

Friends of Burma, Inc. (FOB) Annual Report for 2016



January 20, 2017

We have just completed another meaningful year with the faithful help of our dedicated donors. We had a direct and profound effect on over three hundred and ninety three individuals who received scholarships. One hundred and twenty two orphans received support. Hundreds more were helped with medicine and medical care through our work with the KBC Hospital in Insein, Matthew 25 Hospital at Pathein and free neighborhood clinics. We partnered with other organizations aiding them by getting their money into Burma (Myanmar). Some of our work is hard to measure. We give grants each year to forty five Bible Schools and Seminaries which they can use any way they want for development, scholarships, etc. In 2016 FOB raised \$22,910 for medical support.

In Burma admission to medical schools is based on the student's scores on the Matriculation tests. Usually those with high scores are from rich families who can give their children extensive tutoring. But once in a while a brilliant student from a poor family scores high enough to enter a medical school. FOB comes to his/her aid and provides money so they can get medical training in exchange for service to their people after graduation and doing their mandated government service. Pictured is Saw Wai Yan Yin Htwe (in blue) who just graduated from Myanmar Traditional Indigenous Medicine University at Mandalay. His brother, Saw Wai Hin Yin Htaw just graduated from high school with six distinctions and so is eligible to go the medical school too. Their father died in 2001 so he will need help, about \$1,000 per year. See Wish List at end.



We have about 300 dedicated donors. Some like J.T.W. give \$50 each month for professor support, eye glasses and retired Christian workers. Other like P. S. gives a significant amount each month for orphan support and evangelism among the Myos. We have churches that support Bible schools, churches in Burma, and seminaries each month.

Entrepreneur or Micro Credit. Naw Paw Gaw of the Karen Women's Development Organization trains women and organizes them into groups for mutual support. The cost to sponsor a group of twelve women is \$300. The four women are showing their work—weaving and sewing shoulder bags.



Part of our work is not obvious. We help other organizations and individuals to get money into Burma for their humanitarian and religious programs. We have a license from the U. S. Treasury Department, Office of Foreign Asset Control that allows us to legally do that. Since getting the license is time consuming, they prefer to go through us. Therefore we have helped the D. B. F. get \$20,000 to a school for the blind, the A.J.F. with \$30,000 for relief and development in the Pegu Yoma Mountains, T.N.W. foundation with \$50,000 for grants to hospitals, etc. These “wash throughs” total \$198,819 in 2016. Our total income for 2016 was \$445,025 which includes the “wash throughs”. That means that \$246,206 came in for our programs, most of which was designated. Undesignated giving totaled \$71,851 of which \$59,840 was allotted to our budget. That leaves only \$12,011 of which at least \$5,000 has already been allotted to several unfunded immediate needed projects. The rest, \$7,011, the board will distribute at our annual meeting.

Neil has been working on a book of resources for Baptist Leaders in Burma called Possibilities II. He issued the first book in 1996 by printing it in Burma and distributing it. This update is on line on FOB’s website where all can read and download it. It is 174 pages long. It has the Prospectus for Judson University that Myanmar Baptist Convention and Myanmar Institute of Theology want to establish in Yangon.

Lwin Moe and Neil have been working to improve and increase FOB’s website adding Interviews of former Burma Missionaries, videos related to Burma and Adoniram Judson, and links to other resources.

schools at the village. Our ministers are working hard with commitment for the children at the village.”



Another of Neil’s projects is also on FOB’s website under Resources called “Food for Soul. A **Place for Christian Sharing**”. which has 46 persons sharing when God was most real to them. It’s available [here](#). Below is an example of one of them.

God is My Refuge.

By Ku Shar Rei

My name is Ku Shar Rei and I came from Tee Ther Klo village, De Mor Soe township, Kayah State. I was born there on April 15th, 1966 and was premature. I had little chance of survival but, by the grace of God, I did. The pastor came and prayed for me and told my parents that, if I continued to live, I must serve the Lord. Since I was the eldest child, my parents, too decided that I must serve the Lord when I grew up.

I finished school to the tenth standard and achieved the "B" list. But I had no wish to serve the Lord's work. Therefore I worked at Socialist People's Council Office as a clerk for two years. After the political change which took place in 1988, our office became the Township Law and Order Restoration Council and I continued to work there as a clerk.

On the fourth of May, 1992 at 10 AM, five insurgents, who were not wearing uniforms but armed with guns, seized our office. After attacking the office for half an hour, they took the typewriter and went away. Three staff members and one soldier died in the fight. Eight of our staff were injured and we took them to Loikaw Hospital.

A friend of mine, who was a Buddhist, told me that I was very lucky and his words made me think. Only then did I realize that it was not because I was lucky I survived but it was God who

protected me in time of danger. I could not even eat or sleep but kept thinking back to what happened that day. I could not drive that event out of my mind. Finally, I decided that I must serve the Lord in return for His mercy shown me. So I resigned my job on the 1st of June, 1992.

Since that time I have been preparing for full time Christian service at Karen Baptist Theological Institute and want to serve the Lord through the A.D. 2000 ministry.

Report on a Christmas gift. Nine people elected to give fifteen Christmas gifts to needy persons in Burma. There is a report from Naw Lwai Wah who gave out one of the gifts. "Thank you very much for the Christmas gift. This is my first experience being introduced to this thoughtful action. To be honest, I was so excited and several people came to my mind. But, I've made up my mind to share this meaningful Christmas gift to my close friend Saw Samson and his family.



Saw Samson has been faithfully serving the Lord and KBTS family as a cook since 1998. He is staying on campus with his young family. His daughter is two years old and the second child is on the way. He was trusted by the former principals and co-workers. He has a good relationship with the students as well. I have known him since he started to work at KBTS and we are as close as real families. When I gave him the money he said, this is the first time he holds US dollar. Thank you! Naw Lwai Wah"

Wish List

- Support a **teacher** in the Pegu Yomas with \$150 per year for salary and supplies.
- Sponsor an **orphan** at one of the seven child care centers. Cost is \$360 per year. The picture shows a child from Agape Child Care Center on an adventure trip to Taunggyi and Inle Lake.



- Support for Saw Wai Hin Yin Htaw to attend **medical school** in Yangon. The cost is \$1,000 per year for a seven year program.
- **Scholarship** for Naw Cho Thel Aung who is studying English in Thailand in order to teach at Ko Tha Pyu Seminary in Pathein for two years: **\$3000 per year**.
- **Fence** at Hpu Sein Htwa Aung Orphanage. It needs to be finished. "Good fences makes good neighbors": **\$200**.
- **Small programs**—Eyeglasses (\$17), hearing aids (\$50), grants to retired Christian workers (\$15), mosquito nets (\$6). While these are relatively low cost programs, their impact on the recipient is very great. Prescription eyeglasses really help students who need them. The hearing aids to ministers allow them to hear their church members. Mosquito nets are the best malaria prevention method.

Every one of our wish list in our Fall Newsletter was funded by you generous donors!

Thank you letter (unedited): "First and foremost, I am grateful to God for preparing Friends of Burma for me. My name is Naw Htee Eh Soe. I lived in Kawlaylu Village and my mother church is Kawlaylu Church, Pathein Myaungmya Association. My parents are Saw Saw Win and Naw Htee Khu. I have two brothers and one sister. I passed the matriculation examination in 2010. I got the helps from FOB. I am really thanks you because you show me a great compassion

through your financial support for my study period. I now join Nurses School for final year. Naw Htee Eh Soe"

Why do people donate to helping others? God has called us to love our neighbor and to draw a very inclusive circle, not just our family and neighbors. Jesus calls us to heal the sick, feed the hungry etc. and they can do that through FOB. Jesus also promises us, if we follow him, that we will have life abundantly. This is not just material wealth. It is the deep, deep, satisfaction that comes from helping our fellow man. One donor, who loves sports, sponsored an orphan until he graduated. He was able to join the second string of a professional soccer team. So she now has her own personal professional athlete!

Why do they choose FOB?

- We have very low overhead—less than 2% and that overhead is paid for by one donor so 100% of every donation goes to our programs in Burma.
- Our programs originated by the leaders in Burma. These programs are what they want. Our programs are not imposed on them.
- All of our work in the U. S. is done by volunteers—board membership, writing and mailing newsletters, 990 filings, accounting, tracking orphan support, etc. The sixteen board members in the U.S. pay their own way to the board meeting. This year it will be in Fort Wayne July 15th. For some reason they did not want to meet in February in Indiana.
- We have only one part time paid employee in Burma who distributes funds. Members of Friends of Myanmar Governing Board are all volunteers although we do pay their expenses in attending board meetings.
- We do not spend money providing letters from orphans, etc. Such feedback in some organizations takes up a lot of their money and it is questionable whether the letters are genuine.
- We try to respond to their needs whether it is for eyeglasses, a scholarship, medicine, or an elevator. We started helping KBC Clinic when it was in a four room wooden house. Now it is three buildings four stories tall and is rated as a hospital.
- We have a wide variety of programs—over fifty so they can find one in their area of interests.

Who are our donors! Our donors come from four groups. One group is former missionaries to Burma and their families and descendents who want to continue the work of their missionaries by helping the people their missionary worked with. There are at least nine missionary families.

The second group are people from Burma and have made a good life in the United States. Since they are Christians, they follow Jesus' commandment to heal and educate their people. So they give to various programs in Burma. It is disappointing that some Burmese here have turned their backs on their own people and have been seduced by American materialism and

give nothing. But I am heartened by those who give generously, some sacrificially. Two have told us they are remembering FOB in their wills so they will be helping Burma forever.

The third group grew up here in the 1950 to 1970s when church culture put a strong emphasis on missions with programs, missionary speakers, Women Society. They developed an interest in Burma which has continued to this day. Unfortunately they are going into retirement centers which take all their money or dying off. Some have remembered FOB in their wills so their support will go on forever. Now many churches are in the trying-to-survive mode.

The fourth group is everybody else. They have a love for their fellow human beings and so support FOB because they believe in helping people even if they are on the other side of the world. We need more of these people but have not found a way to reach them. Some have been reached by donors sharing their newsletter with them. If anyone has ideas regarding reaching these people, please let us know.

It has been suggested that those of our donors on Facebook, etc. share their appreciation of FOB's work on their social media, or some of our feedback. It might attract some interest in our work.

Recently I learned something interesting about Trusts. My college roommate's wife worked in the Trust Department of a bank for almost twenty years and drew up many wills and trusts. I was surprised when she told me she could only think of four cases where the recipients used the money they received in a way their givers would have approved. Most spent the money they received in three years which had taken the donor a life time to accumulate!

Please pray for us that we make the right decisions and that our work can continue. Yours in Christ, Neil and Diana Sowards

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Annual Report

Newsletter
