BORDER CROSSING, COLLABORATION AND TRANSITION: 
NGOS’ HEALTH AID IN THE CHINA AND MYANMAR BORDER [1]


Adviser: Stevan Harrell [2]

This research will investigate how NGOs play a role in providing public health services in a recent conflict zone of Northern Myanmar where an uneasy peace has been established between the national government and a local ethnic authority made up of former armed rebels. How does dynamic and complex NGO practice develop in an area where ethnic minority groups, NGOs, the Chinese government and the Myanmar government form a four-sided relationship that shapes and shifts NGO strategies along with political and economic changes? Since about 1960, several armed resistance organizations have controlled most of the border areas in Kachin and Shan states, and have managed their health care independently from the Myanmar national system. To do this, they have sought help from international NGOs such as Health Poverty Action (HPA) and from local health departments of China’s Yunnan Province. My research will focus on HPA (formerly known as Health Unlimited), one of the earliest NGOs that entered into Kachin conflict zone since 1994. For this project, I will conduct historically-grounded ethnography of public health practice, to review the course and effects of HPA’s aid in this region and its relations with the Kachin resistance organizations, Chinese government and Myanmar government. Perhaps most significant is the prospect for the future: how will the transition take place in areas like Kachin Special Region 1 (KSR1) that are going through political and civil absorption into the national system since 2009. My research will follow the process of health transition and investigate how NGOs take part in the integration and probably the transformation of their own mission in the end.

People Involved: Juan Luo [3]
Status of Research or Work: In progress