

## **Paw Gaw: Red Flower**

God did not choose to give me children. So... how is it that I have so many girls all around me, depending on me, asking me for advice, joking and challenging me?!? (smiling)

I am Naw Paw Gaw. I live in Yangon, Burma and am from the Karen (ka-RHEN) tribe. My husband and I do not have children, but God has allowed us to be spiritual parents for many. He is pastor in a small, poor village that was devastated by cyclone Nargis in 2008. Over 250,000 people were killed; many children were left without parents, and many parents without children.

I am now a mother, auntie, and sister to many young women who come from the village to the city with hope of finding a job. In my role as director of the ZOE Development Center, I am able to coordinate job training programs for nannies, housekeepers, cooks, tailors and nurse aids. That's why in our 3-story center, I am surrounded by the noises of many daughters!

In Burma, we have a shortage of doctors and nurses. Many who have the luxury of attending the state medical university leave the country once they graduate. One program that has given hope to young women is a 6-month nurse aid training program we offer at the ZOE Center. We usually have 30 young women pass the entrance exam. Some women take the exam but do not pass due to poor health, as a result of malnutrition. When cyclone Nargis hit, many rice fields were destroyed, and the price of this staple food became very high.

Other organizations also offer trainings, but they are expensive. Because of gifts from Global Women, ZOE is able to provide scholarships to young women who have the potential, but lack funding. And, as the women are trained to offer physical healing, they also learn to provide spiritual healing for those who are suffering in a desperate world. We remind our young women that ZOE means "abundant life," and Christ came to bring abundant life to all –women and men, rich and poor, people from the Karen tribe and the Chin tribe, Christians and Hindus.

When God called me to minister with women, I did not see myself as a leader, and I was afraid. I know I am not qualified, but God sees me as a leader and He helps me. Now, I try to help women who deal with many difficult issues, but I also look for the new leaders that God is preparing. I want to help them grow.

My name Paw Gaw means "red flower." Some might see me as a small and fragile flower, but because of God's strength in me, I am like the red Aster that grows strong in my country and has many offshoots! They bloom in parched, dry areas, and also in areas that are flooded with rains and sorrow! They thrive in low areas, and in rocky, challenging hills. No matter the season, they overcome challenges and glorify their Creator. I want to be like this red flower.

Please pray for my spiritual and physical strength, and also for more wisdom and knowledge so that all I do will glorify God.

Pray also for the leaders of our country. They need God to change their attitudes. There are some new changes happening in our country, and we have hope. May that hope remain strong in the lives of Christian women of Burma, and may their lives be like flowers glorifying their Creator.