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## Editor's note

To bring peace in the world, you need to have a transcendent vision and accept the pains caused by suffering. Our children and youth development ministry has no absolute formula, but we have the determination to walk alongside, to care for and to watch over the suffering children. In this issue of *SHARE*, 'Focus' brings us to the scene of conflicting Myanmar to listen to children's desire and frontline workers' thoughts, and 'Join Hands Join Hearts' shares how we fill up the educational gap by providing learning opportunities for Syrian children. Moreover, Dr. Sarah Shea shares the meaning of children as those being called according to the Bible, and teaches us to receive children to accept the Gospel.

## Focus

### Peace in Turbulent Regions of Myanmar

*Written by Edward Lai (Senior Communications Officer)*

'Our dream has come true! We may have our new house very soon. We now come here every day to help build the house.' Mg Byar Woo, a ten-year-old boy in Myanmar said excitedly.

He invited CEDAR Fund's partner, Fullmoon Family Foundation (FMFF), to his current temporary shelter and said, 'every family has only a small living space. We sleep and cook in the same room.' His family slept on the same narrow bamboo bed with neatly folded sheets.

Though the temporary shelter was crowded, at least he and his family were safe. In his mind, not only his family was safe,

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but also over 40 other Lisu families, who had gone through the same adversity and displaced within the country.

## Flee for Safety

Years of civil war in Myanmar destroyed the place where he originally lived on the border between China and Myanmar. In addition to the remaining armed forces and landmines buried all over the villages, Mg Byar Woo learned that he had no hope of returning home in the foreseeable future. Once his home had been ruined, his family walked a long way to reach the refugee camp in Sadon, Kachin State in the north. However, a few years ago, the Myanmar Government announced the closure of camps in all districts and provided assistance to a majority of affected families. Only the Lisu people received no help from the government due to discrimination against their ethnic minority identity and Christian belief. Thanks to the help of David Fish, a senior pastor of the Flower Lisu Evangelical Church, Mg Byar Woo's family finally got sheltered. This senior pastor also assisted these displaced families in obtaining identity cards, arranging school registration for children, and even providing medicines and education subsidies.



Four-hectare land in Sadon

Gratefully, a compassionate person donated a four-hectare land in Sadon to the Flower Lisu Evangelical Church to serve the displaced families. In order to help Lisu families start a new life, CEDAR granted more than HK\$740,000 last year to support our partner to begin a three-year community resettlement and rebuilding project. Project items include construction of new houses, water and sanitation facilities, as well as provision of medical services, livelihood and psychosocial support.



Temporary residence of Lisu people (left) and new village house (right)

Mg Byar Woo said, 'I'm very happy! We then no longer need to flee and live in temporary housing. My new house is so close to the school and we are so happy to be able to go to school!' While gazing at his new home to-be, his face shone with delight. His nine-year-old sister prayed for their new home every day.

Ni Sat Tin Htoo (Ni Sat), Chairman of FMFF said, 'I believe this will be a pilot project for Myanmar. In the midst of darkness and hopelessness, during which different districts were locked down and banks were closed, God made a way for us, that the project's remittance and fund withdrawal were not too affected. Once a senior Myanmar official saw this project and said, "even we are in a high position, we can't help you like this way. Your God helps you accomplish this project!"'



Ni Sat and her father (Photo: Jacky Studio)

## Dark but Unimpeded

Our partner spent more than two years conceiving this project. Every time Ni Sat visited these Lisu families, she would also pray with the children. When CEDAR discussed the project agreement with the partner last year, it coincided with a coup d'état in Myanmar. Since then, armed conflicts have never ceased. Ni Sat recalled that on the day of signing the memorandum with CEDAR, she heard banging gunshots from the street, 'I was really worried at that moment. How shall we implement this project? We had been praying for a year. When the project was finally approved on that day, unrests in the country seemed to put everything on hold. I could only pray to God. I'm convinced that without His will, we can't do anything.'

With God, things become possible. The project was launched amidst conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the water tanks in the new village was already built and by the time of writing, around twenty new houses had also been established.

Through this project, God strengthened Ni Sat's faith and gave her strength to move on. As a caregiver and companion of orphans displaced by conflicts and natural disasters, she sighed,

*'Because of conflicts, many children have lost their parents; because of wars, many families have lost their homes and communities; because of the country's instability, many teenagers have lost their future...Children are precious, and they are our future. If they all lose hope, and if they were with you, what would you do for them?'*

## Bereavement and Embrace Forgiveness

When Ni Sat was young, she followed her father, U Ba Hla, to take care of poor children in mountainous areas and conflict zones. In 2008, when her dearest sister and brother-in-law were carrying out community development work, they were killed by the regional ethnic armed group members. Her two



nephews became orphans overnight. The death of her closest ones made her hate the armed groups. However, due to the needs of the children in the district, she continued to serve the communities. During her visits, she knew she was always in fear and felt that someone would attack her and her family – unwittingly she couldn't serve as dedicated as before and didn't think that community work would bring any expected results.

No matter how hard Ni Sat pretended to be normal, her trauma and doubts did not fade away. In 2015, she was invited to a historic ceasefire ceremony, where she would meet the General who ordered the killing of her sister and brother-in-law in the past. The day before the ceremony, she stayed up all night. 'I asked God to help me forgive but I still couldn't calm down.' Until the moment they met and talked about the peacemaking progress in areas and how they came to this stage of ceasefire, she was finally relieved and had peace, 'I remember my father said: "Only when you accept the heart of forgiveness, your life has the real peace."' With God, she forgave that General she hated the most. And amazingly, since then, she no longer felt fearful but a sense of security and strength whenever she went into those conflict-affected areas.



Ni Sat (left) met the General who ordered to kill her relatives (right)

FMFF has a motto: 'One day, our children must return to their communities to rebuild their peaceful communities.' FMFF runs a children home in the outskirts of Yangon. There are currently approximately 200 children living in the home. The team teaches children to resolve conflicts by hugs and kisses. With CEDAR's support, many children in the home have grown up and become nurses, teachers and social workers. Ni Sat said that over 80 young people have returned to their hometowns where were once ravaged by conflicts. Many of them had experienced the pain of bereavement. The memories of the past were dark, but Ni Sat's example teaches them how to rely on Christ's love to go through difficulties, and to be the wounded healers to mend the wounds of communities and transform communities by development.

The road to rebuilding communities is long, and there are no shortcuts to healing people's hearts. Every year, Ni Sat reunites with young people who have returned to their communities. Some shared their struggles in the serving that whenever they were troubled, they had to get back to the origin of life – God's love and forgiveness – to regain strength.

**Remark:** some pictures in this article are provided by CEDAR's partner. We encourage you to support our children and youth development ministry in poor and conflict-affected

areas. Please join our 'Join Hands Join Hearts' donation campaign: [link.cedarfund.org/243-cm-e](http://link.cedarfund.org/243-cm-e)

## Back to the Bible

### Fortunate, Unfortunate, or Called? - Children in God's Eyes

*Written by Dr. Sarah Shea (Assistant Professor of Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary, Vice President of Asia Academy of Practical Theology)*



No one can choose their mother; we are accustomed to calling children of wealthy families lucky and those born amidst poverty, war, disasters, or disability unlucky. Is this interpretation of children precise and comprehensive? We suggest the contrary, that children are the called ones.

Based on the Scripture, children are not arbitrarily manipulated by destiny, instead, they are the actors endowed with different missions in families and communities (Bunge 2001). In the Bible, the vocations of children can be varied, spanning from respecting their parents, loving the Lord, studying and practising the Word, and even teaching adults faith. Due to the limitation of space, I will only discuss one biblical view of children.

Jesus once said to his disciples, 'Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.' (Mark 9:37, American Standard Version). What did Jesus mean? How can receiving Jesus, Lord of all creation, be equivalent to receiving a little child? Scholars have put forward several interpretations, here I introduce an interpretation that relates to children's vocation.

Lane (1974) believes that the key to resolve this problem is the meaning of the word 'receive'. He clarifies that it was not about philanthropy, as the word referred to a particular welcome comes from the Lord's authorisation and delegation. Lane derives such meaning by making reference to Mark 6:11. Contexts of the two verses are similar. They both include disciples instructed by the Lord on His order of welcome, but differ in the role of disciples. In the former, the disciples are the ones being welcomed, while the latter's recipient is a little child, welcomed by the disciples. Lane infers that the ground of receiving hospitality in both verses are the same, as the recipients act as Jesus' representatives - welcoming them is equivalent to welcoming Jesus who sent them. On the contrary, those who do not welcome them will endure severe consequences and even eternal punishment (Matthew 18:6 and 25:45-46), as their inaction is equal to not welcoming Jesus and the Father who sent Him.

Taking Lane's view, a question arises, what did the Lord appoint 'one of such little children' to do on His behalf? I recommend Barth's theological interpretation in *Church Dogmatics* where he thoroughly explains the poor, whom the Lord calls and appoints are the benefactors prepared for His people, so that we will return to the gospel by welcoming the poor among us.

The Bible tells us that the Lord sends children to this earth to be His representatives so that His people will receive His grace. Then, the question is: have churches followed the Lord's command in welcoming children just like the disciples met, welcomed and recognised the resurrected Lord on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24)?

#### Reference:

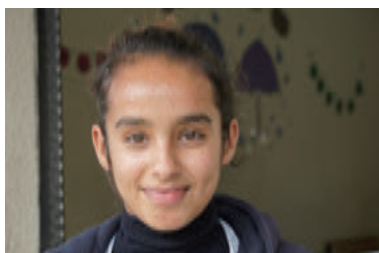
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## Join Hands Join Hearts

### 'I don't want to miss out on studying!' said the Syrian children.

Written by Edward Lai (Senior Communications Officer)

'I really enjoy coming to the learning centre. Whenever I am here, I feel extremely happy. I never want to miss out on my daily study sessions at the centre!' said Bayane, a 14-year-old Syrian refugee.



'I want to become a doctor when I grow up,' said Bayane.

In Lebanon, 90% of Syrian refugee families live in extreme poverty, a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, shelter, sanitation facilities. Refugee families are already under considerable financial strain. In order to survive, they usually resort to negative coping mechanisms, including child labour.

Since 2019, CEDAR has been supporting the operation of two learning centres, run by our partner Middle East Revive and Thrive (MERATH), in two towns in the Bekaa Valley, home to the lowest school attendance rate in the country. These centres provide education for refugee children, using the government-approved basic literacy and numerical curriculum, which covers Arabic, English, and Mathematics courses. They also provide an additional class in Science, as well as organise sports, music, and craft activities, so the refugee children will be better integrated into formal school in the future.

In addition, these centres act as havens where children are able to recover from trauma. MERATH reported that children have shown improved signs of psychosocial wellbeing. Children are more sociable and many of them have found their best friends through the centres.

Like the other 400 students, Bayane, who is from Syria's city Raqqah, treasures every opportunity to learn. Last year, Lebanon's COVID-19 lockdown caused the two centres to

close for several months. MERATH responded quickly by shifting classes online, and providing students with remote learning through their smartphones. Some of the teachers were even given technological training to create play-based interactive videos to enhance students' learning experience. We are pleased to witness the adaptiveness of our partner, enabling students to continue learning during the lockdown.

By the time of writing, the centres have resumed face-to-face teaching. Benefited by the learning opportunities, Bayane has grown to be a good helper in her family, handling various documents and some other miscellaneous tasks. No wonder his grandfather said thankfully, 'We thank God for having Bayane! She has learned and grown so much. I hope that she continues learning more and more as she grows!'

(Please support 'Join Hands Join Hearts' donation campaign: [link.cedarfund.org/243-cm-e](https://link.cedarfund.org/243-cm-e))

## HAPPY CHILDREN ON THE BATTLEFIELD

We may not be able to stop the wars, but we can definitely bring a little happiness to the children on the battlefields.

For details:  
<https://link.cedarfund.org/243-rpc-e>

## 2021/2022 Operating Statements In the period of Jul 21 - Oct 21

Income	HK\$ 4,425,096
Donations	3,408,683
Grants	-
Appeal for Relief	993,832
Other Income	22,581

Expenditure	HK\$ 7,064,858
Development Projects - Asia	2,120,172
- Middle East	194,755
- China & HK	1,090,486
- Africa	1,139,854
Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation Projects	992,689
Partnership Development	934,927
Administration	591,975

**Surplus/(Deficit) HK\$ (2,639,762)**

The annual budget for 07/2021 to 06/2022 is HK\$23,129,000. Please support CEDAR and our partner's work with your prayers and donations.

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