

“He is more than an architect,” Hardy says. “Derek asks important questions like: ‘How can we prove that the villagers will use the medical facility?’”

Accessing remote villages

Pantawpyin Village is a total of 8,064 miles away from Marin County, in the western state of Rakhine in Myanmar, a country of about 53 million inhabitants located between India, China and Thailand on the Bay of Bengal. It’s an arduous journey to get to the village, Hardy says: It takes 29 hours of flights, including a one-hour flight from Yangon to Kyauk Phyu; a 3½-hour boat ride to Kabaingchaung Village; then a 1½-hour trek to Pantawpyin Village, which is on an unnamed island east of Ramree Island, Hardy says.

The destination is home to Hla Kyi, a California resident, Caltrans engineer and cofounder of Care for Peace, who originally approached Hardy to look at designs to build a hospital in his childhood village.

Kyi reached out to Hardy after he learned of Hardy’s background as an international health professional and hospital designer. Hardy was invited to look at the site of the potential hospital and envisioned the concept of the mini-medical centers across the countryside of Myanmar, where a majority of the nation’s citizens live. Some of the remote villages are completely inaccessible during the winter rains and seriously need modern health care services, Hardy says.

In partnership with the government of Myanmar and a group of private citizens, Care for Peace was incorporated as a 511(c)(3) charitable organization in California in 2014. Dr. Than Sein, a retired health official in Myanmar, founded the People’s Health Foundation, which collaborates with Care for Peace by providing local doctors and medical supplies for Care for Peace’s mobile health van and rural health center.

The health center in Pantawpyin Village was a gift from Care for Peace to the Ministry of Health, Hardy says, and it is their responsibility to operate the facility at a cost of about \$2,000 per month.

In addition to the rural health center, since September 2014, there is a mobile health van that circulates through rural villages in the Ramree Island countryside and provides outreach health services.

Care for Peace paid for the van, medical equipment, generator and mobile tablet/laptop and the People’s Health Foundation provides ongoing expenses for medications, records and staff – a medical doctor, midwife, nurse and driver – all of which run approximately \$800 per month.

“The Care for Peace difference is that we are helping villagers transform their own villages one step at a time until what they end up with is an entire ‘healthy community’ that is 100 percent self-sufficient and fully sustainable,” Hardy says.

“I would like to help translate buildings that make sense for the villagers through technology and communication with our partners in Myanmar,” Parker says.

The mini-medical center model

Each mini-medical center will provide 90 percent of the health and medical needs in a village and thus patients will not have to be transported to distant hospitals or specialty centers.

Parker has designed the centers as 120-foot by 60-foot cement buildings that can withstand heavy rains and cyclones. They will provide dental care, examination rooms, birthing rooms, treatment areas, a laboratory, a few sick beds, a space for records, a room for maternal and child health care programs and other health programs, and serve as a place to hold town hall meetings.

Ideally, the centers will be solar-powered with computer-connectivity to health experts worldwide through a tele-health network, which is being designed to connect via the Internet with sister hospitals and the Burmese diaspora of medical and health professionals located through the world, according to the nonprofit's web site. Care for Peace also wants the centers to be self-supporting and sustainable with adjacent land for commercial crops.

"I have drafted conceptual designs that can be translated by local architects into buildings that make sense for them," Parker says. "For instance, in Myanmar, they place toilets outside, not inside, the building."

A 6-acre site has been donated by the government of the Kyauk Phyu District, where the first prototype center will be built in Taung Yin Village. Hardy believes an estimated 100,000 people are in the outer sphere of the village.

The future center is still in the design phase and is budgeted at \$181,000. The subsequent buildings will cost \$41,000, says Hardy, and the nonprofit's long-term goal is to build 240 centers in remote mountainous villages.

Through the clinics, one of the nonprofit's goals is to lower the country's infant mortality rates.

The World Bank's 2015 data indicates that Myanmar had one of the highest neonatal death rates in the world, with 26 incidences per 1,000 births, or 2.6 percent. Countries with the similar rates include: Burkina Faso, 27; Ethiopia, 28; Ghana 28; Mozambique, 27; and Papua New Guinea, 25. In contrast, in the U.S. there are four neonatal deaths per 1,000 births, or 0.4 percent.

International expertise

Parker has designed hospitals and health research facilities for more than 50 years in 15 countries including the United States, Australia, China, Canada, Mexico, United

Kingdom, Italy, Turkey, Sweden and Norway. He also served on Marin General Hospital's operations board of directors for six years.

Among his numerous awards, he has received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American College of Healthcare Architects in 2008 and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Academy of Design and Health in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2011.

Most of the international health care facilities were constructed while Parker was a partner at Anshen + Allen in San Francisco, one of the largest health care design practices in the world, where he worked on how design could affect the healing environment. His projects include Lucile Salter Packard Children's' Hospital at Stanford University; the Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose; John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek; Hospice of the Central Coast, Monterey; and Saint Anne's Home for the elderly poor in San Francisco. He retired in 2004.

Parker was born near Birmingham, England, in 1934 and during World War II he and his mother lived about 30 miles outside Coventry where his father was a Spitfire pilot in the Royal Air Force. During the war, his homemaker mother ran the local ammunition factory.

Coventry was bombed by German air raids in 1940 and this left a lasting impression on him, Parker says.

He graduated with a master's degree in architecture from the Birmingham School of Architecture and worked to rebuild the city of Coventry.

When Parker traveled the world as a young man, he discovered that he really liked San Francisco and decided it would be his home port. He met and married his wife, Nance, in the Bay Area. They have two daughters and two granddaughters. Over the past 50 years, he has enjoyed sailing on San Francisco Bay.



A nurse who travels with Care for Peace's Mobile health van distributes medicines and provides medical outreach to isolated villages on Ramree Island in Myanmar

Marin as a health resource in Myanmar

Linda Tavaszi, chief executive officer of the Marin Community Clinic, is another cofounder of Care for Peace and also serves on its board of directors.

In 2014, Hardy brought Kyi and Sein to tour the county clinic and discuss ideas for Myanmar. Coincidentally, Tavaszi was set to visit Myanmar for three weeks with a tour group through Overseas Adventures Travel a year later.

While there, she also met with health officials.

"Myanmar is beautiful," Tavaszi says. "The population is friendly and peaceful and committed to its Buddhist shrines. We are very proud of the work we are doing in the country."

"My involvement feels very personal – very hands-on," she says. "I have worked in health care for so many years, I would like to do whatever I can do to help the wonderful people of Myanmar.

"Health is a global issue. If Myanmar gets polio, we will eventually get it too," Tavaszi says.

Parker says he has known Tavaszi, Hardy and some of the other members of the board of directors and advisory board for several years.

"We have quite a brain trust in this county," Hardy says.

"The rest of the world has a lot of catching up to do and we have an obligation to help the developing countries without being invaders or arrogant," Parker says. "Healthy children can be educated and educated children are the foundation of a civilization."

"I have traveled to a lot of countries, but Burma back in 1963 is the only country that kept my passport until I left 10 days later," he says.

While he is sure that the country is safe to visit now, Parker says he has no desire to take the long plane flight.

"I can do a lot for Care for Peace from Marin County," he says.

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To learn more about Care for Peace, www.careforpeace.org