

Charity's account of her recent trip to Laputta

We were able to make a further trip to Laputta on 23rd June. For the first time, four foreigner friends were able to accompany me. One person from Samaritan's Purse, one from Food for the Hungry, and a doctor and a nurse from Brazil.

The government authorities gave permission to make a trip to Laputta for a day. So, we started our trip at about midnight on the 22nd. We were checked in 5 check-points for the documents and papers, and got to Laputta at about 11am. The road was very rough and when we got to Laputta, the car wheels sank in the mud and we were unable to go any further...because we had to make the return trip the same day we bought bus tickets for the return trip, loaded the rented motorboat with family kits, pots and pans, and immediately went to the villages.

Because I had told the villagers that I would come back on the 25th, the villagers in 'Thine Chaung' were overjoyed to see me quite unexpectedly on the 23rd. When I invited them, 'We have a doctor from Brazil, people who are ill, please come', immediately many ill people gathered and we were able to start the medical treatment. At the same time, we unloaded the "family kits" from the boat and distributed to each family. We continued to 'Hsin Twin Kone' village. We also invited 'Malay Gyi Kone' villagers and gave out medical treatment. On this trip, we were able to treat about 60 patients and fulfill the needs of 154 households. Most elderly patients suffered from headaches, aches, dizziness, and tiredness. They were frightened and devastated by Cyclone Nargis and said that they could not sleep at night because they were depressed.

When we got to Laputta, we were late and not able to catch the bus [back]. However, because they have permission only for a day, our foreigner friends were unable to sleep in Laputta. So, they had to rent motorcycles to catch up with the bus...I stayed on in Laputta to continue the relief work.

We were able to help farmers in [some] villages with 9 tractors, 40 tinns/60 bags of seeding paddy and 1 barrel of diesel. Rather than giving the tractors gratis, it was more like the farmers renting the tractors from us and we made contracts with them. When they have income after harvest, they promised to buy the tractors as their own. I respected and admired the farmers for having this kind of conscientiousness in such a dismal situation.

While I was in Laputta, village heads, headmasters, teachers, and monks came to ask for help from day to day. They were all in great difficulties and needed dire help. We didn't want to turn our back to them even though we didn't have enough money and material to give to everyone who asked for help. So, we received and talked with them warmly and made a list of the aid that they requested. I could only reply to them that we were praying to be able to come and help them further. Thankfully we were able to go to 12 of these villages to encourage the villagers and distribute some blankets, mosquito nets, pots, pans, woman kits, food kits, mats and school kits. We went to 25 villages in 2 groups and were able to help about 15,000 people in 3000 households. This was all because of the donor brothers and sisters who have been willing to share and help.

Farmers, education workers, all are suffering under extreme pressure. For the farmers much of their land is contaminated by the sea water. Others have no seed or way to plant. If there's no crops the months ahead could be every worse for the people. The school teachers were forced to reopen the schools on a day designated by the government officials, but given no help, and they had to struggle among the collapsed rubbles. Most children have no uniform or means to pay the school admission fees or buy books. Seeing them distressed make me weep and I made up my mind to try to help them as much as I can.

Many young people had lost parents, siblings, or relatives. They don't have anyone to support them in education. Dr T (who moved to Labutta 25 years ago and opened a clinic) invited these young people and gave them health education and taught them hands-on at his clinic. There are 3 stages in his teaching: basic, intermediate and advance health care. After they finish each stage, they have to go back to their village to take health surveys and give health care. This is a productive program both for the young people and their community.

We so appreciate your partnership and prayer,
Aung and Charity