au/reports](http://www.arms.org.au/reports).

## RescueNet Training Camp

The RescueNet steering committee recently met in Sydney to finalize aspects of the establishment of RescueNet Australia. The meeting has put in motion several initiatives that will see take the RescueNet Australia to a new level. A training camp will be held from November 25<sup>th</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup> at Wyee near Gosford. A second training camp will also take place in Perth around the same time.

Meanwhile the committee is seeking sponsorship and donations to get help raise the \$50,000 needed in order to get RescueNet up and running. Please pray as we set up this vital ministry.

## Free Screen Savers

Free Screen Savers are now available from the ARMS web site. These screen savers are self loading and have beautiful digital photos of some of the projects we are working on. You can download them from our web site in ZIP format [www.arms.org.au/downloads](http://www.arms.org.au/downloads).

## Keep Your Eyes Peeled.....

RescueNet is really getting going and is setting up its own web site. This will shortly appear at [www.rescuenet.org.au](http://www.rescuenet.org.au). Other information on Rescuenet can also be obtained through the ARMS web site [www.arms.org.au](http://www.arms.org.au)

## Focus On Mercy

is the newsletter  
of the National Office of  
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A Ministry Of Youth With A  
Mission Australia

## 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:

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> East Timor <i>Hecan</i> Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-school Christmas Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> Australian Mercy Fund   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> National Office Support         | <input type="checkbox"/> Karen Preschool Needs       | <input type="checkbox"/> Chiang Rai AIDS Project |

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code .....

Contact Number .....

Please debit my credit card (circle one) Visa Mastercard Bankcard

                      

Expiry date ...../..... Signature .....

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