

Myanmar - Heartspring and World Vision Overview 1995

On January 17, 1995 a team of four communication specialists representing Heartspring in Wichita, Kansas traveled to Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) to provide equipment, testing and training to the students and teachers of the Mary Chapman School For The Deaf. The opportunity to assist children in Southeast Asia was made possible by a joint effort of World Vision, Jack and Marilyn DeBoer and Heartspring.

Linda Parmiter-Jacobs, Director of Audiology along with Carol Jared-Brown, Audiologist, Teri Hubbard, Audiometric Technician, and Jennifer Johnson, Director of Speech and Language Department of Heartspring provided seven days of extensive services to 250 hearing impaired students. All children at the school were provided otoscopic inspection of the ears, tympanograms to assess the condition of the middle ear system and standard hearing tests to determine the type and degree of hearing loss and to identify the need for medical management. A total of 87 children representing 36% of the total tested required medical referral. Medical services were provided by the EENT Hospital in Yangon. A total of 142 children were provided hearing aid evaluation and fitting of hearing aids representing 57% of the total student population.

A major emphasis on teacher-training included eight topics with hands-on training to include the use, care, maintenance and minor repair of hearing aids, techniques for communicating with the hearing impaired and techniques for teaching speech. Teaching staff was trained in the use of the audiometric testing equipment and the procedures for evaluating hearing loss and guidelines for identification of the need for medical referral and management. Text books were provided for reference and inclusion into the school library to become part of a long term training process. Classroom acoustics and the importance of a "Good Listening Environment" are areas for future consideration and attention.

A future goal of Mary Chapman is to develop an Audiology Resource Center for the testing of hearing loss. At present the school has built a sound room for testing purposes. Heartspring donated used equipment to include a diagnostic clinical audiometer, impedance middle ear analyzer, otoscope, two auditory trainers and a vibro-tactile auditory speech trainer. New hearing aids were purchased by the DeBoers which will allow 150 students to enjoy the sounds of life and with time and training to have an opportunity to develop verbal speech/language communication skills. Hearing aid supplies, cleaning products, standard earmolds and batteries were provided by friends and contributors to Heartspring.

The Mary Chapman School For The Deaf is celebrating it's Diamond Jubilee this year. Upon our arrival to the school we found that none of the children had had their hearing tested since 1987. Prior hearing test records were nonexistent. If any of the children had been tested no one knew what degree or type of hearing

loss was present. The few hearing aids that were present at the school were not in working condition, had no batteries and no earmolds for directing the sound to the ear. No staff had been trained in the use, care and maintenance of hearing aids. Prior audiometric test equipment that had been donated by organizations had been sent with no instructions or training. No staff had been trained on how to test hearing or on how to understand hearing test results. With this as our reference point our work was cut out for us. The four Heartspring staff with assistance from teachers, physicians, school volunteers, a local hearing aid manufacturer, support staff, the one and only Audiologist in Yangon and the World Vision staff undertook the task of "Making A Difference – One Child at a Time."

The World Vision philosophy of teaching and training individuals to direct and provide their own services speaks well to the need that we found at Mary Chapman. Organizations must be willing to provide, in addition to equipment, supplies and monies the human resources to teach self sustaining skills that can perpetuate long term benefits and growth in development.

The Heartspring team returned on January 31, 1995, exhausted but feeling very excited about the difference they made in many children's lives. It is our hope that the equipment and training will make a positive and significant addition to the abilities that the dedicated staff at Mary Chapman can make on the lives of the hearing impaired they serve. All of us together can make a difference that is not forgotten. David Chandler of World Vision summed it up best: "I believe their presence sends a very positive message in many ways... they are having a significant impact... We shall see, but it is my hope that this is not a one-time deal, but in fact just the beginning. Thanks for making it happen."