



Leadership Matters

What lies behind the numbers?

It's hard not to look at the news over the last week and not be confronted by the death of so many in first Burma and now China as a result of the earthquake. I think without doubt the most confronting thing to come out of Burma is the number of deaths which could have been prevented. Prevented if the Government of Burma had allowed in the foreign aid offered by so many.

There is of course the need to respect the country of Burma's sovereignty and their right to allow into their country whom they wish. However, it is reported that such refusal to grant visas is unprecedented in humanitarian aid work.

The tragedy surely is not the act of nature but the act of the Government that tens of thousands of people will die, whilst life saving aid is prevented from entering the country.

Listening to news reports from Burma, I heard a comment that the effects of the cyclone are likely to live on for many years. This has to be an understatement. You can't take generations of families away and that not have an impact for generations to come. This is what exists in Thailand today with the kids living in our orphanage.

You don't go out on a day excursion as a young girl, return to your village and find you have lost all of your immediate family members and a further 21 members of your extended family and then recover from this in a couple of years. The impact of the Boxing Day tsunami, the impact of cyclone Nargis and the impact of the earthquake in China this week, will live on for those survivors who have lost family members for their lifetime.



Leading with Compassion

Make no mistake about it, just because we move on, just because we no longer think of the victims, just because their struggle is not on the news anymore does not mean they have moved on. I never would have thought that when we agreed to build the first orphanage our numbers of kids needing a home three years on, would have doubled that which we first sort to provide accommodation for.

So what is it all about, how do we forget so quickly of these hundreds of thousand of people who die and the millions that are left with their lives changed forever?

I recently received an article from Professor Emma Robertson from the University of New South Wales, called "Why we don't care about Darfur" written by Thea Singer. The article talks about the thousands of children who die each day from Malaria, starvation and preventable disease. It also talks about how \$48,000 was raised to rescue a dog that was stranded on a shipping tanker in the Pacific. The point of the article is that "psychic numbing is a mechanism to keep us from exploding with grief," when confronted with such staggering numbers.

Asked what a compassionate person can do to keep their eyes from glazing over when reading about horrific situations psychologist Paul Slovic suggests that we "each make a conscious effort to pause and really consider what lies behind the numbers".

As Leaders we understand the challenges for the kids of Thailand will go on, as Leaders we understand the challenges for the kids of Burma will go on and as Leaders we will act with compassion and consider what lies behind the numbers. In leading with compassion we demonstrate that Leadership Matters.