Transformed by Jesus amidst her own journey through poverty, P' Kaew is passionate about supporting other families experiencing financial burdens

WHEN FAMILIES KNOW SHALOM

P' Kaew's Experience of Poverty Transformed Into Compassion

BANGKOK

Dadchanee Ariso, known fondly to many as P' Kaew, was born to a family suffering poverty in the province of Nan, Thailand. Her memories of childhood remind her of the lack she suffered, and left her with a single motivation: "Get an education and work very hard to have a better life than my parents had."

"I sought stability for my family through hard work, but the harder I tried, the further I seemed from a better life," she reflected. "I finally realized the truth when my family failed, and I saw that human love isn't enough to sustain a family. I came to know Jesus and saw that He was enough."

God transformed P' Kaew's financial anxiety into a deep burden for her family and others. "I shifted from thinking mostly about myself and my own economic situation, to having compassion for others struggling in the same situation."

Since then, P' Kaew has partnered with God for 20 years of ministry. She currently works with the local government and the Community Organizations Development Institute to support people-driven community development. She is also a ministry partner with Servant Partners, and has worked with Servant Partners staff Suzy Triplett to co-found and lead the Santisuk (Shalom) Families Program in Bangkok, Thailand. This one-year, Gospel-centered mentoring program holistically develops families to care for themselves, become financially stable, resolve interpersonal conflict, and serve their community with love and generosity.

The Santisuk Families Program empowers families to care for themselves, become financially stable, resolve conflict, and learn about Jesus

But working with families is anything but simple. The families in her program have faced tremendous hardship in recent years—evictions, job loss, COVID-19 hospitalizations, and family separation. They are also marginalized by poverty and learning to follow Jesus in Buddhist-majority Thailand. Through it all, P' Kaew and her co-leaders have poured out their lives to shepherd these families in Christ.

"My hope is that my family and other families would know Santisuk (Shalom)." P' Kaew said. "There is a lot of injustice in Thai society, and people experiencing poverty aren't able to access the rights and resources that they need. I want to see justice for families in these communities."

Dara* attended the Santisuk Families Program with her five family members. When they first joined, they were unhoused. Through one year of mentoring through the program, they were able to rent their own home, start a small business to earn a livelihood and send their children to school, and regularly tithe to their local church. Like Dara, several families have started businesses, received training in financial management, broken toxic family dynamics, and been empowered to care for other vulnerable families in their neighborhoods. The program has seen many families reconciling with one another and with other families.

"When I think back on these 20 years, I never imagined my life would look like this," P' Kaew reflected. "But I think about the disciples whom Jesus chose. They were fishermen—not wealthy, powerful people. And yet, He used their lives to create a spiritual revolution. I draw strength and courage from that. If He can do that with those disciples, He can do it with me."

A BRIDGE ACROSS BORDERS

How Omar Helped Close Divides in His City & Beyond

EAST LOS ANGELES

Eight-year-old Omar Cova crossed the border into Mexico to visit family, just a few years after he had first left it for the U.S. "I had never seen that level of poverty before," he recounted. "I saw a lot of kids my age selling things to fend for themselves, and it made me cry. It was before I knew God, but it was the moment that God started to change my heart—there are people that are struggling, and I can't ignore them."

By following Jesus' call on his life, Omar has found belonging and opportunities to be a "bridge" to others in East LA, India, and beyond

Omar grew up in Downtown Los Angeles, California, where he and his family worked in the garment district. He and his brother helped sew, iron, and sort clothes from a young age. "Summers had no summer camp for me," he laughed, remembering his childhood. While running deliveries for his parents, Omar witnessed the city's poverty firsthand and was again overcome with compassion for his neighbors.

These seeds that God planted in Omar sprouted when he gave his life to Jesus at the age of 19 with a simple prayer: "I'll follow you anywhere. Just don't make my life boring."

Although Omar wanted to pursue ministry abroad, Jesus called him to remain in Southern California and be a "bridge" to his neighbors. For 10 years, Omar lived and worked in a local urban marginalized community, mentoring youth, breaking up fights, celebrating quinceaneras, helping addicts recover, and experiencing a wide spectrum of joy and pain in urban ministry. "I learned that I'm not saving nobody," he said. "I just have to plant and water seeds, and have the wisdom to see how God is transforming people."

When he heard God say that his local ministry was complete, Omar left to pursue a Master of Arts in Transformational Urban Leadership (MATUL) at Azusa Pacific University. Through MATUL, Omar and his family were sent to live and learn in India for 17 months. He would finally experience ministry in a foreign place.

"When we left, my children were the same age as I was when we first came to the U.S.," he reflected. "It's like the story repeats itself, but for the sake of Jesus. The first time we crossed the border, I felt like Jesus was saving me by bringing me here—and now, he's sending me."

Despite crossing borders to encounter a drastically different culture, climate, and set of customs, Omar quickly felt at home in India. He heard things like, "Your values are very similar to our values," and "You like spicy stuff, too?" His new neighbors had never met a Mexican-American person before, but the experiences of familial bonding, lingering after celebrations, and switching between languages were deeply familiar to Omar.

"That's when it hit me: people like me, that grew up in the city, that are bilingual, that are Latino—we can minister in places like this!" he said. "Jesus said that they would know his disciples by how we love one another. Diversity of culture, income, and ethnicity in ministry expresses the fullness of that love. That closes our cultural divides."

Omar now serves as the Servant Partners site leader for East Los Angeles, where he disciples and develops local leaders. His journey has taken him across borders near and far, but wherever he goes, he knows he is a bridge.

THE FIRST TO GO

A Movement of Latin Americans to the Middle East

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

When Sara Oviedo became a follower of Christ, she felt called to leave her home of Argentina to be a missionary in the Middle East—but faced considerable resistance. Sara's family had tirelessly labored to climb out of poverty, and opposed her decision to be a Christian because the religion bore the stigma of being a religion of the poor. Local religious institutions doubted her capability and credentials because of her family and class background. And while Argentine churches would send families and single men for missions, there was little precedent for sending single women to a place like the Middle East.

Zach Powell also grew up in Argentina, but as the child of missionaries. He felt called to work among those who had never heard the gospel and were marginalized by poverty. He joined the Servant Partners internship when it first began in 1995, and later moved to North Africa to pioneer a community center among an urban poor Muslim community in 2002. Because of his upbringing, Zach saw firsthand the potential of the Latin American church to send workers with cultural similarities to communities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Also in 2002, other Servant Partners staff began living and working in an urban marginalized community in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. At a meeting of pastors and churches in Nueva Suyapa, one of the poorest communities in the city, they learned about the community's vision to send Hondurans to minister among unreached people groups in Africa. Soon after, Servant Partners received a formal invitation to come alongside these pastors and form a new sending agency called Puerta Al Mundo (PAM).

While the journeys of Sara, Zach, and these Honduran pastors occurred separately, they were not coincidences. God was weaving together a movement representing the future of missions, where Latin American leaders would labor for transformation alongside people in the Middle East and North Africa. After being the first woman in her denomination to be ordained for ministry, Sara joined Zach's team and led Servant Partners' North Africa site. PAM sent Hondurans and other Latin Americans to MENA to serve on multiethnic teams for years to come. Sydney Gracia was one such missionary, who now leads the North Africa site.

"Where I'm from, we are always waiting for others to come and do the work, but I think we should also be the ones to go out," Sydney said. "My own journey to North Africa helps my community see that God calls a diversity of people to His work. Honduras is not just a place to receive, but a place to send and contribute to God's Kingdom around the world." Like Sara, Sydney too faced pushback as a single woman pursuing missions.

"People from our community aren't thought of as trained or capable," she said. "Because we are women, people thought we wouldn't last and instead needed to stay back to help the family. But they needed to learn that it isn't about trusting in us—it's about trusting in God's purpose."

Two decades since these pieces started to fall into place, Servant Partners has seen a pipeline of Latin American leaders being trained up and sent out to join diverse teams in MENA. God has worked across nations to usher in a breakthrough in the history of missions.

Sara and Sydney were among the first women from their countries to minister in the MENA region, overcoming countless barriers

A groundbreaking pipeline has formed sending Latin Americans to minister in North Africa, representing God's diverse vision for urban missions

"This is the only instance that we know of where the urban poor in one continent are now the leaders of an urban poor ministry among the unreached in another continent," Zach said. "This diversity in mission is countercultural and economically fragile, but because of Jesus, it works."

Last year, teams from these areas came together for one of Servant Partners Regional Gatherings. Those present had roots in Argentina, France, Honduras, Mexico, and the United States, but were living and serving in Middle Eastern and North African urban marginalized communities. They spoke multiple languages and demonstrated a diversity of gifts. These leaders represent the future of Servant Partners—people from everywhere, going to everyone.

"Poverty is a problem of broken relationships," Sara said. "The multicultural identity of our teams communicates the Shalom of God in the places we go. Sometimes, seeing different people get along can leave a greater impact than anything we say. It shows that God can bring differences together."

FOLLOW us at @servantpartners

PARTICIPATE in one of our short-term or international internships. Email us at *internships@servantpartners.org*.

JOIN US to break the cycle of urban poverty. Email us at *join@servantpartners.org* to learn about joining Servant Partners staff.

LEARN to listen to God, neighbor, and self through our short-term Community Transformation Certificate program at *servantpartners.org/certificate*.

SERVANT PARTNERS

**Names changed for security and privacy reasons.*

VISION 2030

Build, Strengthen, and Bridge God's Movement in Urban Poor Communities Around the World

Two years into our 10-year Vision 2030, we have seen God move in profound ways. Local leaders have been empowered to pursue lives of sustainable urban ministry in domestic and international capacities. Staff have gathered in seven different regions from Africa, Asia, Latin American, and the US to collaborate, initiate new works, and encourage one another. We are bridging national movements of urban poor church planting and community transformation in Canada, the Caribbean, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mexico, South Asia, and the US. Leaders of these movements are beginning to collaborate with one another on how to extend God's Kingdom to urban poor communities around the world.

You can read more and partner with our Vision 2030 by visiting **servantpartners.org/vision2030**.

The Mural

SOUL OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

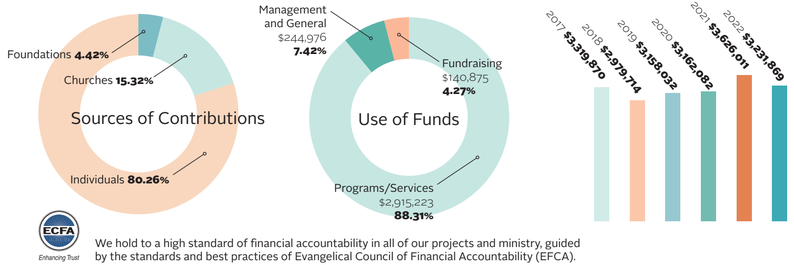
The Mural is a quarterly art magazine published by Servant Partners Press, featuring poetry, prose, photography, and more from people living and working in urban marginalized communities. Find it at servantpartnerspress.org, along with other theological reflections, narratives, and training materials that proclaim God's presence among the poor.

RESOURCES FOR MINISTRY AMONG THE URBAN POOR

Currently available at ServantPartnersPress.org, Amazon, and other major booksellers

SERVANT PARTNERS PRESS

2022 FINANCES



ECFA Enhancing Trust

We hold to a high standard of financial accountability in all of our projects and ministry, guided by the standards and best practices of Evangelical Council of Financial Accountability (EFCA).

Watch our newest videos showcasing who we are and the Nine Signs of a Transforming Community in English and Spanish at youtube.com/servantpartners

SERVANT PARTNERS
Servant Partners
P.O. Box 3144
Pomona, CA 91769 USA
626-398-1010
info@servantpartners.org

SERVANT PARTNERS | ANNUAL REPORT | 2022

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Transforming Communities with the Urban Poor

SERVANT PARTNERS

Dear friends,

Historically, world mission has been assumed to be a Western, middle-class endeavor. As such, it has a mixed track record, often imposing culture and utilizing paternalistic, destructive approaches towards communities which cross-cultural workers were meant to serve. But the problem is not mission itself, or even cross-cultural mission specifically, but how it has been done. Our God, by nature, is missional—always seeking to expand His Kingdom throughout the world. Therefore, God's church must also be missionally minded, extending the love and salvation of Jesus and advancing His holistic Kingdom. Mission is the responsibility of the whole church—not just the Western church, and not just the wealthy church. At its heart, mission is about partnership, collaboration, learning, and mutual transformation.

We believe that God calls people from everywhere to everyone. The church is exploding in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Many of these believers desire to see transformation come in their own urban centers, and many are also called beyond their borders to join God's larger mission in the world. As Servant Partners, we send small teams to live incarnationally in urban marginalized communities, and we partner with national organizations doing the same. The transformation of the world's urban poor communities is the calling of the global church—both those born into comfort and those raised in poverty. In the following stories, you will see how God is calling people who may not fit the missionary stereotype to lead the next generation of missions.

Thank you for your prayers and financial support of Servant Partners. We are blessed to be a part of God's journey of hope in the midst of poverty.

In Jesus' hope,
Derek and Lisa Engdahl
General Directors