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Editor's note

In this issue of *SHARE*, we share how to walk with those suffering in a turbulent world. 'Focus' shows us how to hold on to faith despite exhaustion amid global conflicts and disasters. 'Learn a Little More' provides an overview of the current state of conflict and peace around the globe and shares CEDAR's work in Myanmar and Lebanon. Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, 'Back to the Bible' reminds us of loving our neighbour regardless of race and emphasises the teaching of continuous help to our neighbour. May we find the strength to walk with the conflict-stricken poor.

FOCUS

Walking with the Afflicted: Seeing Hope in Weariness

Written by Ken Wong (Communications Officer)

In a turbulent world, news of wars and disasters always surrounds us. In Afghanistan, Lebanon, Ukraine, and

Myanmar, the war has devastated countless families, as if there is no end in sight. Although we are not directly affected in Hong Kong, we may still feel powerless and exhausted from the perspective of supporters, donors and bystanders—tiredness that comes from the depths of our hearts and is difficult to resolve.

This weariness comes not only from our inability to quickly resolve the problems of war and the problems it brings but also from 'information fatigue' and 'compassion fatigue'. Every day, our screens are filled with tragic news, but there is little glimmer of hope. When messages of sadness and helplessness come one after another, our compassion gradually becomes dull and even numb.

The Poor Enduring Long-term Conflict

Many people have paid attention to the Middle East and Ukraine wars in recent years. However, there are still many easily forgotten sufferers around us who are silently suffering from the war, waiting for the dawn of hope. Myanmar, a land that has been plagued by internal conflict since its independence in 1948, has struggled with war and poverty for years. CEDAR's work with local partners on several poverty alleviation projects has made some progress. Still, since the 2021 military coup, the situation has taken a turn for the worse, with many families once again falling into poverty.

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As the war continues to devour communities, we are saddened and exhausted when we hear from our partners about the hardships that local people face day after day. Many factories and shops have closed in cities, leaving poor families without income. In remote poor villages, the situation is also very dire. The army forcibly occupied the village and even burned down the houses, forcing the villagers to flee. They had to dig holes to hide from the fighting. When they returned home, they found that their farmland had been destroyed and their livestock had been lost, making their lives even worse. What is even more distressing is that landmines surround the village, and the villagers have been living in the shadow of death for years.

What is even more painful is the pain of being separated from families without knowing they were alive or not. An elderly woman told us in the temporary camp, 'Within two months, our family had lost all the men. The rebels have captured my son-in-law, and my son and daughter-in-law disappeared, and we can't find them anyway.' Grief, anger and fear are woven into the hearts of the people of Myanmar. In the face of a long period of war, the day of peace is far away, and we share the exhaustion of the people of Myanmar.



As affected by the war, children greatly needed love and care.

Upholding Our Faith amid Weariness

The protracted war is entangled with the deep-rooted problem of poverty, which is very complex and challenging to solve. Frontline workers and donors have repeatedly made efforts, but no visible progress has been seen. They may feel that their efforts are insignificant or even futile, and some choose to withdraw and distance themselves from the problem. However, such a choice not only makes the sufferers lonelier but also distances us from the Lord's call.

In the face of these challenges, should we abandon long-term assistance for the vulnerable? Of course not. As Christians, we are called to follow in Christ's footsteps and walk with those who are suffering. The Lord's salvation is not only manifested on the cross but also in his continued presence with us and in our close relationship. No matter how broken our lives are, He never forsakes us and is always with us.

The hope of Christians lies in the eschatological salvation as well as the constant presence of the Lord. It reminds us that the expression of love is not only about a desire to end war and poverty once and for all, but also a continuous walk with those who suffer with the love of Christ. This gives us a new look at exhaustion – we feel tired because we associate our feelings with the tired lives of those who suffer, just as the Lord binds with us. It also reflects the Bible's teaching that we should weep with those who weep and that we feel helpless with those who are suffering, which is a beautiful display of Christianity.

Walking with the People of Myanmar

On the path to enduring exhaustion with the people of Myanmar, we are experiencing the beauty of walking together and feeling the power of life intertwined. In April 2024, as the conflict in Myanmar intensified, many people poured into churches seeking refuge because they believed that the Christian church could bring them hope. However, as local churches lacked resources to meet people's basic needs, we worked with partners to provide emergency food, medicine, and other necessities. A pastor who has worked with us for many years said, 'Thank you for your unwavering support and concern. In these difficult times, you bring us food and hope to live. Each meal not only fills our stomachs but also supports our souls, reminding us that we are not alone so that we can continue to meet the challenges of each day with hope and faith.' These words touch us deeply and inspire us. It turns out that simple material assistance brings material help and transmits the power of faith.



We brought the conflict-stricken children to know the Lord and worship together.



Families taken refuge in the church finally received food and a moment of rest.

Walking with the people of Myanmar is not a given but a grace of God. Due to political factors, it is difficult for Western funds to enter the local area, but the Lord has not forgotten the sufferers. The local authorities see CEDAR's funding as a non-Western source, and we can continue to work with our local partners to grasp the path opened by God and walk alongside the people of Myanmar.

In addition to material assistance, we also take care of mental needs. Like many of the beneficiaries, the leaders of local partners have experienced the pain of death threats and family separation, so we offered counselling workshops to help them vent their emotions and learn to support each other. Besides, we carry out various community development projects for long-term development, providing vocational training such as agricultural training and women's sewing and handicraft skills to help enhance the villagers' income. We also established children's learning spaces to offer educational opportunities for children and orphans in slums, filling gaps in Myanmar's education system and empowering communities to build their futures.

Although we cannot immediately eliminate the world's suffering, by the grace of the Lord, we can walk with those who suffer so that they will no longer be alone and find the strength to move forward. In addition to walking with the people of Myanmar, we also walk with refugees and people living in poverty affected by the protracted wars in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Ukraine and other places, and we witness the grace of the Lord to see lives touched by love and transformed by hope.



In a workshop in April 2024, we helped the leaders of our partner in Myanmar channel their emotions and pray together.

May we not be deterred by weariness but strengthened by faith, remembering that our strength comes from the presence of the Lord, continuing to accompany those who are suffering and providing long-term assistance to the conflict-stricken poor so that more people can experience the love and hope of the Lord because of our actions.

Back to the Bible

Love Your Neighbour: Irrespective of Race, Enduring Assistance

Written by Tony Chan (Senior Communications Officer)

Scriptures reading: Luke 10:35

'35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him", he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, a man fell victim to robbers who not only stole from him but also stripped him of his clothing and beat him severely, leaving him half-dead. Two persons who served in the synagogue passed by. Although they saw the injured man, they chose to remain indifferent and walked away. However, a Samaritan later passed by, saw the injured man, was moved with compassion, and extended a helping hand.

Jesus crafted this parable to respond to an expert in the law's question. During a debate with Jesus, the law expert asked, "Who is my neighbour?" The Bible noted that he asked this question to 'justify himself', as he believed he had already fulfilled the law's requirement to love his neighbour. However, Jesus instructed him to love his neighbour as if he had never truly done so before.

Jesus' story is masterfully crafted. The two persons who ignored the injured man were both workers serving in the synagogue. The injured man, in addition to being robbed, was stripped of his clothing. At that time, people often identified others' ethnic backgrounds based on their attire, so the passersby could not determine the man's identity. However, the incident took place on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, an area predominantly inhabited by

Jews, making it more likely that the injured man was Jewish.

When the two temple ministers saw a person lying on the road whose identity was unrecognisable, they did not consider him a neighbour, even though it was highly likely he was a fellow Jew. Consequently, they chose not to offer assistance. The Samaritan, however, acted differently. He saw someone whose identity was unclear and who was very likely a Jew—a member of a group that commonly harboured hostility toward his own people. Yet, he still chose to help him.

Through this parable, Jesus conveyed that 'neighbour' is not restricted by ethnic or racial boundaries. In the parable, the only definitive information about the injured man is his need for assistance. Thus, a neighbour is not defined by proximity or familiarity but by the presence of anyone in need.

The Samaritan not only acted on his initial compassion by providing immediate assistance, but the next day, he went further, entrusting the innkeeper to continue caring for the injured man and even committing to cover future medical expenses. His moment of compassion resulted not in a single act but in continuous assistance.

Today, we reflect on two key points: First, a neighbour is not merely someone close to us but anyone in need. Second, loving one's neighbour requires more than a single act of kindness. It involves providing ongoing support according to the neighbour's needs. May the Lord guide us in living out His teachings. Amen.

Learn a Little More

Global Conflicts and Peace

Written by Clara Chiu (Head of Partnership Development)

Throughout the long process of human history, conflicts have often led to waves of refugees, displacing countless families. Those who migrate internally are known as 'Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs), while those who leave their home country and seek refuge in a neighbouring country are known as 'Refugees'. These conflicts can be caused by political struggles, religious persecution, ethnic conflicts, and so on.

The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), an Australian think tank, released the 18th edition of the Global Peace Index 2024 (GPI) in June 2024. The report ranks the level of peace in 163 independent countries and territories, covering 99.7% of the world's population. The report states that there are currently 56 conflicts, the most since the end of World War II. In 97 countries, peace has continued to deteriorate more than in any previous year since the GPI was released in 2008. Iceland is the most peaceful country, ranking first in the GPI, and the least peaceful country is Yemen, ranking 163rd. The countries with CEDAR's presence, such as Lebanon (134th), Myanmar (148th) and Afghanistan (160th), all ranked lower as places of frequent conflict.

The Mid-Year Global Trends Report 2024, released by The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 13 June 2024, revealed that the total number of people forcibly displaced globally increased to 122 million by June 2024, up from 117 million at the end of 2023. This is equivalent to 1 in 67 people being forced to migrate—almost double the ratio of 1 in 114 a decade earlier—and 87% of those people live in low-income and middle-income countries.

Whether it's a civil war or a conflict between countries, people affected by conflicts face many difficulties as they flee. Many refugees carry heavy psychological stress and trauma, migrating from one place to another without food,

medicine and other urgently needed supplies. In April 2024, CEDAR funded a Myanmar partner to assist people fleeing from war in the Kachin state by distributing medicines and emergency food supplies. In Lebanon, CEDAR supported partners to work with refugee families from Syria, helping to educate refugee children in an unfamiliar country, providing psychological support to help them adjust to life in a foreign country and cultural differences, and providing warming items for their families during the winter months.

Emergency humanitarian assistance in times of conflict can address the immediate needs of those forced to flee. However, reducing conflict is the root cause, and it requires cooperation and dialogue between global leaders in each country or region to promote peace and stability. Despite the challenges, everyone has a role, from raising personal awareness of issues such as peace and reconciliation and refugees to supporting organisations addressing humanitarian crises.

As believers, being a peacemaker is not just an ideal but a responsibility that we should shoulder. Let us encourage one another with the hymn 'Make Me a Channel of Your Peace': 'Where there is hatred, let me bring your love; where there is injury, your pardon, Lord; and where there's doubt, true faith in you. Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope; where there is darkness, only light; and where there's sadness, ever joy'. The secret of believers' ability to sow good seeds under challenging situations is suggested by the hymn, 'Master grant that I may never seek; so much to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love with all my soul'.

2024 - 2025 Operating Statement

For the period Jul - Nov 2024

Income	HK\$ 6,062,522
Donations	5,016,550
Donations for Disaster Relief	643,817
Other Income	402,155

Expenditure	HK\$ 8,035,370
Development & Poverty Alleviation	5,431,663
Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation Projects	708,934
Education & Partnership Development	1,476,038
Administrative Costs	418,735

Surplus /(Deficit)	HK\$ (1,972,848)
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Special Donation (Note)	HK\$ 10,000,000
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Note > CEDAR's fiscal year is from 1 July to 30 June of the following year. The total budgeted expenditure for the 2024-2025 fiscal year is HK\$21,943,077. Please pray for and support the work of CEDAR and our partners.

> The special donation is used to set up an endowment fund: 'Education and Community Development Fund'. The endowment corpus will be kept in perpetuity, and the annual return will be used to support CEDAR's education and community development projects.

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Choose to donate the money you receive in red packets. Attach a 'Lucky Sticker' to your red packets and send blessings to impoverished communities.

Give Red Packets

Fill in the donation slip inside the CEDAR red packet. You can also pass the red packets on to your friends and family, encouraging them to turn their blessings into action.

Spread the Word

Request 'CEDAR Red Packets' and 'Lucky Stickers' from us to distribute among your community.

Invite Us to Share

CEDAR can share the stories of refugee children, helping more people understand their needs.