

VOICE & HANDS

VOICE TO MYANMAR

By Jonas Santos

Myanmar is a country with many different ethnic groups and languages. Several of the minority language groups are considered “reached” with the gospel because there is a legacy of church planting that goes back to the days of pioneer missionaries in the early 1800’s. Many churches in these remote areas are filled with nominal believers, where they attend church sporadically because it’s part of their culture rather than a matter of personal faith in Christ.

Not so for the dominant ethnic group in Myanmar, the Burmese (or Bhamas, as they are sometimes called). They number in excess of 30 million people. While there are some churches, mainly in Yangon, Theravada Buddhism is deeply entrenched in the culture. It is estimated that evangelical Christianity is only 0.3 percent. So how can they learn about Jesus?

Shortwave radio is an answer.

From its shortwave facility in Australia, Reach Beyond broadcasts to Myanmar every day! Through our relationship with people like Pastor V, his small radio team have been producing programs in Burmese for about nine months. But, they want to increase the number of programs.

At the request of Pastor V, I recently travelled to Myanmar with Reach Beyond media trainers, Lisa Balzer and Janice Reid, to train a new group of volunteers and encourage them as their vision grows for reaching their people by radio. Nine students were able to learn how to focus their programs on the needs of rural listeners. One of them commented: *“It is a very good experience for me, hearing this teaching. We have to focus on the listener.”*

Increasing production from an occasional program to two per week is an enormous leap. One program contains more overt Christian teaching, whilst the other provides encouragement to rural women. The strategy is to work with people in the

villages to promote the programs, distribute radios and teach them how to tune in. There is however, an urgent need for more radios. One pastor exclaimed, *“The last time we visited the villages we only had 70 radios. We decided the fairest way to choose which families received a radio was by lot!”*

As the team gears up for a more intensive effort in production and promotion, pray with us for the unreached of Myanmar, that they will hear the Voice of Jesus.

Jonas is our Media Manager based in the Melbourne office. He is responsible for our shortwave broadcast strategy and works closely with our colleagues throughout the region including Lisa Balzer and Janice Reid who contributed to this article.



To get involved with Reach Beyond through praying, giving or going, visit reachbeyond.org.au



OPPORTUNITY TO DO GOOD

THE ROHINGYA REFUGEES

By Lisa Balzer

The bamboo and tarp tents blanket the hillsides as far as the eye can see, in what has become the largest refugee camp area in the world. The images and stories have circulated the globe – of the estimated million ethnic Rohingya who have fled violent persecution in their home country of Myanmar since August 2017, to neighbouring Bangladesh.

Last November, Reach Beyond and a local Bangladeshi NGO began working on a plan to help the Rohingya in their displacement. The immediate need was for blankets in the cold season and, in January, we distributed 10,000 blankets to one of the camps. People began sharing their stories with us. One man showed us the scars where he had been shot at as he fled; another clutched a photo of his family, from whom he had become separated during the escape and had not been able to locate since.

The camps are so vast that the need for medical facilities is great. With a local partner, we determined that our next step would be to provide a maternal and primary health care clinic in an under-served camp area. On May 7, that clinic opened, with local professionals and a Reach Beyond medical team working together to begin serving the people in the immediate vicinity. In its first four days, the clinic registered more than 300 people for consultation and/or treatment. Conditions have included gastric problems, day-to-day injuries from working with bamboo, skin infections, malnutrition, anaemia, coughs and fevers,

suspected tuberculosis and malaria, cuts and burns, and pre- and post-natal issues.

The stories start to come out as patients interact with the medical staff; when they fled Myanmar and by what route, who they lost on the way, what they experienced and witnessed. One 12-year old boy told us in clear English, “My mother was shot. She is dead. And my brother, and my brother-in-law.” An 18-year old girl came in seven months pregnant, with no husband and no family in the camp. She wouldn’t give details. Completely alone, she is facing motherhood in two months’ time.

I Couldn’t Make Her Smile

Dr. Steve Nelson was among our first doctors to serve in the clinic. One patient in particular caught his attention for just the fear and hopelessness she felt.

“Rahjek (name changed for her protection) was one of the patients I saw today. She is eight-years-old and was looking pretty sad, he said. I asked her if she had left her smile at home, which usually works to get one to show up, but no-go for Rahjek. Even taking into account how strange it must have been for her to find herself at our clinic faced with a foreign doctor, I guess she didn’t have much to smile about. She had been ill for two months; coughing, fevers at night and losing weight, and coughing up blood. Maybe coughing up blood reminded her of her sister who had died last year in Myanmar of tuberculosis (TB). “I asked her to cough, and what she brought up looked very infected, but no blood.”

OUR VISION: To see Jesus known



Therefore,
as we have
opportunity,
let us do good
toward
all men...

GALATIANS 6:10

By then, Mom was standing by and said 'it doesn't happen all the time' – but there were some tell-tale signs in her chest and I was starting to talk to Mom about a special clinic not too far away that specializes in treating TB. Mom looked pretty frightened at the thought - maybe she had been through some of this with her other daughter who died. I tried to tell them that Rahjek could get well, grow fat and give her some grandbabies but she would have to take medicine for a long time. I wanted to pray with them ... and wound up doing it by myself as they headed out of the clinic with my referral note, at least headed down the right path of the camp to be seen at the specialty clinic."

Medicine alone cannot treat all cases. But by God's grace we are trying to help bind up their hurt through compassionate medical care, seasoned with love and silent intercession to our Father on their behalf. The Rohingya numbers are vast, but the more we interact with them the more we see individual faces smile, individual stories, and precious individual souls to be loved and cherished in His name.

Reach Beyond has been broadcasting the gospel message into Myanmar via shortwave radio for many years, being the voice of Jesus to unreached people. The Rohingya people were on our heart long before they fled to Bangladesh, but we had been hindered in reaching out to them while they were isolated in Myanmar.

With the refugees now in Bangladesh, a window has opened allowing us to love and pray for this unreached people group – now being the voice and hands of Jesus – together.

Our annual Golf Day (see next page) will be raising funds for this important project.

WHO ARE THE ROHINGYA?

- A people group indigenous to the Rakhine State in Myanmar, tracing their heritage to the 8th century
- Denied citizenship under the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, left out of the 2014 census and declared as illegal immigrants
- Described by the UN as one of the most persecuted minority groups in the world
- One of the largest stateless populations in the world
- Population estimated to be one million in Myanmar before the crisis
- Estimated 800,000 have crossed the border into refugee camps in Bangladesh.
- Almost completely Muslim, Rohingya are a very conservative people group.

A FRESH LOOK

You might have noticed the change in the look and feel of our newsletter, including our new logo. This change reflects our renewed passion and commitment for making Jesus known and loved among all people. Through this fresh new look, we are striving to remain relevant, looking to attract a new generation of support whilst remaining true to our mission.

and loved among all people.



GOLF DAY 2018

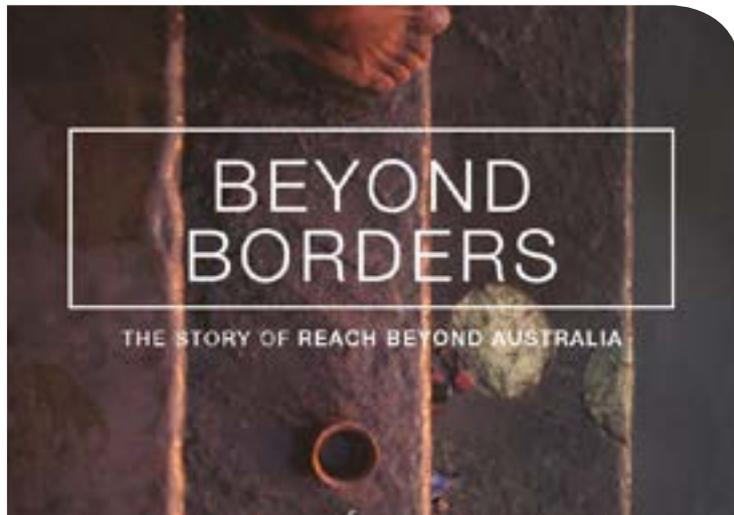
We're excited to invite you to our annual Golf Day on Friday 23 November 2018 at Eastwood Golf Club, Liverpool Road, Kilsyth, featuring guest PGA professionals, Scott Laycock and Euan Walters.

Reach Beyond was asked to help build and staff a medical clinic in one of the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. This clinic began functioning in May 2018 and Reach Beyond is now rotating five-person medical teams into the clinic per month.

Our ministry to the Rohingya people will be the focus of our annual Golf Day, where we are aiming to raise \$15,000 to cover the cost of medical supplies for 60 days. We'd love to see you there!

If you aren't able to participate on the day then you may be able to help by donating toward this cause.

For more information, please contact Adrian on **1300 653 853** or go to our website at reachbeyond.org.au/golfday



BEYOND BORDERS

The Story of Reach Beyond Australia

In *Beyond Borders*, Margaret A. Penford tells the inspirational true story of how one man's faith led to the creation of Reach Beyond Australia, a shortwave radio ministry which broadcasts the gospel message in over 30 languages to the Asia Pacific region.

In the pages of this well presented coffee table book, you will read that through faith, God is able to do more than we could ever hope, ask or imagine.

Reach Beyond CEO, Dale Stagg said, *"We cannot make people come to Christ but we can do everything in our power to bring Christ to them."*

To purchase your copy, call us on 1300 653 853 or email meloffice@reachbeyond.org.au. Cost is \$30 each or \$50 for two (incl. GST) plus postage.

REACH BEYOND

GIVE, GO & PRAY

GIVE: Help us continue to be the VOICE and HANDS of Jesus to the unreached. **GO:** Has God been speaking to you about serving or volunteering with Reach Beyond? **PRAY:** Pray that God will continue to open doors for us to be able to share the love of Jesus to the unreached.

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