

Vision: The safety and survival of all ethnic groups in a free and democratic Burma.

Mission: We are dedicated to fostering the development of medical clinics and youth hostels to serve victims of ethnic cleansing and cultural destruction in Burma. To accomplish this, our Canadian Foundation raises awareness and funds.



What your support to Project Umbrella Burma has allowed us to purchase in just the past month:

- pumpkins
- tomatoes
- cabbage
- long green beans
- a funny English cucumber-length vegetable that looks like okra
- chillies & lentils
- garlic & onions
- extra cooking oil
- rice
- charcoal
- chicken, fish & duck
- 90 pairs of warm socks,
- 73 woolly hats
- 3 more guitars
- two boxes (120 bars) of 'everything' soap
- 10 large toothpaste
- gas
- 2 recycled truck tires
- 15 nylon comforters
- 3 mats
- 2 mosquito nets
- 14 girls' sweaters
- windbreakers for 43 boys (and some of both to take to Mae Ra Mu).
- 14 pairs of click-cloks
- bamboo
- roof-leaves
- 4 badminton rackets
- 2 volleyballs
- 3 chillo balls
- a box of birds
- 3 nets
- watermelon
- cabbage
- lady finger/okra
- tomato seeds
- weed killer

How the Kaw Tha Blay Hostel Helps

In asking the question "How has the hostel helped you?", the first reply was from Luay Htoo who said simply "I wanted to learn education", which really didn't give a complete picture. I decided to try to find out what it had been like before they came to the hostel or what it would be like for them now if Kaw Tha Blay had not existed.

Luay Htoo

Luay Htoo has two brothers, three sisters and a mother and father back in Kaw Po Kho village. Her father is a rice farmer who rents a paddy from a 'rich person'. When he has a very good year he will harvest enough rice to pay the landlord and feed his family, perhaps buy fish paste for protein and he and his family will forage for wild vegetables, bamboo shoots etc. Both Luay Htoo's parents read and write Burmese to perhaps level 8 and know a little English. They speak Karen. Her 15-year-old brother and 13-year-old sister have never been to school. She has a 9-year-old brother and an 11-year-old sister who are now attending primary school in Kaw Po Kho. The schooling is inconsistent depending on the movements of the SPDC, the health of themselves or their teacher and the weather. There are over 100 children attending this bamboo school with 3 poorly paid underfed teachers, who have scarcely any supplies and few (if any) texts.



Luay Htoo playing guitar. We now have 5 Guitars. The kids are constantly practising and taking lessons in preparation for the Karen New Year's celebrations on Dec. 23d maybe in Burma if the truce holds.

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Luay Htoo appears bright, balanced and all testify to her goodwill, hard work and laughter. She did better than most in her primary school and was encouraged by her teacher to go on to the Middle school, which was in Yoeuklar, a village about 45 minutes walk from her home. Walking to this school everyday was difficult because of the patrolling Burmese soldiers ("they have guns"), but she completed level 5 and 6 before the SPDC closed the school. To ensure it stayed closed they burned it to the ground. To continue her schooling it was then necessary to go to Tee Pah Doh Tah for level 7. The family tried, but due to the distance and the cost to pay for the teacher, school fee, and board and lodging with a family, they could just not keep up, so she had to return home.

It was at this point that her teacher heard about Kshakalu's project, the almost built Kaw Tha Blay Hostel. So he collected about seven chosen children and walked them to Thailand, Mae La refugee camp and Kaw Tha Blay Hostel with just the clothes they wore and some rice. This took four days walking and three nights in the jungle. They arrived at the hostel just before we did. At that time the girls' sleeping quarters had just been finished and the girls' kitchen/study hall was under construction

Luay Htoo now attends Mission School # 5 and is doing well academically and will finish level 8 this February. She says it was really hard at first as her Burmese education was inferior. She says the teachers are much better, her school fees are paid, and (grinning) she says we get curry (a meal with protein and flavour) once a week, and sometimes two. She frowned slightly and then added "sometimes not".

They have two meals a day – nothing for lunch . yet!

She arrived in April 2002 and has not seen her family or any relatives since. She does write and occasionally people, mainly Karen soldiers, will take her letters and bring back ones from her family.

Win Win Cho

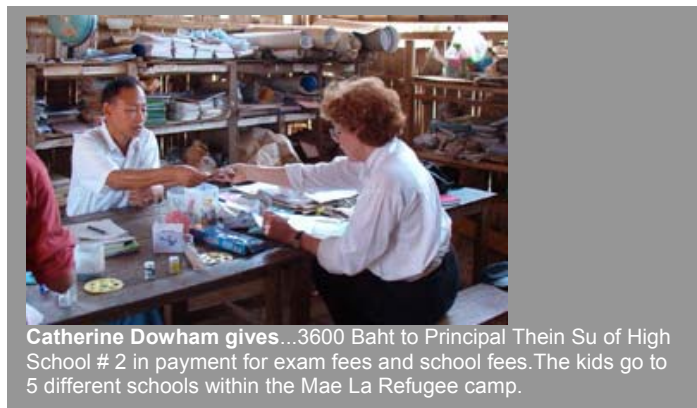
Win Win Cho, who has just turned 15, came with the same group as Luay Htoo. Her situation at home in Ta Eu Ke village, Monkey village (this produces giggles) was precarious. When she was two, her mother, who was pregnant with her brother, saw her 30-year-old husband shot in the back as he ran across their paddy for the protection of the jungle. He died instantly. The

SPDC had made a surprise arrival and were 'recruiting' all able people from the village to carry their supplies (porter) as they were going on a major offensive. Of 'portering', one man who escaped said "it is better to run because you are dead anyway". They use these porters to walk ahead of the soldiers to detect landmines. Monkey village was torched and the animals butchered.

So for Win Win Cho, from the age of two, life was tough. Her grandparents and other family helped her mother with the birth of her brother and shared their food and continued to do this but the loss of a working man is enormous so everyone had less. They rebuilt the village and the school and when she was five, Win Win Cho attended the Ta Eu Ke Primary School. There were more than 125 children in the bamboo school with three teachers who had perhaps level 7-9 education. Win Win Cho said she had only two pairs of clothes. The SPDC now have a big military camp at Lay Kay and the bored soldiers patrol the area constantly. Win Win Cho is exceptionally beautiful. She completed as much of the primary school as the situation allowed. We pay approximately \$8 Cdn. per month for Win Win Cho to attend the special Helen Hall School, which for brighter children allows the children to progress as quickly as they can from grade to grade.

Helen Hall is an Australian Seventh Day Adventist teacher who has been here for over 15 years. She sheltered Dr. Cynthia when she first arrived. She is in her late 60s now and races up and down the highway managing the three schools she began and now administers. Everyone knows her and waves and honks as she races by in her turquoise Chevrolet.

I particularly remember Win Win Cho from last summer when we were in Burma at the camp and when I stayed at KTB. She would come and sit close to me whenever she had free time. She just sat close, watching me write or inspecting my freckles. She was comforting and perhaps comforted. As the only daughter, (her brother is now 13 and in level 6 at a village near Monkey village), it must have been so painful for mother and daughter to make the decision to separate so that Win Win Cho could have an education and be safe. To me that alone helps justify our involvement in Kaw Tha Blay Hostel.



Catherine Dowham gives...3600 Baht to Principal Thein Su of High School # 2 in payment for exam fees and school fees. The kids go to 5 different schools within the Mae La Refugee camp.

About your donations

We have handed out all the donated gifts we were able to carry. At least 100 shirts of various styles, pens, pencils, shorts, skirts, underwear, sanitary pads, barrettes and hair bands, guitar strings and a harmonica as well. And, boy, were they appreciated! As I write this I am reading from my hand-written account book, aware that I am not quite up to date and only the small boys have underwear and the larger boys' shorts are in tatters. No one has much of a longyi anymore and they are a last line of defense against mosquitoes and malaria. I have found a place where I can get 12 pairs of boy's satiny sports shorts for 340B (\$94 Cdn. each). They seem to like these, or like it when they get new ones. It's hard to tell sometimes. I certainly haven't given a complete list but a beginning. We will go from school to school soon to pay the school fees and talk to the principals tomorrow.



The boys are very expertly attaching leaf batts with strings of bamboo to the roof of the now relocated chicken house.

Clinic News

The sterile gloves, antibiotics, stethoscopes and other medical supplies are being handed out slowly. David and Law Kwa are being very careful to take the supplies to the clinic only as they are needed, sometimes biking back to pick up something they need immediately. Dr. Ross McNeil's donated instruments are fondled and discussed and taken to the clinic, then brought home again. Dr. Toye's sutures have just been admired so far. David has purchased medications for Moe San Dar, a young girl brought in from Burma with horrible infected eczema, as well as a lot of Dettol that doesn't seem to be on Mae Tao clinic pharmacy list.

We have started to make individual records for each student. So I managed to find a file box, staples, etc. but can't seem to locate file folders anywhere. Win Ko and Eh Kah Lu have taken pictures of each child to attach to their files. I want to be able to record their villages, when they arrived, their school reports, academic level, any sickness they have had this year and their date of birth. They know their age but because of the different calendar system can't always identify the date in our terms. They always know the week day they were born though - like us - "Wednesday's child is full of woe" etc.

Amazingly no one is sick in Mae La now but we have reports from Mae Ra Mu that more than half are sick. These 25 have not been started on the vitamin and de-worming protocol yet and are harder for us to see. I will be buying these for everyone this afternoon at a cost of 3,185B or \$106.15 Cdn. for every six months.

We send the Mae Ra Mu group stuff if we find someone going and they send someone through the jungle to collect food money from Kshakalu at his camp.

There is a battle going on now in Karen State side between Mae La and Mae Ra Mu. Mortar shells are actually landing in the river, which is the border between Burma and Thailand. We had planned to visit this week but apparently the SPDC have more than five brigades (1000 soldiers) in the area. I don't really know what is going on but the bullet wounds and landmine victims arrive at the clinic according to David. I think the losses for the SPDC are much greater as they do not know the mountainous jungle area as well as the Karens. They are not brought to the clinic. Mind you, there are apparently well over 400,000 in the Burmese army and. if you count the cooks, maybe 8,000 in the Karen resistance.

Article by Cathy Downham, Chief Operating Officer