



**FOCUS ON MERCY**

**September 2011**

*Australian  
Mercy*

*Good Bye  
Pehlu*

*ARMS Re-  
structure*

*Buzz Off*

*and much  
much more*

## Australian Mercy

*By David Skeat*

The ARMS Board have been looking at developing a new branding for ARMS, one that states clearly who we are and what we are about. On several occasions potential donors have misunderstood the name ARMS to mean an organization that is involved in armaments. There are also other organizations out there that use the acronym ARMS.

One such organization made some public statements on an ABC news program and we were flooded with abusive emails from people who presumed that we were the "ARMS" that was involved in the controversy; we were not and it took a lot of persuading the ABC to make public correction on the matter.

For legal reasons ARMS will not be changing its constitution; so the Board set about seeking a branding that was unmistakably clear. The Coca Cola Company owns the branding Coke. So the ARMS Board felt that a similar shortening of our legal name would not be a bad thing; after all Australian Relief & Mercy Services Ltd is quite a mouth full!

After a lot of work the ARMS Board settled on the name Australian Mercy, it was a shortening of our legal name, it said all that we needed to say and it was compliant with Australian aid regulations which require Australian aid agencies to be clearly identified as Australian in the field. Australian Mercy was a win, win, win situation.

However, once we settled on the name and had taken out a trademark on its use a US based organization threatened to take us to court over the use of the name Australian Mercy. We sought legal advice on this and were told that we would win the case hands down if it went to court but it would cost us more than \$20,000 to defend the case in court and \$50,000 if we lost. This meant that we needed to negotiate with the US organization and after some months of back and forth negotiation they withdrew their objections and we are now free to use the branding Australian Mercy.

In the coming months you will be hearing a lot more about Australian Mercy. A new logo will be soon be launched and our new website can be found under two domains [www.arms.org.au](http://www.arms.org.au) and [www.australianmercy.org](http://www.australianmercy.org) (Our other websites [www.donnamcdemid.org](http://www.donnamcdemid.org) and [www.buzzoff.org](http://www.buzzoff.org) have also been revamped.) (Continued)



# Good Bye Pehlu

By David Skeat



*Pehlu with two students from the middle school*

I have known Pehlu for 16 years, I first came in contact with her when she cooked for Steve Gumaer and I on a visit to Mae Salee Khee in 1995. Pehlu is an amazing woman who has endured much over the years.

In Burma Pehlu had been a secondary grade science teacher, but like thousands before her she had to run from the forces of the SPDC and found herself in Mae-la camp where she became a good friend of Rose Mu.

Pehlu took over running the preschool that Rose once ran, and when Rose died, she took over the orphanage that Rose had been running. Her husband Sunday has raised vegetables and goats to try and provide food for the orphans. Pehlu and Sunday's children have all grown up in Mae-la camp.



*David with Pehlu in 2009*

In recent years the Thai government has put incredible pressure on the refugees to get out of Thailand and either go back to Burma (which is a death sentence for most), or to the third nation, such as America or Australia. Pehlu and Sunday have children who have left the camp and gone to a third country, in Pehlu's case she has a son and grand children living in Kentucky. (One son still lives in the camp with his wife and family.)

About a year ago Pehlu told me that she had applied to go to the US and live with her son and daughter-in-law there, but as refugee applications to the US take a long time to process she thought it would take 3 years before she would be able to go.

A month ago Pehlu received notification that her application to the US had been processed and that she had 14 days in which to leave the camp and travel to the US, no one was more surprised than Pehlu. (Sunday's application has not yet been processed.)

Pehlu has been a very influential person in the Mae-la camp, she is a member of the Anglican church there and in her last couple of years has established a Middle School in the camp which she ran as well as running the orphanage. ARMS will continue to help the orphans and Middle School using the management structure that Pehlu has put in place.

One of the people who will be impacted the most by Pehlu's departure will be Corinna. She and Pehlu were inseparable friends who worked together on many of the aspects of the preschool and other projects within the camp.

It is with much sadness and joy that we announce that Pehlu has now gone to Kentucky to live with her son and family there, she is in a safe place, she will have good health care, she will flourish there I am sure.

I spoke to Pehlu on the phone the day before she left the camp, she was nervous, excited and anxious about the orphans she has been caring for all these years. She was also concerned for the children in the middle school. Australian Mercy will continue to care for the orphans and the children in the Middle School.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the incredible work that Pehlu has done in the Mae-la camp over all the years that I have known her. I can only say that the staff here at ARMS, and myself wish her every success in the US and hope that Sunday's visa will also be processed soon.



*Pehlu and Corinna - inseparable friends*

*From Page 1*

## Australian Mercy Cont .....

In the coming months there will be more changes as ARMS moves to a new level of ministry and reconfigures and restructures itself to better serve the poor and needy. Focus on Mercy will be undergoing a redesign and we will also be talking to the public more through social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

We are ARMS and our new branding is Australian Mercy.

**Australian Mercy is the new way of saying ARMS!**

## ARMS help HIV sufferers in Africa.

Last year ARMS received a large in-kind donation of HIV medicines through an arrangement with Donors Without Borders these medicines were in date and stored in the UK.

Over the past few months ARMS has been negotiating the transfer of these medicines to a project in Burundi. In June 2011 ARMS received notification that the medicines had indeed arrived in Burundi and were being dispensed by doctors at a clinic that had registered with ARMS early last year.

Since receiving these medicines ARMS has been informed by the Australian Tax Office that it has reservations with regards to some aspects of the arrangement with Donors Without Borders in its current format. Until these issues are resolved ARMS has stepped back from this arrangement and will not be processing any gift in-kind donations of medicines until an ATO approved system can be put in place.

ARMS is thrilled that we have been able to help hundreds of people in Burundi who are living with HIV/AIDS and we look forward to extending the work we are doing in the HIV field as opportunities arise.



*Receiving HIV meds in Burundi*

## ARMS Restructures for the future.

ARMS has not only got a new branding of Australian Mercy but we are also restructuring the company to run more efficiently.

The ARMS Board has been restructured and reduced in size. The Board will meet more often and will take a more direct role in the running of ARMS. The old ARMS Board had 13 members, many of whom have served ARMS faithfully for many years.

The new ARMS Board has 8 members;

David Skeat (Chairman) Chris Harrison (Secretary) Matt Colwell (Treasurer) Dianne Clark (Director) Jen Keatch (Director) Bruce Skinner (Director) Kris Thomson (Director) and Nik Matthews (Director).

ARMS has moved its National Office from Melbourne to Port Kembla, the new contact address for ARMS is PO Box 132 Port Kembla NSW 2505.

So as you can see much is happening. This restructure has been one of the reasons why there has been only one edition of Focus On Mercy in the past 12 months. However, as we now prepare to move forward under our new branding you will be hearing a lot more from us.

As you can see this past 12 months has not been without its challenges and difficulties; we have had to seek counsel as we have sought to make these changes, and we are now at the point of where we can boldly move forward.

Please take the time to look at the new look ARMS websites. In the coming months you will also notice differences as Focus on Mercy also morphs into a new format.

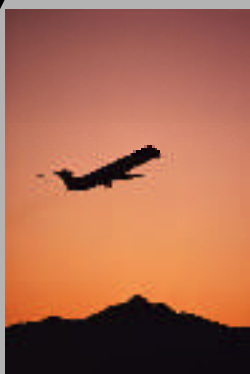
All these changes are for good and as we move forward we are more resolved in our passion to serve the poor and the needy than we have been before.

## Buzzing Off Overseas?

Why not do your part to fight malaria? If you are travelling in a malaria endemic area why not take an extra mosquito net with you as a gift to a local family – for just a few dollars and a place in your baggage you could help to save a life!

Buzz Off are selling high quality mosquito nets to people travelling overseas as part of its Mozzie Net Bank program. You can buy your mosquito nets from Buzz Off from \$15 each plus postage (this amount varies according to the size of the net.) Group orders are welcome too. Just email [nets@buzzoff.org](mailto:nets@buzzoff.org) and place your order.

Profits from this program will help Buzz Off.





# Accountability and Development

There are many aspects to working in development, the good bits are you get to do work that changes lives and communities and gives hope to thousands. The other bit is primarily you are utilising money that has been entrusted to you by others; therefore you need to be accountable for it.

From its inception ARMS has understood the need for being transparent and accountable in its operations and handling of the funds that are entrusted to it. The government and peak bodies to whom we report each year get a full report on our activities as well as this; we publish our Annual Reports on our website.



The Not For Profit (NFP) sector in Australia is highly regulated, some say over regulated. Each year the burden of compliance for those in the NFP sector seems to increase as government and peak bodies fine tune and in some cases increase the ways that compliance is expressed.

ARMS has to be compliant to all state governments in the area of fund raising and lodge reports with them annually, we send our Annual Reports to 4 peak bodies as well as submitting copies to ASIC every year.

I remember a few years back the Melbourne Sunday Herald Sun ran an article about a Victorian charity that was set up by a man to raise money for kids with cancer. According to the article this man raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, bought himself a holiday house by the sea and gave a few dollars to a hospice that cared for kids with cancer. Understandably there was outrage expressed in the press, TV and parliament etc; and rightly so this man was cheating the system, deceiving the public and robbing from those who were in need. His actions needed to be censured in the strongest possible way.

Within months the law in Victoria was changed in order to stop repeats of such dishonest and deceptive behaviour; but the damage was done, people seemed to be thinking that if one charity was cheating them there had to be more. About 3 months after this article appeared I attended a meeting at which officers of the Victorian Attorney General's office told the gathered CEOs and leaders of the NFP sector in Melbourne that they were no longer going to be allowed to be cowboys, and that the Victorian government would make all assembled honest citizens. What an insult. Probably all those who were gathered were completely honest people who just wanted to help those in need. Yes sometimes you run across the odd cowboy who is blatantly doing things that are not correct, but for every single bad guy there are thousands who faithfully do the right thing and who understand the importance of compliance to minimum standards of integrity. So it always has been with us at ARMS.

Recently the ARMS Board have been reviewing policy and governance issues and as a consequence will be putting into place new procedures that will help us to better comply to the standards expected of us by both government and peak bodies. We hope that these new standards will exceed the standards that are currently required; because we see the value in transparency and integrity. This move has come about due to the incredible growth ARMS has experienced in the last few years. In the coming 12 months more measures are being put in place to make sure that donors will be confident that ARMS is using the money they give wisely, ethically, and appropriately.

One of the innovations we are using to make sure everyone is on the same page is found on a website. Soon registered projects will be able to login and download the latest material they need in order to stay current; and in order to report back to the ARMS National Office. We are also looking at our reporting and record keeping. All Board members and advisory Board members are being given access to a cyber Board room where all documents are uploaded and online discussions can be held so no matter where our Board members might be they will still have access to information and documentation relating to issues that are before the Board.

At ARMS we love the work we do and we count it a real privilege to serve the poor and needy within Australia and overseas. The structural changes we are making position us to better serve those we are trying to help as well as giving confidence to those who are partnering with us.

Accountability is an expectation that is put on all forms of corporate enterprise in one sense or another. It is a reality that comes with the territory of using public funds. At ARMS we welcome reasonable regulation and hope that as time moves on governments and peak bodies alike will streamline their systems so that national standards are in place so that compliance is more straightforward than it is now.

## A Letter from Corinna

Corinna is a refugee in Mae-la camp that directs the preschool we support there. She has written a long letter to us that we have edited and reproduced below. (English is her second language.)

Dear David,

*In our preschool there are 37 boys and 33 girls and 5 teachers. They are fine but sometimes they get sick with fever, colds, diarrhoea, malaria and other sicknesses.*

*The children in our preschool are very happy and love to learn. In learning time we have fun and sing songs, learn the alphabet and about our bodies, animals, vegetables, fruit and our family tree.*

*I am helping to teach many other teachers in the camp and one the weekends they write practice lesson plans.*

*Recently we ran a workshop for teachers about child rights and child protection, and we also learned about child abuse. These are very hard things to learn and teach.*

*This school year in the summer we want to repair the school building, make a play space for the children and a garden for them.*

*So we need to buy the supplies to do this work which will cost 15,630 Baht (\$AUD 521). We would also like to buy some pigs that we can grow. Thank you for your kindness to the Karen refugee children*

Corinna.



Corinna

Australian Mercy is the new way of saying ARMS!

The Australian Mercy National Office is continually raising funds for the ongoing work of the preschool and also for these additional projects. We estimate that the pigs will cost \$50 each. Tax deductible donations to this project can be made through the Australian Mercy website [www.australianmercy.org](http://www.australianmercy.org), or by sending funds to the National Office.

### A Quick catch up on RescueNet.

Late last year RescueNet formed an international council which will take over the international running of the ministry, set training standards etc. The RescueNet International Council has delegates from all centres serving on it. This is a great step forward for the ministry.

Earlier this year, over 30 RescueNet personnel were ready to deploy into the Japanese Tsunami disaster but the Japanese government were only taking rescue personnel on a government to government basis and rescue teams that were arriving in Tokyo en-route to the disaster site were being sent back by the Japanese government.

We did get assessment personnel on site and had permissions from the local authorities to deploy but the Japanese national government would not allow foreign teams on site.

RescueNet training has been conducted in three locations, New Zealand, Switzerland and the US. International staff membership is over 40 people.



ARMS partners with the World Relief Overseas Fund by acting as its agent for the delivery of aid and development projects. More information about World relief can be found at [www.wra.org.au](http://www.wra.org.au)

ARMS is also a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct, which defines minimum standards of governance, management, and accountability for non-government development organisations.



To view the ACFID Code of Conduct visit the ACFID website [www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au)

By David Skeat

Buzz Off has been very busy over the past 12 months— through funding that we have received we have been able to fully engage in Burma and have just started a project office in Yangon.

Buzz Off in Burma is working on two fronts. Firstly we are working with the IDPs and refugees on the Thai / Burmese border and secondly we are working in other remote areas within Burma holding training seminars and setting up medical networks in regional areas.

Buzz Off has also just received funding to start work in remote areas of Papua New Guinea and is also assisting clinics in Western Papua (Indonesia).

More invitations are coming and we are in desperate need of more Australian based office staff to help fundraise and manage the work of Buzz Off.

To show you what a profound affect this project is having let me share with you some of the statistics that have come out of the Burma project.

In February this year Buzz Off trained 165 malaria workers in Burma and 12 PHC workers on the Thai / Burmese border. Also on the border Buzz Off trained 16 microscopists and is developing a microscopy flip chart to help with the diagnosis of malaria.

In the 2010 / 2011 campaign Buzz Off distributed 7,250 LLIN mosquito nets. 6800 of these were distributed into IDP camps. Statistically, these nets can protect up to 34,000 people from malaria. A mosquito net makes a huge difference to those who are in the forests on the run from the SPDC forces. The balance of the nets was distributed in other remote areas of Burma.

Buzz Off also distributed 6,160 Rapid Diagnostic Testing kits inside Burma this means that clinics were able to quickly diagnose patients and treat them quickly.

We bought more than \$15,000 in medications and when all the numbers were crunched the figures showed that Buzz Off had saved the lives of 9,014 people inside Burma who without our aid would have died from Malaria.

This is a great result and your continued support of Buzz Off as it increases its field of influence will help us to save more lives. Donations can be made through the Buzz Off website or through the ARMS National Office.

ARMS also wants to acknowledge the generous support of Entrust who recently donated \$9,545 to Buzz Off. These funds have been used to buy mosquito nets for IDP communities on the Thai / Burmese border.

Another Buzz Off donor, Australian band The Temper Trap who have also donated several thousands of dollars to Buzz Off. The first lot of finances has been used to place mosquito nets, testing kits and medicines to clinics serving the IDP areas in Burma, future donations will be directed to the work we are establishing in West Papua where Buzz Off is empowering clinics in remote areas to fight malaria.

Buzz Off is growing in Asia and we are grateful for the excellent progress this project is making; our biggest needs are for finances and personnel. Australian based personnel to help run the project and funding for the more remote areas in Burma which are in great need. We are currently seeking funding and support to extend the work of Buzz Off into Africa where the largest numbers of people are dying from Malaria. Your support of Buzz Off is saving lives and changing communities.



Check out the Buzz Off website: [www.buzzoff.org](http://www.buzzoff.org)



# Malaria training in Burma a huge success.

In February this year Buzz Off ran a Malaria training seminar in three states of Burma. The seminars were well attended and 165 came which was more than double the expected number. The seminars were run in Mandalay, Lashio and Sittwe.

These seminars have provided Buzz Off with three networks through which it can feed medicines, testing kits and LLIN nets. The long distance communication between these networks and Australia is difficult but Buzz Off has now established an office in Yangon which will be responsible for all of the communication. One highlight from these seminars was the coming on board of an already existing medical network that is attached to a local church. The network comprises about a dozen doctors and other medical personnel who do medical outreaches into the remote areas of Shan state. Since coming on board this network has begun to regularly test for malaria, use haemoglobin testing kits which they had not seen before and distribute LLIN nets.

Buzz Off has great hopes for the extension work that can be done through these networks. Our need is continued funding. We now have the means to get money and resources into these networks but we also need to now find long term partners who will help us with long term funding for the established networks and their expansion into other areas of Burma.

Buzz Off has invitations to 3 more states to set up networks there. In order to do this we will need to increase our Australian based Campaign staff and see more funds raised for Buzz Off.

We are working on the idea of presentation kits that friends and supporters can use to explain Buzz Off (what it does and how people can help) to local community based groups within their networks. We are also seeking sponsorships from businesses and the corporate sector to help in the expansion of Buzz Off.

The continued growth of Buzz Off will be huge once we roll it out in PNG and Western Papua, we also have a project in Africa that we are wanting to start.

Donations to Buzz Off can be made through the Buzz Off website [www.buzzoff.org](http://www.buzzoff.org) or by sending a donation to the ARM National Office.



## Primary Healthcare Seminars

*By Marion Wilbraham*

This year we were again invited to hold the Primary Health Care seminar inside the Mae La Refugee Camp. The course was compacted into 3 weeks.

Twenty seven students were graduated and 12 of these were mature age students. The lectures were interpreted into both the Burmese & Karen languages, and the medication dosage chart was translated into Burmese, which will be reproduced for future courses.

We held a full day clinic with 73 patients coming for help. Five "Doctor groups" of five/six students each, did excellent work with patient history taking; but lacked confidence to suggest a diagnosis. Geoff Masters and his wife Keren gave valuable assistance as supervisors & with relating personally with patients.

We have been asked to run a Teacher Training Healthcare Seminars next year during the school vacation, with the intention of having health education in the Camp schools.

The teachers were David Skeat, Robin Wales, Geoff Masters & Marion Wilbraham; we stayed in Mae Sot & traveled to the camp each day. A truck hired for the last week was a wonderful luxury, and we were able to transport school stationary supplies from Mae Sot for the coming term.

Our aim is to help the students understand that many health problems can be reduced or even avoided by the use of hygiene, immunization, good nutrition principles, and early diagnosis. We encourage them to put into practice, in their own lives, what they have learned, and to share their knowledge with other people living nearby.

Our principle in this ministry is 'little bit, by little bit'.

# THE Back Page

## Micah Challenge

ARMS is a supporter of the Micah Challenge, a global movement of Christian agencies, churches, groups and individuals inspiring and equipping Christians to speak out against poverty and injustice.

The Micah Challenge urges decision makers to fulfil their promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on global poverty by 2015.

You can find out more about the Micah Challenge at [www.micahchallenge.org.au](http://www.micahchallenge.org.au)

  
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## Focus On Mercy

is the newsletter of the National Office of Australian Relief & Mercy Services Ltd. (ARMS)  
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A Ministry Of Youth With A Mission Australia

## Quotable Quote

**"Have the courage to say no. Have the courage to face the truth. Do the right thing because it is right. These are the magic keys to living your life with integrity." W. Clement Stone**

## ARMS Tax Deductible International Projects

1. Burmese IDP Project
2. Hera Comm Dev Project
3. Karen Preschool Project
4. Cambodian Harvest
5. ARMS Disaster Trust
6. Buzz Off
7. Donna McDermid Fund

## 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"/> National Office Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Karen Middle School | <input type="checkbox"/> Buzz Off              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RescueNet               | <input type="checkbox"/> Karen Preschool     | <input type="checkbox"/> Australian Mercy Fund |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Karen Orphanage         | <input type="checkbox"/> Donna McDermid Fund | <input type="checkbox"/> Where Most Needed     |

Donations to all of ARMS Australian Projects are Tax Deductible

Name.....  
 Address.....  
 .....Post Code .....  
 Contact Number .....

Please debit my creditcard \* (circle one) Visa / Mastercard

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

\* All credit card transactions are subject to a 2% credit card fee.

Return to Australian Mercy  
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